The History of the

HEN DŶ CWRDD CEFN COED Y CYMMER

By

TOM LEWIS
(MAB Y MYNYDD)

I NI NID OES OND UN DUW, Y TAD.
(TO US THERE IS BUT ONE GOD, THE FATHER).
1 Cor. Chap. 8, verse 6.

Printed by
J. D. Lewis & Sons Ltd., Gomerian Press, Llandyssul

HEN DŶ CWRDD
CEFN COED Y CYMMER

HEN DŶ CWRDD (1747—1853) *(From a Sketch by Morien Lewis)*

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FOREWORD

I had the privilege of reading the major part of this work while it was going through the press and it is my pleasure to express my gratitude for the opportunity of so doing : I look forward eagerly to its further perusal at greater leisure.

The author, as the result of exhaustive research, has gleaned much valuable information about one of the early Welsh Unitarian Churches, its founders and its later adherents, which, in the absence of untiring investigations, might have been forever lost.

He takes the reader back some 300 years to the days of Charles II and by way of a background gives a brief account of the struggle for religious liberty in the country. Into this story he weaves references to contemporaneous movements in the Merthyr area and gives a coherent account of the developments which, *via* Blaencannaid and Cwmglo, eventually culminated in the establishment of the Unitarian cause at Cefn Coed, now about to celebrate its bi-centenary.

The book does not confine itself to purely theological movements, for inextricably connected with these were the educational and social conditions of the period covered : in the improvement of the latter Yr Hen Dŷ Cwrdd played no mean part. Mr. Lewis manifests a deep insight into the home life and conditions of work of our forefathers and depicts them vividly, conjuring up in the reader's mind a very real picture of stern and stirring times.

Much of the work relates to biography and in his delineation of character, interspersed with anecdotes, the author excels. Here we have not dry facts but living portraits, the preservation of which is of inestimable value in the understanding of the daily lives of the common people.

The book is graced with a fine style, which makes reading easy and absorbing. Its human interests, quite apart from bare facts, give the work a value and importance which transcend time and space and which should make a wide appeal to students of religious development and social amelioration.

Bryn-hir,
Llandre,
Cards.

W. S. JONES.

PREFACE

Dr. Martineau said,—"you cannot build with the past alone, but you cannot take a step into the future without it". "Mab-y-Mynydd" has rendered great service in writing this history. History is not a mere chronicle, but an interpretation ; and the success of a historian is not that he is able to write history, but to interpret it in such a way that succeeding generations may profit by the lessons of the past.

That is the value of this book. It records history, not merely for history's sake, but we hope, for the enrichment of the mind of the reader, and as an inspiration to him who would plant the shape of things to come.

Delving into these pages has again reminded us of one of the dangers of our generation—and that is the losing of the sense of personal responsibility. Our life today is being so ordered and arranged for us in the fashion of the stereotyped, that we can lose the individual in the regimentation of life.

Where, today, is found the genius of originality ?

Furthermore, this book is not merely the story of persons but an interpretation in character-study of a religious faith born from within, with its authority in the voice of an enlightened conscience. To read this book is to penetrate into the fundamentals of religion,—the mind to understand, the will to serve, and the urge to worship the One God,—Father of All.

Cradled in that religious faith, the author has succeeded in telling a true story in his own way. The reader will not find him conspicuous in the book. Nowhere does he write himself into its pages. By nature reticent and retiring, he stands aside in order that those of whom he writes may hold the stage. That is a trait of his character : his gifts, and not self-advertisement make him a man of many interests and affairs in public life. Nevertheless, as one reads the story the character portrayals reveal the character of the author himself. The grace of his pen, and the style of his writing, show him forth as he is. Deep within him is the poet and the mystic, and, deeper still, is a veneration for the best in the

past, and a profound conviction that, except we learn from those who have gone before, we cannot master the Art of Living. As he has written, so has he lived.

This history is his presentation, not merely to the old Chapel in which he worships, and to the cause he loves, but to all who would seek to perpetuate the vision of the past, and honour the heritage of a Free Faith.

The original MS. was presented by him to the Congregation in 1930. In 1940, as a result of a consultation between himself and the Secretary, it was decided that the MS. should be considerably enlarged, and brought up to date. Two years later it was unanimously resolved to obtain the author's permission to print the MS. as the Chapel's contribution to the Bi-centenary.

Mr. Lewis readily agreed, and, using the original MS., merely as a basis for this history, he set out upon the exacting task of searching for further historical records. All this meant years of extensive and thorough research, and that into fields far beyond the confines of the Chapel's immediate influence. All this hard work, done during his leisure hours, has been a labour of love, gratuitously rendered.

In order to ensure a wider circulation than that of the membership of his own Church, the Congregation decided to contribute a substantial sum towards the cost of publication. The book is therefore published at a price far below the cost of production.

It is sent out in the hope that it will be kindly received, not only by Unitarians in general, but by all who read history, and seek to profit from the reading. May the reader read himself in some of its pages, and see himself as a descendant in high courage, and in the spirit of religious adventure, of those who made the history of these two hundred years worth telling.

"Dduw ein Tadau, Dduw ein Mamau !
Bydd i ninnau'u plant yn blaid".

J. MARLES THOMAS, *Minister.*
LEWIS EDWARDS, *Secretary.*

TO THE READER.

THIS modest book is not perfect. Its faults are many; of that I am painfully aware. I have, however, been at much pains to adhere strictly to the facts. Where I have been obliged to rely on tradition I have said so. If errors, despite all care, have crept in (and that is not impossible) I trust they will prove to be trivial.

I have not, of course, written for the fastidious and the critical. I have written, in the main, of simple people in, I hope, a simple way.

The book was actually begun as far back as 1914 and then laid aside until such time as the need for it arose. Of recent years it has been substantially added to and brought up to date, and it is a sad thought that many of the old members who looked forward to its publication will now no more read it with mortal eyes. Much of it was written when the world had lost its sanity and German bombers passed overhead on their errands of destruction.

The future is largely shaped out of the past. History is read in order that we might learn from the mistakes and failures of our fathers; to avoid the pits into which, unwittingly they fell. It was not, however, merely with that object in view that I was prompted to pen the following pages. It was, rather, to save, before it was too late, much valuable information from being lost. I also undertook the task in the hope that, reading the book, the younger members of the congregation would drink some measure of inspiration from the devotion of their forbears, and would try to tread in their footsteps.

I have, all my days, been interested in biography. To me biography is, literally, the book of life. I make no apology, therefore, for devoting so much space to the old members and ministers. History, after all, is the story of persons.

My gratitude is due to many : to our Minister, Rev. J. Marles Thomas, M.A. for the intense interest he has shown in the progress of the book ; to Mrs. Hannah Jones, our oldest living member, for giving me the free run of her amazing memory, and to Mr. W. S. Jones, M.A., M.Sc., former Principal of the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, for helping me to locate a copy of Sion Llewellyn's hymns and rhymed biography.

There is not in existence a picture of the original Chapel. Fortunately the old fabric was described to me by my father. It was described to him by my grandfather who, being by trade a way-side blacksmith, and a member of the Chapel, was often called upon to attend to some of the Chapel's repairs. From this description was made the sketch which forms the frontispiece. The drawing was made by my son, Morien, to whom I acknowledge my thanks. In the absence of a contemporary picture the sketch will, I hope, give the reader, at least, an idea of what the first Chapel looked like.

In a special way, I am indebted to Mr. W. Cledwyn Davies, Superintendent Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. In 1904, Mr. Davies' father, Rev. J. Hathren Davies, whose name will appear frequently in the succeeding pages, himself wrote a short account of the HEN DŶ CWRDD in Welsh and, in 1945, Mr. W. Cledwyn Davies kindly presented his father's manuscript to the Chapel. I am glad to have had the opportunity of consulting it, and to cull from it a few brief facts of which I was hitherto unaware.

There are others to whom I feel obligated but it will, I am sure, be appreciated that I cannot make explicit reference to them all.

I chanced recently at the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery upon a fine water-colour of "Cwm Capel" by Penry Williams. I thank the Museum Committee most cordially for allowing me to have this most interesting picture photographed.

WILLIAM JONES

WILLIAM HUGHES

My greatest debt, however, is due to Mr. Lewis Edwards, the present secretary of the Chapel. Quite frankly, without Mr. Edwards' support and frequent words of encouragement the book would never have been written, much less published. When difficulties multiplied Mr. Edwards swept them away; when interest flagged, as it sometimes did, he infused into me a new vitality. Words can express only feebly how grateful I am to him.

One more word and I have done. I do not claim (far from it) that my metrical translations of Welsh verses into English will stand the test of strict literary scrutiny. Translating is an art that few, as yet, have mastered.

Bryn y Waur,
Cefncoed y Cymer,
14 *September*, 1947.

TOM LEWIS
(*Mab y Mynydd*).

CHAPTER 1

BLAENCANNAID AND CWMGLO

THE Hen Dŷ Cwrdd is an offshoot of Cwmglo, and Cwmglo, in turn, was an offshoot of Blaencannaid. Blaencannaid, however, was not a place of worship in the generally accepted sense of the term. It was, rather, a lonely farmstead situated in a fold of the mountain about a mile south of Penheolgerrig. Even today, it is remote from the tumult of busy streets, but 300 years ago when it loomed into prominence in the struggle for religious liberty, it stood almost alone in the hills. It was a retreat where the visionary could weave his mental garlands uninterrupted, or the poet ponder his lyric undisturbed. Its enfolding silence served as an appropriate setting for the promulgation of a Gospel of Peace. Merthyr Tydfil was then only a straggling village. Dowlais was yet to come into existence. Cefn Coed y Cymer was a dense woodland, and man, in his struggle for existence and search after wealth had not defaced the windswept slopes of Clwydyfagwyr and the lush, rolling meadows of Llwyn y Celyn.

The story of Blaencannaid takes us back to the reign of Charles II. In those days, the two dominant sects in England were the Anglicans and the Presbyterians. In the hope that the Anglicans would make the Church more comprehensive, that they might come within its folds, the Presbyterians met the Bishops at a conference held in Savoy Place in April 1661. The Bishops, however, refused to yield. Instead, they made the Prayer Book more stringent than ever. Charles wished for some measure of toleration for the sake of the Catholics but Parliament was inexorable. The result was that the persecution of Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists alike was continued as ruthlessly as before.

In that year, 1661, the Corporation Act was passed. It decreed that all holders of office in a municipal corporation were to renounce their own beliefs, stifle their own consciences and take the sacrament in accordance with the forms and rites of the Church of England. That is, Nonconformists were excluded from taking part in local government.

The following year saw the passing of the Act of Uniformity which compelled all clergy to use the revised Prayer Book and receive ordination at the hands of the Bishops. Two thousand clergy, loyal to their convictions, refused to obey. In consequence, they were ejected from their livings.

Some of the clergymen, however, who held Presbyterian opinions, remained in the Church in the hope of converting it to their own views. The Independents and the Baptists, on the other hand, remained firm and met for worship in secret conventicles. Meanwhile, the Presbyterians had failed in their object to influence the Church. Eventually they, too, quitted to swell the ranks of the Nonconformists. To prevent the Nonconformists from worshipping apart from the Church and in their own chosen way, the Conventicle Act was placed on the Statute Book in 1664. This iniquitous measure forbade more than five persons to assemble for worship except according to the requirements of the Anglican Church. The penalties were severe. The third offence involved transportation to the West Indies.

In 1665 came the Plague of London, and although the Dissenters (Nonconformists) showed exemplary devotion to the suffering, Parliament, with extraordinary vindictiveness, passed the Five Mile Act. By this Act no Nonconformist was allowed to teach, preach, or settle within five miles of any town or parish in which he had formerly held a Church living. These series of infamous enactments proceeded, of course, from motives of malice, and, angered by their severity, the Nonconformists resisted stoutly and soon the prisons were full of unhappy Dissenters. The most illustrious of them was John Bunyan who, in Bedford Gaol, wrote *"Pilgrim's Progress"*. A revealing entry on the subject appears in Pepys' Diary :

> "While we were talking, came by several poor creatures carried by, by constables, for being at a conventicle. They go like lambs, without any resistence. I would to God they would either conform, or be more wise, and not be catched".

The flood of militant reaction against Parliament spread to Merthyr Tydfil, where exponents of subversive religious propagandism had, for long, been active. Foremost among

these was Tomos Llewelyn, Rhigos, who, about 1540, translated Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament into Welsh. He was licensed to preach by Archbishop Grindal in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Tomos Llewelyn travelled extensively in North Glamorgan, and, in the course of his preaching tours, formed religious societies. When, therefore, a century later, Parliament let loose its hungry dogs of persecution upon the Dissenters there were valiant protagonists of the cause in Merthyr who were ready to hold the fort and meet the attack. Here and there in sequestered homesteads around the town a few yeoman-farmers held secret meetings in order to form a "Society" of their own somewhere far removed from the beaten track. The venture was fraught with danger. But undeterred by threats of punishment and ruinous fines these defiant and daring spirits set out to achieve their aim. They chose the farm-house at Blaencannaid as their meeting place. This was in 1620, the year by the way, the Pilgrim Fathers set sail from Plymouth to seek religious freedom across the seas.

Of the inner history of the Society at Blaencannaid we are furnished only with the barest outline. The Society could hardly have been composed of more than about two dozen members. But few as they were, they seem to have had a minister. He was probably "Edward o'r Gurnos" who, it is worthy of mention, was an ancestor, in the direct line, of Mr. Lewis Edwards, the present Secretary of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. It is extremely unlikely that "Edward o'r Gurnos" had received any education in the academic sense. He was a member of the flock, and was chosen for the office, perhaps, not only because of his natural talents, but because he was not afraid to put up a fight in defence of his principles. Since it was the exception, in those turbulent days, rather than the rule to find a peasant who could read and write, we may safely conclude that Edward's "congregation" were largely, if not wholly, unlettered.

The Dissenters continued to worship at Blaencannaid until about 1640. Meanwhile, their number had increased and the chamber in which they met could no longer accommodate

them.[1] A more spacious conventicle (meeting place) became a necessity. One was found in Cwmglo half a mile away.

It should not be thought, however, that inadequate room was the only reason for the exodus from Blaencannaid. Fear of detection was a contributory cause. It had been observed of late that the hunt for conventicles by the military had been intensified, and to reach Blaencannaid unobserved, long, wearisome detours had had to be made over the mountains.

Cwmglo, on the other hand, was less conspicuous. A dingle of sylvan beauty, it was screened by a profusion of dense copses and tall, overhanging trees[2] where, tradition states, the nightingale often sang. But even in the delicious seclusion of Cwmglo the Dissenters were not free from molestation. Though their minds were fixed on the things of the spirit, their ears were always alert for the footsteps of the informer. A shaking bough, or a quivering bush, or the snap of a twig in the undergrowth, made their hearts beat faster, their blood run cold. The soothing influence of hymn and sacred song was denied them. Hostile ears might be listening in the thickets. On wintry nights, not for them the cheery gleams of a modern street lamp. The only light to guide their faltering footsteps was afforded by the moon or the stars. When the sky was overcast they stumbled over trackless mountains in an inky darkness that only country people know.

Hidden in the trees around Cwmglo was a gabled farm house of considerable dimensions and built in the Elizabethan style. Its occupier was himself a Presbyterian, and when his fellow worshippers requested of him the use of one of his barns as a conventicle, we may be sure, that he readily acquiesced. An empty barn all the year round on a farm well known for

[1]Blaencannaid Farm was rebuilt in 1840. In July 1917 a filled-in doorway in the cellar of the house was opened out and a rectangular room discovered approximately 10ft. by 8 ft.—F. T. James, in "Cymrodor".

[2]Some of these trees were cut down in 1879 by the late Lewis Phillips who had lived in Cwmglo for 40 years. Deeply embedded in them, Lewis Phillips told me, were some iron hooks to which, no doubt, the Dissenters tethered their horses—T.L.

its productive meadows might, it was thought, arouse the suspicion of an erstwhile passer-by. To delude the curious, therefore, the barn was stored with hay during the week-days, and emptied for the services on Sundays. The congregation were not seated when the services were in progress. A standing position was more conducive to instant dispersal should escape become necessary. The rostrum was crudely built of timber felled in the contiguous woods. A rush light that flickered wanly in the draught from the ventilation holes in the walls, provided the only illumination. There was no fire except the fire of the spirit. To keep themselves warm, they wrapped their feet in straw. In the dark, cob-webbed recesses of the roof owls huddled nervously, and on a beam overhead a stray chicken roosted oblivious of the movements below. It was, indeed, a scene of absorbing interest, and it is a pity that obscurity has clouded much of it from our view.

On high ground around the conventicle sentinels were posted to warn the "brethren" of approaching danger. "Keeping watch", by the nature of it, was an unpleasant duty. In its execution, the severest weather had to be faced. In snow that chilled to the marrow; in winds that lacerated like vicious thorns, a constant vigil had to be kept. Despite all precautions, however, the Dissenters were once caught in the very act of worship.

In the twilight the military, led by a Colonel Morgan, were scouring the mountain side for conventicles. Some distance away from Cwmglo they halted, and Col. Morgan, dismounting his horse, went down into the dingle to reconnoitre. He found the Dissenters at prayer, but he did not enter. Unseen and unheard, he listened from without. Within, one of the faithful, on bended knees, was, like Jacob of old, wrestling with his God. Moved to compassion, or it may be stricken with remorse, the Colonel stealthily withdrew into the woods and left the service undisturbed. The story goes that, when he returned to his men he told them that he would be a callous man who could do his duty under such circumstances.

History is silent as to whether the Dissenters were actually maltreated at Cwmglo. It is significant, however, that to this day three of the fields in the vicinity are known as "Cae Watch" (Watching Field) "Maes y Gwaed" (The Meadow of

Blood) and "Cae Dial" (The Field of Persecution). The name of one of the sentinels has been preserved. It is that of Edward Harri (Harri o'r Gurnos,) son of the "minister" of Blaencannaid. Edward Harri was born in Cwmglo in 1694. He died in 1800, aged 106. There is a tablet to his memory in Ynysgau Chapel, Merthyr.

But whilst proof cannot be adduced that corporal punishment was ever inflicted at Cwmglo, an instance of local persecution is afforded by the story of the betrayal of Vavasor Powell. Vavasor Powell was a Welsh Puritan preacher of national repute, and was described by the Anglican Church as "a dangerous and a marked man". In the winter of 1668, the news spread that he was expected to pass through Merthyr Tydfil whilst on one of his peregrinations through South Wales. When he arrived in Merthyr 2,000 people were awaiting him. He was pressed to preach. Though tired, he delivered a sermon from the top of the wall of the Parish Church. He took for his text Jeremiah, Chap. 17, verses 7 and 8. As soon as Rev. George Jones, Rector of Merthyr, heard that Powell was in the neighbourhood, he hurried off to Cardiff to lay information before the military authorities. Powell was arrested. He was convicted at Caerphilly and committed to prison. His imprisonment, however, was of short duration. Soon after his release he was apprehended again for a similar offence. He was this time sentenced to a long term, and died in Fleet Prison, London, on the 16 Oct. 1669. Vavasor Powell spent eleven years in thirteen prisons. His crime was that he preached the Gospel in public without a licence to do so.

The barn at Cwmglo was used as a conventicle for about fifty years. In 1689, the Toleration Act was passed, and the freedom for which the Dissenters had long prayed was granted them by law. They were now free to proclaim their faith unhindered. Grit and resolute faith had, at last, triumphed.

The Arminians (Unitarians) however, were still in spiritual bondage. THEIR liberty did not come until 124 years later. The Toleration Act of 1689 applied only to those Dissenters who subscribed to the Trinitarian Creed. Those who believed in one God, and not in three, were outside its pale. It was not until 1813—sixty six years after the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was built —were the Arminians allowed by Statute to worship in public.

WILLIAM HARRIES

RICHARD JONES

Fearful no longer of punitive action being taken against them, the Dissenters at Cwmglo relinquished the old barn, and decided to build an appropriate Chapel close by. The owner of the land was a Captain D. Jenkins, of Hensol who was uncouth in speech and difficult of approach. A volunteer at last was found to interview him. The volunteer's qualification for the task was that his brother served as butler to the Hensol family. The request having been made to him the Captain replied with characteristic irreverence, "If you wish to worship at Cwmglo, you shall have a plot of land, but as for me and the little butler we worship nothing but our stomachs". The new Chapel was an austere, plain building, and was 30 feet long and 18 feet wide. Its ruins may still be seen. The ground was granted on a 60 years lease.

The few facts that have come down to us relative to Church life at Cwmglo are disordered and ambiguous. It would seem, however, that for the first 80 years or so comparative harmony reigned there. Then disputations arose over hazy points of dogma. Attempts to formulate a system of doctrine that might gain the complete approval of the Society failed abysmally. Discussions on the correct interpretation of scripture led to acrimonious, and often, bitter argument. We have no means of forming an adequate conception of what really transpired there, but nothing is more evident than that the Society at Cwmglo was divided, in the end, to two or more arguing sects. Controversy probably arose, not so much from personal pique and deliberate intolerance as from deep-seated conviction, for what our fathers believed in they believed implicitly. In their religious opinions in particular, they were immovable and static. Just as in years gone by they were at variance with the Church of England, they were now contending with one another. Nor is this to be wondered at. Comprised as the Society was of Presbyterians, Baptists, Anabaptists, Calvinists, Quakers and Arminians, it could hardly have been otherwise. The Arminians who, of course, refused to invest Jesus with the character and attributes of a Deity were, as might be expected, subjected to severe criticism. In a Society where orthodox opinions preponderated, vehement repudiation of Arminian belief was a natural corollary. The Society was at last rent in twain.

[1]It is not known with any degree of certainty who first ministered to the little flock at Cwmglo. Vague references are made to Vavasor Powell. Some historians say that not only did he preach there, possibly on occasion, but helped in founding the cause. The first minister of Cwmglo of whom there appears to be authentic knowledge, however, was Rev. Henry Maurice, who held the pastorate from 1672 until his death in 1682. He was a Presbyterian and was the pastor of the combined Presbyterian Churches of Breconshire and North Glamorganshire. He could not have been permanently settled, therefore, at Cwmglo but merely had the oversight of it. His visits too could not have been frequent, and we can only assume that during his ten years ministry there the services were conducted largely by individual members of the congregation. There appears to be no record of a successor to Maurice until 1698, when Rev. Roger Williams was appointed to the charge. Roger Williams was an Arminian, and a stout protagonist of his faith. Candid in his own opinions he had a deep respect for the opinions of others. This trait in his character won for him the esteem of those who differed from him in their religious views, and, in consequence, his ministry, on the whole, gave satisfaction. But in addition to being Minister of Cwmglo he also had charge of a Society in Cefn-Arthen in Carmarthenshire. Cefn Arthen was fifty or sixty miles away. To reach it, long stretches of bleak mountains had to be traversed, and the distance had to be covered on horse-back or on foot. The highways of that time were no more than puddled cart-tracks, for roads, as we know them today, were undreamt of, and as the country-side was then infested with robbers and outlaws, wayfarers had to be strong of limb to resist attack. At length, travel-fatigue began to take toll of Roger Williams' health. Serving two causes so widely separated became a physical impossibility. He was now 57 years old and growing decrepit. To ease the strain on his mental and bodily powers the congregation at Cwmglo resolved to appoint a minister to assist him in the person of Rev. James Davies of Llanwrtyd. James Davies was a Calvinist of the

[1]Howel Harris, according to his diary, preached at Cwmglo and Vaynor 28 March 1739. Howel Harris was a famous Methodist preacher

strictest sort, and his disposition towards those who could not, and would not, embrace Calvinism seems to have been distinctly unfriendly. Siôn Llewelyn, who was a member at Cwmglo at the time, was severely critical of Davies' order of faith. To Siôn, an Arminian, punishing the children because of the sins of their fathers (cosbi'r plant am feiau'r tad) was the very antithesis of the New Testament teaching. A religion, Siôn prophesied, that stressed the precept and virtually ignored the example could not possibly endure.

It will be obvious that after James Davies was appointed to assist Roger Williams both Calvinism and Arminianism were expounded from the same pulpit. It is not surprising, therefore, that, as in the Church at Corinth, "envying and strife and divisions" followed. It was a perplexing and difficult situation.

On 25 May 1730, Rev. Roger Williams died at the age of 63. Rev. James Davies now had the pulpit to himself, and, perhaps justifiably enough, made full use of the opportunity that had come his way. Since it was his duty as a minister to make converts and "save souls" he probably felt that he was not committing a breach of faith by preaching Calvinism to the exclusion of the spiritual needs of all the other members of the Church. Against this the Arminians protested, and they were strong enough to make their protest effective. This they did in a practical way. They appointed a minister of their own faith to share the pulpit with Rev. James Davies. Their choice fell on Richard Rees, Gwernllwyn, Dowlais, a young student who was about to complete his course at the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen. Richard Rees was a young man of exceptional promise and fearless convictions, and a natural impulse in him was love of truth as he saw it. Although he was but on the threshold of his career he was no less redoubtable in debate than Rev. James Davies himself. James Davies as we have seen, belonged to the older school of theologians and clung tenaciously to the traditional concept of Calvinism. Richard Rees, conversely, was a product of a more recent school of thought, and brought with him to Cwmglo a new light on religion and ethics. The relations between the two Ministers were not cordial. The conditions were such that they could not be. The Church, in consequence, slowly

deteriorated. A rupture, sooner or later, was inevitable. It did not come, however, incredible as it may seem, until 15 years later, when, in 1747, the Arminians who lived on the Merthyr side of Aberdare mountain built the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd at Cefn Coed y Cymer.

It does not come within the scope of this history to decide which of the opposing sects was right. In truth, neither was right. The doctrines about which they contended are today, for the most part, discredited, and it is lamentable that a schism, which was totally unrelated to true religion, should have brought about so unfortunate a cleavage. The senseless wranglings which culminated so disastrously at Cwmglo are to be regretted, but nothing that occurred there can ever dim the lustre and the glory of the Dissenters' initial achievement. That must always be remembered. When we remember that to attend the services they journeyed from Aberdare, Gelligaer, Vaynor, Cwmtaf, and even from distant places in Monmouthshire, we cannot but admire their devotion, their courage and honesty of purpose. One of them, "old Saphin", found his way there, presumably astride his pony, from Bridgend. We are so accustomed, in our time, to accept the right to public worship as a part of our long heritage that it seldom occurs to us that that right was won for us after much suffering and travail of spirit. The memory of man is short and fleeting, and it is doubtful whether Nonconformists of today give the Fathers of Cwmglo even a passing thought. The Dissenters lie in forgotten and unvisited graves, and should they return and make a pilgrimage to their old shrine today they would find there, (probably to their disgust), only a few feet of crumbled walls—a jumbled heap of sacred rubble. But if by men the ancient pile is remembered not, nature is less ungrateful, for throwing their protective arms and their tangled shadows athwart the ruins are a few sturdy oaks that might well have been silent witnesses of the persecution of long ago.

It is not clear when the Arminians who lived in the Cynon Valley left Cwmglo for Aberdare. That they left the same time as the Cefn Coed contingent is doubtful. The probability, if not the certainty is, that they delayed their departure

JOHN SIMON

EVAN WILLIAMS

until such time as they could build a Chapel of their own. Another reason in support of this view offers itself.

After the exodus of Rev. Richard Rees and his flock to Cefn Coed, Rev. James Davies was assisted in the Ministry at Cwmglo by his son, Rev. Samuel Davies. Samuel Davies and Rev. Richard Rees were fellow students at Carmarthen Presbyterian College, and in their views on theology they were largely, but not wholly, in agreement. In the meantime, the elder Davies had modified his opinions very considerably. The heresies he condemned formerly in Richard Rees' sermons he now condoned in those of his son. It was, of course, probable that his change of outlook on religion and life generally was the result of a natural inward process due to contact with his son's more progressive ideas; but of this, some of his most devoted followers were dubious, and, imputing to him unworthy motives, his fame as a protagonist of Calvinism waned. He died 20 April, 1760.

The advent of Rev. Samuel Davies to Cwmglo removed many of those doctrinal points of difference that, in the past, gave rise to so much bickering, and the supposition that the Aberdare Arminians found life there more agreeable in consequence cannot be ignored. Two years, however, after Rev. Richard Rees made his exit for Cefn Coed the Aberdarians too, turned their backs on the old Sanctuary and built Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon, in 1749. In 1752 Cwmglo was closed when the remainder of the congregation, who were possibly Presbyterians, left for Ynysgau, Merthyr. On a few occasions during the last fifty years the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Congregation at Cefn Coed have made pilgrimages to the ruins of Cwmglo and have held religious services on its now almost obliterated site.

CHAPTER II

HEN DŶ CWRDD: The Old Time Congregation

The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd of 200 years ago was built in a clearing in a wood. The wood formed part of a larger wood which stretched from the confluence of the Taf Fawr and Taf Fechan rivers to the higher slopes of Cilsanws mountain. In its deep recesses wild life teemed, where the poacher plied his illicit craft and found his heart's desire. When, however, Anthony Bacon built his first furnace at Cyfarthfa in 1765 the wood was denuded of its trees in order to provide fuel to smelt the iron. In the clearings, an occasional cottage was erected and as time wore on, and Anthony Bacon's works expanded, a small picturesque village grew and was given, because of its natural features, the lovely name of Cefn Coed y Cymer.

It is not unlikely that Sion Llewellyn who lived in Pontycapel and was a member at Cwmglo, had something to do with the choosing of the chapel site, and, as already stated, since liberty to worship in public was not granted to Arminians until 1813, it is possible that regard was had to concealment. The timorous, perhaps, partly from fear and partly from habit, involuntarily sought the friendly protection of the trees. Indeed, it may well be that they missed the birds that used to sing in the woods of Cwmglo and whose flutings mingled restfully with the dolorous melody of their hymns.

Very little information, unfortunately, has been handed down to us relative to the Chapel of 1747. What, for instance, was the numerical strength of the original congregation is not known. How many Unitarians the Rev. Richard Rees and Sion Llewellyn brought with them from Cwmglo is impossible to say. History on that point is completely silent. They could not, however, have been very many—possibly they were not more than two or three dozen. The old Chapel at Cwmglo was not, by any means, a large one, and even if all the members of the various sects and creeds who worshipped there had joined in the exodus to Cefn Coed the number would still have been comparatively small.

Even as late as 1821—74 years afterwards—our Chapel register contained the names of only 33 members, and of these only three lived at Cefn Coed. The remainder came from places much farther afield—from Merthyr, Dowlais, Mountain Ash, Rhymney, Troedyrhiw, Quakers Yard, Cwmtaf and Vaynor. If the records kept by the Rev. Thomas Davies can be relied upon, only three members joined the Congregation between 1800 and 1831. Yet tradition has it—there is no documentary proof of this—that when the first Chapel was opened it was so closely packed that the door and windows were thrown open so that the people, who could not be accommodated within, might hear the service from outside. It is not unlikely, however, that since the erection of a Chapel was a new thing, not to say a momentous event, people who were in no way connected with the Chapel attended to have their curiosity whetted.

It is regrettable that this important period in the history of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd is a closed book. Whether the Rev. Richard Rees kept any records, which were afterwards lost or destroyed, may now never be ascertained. We know, however, that the published works of Sion Llewellyn contains no reference whatsoever to the Chapel's early beginnings. In view, therefore, of this unfortunate silence the story of the older congregation, must of necessity, date from later times.

In the Cardiff Central Library there is a scrap of paper upon which is written this note:

"Nid wyf yn tybied mai Doethineb yw i chwi gael Ty Cwrdd Coed y Cymer bob yn ail Sabbath ond y dylai Mr. Davies a'r gynulleidfa ei gael fel o'r blaen. Y mae Mr. Williams o Hendredenny o'r un meddwl a Minnau yn y peth hwn yn ol tystiolaeth Sienein Tomos Sion wrthyf fi.

Penrhiw'r Glais JOHN WILLIAMS.
Mawrth 30*ain*, 1805.

(I do not believe that it will be wise for you to have the Meeting House, Coed y Cymer every alternate Sunday, but Mr. Davies and the congregation should have it as hitherto. Mr. Williams of Hendredenny is of the same opinion as myself in the matter according to the testimony of Sienein Tomos Sion to me).

There is nothing in the note at the Cardiff Library to indicate to whom the communication was addressed which, of course, is a pity. It is obvious, however, that the meeting House was loaned to some congregation or other for worshipping purposes. Was it loaned to the Calvinistic Methodists of Cefn Coed and district until Moriah Chapel was built two years later, that is in 1807? Moriah is the second oldest Chapel in the village and it is known that its founders, until they could build a *public* place of worship on their own held their religious services in each other's cottages. It is not impossible (this is pure conjecture) that by 1805 the cottages could no longer accommodate the members, and the "Tŷ Cwrdd" being then the only Chapel in Cefn Coed (indeed it was the only public building in Cefn Coed) was engaged to meet the demand for more room for the ever increasing number of the Calvinistic congregation. It will be observed that Mr. Williams, Penrhiw'r Glais, in his note, refers to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd as "Ty Cwrdd". The adjective "Hen" was added after Moriah was built in order to distinguish the old Chapel from the new.

Delving into the registers of over a century ago is revealing in that the entries present us with a picture of the inner life of the Chapel at that time. It is pleasing to note that our fathers were not unmindful of the true Christian virtue of charity. They did not merely *believe* in charity; what is far more important, they religiously *practised* it. A few examples to prove this will suffice. A member of the Sunday School, a young lad, had a sweet alto voice. He could not appear on the stage at a Chapel "Penny Reading" because his clothes were the worse for wear. The congregation provided him with a new suit "from the poor box in the loby". Entries, like the following are frequent. "Pare of shoes to Howel Powell 9/-; pare of shoes for his wife, Margaret Powell, 6/6; Charity to Edward Harri, 1/-". Nor were indigent ministers forgotten. "Charity to Rev. Benjamin Davies, 3/-".

An entry made on 31 Dec. 1830 shows that the "Meeting House" was "in debt of 10d". But, we are told, "the debt was paid out of the stock". The "stock" was the "Treasury stock" in which the minister, Rev. Thomas Davies, had invested £88 : 11 : 3. The following year, 1831, the "Meeting

House" was in debt again, this time to the extent of "2/1½" but "John Williams, Penrhiw'r Glais, Pontsarn, served on the occasion the arrears". John Williams whose inscription in the graveyard is still decipherable, by the way, came to the aid of the congregation several times. Four years later, in Oct. 1835, the financial position had so improved that "£1 : 10 : 0 was paid to David Davies, Draper, Merthyr to be put in the Treasury Stock of the Meeting House". The fare provided the Ministers who attended the "Quarterly Meetings" was not by any means sumptious! "Bread and cheese to the preachers, 9/-". An entry made in June 1836 shows that postage was expensive; "a letter from London 11d.". Postage then of course was paid when the letters were received. They were brought into the village by Stage Coach and delivered at a local inn, probably at the "Cross Keys", from where "they was fetched".

A fixed salary was not paid the ministers, apparently until 1837 when Rev. Owen Evans was appointed to the pastorate. Before then the minister was solely dependent for his living on the collections. The collections were made quarterly. If they were small the stipend was small. Here is an entry (one of many) made 1st May, 1825. "Received of Harri John Harri the sum of £3 : 9 : 6 for the quarter: Thos Davies". "Harri John Harri" was the Chapel treasurer, and "Thos Davies" was the minister. It will be seen that Rev. Thomas Davies was "passing rich" on a much smaller salary than that of Oliver Goldsmith's parson who received £40 a year!

Although Welsh was the predominant language at Cefn-Coed at that time, it is amazing to find that the Chapel records were kept in English. Of the English I have given copious examples. To add to the number, here is another. "This is to give you satisfaction that i ave resive the cole 6s, for the cole and 2s for carin". This of course passed muster as a receipt.

In the seventies of the last century the congregation seemed to have engaged a member to collect the contributions. "Margaret Timothy was paid 1/- for to fetch one pound from Mrs. Lewis, Maerdy". Maerdy is in Aberdare and, I think, was once the home of Sir William Thomas Lewis, afterwards Lord Merthyr.

Amongst the Chapel records there is an interesting "memorandum" bearing the date 24 June, 1827. The facts it contains were recorded by Thomas Evans, the first known School Master at Cefn Coed. The memorandum is now yellow and worn with age, but the fairly clear hand of the writer is still, except in parts, decipherable. The document reads :—

"Names and number of the members that partake of the Lord's Supper at the Old Meeting House, Coed Cymmer 24 June, 1827".

1 Mathew Wayne, gent.
2 Mrs. Wayne.
3 Thomas Davies, eldest son of the Rev. Mr. Davies Minister of the sd place.
4 Rev. Jenkin Rees
5 Rev. William Rees } Both officiating sometimes.
6 Thomas Evans, School Master, some time back.
7 Harry John Harry, a very obliging member.
8 Mrs. Morgan Gurawen.
9 Mrs. Jones of Maes Y Faenor (I can't omit though buried 13 July, 1825).
10 David Davies.
11 Mr. Davies' spouse (Mercer, Merthyr).
12 Mrs. Mary Williams, Iron Monger Shop, Merthyr.
13 John Harry, Weaver.
14 Mary Harry, his wife.
15 John William Penrhiw'r Glais.
16 Margt. William, his wife.
17 Anne Robt William's widow (deacon for some years).
18 Katherine Rees, widow.
19 John William, Merthyr.
20 Mary William, wife.
21 Lewis, Thomas Lewis', son, Penylan.
22 Mary Watkins of Ynysfawr.
23 Elizabeth Watkins, Goitre, Merthyr.
24 William Harry, Vaynor, Farmer.
25 William Jones, Tiler, Vaynor.
26 Mary Rees, Spinster, Merthyr.
27 Martha William
28 Jane, her daughter } neglected to attend.
29 Richard Jenkins, Merthyr, Farmer.

30 John Richard, Mason, etc., Coed y Cymmar.
31 Anne Jones, very ill at this time, Coed y Cymmar.
32 Mary, John Morgan's widow
33 Thos. Powell, gravedigger.
34 Margaret Powell, his wife, pew opener.
35 Mrs. Davis, James Davis' wife, Dowlais.
36 Mary Saunders, Cyfarthfa.
37 Her eldest daughter, married woman.
38 Mary Saunders, Seamstress.
39 Lewis Jones, Berthlwyd, Vaynor.
40 Maud Jones, His wife.
41 Mary Aberteifi, single woman.
42 Rachel Jones, the butcher's wife.
43 Annie Lewis, her sister, Coed y Cymmar.
44 Mary Pencoed, Penderin.
[1]45 The Rev. Dr. David Rees, Merthyr.
46 Gwenllian John, widow of Llwyn Molgoch.
47 Margaret William Daniel.
48 Howel Powel, Weaver, Coed y Cymmar.
49 Sarah Jones, Berthlwyd, Vaynor.
50 John Thomas David, Cyfarthfa.
51 Margaret William of Troedyrhiw.
52 Anne Price, widow, Aberdare (she don't attend owing to illness).
53 Evan Thomas, Aberdare.

---

[1]Rev. Dr. David Rees was the first minister of the Unitarian Church at Twynrodyn, Merthyr Tydfil. The Church was built in 1821 and Dr. Rees was ordained there the following year, 1822. Dr. Rees was born in Cei Newydd (New Quay) Cardiganshire 10 Aug. 1793. Due to a dispute which arose between him and his congregation he resigned the pastorate on 10th March 1825. He seems to have broken all connection with his former church after his resignation, and attached himself to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. When he took over the pastorate of the Merthyr Church his stipend was £60 a year, and to implement his salary he decided to study medicine and graduated M.D. in Glasgow University. He had already taken his M.A. degree in April 1818. He was an eyewitness of the Merthyr Riots of June 1831, and was ruthlessly dragged through the streets by the mob to attend to a wounded woman. The incident affected his health, and he died of consumption 4 Jan. 1832 at the early age of 38 years—From the records of the Merthyr Unitarian Church.—T.L.

54 Gwenllian, John William's daughter.

We the said members acknowledge ourselves indebted to the Rev. Mr. Davies, present minister, for his charitable services.

Unitarian Chapel, 24 *June*, 1827." THOS. EVANS.

On the reverse side of the leaf the entries are continued as follows :—

1827—July 22. Edward Harri, Weaver, and his wife have been restored and partook of Lord's supper,

Aug 19. Thos John William's grand daughter.

Sept. 16 Sarah Jones, widow.

,, ,, [1]Mrs. Petruck of Cardiff, she participates when she comes to Merthyr and the Lord's supper administered.

1828—Jan 6 John Thomas, Miner, a native of Pembrokeshire. And may we all walk according to the precepts which God has given us through his Son, Jesus, and by so doing we may expect God's blessing on us all and add (word too indistinct) the present ministry of thy Servant Davies, those that shall be happy here and hereafter. THOS EVANS.

Good God, I hope we ask pardon, and forsake our sins and may we all be happy is my sincere wish.
THOS EVANS".

In 1827, when "Thos Evans" recorded, in his Memorandum the above particulars, life in "Coed y Cymmar" was vastly different from what it is now. The march of the years has brought its changes; a hasty account, therefore, of the social, moral, and educational conditions obtaining in our village in the early part of the 18th century may serve, not only as a background to the history of the Chapel, but will present, as well, some idea of the character of the people among whom our fathers lived.

---

[1]Who, one wonders, was "Mrs. Petruck of Cardiff"?

WILLIAM R. DAVIES

REES JENKINS

A century and a half or so ago Cefn Coed (or Coed y Cymmar as it was then called) was in its early infancy. It consisted merely of a few dwellings which dotted the mountain side here and there, and, except for a few houses near the Cross Keys Inn and on Pont y Capel Road (Tai Gerddi) no other human habitation could be seen until the eye chanced to catch a glimpse of the "village of Merthyr Tydfil" in the distance. The present High Street had not, as yet, been built. The main thoroughfare (yr heol fawr) from Merthyr to Cwm Tâf was by way of Nant y Gwenith Street then through the Cyfarthfa Iron Works, over Pont y Cafnau, past the lime kiln (now derelict), over the old Cefn Bridge, along Field Street and Pont y Capel Road, then continued along Job's Lane, through the gardens in front of Fair View Houses, through the Cefn Cemetery and joined the present Cwm Tâf Road near Dan y Darren Farm. Over the whole neighbourhood then a deep rural calm reigned. It was a place eminently fitted for quiet study and meditation.

The lovely country side, however, was used for less noble purposes. It was no unusual sight, on a fine Sunday morning, to see men wending their way, not to our Chapel but to a cockfight on the "Twyn", each enthusiast with his favourite rooster under his arm. Long after the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was built a favourite pastime in the village was bull-baiting. The last contest was staged on the site now occupied by Ebenezer Vestry in Holford Street. The contest was stopped by the "cwnstabs", and was continued the same day at Nant Ddu, Cwm Tâf.

As the years passed however the crueller forms of sport passed with them. Then came gaming with cards. Drink became an obsession. Ordinary cottages were converted into public houses literally by the dozen. Carousing was a daily habit. Every Sunday, in Godre'r Coed, where nature in her innocence screened the gamblers from view, "pitch and toss" was played from early morning until late evening. Young boys carried beer openly to the "dens".

The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd raised its voice in protest. So did the Methodist Church at Moriah—the second oldest Chapel in the village. The two congregations held council together, and with a view to trying to restore some measure of rectitude to

the warped minds of the delinquents, they conceived a plan of action. The plan was simple enough but it was not altogether ineffective. It was decided that two deacons from each chapel should visit the "pitch" every Sunday morning to try to convince the "sinners" of the error of their ways and "shame them into repentance".

The men who participated in those sad orgies have long since appeared at the "Last Account", and praise or blame, eulogy or censure means nothing to them now. Let this, at any rate, be said of them. If they took no part in Sunday observance themselves, they inwardly respected those who did. The village constable (cwnstab) would have raided the rendezvous at his peril. Not so the "deacons". They were never molested. When in their "Sunday Black" they solemnly approached the pitch the culprits dejectedly gathered up their coins, and guiltily slunk away.

Whilst we may recoil from the retrograde way of life followed by some of the old villagers, it would be uncharitable to criticise them unduly. They lived at a time when it was the exception, rather than the rule, to find a man who could read and write. They were victims of circumstance and upbringing. Their lives were extremely dull, and their only haven, after the toil and drudgery of the day, was the Tavern and the Inn. After all, are we who live in a far more enlightened age, so vastly different from them? That time has brought about changes in our customs, habits and manners must be admitted. But the changes do not go deep. They are merely surface alterations. To believe the contrary is to hug a delusion. Drinking and gambling were by no means vices peculiar to a former age. True, we do not bait bulls any more, and cock-fighting is a thing of the past. But hares are still coursed to exhaustion, otters are still being hunted and horribly mutilated, and foxes are still torn to pieces by blood-thirsty dogs at the "kill".

But if among the villagers of past days there were men of low habits, there were too, by the Grace if God, men of a totally different character—men who struggled towards the light; men of high endeavour who struggled earnestly after good.

There lived in Field Street during the first half of the 19th century a plain, modest, working man named David Edwards known to his intimates as Dafydd Nedws. (Nedws is a variant of Ned, just as Danws is a variant of Dan). Possessed of intelligence above the ordinary, he sedulously applied himself to the study of English. When other boys played and gambolled in the streets David Edwards was absorbed in his books and was soon able to read tolerably well. It is possible —but this is purely conjectural—that he was helped in his studies by William Morris, Caepant-tywyll, who, at the time kept a school in a cottage in Cross Street—a school that had principally for its object the teaching of reading and writing.

The only newspaper circulating in the village in those days was the "*News of the World*", and David Edwards was one of the very few working men who could read it. How his neighbours envied him! Travel, to the great majority of the villagers was an untasted luxury. They had never been much farther from home than the chickens from their coops! All their lives they had been pent up within the narrow confines of their native heath. The receipt of a letter was an event, a telegram caused the greatest consternation. News, to be sure, even between valley and valley, travelled slowly. Proof of this is afforded by the fact that when one of our former ministers, Rev. Daniel Davies, died in 1853, Rev. John Jones, Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Aberdare wrote to the *Ymofynnydd* a *few months* afterwards stating that he had only recently heard of his old friend's departure.

Eager to apply his knowledge of English to some useful purpose David Edwards conceived a plan whereby his illiterate and news-hungry neighbours should no longer be uninformed in national and world events.

On the site now occupied by the "Lord Raglan" there used to be an immense boulder—afterwards incorporated in the walls of the inn. The top of it being fairly even, it made a capital open-air platform.

A wayfarer passing that way at approximately eleven o'clock on a fine Sunday morning about the year 1840, might have observed, congregated around this rude rostrum a knot of working-men,—mostly miners and iron workers. They had come together to hear David Edwards reading aloud the

"*News of the World*". Word by word, line by line, Edward translated the news into Welsh, much to the mingled delight and wonderment of his untutored auditors. These "readings" were continued for some years.

Meanwhile, only a stone's throw away, Rev. Owen Evans proclaimed tidings of a less fleeting character, tidings of the Prince of Peace. But anxious as were these illiterate villagers to have the news of far-off places communicated to them, never, so it was said, was David Edwards known to commence reading until, (such was his respect for him) Owen Evans and the last of his flock had passed on their way to the morning service at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. When, the following morning, the village housewives with pails and earthenware pitchers met together to draw water from the wells of Ffynon Beili and Ffynon Pistyll the news proclaimed by Dafydd Nedws the previous day was discussed with animation and wonder.

Schools, of course, as we know them today, were then non-existent. The first known seminary in the Parish was one of the famous circulating schools established by Griffith Jones, Llanddowror, and Madam Beavan. It was held in Blaen Glais Farm, Vaynor in 1738—39. Another was held in Pontsticill[1]. The total number of scholars, juniors and adults, enrolled in these two schools in the first year was one hundred and nine. In 1740 the schools were removed to Cefn Coed where the attendance dropped to forty seven. The decline was steep but the reason is not far to seek—the population of Vaynor at that time was far higher than that of Cefn Coed.

Why, in those circumstances the school was transferred to our village is not known. It was held in a small room in old Church Street—a room which was eventually licensed as a place of worship, a Chapel of Ease, and was known as St. Tudor's. The site of the old Church is now occupied by the Secondary School. St. Tudor's was built in 1830.

There appears to have been no other school in the village until early in the 19th Century when Thomas Evans, the then Secretary of our Chapel, opened one in the Croesdy adjoining the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. One of our church records dated 1827,

[1]These Schools were also held in Cwm Tâf, at Abercar, Pont ar Dâf and Ynysfawr Farms. Average attendance in each was 50.—T.L.

EVAN LEWIS

Rev. OWEN EVANS

refers to him as a "School Master some years back". It is known, however, that he was a schoolmaster in 1821. A copy of his handwriting, as we have seen, is still extant, and if one is allowed to estimate his character from a few brief entries, now almost dim with age, he made in the church register he was a pious and holy man. As to the nature of the subjects taught in the school the records are silent, except that the building formed an annexe to the original chapel on the east side.

An entry in the Chapel ledger dated February 1830 refers to another "Schoolmaster" in the person of one "Samuel Hughes". After much searching I have established that Samuel Hughes kept a school in the Groes Fawr (now derelict) near Vaynor Quarry and was one of Griffith Jones' (Llanddowror) pedagogues. He was a native of Defynnog, and was closely related to Willam Hughes of whom a biographical sketch appears in a later chapter.

In 1837, Rev. Owen Evans' famous Grammar School was opened, followed in due course by those of Rev. T. I. Williams and Rev. John Hathren Davies. These schools will be referred to under another heading.

No other opportunity was afforded the villagers to acquire any education until about 1840 when Timothy Thomas (Timothy Pen yr Odyn) opened a night school in the house (still there) opposite the upper park gates on Pandy Road. Timothy was a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd and the records show that he was the first to "rent a pew" in the renovated Chapel of 1853.

He was employed as Foreman of the lime-kiln that stood (its ruins are still there) within close proximity to his home. It is amusing to note how he came to be appointed to that position. I am indebted to the late Mr. Alexander Lewis, Field Street, for the story. Alexander Lewis was his nephew.

"Timoth" had secretly written some verses on a door in the Cyfarthfa works severely criticising certain actions of his employer, Robert Thompson Crawshay. Someone drew Mr. Crawshay's attention to the offending lines, and a hue and cry for the literary culprit ensued. "Timoth", fearing that the innocent might suffer for his own wrong-doing, resolved to see Mr. Crawshay personally and confess his guilt. He

expected, at least, to be reprimanded. Indeed, his job might be in jeopardy. The expected, however, did not happen. Far from being wrath "the governor" took a magnanimous view of the incident. The trembling delinquent as he nervously sat on the edge of the chair with his cap hanging over his unsteady knee was not even censured, much less dismissed. On the contrary, the great iron-master perceived in the writer of the verses signs of inherent intelligence and, in due course he appointed "Timoth" one of his kiln foremen.

The fact is that Timothy Thomas was an outsize in mental girth. He had a penchant for figures, and had he received an early education he would no doubt have excelled as a mathematician. Nor was he unacquainted with literature, for he had read the Welsh and English poets somewhat extensively. As might be expected, he taught his pupils purely by rote. Taxing their memories to the utmost, he made very little, if any, endeavour to cultivate their reasoning faculties. The school was known as the "College"—originally a bit of sarcasm on the part of some jealous fellow-workers.

To be admitted a pupil at the "College" was deemed a high privilege. Applications had to be made many months in advance. This was due to the fact that the school—or rather the cottage—was so small that to accomodate more than about fifteen scholars at a time was an impossibility. It was not unusual to see one of the scholars poring over his primer in an out-house which was pleasantly heated by the warmth from the kiln. Another might have been seen in the pantry with the old-fashioned stone-shelf serving as his desk. The stone-shelf used to be known as "Y ford garreg".

The curriculum of the school was confined to four subjects only—reading, writing, arithmetic and scripture. Timothy, being a biblical student of no mean order, regarded scripture of such importance that an entire evening was devoted to it. Among the men of note who were indebted to Timoth for their early education were, David Rhys Williams (Index) for many years the editor of the Welsh-American Journal "*Y Drych*"; Rev. Isaac Williams a well-known local Congregational Minister; and Rev. David Morgan one of the foremost Wesleyan divines of his day.

The revenue from the night-school was negligible—a few coppers a week from each pupil. Timothy had never intended the "college" to be a source of income. He was imbued by a far higher and nobler motive—to impart knowledge for its own sake and not for pecuniary reward. Education, in his view, was not something to be conserved or commercialised but to be diffused among those who needed it.

Timoth with all his gravity and seriousness was a bit of a wag. A whim of his was to write a mathematical problem on the door of the Upper-Lodge to see whether someone who chanced to pass that way could supply the solution, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than to find that his own Pastor, Rev. Owen Evans, had been constrained more than once to abandon the attempt. This remarkable old character was called to his rest 31st March 1870. His age was 59. His remains lie near the back entrance of the caretaker's house in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd graveyard.

When Timothy Thomas was diligently at work trying to instil the rudiments of knowledge into his class at the "College," David Thomas, locally known as Dafydd Tŷ Cockyn, was doing likewise, on a more modest scale, in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd schoolroom. The two Masters were ardent friends and worked together in perfect harmony. If a lad had received lessons from David Thomas, preference was given to him when applying for admission to the "College". The one school was complementary to the other. Of the two men, Timothy seems to have been the better informed, but working as they did, in the closest collaboration, the influence they brought to bear upon the youth of the village at that time could not be overestimated. Twenty years ago there were colliers and shop keepers still living who were taught by Dafydd Thomas how to read wage dockets and draft grocers' bills! Both he and Timothy when young had attended Owen Evans' evening classes.

Though Dafydd Thomas was gifted well above the average by no stretch of the imagination, could he be described as a deep thinker. In that particular, he differed from his fellow-pedagogue at the "College". His natural bent was music. He could have said with the poet, "Music on my spirit lies, like tired eyelids on tired eyes". He was a member

of the orchestra which was formed in our chapel over a century ago. Although he could play several instruments his favourite was the flute, and long after the band had become extinct he played the air on it in the services.

Congenitally incapable of much abstract thinking the long, theological disquisitions expounded by the scholarly Rev. Owen Evans from the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd pulpit—disquisitions that were currently accepted as "Sermons" of great appeal and power—reduced poor Dafydd to a state of intolerable boredom ; so, when the sermon was about to be preached he stealthily tip-toed down the stairs to seek the privacy of his kitchen where he beguiled the time browsing in his well thumbed hymn book. The sermon over, he returned to the chapel, with his beloved flute, to join in the rendering of the closing hymn. When Dafydd "had words" with his wife the quarrel was usually brief. The oft repeated threat by Mrs. Thomas that she would throw his music copies into the fire brought the old flautist promptly to heel.

Dafydd Tomos was born at Cae Bryan, Brecon Road, Merthyr, in 1827. His grandfather, Evan Thomas (1760—1841) was a native of Llandyssul, and when the French attempted to invade this country at Abergwaun in 1797[1] he fled to Cefn Coed to elude the Press Gang. He hid himself in a cave in the Glais Valley, Pontsarn, where his wife carried food for him under cover of night until the danger was past.

Dafydd Tomos was an engine driver at Cyfarthfa works and was caretaker of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for 23 years. He died 27 Oct. 1894 and lies near his old friend Timothy Thomas.

His daughter, Mrs. Hannah Jones, Gurnos to whom memories of him are like the chime of a far distant bell, is now the oldest surviving member of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

An attempt to lay down the principles of popular education in our village was not made until about 1857—58 when Robert Thomson Crawshay—largely through the instrumentality of his gifted wife, Rose Mary Crawshay—opened a day-school in Pontycapel Road. The school was far from ideal.

[1]The Glais Cave was more secluded then than it is even now. A cart-road from Cefn Coed to Pontsarn was not made until 1832. Prior to that date there was only a winding footpath through the fields.

Judged by modern standards the education received there was lamentably superficial. But it was a beginning. It was the dawning, as it were, of a new day. All children however, were not permitted to attend this school. It was reserved for the children of Mr. Crawshay's workmen. A small fee was imposed—three-half-pence per child weekly. Few boys remained there after attaining the age of eight or nine years. They left to take up work at the mills and collieries.

Meanwhile, Cefn Coed was in process of transformation from a thinly populated hamlet into a substantial village. A new system of education was needed to meet the changing conditions. Then, appropriately enough, the Forster Education Act of 1870 was passed and Robert Crawshay magnanimously handed over the school to a duly elected board of administrators known as the School Board. Two out of the five members who constituted this important body were Unitarians—William Hughes and John Rees (Y Bulman). Just at this time Mrs. Crawshay gifted the school with an excellent collection of books, and appointed a member of our chapel, Evan Thomas—Dafydd Ty Cockyn's brother—as librarian.

The old regime in "Crawshay's School" had now, therefore, come to an end. An efficient method of teaching was introduced; subjects undreamt of in former years—certainly undreamt of by the old primitive masters—were added to the curriculum. At last every child was afforded an opportunity by the State to prepare for the school of life.

Those were the conditions obtaining in Cefn Coed during the first century in the history of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

The early Unitarians who, as I have already stated, were, for the most part, yeomen farmers, rode to the services on horse-back. Mrs. Morgan, Grawen Farm, Cwm Tâf, arrived accompanied by her groom. Lucy Thomas, Waunwyllt, rode pillion with her mother. Some came in traps, others in high wheeled gigs.

The scene outside the chapel after the Sunday morning service (then the best attended service of the day) was typically pastoral. There was much commotion and bustle; greetings were heard on all sides. The creak of saddles mingled with the rattle of pails and the jingle of harness. The talk, in the

main, was of sheep and saddlery, of hoeing and hedging, and of broad corn fields golden in the sun. The horses, during the service, were tethered to hooks driven into the graveyard wall. In the winter cold, they were provided with shelter in the chapel stable which stood where the caretaker's house is now. Mary Jenkins, whose business and pride it was to "feed and water the ponies" was, no doubt, a picture of fussy industry. Soon the clamour died down and all that was heard in the stillness in which the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd then brooded was the clatter of horses fading in the distance as their riders drew nearer to their homes in the valleys, or the wild retreat in the hills. An opportunity for social intercourse or a little inconsequential talk was not afforded again until next Sunday came round.

But not all the members rode or drove to the services. To some this luxury was denied. It was denied to Ann Jones. Ann Jones was a maid-servant at Blaen Tâf, Cwm Tâf, a farm situated about six miles away from the Chapel. In 1821, the time in which Ann Jones lived, the stage coach to and from Brecon to Merthyr ran only on week days, and times were hard. "The Hungry Forties" were on the way. Clothes were as difficult to find as righteous men in Sodom. Wheat was brought to Merthyr from Cardiganshire by road in horse drawn wagons and so scarce was it that people from Cefn walked half way to Brecon to meet the carriers in order to be certain of their share. The sick and the infirm, who could not make the journey, had to take the risk of going without. Foot-wear was almost unobtainable, and Ann Jones, to "save" her shoes, walked from Blaen Tâf to the top of Cefn in her bare feet. On reaching Tŷ Cockyn (where Pen y Bryn is now) she paused and rested under a hedge to put her shoes on in order that she might "pass the houses" and appear in the chapel with some semblance of respectability. On the return journey (again by Tŷ Cockyn) she took her shoes off and tramped unshod the six miles home over a road that was no better than a puddled cart track.

Whilst most of the women attended the services in the fashionable bonnet, shawl, and gown, the men, for the most part, arrived in their native homespun. A few, however, came in rougher garb.

The conventional working attire of those members who worked in the Cyfarthfa Mills a century ago was moleskin. It was a tough, durable material of which every workman had two suits. When one suit was in use, the other was "in the wash". The clean suit ready for work on Monday morning did service on Sunday in order to "save the Sunday best".

Few, if any, would forsake the services because their clothes were the worse for wear. To our fathers grand habiliments were not an open sesame to the Kingdom. Outward appearance, as they saw it, was not an indication of the nature of the soul within. At the Throne of Grace the tattered and the well-dressed were equal.

In 1837, and possibly for some time before that, the chapel seems to have been in dire straits. The congregation was in deep despair and the Chapel in danger of being closed.

On the 10th day of May of that year, 1837, a meeting was convened with a view to discussing ways and means of coping with the situation. In the chair was "the Reverend Mr. Henry Evans". The minutes relating to the meeting have been preserved—the only minutes, by the way, which bear any reference to that period. And in this connection it would seem that it was not the practice, unfortunately, at that time, to commit to paper any decisions unless they were of vital importance. Credence is given to this view by the fact that the following resolutions were not recorded in a specially adapted "Minute Book" but on an ordinary sheet of foolscap paper. The resolutions, contrary to the usual rule, were recorded in Welsh. A literal translation of them is appended. In order to try to preserve the spirit and tone of the original no attempt has been made at a polished English rendering.

I. That the meeting see the absolute necessity for the Trustees and congregation of this Chapel to fix on a fit and proper person to be a resident Minister as soon as possible.

Moved by Wm. Lyndon, Merthyr, seconded by John Jones, Troedyrhiw.

II. That this meeting is aware that unless unity of purpose prevails among the congregation and the counsel of our brethren in the faith is listened to, the Chapel, burial ground, and everything else will go into other hands.

Moved by Wm. Richards, seconded by David Davies.

III. That this meeting notes with misgiving that funds for the support of the Minister are very low and that we do earnestly and respectfully appeal for the support of our brethren in the faith, and to any others who may feel inclined, to come forward and help, for should the property fall into other hands for want of funds and loyalty of spirit, it is scant sympathy we shall deserve from those who, in their day, laboured hard to erect this Chapel—our forefathers, fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, children and friends who are lying silently in the burial ground outside,

Moved by David Griffiths, Ynysgau, seconded by Thomas Pritchard, Cyfarthfa.

IV. That a committee be appointed to carry the foregoing resolutions into effect by calling upon all persons who may be pleased to do so to contribute quarterly or annually towards the cause, the committee to report to the next meeting the number of promises made.

Moved by Thomas Pritchard, seconded by Morgan Davies, Clwydyfagwyr.

The last resolution however was not passed. It was felt, on reflection that the better course to adopt would be to defer the matter until such time as the meeting could ascertain "how many seats would be in future occupied". Seemingly, it was thought that the piteous reference to the dead in the third resolution would have the desired effect and a "better attendence" would follow. Much to one's regret what occured at the "next meeting" is not recorded.

The Chapel in 1837 was passing through a crucial phase. That is evident. The loyal few who held the fort were in a state of utter dismay. With a view therefore to trying to establish the reason I have made a thorough search of the records and, frankly, nothing has been discovered to warrant so much despondency. There are occasions, when the bravest have their fits of panic, and the most optimistic their bouts of gloom. The attendance does not seem to have been lower than in previous years ; nor were the collections noticeably less. And yet grave circumstances there must have been to warrant calling the Meeting.

The clue to the trouble is no doubt furnished in the phrase "Fit and proper person" mentioned in the first resolution. Rev. Daniel Davies, who was the minister at the time, was 77 years old and was labouring under the infirmities of advanced life. Neglect of his pastoral duties was therefore a natural consequence. He could no longer shepherd the sheep to the fold. Add to this that he was a wealthy man and that he held the Pastorate only temporarily, it will be seen how natural it was for the old divine to ship his oars, as it were, and drift with the tide.

That, indeed, may not have been the only explanation. For twenty-five years before coming to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd as a temporary Minister, Rev. Daniel Davies had been the pastor of Ynysgau, Merthyr, and although Rev. John Jones, Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Aberdare stated, emphatically in the "*Ymofynnydd*" that Mr. Davies had never held trinitarian views it is open to question whether Mr. Jones' statement could stand close and impartial scrutiny. It is possible, and even probable, that Daniel Davies' religious opinions were at least tinged with trinitarianism and that the die-hard Unitarians at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd revolted against his giving expression to them from the pulpit. At all events, I note that when the Rev. Owen Evans, who later succeeded Rev. Daniel Davies, was invited to the pastorate in June 1837, his letter of acceptance contained a significant and suggestive proviso. It reads :—"Now I must say that I accept the warm and unanimous invitation upon the clear understanding that I am to preach my sentiments *without restraint*." The italics are mine.

Now is it not possible that it had come to the knowledge of Owen Evans that differences had arisen between Daniel Davies and the congregation over questions of doctrine, and that, as a precaution against interference in his own religious views, he had expressed himself in no vague and nebulous terms ?

Apparently, therefore, the cause of the crisis lay in the mean between the apathy of some of the members, and the orthodoxy and waning strength of the old pastor.

In the August following the May meeting Rev. Owen Evans began his Ministry. He was then in his 29th year. Under his guidance the congregation steadily prospered. The storm had been weathered, and the ship had anchored

safely in the bay. It was yet another triumph of youth over decrepit age.

It will have been noticed that the meeting above mentioned was presided over by the "Reverend Mr. Henry Evans". Mr. Evans was probably the Minister of the General Baptist Chapel at Craig y Fargoed. There is nothing in our own chapel records to establish his identity, but after much searching I have found reference to him in the biography of Dr. Rees, Swansea. Dr. Rees states that Rev. Henry Evans followed Rev. Daniel Isaac at Craig y Fargoed, and that some time before 1830 the Church there "deteriorated into Arminianism and Unitarianism" and that the chapel had to be closed. Whether Rev. Henry Evans, now without a church, served on occasion, in our pulpit to assist Daniel Davies, cannot of course be definitely stated but it may be inferred with reasonable certainty that he did.

It is curious to look over the old volumes of the "*Ymofynydd*" and observe the change that has taken place in the minds of its readers on matters of religious belief. Few Unitarians believe today in the miracles as isolated violations of the laws of nature. Away back in the Fifties, their literal truth was implicity believed in. The members even of our own chapel accepted, as a fact, their literal interpretation. Proof of this is furnished by a decision arrived at on the point at a meeting of the Welsh Unitarian Society which was held at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on the 8th and 9th April, 1853. The subject for discussion was : "Can one accept Christianity and, at the same time, deny the miracles" ? It was decided on a vote, that one could not. And the meeting, be it noted, was attended by most of the South Wales Unitarian Ministers. William Hughes and Rev. Owen Evans took part in the discussions. So did Rev. Richard Griffiths, Tabor and Rev. Griffith Roberts, Ebenezer (congregationalists). Nor, apparently, did the old Unitarians disbelieve in the resurrection of the physical body. Sion Llewellyn, for example, referring to the dead, expressed himself thus :

> "Daw cyrph y rhain o'r llwch yn iach". (The bodies of these will rise from the dust perfectly whole).

Then again, in an obituary notice of Mrs. Sarah Jones of Bedwellty, a descendent of the Isaacs family, and a member of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for twenty-five years in the last century, it is stated that so conviced was she that the dead would be raised that "she had no patience with those who grieved unduly." Rev. Owen Evans held the same view. At the funeral of one of his members, (William Howel, Georgetown, Merthyr, who, by the way, was a staunch friend of Iolo Morgannwg), he said, "Farewell, dear friend, farewell, until that morning when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and rise from their graves".

Did our Fathers believe in the Second Coming? In the Chapel repository is a book entitled: "Practical Discussions Concerning the Christian Temper being 38 Sermons upon the Principal Heads of Practical Religion by John Evans". I find on reading the book that the writer believed that Jesus died for the propitiation of our sins, that He rose from the dead, that he ascended into Heaven and is in constant intercession on man's behalf at the right hand of God, and that he will return to earth at the end of the world. The book, published in London in 1723, belonged to Rev. Philip Charles. On the fly-leaf is inscribed, "Philip Charles owns me, ME JURE TENET[1], 1765 Minister for the time being of the Unitarian Congregation assembling at Cefn Coed y Cymmar". Did Philip Charles preach the 38 sermons from his pulpit, and were the doctrines promulgated by the author accepted by the congregation as their religious beliefs? Thick dust has now settled on Philip Charles' book but a still thicker dust lies on its teachings.

Though it comes as somewhat of a shock to learn that our forefathers held religious opinions so adverse to our own it should be borne in mind that the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd in 1747 was an Arminian Church, and Arminians, it should be observed, embraced many Calvinistic teachings. The main exceptions were the Doctrine of the Trinity, Absolute Predestination, and Eternal Punishment. These doctrines the Arminians denied absolutely. In most other respects the teachings of the two sects were in complete accord.

[1]Literal translation: Rightfully owns me.

It will be recalled that Arminianism was the religion of our first Minister—Richard Rees. It was because of their Arminianism that he and Sion Llewellyn were constrained to leave Cwmglo and build a Chapel of their own at "Coed-y-Cymmar".

But Arminianism, as such, does not appear to have had a very long lease of life at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. When Rev. Richard Rees died in 1749, two years after the Cause was established, Arminianism seems to have died with him. To all appearances at any rate, Richard Rees' successor, Rev. Philip Charles was not an Arminian. As we have already seen he described the "Congregation assembling at Coed y Cymmar" as "Unitarian". Moreover, his uncle, Rev. Philip Dafydd, Penymaen, states in an entry he made in his diary 18 January 1761. "I was saved from preaching today at Ty yn y Fid. Rev. Philip Charles preached in my place. Good Sermon. If he adheres to what he preached today he cannot be justly charged with being an Arminian or an Arian".

True, Rev. Philip Dafydd does not say positively that his young nephew was a Unitarian, but the only two available facts on the point seem to indicate that way. If this surmise be correct Unitarianism, as distinct from Arminianism, was first preached at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd and accepted by the congregation as their confession of faith, not later than 1761.

The Unitarianism of Rev. Philip Charles must not, however, be confused with the Unitarianism of our own day. His was of the orthodox kind. That is: he accepted, without question, the general articles of the Christian Creed. In other words, whilst to him there was only one God, the Father, he believed, inter alia, in the miracles, in the physical resurrection, and in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. When this is considered, it is not surprising that his views largely, if not wholly, coincided with those of John Evans in whose book he wrote, "Philip Charles owns me". It is probably safe to say that, broadly speaking, ORTHODOX Unitarianism was the accepted teaching of the chapel from 1749 until 1877 when Rev. John Hathren Davies took over the Pastorate. With him, Hathren Davies brought a relatively new faith. At least it was a relatively new faith at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. In concept, it was purely rationalistic. It considered Christ as mere man, a mortal being inspired like other great men,

but in a vaster degree. It rejected the miracles and all other supernatural elements in Christianity completely; interpreted the Bible by the light of reason, and regarded the death of Jesus, not as an atonement for the sins of men, but as a martyrdom in defence of Truth.

That, of course, in the main, is the belief held in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd today. The phrase "in the main", is used advisedly because only comparatively recently one of our oldest members went down to her grave full of years profoundly convinced of the literal truth of the miracles.

When Rev. J. Hathren Davies entered upon his Ministerial career in August 1877 he was only twenty-one years old. His congregation was composed, for the most part, of men and women of advanced years, men and women who had been brought up under the old dispensation. To convince them, for instance, that much of what was contained in the Scriptures was allegorical, and that the Bible, after all, was only a collection of ancient Books, was a difficult, if not a dangerous task. William Hughes and Evan Lewis, whose religious convictions were so deeply rooted in the past and whose inability to keep abreast of modern thought was excusable, were a force to reckon with. To any change they were two granite columns of hostility. But as the older people one by one passed to their rest and a younger generation came forward to take up the tale where the previous generation had left off, the new teachings were absorbed with avidity, and, soon, the new Unitarianism was well under way with the youthful "Hathren" at the helm proudly steering its course.

A prominent feature of our chapel life sixty or seventy years ago was the Prayer Meeting. In the order of importance it was regarded by the old-time congregation as secondary only to the Sunday Services. The need for attending it in "strong numbers" was stressed with persistent regularity by the announcer every Sunday evening.

The prayer meeting was the chapel confessional. Here the penitents laid down their faults and failings at the feet of God. Here the faithful gave free rein to the surging emotions of their innermost souls; here the uninitiated were taught the art of vocal communion with the Most High. The Cwrdd Gweddi,

in short, was the training ground for public participation in the various activities of church life.

The service it rendered was incalculable. In the event of the sudden inability of the minister to take his accustomed place in the pulpit, several of the members could, with little or no preparation, fill the breach. Not that they were capable, of course, of delivering anything in the nature of a polished sermon, but they could, with comparative ease, give expression to one of those simple soul-saving little homilies that, in bygone days, brought so many of the forsaken and neglected "to the Cross".

The pages of the "*Ymofynydd*" furnish ample proof of the training which the old Prayer Meetings provided. As an instance of this, William Hughes, after the death of Rev. Owen Evans, not only preached on Sundays but officiated, with becoming grace, at the graveside of many a departed friend.

At the weekly prayer meeting Celtic emotion was, of course, much in evidence. Welsh spiritual fervour held sway. Few of the members could restrain their feelings, and unless the little gathering was moved by the "Holy Spirit" to repentant tears, the Meeting was deemed to have abysmally failed in its object.

Much to the pious horror of some of the graver minds present, an element of comedy was once introduced into one of these meetings. One of the members, who had five children, had, this night, recounted his spiritual experiences with unusual success. Obviously moved to the depth by what he had heard, another member whispered to his neighbour that he, too, proposed to unburden his soul. Imagine his discomfiture when the neighbour, with a malicious smile asked him in tones that were intended to be inaudible what experiences could *he* possibly recount since he only had one child?

Why prayer meetings were discontinued it is difficult to speculate. That they ceased to function is to be regretted, for no branch of religious endeavour made a bigger contribution to the Spiritual welfare of the chapel than they.

Every student of history knows that all down the ages Unitarians have been persecuted, in varying degrees, for their religious beliefs, and in that respect our chapel has not been

an exception. To the orthodox churches of the neighbourhood, the word Unitarian has always been anathema and our simple faith, in consequence, has been frequently assailed. As proof of this many instances could be cited, but since no purpose would now be served by doing so I shall refer only to one or two.

In April 1907 a series of lectures were delivered under the auspices of the "Christian Evidence Society" in every chapel in the village except in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. The omission gave rise to much local talk, and many were the surmises as to why the Unitarians were so glaringly ignored. Pained at the rebuff, the congregation at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, soon afterwards, passed at the Sunday evening service the following resolution, which was sent to Rev. Thomas Law, General Secretary of the Free Church Council, London.

"That this congregation of Liberal Christians worshipping at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefn Coed is strongly of the opinion that the exclusion of the Unitarians from the deliberations of the Free Church Council is incompatible with the spirit of the religion of Him who made no distinction between persons holding different religious opinion, but who gathered around Him as His disciples all such as wished to do the will of the Father; and it furthermore begs to present a request to the said Free Church Council to be admitted to the same privileges as other Churches in the locality and to be allowed to take part in the conference of the Council".

In due course Mr. Law sent the appended reply to Mr. Gwilym Williams secretary of the local Free Church Council.

"Dear Mr. Williams,

Your letter to hand. In the early days of our movement we carefully considered the question of the inclusion or otherwise, of Unitarians and finally it was unanimously decided that we could not ask them to join us. You see our Movement is essentially spiritual. If it were merely civic, social or moral we certainly ought to ask our Unitarian friends to join us in United Communion Services and so on and most of the leading Unitarians tell us that we took the only course open to us. In the early days there were a few Councils with Unitarians associated with them before it was

fully understood what our Movement was. All these have now turned round. I do not know of a single Council in England or Wales with Unitarians associated with it. You will understand that this is in no sense opposed to Unitarianism. It is simply with the idea of having a clear working basis".

That was the reply. Certainly there was not a vestige of discourtesy in it, but it was considered far from convincing. To infer that our religion was not "spiritual", and to imply that it was on a par with "civic, social and moral" movements was regarded as an insult to our faith and, as might be expected, it invoked many bitter comments. The Rev. J. Hathren Davies, who framed the resolution of protest, whilst he refrained from any outbursts of anger, felt the aspersion that had been cast upon his religion very acutely, but, convinced that further protests would be unavailing, he advised his congregation to take no further action in the matter.[1] The subject was, therefore, dropped and the Church continued its course as hitherto, in complete isolation.

Another instance of this intolerance of our faith was provided by an incident which occurred in the summer of 1909.

The local Established Church inaugurated a movement designed, it was alleged, to entice Nonconformist children into the Anglican fold. Deeply concerned, the Nonconformists convened at Ebenezer Chapel on a Sunday afternoon a meeting representative of every chapel in the village. Three delegates from the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd attended. Except for some preliminary talk nothing was done. In due course another meeting was held but this time the attendance had decreased considerably and the committee dispersed much in the same position as formerly. In a few days the news leaked out why the meeting had been so poorly attended. It transpired that one of the chapels had withdrawn its representatives because the Unitarians were associated with the project. No sooner was this made known than the other chapels adopted a similar course and the much vaunted opposition to the Anglican church

[1] Thirty four years afterwards, on 30 March 1941, the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was invited to join the Free Church Council and accepted the invitation and, wisely, made no reference to the past.

REV. JOHN HATHREN DAVIES

(J. R. Evans)

Rev. T. ERIC DAVIES

came to an inglorious end. By voice and pen, Hathren Davies protested against the action with vigour but all to no purpose.

This transparent dislike, even abhorrence, of Unitarianism was exemplified during the religious revival of 1903—1904. All over the Principality religious emotionalism swept like a gigantic wave. The wave swept into Cefn Coed and every night of the week almost all the chapels in the village were packed to uncomfortable congestion. The services continued far into the night. The atmosphere was so charged with spiritual emotion that tears streamed down awe-stricken faces and, even strong men gulped down their sobs. Timorous women, terrified of "the wrath that was to come", fainted whimperingly, and had to be removed into the open air. Hymns were sung for hours without a lull, and intermingled with the strains of the beautiful melody, could be heard a chorus of plaintive voices in supplication and prayer. Pent up feelings were released in outbursts of self abasement, and human souls were described as less than dust. Out through the open windows the singing surged and billowed like a full tide, soon to die away in the peace of the silent night.

The Unitarians, as a Church, took no part. Whilst they believed that there was nothing wrong in being emotional, if that emotion had for its object the advancement of some good cause, they felt that in these services passionate fervour had been carried to excess. It was only transient; it would not last. Cold, calculating reason was sacrificed on the altar of inordinate feelings and all barriers between mind and heart ruthlessly destroyed.

Rev. Hathren Davies, although he attended some of the services, kept a discreet silence. He merely listened and ruminated. He did not make his views on the Revival publicly known, but he made them known to his intimate friends. Hathren abhorred ostentation, particularly religious ostentation. Except for the deep impression the singing made upon his sensitive nature, the services left him unmoved. A misguided convert, no doubt actuated by the sincerest of motives, prayed that his soul might be saved, but fortunately Hathren, who would have been very hurt, was not at the

service. Nor was he present when prayers were offered for the lost souls of his congregation.

Years passed. The emotional storm slowly abated, and the converts, in ever increasing numbers, returned to the old ways of life from which they came.

Turning over the rust coloured pages of the Register of Burials we come across some entries of moving poignancy. Rev. Owen Evans, under date 25 April 1838, records briefly: "Three bodies in the chapel at the same time", and Rev. Thomas Davies was probably deeply touched when he made this entry: "Elizabeth, wife of John Jones, of this village, was buried 3 Feb. 1801, and her infant, 11 days old was babtized by me in the Meeting House". It was the custom in those days to baptize babies over the coffins of their deceased mothers. Here is an entry of historic interest: "Lucy Thomas daughter of David Thomas, Waun Wyllt, born in the parish of Merthyr, 9th Sept. 1835 and baptized 2 Dec. by me, Daniel Davies". Lucy Thomas, in after years, became famous as one of the earliest pioneers of the South Wales Coal Trade. Her mother was a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd when she was born. I have been unable to establish whether Lucy Thomas herself later in life was a member, but everything seems to point to that conclusion. She did however, attend the services and arrived on horse back.

It was a common practice in the early days to baptize children in their homes. Six children all members of the same family, were baptized by Rev. Owen Evans in their homes in Cefn Coed on 23 June, 1863. At Ynysfelyn, Cwm Tâf, (now submerged) he baptised on 12 July, 1860, five children, two of whom were aged twelve and fourteen years respectively. It is stated (there is no documentary evidence to this effect) that Owen Evans baptised in the chapel one Sunday evening eight baby boys, all bearing the same christian name—Thomas!

It is worthy of mention that when the present Welsh Unitarian Society (Cardiganshire) was formed, the preliminary meetings were held in our chapel. The first meeting was held on 8 October, 1802, when the following were appointed members of the committee: Rev. Josiah Rees, Gellionen, Rev. Thomas Morgan, Blaengwrach, Rev. Thomas Davies,

Coedycymmar, and Edward Williams, ("Iolo Morganwg".) To this committee was delegated the task, apparently, of drafting the society's constitution.

The inaugural meeting was held in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd 28 June, 1803. The sermon was preached by Rev. Josiah Rees.

There is nothing to indicate that Iolo attended any of the meetings. This is to be regretted. Iolo Morganwg was the most renowned Welsh Unitarian of his time, and was an intimate friend of the famous English Poet, Robert Southey, who, in his poem entitled "Madoc", referred to him as :

> Iolo, old Iolo, he who knows
> The virtue of all herbs of Mount or Vale
> Or greenwood shade, or quiet brooklet's bed :
> Whatever lore of Science or of song
> Sages and Bards of old have handed down.

Iolo's contributions to Welsh Antiquarianism and Bibliography were invaluable, and even to this day his collection of manuscripts are eagerly consulted by the most scholarly of Welsh bibliophiles. At an Eisteddfod held somewhere in "Coed y Cymmar" in 1816 he won the principal award for a poem on "*Heddwch*" (Peace). If he did attend the inaugural meeting of the Society in 1803, or attended the Eisteddfod in 1816 to claim the prize, one cannot but believe that he sought the grave of Sion Llewellyn who was, in so many respects, his mental counterpart. Were it possible to establish, without question, that the old hymn-writer, with his canvas wallets slung over his shoulder and a staff which reached to his ears, ever graced the Church at any time with his presence, it could be said, with truth, that the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd never had a more famous visitor.

An old religious custom once rigidly adhered to but long since fallen into decay was to hold prayer meetings the evening before the funeral at the home of the deceased. The service was known as *Yr Wylnos*. The writer can distinctly remember attending one in March 1892. He was only a lad at the time but the service made such a deep impression upon his young and plastic mind that time has steadfastly refused to erase the scene from the tablets of his memory.

One of the oldest members, who lived in a remote upland farm, had passed away. As was the practice in those now distant days the announcement was made after the sermon in the Sunday evening service that the Gwylnos was to be held the following evening.

Led by the Rev. J. Hathren Davies, the little band of members reached the farm when the shadows had already begun to gather. It was a wild, boisterous night and crows, making their homeward flight, were being blown about the sky like wisps of straw. We were solemnly ushered into the cathedral silence of a room heavily furnished with antiques that would have made a modern collector of such commodities speechless with envy. We trod softly and spoke in whispers as though fearful of awakening the dead. On the table stood a dimly lighted oil-lamp that cast ghostly shadows all around. In the grate crackled a huge log fire. Every member of the household was present even to the sheep-dogs that drowsed at our feet. A "Peter Williams' Bible" with gleaming brass clasps was brought in and the service began. The silence was tense. It was only broken by the measured ticking of the grandfather's clock in the corner. The spirit of death brooded over the chamber like a dark cloud. There was a pious awe that no pen could ever describe. The service was brief and utterly devoid of ceremonial. It had a strange, melancholy effect upon the feelings. It was extremely solemn and awful. A portion of the Scripture was read by the Minister, followed by a hymn. The hymn, so to speak, died on our lips so charged with grief and emotion was the atmosphere. Then followed a prayer. This, in turn, was followed by a short address—a few simple words of comfort to the bereaved. The service ended with the Benediction. It was a service that could not easily be forgotten.

Before we dispersed two neighbours from an adjoining farm were nominated to keep vigil over the body through the long watches of the night. A momentary glance into the death-chamber revealed four lighted wax candles, at least two feet in length, which stood sentinel, as it were, over the coffin. Two were at "the head" and two at "the feet". They had been placed there in accordance with an age-long tradition,

to guard the dead against evil spirits until morning light again flooded the room.

As we wended our way homewards the wind howled and whined more ghostily than ever. It was as though a thousand frantic fiends screamed at us. In the murky distance a farm dog barked. Cottage windows across the valley in Cefn Coed sent out a starry, cheerful light. An owl hooted in the trees. The timid huddled together petrified. Was it a portent of another death!

Groping our way through the ink-black lanes proved an ordeal. Yet no one complained. It would have been blasphemous to do so. A religious duty had been reverently performed; a religious rite as old as time had been faithfully observed.

It is not certain when the "Gwylnos" service was discontinued. The service just described was probably one of the last. At all events it was discontinued very soon afterwards. In the old days it was regarded of such importance that it was given priority even over the Sunday School. When Richard Harry, Groes Fach, Vaynor, died on the 14th June, 1877 the Sunday School was closed so that the old man's Gwylnos might be attended by the teachers and the adult classes. Another custom incident to those days was to hold a service in the bedrooms of the sick. Should the patient so desire, the Sacrament was also administered. Except that not so many people were present, because of limited accommodation, the service was conducted on precisely the same lines as those of the Gwylnos.

An annual Chapel event of importance when I was young was the "*Teparti Mawr*". It has now gone the way of the "Gwylnos", and lives only in the memory. The first recorded reference to it I can find is dated May 1861. It may, however, have been held earlier. I have a dim recollection of the "*Teparti Mawr*" of 1892. It was held in the Chapel before its renovation in 1893. The tables, I remember, were skillfully placed on the upright "backs" of the seats, and water was boiled on improvised fire-places erected on the "Plain" in front of the Chapel. A job that was alloted to me and other boys of the Sunday School was to take a generous shilling's worth of cake in a spotlessly clean cloth to ticket holders who were bed-ridden or too ill to attend.

The "*Teparti Mawr*" was famed for its "Bara Cyrans" and "Bara Plaim" (Currant cake and Seed cake). This is not to be wondered at, for it was made by William Hughes whose integrity was a guarantee of its quality.

Back in the '80's the organizers of "The *Teparti Mawr*" found themselves on one notable occasion in a quandary. On the afternoon of the "Te" a large funeral from Heolgerrig took place in the grave-yard, and after the commital service was over, the people who attended it surged into the Chapel and demolished all the eatables before the ticket-holders had arrived. William Harries, the Secretary, was, so my informant tells me, an "object of pity". (Gwrthrych trueni). He simply did not know what to do. There was, however, only one course open to him. He sent a band of young men around the shops in the village to buy up all the available cake. A supply was brought even from bakeries in Merthyr. Twelve hundred and fifty people sat down to tea that afternoon.

The charge of admission to the "*Teparti Mawr*" was, in the early days, sixpence. This included the admission to a concert in the evening. The Artistes evidently came from a distance, for, I find, the statement of accounts for 1861 contains this entry, "Board the singers 5/6". A frequent contributor to the programme was "Caradog", whose Côr Mawr carried London by storm when it easily defeated Proudman's crack choir at the Crystal Palace, London in 1873. The famous conductor, who was a close personal friend of William Harries, and a Unitarian, was also an accomplished violinist, and he was never known to have taken part in the concert without having been called upon to give his well known violin imitation of farm-yard animals and woodland birds. The "*Teparti Mawr*" served a dual purpose. Its proceeds increased the Chapel funds and it afforded an opportunity to those members who had drifted away from the fold to renew acquaintance with it, at any rate, once a year. It is a pity that the ever-changing events of life dictated its end.

The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, as far as I can discover was the first of the local churches to introduce Dramatic Performances into the village.

Sixty or so years ago, most of the orthodox chapel goers regarded Plays as synonymous with "Sin" and the "Devil",

and the very name of theatre was revolting to them. Hathren Davies, however, held no such views. He had noted for some time that many of the more intelligent young people of his congregation spent their evenings in a manner that was utterly unprofitable to themselves and useless to their church, so, to divert their activities to something more edifying he formed in the autumn of 1881 a "Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Dramatic Society". In the following spring the Society presented to the public a little Welsh play called, "Dic Shon Dafydd". Simple though the play was, it took well; so well, indeed, that it had to be performed no less than ten times. It was also staged at Pontsticill once, and at Heolgerrig twice. The proceeds were devoted to relieving destitution amongst the most deserving of the poor of Cefn Coed.

Encouraged by the success which had attended their first attempt, the Society embarked upon the production of a Play of a more ambitious character. A stage version of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in Welsh by Gwilym Marles' widow was decided upon. This meant having to go out of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for assistance to form the cast, as 80 performers, mostly "Slaves", were necessary. The practices were held in the School-room which, of course, was much too small. In the limited space freedom of movement was impossible, and hustling, nervous apprehension, peevishness, in that order, resulted. The "period costumes" were home-made even to sombreros, whiskers, and beards. Full dress rehearsals were held, therefore, for many evenings before the actual performance took place. As the night of the production approached excitement increased, and in the confusion ill-fitting wigs made, for the most part, of sheep's wool gathered in local fields, were knocked off with irritating regularity. Outbursts of indignation, when the trailing dresses of the "ladies" were stepped upon, were frequent. Hathren Davies looked on in despair, and with a sinking heart. But lack of a spacious room to practice in was not his only worry. There was the scenery. A play without scenery was unthinkable, and time was wearing on. Then out of the dark came a shaft of light in the person of a lad of 16 named John Williams who, had he lived in our day of easy access to Art schools, would have made a successful landscape painter. Instead, he became a successful miners'

leader. Every evening, after coming home from work in the collieries young John Williams stretched his canvasses (bought specifically for the purpose) on the floor of his mother's spare bedroom, and slowly from beneath his feet there sprang far rolling meadows and extensive tracts of cotton plantations !

The play was performed in March 1883 in the public Board School, now the Senior School, (the Drill Hall which was built by subscriptions was not opened until 21st of January, 1886) and proved a resounding success. It was repeated on six consecutive nights, and each night crowds waited for admission in the biting March winds for well over an hour. To his undisguised delight, Hathren's dismal forebodings were completely falsified. The team work was admirable, and as is always the case on the night of the production, every actor put all his histrionic powers into the part allotted to him. The greenest laurel was won by William Harries whose portrayal of "Uncle Tom" was, by universal agreement, excellent. The principal scenes, of course, were sad and melancholy, and to an audience in whose character love of the sombre was the basic element, "Uncle Tom's" nightly "dyings" were far and away the most outstanding features of the production. There was a legend when I was a boy that so successfully did William Harries create the illusion of reality in the death scenes, that an old lady, to whom a play was an entirely new experience, elbowed her way to the back of the stage, "to find out the truth for herself".

Except, perhaps for the mirth provoking antics of "Topsy" there was nothing in the drama to enliven the depressed spirits of the audience, but it required no keen discrimination to observe defects in the arrangement of the crude scenery. Informality was obvious, and scenic effects were less considered than the dialogue and spoken word, for, screening one of the stage exits was a discarded bed sheet which bore with delightful clearness several burnt imprints of a flat iron !

Many other comic incidents occurred, and one of my earliest recollections is of my father, who played the part of "slave auctioneer", amusing us children by recounting them with infinite detail. Stowed away in a drawer for many years as a momento of the occasion was his own "wig and whiskers".

Although the Unitarians were the pioneers of the drama in Cefn Coed, and were unhappily held up to much derision and contumely by the more reactionary members of the local churches on that account, I cannot recall our church staging a production of a serious and elaborate character until comparatively recent years. Today, however, the performing of a drama, thanks to our Minister, Rev. J. Marles Thomas, M.A. is an annual event.

CHAPTER III

THE FABRIC: OLD AND NEW

THE Nonconformist Chapels that were built in Wales in the 17th and 18th centuries laid no claim to architectural beauty. They were erected in accord with the strict, puritanical views of those who worshipped in them. To the casual observer, they looked more like farm-buildings than religious meeting places, and not without reason were they called Barn Chapels.

The original Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was not an exception. It was not by any means imposing, for its design was the architectural expression of the taste and style of that day. Its dominant features were ruggedness and austerity. Of embellishment and ornamentation, it had none. All our ancestors seem to have been concerned about was protection from inclement weather. Physical comfort, artistic surroundings, and other amenities appealed to them very little. They were the stuff that physical hardihood is made of. Paucity of old records makes it impossible to say whether the chapel had a fire-place. It probably had not, for, if tradition can be relied upon, in the darkest corner of the "loft" a quantity of straw was kept, and on frosty days this was scattered on the floor in order to keep the feet of the congregation warm. The timber used in the construction of the chapel was hewn from the trees which had been cut down to clear the site. Holding up the roof was a quadrangular beam, shaped apparently, with a hatchet, and incised into it by some inexpert hand was the date 1747. The roof itself was probably made of straw or rushes, and was so low that boys, by putting a stone under their feet, could easily reach the eaves when in search of sparrows' nests. In a book written by "Carw Coch," Aberdare, reference is made to one Rees Lodwick who roofed the 'Hen Dy Cwrdd Coed y Cymmar in 1792." Rees Lodwick, by trade, was a tiler. If tiles were used on the roof in 1747 it would hardly be necessary to re-roof it in 1792. It would seem, therefore, that the first chapel was originally thatched. Incidentally, tiles similar to those used by Lodwick on the roof may be seen on a few houses in Danyderi Lane.

It is a pity that there is nothing in the modern structure to connect our thoughts with the old building. Although the contractors who demolished the chapel of 1747 and built the chapel of 1853 were empowered "to have the old materials and that they make use of such portion thereof in the new building as the Inspector hereafter named shall permit", nothing remains of the original shrine that we can look upon with our fathers' eyes. To have pointed out to us an old door, or window, for instance, that formed a part of the "Barn Chapel" would be a delight to those who have a deep seated reverence for the things of long ago.

The entrance door was just where Rev. J. Hathren Davies' grave is now, and, to enter it, three steps had to be descended. In front of the entrance was a cobbled pavement called "Beili'r Capel."

The interior was not designed for comfort. The straight-backed pews resembled deep, oblong boxes, and when the worshippers were seated, only the crown of their heads could be seen.

The inside walls were treated with an annual application of lime-wash. Reference is made to this in an entry made in June 1842 when "17/3" was spent in "whitewashing the inside of the Meeting House". Paint, apparently, was not applied even to wood, for we find that in June 1826 it was reported to the congregation that "the gallery was in need of whitewash and repair". A "special coat of lime" was given to the interior before the celebration of the centenary in 1847. The duty of lime washing devolved upon Siôn y Gwehydd[1], the caretaker, whose salary was "1/- a week".

The Chapel was illuminated by candle light. The candles were stuck in their own tallow on a crude, wooden chandelier which hung from one of the beams. In May 1826, however, something more ornate was introduced. A sum of 10/6 was received from "Mr. Wayne to have brass candle-sticks in the Meeting House". In 1844 "2 snuffers" were purchased for 1/-. At the same time another 1/- was expended on "two pounds of candles".

---

[1]Mrs. David Powell, South Terrace is one of Siôn's descendents—T.L.

The pulpit in those days, was erected against the wall nearest the school-room. That is, the Minister faced South West.

Entrance into the Chapel was by way of the present door above Holford Street. This meant that the worshippers had to walk for a few yards through the graveyard, and along the path under the yew tree. To the women, in the dark days of winter, this was an ordeal. Save for the faint glimmer of candle light that struggled wanly through the two small windows of the chapel there was, all around, an inky blackness, and the superstitious mind, taking its colour from the gloom, saw imaginative figures moving stealthily in the weird shadows. The timorous expected to feel the clutch of a ghostly hand on their shoulders. The effect of this eerie spectacle upon the female section of the congregation was so deep that they were too terrified to attend the services after sun-down unless accompanied by the opposite sex. When, therefore, the rebuilding of the Chapel in 1853 was under consideration, this matter was borne in mind, and it was then that the present entrance was made.

As far as I have been able to ascertain—and I have made a thorough search—there is nothing recorded to show what costs were incurred in building the first chapel. I am informed however, by Mrs. Hannah Jones that her father (Dafydd Tomos Ty Cockyn) used to say on good authority that after its completion the congregation, few as they were, were £19 to the good.

Financial support for the maintenance of the original fabric does not seem to have been wanting. In 1825 the sum of £12/14/0 was needed to repair the windows and the graveyard wall. An appeal for subscriptions was made to the members, and £13/2/10 was promptly collected. The following year Mathew Wayne collected, largely amongst the congregation, £35/17/6 to defray the cost of some general repairs. Seats were "amended", new windows and shutters were installed, a new gate and "hindges" were provided, and the "inside walls were pointed and limed". It is amusing to note that "Mr. Williams, Merthyr, gave as charity [gift] the shovel's head" (Shovel's head is a literal translation of "Pen rhaw", namely the steel plate). The said "Mr. Williams" was one of

the leading figures of the Chapel. He was the far-famed William Williams, Watchmaker, of Merthyr, whose grandfather's clocks today are almost priceless treasures.

In 1852 the entire building showed obvious signs of general decay. It had now served the congregation for well over a hundred years, and it was apparent that to endeavour to prolong its life in its present state of dilapidation would be a serious drain upon the financial resources of the church. Steps therefore were taken to build a new chapel on the site of the old. The agreement drawn up between the contractors and the representatives of the congregation is before me. It is dated "twenty eighth day of February one thousand eight hundred and fifty three". It stipulates that the contractor "shall finish and complete the new building on or before the first day of October one thousand eight hundred and fifty three" at a cost of "Four hundred and thirty four pounds". The early Unitarians evidently believed in the principle of supporting local labour for we find that all three contractors were residents of the village, namely, Watkin Meredith, Mason, Thomas Vaughan, Carpenter, and Phillip Jones Plasterer. The Architect was John Lewis, a self taught young man who lived at Cwm Moel, Glais Valley, Vaynor. For about sixty years the plans were lost, but by a stroke of good fortune they were afterwards discovered, and are now in safe keeping amongst our Church records.

One of the chief artistic attractions of the Chapel of 1853 was the cornice work incrusted in the ceiling. It is still intact. It was executed by Edward Morgan, a great-uncle of Mr. William Morgan, one of the present members of our church. Edward Morgan died in Utah, U.S.A. in 1872.

To defray the cost of the renovation a subscription list was opened on the 31 May 1852, and was headed by Rev. Owen Evans and Jenkin Harri with a donation of £30 each. In less than two months £240 was collected, and before the building was completed the requisite figure of £434 was reached.

The new building was opened 28th and 29th December, 1853. By previous arrangement the event was celebrated by holding in the Chapel the Quarterly meetings of the Unitarian Welsh Society. Usually at these services two sermons were delivered at each session, but I note that a writer in the "*Ymofynydd*" states that "owing to the cold weather, and the fact

that the walls were not yet dry, one sermon, instead of two, was preached". The preachers were Dr. Lloyd, Carmarthen, Rev. Thomas Thomas, Pant-y-defaid, Rev. John James, Gellionen, and Rev. J. E. Jones, Bridgend. It is worthy of notice that the services were not conducted entirely in Welsh. Consideration was given to those who were not conversant with the vernacular. Rev. J. E. Jones, Bridgend, preached in English. Two subjects were discussed in the afternoon conferences, namely, "The difference between Doctrinal and Practical Teaching", and, "The Forgiveness of Sins". The Ministers, so the old chronicler states, were entertained at a "local Hotel", probably, the Cross Keys Inn of which William Hughes was the proprietor.

Whether the Chapel of 1853 was badly built, I am not in a position to determine, but it is somewhat remarkable that only 42 years had elapsed before the Chapel again needed complete renovation.

During a fierce storm which raged on a Sunday evening in the summer of 1894 one of the windows was completely blown in, but, fortunately, no one was injured as the services had ended, and most of the congregation had left for their homes. The incident, however, gave rise to considerable anxiety, particularly in the minds of those who witnessed it. In due course, it was resolved to proceed with extensive alterations. This was done at a cost of £750, and the Chapel was opened free of debt on the 4th and 5th August, 1895. The preachers were Revs. W. James, Llandyssul, W. J. Phillips, Nottage, W. Griffiths, B.D., Ph.D., Pontypridd, Rees Jenkin Jones, M.A., Aberdare and the resident Minister, Rev. J. Hathren Davies. The latter read a paper on "The history of Non-Conformity in the district with special reference to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd".

The builder was a Mr. Dowlan of Abergavenny who, when the Chapel was only half completed, had to file his petition in bankruptcy. The remaining half of the work therefore was done under the expert supervision of one of our own chapel members, to wit, Mr. Rhys Jones, carpenter of Cwm Tâf. The interior woodwork consists of well seasoned pitch pine, and its quality has frequently been commented upon by several builders.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

To establish the date of the origin of the Sunday School is well-nigh impossible. The few available facts relating to its early history are so scattered that to fit them together as a coherent whole is extremely difficult. It would appear, however, that a Sunday school was held in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd in a few years after the first Chapel was built. Elsewhere in these pages, I have recorded a brief account of the life of Catherine Rees, and from that account one interesting and significant fact emerges. Catherine Rees attended a Sunday School in our Chapel in 1775—ten years before Charles o'r Bala inaugurated his famous Sunday School movement in Wales.

But the first *recorded* reference in our Church ledgers to a Sunday School was made in April, 1838, when a "Sunday School Testament" was bought. Another reference to it was made on 8 April 1861. The children had been very faithful in their attendance, and as a reward for their constancy they were given, free of charge, a tea party in the Chapel, followed, in the evening, by a concert. A charge for admission, however, was made upon the adults, the proceeds to be used to buy new Sunday school books. The report of the concert makes interesting reading. It states, among other things, that "the books were to be provided so that the children might have an opportunity of learning to read for themselves, instead of having to listen to the preacher all the time". Then again, we are told with blunt candour that "two choirs sang at the Concert—the Cwmbach Choir and the Cefn Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Choir. The Cwmbach Choir sang magnificently, but the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Choir sang poorly".

Strangely enough, ten of the books bought from the proceeds were written in English. They were entitled "Reading made Easy". They cost 2/6 and contained short simple phrases such as, "The corn is ripe. The grass is green" etc. These primers were obviously purchased with a view to imparting to the children—and possibly to some of the adults—an elementary knowledge of the English tongue.

There are no reasons for believing, however, that the teaching of English was given any serious attention. The probability is that the scholars were taught to read a little English until the Forster Education Act of 1870 became operative, when the subject was dropped altogether. At all events, the present oldest member of the Chapel—she is over 85—can only remember being taught Welsh. And she attended the School when she was only five years old.

For some unknown reason there was no Sunday School in Hen Dŷ Cwrdd in 1848. The late William Jones, Deacon, told me 35 years ago that when he was a lad his parents compelled him to attend Sunday School in Tabor[1] because there was no Sunday school in his own Chapel. G. T. Clark of Talygarn, the Dowlais historian confirms this. He records: "The Old Meeting House, 1747: Minister, Rev. O. Evans; Services 11 and 6, No Sunday School".

Eighty years ago the principal teachers were, Evan Lewis, William Hughes, John Evans and William Harries. The younger children were "taken" by John Evans who taught them the Welsh alphabet. When the class was able to read simple Biblical verses such as, "Da yw Duw i bawb" and "Duw cariad yw" etc., they were moved up to Evan Lewis' class. Here they were taught to read the New Testament, and after they had made sufficient headway in the reading of the Gospels they gravitated to the "Big Bible Class" (Y Dosbarth Mawr). This was the summit of every Sunday School scholar's ambition. To achieve it a test was imposed. The Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments had to be recited before the whole school. Questions were then publicly put to the candidates to test their general Biblical knowledge. William Hughes was the examiner. Such was the eagerness of the candidates to pass the examination that they applied themselves to their scriptural studies with zest for many weeks before the test took place. This system of "learning the Bible" was fruitful of good results. Of very few Unitarians in

[1]In 1848, Tabor Sunday School had 120 scholars and 18 teachers; Moriah 150 scholars and 28 teachers; Carmel 95 scholars and 12 teachers; Ebenezer 130 scholars and 27 teachers; St. Tudor's 160 scholars and 23 teachers.

Rev. J. CARARRA DAVIES

Rev. T. L. JONES

those days could it be said with truth that their knowledge of Holy Writ was defective. Most of them were able to discuss intelligently the meaning and implications of nebulous scriptural verses, and in a theological debate there was hardly a member who could not defend the faith that was in him, in a manner that did him credit. In those days, of course, religious arguments were as common amongst working class people as are economics and political arguments today. The training ground was provided by the various Sunday Schools.

Propriety of the strictest kind was insisted upon in the Sunday School at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. Loud laughter was suppressed with a stern rebuke. Clamour was instantly hushed. The sucking of sweets had to be done surreptitiously. Above all, the children were taught to look upon the "House of God" (Ty ein Tad) with the profoundest awe.

In our more freedom-loving day we may regard the religious discipline of past Sunday Schools as unnecessarily severe, but the increase in juvenile delinquency in recent years may not be altogether unrelated to this absence of discipline.

It is not easy to fix the date of the first Sunday School Picnic, but all the facts tend to indicate that it was held about 1870. The Sunday School teachers were unanimous in their opinion that, as a reward for their faithful attendance, and, as an incentive to continued loyalty, the children should be given a free outing into the country. The only difficulty was lack of funds. Ways and means had to be found to defray the cost of the food. The difficulty, however, was surmounted by the joint efforts of Dafydd Tomos (Ty Cockyn), Rev. T. Benjamin Hughes and William Harries. They resolved to perform a play entitled "Theodore Parker". The name-part was played by Benjamin Hughes, and Dafydd Tomos and William Harries acted as producers. The play was performed in the Chapel and the proceeds realised quite a satisfactory sum. Now that the wherewithal was assured it was decided to hold the picnic on what was then known as the Penrhiwglais Field at Pontsarn.

The much looked-forward-to day at last arrived—a warm sunny day in early Summer. It was an animated scene that met the gaze outside the Chapel on that lovely afternoon.

Excitement ran high. The air rippled with innocent merriment. Some of the parents had come to see the children off! To William Harries was given the task of lining the children up, for they were to walk to the playing field "two by two". Trains to Pontsarn had been running through the village for the last three years but the very suggestion of making the trip by rail was dismissed with scorn. It was an age accustomed to walking.

Heading the procession was William Hughes, his kindly face beaming. Walking briskly beside him was Evan Lewis chatting merrily. Their Wellington boots creaked and crackled on the dusty roads. The children, garbed in their gayest apparel, raised their piping little voices in song from sheer rapture. The lady teachers, of course, had donned their newest modes.

As the happy throng meandered their way along the Vaynor Road—then a winding, secluded lane—the dingle reverberated with buoyant laughter. As though desirous of joining in the glee, from bush and brake birds flooded the glen with their melody.

The Marshal was John Evans y Crydd. His duties were not easy. The children, despite his feigned rebukes, persisted in breaking the rank to pick flowers from the hedgerows.

Far behind, Tomos Pegi o'r Coed, coaxed an obstinate donkey to pull a heavily laden cart up the steep incline by Clwyd y Gelli. It was Tomos who was responsible for the conveying of the provisions to the picnic field. His greatest concern was the cake over which William Hughes had had such an anxious time in the baking.

The field, having been reached, the fun began. It was a beautiful pastoral scene. Animation, like the sunshine, was over all things. Races and other infantile gaieties, were organised. William Hughes patted the tousled heads of the winners. Evan Lewis, by way of encouragement, lavished his candy-sugar on the losers. The smaller children lay on the cool sward weaving daisy chains. The men, their Welsh woollen shirt sleeves rolled up, played quoits in a remote corner of the field. The young women beguiled the time by playing "Touch" and "Blind Man's Buff". John Evans Y Crydd, fatigued after his exacting marshalling duties, drowsed in the shade of a hoary thorn.

The day was now far spent. The sun was declining; the clover was closing; the bees had already "gone home". It was a more subdued procession that was seen wending its way back to the village that evening. The animation, the bubbling laughter of the morning, had given way to an intense feeling of weariness. Mothers, carrying their sleeping babies in shawls, dragged their feet languidly. Here and there a few rested their aching ankles by the roadside. The journey home appeared to be endless.

We may be sure that that inseparable trio Evan Lewis, William Hughes and John Evans slept soundly in their beds that night. From that day forward the picnic was an annual event. For several years it was held on the meadow adjoining the Cefn Hotel. Three decades or so ago the children were taken farther afield. Walking to a local farm no longer evoked enthusiasm. A railway journey was now expected, and a trip to the sea-side, for a change, was now called for. These trips are still being made. It should be borne in mind, however, that the children were given a Sunday School *treat* before 1870, but it took a different form from that of the picnic. The first recorded reference to it is dated 1861 when they were given a tea in the Chapel followed by a concert. Reference is made to it in another chapter.

One recalls with a smile those simple days when the Sunday School children were given the first magic-lantern entertainments in the school-room. I can vividly remember attending one of them over 50 years ago. The title of the "Picture" was "The Holy Land", and the Minister, Hathren Davies, was the lecturer. The lantern, which was manipulated by my inexpert father, was of a hoary vintage, and had done long service before it had been bought by the Chapel second-hand. Clouds of black smoke drifted and swirled through and around the room, and the children, growing every moment more impatient and noisy, peered expectantly through the fumes on the white, blank sheet on the wall in front of them. Meanwhile, my father, his face streaming with perspiration, was desperately occupied in trying to coax an exasperatingly obstinate wick to burn clearly, and, now and then, well above the din, he could be heard asking in a choking voice, "Odi chi'n gweld rhywbeth nawr" ? (Can you see something now !) Doubting

our eyes, we at last saw a hazy form of one of the shepherds who watched their flock by night but it soon vanished, and our boyish hopes with it. Hathren Davies fidgeted with his "Notes", and smiled blandly. Again the distracted operator adjusted the lenses, and tried to cope with the hissing, spluttering flame, this time with better success for our bleared eyes were soon glued on "Nazareth", "The Dead Sea" and other places of biblical interest, and we settled down to an evening of pictorial joy. Looking back, it is a far cry from the early magic lantern to the screen projector of today.

The average number of scholars attending the Sunday-School at the time of writing (1947) is 150. The number of male teachers are, however, unfortunately, relatively few. Accommodation is also a problem. Although both the Chapel and the schoolroom are utilised to the full, teaching in the space available, is exceedingly difficult. It is intended, however, as soon as post-war building conditions will allow, to convert the premises known as Herber's Court, (bought about ten years ago) to relieve the congestion.

The attendance record of some of the present Sunday School teachers is worth noting. It is a record that is unsurpassed in the Unitarian denomination in England and Wales. At a crowded Sunday evening service held in the Chapel on 28 Sept. 1942 these teachers were awarded long service medals presented jointly by the Unitarian Sunday School Association and the Religious Education Department of the General Assembly, London. The recipients were :—

Mrs. J. R. Evans. 55 years continuous service as a teacher.

Miss L. Harries. 53 years continuous service as a teacher.

Mrs. Barbara Jenkins, 39 years continuous service as a teacher.

Mrs. Lewis Edwards. 33 years as teacher and Organist,

Mr. Lewis Edwards. 31 years as teacher and Superintendent.

[1]Miss Margery Davies (now deceased) 29 years as teacher and Secretary.

---

[1]Margery Davies was the eldest daughter of Rev. J. Hathren Davies. Truly, she was one of the faithful. In every service, and in every meeting she could be counted upon to be present. When volunteers were asked for to represent the Chapel at Unitarian gatherings in South

Mr. David Robert Lewis (now deceased) 28 years as teacher and Secretary.

[2]Miss Bessie Morgan (now deceased) 27 years as teacher and Secretary of the Sunday School Bank.

Miss Doris Simon. 27 years as teacher and Sunday School Bank Treasurer.

Mr. Tom Lewis, J.P. 27 years as teacher.

In 1944, Rev. J. Marles Thomas, ever interested in the young, introduced into the Chapel a novel service. It at once caught the imagination of the children and made a strong appeal to their devotional nature. The service is called the "Coronation of the Rose Queen" and is still held annually with unusual success.

The "Queens" who have already been crowned are :—

1944—Miss Vaynor Jenkins.
1945—Miss Betty Jones.
1946—Miss Joyce Ullyet.
1947—Miss Joan Watkins.

Connected with the Sunday School there is also a Young People's League. It was instituted by the minister in 1945, and is affiliated to the National Y.P.L. It has a membershp of thirty-five and every encouragement is given to the members to participate in all the Chapel activities. The League, in 1946 sent thirteen delegates to the Conference of Sunday School Workers held at Llanmadoc.

East Wales Margery Davies was invariably the first to indicate her willingness to attend. To her, serving the congregation was not a pastime or occupation ; it was a duty, and well she always performed it. Her father's old chapel was more to her than anything else in the world, except perhaps her father's memory.

[2]It was a sad day for the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd when Bessie Morgan died in September of last year. A teacher by profession, her two main interests were her school and her church. To both she gave of her best. The regularity of her attendace in the Sunday School in particular could not but evoke one's admiration. Her thoroughness as Secretary of the Sunday School Bank was a by word. She was undoubtedly one of the best workers in the chapel and her earnestness of purpose and her useful life will not easily fade from the memory. The urn containing her ashes was deposited in her parents' grave in our burial ground.

CHAPTER V

MUSIC

Music, choral and otherwise, has always been given a prominent place in the devotional life of the Chapel. By common consent the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was, for a century and a half, the abode of true musical taste and acquirement. It had a mixed choir of much local fame as far back as a hundred years and more ago. The services of this choir were in considerable demand for many miles around, and on Easter Monday, 1843 it sang with great effect to an appreciative audience at Aberdare. "Cynonwyson", who was a descendant of Sion Llewellyn, and a local bard of much merit, paid poetic tribute to its excellent performance in the pages of the "*Ymofynydd*".

It is interesting to observe how the members of the choir learned their respective parts. Few could read the staff notation. It is highly probable that the conductor—[1]his name unfortunately is not known—was the only one to whom this gift was vouchsafed. The tonic-solfa system had not yet been evolved, and learning to sing, therefore, was a difficult and laborious task. The conductor—or leader as he was then called—read the music from the "Old Notation" (Hen Nôd), and, alone, sang the first bar over and over again. Parrot-like, the notes were taken up by the choir, and repeatedly sung, until they were thoroughly committed to memory. By this method it took the choir many evenings' diligent practice to learn a single hymn-tune. How different are the methods of our own day! By diligently applying itself to the task, a whole oratorio may be mastered by a choir in a few weeks.

The conductor usually prefaced the rehearsal by giving utterance to the following dictum :—

> "Codwch oll eich pen i fynny
> Peidiwch cau eich safn wrth ganu."
>
> (The head well upwards you must bring ;
> And do not close your mouth to sing).

[1] I have since discovered that his name was Sion Tomos Sion.—T.L.

Much to the consternation of the local orthodox churches, musical instruments—string and reed—were played in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd even in the early days of the nineteenth century. The old Unitarians scorned the then prevailing idea that instrumental music was an obstruction to the Spirit. They had their "string band" in 1810, and "Billy Berthlwyd" walked in every sort of weather from his remote farm in Vaynor to the Chapel to teach some of the members how to play the 'cello. The orchestra must have existed for some years, for I find on consulting the records that, in 1833 the Church bought "Howel Powel, weaver, a fife for 7/6" and in 1851 they expended "6/-" on a 'Viloin' [Violin] for Wm. Jones". "Tomos o'r Sychpant", Cwmtâf, played the 'clarionet'.

The "fiddle-playing" members of the band were frequently called upon to perform some very interesting duties. I am indebted to my father for the following account.

Long ago it was a pretty sight which met the gaze when a wedding-party marched from "Coed y Cymmar" to Vaynor Church to be married. Vehicles were rarely used in those days to convey the happy pair to the altar. The "B and M" railway was then undreamed of. The contracting parties therefore had to trudge the two miles to Vaynor Church on foot. Up through High Street the bride and bridegroom marched side by side, their faces wreathed in smiles. In front of them one of the Hen Dy Cwrdd violinists "fiddled" triumphantly. Behind, followed their young friends to the number, perhaps, of fifteen or twenty, arm in arm, decorated with roses and multi-coloured ribbons, and cracking jokes which evoked peals of laughter that made the streets resound. To watch the procession pass, the shoemaker abandoned his last, the smith his anvil, the carpenter his bench, the weaver his loom, and the housewife her domestic duties, all in turn, hurling after the jocund pair a word of advice or a witty sally—or an an old boot!

When the Church had its first Harmonium it is difficult to determine, but it may be inferred with reasonable certainty that it was in 1867, for, the first recorded reference to it was on December 14th of that year when William Harries was paid "£3 for the Almonium" and it was so small that it was

carried on several occasions to the Caretaker's house for singing practices because "it was too cold in the Chapel". It is quite possible that this was the Harmonium which was used in the schoolroom until some ten years ago. It is amusing to note that one of the old members once composed a "Polka". It was composed in 1860 by "Tomas Beynon, Blaenor y Band of Hope" and was known as "Beynon's Polka". The Polka was probably then a musical rage for, on investigation, I find that it was introduced into the ballrooms of this country in 1844.

The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was one of the first Chapels in the village to adopt the Tonic Solfa system. This was in 1872. The modulator was presented by Miss Jones who was a Lampeter lady and a generous subscriber to everything Unitarian. Miss Jones, at her own expense, visited the village for about a week, and devoted the evenings to teaching the members of the Chapel how to read the modulator. Her most apt pupil was Dafydd Tomas, Tŷ Cockyn, who, despite his advanced years, became so proficient in the Solfa system that he was engaged by the then Rector of the Parish to teach it to his own Choir at Vaynor Church. The classes were held in winter evenings and Dafydd walked to the church from Cefn Coed through the long, pitch-dark lanes alone. So blessed was the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd with musical talent in 1880 that two choirs from the Chapel competed against each other at an Eisteddfod held at Pontsticill.

To three members of our Chapel was delegated the task of compiling the "*Perlau Moliant*" in 1896. William Harries and D. Eiddil Jones chose and arranged the tunes and Rev. J. Hathren Davies was responsible for the hymns.

The first known hymn-book used in the Chapel was entitled "Casgliad", and was compiled by Rev. Josiah Rees, Gellionen. It was published in 1799. A copy is still to be found among the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd records, and is in a good state of preservation. On the fly leaf are written, in a good hand, these words: "Henry John is book, age 16 years, 1799".

What hymn book was used between 1747 and 1799 cannot now be reliably stated, but since Sion Llewellyn published ten of his own hymns prior to 1772 it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that these were sung, at least, on occasion.

In due course the "Casgliad" was abolished and was replaced by "Caniadau o Fawl". Neither of these books, by the way, contained any tunes. Tunes were not introduced into our hymn books until "Caniadau o Fawl" was withdrawn to make room for the first "*Perlau Moliant*" in 1896, when practically every member of the Congregation could read the tonic solfa.

Browsing in Josiah Rees' "Casgliad" one is struck by the doleful character of the stanzas. There is nothing in them to elevate and exalt; nothing to suggest that the Christian life is one of hope and felicity. There are no hosannas, no jubilees, no rejoicing. The tone, in the main, is that of gloom and despair—the dreary reflections of melancholy minds. Particularly is this true of the old funeral hymns our forefathers used to sing. Here, for example, is a verse that was frequently sung at the graveside, and which I have taken from the "Casgliad".

Wyr Mawr! eich gwely fydd y clai.
Er cuweh yw tyrrau mawr eich tai
Y dowr ar doeth a'r gwychau'i wedd
Cânt orwedd megys ninnau yn y bedd.

(Ye men of grand estate in clay thou too shalt lie,
Howe'er so high thy mansions' towers reach the sky.
The loveliest face e'r seen, the wise and brave
At last, like us, shall lie recumbent in the grave).

It will be noticed that in concept and sentiment that verse bears a marked resemblance to one of the stanzas of Gray's famous Elegy. It would be a revelation to know what were the reactions of the rich and generous Wayne family to the sentiment expressed in the first couplet. The probability is, however, that with their usual graciousness and magnanimity they dismissed the obvious allusion to their class with a benevolent smile and reverently joined in the singing.

A popular musical event in the Chapel fifty years ago was the annual Eisteddfod. It was held on New Year's Eve, and was proceeded by a tea in the school-room. To us children, this "treat" was the high-light of the year. The stone steps that led to the school-room were worn thin by the feet of many generations of "students", and were exposed to the open sky.

When the night therefore was dark and the graveyard over the wall was shrouded in a black mantle, we children climbed the steps with exceeding haste lest we might glimpse an apparition. The dilapidated door, the bottom of which scraped noisily against the uneven flagstones, we pushed open violently, and it was a relief to feel on our faces the genial, companionable warmth from the heaped up coal-fire within. Inside all was bustle and mirth. Down the chimney rumbled gusts of wind that, to the consternation of the "lady-helpers", blew specks of dust into the two "tin boilers" with wire handles that simmered murmurously on the two spacious hobs. The rough walls, painted green, streamed with condensation, and the crude furniture, benches, settles, desks, and what-not that had probably been there since 1837, creaked with their load of boisterous youngsters. Steam from the many tea-pots, and smoke from many ancient briars spiralled to the low coved ceiling. Here and there gleamed sprigs of berried holly, and, of course a prominent place was given to a bough of mistletoe.

The tables having been cleared, we adjourned to the Eisteddfod in the chapel where every seat was occupied and the air electric with anticipation of keen contests. The aisles were crammed with benches from the school-room, and the smaller children were put to sit in little groups on the window sills. Strung across the whole length of the pulpit, like clothes on a line, was a row of brilliantly coloured prize bags, and to be handed one of these with a bright new shilling in it was the successful competitor's idea of earthly paradise. For weeks afterwards the bag was shown with great pride to all and sundry, and afterwards put away in the "chest of drawers" as a keep-sake beyond price. I saw one only recently, its faded silk bearing witness to an age that has long departed.

The most important event in the New Year's Eve Eisteddfod was what we used to call proudly the "Chief Choral". True, we could only muster two choirs from the chapel for this competition, but the excitement could not have been more intense had there been six. The two choirs practised almost up to the last moment, for when the Eisteddfod was at its height, and the smaller competitions were in full swing, across the strip of graveyard that divided us from the schoolroom

could be distinctly heard the rival leaders putting the finishing touches to the "prif ddarn". The test piece was usually a hymn tune chosen by William Harries from the *Perlau Moliant*. I remember on one occasion it was "Moab", one of William Harries' favourite hymns.

The chief choral was usually the last item on the programme, and although the night was often far spent when the two rival choirs trooped up the pulpit stairs to decide the vital issue, no one would dream of going home until the last prize-bag had been placed around the neck of the successful conductor by the "oldest member". A privilege that was granted to us young people was to return to the school-room to sit around the embers of a dying fire until the bells of St. John's clanged the New Year in. It was whilst returning from one of these Eisteddfodau in the witching hours that I first saw heaps of straw littered on the main road in High Street to deaden the sound of the traffic because an old Cefnite lay dying in a house near by. These pleasant evenings seem far away now, and yet, in terms of eternity, they were but yesterday.

The "Singing School" on Sunday evenings in preparation for the Annual Gymanfa was then well attended. After the service, almost every man, woman and child "remained behind" (sefyll ar ôl). If William Harries, the conductor did not have a choir of nearly a hundred members in front of him he wanted to know why! The older members of the chapel today will remember how we used to walk on a week-night evening through Clwydyfagwyr and over the Aberdare mountain to attend singing rehearsals at Abernant and think nothing of the distance we had covered. The rule of life is everlasting change, and I can clearly recall, some of the old members telling me that when, in June 1890, the Gymanfa was held in Ebenezer Chapel because the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was too small, the Gellionnen Congregation travelled in horse-drawn brakes, and at the bottom of the hill, near Cwmsminton, one of the brakes broke down and the occupants had to do the remainder of the journey (about 6 miles) on foot.

In 1900 there was formed in the Chapel an orchestra which we used to call "the string band". It was composed of about

a dozen members, all of whom were members of the congregation. The leader was Mr. J. R. Evans who is now a retired schoolmaster and an etymologist of standing. Several concerts were held in the chapel by the orchestra and good sums were realised. On a few occasions it played at the annual Gymanfa and was implemented by the Capel y Graig (Trebanos) Brass Band. I can distinctly remember it playing (I was one of the players) at the great Gymanfa at Treorchy in 1903 when my brother, John Lewis, who was then only 20 years old, was the conductor.

Incidentally, it was in 1900, too, that we started a Chapel library. The first collection of books was presented by our Minister, Rev. J. Hathren Davies, and this was added to by Mr. J. R. Evans and others. Access to good books was not so easy then as it is now. The library, therefore, was made good use of by the younger generation of members. I consulted it often to my enduring benefit and delight.

About this time also we formed a Mutual Improvement Society. It was inaugurated by the joint efforts of Rev. Hathren Davies and Mr. J. R. Evans, and proved, at once, an outstanding success. The happy evenings we spent in "the Mutual" are some of my most fragrant memories. Every member of it, however young and uninformed, had to take part in some way or other, in the discussions. None was excused. The ordeal of addressing the audience had to be faced, come what may. "Hathren" and Mr. J. R. Evans saw to that!

"The Mutual" did not produce orators and thinkers of national repute but it *did* provide young men and young women who afterwards became school teachers, colliery managers, and ministers of the gospel, with the necessary "stepping stones to rise from their dead selves to higher things".

CHAPTER VI

ROLL OF MINISTERS

IT will be remembered that the first minister of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was Rev. Richard Rees. Some of the earlier records refer to him as "the Reverend Mr. Risiart Rhys". He was born in 1709 and entered Carmarthen Presbyterian College in 1734 and was ordained at Cwmglo in 1738. His ministry at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was brief, for his death took place two years after the cause to which he was so devotedly attached was established. His tomb-stone in the graveyard of the Merthyr Parish Church gives the date of his death as 23 August, 1749. "He died in the 40th year of his age." The graveyard of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd had then not been enclosed.

It is obvious that Richard Rees did not enter the ministry in order to earn a living for he was a man of very considerable means and lived at "Gwernllwyn", Dowlais, one of the biggest farms in the district. He does not appear, however, to have been unduly interested in agriculture. His passionate desire was to preach the gospel, for, it is recorded, he left the management of his extensive acres to his wife whom he predeceased by 28 years. He was the author of that well known hymn which is still often sung at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd commencing :

"Gwlad dda yw'r nefol wlad, mae'n well
Nag un ar wyneb dae'r ymhell,
Gwlad helaeth, ffrwythlawn yw", etc.

The following is the last verse of his metrical paraphrase of the 19th Psalm :

"Atolwg, boed derbyniad grasusol ger dy fron
Fy N'Graig a'm Prynwr nerthol i'r gan a'r gyffes hon,
A phan ddyrchafwyf atat fy n'gweddi clyw fy llef
Gogwydda'th glust i wrando o'th annedd yn y nef."

The paraphrase contains 12 stanzas, and the complete set are extant.

Rev. Richard Rees was succeeded at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd by Rev. Philip Charles. Philip Charles was born in 1721,

entered Carmarthen Presbyterian College in 1746, and was ordained at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd in 1749.[1] Where he was born is not known but it may be safely assumed that he was not a native of the district. He lived at Gwaelod y Duffryn, a substantial farm-house which stood near the ruins of the present Vaynor House. Tradition states that the land under Gwaelod y Duffryn, and a number of fields around, at that time belonged to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, but due to apathy and indifference on the part of the congregation the property was lost. In my researches, I have not been able to find any documentary proof of this but the story was persistent amongst the older members of the chapel as late as fifty years ago.

Rev. Philip Charles was a nephew of Rev. Philip Dafydd, Penmaen, Monmouthshire, with whom, it transpires, Charles rarely agreed on theological questions. Heated arguments between them, therefore, were constant. Philip Dafydd kept a diary (would that his nephew had followed his example) and in it under date 18 Jan. 1761 appears this entry.

> "I was excused from preaching today in Tŷ yn y Fid. Rev. Philip Charles preached in my place, good sermon. If he adheres to the views he expressed today he cannot justly be accused of being an Arminian or an Arian".

The entry was made in Welsh.

What is known of Philip Charles is, unfortunately, extremely scanty and disjointed, but that he was a man of much ability is beyond doubt. Charles Wilkins, the Merthyr historian, seems to have known something about him. It is true that Wilkins dismisses him in four words, but the words signify much—"a man of eminence". In 1757 Philip Charles appears to have sojourned in Germany. At all events, the "Calaniadur Cymraeg", which was in circulation about the middle of the last century, contained an entry which stated that "he preached in Hanover, 9th July, 1757 and took for his text John, ii Chap. verse 12". I also find that he was present at the ordination service of Rev. Jacob Isaac at Craig y Fargoed in 1773, and that it was he, in accordance with the practice of

[1]Dr. Rees in "Hanes Eglwysi Annibynol Cymru" gives the date as 1751. This is hardly correct; all the evidence supports 1749.

the time, who publicly examined Isaac on questions of faith. He also preached in Jacob Isaac's house before the Unitarian cause at Craig y Fargoed was established.

For some reason or other Philip Charles, towards the close of his life, dropped his surname and became known as "the Reverend Mr. Phillips". This is borne out by his tombstone in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd graveyard the inscription on which read, "also of the Rev. Mr. Phillips who was for 41 years pastor of this chapel". Following the inscription was this verse :—

Bydded i'r rhai rybuddiais
Orau Duw'n llwyr wrando llais
Efengyl Crist, rhag tristwch
A llef wedi mynd i'r llwch
Cofiwch orphwysfa'r cyfiawn.
A lle'r di-dduw, llerw di-ddawn.

He obviously changed his name into Phillips, after July 1772, because when, in that year, he signed, as a witness, the certificate of ordination of Rev. Edward Evans, Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon, he signed his name as Philip Charles. Twenty years later however he was known as "Mr. Phillips," for thus he was addressed by Rees Lodwick the Aberdare tiler in 1792.[1] Incidentally, Rees Lodwick is the only man, as far as I know, who has left, us a sort of fleeting glimpse of him. The story is told by Carw Coch of Aberdare.

The roof of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd (Cefn Coed), it seems, needed repairing, and Rees Lodwick, a bit of a wag and a practical joker, was engaged to do the work. One morning—it was on a Monday—Rees arrived late on the job, and much to his discomfiture saw that "Mr. Phillips" was there waiting for him. Rees was at his wits' end what to do, for it was evident that Mr. Phillips, who was anxious to get the work completed, was very angry. He knew that excuses would not be listened to so, as a last resort, Rees related to the irate pastor a story that was far from being in accord with strict ministerial dignity. Shocked by what he had heard "the reverend" covered his eyes with his hands and with a flicker of a smile

[1] "Rhyddiaeth a Barddoniaeth".

on his face hurriedly fled the scene. Rees sought the safety of the roof, rocking with laughter.

Exactly where Rev. Philip Charles lies in our graveyard is in doubt but a careful examination of the graveyard register leads me to the conclusion that the old minister reposes about three feet to the left of the west end corner of the chapel and a few paces away from Rev. J. Hathren Davies' memorial. Philip Charles was known as "gweinidog Coed y Cymer", pastor of the only Chapel in the village.[1] He died 19 May, 1790 at the age of 69.

It is amazing how little is known about the lives of our early ministers. In spite of much rummaging among old records and periodicals in order to glean some facts that might throw some light on the life of Rev. Thomas Davies, Philip Charles' successor at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, the search unhappily has yielded very few results. What is known of Rev. Thomas Davies has largely been handed down from generation to generation and is here committed to paper for the first time.

It is recorded however, that he was educated for the Ministry at Carmarthen Presbyterian College and entered upon his duties at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd in 1790. His stipend was "£3/9/6 a Quarter". He remained at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for 43 years—two years longer than his immediate predecessor. The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was his only pastorate.

He lived practically all his ministerial life in Dan y Deri Lane, in that house now known as Brewery House. My father who attended the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd as a boy some 90 years ago used to say that he had heard it said that Rev. Thomas Davies was a modest, silent man who abhorred all strife and contention, and wished to live in harmony with his neighbours. His tongue, it was said, was the tongue of the gentle; his ways were the ways of peace, yet very little peace reigned about his home. He was fated to make his abode near the scene of many a rowdy encounter. The "square" in front of his house, where the four roads now converge, was then known as the "Pitch" and when disputes arose between the more bellicose members of the local rabble it was on the "pitch"

[1]Two certificates of baptism, signed and sealed by Philip Charles may be seen in the reference department of the Cardiff Central Library.

Rev. J. MARLES THOMAS, M.A.

Rev. HATHREN JONES

that the combatants "settled" their differences. The sights Rev. Thomas Davies witnessed from his study window were indeed revolting. The clamour of the motley crowd grated on his sensitive ears. Time and time again he, with measured step and regardless of the consequences, left the quiet of his books to use his restraining influence on the combatants. His influence never failed. There was still respect for the "cloth."

To live on the stipend he received as pastor of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, even in those days of plain food and durable clothing, was impossible. Out of his salary of "£3/9/6 a quarter" he had to maintain a wife and family; a source of additional income, therefore, had to be sought.

Welsh industrial and economic conditions in Rev. Thomas Davies' day, a hundred and fifty years ago, were, as every student of social history knows, unbelievably wretched. Children from Cefn Coed, for example, were sent to work in the local mines when they were only eight years old, and as they had to be in the pits at six in the morning, slept, and often fainted, at their work. Men's wages were so low that their wives were forced to take up employment underground in order to eke out a precarious existence for their interminable offsprings. Fifty years ago I well knew an old man who had been born in the coal face of Coedcae Level, near Colliers' Row.

In Rev. Thomas Davies' day the work which had to be done on top of the Cyfarthfa mine pits was, for the most part, done by women, and it was as foreman over these women that Thomas Davies implemented his scanty ministerial salary. If he found his task uncongenial and perhaps distasteful we are not surprised, for it was not easy for him to reconcile the hardships his charges had to endure with an all-powerful and loving God in whom he believed and about whose Love he preached. He died 10 March, 1832, aged 73 years.

Rev. Thomas Davies and his wife lie side by side in separate graves. Their tombstone is in an excellent state of preservation and may be seen flat on the ground close to the West Wall of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. Their memory is also enshrined on a mural tablet inside the chapel.

The pulpit at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd after it was rendered vacant by the death of Rev. Thomas Davies was occupied for

five years by Rev. Daniel Davies of Cwm, near Caerphilly. But it would seem that Daniel Davies was not appointed to the pastorate permanently. He took up the duties until a suitable minister could be found. In the chapel records there is a note written by him much to that effect. Some historians hold the view that he came to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd *before* the death of Rev. Thomas Davies as Thomas Davies' assistant. This is not impossible, for it was he who performed the last rites in Thomas Davies' funeral. For that we have his own words; "The Revd. Thomas Davies who had been minister of the Dissenting Congregation at Coed y Cymmer for 40 years died 10 March, and buried 14th, 1832. Entered by me Danl. Davies who succeeded him in the ministry at Coed y Cymmer". Living as he was in so far away a place as Caerphilly he would scarcely have been invited to officiate at Rev. Thomas Davies funeral in preference to the then minister of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Aberdare, were it not that he was associated in some way or another with our Chapel. Moreover, it is doubtful whether he was an Arminian, as such. That he had Arminian leanings must, of course, be conceded. For twenty-five years he had been minister of Ynysgau Congregational Chapel in Merthyr Tydfil where he was ordained 6 May, 1785, and although Rev. R. J. Jones, M.A., Aberdare, states that "he appears to have held distinct Arminian views there and associated himself with Unitarian friends more closely than with any others"[1] there seems to be no evidence that he had renounced althogether his former Christian beliefs.

He was trained for the Ministry at the Carmarthen Presbyterian College and was a fellow student of Rev. Thomas Davies. He married the rich daughter of the Gwernllwyn Isaf, Dowlais, and was the youngest of the eight sons of Rev. James Davies, Abermeurig. He died 15 August, 1853 at the ripe age of 93. It is unlikely that he was buried in our graveyard.

On the 30 June, 1837 Rev. Owen Evans wrote from Llandyssul to William Lyndon, who was secretary of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd at the time, a letter of which the following is a copy:

---

[1] "Yr Ymofynnydd".

"Sir,

Yesterday at a meeting of ministers I proposed to their consideration the invitation which I had from the congregation at Cefn, and I am very glad to inform you that I have been encouraged by them to accept it.

Now, I must say that I accept your warm and unanimous invitation upon the clear understanding that I am to preach my sentiments without any restraint.

I cannot come to settle at Cefn before the beginning of August owing to my having promised to keep the services at Blaengwrach another month after the holidays.

I remain,

Yours respectfully,

Owen Evans."

That letter was the beginning of a long and happy association between Rev. Owen Evans and the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

Rev. Owen Evans was born at Pyrlip, Llandysul, 23 April, 1808, and was prepared for College by Rev. Dafydd Davis, Castell Hywel. At the expiration of his four years course at Carmarthen Presbyterian College he proceeded home to keep a school and supplied Pantydefaid as well. His reputation as a school master soon grew, and a bigger seminary had to be built. It was known as "The College", and was situated at Maesmeillion. One of his pupils was the late Rev. Thomas Thomas ("T.T." of *Yr Ymofynydd*). As no Unitarian pulpit was vacant in Wales at the time, he left his native land in due course and went to England. For six months he was engaged as an assistant Master to a Mr. Whiteing at Evesham but was obliged to leave owing to his advanced religious views. In June 1838, whilst at Evesham, he married Jennet Rees, daughter of Rev. D. Davies, eldest son of "Dafis Castell Hywel". Mrs. Evans died 20 May 1844, aged 34 years. Children were born of the marriage but none survived. From Evesham Owen Evans went to Birmingham where he remained six months as a private tutor to one Mr. Greaves. Whilst there he received, and accepted, a call to

the pastorate of Blaengwrach, Glyn Neath, where he ministered from January 1836 until August 1837. In the latter year, as we have seen he came to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd and laboured faithfully to the end of his days for very often less than £30 a year. After settling at Cefn Coed, Owen Evans married Margaret, daughter of Evan Harries, Penderyn—a descendant of Sion Llewellyn. His only son is Rev. E. D. Priestley Evans, Kidderminster, who is now in his 85th year.

Soon after taking up the pastorate of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Owen Evans, in order to implement his salary, opened a Grammar School in the Old Ysgoldy. The success of the School was instantaneous. Its reputation as a seminary of sound learning and unbiassed religious education travelled far beyond the confines of the Vaynor Parish. As a scholar and divine Owen Evans is today known to all who know anything about the history of Cefn Coed. Though, as a scholar, his mind moved in spheres to which ordinary thinkers had no access, he evidently believed in practical teaching. When taking his pupils in mensuration he accompanied them to Vaynor to measure hayricks, barns and tracts of land on the spot. With all his suavity and immense seriousness he did likewise when he taught them games. Descending from the realm of abstract thinking he would gleefully join the junior scholars during "play-time" on the "Twyn". He knew the tonic value of hilarity.

He numbered amongst his pupils men of whom Wales has reason to be proud. They were found in all walks of life, in law, in medicine, in pharmacy and, of course, in the Christian Ministry. For the latter profession Owen Evans probably trained scores. Not all his students could pay him their fees. No matter, their education must go on. He went further. When the need arose he fed them, and even clothed them. It was not for nothing that he had read his New Testament. But the free education he gave his students was not *unconditionally* free. There was a stipulation. It was that when they grew up they should "go and do likewise". In 1853 his students presented him with a gold watch and chain. The address he delivered on that occasion is before me, and is worth preserving in these pages: It reads—

"My dear young friends,

To be surrounded by so many familiar countenances as I see around me, so many minds with the training of which I had something to do, character, the formation of which was entrusted to my care at that interesting time when the mind is most susceptible of impressions, is a gratifying spectacle, a pleasing sight. But to listen to your affectionate and moving address and at the same time to be made by you the recipient of this valuable present makes it impossible for me, either to describe my feelings, or adequately to express the gratitude I owe you for this token of your esteem, this mark of your respect. That the profession of a teacher is an important, onerous and most respectable one is passed doubt. That it has long been looked down upon is a lamentable fact, but that it is not so in your estimation is equally certain from your flattering, I fear, too, flattering, address accompanied by this substantial proof of its sincerity. I can now join the poet in saying that "there is no flesh in man's obdurate heart that does not feel for man". No, my dear friends, for you do feel for me, and if I may be allowed to interpret the feeling of the heart from the cheerful countenances before me, there are others present that join you in this feeling. When I look for the cause of this manifestation of esteem, this display of respect, I look in vain for it in myself though you seem to find it there. This is not owing to any superior merit on my part. There are others in the same field who feel that it is dangerous sporting with the world, with things so sacred as a nation's trust, with the nurture of her youth, yet, they go without acknowledgment, without any token of esteem. It is not then that I am better than others that I have my testimonial whilst they have none ; no, but it is because I have had the good fortune to meet with more affectionate pupils, more sensitive hearts, more generous minds than they. It is to this circumstance principally, if not entirely, I owe this pledge of affection. In your feeling address, you allude to the difference of opinion that may exist between us on religious and political matters, but that you are fully agreed in paying me this tribute of affection. I am glad of this as it involves a question of great public importance, the practicability of secular education which, as you all know, is the

system adopted and carried out in my school at Cefn. On this ground all parties may meet; forget their differences but not their improvements.

My young friends, I have listened with pleasure to your address, and am now in possession of your handsome testimonial—a beautiful machine. In an admirable author and by the most admired one, I have met with a beautiful expression on a machine of this class. He calls it "the index and the tongue of time"—a beautiful idea happily expressed. Beautiful as it is, you have enabled this evening to heighten its beauty. It is no longer the index and the tongue of time alone. You have taught it another language. You have given it another tongue. It is now the index of affection and the tongue of esteem. Its accents, like those of your sweet address, are those of love. Whether it will mark the minutes and hours of the many years of happiness you wish me I know not. One thing do I know. It has already marked the minutes and hours of the happiest evening of my life. I will keep it my young friends; yes, I trust I shall be able to keep it as long as I live. I will hold it with a tenacity to be overcome only by sheer and superior force. I will keep it for its own sake. I will keep it for your sake, but above all I will keep it for the sake of the noble efforts you have thus made to elevate the profession to which I belong. For this the world stands indebted to you as well as to myself. For this then, my dear young friends, accept my most sincere thanks, and the assurance of my esteem in return. Our attachment, believe me, is mutual, and I doubt not will be lasting. May you be happy, henceforth and for ever is the most ardent wish of my glowing heart".

Noble in language, lofty in sentiment, artistic in emotion, that address surely reveals Owen Evans as he was. For a time Owen Evans was examiner in Hebrew at the Carmarthen Presbyterian College, and one of the fruits of his literary labour was a translation into Welsh of a sermon on "Unity of God, the chief characteristic of the Jewish Faith", by Rabbi Morris J. Raphall, M.A., D.Ph., pastor of the Synagogue at Birmingham. In 1846 the Welsh Unitarian Society published his much discussed sermon on "Barnedigaethau Tymhorol" (Temporal Judgments). The more one pores over the

sermons and essays which appeared from his pen a century ago the more one is amazed that a congregation, which was largely illiterate, could follow what appear to us today to be dry, scholarly disquisitions on pure theology. From information which has been verbally handed down to us he was not what is termed in our own time a popular preacher. His style of exposition was ponderous and deliberate and hardly ever did he flare out in a flame of spiritual fervour. But that he was a scholar with a scholar's love of dwelling in the limitless realm of speculative ideas, goes without saying. In truth, he was a faculty of theology personified.

He was a formidable controversialist and gave no quarter to his antagonists either in the pulpit or in the press. He was possibly the doughtiest champion of Welsh Unitarianism of his time. The need for his taking up the cudgels in defence of his faith may be gauged by the tenor of Wesley's famous—or infamous—hymn, beginning :

> [1]"The Unitarian fiend expel
> And chase his doctrine back to hell".

In 1857 Owen Evans was attacked, as a school master, by Rev. Rees Gwesyn Jones, Congregational Minister, Bridgend. Gwesyn Jones contended that Owen Evans, being a Unitarian, was not a fit and proper person to prepare young men for the orthodox pulpits, as he must influence their minds in the wrong direction. Owen Evans who, in a newspaper combat, was an incomparable adversary, defended himself with vigour. The controversy was waged in the *Annibynnwr* and as disputed theological issues were involved the battle was protracted and almost bitter. In the end, the pages of the *Annibynnwr* were closed against Owen Evans, but nothing daunted, he continued the fray in *Yr Ymofynnydd*.

A bosom friend of Owen Evans was Rev. Rees Williams, (1803—1883) Rector of Vaynor. The Rector, like Owen Evans, revelled in debate. Both were men of outstanding intellect and both were worthy of their steel. One who remembered them in their last days told me that whenever the Rector

[1]"Yr Ymofynnydd".

visited Cefn Coed in the course of his pastoral duties he invariably called to see Rev. Owen Evans at his home in Laburnum House. As soon as the customary greetings were over a wordy warfare began ; a display of intellectual agility commenced. Refreshments over, out we are told, into the street they went arguing without pause. There was no rancour. That was forgotten. The aim was to satisfy the thirst for knowledge. Arm in arm, they would reach Groes Fach near the Vaynor Quarry too absorbed in their dialectics even to note the presence of a casual passer-by. At Groes Fach Owen Evans usually retraced his steps, and in the quiet of the lane, reflected on the Rector's "arguments". The rector did likewise as he proceeded in the opposite direction.

Sometimes, however, even at Groes Fach the Rector refused to lay his rapier aside. Turning back with his adversary he continued the debate and when the villagers of Cefn Coed saw the two divines return to Laburnum House in animated discussion they knew that the unceasing quest for truth was still on. Anglicanism and Unitarianism could agree to differ.

The story used to be told that one day Owen Evans proceeded to the Merthyr Railway Station to meet his twin brother whom he was expecting by train. Having a short time to wait he walked into a waiting room, and was there surprised to find his brother walking to meet him. Owen Evans at once proffered his hand but no sooner had he done so than he realised that on the mantelpiece hung a mirror in which he saw, not his brother, but his own image.

Deeply pious man though he was, Rev. Owen Evans was not devoid of the saving grace of clean humour. He also loved a practical joke. I once heard this story related of him.

Sometime between the late forties and the early fifties of the last century, the Mormons were reaping a good harvest of emigrants in Wales. One of their leaders was a Captain Jones, brother of Rev. John Jones, Llangollen a well-known preacher of that day. Captain Jones came to Merthyr and made certain incredible claims which reached the ears of Owen Evans. When, at a later date, Captain Jones returned to Merthyr, Owen Evans went down to hear him speak. On his way to the meeting he called at a chemist's shop (probably Tom Stephens') and bought two small bottles

of certain liquids. Listening with obvious amazement to Captain Jones was a large audience. The speaker was delivering a sermon and had chosen as his text Mark, chap. 16, verses 17, 18. "And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover". All these things the Captain claimed, the Mormons could do. "Can *you* do them?" asked Owen Evans. "Yes" answered the Captain. "Can *you* drink poison and suffer no ill effects ?" Again came the answer "Yes". Thereupon, Owen Evans drew a small bottle from his pocket, and handed it up to the Captain. "Drink the contents" requested Owen Evans. With blanched face the Captain refused, stating, in justification that Owen Evans was being urged by the devil to tempt him. "Drink, drink", cried the now exultant crowd vociferously. The captain however, still declined. Visibly crestfallen, he returned the bottle to Owen Evans. Turning to the audience, Owen Evans said, with perfect calm, that inasmuch as the Captain had refused to drink the liquid he would drink it himself. And he did. It was pure water ! Amid loud derisions, the Captain, perceptibly humiliated, slunk away.

Owen Evans, like most Ministers of his generation, was a great walker and one wonders what would be his reactions to our modern means of easy transport. In his diary Rev. John Thomas, minister of Pantydefaid, Cardiganshire, from 1816 to 1846, has, I note, recorded that he and Owen Evans on 3rd April, 1850 "slept in the Red Cow, Llandeilo." Owen Evans was on a visit to the town to preach at the Quarterly Meetings. What amazes us in this age of swift transport is that he made the journey from Cefn Coed to and from Llandeilo on foot. In fact, he performed this pedestrian feat more than once. On one occasion "there was a layer of snow on the ground".

His favourite "constitutional" was a brisk walk up Cwm Tâf road, but he does not seem to have been endowed with a love of natural beauty. He appears to have taken his "constitutional" not so much for the sheer love of scenery as for physical exercise and to think. It is doubtful whether he paused to listen to the wind on the heath or watched the Tâf

River racing from the mountains to the sea. His heart was in the study, and not in the fields. At any rate, I have failed to find in his writings anything to suggest the contrary. He dearly loved a joke, and when once asked to account scientifically for those large boulders that litter Cilsanws mountainside overlooking the new Cefn Cemetry, he replied, with a twinkle in his eye, that when God had finished creating the earth He found that He had a few stones to spare and not knowing what to do with them, threw them away on Cilsanws!

The effect of Rev. Owen Evans' personality upon any gathering of people was, according to those who remembered him, something akin to religious awe, and, although he was one of the most charming of men, few were really intimate with him. His eminently ecclesiastical appearance had, perhaps, something to do with this, for he moved, we are told, about the village "like a man in a dream". For all that, he was not unaware of the needs of the rank and file. He was not so absorbed in his books as to be unconscious of the realities of life, and, convinced that abstention from local government affairs was the negation of the Christian teaching, he served the village for years as a member of the Merthyr Board of Guardians. There were times, but this was not often, when he shed his solemnity and descended from the heights in order to enjoy a little wholesome frivolity. I am indebted to my father for this anecdote.

In Owen Evans' time one of the principal hostelries in Cefn Coed was the "George Inn". "The George", like all Inns of that day, boasted a "long room" in which some forty or fifty people could be accommodated. The "Temperance Hall", now known as Ebenezer Vestry, had not then been built and when an entertainment of a secular character was held in the village the venue was the "long room" of one of the local Taverns. It should be borne in mind, in this connection, that the old Inns of long ago bore very little relation to the modern "Public House". In the life of every village community the Inn in the old days was an essential part. Indeed, they were closely connected with the Christian Church. Until 1850, for instance, the vestry meetings of Vaynor Parish Church were held in "Church Tavern". And Jesus, we are told was born in a stable "because there was no room at the Inn".

At the time of which I write, the inhabitants of Cefn Coed were provided with an annual "Show" which its proprietor proudly called, "Rogers' Puppet Show". If Rogers' Show were staged today we would laugh, not because of it, but at it. Yet, for weeks before hand the villagers looked forward to it with almost delirious animation. On the night of the performance the long room of the "George" was full to suffocation. Rogers strutted on the "landing" making it known with a loud voice that he was glad to welcome his patrons once more. In the "long room" amused expectation was written on every face. Every one was in good humour : harmless banter was indulged in. Suddenly there was a flutter of excitement and every face was turned in the direction of the door. Rogers, wreathed in smiles and bowing deferentially, was giving a special welcome to two "gentlemen". The clamour in the room ceased. The "two gentlemen" were Rev. Owen Evans and Rev. Rees Williams, Rector of Vaynor. They had come to redeem their promise to Rogers that they would grace his show with their presence. With dramatic gait, the proprietor cleared the way and personally led his two distinguished patrons to their seats in the front row.

The performance was simple enough and was not wholly dissimilar to the modern "Punch and Judy Shows" except that a larger number of grotesque figures responded to Rogers' manipulation of the strings. The audience laughed convulsively and no one joined in the hilarity with greater abandon than the two staid representatives of religion.

The show over, the audience dispersed. Some walked out straight into the street ; others lingered guiltily in the cosy kitchen of the inn. Furtive glances were made towards the door through which the reverend gentlemen would have to pass. At last, they were seen to leave but not until their raven-black figures had been engulfed by the night did any one attempt to "call a drink". Respect for the ministerial profession could go no further.

Rev. Owen Evans died in the full plenitude of his mental powers, and left in the hearts of the villagers an aching sorrow. For some time before his passing, he had a presentiment that his life was rapidly drawing to its close. When on the last day of the year 1864, he was officiating in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd at the

funeral of a young man who had met his death in one of the local pits he said that he would prefer an instant death to a lingering one. In his judgment, no death could be sweeter than that. He was not, he continued, afraid to die, but he feared long suffering. On the following day, New Year's Day, he preached from Jeremiah chap. 28, verse 16; "This year thou shalt die". In the sermon, he referred nostalgically, to his colleagues in the ministry who had passed on, to his own failing health, to the uncertainty of man's life. The previous day he had attended a meeting of the Merthyr Board of Guardians. It was evident to his fellow members that he was ill, but he did not complain. He was too unwell, however, to walk home and a conveyance had to be requisitioned. He was put to bed; yet, on the following morning, which was a Sunday, he insisted upon taking his accustomed place in the pulpit. His sermon, however, was brief. In the evening he could not preach at all. The following Thursday evening, 4th January 1865, he was reading the newspaper with his family around him. In the silence, the newspaper was seen to fall, rustling as it fell. Owen Evans had had his wish. He had passed away without a twinge of pain. It was nine days after he had preached from the text: "This year thou shalt die". He was in his fifty-seventh year. His grave is in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd burial ground. On the day of his funeral not only was the pulpit heavily draped in black cloth but even every seat in the Chapel. At the first meeting of the Merthyr Board of Guardians, following his death, so eager were the members to be the first to pay public tribute to his memory that the Chairman stopped them from speaking, claiming that honour for himself.

So lived and died a man of great moral worth, a man of true Christian piety in whose dealings the cardinal virtues were given their due place. Owen Evans was minister to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for twenty seven years.

Death having removed Rev. Owen Evans from the earthly scene, the pulpit at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was again vacant. It was supplied during the summers 1865—1866 by Rev. Rees Cribyn Jones who was then a student at the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen. Rev. Rees Cribyn Jones was born in June 1841 and was a cousin of Rev. R. J. Jones, M.A., Aberdare.

He was the father of Mr. W. S. Jones, M.A., M.Sc., former Principal of Carmarthen Presbyterian College. At the end of the summer of 1866, when he was a supply at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, he was invited to become its permanent Minister, but acting on the advice of a near relative he declined the call.

On the 1st May, 1867 a call was extended to Rev. Isaac Thomas Williams, a native of Aberdulais near Neath. Isaac Thomas Williams, was from the first a sick man. His outward appearance betrayed the sad condition of his health. For a time he kept a school in the "Ysgoldy" but in 1873 he was compelled by persistent illness to relinquish the pastorate. On the 4 Dec. 1873 he died, a young man of thirty-seven years. He was nurtured in the Baptist faith, and was educated at the Baptist College Bristol. His studies when at College brought about a change in his theological views and in due course he threw in his lot with the Unitarians. His remains were buried in Llangatwg Church Yard, Neath.

For four years after Rev. T. Isaac Williams' death the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was without a settled Minister, but valuable assistance was rendered the congregation in the meanwhile by E. Ceredig Jones, Tanerdy, Vale of Aeron, later of Bradford who devoted two of his summer vacations to fill the breach. In the summer of 1876 J. Hathren Davies then a student at Carmarthen rendered similar services.

On 21 January 1877 an invitation, of which the following is a copy, was sent to J. Hathren Davies.

"Dear Sir,

We, the undersigned being Trustees and Deacons and Members at the Unitarian Old Chapel, Cefn Coed, in the Parish of Vaynor, in the County of Brecon, do send an invitation to you to become our Minister at the said Chapel and that we do promise you a salary of sixty pounds a year with the use of the School Room that belongs to the said Chapel if you should wish at any time to keep a School. Your salary is made up between endowments and subscriptions of the Members and the Congregation of the said Chapel. Your salary will be paid by instalments every quarter.

We hope that under God's blessing the Congregation will increase in numbers under your ministry so that we may be enabled to increase your salary in time to come.

As witness our hands this 21 Day of January, 1877.

Evan Lewis, Deacon and Trustee.
William Hughes, Deacon and Trustee.
John Evans, Member.
David Thomas, Member.
Richard Williams, Member and Trustee.
Evan W. P. Evans, Member and Trustee.
Evan Thomas, Member.
William Harries, Member and Trustee.

Dear Sir,

We shall be thankful if you will please return us an answer to the above invitation as soon as possible".

Rev. J. Hathren Davies accepted the invitation and commenced his duties in August 1877.

It is difficult, even at this distance of time, to write about Hathren Davies without emotion. He was probably the most widely-known minister our church ever had. In this respect, no less a renowned divine than Rev. Owen Evans would have been constrained to yield him the palm. Owen Evans largely belonged to the study. Hathren, on the other hand, revelled in a greater measure in the activities of the outer world.

A native of the parish of Talsarn in the vale of Aeron, Cardiganshire, John Hathren Davies was born on the 15th October 1855, and was one of eight children. His father, known throughout the neighbourhood as Deio'r Hwper, was highly esteemed for his Christian piety and earned a modest living as a maker of wooden implements for farm use. Although the simple needs of life in Deio's home were ample, luxuries were extremely few, and frugality was a necessity that had to be given unremitting attention. The scenes and incidents of one's early and impressionable years stand out in clearer relief than those of later times, and I can well remember Hathren telling me with a wistful smile how eagerly, when a boy, he looked forward to five o'clock on Sunday afternoons, to the pleasure of drinking his tea sweetened with sugar. It was the

only meal of the week when that precious commodity could be provided owing to the low ebb of the family exchequer. Yet, unalloyed happiness pervaded this humble home, happiness that was due to the honest toil and industry of virtuous parents.

In his delightfully racy book "*Hen Bregethwr a'i Gyfoedion*", Mr. W. S. Jones, formerly Principal of Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, states that he has heard it said that Hathren's arm was amputated without an anaesthetic. The story of the amputation was related to me many times by Hathren himself. Here it is as I recall it.

When he was about ten years old, Hathren, as was his habit, proceeded one day to play with the boys of Velindre Rees farm not far distant from his home. On the farm was a large chaffing-machine worked by hydraulic power. Eager and curious, like most boys, to see for himself how the machine operated, Hathren touched one of the pulleys with his fingers, and his hand was drawn into the cogs. Frantically, he shouted to the servant man who was not far away, to knock off the strap, but the man, terrified at seeing the boy's hand being slowly mutilated, instead of doing what he was bade, fled to seek the aid of the farmer. The farmer soon arrived and removing the strap brought the machine to a standstill.

One of the servant-men at once mounted a horse and galloped off to Lampeter to fetch a doctor. In due course, Doctor Abel Evans arrived, but found that the lad was now so weak through loss of blood that, save for the stemming of the haemorrhage, he could do very little.

Late that night the boy's father arrived on the scene distressed and agitated. Someone would have to keep vigil over the little patient through the night. Deio insisted that this was a duty that he personally must undertake. Weary after the long walk from the farm where he had been working that day, fatigue overwhelmed the devoted parent, and sometime before the dawn, he fell fast asleep. When he awoke he was appalled to find that the lad's arm had bled profusely. The boy's condition was manifestly worse, and Deio wept convulsively.

Early that morning Doctor Abel Evans called again. This time he was accompanied by another Doctor. An examination disclosed that the boy was too weak to be given chloro-

form, and yet something would have to be done, and done soon, to save the lad's life. There was no alternative but to amputate the arm without an anaesthetic. When the Doctors prepared to blind-fold him, the boy steadfastly objected. He implored upon them to let him see the operation being performed. He promised them that he would suffer the pain bravely and that he would not cry. For some time the doctors were deaf to his entreaties, but after another consultation they at last yielded, and with that strong and manly conduct that Hathren manifested when in adversity in after-life, he witnessed, almost without flinching, the amputation of his own arm below the elbow. It was this accident that determined Hathren's career. Destiny was soon at work tempering the wind to the shorn lamb.

Deprived now of his left hand, to earn a living in the fields, or as a craftsman like his father, was out of the question. Some months later therefore, Hathren was sent to school preparatory to his entering upon a ministerial career. The school chosen was the "Vale of Aeron Academy"—then a seminary of much repute. Rev. W. Rees, Rhydygwin, was the master. Although at this time Hathren had no knowledge at all of the English alphabet, he soon proved to be an apt pupil. He entered upon his home-work with zest, and pored over his books until far into the night, his only source of light being a tallow candle. Many times, I heard him say, the grey streaks of dawn found him at his studies.

Having made satisfactory headway in the rudiments of knowledge at the Vale of Aeron Academy, he proceeded to the famous grammar school kept by Rev. Rees Cribyn Jones, at Lampeter. From there he passed into the Presbyterian College at Carmarthen in 1873. Here he remained until 1877,—one of the best students of his year,—and at the end of his course he took a high place in Latin, Hebrew and Greek. When at College, he was called "Hathren" after the name of a stream adjacent to his home to distinguish him from other students who bore the same surname.

During the vacation of 1876 he preached at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on several occasions and made, despite his immature years, an excellent impression. On the 21st January 1877 he received a cordial invitation from the Church to become its

SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFICERS AND TEACHERS—1947 (*E. Warrilow*)

WOMEN'S LEAGUE—1947 *(E. Warrilow)*

Minister. He did not, however, reply to the "Call" immediately. He was, at that time, torn, as it were, between two conflicting passions. On the one hand, he had, for some months past, been wrestling with the idea of emigrating to America to read for a degree in Divinity. On the other hand, the invitation to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd—still redolent of the fame of Owen Evans—was not to be lightly cast aside. In the end, after deep reflection, he resolved to abandon the idea of graduating at Harvard and accepted the "Call" to the Hen Dy Cwrdd. He entered upon his ministerial duties on the last Sunday of August 1877. He was then only twenty-one years of age. In after life, I often heard him say that, in retrospect, nothing stood out more prominently in his mind than that disturbing period in his career when, without the least experience of the world, he timorously tried to indicate the path to the Higher Life to a congregation consisting, for the most part, of men and women already bent with the heat and burden of the day.

It has already been stated in these pages that Unitarian Ministers of former years were not entirely dependent upon the ministry for their living. Other sources of income had to be sought. Hathren's salary, when he launched upon his career at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, was only £60 per annum. It was a meagre sum, even in those days, when the cost of living was low and goods comparatively cheap. With a view, therefore, to augmenting his stipend he opened within three months of his ordination, a grammar school in the "Ysgoldy", now renovated beyond all recognition. The school was known for miles around as "Ysgol Davies", but a wag, one day, more in jest than in earnest, gave it the descriptive, if rather hybrid, appellation of "Pen Steps Academy", and by that name it was fondly referred to until 1901 when through Hathren's indifferent health, it was closed.

Although, when he opened the school, Hathren was fortified by a sound knowledge of English, Welsh, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, French was not one of his linguistic acquirements, and many pupils were lost to him on that account, particularly those pupils who were intended for the medical and legal professions. Here was a hurdle which, by hook or by crook, he would have to negotiate.

At that time, Cardiff University College, had only just been opened, and facilities were offered to external students to attend lectures there. Hathren availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded and decided to matriculate, taking French as one of his subjects for study. He passed the examination in the first division, and there are solicitors[1] still living who owe their knowledge of French to his tuition. He soon discovered, however, that adding French to his curriculum was not enough. Local farmers wished him to instruct their sons in the principles of agriculture, and although he had been brought up in the country he felt that his knowledge of the land and its cultivation was too superficial to teach the subject sufficiently. Once again he settled down to a course of intensive study and in a few months he gained a high position in the honours stage (Agriculture) in South Kensington, London.

When he was reading for his matriculation he discovered, to his chagrin, that whilst he had an array of Welsh words at his command, his vocabulary of the English language was relatively limited, and it was characteristic of his thoroughness that, in order to increase it, he read all Macaulay's Essays, line by line with, as he used to put it, a dictionary at his elbow. I believe he knew Macaulay's famous Essay on "Milton" almost off by heart. On 1st January 1879 he married at Twynrodyn Unitarian Church, Margaret, elder daughter of William and Margaret Hughes. His eldest son Mr. W. Cledwyn Davies is Superintendent Registrar for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

From 1888 until 1893, and again in 1901, he was secretary of the Aberdare and Merthyr Unitarian Musical Society. In 1898 he was the President of the South Wales Unitarian Association, and from the chair delivered an address on "The position and work of our church in Wales". From 1888 until 1900 he was the Editor of *Yr Ymofynydd* and, according to an authority that Journal was never a brighter or a more helpful advocate of Unitarianism than during Hathren's able

[1]Mr. Taliesin Griffiths, now Magistrates' Clerk, was one of his pupils, so was late Rev. Dr. Richard Jones, M.A., D.D., of Llandinam.

editorship. One of his publications was a translation into Welsh of Armstrong's "Back to Jesus" published in 1903. At the time of his death, he was engaged in translating into Welsh, "The Bible ; what it is, and is not".

As an Eisteddfodwr, he carried off several important prizes. His prodigous work entitled "Biography of Eminent Welshmen, 1700 to 1900" (now in the National Library) took second place in the Caernarvon National Eisteddfod in 1906. In 1909 he won the prize at Newcastle Emlyn on "Beirdd Dyfed", and in the previous year he gained the prize offered at an Eisteddfod in Brecon on "Giraldus Cambrensis". For four years, he was engaged as a teacher of Welsh by the Merthyr Education Authority at their evening classes. He was also engaged by the Glamorganshire Education Committee in a similar capacity.

For nine years, he was a member of the now defunct Cefn School Board, and headed the poll three times. In 1898 he was elected a member of the Merthyr Board of Guardians, and was chairman in 1909. He was also a member of the Vaynor and Penderyn District Council for ten years.

In 1900, the public of Vaynor and Cefn Coed presented him with an illuminated address and a purse of gold, and it is worthy of mention, as proof of the regard in which he was held that, out of the little over six hundred houses of which Cefn was then composed, only in three cottages did the collectors fail to get subscriptions, and even in these the refusals were due to restricted means.

Those were some of Hathren's attainments. In a biographical sketch, however, one must depict the man as he was, not only his achievements.

Above all, perhaps, Hathren Davies was an ardent Welshman whose affection for Wales, and everything Welsh, was deeply ingrained in his nature. His knowledge of the literature of his native land was not confined to the names, dates and editions of leading works, but included the fuller and profounder knowledge possessed by men who have ranged widely over the cherished productions of Wales' most gifted writers.

Deep down in his heart was an intense love for the windswept moor and the rolling hills. Nature was not the least of

his teachers. The song of a bird on a bough, the whispering of a rill in a glade, the perfume of hay in a new mown field made his soul rejoice. He found exquisite enjoyment in searching for birds' nests, and the ease with which he found the sequestered abode of a linnet or a wren was uncanny. In years now long since passed away—I was only a youth at the time—I made excursions with him into the remote fastnesses of our neighbouring valleys, and recollections of those agreeable hours will remain with me as long as life lasts.

Blessed with a sturdy physique, it was not without reason that he was proud of his pedestrian powers. A walk from Cefn Coed to Brecon and back in a day—34 miles—he looked upon as a leisurely stroll, and not often could he prevail upon those friends who had accompanied him on one of these expeditions to repeat the ordeal. Despite the loss of an arm, the ease with which he folded an open newspaper in a windy street had to be seen to be believed.

He had a keen sense of humour and loved a joke, but it had to be a joke that did not embarrass. Although essentially a grave man, he was the antithesis of gloom. His quest in life was not for shadows but for golden sheaves of sunbeams. In his day, local trains were not known for their punctuality, and he was prompted to have a sly "dig" at the Railway Company. "Astronomers" he wrote "know to the fraction of a minute when an eclipse of the sun is expected, but no one ever knows when a train is due to arrive at Cefn Coed within *twenty* minutes".

As a schoolmaster, his reputation had travelled even into the remotest parts of South Wales. His pupils consisted mostly of young men who proposed entering the Universities or Theological Colleges. Not a few of them, later in life, excelled their teacher. Hathren, however, was not envious; quite the contrary. He was content to dwell on the pleasing thought that he had helped them on their way. Literally dozens of youths received tuition from him without expense to themselves. He had no patience with people who conserved their knowledge as they did their wealth. He would allow no talent to languish in obscurity and poverty. No one knew better than he that his mission as a schoolmaster was to

educate and set men thinking. An aspiration to climb he nourished therefore with patient care.

He hardly ever used the birch at his school To inflict punishment upon recalcitrant pupils he adopted a more effective method than that of using the cane. He pinched the lobes of their ears! This little oddity of his, this quaint way of inflicting corporal chastisement is remembered by old pupils with mingled amusement and pain to this day.

Many of his pupils at the "Academy" were young men whose education had been interrupted at the age of fourteen when they left the Elementary School to take up jobs at the steel-works and collieries. When they had reached their late teens, and the novelty of having "started to work" had worn off, they discovered that, not for them the prosaic calling of a miner, nor the uninspiring trade of the blacksmith or carpenter, but, rather, the more congenial pastures of the professions and the Ministry. Finance, however, was often an obstacle, but they got over the difficulty by following their respective occupations in winter, and, putting their savings by, were able to pay for their tuition at the academy in summer.

Towards the end of his life, Hathren used to say, rather wistfully, that the happiest years of his life, were those he spent in "Pensteps Academy". By those who knew him intimately, this can be easily believed. Indeed, shaping the thoughts of the young, restraining their excessive exuberance, and guiding them along the paths of life was one of his most agreeable traits. He was never happier than when he had a band of young men about him. He was, so to speak, the wise man in the company who made the company wise. Intelligent young men were to him what a golden field of corn is to the reaper—a harvest ripe for the gathering. Contact with his juniors was probably the secret of his own youthful mind. His activity was contagious. He infused into all around him his own unwearied industry. He scorned the view that mixing with his pupils out of school hours was "improper". He made his scholars his friends, and, his scholars, far from feeling ill at ease in his presence, were drawn to him, as by a magnet.

He was not, in the accepted sense, a popular preacher. His style was homely and natural rather than aggressive, and it was rarely, if ever, he was moved to flights of eloquence.

His sermons were more scholarly than evangelical. They appealed more to the intellect than to the heart. In other words, they instructed rather than "saved".

The tragedy of the poor ever before his eyes, he preached more about the sick and the sad than about creeds and dogmas. He never aspired to the Welsh "hwyl", and studiously avoided all those conventional almost theatrical, artifices so commonly practised by orthodox preachers of those days. The absence of any sign of fervour in his pulpit utterances, and his inability to move his hearers to copious tears, gave rise to the belief that emotion was foreign to his nature. The fact is, of course, that to no one had been given a more generous share of the most sensitive feelings of the human heart. For, truth to tell, he was a strange combination of the mystic and the realist, of the dreamer and the man of affairs. Every Palm Sunday, when our main street was thronged with people wending their way to the cemetery he stole into the quiet seclusion of his study to read to himself, "*Bedd y Dyn Tlawd*" or Gray's noble "*Elegy in a Country Churchyard*".

He passionately loved old things—old books, old thoughts, old memories. In short, he loved everything that had its roots in the past, and those friends who had been longest dead were dearest in his eyes. Music to him was like the breath of a scented flower, and the simplest strain of melody stirred him to the depths. Possessing a pleasing voice, one of his lasting delights was to sing "with the tenors" in the singing practice at the end of the evening service. The "Ysgol Gân", of which he was immensly proud—and rightly so—was then probably better attended than at any time in the history of the chapel, and it was amusing to note, at the end of the service how shyly the Romeos and Juliets on courting bent attempted to avoid his watchful glances when the night was fair and the moon at the full! For to be caught in the act of trying to play truant from the Singing School was too appalling to contemplate!

Although he believed that the primary concern of religion was the world of the spirit, Hathren Davies could not divorce the Gospel from the economic needs of the children of God. The church, he argued, if it was to fulfil its mission, must take its full share in local and national politics. To act in the

interest of the oppressed was, as he saw it, to act religiously. Nothing, however, was further from his mind than that the Church, as a corporate body, should be identified with any particular political party. Choice of party should be left to the dictates of the individual. Some there were, even in his own congregation, who thought that in prominently associating himself with economic and other secular activities, he was overstepping the line of ministerial duty, but, having the courage of his convictions, he openly, but deferentially disagreed with them and, nothing deterred, followed the path along which he was convinced his duty lay.

So, as soon as he had established himself at Cefn Coed, he threw himself with all his youthful vigour into the vortex of local political life. He was a student at College when squirearchy in Cardiganshire drove Rev. William Thomas, M.A. (Gwilym Marles), and his congregation, out of Llwyn Rhyd Owen Chapel in 1876, and the memory of this shameful affront to the principles of religious freedom so embittered him against Toryism that, all his life, he consistently opposed, by voice and pen, the Tory political faith. By common consent, the history of Liberalism in Cefn Coed provided no greater name than his.

One of Hathren's pet aversions was alcohol. He declined to take liquor even as medicine. Though he suffered from angina pectoris, in vain did his medical adviser[1]—one of his old pupils—try to prevail upon him to take an occasional sip of brandy.

A man's personality is often more vividly revealed in his actions, and mode of living, than in a most careful psychological analysis of his character. In January, 1887, accompanied by Mr. David W. Thomas, one of his pupils, (now a retired schoolmaster), he set out on one of his walks to Brecon and back. On his return journey, he collapsed from a heart attack on the road near the Brecon Beacons and had to be assisted to a hostelry (Storey Arms) a full mile away. It was obvious that he was very ill, and in a critical condition. A stimulant was urgently necessary and, having no brandy in the house, the

[1]Dr. W. Llewellyn Jones, M.D.

publican hastily brought some wine. Hathren obstinately refused to drink it. Deeply concerned, Mr. Thomas beseeched him to take just one draught, but again he declined, and brushing the wine aside asked for a cup of tea. After a rest, however, he recovered, and bravely walked the remaining 8 miles that separated him from his home. Here is another illustration, to indicate this deep seated objection to intoxicants.

Sixty or so years ago, his congregation included a very wealthy brewer whose iron will and dominating personality was the talk of the neighbourhood. Mr. Evans, who was a very generous contributor to the cause at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was, despite his aggressive manner, an extremely generous man, and his readiness to dip into his pocket, at the slightest sign of need, was a by-word in the locality. He, too, had his decided opinions on "Drink", but they were the very opposite of Hathren's. He was one of those men—and their name is legion—who could not understand why a man's Christian piety—or even a Minister's Christian poiety, for that matter—should be called into question because he drank an occasional glass of ale.

When Hathren, therefore, called upon him in his ministerial capacity, for the first time, he was cheerfully offered a glass of beer. But the offer was respectfully declined. An argument ensued. The air noticeably chilled and minister and member parted hardly the best of friends. On reflection, Hathren thought that the incident might conceivably react to the detriment of the finances of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd ; he was not, however, sorry. He had acted in accordance with the promptings of his conscience, and had made a stand for which he was not ashamed. The incident, it is pleasant to relate, led to no unhappy consequences. It was soon forgotten and both disputants struck a close and affectionate friendship that lasted without pause until it was severed by death.

Despite his marked Celtic propensities, Hathren was not unduly sensitive to public criticism, and, regarding life, as he did, philosophically, he was not easily upset by petty fault-finding. A notable trait in his public speeches was his brevity and meticulousness. Even in conversation he expressed himself with the minimun of words. These words he weighed

carefully before giving utterance to them. Precise, however, as he was in the phrasing of his platform speeches, an incident occured one evening at the local Drill Hall that gave him, on his own admission to me, a restless night. It was a trivial affair ; just a pin-prick, so to speak, but it hurt.

He was chairman at a charity concert held in aid of an incapacitated villager, and at the end of the entertainment he had to announce that a repeat performance would take place the following evening at reduced prices in order that persons of limited incomes might be given a chance to attend. In doing so, he referred to the poorer section of the village community as "common people". The phrase, of course, was a perfectly legitimate one and, in the sense he used it, did not, by any means, connote a morally lower order of society ; but some members of the audience, who were unversed in the correct use of words and their subtler shades of meaning, took exception to it. That Hathren Davies, universally regarded as the champion of the oppressed, should have so far fallen from grace as to call the poor "common", was to them, incredible, and an explanation was demanded ! When Hathren's attention was drawn to the offending word he was noticably distressed, and his face wore a troubled expression. He was naturally disturbed at the imputation that he had sneered at people whose lives were so closely knitted to his own, and for whom he had done, and was still doing, so much. He at once, therefore, made his position clear ; no offence, he said, was intended nor implied. The word "common", he explained, was an elastic one and lent itself to a far wider interpretation than that given to it by his critics. He had used it, he continued, in its broader and more general sense, and nothing was further from his mind than to cast an aspersion upon people whose lot it was to be poor. The air having been thus cleared, the expressions of regret that followed were many and sincere, but for all the profuseness of the apologies Hathren left the scene with a heavy heart, and it was many years before the recollections of it were completely obliterated from his memory.

Another of Hathren's aversions was unpunctuality. Punctual himself, he expected punctuality from others. Time to him was not something to be abused but to be used. Almost invariably he was the first to arrive at the services, and a habit

of his was to pace up and down the aisle, singing in subdued tones, snatches of some favourite refrain until the Chapel began to fill. On the very stroke of the hour he gave out the first hymn. He was like the tide. He waited for no man.

Though he was a man of many parts, he never neglected his Church. To the faith of his fathers everything was subordinate. He was a Unitarian to the marrow, and never shrank from making it known. It was not often that he could be angered, but if anything aroused his wrath at all, it was religious intolerance. The liberty he claimed for himself to believe what he liked, he freely gave to others. True, he expressed his opinions in no unwavering terms but to try to assert dominion over the conscience of his opponent he regarded as the very negation of religious freedom. He always tried to see the other man's point of view. Quoting S. T. Coleridge he used to say, "I will be tolerant of everything except every other man's intolerance". It was extraordinary how highly developed were his intuitive perceptions. To conceal from him a secret grief or a hidden worry was almost impossible. It was as though every heart was laid bare to him.

Outwardly, he impressed one as being a little austere, even forbidding. This, however, was only a delusion. No one was more approachable. The moment a favour was asked of him, his face lit up like a beacon light, and one's fears dissolved in his genial presence. All sorts of requests were made to him, from the execution of Wills and the writing of private letters, to counsel and advice in love affairs and family wranglings. He probably brought about more family reconciliations than anyone in the parish. Disputes over cottage and garden boundaries, subtle points of difference in political arguments, disagreements over the correct construction of a Welsh "Englyn"—all were brought to him in the sure knowledge that they would be smoothed away. He was, as it were, a reference library personified. When the grave engulfed him, it engulfed also countless secrets and confidences. It was not without truth that the leader-writer of the "*South Wales Daily News*" said of him after his death, "Wales would be rich indeed were every village to contain a Hathren". Though he had mingled actively with the throng ever since his advent to our village, he was, I think, still a country-man at heart;

his true home was far from the madding crowd. He revelled in the freedom of the open air. To the end he was interested in the land, and those who tilled it, and worked on it. That he rejoiced and was thrilled at the sight of a grubby little urchin playing happily in the street, no one, who knew his love for young people will deny, but a lamb gambolling with unrestricted ecstasy in a meadow pleased him probably no less.

His belief in the immortality of the human soul was unshaken and sure. Like most Unitarian Ministers of his day he took more than a fleeting interest in psychic phenomena and "sat" in many seances with Mr. Scott the well known spiritualist and astronomer of Merthyr Tydfil.

Hathren Davies expressed a wish that his end would come suddenly, as it came to his father. And it did come. The day before he died I accompanied him on one of his favourite walks to Cwm Tâf. It was a beautiful spring morning, and life was already stirring in the trees. On several occasions in the course of our wanderings, he turned the conversation to his old home in Cardiganshire, and imagined himself back in the haunts of his childhood. He recalled the boyish pranks of the lad he used to be, and fought, in fancy, his early battles over again. He recollected the snows as well as the lush green of his early years and was depressed by the reflection—wholly imaginary, of course—that his life had been a failure and a desolate waste. He felt he could have done more and better. Now and then he paused because of a distressing internal pain, and one could not escape the feeling that he was conscious of his impending departure from the earth.

The following day (12th March, 1910) I witnessed a scene which dwells painfully in many memories beside mine. I saw him being carried home in a chair. He had died on the road by St. John's Church on his return from a meeting of the Merthyr Board of Guardians. The energy which he had infused into others had too clearly sapped his own. The news spread like wild-fire through the neighbourhood, and I can still remember with what consternation the villagers heard the melancholy tidings. All were sad because he had gone.

Next morning, which was a Sunday morning, it was a sad sight that met the gaze inside his beloved church at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. The pulpit was vacant; no voice emanated from

it, and the congregation, grief-stricken and blinded by the blow, sobbed in the cloisteral silence. A great man had fallen in Israel, and a gap had been made in their lives that never could be filled. Hathren passed on at a comparatively early age—he was only fifty-four,—but no man, perhaps, had more need of rest, for none was more uneasy, more impatient, more active in that life in which, contrary to his own assessment of it, he had acquitted himself so worthily.

The funeral was a public one, and so large was it that those who headed the procession had already reached the chapel before the body had left the house Bryntawel nearly half a mile away. It was computed that well over a thousand people attended it. The main street was lined with dense crowds, and traffic had to be brought to a standstill. En route, the Vaynor Philharmonic Society sang some of his favourite hymns. The principal officiating ministers were the late Rev. Rees Cribyn Jones (his old schoolmaster), and the late Rev. R. J. Jones, M.A., Aberdare. Among those who sent letters regretting their inability to attend were Mr. D. A. Thomas (afterwards Lord Rhondda), Mr. Sidney Robinson, M.P., Sir Edgar Jones, M.P., and Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P.

When most of us make our adieu to life, oblivion is not long before it wraps us in its thrall. We are remembered only by the few. Soon we lie in unvisited tombs, and the pageant of life passes us by as though we had never appeared upon the earth at all.

Here, however, was a man who had a special claim to remembrance. He had shown unflinching devotion to the welfare of the locality, had pursued an undeviating course of virtue, and zealously promoted the Kingdom of God. Feeling in the village was universal that his services should be recognised, and his memory perpetuated in some tangible form. Therefore, in the November following Hathren's death, a meeting representative of the inhabitants of Cefn Coed, was convened with a view to erecting a memorial on his grave. The meeting appropriately enough, was held in the old "academy," made sacred by many associations. The public responded to the appeal magnificently. Subscriptions were received from all parts of England and Wales. A few were sent by some of his former pupils who had made their homes in America.

Twelve months later, the memorial was unveiled by Dr. Elfet Lewis who was a contemporary of Hathren at College. The proceedings were conducted by Richard G. Price, an old pupil whose vivid word-picture of his old preceptor is a lingering memory. From the shade of the Yew tree, James Keir Hardie, M.P. expressed his admiration for "a man whose character was as strong as the granite monument which had just been unveiled, and whose countenance shone like the gloss upon it". Among the many who paid their tributes by letter was Lord Merthyr, K.C.V.O., to whom it was a pleasure to bear testimony to "a worthy and noble man".

I can vividly recall the scene. It was a beautiful Autumn afternoon, one that Hathren himself would have delighted in. The sky was cloudless, the air calm and still. All around, men and women of all sects and creeds stood in solemn silence. Nothing was heard save the voices of the speakers, and the noisy chatter of a row of sparrows that looked down knowingly at us from the chapel roof. Here and there, a leaf fluttered on to the lichened tombs from a nearby tree, a mourning breeze whispered in the sombre shades of the trees. Before the proceedings were over night had fallen. Not, however, on the dead that slept at our feet, for, "It shall come to pass in that day the light shall not be clear nor dark. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, nor day nor night, but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light".

On 26 June, 1910, a successor to Rev. J. Hathren Davies was appointed in the person of Rev. J. Carrara Davies, now of Belper.

Rev. J. Carrara Davies was born in Lampeter, 15 May, 1882, and was prepared for College by Rev. David Evans. Trained at the Home Missionary College, and Owen's College, Manchester, he was, before coming to Cefn Coed, for six months in temporary ministerial charge of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Aberdare. The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefn Coed, was, however his first settled pastorate. During his ministry at Cefn Coed, Mr. Davies' kindliness of spirit and charm of manner won for him a host of friends even outside his own church and when he left for Belper in 1918 regret at his departure was universal. Like his predecessors at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd he took an active interest in public affairs and when he presented himself for election

on the local Parish Council, though it was his first attempt, he easily headed the poll.

For seven years after Rev. J. Carrara Davies' resignation the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was without a pastor. At the end of 1918 a call was extended to Rev. T. Eric Davies, and early the following year Mr. Davies entered upon his duties. Mr. Davies was born at Caio, Carmarthenshire, 15 January, 1884, and started preaching at Crugybar, in the same county, when he was only sixteen years old. He was prepared for College at Llansawel Academy and, later, at the Old College School, Carmarthen. He entered Carmarthen Presbyterian College in 1904, and finished his course there in 1907. His first ministry was at the Congregational Church, Laugharne, upon which he entered in September 1907. He remained there until 1912. His ordination at Laugharne, "caused some consternation on account of his very heterodox views". In 1912 he became the minister of the English Congregational Church at Treorchy where he remained until he joined the Unitarians in 1915. In 1915, he was inducted to the pastorate of the Unitarian Church at Pontypridd and towards the end of 1918 received an invitation to take charge of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefn Coed. Commencing his duties there early in the following Spring, Mr. Davies remained at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd until November 1925, when he left to take charge of a Universalist Congregation at Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Returning from Canada in 1930 he settled at Waverly Road Church, Heath, Birmingham. That ministry lasted until the end of 1937 after which he took temporary charge of a Unitarian Church in Newark, Notts. In 1938 "he decided to leave the Ministry for good and to sever all ties with organised and unorganised religion". Mr. Davies is now in retirement in Gwernogle, Carmarthenshire. He states that he is nevertheless "interested in people who are struggling for light and freedom and has not lapsed into any kind of cynicism". He assures the present writer that "the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was the most attentive congregation he ever addressed and that the the congregation represented Nonconformity at its very best".

Rev. T. Eric Davies was followed at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Rev. T. L. Jones now of Leytonstone. Mr. Jones was born at Cribin, Cardiganshire, in 1895 and was associated with the Unit-

arian Chapel there from his childhood. In 1914, at the outbreak of the first Great War, he enlisted in the armed forces, and from 1915 to 1919 served in Gallipoli and Mesopotamia. After his return to civilian life he showed a marked aptitude for Ministerial work and under the guidance of his pastor, Rev. T. O. Williams, M.A., Lampeter, he prepared himself for admission into the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen. In June 1929 he was appointed student-minister of the Unitarian Church, at Nottage, Glam., and after the completion of his college course was ordained minister of that church in June 1930. For a time he edited the '*Ymofynydd*' with distinction. He was minister of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd from 6th January 1933 until November 1935 when he left to take charge of the Unitarian Church at Cardiff. Mr. Jones is remembered at Cefn Coed as a deep and natural thinker whose polished sermons bore the stamp of the consummate writer and philosopher.

After the departure of Rev. T. L. Jones the vacancy was filled by the present minister Rev. J. Marles Thomas, M.A.

It has been said of a modern English author that he spends life like a prodigal. This is also true of Rev. J. Marles Thomas. His mental and physical energy is irrepressible; like the wind he never seems to be at rest. When he is not dispensing sympathy and hope at the bedside of the sick, he is selling tickets for charitable objects from door to door; when he is not in his study preparing his sermons he is guiding the footsteps of the young. Few men associate more freely with the masses. None knows better than he their feelings and their wants. Conflicting estimates are invariably formed of men whose duties expose them to the public glare. Both inside and outside the chapel there appears to be only one opinion of Mr. Thomas. The respect in which he is held is universal. But like truth, he does not force himself upon the affection of the people. He wins his way to their hearts by his cheerful willingness to serve; by taking upon himself the humblest tasks. There is something about him of the restlessness of his age, an age in which the leisurely, slippered ease of the past does not exist. He leaves nothing until the evening that can be done in the morning. If there is work to do, it must be done while it is yet day. His motto is action; his aim, service.

But with all his industry, with all his ceaseless desire to be up and doing, he finds time to ponder the immensity, the awesome mystery of life. Born in the country, for the peace of which he often yearns, he draws his inspiration from the fountains of nature and has the gift of investing the most prosaic subjects with the freshness of the green pastures amongst which he was brought up. Like Hathren Davies, whose catholicity of mind and earnestness of well-doing he so strongly resembles, he goes for his similes and illustrations to the same source—to the woods and the mountains. Eloquent in the pulpit and fluent on the platform his sermons are what modern sermons should be—a mixture of the abstract and the practical, of the scholarly and the artistic.

His belief in Unitarianism and its message is implicit. In the faith of his fathers he is unwavering, immovable, and in this connection it is worthy of record, as an indication of the more tolerant spirit of the present age, that his loyalty to his beliefs has not, as in the case of his predecessors at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, rendered him a religious outcast in local ministerial circles. Indeed, some of his best friends may be found occupying neighbouring orthodox pulpits.

Mr. Thomas is the son of Mr. and Mrs. T. G. Thomas, Crug yr Eryr Factory, Talgarreg, Llandyssul, and was born 28 October, 1905. He received his early education at the local village school and County School, Llandyssul. Before entering the ministry he worked, for some time, with his father in the Woollen Factory. In 1925 he entered the Tutorial School, New Quay, where he was prepared for admission to Carmarthen Presbyterian College. He entered the Presbyterian College in 1926. Leaving Carmarthen in 1930, he proceeded to Glasgow University with a Dr. Williams Scholarship and gained his M.A. degree there in 1933. He came to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd from the Unitarian Church, Aberystwyth—his first pastorate—in May, 1936. The following year he undertook the oversight of the Unitarian Church at Merthyr and still ministers to the two congregations. Mr. Thomas married Mary, daughter of Mr. and the late Mrs. D. R. Davies, Cledwyn Terrace, Trecynon. Mrs. Thomas is a niece of the late Rev. W. J. Davies, former minister of the Dowlais Unitarian Church and author of "*Hanes Plwyf Llandysul*".

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEAGUE—1947 *(E. Warrilow)*

A GROUP OF MALE MEMBERS—1947 *(E. Warrilow)*

CHAPTER VII

MEMBERS RAISED TO THE MINISTRY.

John Phillips.

Over this young man's life a veil has been drawn that is not easy to penetrate. Very little is known about him. He was, however, the son of Rev. Philip Charles. He was twenty-four years old when he died at the end of December 1780. He was then a student at Carmarthen Presbyterian College. There is nothing specific to show that he was a member of our Church, but in view of the fact that his father was Pastor of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd at the time it is natural to assume that he was brought up there.

Rev. Thomas Morgan.

He was born at Llanon, Carmarthenshire, about 1737. He was apprenticed to a local weaver—Sion Ieuan. He was of a studious turn of mind and in his zeal to acquire knowledge, he worked as a lad at the loom for six months of the year, and for the remaining six months attended a local school paying the fees out of his accumulated savings. In his teens, he removed to the vicinity of Cefn Coed to ply his trade. Soon after coming to Cefn Coed it appears that he joined our Church. Inherently intelligent, he continued, in his spare moments, to apply himself to intensive study and having a natural gift for public expression he was encouraged to enter the ministry. In 1768 he was admitted into Carmarthen Presbyterian College, and must therefore have been a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for well over a decade. He left College in 1772. After that year he seems to me to have disappeared completely from the records. He re-appears, however, in 1778 when he was extended a call to the old Unitarian Chapel at Blaen Gwrach, Glyn Neath. The call was not accepted, and with a view to adding further to his store of knowledge he spent a few months with his cousin who was a clergyman in Vaynor.

In 1779 the congregation at Blaen Gwrach extended to him another call. This time the call was accepted. Comparatively soon afterwards he left Blaen Gwrach to take up the pastorate of the Church at Craig Y Fargoed, but regretting the step he had taken, he returned to his first Church at Blaengwrach at the end of twelve months. Here he remained until his death.

Rev. David Davis, Castell Hywel, the famous schoolmaster, who was eminently fitted to judge, regarded Thomas Morgan as one of the best preachers of the day, and so highly did he esteem him both as a man and as a scholar that he wrote to his son Rev. David Davis, Neath (1796—1846) strongly advising him "to associate with Thomas Morgan as much as possible." This Rev. David Davis presumably did, for when Thomas Morgan died many years afterwards it was Rev. David Davis who delivered the "funeral sermon". Fortunately a copy of the sermon was later found amongst Rev. Owen Evans' papers, and to that discovery we owe much of what is known of the subject of this brief sketch.

As a reader Rev. Thomas Morgan apparently had few peers. His range of study included medicine, and it is stated that when an epidemic of small-pox swept the Neath Valley in 1784 he was in much demand as a lay physician. He was reputed to have innoculated a hundred and one children against the disease, and when the scourge abated the medical profession expressed to him their special gratitude.

About 1809 he was stricken with paralysis. To add to his affliction he was already practically blind. Presumably to induce sleep he resorted to opium, and the story goes that he took enough of the drug in one draught to "put three men to sleep for their lifetime". In addition to preaching and keeping a school, he found time to do a little weaving until his vision failed him.

Rev. Thomas Morgan was, from all angles, an excellent man, and the faith his adopted church at Cefn Coed placed in him he fully justified. I note that he baptised three children at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on the 14 April 1802. He died in retirement at Allt Y Cham, Pontardawe. He never married.

The marble tablet erected to his memory in Gellionnen Chapel—in the graveyard of which he sleeps—testifies in noble language to his worth.

"This Marble is dedicated by a few friends to the memory of the Reverend Thomas Morgan, for more than 30 years Pastor of a congregation of Protestant Dissenters, at Blaen Gwrach; who in his benevolence of heart, humility of mind, and purity of doctrine, exhibited the character of a sincere follower of Jesus Christ. Rejecting all human creeds, he believed in one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. He died not leaving many equals behind him.
Oct. 17th 1813 aged 76".

Rev. Jenkin Lewis, D.D.

It cannot be stated with certainty that the Rev. Jenkin Lewis was connected with our chapel in his younger days. It is, however, extremely probable. We know, at any rate, that his parents, Malachi and Cecilia Lewis, Brithdir Uchaf, Gelligaer, were members there when he was born 12th August, 1760.

In 1916 the late Rev. R. J. Jones, M.A., Aberdare, wrote to the present writer expressing the view that Jenkin Lewis married Margaret, sister of Rev. Thomas Davis who was Minister of our Church from 1790 to 1832. My researches have proved that R.J.J. was in error. According to A. N. Palmer, author of "*A History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham and its Neighbourhood*", Jenkin Lewis married firstly on 29th April 1787 Miss Jane Jones, daughter of John Jones, Gentleman, of Coed Y Glyn, Wrexham, and secondly the widow of Rev. William Armitage of Chester. Palmer further states that Jenkin Lewis was given "a broad and liberal education as a boy, supplemented by five years study at the Independent Academy, Abergavenny". Dr. Lewis held pastorates at Newport, Mon. and Wrexham, and died at the former place 11th August 1841. He received the degree of D.D. from one of the American Universities six months before he died. He had no issue.

The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Register of Baptism bears this record; "Mary, daughter of Edward Edwards of this village, born 13th June 1802 was baptised 17th of the same month by Rev. Jenkin Lewis of Wrexham". That entry appears to be the only documentary evidence we have of Dr. Lewis' association with our church. It is recorded, however, that his brother, William Lewis, was a deacon at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for many

years, and was one of the original Trustees. William Lewis also figured prominently in a litigation in which the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was involved in 1804. The foregoing reference to Jenkin Lewis' "broad and liberal education as a boy" suggests a Unitarian upbringing. One wonders whether he was assisted in his early studies by Rev. Philip Charles.

Dr. Lewis' grand-niece was Mrs. Jane Harris, step-grandmother of Major D. Cope Harris, J.P., Merthyr Tydfil. Mrs. Harris died 10 May 1896, aged 78, and was buried in the family vault in the Cefn Cemetery where that masterpiece of sculptural art, executed by Joseph Edwards, looks down upon the dead with such wistful mien and noiseless reverence. In her young days Mrs. Harris was a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd but during her married life she attended the Baptist Chapel in Merthyr with her husband. When Mr. Harris died she returned to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

William Beynon Hughes.

He was born at Cefn Coed 17th February, 1838, and was the son of Thomas Hughes one time deacon, sexton and secretary of our church. He was prepared for college by Rev. Owen Evans, and was considered one of Owen Evans' most apt pupils. He entered Carmarthen Presbyterian College in 1856, and at once became very popular there because of his genial and kindly disposition. Though nature had given him a fragile body he possessed remarkable mental and physical courage. When a student at Carmarthen he plunged into the Towy fully clothed in an attempt to save a college friend who was in serious difficulties in the river. He could not swim, yet he managed to keep his friend's head above water until help arrived. The adventure nearly cost him his life, for were it not for the timely assistance rendered by a passer-by both he and his friend would have unquestionably been drowned. His bravery, particularly in view of his frail constitution won for him the admiration of the whole town.

When still pursuing his studies at College, he received a call to the joint pastorates of Penrhiw and Panteg, Cardiganshire, and entered upon his duties there in 1861. To implement his salary he opened a grammar school. But his stay here was

brief. In 1863 he removed to Dwygyfylchi, North Wales where he was engaged as Chaplain to a Mr. Darbishire—a gentleman who in his day did splendid service to Unitarianism in England and Wales. Soon after his appointment to the chaplaincy Rev. W. B. Hughes' health broke down and he was obliged to return home to Cefn Coed. After a short rest he resumed his duties ; but in a little over three months his health again declined and he was constrained to relinquish his post altogether. This was in 1872. The blow was a great shock to him. Soon afterwards he was stricken with paralysis, and for the remainder of his life he was wheeled about in a bath-chair, a confirmed invalid. He died 1 April, 1878. He was only 38.

Sometime before his death his vision became affected, and his family had to read aloud to him. Around his hospitable fireside Rev. J. Hathren Davies—then a young man of twenty-two years—spent many an evening hour, and I can well recall "Hathren" saying how deeply grateful he was to William Beynon Hughes for his kindly advice and wise counsel on matters relating to the Christian Ministry.

William Beynon Hughes was known for his unruffled spirit, his sweetness of temper and strict piety. He bore his affliction with that fortitude which is expected of all true Christians. Sickness had not soured him. Disappointment had not embittered him.

In 1868 he published a translation of several of Dr. Brooke Herford's "*Home Page Tracts*". He married Sarah, daughter of Enoch Howell, Relieving Officer, New Castle Emlyn and had issue. He was buried in the graveyard of his home church.

Rev. Evan David Priestley Evans.

He is the only son of Rev. Owen Evans, and was born at Cefn Coed, April 29th, 1862. He received his very earliest education at a School kept by a Miss Turner in the house adjoining the "Station Hotel", Cefn Coed. Subsequently he attended the Rev. T. Isaac Williams' school at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, and after Mr. Williams' death proceeded to the Merthyr Grammar School of which Evan Williams, M.A. was headmaster. Later he attended the Trecynon Seminary, Aberdare, which was

conducted by Rev. William James, B.A. In 1879 he entered Carmarthen Presbyterian College, and left for the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth a year later. He again returned to Carmarthen, and again to the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth. In 1883 he left the University and was "locum tenens" for eleven months at Llandyssul having as well the pastoral oversight of Bwlch-y-Fadfa and Llwyn-rhydowen. In 1884 he returned to the University at Aberystwyth, and the year following proceeded to Manchester New College, London, now removed to Oxford. In September 1889 he commenced his ministerial career at Loughborough, and remained there twelve months. He then left for Kidderminster, and left Kidderminster again for Bury. Mr. Evans has compiled and edited "*A History of the New Meeting House, Kidderminster* (1792—1900)", a book of 300 pages. Mr. Evans is now in retirement.

Rev. D. T. Evans.

Mr. Evans was born on the 3rd April, 1900 and although he is not a native of Cefn Coed, he came to reside in the village when he was a very young man. In due course he became a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd and at once threw himself enthusiastically into all the chapel activities. In 1925, having evinced a natural bent for study and, possessing an excellent speaking voice, he was invited to preach on several occasions at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, and this he did so impressively that he was prevailed upon to enter the Unitarian Ministry. In October 1929 therefore, after a year of intensive study, he passed into the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen. He was exempted from taking the first year's course, and was allowed to enter upon the second year's work immediately. It was no easy task that he was called upon to undertake but he acquitted himself with credit and to the entire satisfaction of his examiners. He left College in 1932, and in July of that year he was ordained minister of the Unitarian Church at Nottage, Glam. In the following year he was invited to take charge, as well, of the Unitarian Church at Bridgend. In 1935 he resigned from the joint pastorate of these two churches and accepted a call from

Stannington Church, Sheffield. [1]"From the first his ministry was successful and a note to that effect is to be found in the minute book dated 28 January, 1936, on which occasion the Trustees sent him a letter of appreciation and congratulation".

In December 1937 the Unitarian Chapels of Stannington and Fulwood were amalgamated, and Mr. Evans took charge of both congregations. In 1941, he resigned and went to Ulster, Northern Ireland where, ever since, he has ministered under the Templepatrick Presbytery Remonstrant Synod of Ulster. At present he is pastor of Cairncastle Old Presbyterian Church, County Antrim.

Mr. Evans married Margaret, youngest daughter of the late Rev. J. Hathren Davies.

Rev. Hathren Jones.

This genial and lovable young man was born of faithful Unitarian parents at Cefn Coed in 1911 and was a descendant of Thomas Jones (Tomas o'r Sychpant). He entered the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen in 1936 and after the completion of his course there proceeded to Manchester College, Oxford. Soon after his admission to Manchester College he contracted a fell disease from which he failed to recover. The thread of his life was broken when the pattern was rapidly being weaved into shape, for he died 10 January, 1941 when he was only thirty years of age. I knew him well and had great admiration for him but Mr. Lewis Edwards, who guided his footsteps in the early stages of his student career, knew him better, and paid him this touching tribute in the pages of the "*Ymofynydd*"[2]:

> "By the death of Hathren Jones, Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefn Coed, has lost one of its most promising young men. He came of a family of Unitarians of very strong connections, and having practically an unbroken line of association with the cause at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd since it was established in

[1]History of Underbank Chapel by F. T. Wood.

[2]In the same issue, March 1941, Rev. J. Marles Thomas M.A. and Principal W. S. Jones, M.A., M.Sc. also paid him tribute in Welsh.

1747. And like his forbears the Old Chapel stood for something really tangible in his life—an ideal calling forth ungrudging sacrifice in its service. Thus cradled in the faith, it was natural that Hathren, from an early age, should have pledged his life to the service of the Temple of his fathers. They had reared the edifice stone by stone, and he entered into their labours, building upon the structure they had so firmly established. Unobtrusively, he did the duties which claimed his attention with a willingness and devotion that became so evident in later years in all his work on behalf of the chapel and its activities.

In 1927, during the celebration of the 180th anniversary of the chapel which coincided with the opening of the chapel after much needed repairs and redecoration, Hathren, then a young man of seventeen, was specially chosen to read a history of the cause at one of the services. The Rev. Delta Evans, former editor of the "*Christian Life*", who was the special preacher, paid a glorious tribute in his periodical to the excellence of his effort and to his natural aptitude for pulpit work.

This was the turning point in his career. The call of the Unitarian Ministry could not pass undecided. Hathren decided to leave the office stool for the service of God and man. By dint of intense study and application his opportunity came and he was admitted to Carmarthen as a student for the Unitarian Ministry.

Hen Dŷ Cwrdd gave him the necessary opportunity for equipping him with a background for his work in a wider field. He was always a very acceptable preacher. Nature had endowed him with necessary qualities for preaching in the pulpit, or outside. He was specially interested in Sunday school work. He had a way with children which did not fail to find a ready response. One of the secrets of his work among the young sprang from his intimate knowledge of child nature. It is no wonder that his scholars loved him. The same enthusiasm marked his labours on behalf of the young people with whom he was exceedingly popular. He set out with high ideals, and his one great aim was to carry these ideals into a ministry for which he was so eminently fitted.

The church mourns the loss of one who seemed destined for great work. His memory will ever remain green in the many seeds of love and kindness sown during his short but full life".

Hathren Jones was never ordained. The "call" he received was not of this world. It came from another. His preparatory training, one likes to think, however, fitted him for both. He lies with his kindred in our burial ground. He was named after Rev. J. Hathren Davies who died the year before he was born.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME DEACONS AND MEMBERS OF PAST DAYS

In the long Winter evenings when time drags wearily and rain patters incessantly on the window panes outside, it is pleasant to sit around a blazing fire listening to a village octogenarian speaking, in reverent accents, of the long ago. In this way the writer has, from time to time, beguiled many a dreary hour. The people whose personal characteristics and social peculiarities he will attempt to describe have now been gathered to their fathers, and the place that once knew them knows them no more. They were only ordinary, humble folk—folk who, in their simplicity of mind, little guessed that sometimes in the distant future someone would reveal to his contemporaries the joys and vicissitudes of their eventful lives. That they did not associate with the illustrious and the great is no reason why their names should be allowed to fall into utter forgetfulness and neglect. On the contrary they should be longingly remembered, not only because of their triumph over difficulties, nor even because of their profound devotion to faith ; but, rather, because of their noble example, and their deep regard for truth.

Since they have passed to their well-earned rest full many a golden dawn has bathed their graves in light ; full many a storm has surged in the gnarled and tortuous limbs of the ancient Yew beneath whose shade they lie, but they are not dead. They still live. They still speak to us across the void in the nobility of their character, and the usefulness of their lives.

"In winter's tedious nights, sit by the fire,
With good old folks, and let them tell thee tales".

SIÔN LLEWELLYN.

EVERY Church, with any claim to antiquity, has, at one time or other, produced a character whose natural traits stood out in bold relief from those of all his fellows. The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd has not been an exception. During its long history it has

been the spiritual home of many such characters, the most notable of whom was Siôn Llewellyn who took the leading part in the founding of our cause in 1747.

Siôn, by trade, was a blacksmith and was born at Cwm Capel, Cefn Coed on the 30th November, 1693. Where the house in which he first saw the light once stood is now known, namely on the south side of the Pontycapel Viaduct, and on the Vaynor side of the Taff river. Within a hundred yards or so of the pillars of the Viaduct, there may still be seen a clear, bubbling brooklet known as Ffynon Focyn (Morgan's Well) and owing to its proximity to Sion Llewellyn's modest abode his house was named Ty'r Ffynon (Well Cottage). The remains of the cottage are no more to be seen. It has completely vanished in a jungle of nettles. Tradition has it that the old bard meditated his verses under a thorn bush outside his home and within ear-shot of the rippling music of the well, and the louder gurglings of the Tâf beyond. Opportunities to improve his mind were totally absent. He knew no English. He tells us that in his apologetic "Preface". Of schools, even of the crudest kind, there was none in his day. What knowledge he possessed was no doubt acquired by dint of hard toil within the four walls of his rustic cottage with its thatched roof and earthen floor. Yet, this remarkable old bard published a collection of his poetry in a book of 60 pages that called for four impressions. Fortunately, copies of his collected works have been saved from oblivion, and may be consulted at the following Libraries :—The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth ; The Free Library Swansea and the Free Library, Cardiff. Another copy is in the possession of that gifted bibliophile, Mr. Bob Owen, M.A., Croesor, North Wales.

It is said that Sion Llewellyn did more, through his poetical effusions, to diffuse the principles of Unitarianism—or Arminianism as it was then called—than all the sermons of Revs. Roger Williams and Richard Rees added together. This is probably true because a century and a half ago, we are told, there was hardly a man or woman for miles around who had not committed his songs and hymns to memory. This claim appears to be borne out by the fact that his collected works, as we have already seen, ran into four editions.

Though Siôn was known in his day as a bard of much repute he did not write great poetry. Indeed, to say truth, he did not write even good poetry. What he wrote was the average poetry of his time. Although Siôn Llewellyn lived amidst the most romantic scenery—scenery that awakens genius, inspires lofty ideals, and invokes the wild impassioned muse, we search in vain in his compositions for that indefinable something, for that grain of burnished gold which is the hallmark of true verse. He appears to have written largely impromptu and belonged to that class of bards known as "Beirdd yr Awen Barod" (Bards of the spontaneous muse). In his day, verse-making, among the literate, was an intriguing pastime, and not all aspired to write poetry that would endure. Siôn, like his bardic brethren, subordinated imagery to spontaneity. His lines bristle with provincialisms and hackneyed phrases. You read his poetry, not for exaltation, but for facts. In other words, his compositions are rhymed catalogues of details and events. What he wrote in verse would have been better said in prose. The most essential attributes of the true poet, visionary propensities, flights of fancy, and an ear for the music of words seemed to have been denied him. In his hymns only does he evince an aquaintance with the refined and polished phrase. For much of this, of course, there was a reason. It was lack of education, and he had to make shift with what little knowledge of literary composition he had.

But after all has been said, his poetry serves a useful purpose in that it adds to our knowledge of the bard's early life and the doctrines he held. It is extraordinary that a man who was so given to express his thoughts in verse never wrote a single couplet, for example, on so important an occasion as the building of our original chapel. This is the more amazing when it is recalled that, it was he who more than any other, was responsible for its founding. On such trivial matters as an accident to his cow, and the trespassing of sheep into neighbouring gardens he burst forth into song but on the opening of the chapel, he is strangely silent.

When the first edition of his works appeared we do not know; a copy does not seem to have been preserved. We know, however, that the second edition was published in 1772 —"With additions". Even if the first impression was published

before 1747—the year the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was built—Siôn would have surely included in the "additions" of 1772 any poems he might have written in the interim period.

The principal poem in his works consists of twenty-nine stanzas of four lines each. In it the poet lays bare his early secular life, and throws some light on the doctrines then current at Cwmglo. He was sixty years of age, so he tells us, when he wrote it.

Gwrandewch ar ronyn bach o'm hanes
R'wyn drigain mlwydd ar ddydd gwyl Andres
Mi adroddaf ran o gwrs fy mywyd
Nes dod i'r oedran hyn o'm iengetyd.

His parents were obviously religious people and "brought him up" in their own faith. He states that he learned to read books in his mother's tongue:

Fe godai nhad a mam fi fynydd
Yn ôl eu deall hwy o'n crefydd
Nes i mi ddysgu darllan Llyfyr
Yn iaith fy mam yn ddigon eglur.

As a youth he lived a "wild" life and mingled with rough characters. Yet, in this company he was thoroughly miserable:

Gwedi'm codi i'r lan yn grwtyn,
Profi'n wyllt wneuthym wedyn.
Rhyw oferwyr a ddilynais,
Nes mynd fy mywyd trwddo'n ddiflas.

Though he associated with retrogrades there was a secret inward longing for a nobler life and even before he had abandoned his old ways he attended the services at Cwmglo—three miles away—to hear Roger Williams preach. The message "made him tremble".

Ac er diflased fy arferion,
Cyrchu byddwn dan fy moddion
I wrando Williams yn pregethu
Tra bawn yno gwnai i mi grynnu.

He had ignored Williams' "Words of advice" until he was over eighteen years of age.

Anghofio geiriau'r gwr a'i gynghor
Nes cyrraedd deunaw mlwydd a rhagor.

He was particularly eager to be transported to the heavenly regions in the Hereafter but he wished to attain that felicity in his own way and "by means of his own faith"—a delightful example of his reputed independence of mind.

Yr oeddwn ninnau am y nefoedd
Ni fynnwn golli Honno'n un modd
Ond i mi ei chael hi yn fy merchen
Yn fy ffordd a'm ffydd fy hunan.

He was now reading the Bible as a critical student and subjecting its contents to the test of his own common sense. He discovered that his own reasoning confirmed Rev. Roger Williams' scriptural interpretations, and was convinced that he would be judged at the Grand Assize, not by any verbal confession of faith, but by his own personal actions.

Chwilio'r Bibl, chwilio, chwilio,
Cymryd amser i fyfyrio,
Trwyddo draw r'own i yn gweled
Y cawn i marnu yn ôl fy ngweithred.

The wayward life he led in the past brings remorse. Pangs of conscience attacked him "like a plague" and he repairs to a desolate glade—presumably under his favourite "thorn bush"—to ruminate. In his despair he kneels, and beseeches God to lead him along the Christian path.

I ambell gornel digon dirgel,
Na chlywai undyn drwst fy anal
Mawr y plag oedd arnaf'n plygu
Gan rhwd cydwybod yn fy nghagu.

At the age of eighteen years he applies to be admitted a member at Cwmglo, but owing to his hitherto roistering life a faction in the church was loth to accept him into their fellowship and a probationary period was imposed. Some there were who laughed in derision at him; others stated that he should not be given a helping hand. He was thrown from pillar to post.

Treulio'r dyddiau hynny'n chwerw
Rhai fy nhaflu rhai fy nghadw
Fe ddyweda rhai mor ddwl dan chwerthin
Na rowch un llaw i Siôn Llewellyn.

Then at last his long cherished dream was realised and he was welcomed into the Christian fold in November 1708. It was during the "feast of Andres" and Siôn had been kept waiting for five months.

He was catechised by Rev. Roger Williams in the presence of all the members and his answers throw a clear light on the doctrinal position in Cwmglo at that time. Williams asked him: "Who, think you, is Christ the Lord"? Siôn answered, "He is the son of the Great God who came down from the Heavenly Hosts to reconcile God and men".

Ar hyn fe agorwyd drws i'm holi
Am y gobaith gwan oedd gen i.
Fe ofynai Williams i mi yn ebrwydd
Pwy meddwch chwi yw Crist yr Arglwydd
Mi atebais fel rown yn credu
Mab Duw mawr yw Arglwydd Iesu
A ddaeth or nef o blith Angylion
I gymodi Duw a Dynion.

In the following verse Siôn refers to the division at Cwmglo which led to the exodus of the Arminians to Cefn Coed in 1747. Not inaptly he describes the rupture as a "gagendor"—an abyss. He was accused by a few of being responsible for it, but judging by the ultimate couplet the charge was ill founded. Whoever alleged that Siôn brought about the division "there was no pleasure in it". [No truth in it].

Yn awr mae rhyw beth fel gagendor
Rhwng Merthyr, Aberdâr a'r Vaynor;
Myfi medd rhai a gododd honno,
Mae dydd y farn i dreio.
Pwy bynnag sydd wedi ei chodi
Nid oes dim hyfrydwch ynddi.

Then the poet goes on to say that the "abyss" must be bridged by love and that the iron shackles that hold men back from church fellowship must be smashed with the "sledge hammer" of Christian love. The metaphor is not, of course, a very happy

one, but it is, at least, illuminating. Siôn, it will be remembered, was a blacksmith.

The news that Rev. Richard Rees had passed away, was to Siôn, "a bitter pill".

> Mi glywn i Rice o'r Gwernllwyn farw
> Blasu'n oer y bilsen chwerw.

After his conversion he often met his former boon companions but he never joined them. He remained to the end with "the Brethren".

> Er cwrdd a bagad o wrthwynebwyr
> Ni bum i byth o blith y brodyr.

Though Siôn in his biographical poem, denies,—at least, by implication—that it was he who stirred up the strife which ultimately brought about the closing of the old chapel at Cwmglo, it is difficult to believe that he took no part in the doctrinal dissensions which led up to it. Siôn, as we have already seen, was a loyal disciple of Rev. Roger Williams, and Roger Williams, if ever there was one, was an Arminian of the deepest dye. It was he, it will be recalled, who converted Siôn from his wayward life—the greatest fact of the old bard's career.

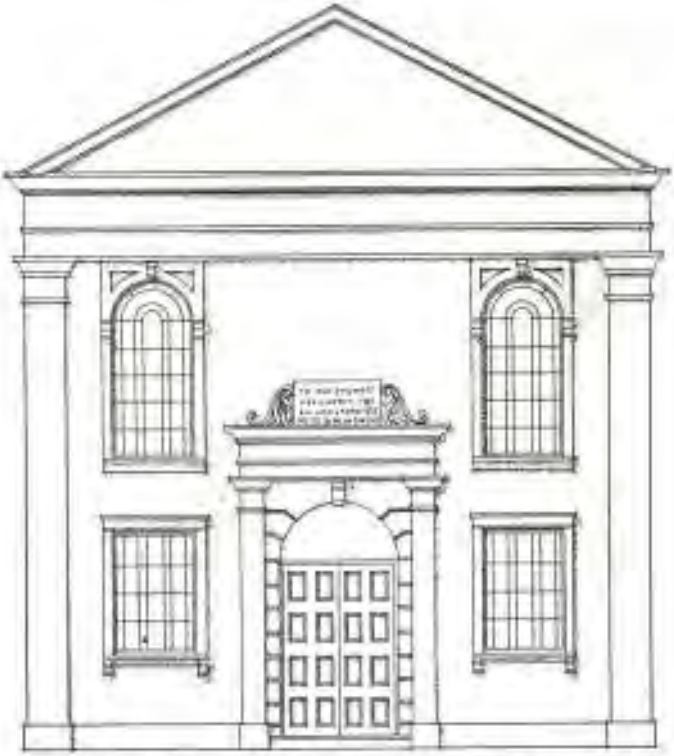
Moreover, Siôn had no love for Calvinism. For that we have his own recorded word. He could not tolerate its austerity and strict discipline. The narrowness of its confession of faith aroused his indignation. Siôn could not invest with meaning a Divine dispensation which decrees that children shall be visited by the sins of the father. Such teachings, to Siôn, were "a country's shame". With characteristic bluntness he tells us that he would rather "believe in Ezeciel the Saint than in a thousand Calvins". "Some people's religion", he states, "consists merely of words. These people call Jesus their brother but in their actions they deny Him". "Such religion has :

> Its origin in the tongue
> And is doomed to end in dung".

OFFICERS—1947

Back Row (left to right): TOM LEWIS, J.P. (*Minute Secretary*); LEWIS EDWARDS (*General Secretary*); D. B. JONES, J.P. (*Vice-Chairman*).

Front Row (left to right): H. G. SIMON (*Contributions Secretary*); TOM LEWIS (*Chairman and Treasurer*).



HEN DŶ CWRDD (1853—1895) Front elevation

Cospi'r plant am feiau'r tad, Och, c'wilydd gwlad yw'ch testyn,
Mi gredaf yn Ezecial Sant o flaen deg cant o Galfin
Mae crefydd rhai mewn geiriau, proffesant Crist yn frawd,
Hwy'i gwadant ar weithredoedd, mae hono'n Grefydd dlawd,
Mae'n tarddu maes or tafod, a thyna i gyd ei grym,
Daw'r Grefydd hon o'r diwedd i'r dom heb dalu dim.

It is incredible that a man who, for his day, held such advanced views—and had the courage to publish them—looked silently on when the various religious factions at Cwmglo contended for theological mastery. For, if tradition can be relied upon, and tradition is often inventive, Siôn revealed his real self in opposition. He was not a dreamer—his poetry is proof of that—but a realist, a man of action, a protagonist to whom compromise and conciliation were impossible. It was not his nature to hide his feelings and mask his opinions. What he had to say he said bluntly, regardless of its effect upon sensitive minds. He asked for no quarter nor did he give it. He was not the sort of person to yield when truth and right demanded the opposite. If legend is to be believed he occupied his prominent position in the locality not merely because of his literary attainments, but because of his strength of character, his inflexible courage and unyielding determination. When, therefore, the doctrinal storm was raging at Cwmglo, and Roger Williams was valiantly defending the Arminian ramparts, it is inconceivable as I see it, that Siôn took no vocal part in the fray. Such an attitude would belie all the sterling qualities attributed to him, and would be the negation of that inherent candour with which his biographical poem is so strongly marked.

When Rev. Roger Williams died the blow left Siôn reeling.

Fe dd'wedai rhyw un newydd chwerw
Roger William a fu farw

(Some one brought the tidings dread
Roger William, alas, is dead).

Mention has already been made of Siôn Llewellyn's hymns. They are ten in number. From the viewpoint of literary merit they are in my opinion, manifestly of a higher standard than are his other metrical works. The lines scan better, and the language is more choice, subdued, and restrained. He appears

to have had a clear conception of the first essentials of a well-constructed Psalmodical stanza—praise and prayer—and it is obvious, to the least observant, that to this medium of literary expression he gave much thought and attention. There are in his hymns evident signs of repeated revisions and corrections, and to all appearances, had he written his other compositions with the same meticulous care he would have attained a higher position than he did on the slopes of Parnassus. It has been written that Siôn was the only Vaynor bard to write poetry on religious subjects. This is hardly true, many instances could be mentioned to the contrary.

His hymns, as might be expected, are written in a strain that was peculiar to his age and generation. The dominant tone is gloom. The ever recurring refrain is sadness. Here below there can only be despair and grief. True, there are promises of joy in the far away "otherwhere", but the theme, for the most part, is death and the waiting grave.

The tomb, however, is only a transient abode. It is no abiding, cavernous city. In God's good time the trumpet shall sound, and the sad, the aged, the deformed, the oppressed, the sick, and the maimed shall be raised into glory, and their earthly caskets be like unto Christ's own body—beautiful, unblemished, perfect. For, Siôn, as an Arminian and Arian—he was both—believed in the physical resurrection.

Here are four stanzas—typical of the rest—from one of his hymns.

Mae hyn yn gysur i bob rhai
Sydd trwy gystuddiau fwy neu lai
Yn mynd i'r bedd yn fawr yn fach
Daw cyrff y rhain o'r llwch yn iach.

I'r henaint a'r methedig gwael
Mae yma gysur idd i'w gael
Yn ddynion ieuainc llawn a glan
Cyfodi'r chwi mewn grym a gran.

Mae yma gysur i chwi gyd
Sy'n cael eich erlyd yn y byd
A'ch lladd i'r llwch am fod yn Saint
Cyfodir chwi mewn bri a braint.

I'r rhai y sydd a chyrph anhardd
Oddi yma cysur mawr a dardd
Fe gyfyd Crist hwy'n hardd bob un
Yn debyg i'w ei gorph ei hun.

There are many homely incidents of intrinsic interest connected with Siôn's daily life. His wife reported to him one day that their only cow had fallen over a precipice, and had broken its neck. Disturbed by the thought that her young daughter would now be deprived of milk Mrs. Llewellyn bewailed the calamity with streaming eyes. Siôn, on the other hand, was unperturbed. He had that unhasting mind which is peculiar to those who live in the country. He accepted the situation philosophically, almost gaily, and, on the instant consoled the distracted mother in an excellent "Triban".

Caiff flawd ceirch hen a menyn
A dwr o ffynon Foeyn
Ti faethu'r ferch er waetha'r fuwch
I neidio cuwch ag undyn.

(She'll oatmeal have and butter
From Morgan's well some water
Thou'lt rear the girl despite the cow
To jump as can no other).

Sion's bread was made of wheat that he himself had reaped in the neighbouring fields and ground in the water-mill across the Cwm Capel bridge.[1] Siôn, in the appended verse, records with pride that he had eight children, and thirty-eight grandchildren; and that he "professed religion" for fifty years. "What greater pleasure than this", he asks, "can life provide"?

Cael hir broffesu crefydd, flynyddau haner cant
Cael byw yn ngyda'th briod i fagu wyth o blant
Cael pymtheg wyr ar hugain
Rhoi'r pethau hyn yn nghyd
Beth oedd i'w gael yn rhagor o fwyniant yn y byd.

Siôn's power of limb was amazing. The country-side rang with his hardihood and feats of bodily endurance. In the summer he abandoned his anvil, and undertook the more pleasant occupation of mowing. As a mower few could equal him. When he was over eighty years of age he and his son, his grand-son and great-grand-son mowed a large meadow in Maes y Faenor near Pontsticill. The four generations took up their respective positions in order of seniority. It must

[1] Afterwards the site of a brewery.

have been a lovely sight. The blazing sunshine, the serene tranquility, the whispering woods, and the lush grass falling in rich folds to the rhythmic sweep of the crescent blades—and the bowed figure of the old bard leading the line. Siôn was a voracious eater, and on his mowing expeditions about the parish he carried around his neck a linen bag in which he deposited his food. It was his habit to eat his food immediately he reached the field, and then proceed with his day's task. Not until evening, when his home was reached, did he partake of another meal.

Tradition, however, provides an amusing exception to this rule. On one occasion he, with two others, were mowing at Maes y Faenor. From dawn until eight o'clock in the evening the three men worked together. When the maid brought them their breakfast Siôn, much to the young woman's discomfiture, asked her brusquely how much food she had. "Why", said Siôn, as he eyed tier upon tier of bread and butter, "I can eat this myself. Go and fetch some more for the other two". The maid disconsolately did as she was told. After demolishing a meal that was intended for three, Siôn turned to his mates and said, "I am going to the three-acre-field whilst you carry on here". And to Cae Tair Erw he made his way.

Mid-day arrived, and the maid brought Siôn his dinner. He waved her aside. "Take it away", said he "I have no appetite for it now", and with a sweep that betokened the master hand he resumed his mowing. Tea time came round. Again Siôn declined to eat. When the darkness had gathered, and night had fallen over the scene, Siôn began his three mile journey homewards having that day completed the herculean task of mowing unaided a meadow three acres in extent. He was then seventy-two years old. The incident is commemorated in the following verse:

Siôn Llewellyn a'r croes grwpyn
Lladd tair erw yn y dydd
Mae'n nawr yn ddeuddeg mlwydd a thrigain
Os lladd bedwran, rhowch e'n rhydd.

(Siôn Llewellyn with crooked sned
In one whole day mows acres, three
Now he's seventy two, t'is said
If four he mows, then let him free).

It is stated that when Siôn was at the zenith of his physical powers he mowed on Coed Meurig field in Clwydyfagwyr a swathe of hay a mile long without once whetting his scythe. The news of this hitherto unaccomplished feat—at any rate, unaccomplished in Vaynor and the neighbouring parishes—percolated into every glen and valley throughout the County. After this extraordinary performance Siôn's name was synonymous with bodily power. Indeed, his fame as a strong man vied with his reputation as a poet. Truly, Siôn was a character—a stronghold, as it were, of rural individuality. His type never again will be reproduced. Modern centralised education which whisks country-born children in motor vehicles to town schools has destroyed the mould.

Towards the end of his days Siôn, on a still evening, might have been seen ambling dreamily along the Ffrwd Lane leaning heavily on his stick and one hand resting on the small of his bent back. Like the prophets of old he loved to go out at nightfall to meditate in the fields.

Just as decay is the end of beauty, so is weakness the end of strength. Siôn, at last, arrived at the days of the "sere and yellow leaf." The forceful spirit noticeably drooped. Soon it was to cast off the mortal weeds, and, at length, a grimmer scythe than his own laid the old mower low. Siôn died on New Year's Day 1776 on the threshold of his eighty-third year.

His body was laid in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd burial ground to await, as he so confidently believed, the dawning of a glorious resurrection day.

The headstone which used to mark his resting place may still be seen nailed to the chapel wall on the eastern side. It bears the following verse, reputed to have been written by Siôn himself:—

"Fe roddwyd Shon Llewellyn
A'i wraig mewn Daiar erwyn
I orwedd dan y garreg hon
A saith o'u hwyrion rhyngddyn.

Translated, the above verse testifies that underneath the headstone, lies Siôn Llewellyn and his wife, together with seven of their grand-children.

In September 1903, there was laid to rest in Siôn's grave, David William Davies, known locally as Dafydd William Dafydd, one of Siôn's lineal descendants. Fortunately for future lovers of poetic associations, William R. Davies, Dafydd William Dafydd's only son, arranged to have recorded on his father's headstone the fact that the grave beneath was originally that of Siôn Llewellyn. Were it not for William R. Davies' foresight the exact spot where Siôn sleeps would be unknown. As long, therefore, as the inscription on David William Davies' headstone is decipherable, the grave of the most historic character ever connected with the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd will not be lost in the welter of human dust that has accumulated in our churchyard for nearly two centuries.

Some of the members of the congregation had felt for some years that to do justice to Siôn Llewellyn a tablet in memory of him should be erected on one of the interior walls of the chapel. When, therefore, preparations were being made to celebrate the bicentenary this year steps were taken to have this done and on Sunday evening, 17 August 1947, after the evening service, a tablet in plain marble which, it was thought, would be in keeping with Siôn's simple life, was unveiled by Mrs. J. R. Evans. No longer will the old poet be without visible honour in the church he founded.

The ceremony was one to be remembered. Its simplicity, and absence of ritual was apparent. It was a gathering that Siôn himself would have loved to attend. It was brief, yet solemn ; devotional, yet interesting. The silence recalled to one's mind the hush of the glades in which latterly Siôn loved to loiter to review the past and drink in peace for his soul. Through the west windows the warm summer sun streamed genially, casting lengthening shadows over seat and aisle. Somewhere perhaps in the deeper recesses of the chapel, Siôn's unfettered spirit hovered expectantly.

The proceedings were presided over by Mr. Lewis Edwards whose introductory address created an atmosphere that befitted the occasion. The tribute that was being paid Siôn Llewelyn, said Mr. Edwards, was possibly belated but it was none the less sincere for that. To him (Mr. Edwards) the unveiling of the memorial was not only a matter of history but a matter of sentiment for he had married into Siôn's family.

When he looked into the past of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd he did so with a sense of wonderment and awe and he could not but feel a great pride in the achievement of him who, that evening, was given the principal place in their thoughts. Siôn Llewelyn had set an example which the present generation would do well to follow ; he had issued a challenge which they would do well to accept. Mr. Edwards was followed by the present writer who, speaking in Welsh, gave a short account of Siôn's life.

Before unveiling the tablet Mrs. J. R. Evans, an ancestor of whom became Siôn's wife, said that Siôn Llewellyn was a man of high courage and deep religious convictions. He succeeded in building a place where free men could read the Bible in their native language and worship God in their own way. In his heart there kindled a fire of unswerving faith, a faith, she hoped, the future members of the chapel would inherit. Such a man as Siôn Llewelyn would never die.

Mrs. Evans was supported by Mrs. Lewis Edwards, a direct descendant of Siôn on the male side. Mrs. Edwards felt more than ever that she stood on hallowed ground and was pleased that she had been invited to participate in so unique a ceremony. The thought that she was linked in body and in spirit with one to whom the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd owed so much aroused in her emotions of real pleasure. It was with a profound gratitude to the past that she took a small part in honouring one who was great in his generation.

The dedication was performed by the minister, Rev. J. Marles Thomas, M.A. Speaking in Welsh, Mr. Thomas said that the ceremony had impressed him deeply. It had been distinguished by a devotional fervour that did his soul good, and as Siôn Llewellyn was a layman it was appropriate that those who had participated publicly in the service were of the laity too. To do honour where honour was due was always a pleasant duty ; indeed it was a Christian duty. He had always felt proud of his church and the spirit of amity that obtained there, and he was not less proud of the spirit which had animated the congregation to perpetuate the memory of so worthy a character as Siôn Llewellyn.

A hymn and the benediction brought a memorable service to a close.

Catherine Rees.

Catherine Rees was born at Cefn Coed in 1760. She was the daughter of John William Thomas who was a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for many years. According to a lengthy article in the "*Seren Gomer*" for 1841 she attended Sunday School in our chapel when she was fifteen years old. Here, "together with other girls of her own age" she learned to read the Bible in her mother tongue.

At the age of twenty-four she married Edward Rees a local mason. He, too, was a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. Catherine Rees was "brought up", states the writer of the article, amongst "wicked and blasphemous people—people who reviled the Christian Religion and persecuted its adherents". The one passion of Catherine's life was "to save souls". Armed only with the courage of her convictions, nothing deterred her from carrying the "message" to the roughest of her neighbours. She attacked the "wicked and the lost" relentlessly, and beseeched them to abandon their unsober and sordid way of living. Whenever during her peregrinations about the village she chanced upon a motley crowd of inebriates, she accosted them without a tremor, and admonished them severely, calling to her aid at the same time a stream of biblical verses. Her favourite verse was, "Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest". Her long night watches by the bedside of the sick was a local legend, and when she walked about the streets it was as though a pervasive spirit was passing by. She followed the gleam we are told with fearless tread. Fighting for the faith was her greatest joy. In the early days of her womanhood she had a beautiful voice. This gift she dedicated to the glory of God, for it was she who taught the congregation of that time "how to sing the hymns".

What she preached she crystalised into practice. She had no offspring of her own, and when death removed almost at a single stroke her sister and her sister's husband, she never hesitated to adopt their four orphan children. She was the village midwife and "had brought into the world 1,000 children" Evidence that she attached due importance to her calling is furnished by the fact that she had studied "medical subjects" far in excess of her midwifery needs.

She died on the 16th July 1841 in the eighty first year of her age. Now that the hand which had smoothed so many restless pillow lay limp in death, her gracious deeds were recalled with greater force, and there was great lamentation. Emotions were dissolved into tears, for, we read, that "on the day of the funeral there was not a dry eye in the village." She was laid to rest in our burial ground, but her grave is unknown. Catherine Rees was to all seeming, a personality of exceptional virtue. That a lengthy appreciation of her life was published in a journal whose religious tenets were so definitely opposed to her own was indeed an eloquent testimony to her character. Denominational barriers were broken down by her inherent saintliness and her intense love of her fellows.

Benjamin Saunders.

He was a truly remarkable man—a man born in advance of his time. In the congregation of his day, he had no equal. In mental capacity he towered above his contemporaries as the cedar towers above the surrounding shrubs. His life affords another proof that the purest genius is often born amongst the virtuous poor.

Saunders was a profound lover of nature. He revelled in Nature's mysteries. The visible universe attracted him like a magnet. The starry sky and the lonely hills spoke to him of magic and beauty. By trade he was a master-moulder and was born near the old Cyfarthfa Works about the year 1795. Very little is known about his early childhood but it may be safely assumed that he had had no schooling. Like all other boys of his day and generation he was apprenticed to his trade when he was only eight or nine years of age. In his early teens he evinced a passion for the sciences—a passion that long weary hours at the foundry could not quench. By dint of hard mental toil he soon became proficient in mechanics, astronomy, mathematics and geography. This knowledge he acquired unaided in the cosy harbourage of his own chimney corner.

In some natures the theoretical and the practical combine in one harmonious whole. They combined in Benjamin

Saunders. He was an amalgam of the inventive brain and the deft hand. This was exemplified in his scientific instruments—all his own handiwork. Among the several appliances he had constructed was a quadrant, a thermometer, an ingenious water-gauge and a weather glass. Added to these acquirements was a knowledge of meteorology and the records he kept of rainfall, temperature and pressure were remarkable for their accuracy. He had even built his own planetarium and used wax candles to represent the stars. Hard by his cottage, rising sheer into the sky, stood his home-made observatory where he used to watch, with rapt attention, the moving pageant of the firmament. Those rude forefathers ! How steep was their path to the light ! And those crude appliances, where, one wonders are they now ? To chance upon them in the dust of some deserted garret would be a discovery indeed.

Saunders was an active member of the far-famed Cyfarthfa Philosophical Society, the first meeting of which was held at the "Dynevor Arms", Georgetown, Merthyr on the 15th December 1807. The Society was composed of no less than sixty members. As far as is known, no records, unfortunately, have been preserved relating to its activities. It has been recorded, however, that latterly it was comprised largely of Unitarians, most of whom were members of, or associated with, the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. The remainder belonged to the Unitarian chapel at Merthyr. Whether the Rev. Owen Evans was a member of the Society it is difficult to ascertain, but I find that he frequently addressed them on "The Use of the Globe".[1] Another Unitarian minister, Rev. John Jones, Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Aberdare, also lectured to them. His subject was astronomy.

It is really amazing, on reflection, that at a time when only one adult in every sixty could read and write, a group of ordinary working men foregathered to discuss such complex questions as Philosophy, Mathematics, and Astronomy. Nor was this all. They also discussed religion and literature, and even the writings of Tom Paine and Voltaire came within the range of their studies. We may be sure, too, that the great Reform Bill of 1832, the Chartist Insurrection of 1839, the

[1]One of the globes is in my possession.—T.L.

Rebecca Riots of 1843 and "Brâd y Llyfrau Gleision" of 1847, came under their intelligent consideration.

As some of the members held advanced views on theology in particular, and religion in general, it is not surprising that the orthodox churches in the locality regarded the Society with suspicion, even with abhorrence. It would seem, however, that the Society never wavered from a belief in God and a Higher Destiny. Every thinker, if he is honest, is, I believe, at heart somewhat of a doubter. At any rate we know that, in the track of the physical sciences, a mild form of scepticism is almost invariably found ; but there are no reasons for believing that a single member of the Cyfarthfa Philosophical Society disbelieved in an almighty Father and in the survival of the human soul. Although they were men of broad and progressive views who sought to convince the mind rather than to arouse emotions they could rise above mundane things. They were as proof of this devoted to their chapels and their churches.

At all events, we know that Benjamin Saunders was a very pious man. He was first and last and all the time, a Unitarian and a nature lover to whom God spoke as eloquently through a green blade of grass, as through the pages of Holy Writ. When the Society, through death and removals, was constrained to disband, Saunders, on his own initiative, although he was now growing old, attempted to resuscitate it. His unremitting labours, however, proved abortive, much to his disappointment and dismay.

One of his closest friends was that indolent, wayward genius of Vaynor, Rhys Hywel Rhys. In matters of religion, he and Rhys were poles apart. Saunders was a Unitarian ; Rhys was an Anglican, though an anglican of revolutionary views. Yet, they were kindred spirits. Disagreement on questions of faith was not allowed to mar their friendship. Benjamin Saunders died on the 1st April, 1853 and was buried near the Yew Tree in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd burial ground. At the graveside, bare-headed and pensive, stood Robert Thomson Crawshay, the great Iron Master of Cyfarthfa Castle. Not often was the "governor" seen at the funeral of one of his "men". He had come this day to pay homage to a man of no mean calibre. A diamond had returned to its native element.

Not until the hollow thud of falling earth indicated that the committal service was over did Mr. Crawshay solemnly move away. Rev. Owen Evans performed the last rites.

Thomas Parry.

He was born at Talgarth, Breconshire in 1787, and was initiated into the Christian way of life at the local Methodist chapel when very young. Here he was taught to believe in the purely traditional interpretation of the Bible. When he was about twenty years old he married and, together with his young wife, removed to Llandovery. There, for some unknown reason, he joined the then established Church of Wales. Soon after his confirmation he was appointed sexton and bell ringer. His stay at Llandovery, however, was brief. He migrated to "the Works" and settled in Cefn Coed. Until he came to our village he had never heard of Unitarianism, and probably more from curiosity than from a desire to search for the truth, he attended the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd to hear Rev. Owen Evans preach. He was now well on in years. A natural student of theology, Parry, for some time past, had had his doubts respecting the infallibility of the bible, but had hesitated to make his doubts known to his orthodox friends. Moreover, difficulties had arisen when he had tried to reconcile the contradictory versions of the Gospel story. These difficulties Rev. Owen Evans helped to remove and in due course Parry expressed a desire to be admitted a member of our chapel; he was accepted on the 9th March, 1844. Early educational advantages were totally denied him. The Sunday School was the only "academy" he ever attended. Here he learned to read and write. But if destiny had deprived him of scholastic opportunities, nature made amends for the omission. He had a most retentive memory. He almost knew the scriptures off by heart. If you quoted a biblical verse, Parry could instantly quote the verse which followed or preceded it.

He was well-known for the courage of his convictions. He knew no moral fear. Here is a story that is told of him.

On one occasion he spent a fortnight's holiday at Llanwrtyd. When his fellow lodgers learned that Parry was a

"Sosin"[1] he at once became the object of their scorn. Repugnance of his religion was expressed in no moderate terms, but Parry was not dismayed. On the contrary, he challenged his opponents to a public debate. The challenge was accepted, and one of the local halls was requisitioned for the meeting. The hall was full to capacity and Parry was the only Unitarian present! Indeed, he was the only Unitarian in the town. When Parry ascended the platform and saw the sea of expectant faces around him his heart quailed. An attempt was made to laugh him down. Jeers were frequent, but Parry held his ground. There must be no burking of the issue. The citadel had to be defended. There was to be no running away. With the Bible in front of him, and his finger on the verse which was intended to refute the assertions of his opponents Parry bravely defied the verbal storm that careered around him. The debate lasted far into the night and the chairman was obliged to adjourn the meeting until the evening of the following day. Again the combatants met, and again the debate stood adjourned. By the end of the week Parry's courage and nonchalance in so electric an atmosphere had won him a multitude of friends, and at the close of the meeting even his adversaries crowded around him to express their admiration of his amazing gift of biblical quotation.

On the evening preceding his return home another meeting was held, this time of a totally different character. It was a mock degree ceremony and Parry had conferred upon him a Doctorate in Divinity! To the end of his days he was playfully known as "Dr. Parry". If Thomas, when he walked from Cefn Coed station down the main street on his return home from his holidays felt that a few inches had been added to his girth and a cubit to his stature, we are not surprised.

He was, it seems, an excellent public reader of the scriptures, and woe betide the young student on supply who read the lessons at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd unintelligently. A cold, colourless intonation or a misplaced accent or a false emphasis, grated on his sensitive ears like a saw.

---

[1]Welsh for Socinian, by which name Unitarians were then generally known in Wales.

There is no more pathetic sight than that of a working man, already advanced in years, growing poorer as he grows older. That, at the end of his days, was Thomas Parry's fate, and material assistance had to be given him by the congregation. A feeling of loneliness added to his distress. "I have", he said, "more friends on the other side now than on this". His last appearance in the chapel was a week before he died. He was then eighty-five years old, and very feeble; only a convulsion of nature would have kept him away. His eyesight was now growing dim, and as, with trembling hands and faltering voice, he opened the Sunday School for the last time, he had to resort to the use of a powerful magnifying glass to read the hymn. He died on the 22nd July, 1872 and sleeps in our churchyard.

John Jones (Siôn y Gwehydd).

It is by the passionate adherence of the few that every church lives, and not by the ebb and flow of the many. Siôn y Gwehydd was not one of the many. He was one of the few. My father, who remembered him dimly, used to say that when someone spoke irreverent language in the graveyard, Siôn's honest face put on the pale cast of thought, and the culprit was administered a stern rebuke. Siôn, it will be remembered, was sexton and caretaker of the chapel in the early part of the last century and of him it can be said with truth that he "tended the graves" and "cleaned inside the meeting house" not only for his wages of "1/- weekly", but to the glory of his God. He was, it seems, quite illiterate, and was one of those simple believers, (so numerous in those days) whose religious faith was far deeper than their knowledge. As the name by which he was locally known implies, he was by trade a weaver but all his spare time he devoted to the material care of the chapel and to his beloved "Erw Duw" (God's Acre).

Rev. Owen Evans has left us a pathetic picture of Siôn's last earthly hours. Siôn was desperately ill, and Owen Evans called at his humble cottage to see him. When death hovers near, life to all of us, is particularly sweet, and when Owen Evans entered the sick room Siôn dreamily began to talk of his far-off childhood days and, in imagination, lived

again the "lovely past". Then, suddenly, he requested Owen Evans to pray for him, "But", said Siôn, stifling a sob, "you must be brief, much as I want to hear your voice, because I don't know when another seizure and the end will come". Overwhelmed by that feeling which broods over the most irreverent in the presence of approaching dissolution, Owen Evans knelt by the bedside and sent up a prayer of comfort and of hope in which Siôn tearfully joined.

When Owen Evans left the room Siôn's eyes were no longer wet and bleared. His voice, a few moments ago so weak and subdued, now rang strong and clear. "Yes" said Siôn as Owen Evans descended the cold stone stairs, "We shall meet by and by". They were the last words of a good Christian who, in the serenity of his rapid decline, believed implicity that the soul is immortal and will never die. In a few days Siôr, in a mood of perfect peace, breathed his last. It was on the 28th November, 1863.

Matthew Wayne.

The name of this estimable member crops up frequently in the early annals of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. Each time Wayne appears so to speak, on the scene, it is as a generous donor. In the chapel records he is described as "Gent", and a "Gent", in its truest meaning, he was. A faint clue to his character is supplied by Charles Wilkins who refers to him as "honest Wayne, a genuine man of the good old type."[1] Wilkins relates, in effect, this story of him. Matthew Wayne, in 1806, was the Manager of Richard Crawshay's iron-smelting furnace in the Cyfarthfa Works, and it was his wont, on an occasional fine summer's afternoon, to escape from the smoke and clamour of the Works to Quaker's Yard, then more rural than it is now.

Whilst he and a friend, a Mr. Knowles, were regaling themselves with some refreshments in a local Inn a "shoe-less, ragged boy with a hungry look" entered the room and inquired the way to Cyfarthfa. The boy stated that he was a nephew of Richard Crawshay (the first of the great Cyfarthfa iron masters,

[1] "The History of Merthyr Tydfil".

who died worth a million and a half pounds) and that he had made the journey all the way from Yorkshire on foot to seek his uncle. Having satisfied himself that the lad's story was a perfectly genuine one, and having also provided the little traveller with a substantial meal "honest Wayne" bundled him into the trap and whisked him off to Cyfarthfa. The boy, in after years, became Sir Joseph Bailey the rich owner of Nantyglo Works. He afterwards, I believe, became in 1899 the first Baron Glanusk of Glan Wysg, Crickhowell. Matthew Wayne, in those days, lived in that ivy mantled house, now known as Ivy House, at the top end of Nantygwenith Street, Merthyr. Wayne, every Sunday morning, used to call at the works to make a casual inspection of his furnaces but was always impatient to get away to attend the service at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. Was he an Englishman? This I have not been able to establish. We know, however, that his friends were Englishmen—the Crawshays, the Bacons, the Coffins and the Guests, all of whom were attracted to Merthyr by the untold wealth that lay hidden in its mountains.

In Matthew Wayne's day the language in which the services at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was conducted was Welsh, and if he was an Englishman he must, I imagine, have taught himself that tongue. That he was singularly devoted to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd is clear. Nothing is more apparent. Even when he made his residence in Gadlys, from which Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon, is not far away, his interest in, and his attendance at, the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefn Coed, never flagged.

Where Matthew Wayne was born I do not know, nor, perhaps, now, shall we ever know. He was however, born in 1780 and married Margaret, daughter of William Watkyn, a prosperous farmer, of Pen Moel Allt, Cwm Tâf. Two sons were born of the marriage—Thomas and Watkyn. After a lengthy service with the Crawshays, Wayne left Cyfarthfa with Joseph Bailey for Nantyglo and subsequently went to Gadlys to found an Iron Works of his own. He was assisted in the enterprise by his son Thomas and, probably encouraged by the success of Lucy Thomas, sank a coal pit in Cwm Bach in 1837. His Iron Works at Gadlys supplied the French Government with five hundred tons of blast iron from which, it is believed, guns were made for use in the Crimean war.

HEN DŶ CWRDD TODAY (*E. Warrilow*)

UNVEILING MEMORIAL TABLET TO SION LLEWELLYN *(E. Warrilow)*
17th August, 1947.

Left to right: T. Lewis; Mrs. L. Edwards; L. Edwards; Mrs. J. R. Evans; Tom Lewis.

Matthew Wayne died at Gadlys, on the 7th March, 1853. His son Watkyn died at Ty Mawr, Rhondda, on the 16th April, 1869. Both father and son lie in the same tomb in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd burial ground. The headstone is in the form of a column, the top of which has been struck off to indicate that the last of the Waynes lies beneath.

Matthew Wayne, as we have seen, has been described as "honest Wayne". This trait in his character led to unfortunate results. Crawshay in Cyfarthfa, Guest in Dowlais, Bailey in Nantyglo moved with the times and availed themselves of every new mechanical device to improve output. Wayne, on the other hand was of the old type. He clung to obsolete and time-worn methods. He was content to run his works on the old lines. In the hey-day of his success he made his will, and in it he left to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd £1,000. After his death, years afterwards, his fortune, due perhaps to his aversion of new methods of production, was found to have considerably dwindled, and his bequest to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd had to be correspondingly reduced to little more than half. There is a tablet to his memory on one of the interior walls of the chapel.

Thomas Jones (Tomos o'r Sychpant).

Born in 1791, he was a contemporary of "Siôn y Gwehydd". He lived at Sychpant Farm, Cwm Tâf, and distance and dark lanes that made walking a painful ordeal did not deter him from attending the services even in the stormiest nights of winter. Indeed, the congregation could not very well go on without him for, before the days of the "Almonium", it was he who "pitched" the singing. This he did with the aid of a clarinet which his deep love of music had prompted him to learn to play. Sad to relate, later in life he contracted a disease of the mouth and his teeth had to be extracted. To Tomos this was a calamity because now he could no longer blow his beloved instrument. The congregation were in a quandary. They were at their wits' end what to do. One Sunday morning, however, Matthew Wayne came to the rescue. With his usual generosity, he gave the officers of the chapel half-a-sovereign to be spent "in any way they liked".

The gift was devoted to the purchase of a "tuning pipe" and this, for long years, was blown to give the congregation the "key note", or, as Tomos o'r Sychpant used to say "the *Kay* note".

Tomos was a short stocky, spruce little man with a ring of whiskers circling his pleasant ruddy face. Sometime after he had been forced to abandon his clarinet he removed to Cefn Coed, where he met "Billy Berthlwyd" of Vaynor, who was a good performer on the 'cello. Charmed with Billy's playing, Tomos decided to become one of Billy's pupils. He made good progress in his studies. The long tramp to Berthlwyd in all weather—his 'cello slung on his back—did not damp his ardour Soon he was skilled enough to play his new instrument in the chapel, and when I was a boy there were people still living who remembered him play on it.

When "Siôn y Gwehydd", owing to ill health, was obliged to resign his position as caretaker of the Chapel, it was "Tomos o'r Sychpant" who succeeded him. Tomos was the first tenant of the present caretaker's house. The house was then known as "Ben stair". In those days the living apartments were on the first floor (the schoolroom now). The ground floor was a stable where long-distance members housed their horses while the services were in progress. When Rev. Owen Evans became minister he needed a room in which to keep a school. The stable was therefore converted into a house and the "upstairs" used as an "academy". That was about 1837—38. I have failed to establish the exact date. The original school room was probably built about 60 years earlier. Tomos o'r Sychpant died March 1856, aged sixty-five. He was the great-grandfather of the present caretaker, Mrs. Ceridwen Prosser.

William Lyndon.

He was one of the signatories of the Trust Deeds where he is described as a Coker. He was employed in the Cyfarthfa works. When he died Rev. Owen Evans paid eloquent tribute to his qualities but gave no biographical details. It is known, however, that he was Secretary of the chapel for twenty-five years. He was Secretary during Owen Evans' pastorate. He

seems to have taken an acute interest in the "chapel yard" for on consulting the graveyard records, I find that a number of graves are entered there in his name. Why this was done is difficult to say but a plausible explanation would be that where ownership of the graves could not be established he, as Secretary, laid claim to them, on behalf of the congregation. I have been unable to find his own grave.

Morgan Davies.

I regret that facts relating to Morgan Davies' life are disappointingly scanty. He must, however, have been a very remarkable man for although "he was only a collier" he was "self educated and could read with keen understanding, the works of Dr. Channing, Dr. Priestly, Dr. Adam Clark, Dr. Pye Smith, and Dr. Whitlow". He flourished a century ago, and lived at Coed Cae, Bryn Teg, Clwyd y Fagwyr. He was one of the signatories of the Trust Deed which was executed in 1834.

John Harri (Siôn Harri).

He was a brother of Gwilym Harri, Garw Dyle, Penderyn, and was born in 1755. He lived at Groes Fawr, Vaynor, and like most members of the Harri family was, by trade, a weaver. In an obituary notice of him which appeared in the *Cambrian*, on the 2nd May, 1833 he was described as a man who possessed "natural talents and had some ability in composing Welsh poetry. He was always sober and industrious, showed goodwill towards his fellow creatures and brought up his children in the paths of virtue".

Siôn Harri was a grandson of Siôn Llewelyn and was the father of Harri John Harri who was treasurer of the chapel during the ministry of Rev. Thomas Davies. Another son of Siôn Harri was Jenkin Harri who was a bosom friend of Rev. Owen Evans whom he resembled in dignity of manner and seriousness of mien. Jenkin Harri died on the 19th November, 1875, aged seventy-one years. His brother, Richard Harri, was the owner of the Woollen Factory the ruins of which may still be seen on the bank of the river Tâf Fechan opposite the Gurnos Quarry.

Evan Evans.

Evan Evans was a notable character, strong in mind, forthright in speech, and stiff in opinion. He was the founder of the "Six Bells" family. In his early days he worked in the local mines as a collier, and lived in a public house at Penheolgerrig, known to this day as "Yr Hen Six". Gifted with a keen business mind Evan Evans so prospered as a licensed victualler that he was soon able to build a brewery of considerable proportions known as the Six Bells Brewery. Successful in the venture, he sank a coal pit in Gilfach Goch and became a prominent South Wales coal owner. He rode to the Sunday Services at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd in a brougham drawn by a beautiful pair of sleek bays. There were in those days many other Unitarians living in Penheolgerrig and should "Squire y Six" overtake them on the road they were always invited into his carriage.One of these was Ann Nicholas whose devotion to the chapel could only be equalled by the "Squire" himself. Evan Evans died on the 3rd March, 1886 and a marble tablet to his memory is fixed in one of the walls of the chapel near the pew which he used to occupy. He left to the chapel £100.

After his death, for about twenty-five years, his family and all the staff and employees attended the morning service at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on every first Sunday in March in commemeration of him.

Christmas Evans, the "Squire's" son and heir, whilst he may not have been so faithful in his attendance at the services as his father, evinced quite as profound an interest in the cause. Evan Evans, though he died a rich man, did not forget his modest beginnings, and left instructions that his funeral should be public. His wish was gratified and the cortege was one of the biggest that ever passed through Cefn Coed. His son, Christmas Evans, died 23 March, 1909. Father and son lie near the entrance to the chapel.

The Isaac Family.

Lack of data has made it difficult to render a coherent account of this family. In their day, however, the Isaacs were famed for their love of religious freedom. The first member of

the family of whom there appears to be authentic knowledge is Jacob Isaac whose life and death is commemorated on a tablet erected in Zion Congregational chapel, Craig y Fargoed, Monmouthshire. The inscription reads as follows :—

"In memory of the assiduous attention paid to religious duties for a long life by Jacob Isaac of Manhole who died June 8th 1782 being 89, this is erected :

All, all on earth is shadow.
All beyond is substance".

The above Jacob Isaac was the father of Rev. Jacob Isaac who was ordained in Craig y Fargoed in 1777, and became minister of Moreton Hampstead, Devon in 1780. The latter was born at Ysgubor Newydd, Manmoel, and was prepared for the Christian ministry at the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen.

Originally, the Isaacs were members of the general Baptist chapel at Hengoed but were excommunicated by the Baptists because of their heterodox views. Some time later, therefore, they started holding religious services at their home at Ysgubor Newydd, and in due course Benjamin Isaac, brother of Rev. Jacob Isaac, took out a licence legitimising the farm as a duly recognised place of worship. The "congregation" was often composed only of two or three members of the family. Iolo Morganwg used to attend the services occasionally and Rev. Owen Evans went over on horseback from Cefn Coed to preach there. The services were held monthly and were continued until well into the second half of the 19th century. For a pulpit the Isaacs used an oak arm-chair to the back of which a ledge was fixed to hold the preacher's notes.[1] The chair today is given place of honour in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd pulpit. It is now probably over two hundred and fifty years old, and was presented to our church in February 1889, by Mrs. Jones, Manmoel, and her brother Jehoida Jones, who were descendants of the Isaac family.

Although the Isaacs held their own religious services at Ysgubornewydd, they were also attached to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd

[1]The chair was last used as a pulpit by Rev. J. Hathren Davies.

for I find on looking up the records that Benjamin Isaac was a contributing member in 1837. Some years later the names of Isaac Isaac, Lewis Isaac, Mary Isaac, and her sister Mrs. Jane Jones, appear. Lewis Isaac and Mary Isaac jointly gave to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd before their death the sum of £100. Distance, of course, made it impossible for the Isaacs to attend the services regularly but they came as often as weather and circumstances permitted. They contributed handsomely towards the cause. Mrs. Jones, Manmoel, who is an annual subscriber to the chapel, is a direct descendant of the family.

William Richard Jenkins.
(Billy Richard Shenkin).

He lived at Ffrwdganol, and had an artificial leg. The lane leading to his farm was uneven and littered with stones and in rainy weather especially Billy found it difficult, even painful, to walk. Yet it is amazing how regularly he occupied his pew. He was "one of the old school", blunt in speech, and unceremonious in manner. He laughed all convention to scorn and in order to have room to thrust his wooden leg when seated, he had a hole made through the board that divided his own pew from the one in front of him. He attended the chapel even after he had grown almost stone deaf, and could not hear a word of the sermon. He died on the 31st March, 1892, aged eighty-two years.

John Jones.

This old member performed the almost incredible feat of walking to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd from Cwmbargoed, a distance of at least seven miles. He walked to the morning service, returned to dinner, and walked back again to the evening service.

Dafydd Enoch.

Like Billy Richard Shenkin, Dafydd Enoch had an artificial leg which he used with difficulty. Despite this physical

handicap he trudged laboriously from Perdarren to the Sunday services and often to the week night meetings. He carried his dinner with him on Sundays and though it was plain enough, (just bread and cheese) when Dafydd Thomas, Ty Cockyn, in whose home he partook of it, invited him to the table to join in the proverbial warm Sunday dinner, Dafydd always declined. Not once, it is said, did he accept the invitation. He was called to his rest on the 7th November, 1893, in his fifty-sixth year. The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd graveyard is the place of his repose.

William Hughes.

It is questionable whether the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd ever had as a member a more picturesque figure than William Hughes. Even a momentary glance at him sufficed to waft you into the mid-Victorian Era. He reminded you of a past age. He carried about with him the atmosphere of other years; and he clung with cherishing fondness to customs and habits of former days. He represented a type that has long since passed away. He bore a striking facial resemblance to William Ewart Gladstone, the great Liberal leader, whose political philosophy he had espoused. Of this resemblance, so it was whispered, he was secretly proud. Grave of face and dignified in step, if you met William Hughes in the street you would be irresistibly impressed by his distinguished appearance and noble bearing. There, you would say, goes a man of no common clay. He spoke in the language of the polite and cultured, and all his actions indicated true refinement.

All that can be said of some of our forefathers is that they lived and died. That, however, cannot be said with truth of William Hughes. He actively interested himself in the shifting scenes of life. In the village and in his church he laboured without pause, and in the hearts of those dwindling few who now remember him, recollections of his manifold deeds of Christian charity will be for ever enshrined.

He was born in Holford Street, Cefn Coed in 1818 and lived in the village all his life. He was the oracle of the hamlet, indeed, not only of the hamlet, but of the whole parish. He

was known to everyone for his homely wisdom. It is unfortunate that William Hughes kept no diary. Had he translated his memories into words we should, no doubt, have been supplied with a vivid picture of life in our village in those pictorial days. His honesty was proverbial and was the boast of the whole country-side. No one would dream of questioning William Hughes' integrity. It used to be said—and it was firmly believed—that he was once prosecuted for selling a loaf over-weight. The story may not be true but it deserves to be true. If a fine was actually imposed, we may be sure that it was ungrudgingly, even graciously paid. It was his unshakeable belief that no man could be religious who, commercially, could act irreligiously.

In his youth he began reading for Holy Orders but after forming a close friendship with Rev. Owen Evans he changed his religious opinions, and abandoned the idea. Meanwhile, he had already delved rather deeply in theology and had acquired some knowledge of Latin and Greek. He kept up an acquaintance with these languages until the end of his life. He was enrolled a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, on Aug. 19th, 1846, and no convert embraced a new faith more zealously. Nor did a convert do so much to defend it. Unitarianism, in the village, never had a doughtier champion than he. The theological debates waged over the counter of his grocery establishment would run into several volumes. Many went into his shop to buy unnecessary articles of food in order to "draw" William Hughes to speak. They came away with more food for thought than for their stomachs.

A pretty custom of his was to supply a line to complete a rhymed couplet. A customer, for example, asking for :

"Chwarter o de"

would receive for an answer

"a lawr ag e",

and, fitting the action to the word, the tea was promptly laid on the counter. His eyes twinkled humorously as he did so. His ruling passion was honesty. When he weighed a pound of butter, (or any other commodity), he added a little extra to make up for the weight of the paper in which it was wrapped.

If a customer returned to the shop to explain that William Hughes had given him too much change William Hughes refused to accept it. He was afraid that the customer was mistaken! Smokers of "twist" always had half an inch of that tobacco more than they were entitled to. Once, when an old villager was told that the price of bread was likely to be increased, he said, with sublime indifference. "I don't care. I buy my bread from William Hughes"!

William Hughes loved to relate this story against himself; syrup, then known as treacle, was not sold in glass jars as in our own day. Customers had to fetch it in their own jugs. One day a little girl coyly planted her jug upon William Hughes counter and asked for three pennyworth of treacle. The treacle was duly poured into the jug to the accompaniment of William Hughes' usual banter. "Now, my dear", asked the benign old grocer, expectantly "where is the threepence"? "At the bottom of the jug, Mr. Hughes", piped the little voice. William Hughes' face rippled with a sunny smile.

For some years William Hughes was the village postmaster but he is remembered best perhaps as a grocer and model "mine host". He kept, in addition to his "Provision Stores", the "Cross Keys Inn", then a typical old-fashioned Welsh hostelry. His customers included carters and drovers who, after a long journey from far away Cardiganshire (they were on their way to Merthyr Market) turned in to put up for the night. The steaming horses having been attended to, the travellers were regaled with a well-prepared repast and, this over, and the tables cleared, news was conveyed, tales were told, jokes were cracked until tired eyelids drove the convivial gathering to bed. Many a time the genial host raked out the dying embers of the fire when the Pandy clock dolefully chimed the midnight hour.

Under William Hughes' hospitable roof the proprieties had to be strictly observed. Wild revelling was stopped with a stern reproof. The vulgar and the uncouth were firmly requested to leave. Profanity was not tolerated for a moment, and excessive drinking was regarded with extreme disfavour.

The reason was obvious. The inn was the favourite haunt of the local intelligentsia who wished to discuss, in a congenial atmosphere, not only national and international questions,

but even high doctrinal points over their gleaming tankards of ale. These discussions continued far into the night and when every subject was at length exhausted and no more faults could be argued into merits, the company reluctantly dispersed.

On these happy occasions mine host was a veritable study in rural contentment and repose. Inordinately fond of the "soothing weed", and his pleasant face expanded into a cordial smile, he lolled in his own arm chair puffing leisurely at his long "Churchwarden" pipe, the happiest man in the wide world.

The inn was also the venue of a local literary coterie. The members ranged from amateur versifiers to bards of some repute. One Winter's evening a small prize was offered to the lesser lights of the circle for the best verse in praise of the Host. The verse had to be composed in a quarter of an hour. The scene was amusing. There was, of course, much scratching of heads. One aspirant, with grim determination writ plainly in his countenance, sat bolt upright in the corner gazing blankly into the fume-laden air! Another rested his elbows on the table with his chin cupped in his two hands looking for all the world like a man staring at a ghost! Yet another, evidently disconcerted by the subdued titterings and furtive glances of the gathering, sought the open air and perambulated up and down the stable yard in the back until the cold night nearly froze him and the muse. After much travail of mind the following verse was produced and was declared the best in the competition.

Mae Williaro Hughes o'r Cefan
Yn cadw siop a thafarn
A phob hen ddyn fydd fel efe
Fydd yn a nef yn gyfan.

(Good William Hughes of Cefan
He keeps a shop and Tavarn
And all old men who live like him
Will find a place in heaven).

Doggerel, of course, and indifferent doggerel at that, but there is no disputing where the "Grand old man" of the village stood in the writer's esteem.

The sentiment expressed in the last couplet of the Triban, although uttered under somewhat unusual circumstances,

was undoubtedly echoed by all who knew William Hughes intimately. Everywhere he went he was an influence for good. He feared God and obeyed Him. Even the Inn, by his presence, was sublimated. By his contact with it, it was transformed, so to speak, into an institution for the improvement of the mind.

Modern funerals are more sparsely attended than in William Hughes' time. They were then attended by as many women as men. The women, drawing their long skirts closer about them to prevent them from trailing in the puddles in the roads, accompanied the cortege even to Vaynor churchyard. Colliers, though their wages were small and their families big, thought little of losing a day's work to attend the funeral of a neighbour, and if their "bowlers", the symbol of grief and respectability, were somewhat shabby they would, regardless of fit and comfort, borrow those of their friends.

The exception was William Hughes. He wore a top hat the gloss of which cast the more humble bowlers into a sombre shade. A collar which almost touched the lobes of his ears, a frock coat that fitted him perfectly, a pair of Wellington boots that shone like burnished ebony, completed his outfit.

There were no motor-hearses in those days. True, there were horse-drawn hearses, but to engage them was beyond the reach of an ordinary working man's purse. The coffins were borne, therefore, even to Vaynor, on human shoulders.

In every funeral, (for there were few he did not attend) William Hughes played a conspicuous part. He always headed the procession, and when he was present the undertaker suffered an eclipse. He claimed the position by, as it were, a sort of prescriptive right. It was he who called upon four men at a time to "turn out" in order to take their turn in carrying the body. And how courtly and dignifiedly he performed his task! It used to be said that a friend of his who was given to innocent pranks once walked beside him at a funeral and started him off on his favourite theme, theology. In the heat of the discussion William Hughes forgot his duties; much to the discomfiture of the exhausted bearers in the rear! He belonged to an age that is now past, and we shall never look upon his like again. He died on the 27th March, 1900 at the age of eighty-two. He reposes amidst

the scenes of his childhood. Cilsanws mountain, which once guarded his cradle, now protects his tomb. I consider it a privilege to have been chosen as a boy to distribute "hymn sheets" at his funeral.

John Evans (Y Crydd).

How vastly different was John Evans from William Hughes in his traits and demeanour. John Evans was born in Llandyssul, Cardiganshire in 1816, and was lured away from his native town by the high wages that were said to be paid in the industrial areas. But John had a rude awakening when he removed to Cefn Coed. He found that things were not what they had seemed. Nothing however deterred, he opened, on his own account, a shoe-maker's shop in Cefn Coed. That was in 1835. Soon afterwards he became a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. In 1865 he was appointed chapel treasurer, and held the position until his death. I can remember him faintly. Austere in appearance and blunt in speech, his impulses were those of candour and frankness. He wore his heart on his sleeve. My recollection of him is that of awe and terror. If we children fidgeted or were restless in the services, one glance from John Evans and we squirmed; a prolonged stare shrivelled us up. He was a man of his word, and his word was the law! He had two over-ruling passions—his chapel and his craft. He once injured his finger (he stabbed it with his awl), and septic poisoning supervened. His own "cwyr" (cobbler's wax) had not brought about the desired effect and a doctor had to be called in. Much to his disappointment John was ordered to take a few days rest, but he could not be prevailed upon to do so. Since he was now unable to work at his last he felt he must do something for his chapel. So with a poulticed, throbbing finger that made him wince with pain he attended the annual meeting of the Unitarian Welsh Society at Carmarthen!

His exterior was cold, and forbidding. We Sunday School scholars kept a respectable distance away from him. Yet he was not easily angered. But if you really wanted to incur his wrath, all you had to do was to refer to him as a cobbler! This was an indignity that John would not, and could not,

tolerate for a moment. Not he. He was a shoe-maker. He did not cobble shoes. He *made* them. He had made boots and shoes for working men and gentry alike; who, therefore, dared call him a cobbler? He abominated cant and humbug, and he spoke only when he was spoken to. A vain, pompous customer had every reason to remember his devastating gibe. In every company of hypocrites and pharisees John Evans was a disturbing element. He could neither crack a joke nor see one. And yet those who knew him well were attracted to him, for underneath that thin layer of frigidity lay a kindly, human, fraternal soul. Of an evening, colliers, straight from their baths, and with shining faces, would turn in to his shop, not only to collect their boots or buy a pair of leather laces, but to hear him denounce amidst the cobwebbed confusion of tools and dust and other oddments of his trade, the sins of the world and man's inhumanity to man. His one proud boast was that he had never made, much less sell, a shoddy boot in his life. He was a unique character, an avowed enemy of sham, a living example of the guileless and the sincere.

One day, passers by in Well Street listened in vain for the familiar tapping of his hammer on the last. John Evans had been taken ill, and in a few days he died. This was on the 26th September, 1894. His age was seventy-eight years. He was a Sunday School teacher at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for exactly half a century.

Dafydd Rowlands.

Dafydd Rowlands lived in Merthyr, and life had been harsh to him. His threadbare clothes were obvious proof of his destitution. His boots were well past their prime. But fortunately Dafydd was not vain in his outward appearance. Nature had endowed him with a meek and lowly spirit and dress to him made little appeal. Asked his age, he always replied that he was born in the same year as Robert Thomson Crawshay of Cyfarthfa Castle. (Robert Thomson Crawshay was born in 1817.) Dafydd's passion was music. Once, he had a good tenor voice and in his early days he was the "boy soprano" of the chapel. In his last days, his voice was a

piping reed. When he sang the hymns his body rocked and swayed from side to side like a pendulum, but he was not conscious of this; he was too absorbed in his own melody. Age had now blunted his musical faculties and he had not the remotest idea of the rules of tempo. In former days none knew the rules better than he. In his declining years, a habit of his when he joined in the singing of the hymns was to "lag behind." He never finished singing the verses the same time as the congregation. Before the congregation could proceed with the next verse they had to wait until Dafydd caught them up, and his quivering notes had faded away in the tense, silent air. Nor was this his only musical transgression. Carried away by his emotions, he repeated the last refrain of the last verse over and over again. The congregation, of necessity, had to do likewise. The position was often embarrassing. Sometimes a little resentment was felt; happily, it was not made vocal. But the position was pathetic, too. Dafydd's tremulous voice was all that was left to remind him of the happy days when he was the chapel's "boy soprano." So, the bent, decrepit old singer, blissfully unaware of his musical shortcomings, was left in peace until 7 May 1879, when his humble spirit burst its thraldom, and his quaking notes melted into the Music of the Spheres. He found rest in our graveyard.

Evan Lewis.

In the life of our chapel Evan Lewis, in his day, occupied a prominent place. Impressed with a deep sense of religion, he will be remembered best for his devotional seriousness and his humble piety.

He was born at Llandilo, Carmarthenshire, in 1810, and when his parents removed to Cefn Coed his mother carried him all the way in her arms. His brothers were conveyed by their father in an improvised hand-cart. In his youth, Evan Lewis led a profligate life and was addicted to drink and gambling. In due course, he married the daughter of John Jenkins, a well known local harpist. One child was born of the marriage. To the intense grief of the father the child died young. The death of the child was the turning point in

Evan Lewis' life, for when some men are bowed down with sorrow they seek succour in the cloisteral contemplation of the holy life. In his bereavement Evan Lewis turned his thoughts to religion and on the 4th April, 1843 he was admitted a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. He was then working as a blacksmith at the Cyfarthfa Iron Works, and earning the princely sum of eleven shillings a week. Low wages drove him to seek a livelihood in another direction and he established a combined grocery and drapery business in High Street. It was a small, insignificant shop typical of village shops of that time, where treacle and calico, toffee and reels, paraffin and bacon were huddled together in confused array. In years, the venture yielded him a substantial fortune and for the remainder of his long life he devoted his leisure almost entirely to the welfare of his church. He subscribed £20 towards renovating the chapel in 1853. A newcomer to the village who had the slightest leanings towards Unitarianism was given no peace until he was safely installed in one of the chapel pews. Evan Lewis had not been blessed with strong intellectual powers. His mind worked slowly, even ponderously. Nothing moved him to anger. He was always unperturbed, serene. The whole tenor of his life was quiet, placid and inoffensive. He loved children. His rotund face beamed when they asked him the "correct time." He was a strict, uncompromising sabbatarian. Had he fractured a limb on Sunday it is doubtful whether he would have called a doctor in until Monday. Not often was a discordant note struck in his supremely comfortable home. Domestic harmony was only broken when Mrs. Lewis protested against roasting her Sunday joint on Saturday! If there was anything that taxed Evan Lewis' patience to breaking point it was to find that on his return from the Sunday morning service his kitchen reeked with the odour of sizzling beef! In no circumstances would he read on the Sabbath day anything other than the "Word of God". For a quarter of a century he represented Cefn Coed on the Merthyr Board of Guardians. The story is related of him that when the bells of St. John's Church were installed in May 1880, he subscribed five shillings towards defraying the costs. The moment the bells began to ring he offered five *pounds*, to silence them! He preferred, he said, to hear them pealing across the glades and

fields. The explanation is that he lived at "Gwynfryn", only a stone's throw from the belfry.

For some time, he was the village[1] "Cwnstab" and during his term of office he had the unpleasant duty of apprehending a ticket o' leave man who was on parole. The present magistrates' court at Cefn Coed was then held in the "Lamb Inn," Penderyn. Although Evan Lewis was only five foot two inches tall and his prisoner six feet he "walked" him all the way from Cefn Coed through Cwm Tâf and over the Cadlan Road to Penderyn[2] to be "tried." The ticket o' leave man was committed to Brecon prison. Evan Lewis and his prisoner covered the distance to Brecon (about 16 miles) on foot. On their way there they met only two persons, a tramp and a shepherd. It was not until some time had elapsed did it come to the "Cwnstab's" knowledge that the man he had arrested was a "dangerous character" whose movements were being closely watched. Questioned as to what he would have done in the event of his prisoner showing signs of resistance, Evan Lewis calmly replied with characteristic honesty, "rhoi'r heol iddo " (give him the road).

He was at the peak of his felicity at the weekly prayer meetings. The pathos of the supplications, aided by the doleful strains of the hymns, moved him to repentant tears. There was in his nature a streak of melancholy. This melancholy seeped even through his bewitching smile, and towards the end of his life he was given to brooding over the waning hours of his earthly pilgrimage. That mood is reflected in his favourite quotation :

> Y llygaid sy'n pallu a'r clust sy'n trymhau,
> Mae hynny yn arwydd fod angau'n neshau.
>
> (The vision grows dimmer, the hearing less clear,
> A true indication that death draweth near).

---

[1]The first appointed "Cwnstab" (Constable) at Cefn Coed was a local ironworker, named Vaughan. He wore no uniform, but to distinguish him from other civilians he was provided with a leathern strap. The Police "Station" was his own cottage in Field Street.

[2]The present Penderyn Petty Sessions were formed in 1857. Prior to that date, Vaynor, Penderyn, and Ystradfellte Parishes formed a part of the Ystradgynlais Petty Sessional Division.

THE OLD SCHOOL-ROOM AND CHAPEL HOUSE *(E. Warrilow)*

THE SCHOOL-ROOM AND CHAPEL HOUSE—1947. (*E. Warrilow*)

Nor was this vein of morbidity peculiar to Evan Lewis only. It also characterised his fellow worshippers. One of their favourite hymns commenced thus :

Pan fo natur yn ymddatod,
A chysuron byd yn ffoi,
Pan fo angau yn ei ddyrnod
Rhwng ei freichiau yn fy nghloi,
Mi ddatganaf da yw'r Arglwydd
Tra fom abl dywedyd dim
Moliant iddo yn dragywydd
Am ei fawr ddaioni im',

(When death doth rend my body and pleasures pass away,
When in it's arms it locks me for ever and for aye,
Proclaim I shall His goodness till I'm at last set free,
Be unto Him the glory for His wondrous care of me).

One who well remembers that old hymn being sung at Prayer Meetings seventy years ago recalls (with moistened eyes) how the glistening tears streamed down the rubicund cheeks of Evans Lewis. Perhaps the old deacon's thoughts wandered into the ancient churchyard outside into whose bosom he was soon to be gathered. It is said that his prayers were always couched in the same terms and that even the Sunday School children knew them off by heart. Occasionally, whilst on his knees before the Throne of God, he would become confused and bewildered. His slow, sluggish mind refused to function and his words would trail off into faint incoherent mutterings. Then he would turn his eyes pathetically to William Hughes to rescue him from his embarrassment. "Dyma fi eto yng nghlwm yn y drain, William Hughes." (I am again entangled in the thorns, William Hughes).

Death makes a wider space in a country village than in a populous town. In the tranquil uniformity of rural life, it is an awful event, and when Evan Lewis was gathered to his fathers on January 1st, 1892, in the seventy-seventh year of his age the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd lost its leading figure and the public a faithful servant. Peace to his ashes, simple reverent soul that he was. He died intestate but his widow bequeathed to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd £50 to defray the cost of renovating the chapel in 1895. A number of his relations are still members of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. One of them, Mr. Tom Lewis, a grand-nephew, is the present chapel treasurer.

William Harries.

No apology is needed in assigning a niche in this modest history to William Harries. The omission of his name would be altogether inexcusable, for no man, lay or clerical, did more than he to keep the Unitarian flag unfurled at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. He came of a staunch Unitarian stock, being a descendant of Siôn Llewellyn and a grandson of Gwilym Harri, the poet of Garw Dyle, Penderyn. He detracted nothing from the reputation his ancestors bore as exemplary Unitarians; on the contrary, he added considerable lustre to it. Just as the Beacons are a part of Breconshire so was William Harries a part of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. One could not think of one without thinking of the other. They were inseparable.

William Harries was born on the 8th October, 1842 at Pontprenllwyd, Penderyn. When he was ten years old his uncle, Jenkin Harris, rode over on horse-back to fetch him back to Cefn Coed to learn his trade as a weaver. He followed this trade until 1888, when he was appointed Assistant Overseer for the Parish of Vaynor. He held this position for thirty-two years, and was Secretary of the chapel for thirty-eight years. He was also a deacon and a Trustee. A Welshman to the finger tips, he was passionately fond of music and was untiring in his efforts, not only at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, but in the village of his adoption, in infusing into young men and young women a love for the finest of the fine arts. On several occasions in his younger days he wielded the baton with success at singing festivals and local Eisteddfodau, and twice conducted the Gymanfa of his own denomination. He was the Conductor of the first Gymanfa which was held in the Unitarian Church at Twynrodyn, Merthyr in 1888. In 1864 he inaugurated a "String Band" at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd of which he was the "Leader." He was an admirable instrumentalist. He played the violin, cello and the harmonium. He was the precentor of the Chapel Choir for about forty years.

The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd enjoyed a fair share of his long life. He saw the chapel pass through many vicissitudes, but never once did he forsake it. The regularity of his attendance at the service was amazing. Rarely was he absent, and only

sickness or disease would keep him away. When William Harries was not in his accustomed place on the gallery a sense of void pervaded the entire service.

Of fine physique, erect carriage, and imposing appearance, he represented the old traditional type of Unitarian, true as a dial to the sun. He stood four-square to all the winds that blew. He was a man of exceptional will power. Having once made up his mind, it was not easy to prevail upon him to alter it. He was adamant, immovable. He was not given to unnecessary talk. He called a spade a spade, and his nay was nay. His personality awed one. It dominated every company. When William Harries had spoken there was nothing more left to be said. After he had given his opinion (rhoi ei farn) the meeting usually ended.

He was the custodian, so to speak, of the chapel. He loved every stone in its walls, and no profane hands would dare do violence to it. If the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, by some stroke of misfortune, were to be destroyed by fire, we may be sure that William Harries would be the last to leave the burning pews. The many positions he held in the chapel he held as a sacred trust. In his hands the destinies of the congregation were safe, secure. As a young man he used to ride on horseback to attend the Sunday morning services at Craig y Fargoed —a distance of about twenty miles.

He was a firm believer in the sanctifying effect of music upon religious worship. In that direction, he toiled incessantly, and it is in that capacity, perhaps more than in any other, that his name will blossom in the annals of our shrine. As a conductor, he was severe, fastidious. He would brook no inattention, no wistful day-dreaming on the part of his choir. Any tittering, any furtive whisperings and his great frame shook with anger. He had an invincible antipathy to the unison. In his eyes the unison was inartistic. It was not harmony. It was a relic of far-off days when solfa was yet to be invented. William Harries insisted upon singing the "four parts." Nothing else would satisfy him, and woe unto the young tenor who would persist in singing the "top" with the sopranos! A few deliberately chosen words of scathing rebuke and the offender wilted like a cut flower in the sun.

But William Harries was not all storm and thunder. The tempest passed, he was "Sweetness and Light." His displeasure was as short-lived as a dewdrop on a rose. Through the wreathing storm-clouds there always pierced at last a glint of warm and genial sunshine. When a glee was "sweetly sung in tune" his handsome profile was a picture of bliss and pride. He was as happy as a bee in a clover field when he had the baton in his hand. This, to him, was the acme of contentment. He had no patience with those who could not read solfa. What was the modulator in the schoolroom for?

That was William Harries as I recall him. I can see him now leaning on the harmonium on the gallery tapping out the tempo like a metronome with his fore-finger when the hymns were sung. His mind having been cast in a melancholy mould he had a preference for the minor chord, and when a hymn was feelingly rendered his eyes moistened perceptibly and his deep, diapason voice faded into a sob.

As one broods by the fireside and recalls "from the shadowy past the forms that once have been," fragrant recollections of him obtrude themselves upon the memory, and one sighs for the quieter and more placid days in which he lived. He breathed his last on the 7th September, 1920 in the seventy-eighth year of his age. He was the last of the bastions to fall—the only remaining leaf on the autumn bough.

And yet, William Harries, though he has passed from mortal view, is not dead. His influence remains. His loyalty lives on in his daughters—Mrs. J. R. Evans and Miss L. Harries. The deep respect in which Mrs. Evans and Miss Harries are held in the chapel today is richly deserved. Their integrity of mind and purpose is equalled by few and surpassed by none. They wear their father's mantle not unworthily.

David Price.

David Price has been described as one of nature's gentlemen. He was one of those silent, diffident souls, who are the salt of the earth. His manners, we are told, were peculiarly gentle, and in the chapel he was oftener seen than heard. He recoiled from publicity, and was content to be regular in

his attendance at the services, to be true to his convictions, to be constant in his attention to his roses. He was gardener to Mr. Foreman, owner of the Old Pendarren Iron Works and although his wages were by no means high he contrived to save a little money. By his will the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd benefited to the extent of £100. He lived at Cefn Coed, and died on the 14th April, 1872 at the age of fifty-nine.

William Jones.

He was born in Cefn Coed on the 4th May, 1838, and was the son of "Tomos o'r Sychpant". He was a member of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for fifty-five years and a deacon for twenty-five years. With a white reverend beard growing from immediately below his eyes, he looked a typical deacon of a past age. I have a clear recollection of his taking the "collection box" around on Sunday evenings, his highly polished Wellington boots creaking audibly in the silence as he moved from pew to pew. He commenced working in the local collieries when he was only eight years old, and he was so small that he had to be carried to the pit on the back of the collier with whom he worked, often fast asleep. His job, largely, was "to hold the light for his boss," and the seam in which he was engaged was so dank and clammy that his teeth, long before the end of the day, chattered with the cold. His hours of work were from seven in the morning until six in the evening. He used to say that, in winter, he never saw daylight except on Sundays, because on other days, he was in the pit before the sun rose and was still there when it sank. He left the collieries, however, when a youth and earned his livelihood in Cyfarthfa Iron Works as a blast-engine tender for over half a century. I consulted him many times about the "old days" (yr hen ddyddiau) and noted that like most illiterate old people he had an amazing memory. His long earthly pilgrimage ended on the 15th June, 1919, at the age of eighty-one years. He lies in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd graveyard with a number of his kith and kin, all of whom were Unitarians, around him. His only surviving daughter, Mrs. Ann Watkins, despite her seventy-nine years is still exceptionally regular in her attendance at the services.

Thomas Hughes.

Thomas Hughes deserves to be remembered among the faithful. For thirty-two years he was secretary and sexton. He was also a deacon. He is reputed to have buried in the graveyard[1] "2,000 people." He was a brother to William Hughes and like most members of the Hughes' family possessed mental gifts above the ordinary. In addition to his being the secretary of the chapel, he was also secretary of two or three local "Sick Clubs." It was he who built, and lived in, the house afterwards known as the "Brecon and Merthyr Railway Inn." So much care and attention did he devote to the graveyard during the time he was sexton that the burial ground was known, not as "Mynwent yr Hen Dŷ Cwrdd," but "Mynwent Thomas Hughes". His death took place on the 16th June, 1877, aged sixty-seven and he lies in the God's acre of his heart.

John Jones (Cwmcapel).

My recollection of John Jones is now rather faded, but I can clearly remember that he had a red, bushy beard which seemed to me then to be aflame with fire. I was also attracted by his voice, a voice that rolled and rumbled like the lower notes of an organ. When John Jones boomed out a question in one of the chapel meetings it was as though a clap of thunder had broken in on the silence. He used to sit up in his pew like a pedestal of granite, his back and shoulders rigid, and his eyes, tucked away under his thick over-hanging brows, fixed immovably on the minister. By occupation, he was a colliery official and, owing to the nature of his calling, was often prevented, much to his regret, from attending the Sunday services. But if he was unable to be present at the services himself he saw to it that his nine children were present. He would accept no excuses for their non-attendance. His command, volleyed in that fierce voice of his, had, come what may, to be obeyed. Forty or fifty years ago when the average attendance at the Sunday services was fifty in the

[1] Yr "Ymofynydd".

morning and a hundred and eighty in the evening John Jones' family were active members of the chapel. By to-day however, death has made serious gaps in their ranks, and now only one (Mrs. Gwen Davies) remains to remind us of a man of stern discipline, of strict supervision, and in whom love of his chapel was a living reality. It was because of his resounding voice and severe manner that John Jones was chosen to play the part of Simon Legree, the slave driver, when the Hen Dy Cwrdd Dramatic Society produced "Uncle Tom's Cabin" sixty-four years ago. John Jones died on the 30th October, 1900, aged fifty-seven and was buried in the chapel graveyard.

Evan Williams.

Evan Williams was a natural thinker, but he did not think aloud. His strength lay in his silence, in his serene tranquility of mind, to which was added a sound judgment and a love of religious literature. He was perhaps the most consistent reader of *Yr Ymofynnydd* in the chapel. He looked forward to its monthly appearance with eager anticipation, and although the amount of instruction he received when a boy was almost negligible he read it with understanding however abstruse the matter. Such was his memory that, years afterwards, he could recall exactly the gist of the articles and the date they appeared. He was brought up in St. John's Church as an anglican but when he reached middle age he was tormented by religious doubts and questionings. Just at this time he struck up a friendship with Rev. J. Hathren Davies to whom he confided his difficulties, and as a result a complete metamorphosis in his theological opinions took place. In due course, he became a member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd and soon afterwards was appointed deacon. He never regretted the step he had taken. This was proved by the regularity of his attendance at the services, and by his unswerving allegiance to his new faith. Knowledge is the product of schools and academies. Wisdom is a gift from God. Evan Williams had very little of the former ; but he was generously endowed with the latter. He was always cool and unhurried, and saw some virtue in the worst of men. He died on the 28th August, 1918, aged seventy-four.

William R. Davies.

The epitaph on William R. Davies' headstone in the Hen Dy Cwrdd graveyard is singularly appropriate :

"To duty firm,
To conscience true".

That couplet epitopmizes William Davies' life. He was a leaf that had fluttered down the years from Siôn Llewellyn's laurel crown, for he was a direct descendant of the old Pont y Capel bard. His father, David William Davies (Dafydd William Dafydd) although self taught had learned to read English so well that he could understand and digest William Ewart Gladstone's masterly speeches with amazing ease. Dafydd William Dafydd was no mean politician, and held advanced radical views when most of his friends and associates were rabid tories and ardent supporters of Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield. Espousing, therefore, Gladstone's political confession of faith, it was an outstanding event in Dafydd William Dafydd's life, when, on the 3rd June, 1887, the great liberal statesman passed through Cefn Coed. Loudest in his cheers on the station platform as the train glided in, and nearest to the compartment in which Gladstone sat, was Dafydd William Dafydd, his face beaming, and waving his hat vigorously. He was of the strong, rugged type and did not mince his words. In his will, he left £20 to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

His only son, William R. Davies, had been cast in a different mould. He was not a politician. He preferred to sit around his supremely comfortable fireside and watch the political world go by. But he was deeply interested in his chapel. His devotion to the Hen Dy Cwrdd was, as it were, a natural disposition in him, and when William Harries died on the 7th September, 1920, William R. Davies was appointed his successor as chapel secretary. But he did not hold the position long. To the deep regret of the congregation, four years later on the 8th November, 1924, he died. Short however though his term of office was, he applied himself to the duties alloted to him with unflagging zeal and, in consequence, enjoyed the well

merited reputation of being a worthy member of a long line of Unitarian forbears. William R. Davies followed the calling of a carpenter, and for years, was foreman of the carpentry department at the Cyfarthfa works. He was buried in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd graveyard.

His daughter, his only child, Mrs. Lewis Edwards, has inherited his loyalty, and has inherited it to an unusual degree. She has been chapel organist for thirty-two years, and Sunday school teacher for thirty-eight years. Truly a remarkable record. A music teacher, and an accomplished performer on the piano, her pupils are legion. Her services, where her art is concerned, are well known to all those inhabitants of Cefn Coed who are interested in charitable causes.

John Simon.

The picture of John Simon that persists in my memory is that of a tall, somewhat portly man with a round and rather chubby face that might at any moment expand into a sunny smile. There was nothing he would not do in the chapel except sing in public or deliver a speech. He was as terrified of the one as he was of the other. He had the business mind, and in committee he was excellent. When he expressed his point of view his words carried weight. His thinking was always clear; his judgment always sound. He was more interested in the administration of the chapel than in its theology, and when business matters had to be transacted John Simon, in his quiet diffident way, could be counted upon to make a useful contribution to the discussion. None was more at pains to please; few were less disposed to speak an angry word. He had a heart that could be easily touched to sympathy. The part he played in the chapel was that of useful labour, and what he did there was done for the sheer love of doing it and not for popular and cheap applause. One of his principal aims in life was to be faithful to the Unitarian tradition of his ancestry. When he and his family, all of whom were brought up in the Hen Dy Cwrdd, left for Liverpool some twenty-five years ago, their departure was keenly felt.

John Simon died in Somerset on the 3rd November, 1932, aged seventy-one and his remains were brought back to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd to be buried.

Rees Jenkins.

Rees Jenkins always struck me as a man who never hurried and never worried and who pursued his purpose and went his silent way as though he had not a care in the world. He appeared to me as the incarnation of contentment and repose ; a man of endless patience who derived his pleasures from seeing others happy. You could never conceive of Rees Jenkins uttering "blazing indiscretions" and taking part in the hurly-burly of life. He moved in the shadows ; the glare of the lime-light was the last thing he hungered for. He was, however, a useful member of the chapel. With the children he was particularly popular. He had an excellent way with them. Every year, I remember, he was entrusted with the arrangements for the transport of the Sunday School scholars to the sea-side. He was looked upon by the youngsters, in consequence, as a sort of hero.

He was not brought up a Unitarian. But by marrying William Hughes' younger daughter he married into a well-known Unitarian family. He sat in the pew that his father-in-law had occupied since the 18th August, 1846. Rees Jenkins died on the 25th October, 1927, at the age of sixty-four, and was buried in our graveyard.

Richard Jones.

My earliest recollections of Richard Jones go back to the days of my boyhood. The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, then, was known for its "bass voices" and William Harries' continual complaint was that there were not sufficient tenors in the chapel to "balance them." Of the limited number of tenors we had, Richard Jones was one of the best. He was also known for his directness of speech. Unlike his more slow-moving fellow-deacons he, in a discussion, arrived at his point by the shortest possible route. He had a mind of his own, and could not be forced into doing anything against his will. But if he

was frank and inclined to be somewhat impetuous there was no doubting his purpose. The motive was the welfare of the chapel, where so many generations of his family had sung and prayed. He started life as a miner but ended it as a colliery manager. He, like most young men of his time, left school in his early teens, and urged by an inward desire to accumulate knowledge, acquired it by reading far into the night after the day's work in the coal-face was done. He was the son of the old patriarch, William Jones, of whom I have already spoken, and a grandson of "Tomos o'r Sychpant". He died on the 5th August, 1939, aged sixty-five, and was laid to rest in the chapel burial ground.

Emmanuel Lewis.

When Emmanuel Lewis died on the 20th of January of this year (1947) a member of rare qualities was lost to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. For years he was assistant chapel Secretary to Mr. Lewis Edwards, and in that capacity he gave to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd of his best. Born at Cefn Coed fifty-nine years ago, he started to work in the local collieries after leaving school and, interesting himself in the science of mining, he gained certificates in that branch of study. He also interested himself in the construction of the human body, and became proficient in First Aid.

Emmanuel Lewis' nature was revealed in his smile, which radiated geniality, in his attachment to his chapel which proved his faith, in his devotion to his family, which evidenced his affection for his home. Whether the circumstances were those of elation, on the one hand, or of gloom on the other, he was ever the same—unruffled and cool. He was patient in adversity, uncomplaining in sickness, restrained in his enenthusiasms. His spirit burned brightly though the body was perceptibly approaching its end. He worked without fuss and unobtrusively, and was inclined to be retiring and shy. He was at home and at peace in a lonely wood. Calm, himself, he loved the precious silence of a glade. One of his greatest joys, on a still evening, was to take a walk under the stars. I accompanied him on these expeditions many times. Often we would walk long distances in complete silence thinking about nothing in particular until our reveries were

broken by the distant wails of the hunted creatures of the night. We were kindred spirits, and deep called unto deep.

Like most men who love the shade, Emmanuel Lewis had his moods of conversational intensity. Although he was sparing, rather than extravagant, with his words, he could, when inspired, express himself freely, even eloquently. He was a wide reader; few working men had read more and better books. On several occasions he was induced to preach in the chapel. His opinion of his own efforts was far lower than that of those who listened to him. Modesty and self-effacement were obvious traits in his character. Yet, Emmanuel Lewis was a man of marked independence of mind. His mind having been made up, it was difficult to dislodge him from his resolution.

He was buried in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd graveyard on one of the coldest days of this coldest of winters and it is sad to think that tonight, as I write this tribute to his memory, he lies under the snow.

David Robert Lewis.

He was a brother of the foregoing Emmanuel Lewis whom he survived by only a few months. David Robert, as he was fondly known, first attended the chapel when he was a mere lad and his connection with it was unbroken until, all too early, death severed the link.

If it were asked what were David Robert Lewis' most obvious personal qualities the answer would surely be modesty and self-effacement. He was happiest where he could hide from public view, and in every situation that called for delicate handling it was his wont to withdraw from the discussion and leave the unravelling of difficult problems to those whom he knew to have been gifted with keener minds and more eloquent tongues than he himself possessed. For all that, he was not an inconspicuous figure in the life of the chapel. He had the failing of his race, and was rarely punctual. Time, to David Robert Lewis, seemed to stand still. Haste had no meaning to him. The ever-changing world left him unmoved. But if he was late arriving at the Sunday services, a service

without him was unthinkable. He could always be counted upon to occupy his seat.

A bachelor, with quaint bachelor ways, he loved quiet, and sought refuge from the commotion of life around him in the loneliness of his cottage from which he would emerge only to attend his chapel and his work—his cardinal interests. He was a teacher in the Sunday school for twenty-eight years and was the Sunday School Treasurer for almost as long. He was one of the solid, traditional Unitarians whose ranks are now growing pathetically thin.

For the last three years of his life he suffered untold physical pain to which a merciful dispensation decreed an end on the 27th May, 1947, when he was in his fifty-seventh year.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HEN DŶ CWRDD OF TODAY.

An account of the activities of the congregation of today would hardly be complete without some reference to the present secretary, Mr. Lewis Edwards, to whose untiring industry the thriving condition of the chapel for the last twenty-five years is due.

The reader who has done me the honour of perusing these pages thus far will have observed that a distinguishing trait in the old Unitarians was fidelity. When the old Unitarians died, however, fidelity did not die with them. It persists today, and it persists in an unusual degree in Mr. Edwards. He stands guard over the destinies of the chapel as faithfully as his ancestors did in the woods of Cwmglo. As long as he remains at the helm the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd need not fear any unconcealed rocks that might lie ahead. He is perhaps the most versatile layman in the chapel. Nothing seems to come amiss to him. He takes the place of the minister in the pulpit with the same ease and grace as he takes the chair in a public gathering. He is as much at home with the children of the Sunday School as he is around his own fireside. A busy man and active in public affairs, life to him is a brief candle that must be thoroughly used up before time extinguishes the glow. His pen is as facile as his tongue is eloquent, and although, like most men, he has his moments of gloom he is not a pessimist. During his long association with the chapel he has seen its fortunes wax and wane. He has watched with anxious eyes the ebb and flow of its vicissitudes. But he has never been known to despair. Deep in his heart there is an unshakeable faith that the religious light, though at times it may grow dim, will never go out. Whilst he reveres the past and has an affectionate regard for its heroes, he does not live in the past. He evinces no slavish adherence to the days that are gone. His hope is in the living present and the years to come. The future to him is not a hideous prospect.

In his nature is found that rare combination—a love of the artistic and a marked predeliction for the administrative.

He is both musician and mathematician. He is as much in love with sacred hymn and holy song as he is with the chapel ledger. Far seeing, he gives to the congregation an impetus and direction that is rarely wrong. He will, it is hoped, relinquish the position he has held for over a quarter of a century only when the sun has sunk low in the west and night has blotted out the landscape.

The family to which Mr. Edwards belongs, on the paternal side, is of ancient extraction. It is traceable to the Scudamores who were descended from Owen Glyndwr, the great Welsh Prince who flourished in the fourteenth century. I have already stated that Mr. Edwards is a descendant[1] of "Edward o'r Gyrnos."

The Edwards' family lived for many generations in Tai Mawr Farm. The farm was built on the site of a Roman Catholic Church, known as "Y Capel." The word "capel" in Pont y Capel is believed to have been derived from it. The last remaining ruins of the church were removed about a century ago when Tai Mawr Farm was enlarged and renovated.

[2]One of the first tenant-owners of "Tai Mawr" was Lewis Edward, and like most Welshmen of that period, Lewis Edward was a devout Roman Catholic. He took part in the Crusades in the Holy Land in the twelfth century. He returned home, however, unscathed and died in peace at Tai Mawr. He was buried in Merthyr Parish Churchyard. Some time before 1780 his tombstone was intact. It bore the inscription "praye for ye sowle of Lewis Edward."

Our chapel Secretary was born at Cefn Coed on the 2nd October, 1892, and received his early education at the local elementary school and Brynmawr County School. In 1913, he was admitted to Bristol University and during the two years he was a student there attached himself to Lewin's Mead Domestic Mission. Interesting himself actively in the work of the mission, his talents soon revealed themselves and he was

[1]Miss Mary Simons, Hanover St., Merthyr, another descendant, is the proud possessor of Edward o'r Gyrnos' prayer book. On the fly leaf is written : E. Harri, Gyrnos Farm 1760.

[2]"Tales and Sketches of Wales" Charles Wilkins.

immediately appointed a Sunday School teacher. Shortly afterwards, he was appointed Sunday School Superintendent. In 1915, after completing his course at the University, he returned home to take up a teaching appointment under the Merthyr Education Committee by whom he is still engaged.

Immediately after his return he renewed his activities at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd and nine years later, in 1924, he was appointed Secretary following the death of his father-in-law, W. R. Davies. The duties of Secretary, however, were not new to him for he had gained some experience of the work some time previously when he assisted William Harries during Mr. Harries' closing years. He was appointed assistant Secretary to Mr. Harries when Mr. Willie Jones resigned and left for Aberdare. He first attended the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd as a child and has since occupied nearly all the official positions connected with the chapel. He has been superintendent of the Sunday School for thirty-two years, and Sunday School conductor for thirty-four years. In 1931, and again in 1933 and 1938, he conducted the South East Wales Children's Festival. He has been conductor of the Chapel Adult Choir for about twenty-six years, and in 1928 conducted the South East Wales Gymanfa.

When the South East Wales Lay Preachers' Union was resusticated in April 1920 he was appointed secretary and held the office until 1926. He was president of the South East Wales Society in 1940-42 and was president South East Wales Sunday School Association in 1938-40—a long record of service of which Mr. Edwards has every reason to be proud.

When the chapel is in need of money, it is to Mr. Edwards is relegated the often unpleasant task of finding it. In this he has never failed. In 1925, for example, the chapel was in dire need of repair, and the funds were at a low ebb. As usual the congregation turned to Mr. Edwards for succour. Once again his foresight and organising abilities saved the situation. On his suggestion the Young People's Society inaugurated a Building Fund. The officers were, Mr. Edwards, who was appointed Secretary, Mrs. J. R. Evans, Treasurer, Mr. D. T. Evans (now Rev. D. T. Evans, Cairncastle, Co. Antrim) Chairman. The Society's first effort was a public dance, which proved a success. The proceeds formed a

HEN DŶ CWRDD (INTERIOR) *(E. Warrilow)*

CHAIR-PULPIT, FORMERLY USED AT YSGUBOR NEWYDD

(R. Warrilow)

substantial nucleus to the fund. In various ways, the society worked tirelessly for eleven years to achieve their objective.

When Rev. T. Eric Davies resigned the pastorate in 1931 the pulpit remained vacant until 1936. During this period Mr. Edwards as Secretary set about to encourage and develop promising talent in the chapel. The scheme was fruitful of good results. The young men were Mr. D. T. Evans, the late Mr. Emmanuel Lewis, Mr. Lewis' son, now Mr. D. T. Lewis, B.Sc., Ph.D., the late Rev. Hathren Jones, Mr. Tom Chambers, Mr. Emlyn Watkins and Mr. Merfyn Hughes now of Australia. During that period, too, the South East Wales Society and the Welsh Unitarian Society rendered valuable assistance. Moreover, the scheme provided the congregation with the rare opportunity of hearing some of the most eminent English Unitarian ministers among whom were Rev. Dr. Mortimer Rowe, Secretary of the General Assembly; Professor Gow, D.D.; Mrs. (Professor) Joyce Gow; Rev. Griffith Sparham who did such excellent work as Warden of the Hibbert Houses in the Middle East during the last war and whose kindness to the son of the present writer in Cairo has been recorded in the chapel minutes; Rev. Bertram Lister, M.A., and the late Rev. Dr. Tudor Jones, Torquay. By 1927, the requisite £250 for repairs to the chapel had been collected. Nine years later the old schoolroom was razed to the ground and a new school room was build on the old site. The new school room cost £1,200 and was opened in the spring of 1937 free of debt. Before its demolition a "farewell service" to it was held on the 21st September 1936 in which the minister, Rev. J. M. Thomas; Rev. Hathren Jones, and the present writer took principal part.

For over a century and a half the message at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was delivered in Welsh. Today the services are conducted in English and Welsh on alternate Sundays. The reason for this may best perhaps be summed up in the phrase so often heard in recent years "the exigencies of the hour." Some thirty years ago the vernacular in Cefn Coed showed signs of losing ground. The decline of "Yr hen iaith" had its repercussions in the chapel. More and more the younger members adopted English as the vehicle of their every day speech. As the old people one by one passed to their rest,

passed to that bourn from which the most venerated never return, a fragment, as it were, of the Welsh language sank into the grave with them. The congregation was faced with a problem. The solution was not easy. The difficulty was met by introducing English into the services.

The step was not taken without regret. The decision was accepted with reluctance rather than with conviction. The aged, who had lisped in Welsh in childhood days, shrank from making the resolution. They found however, after some reflection that to allow love of language to obstruct public worship was the negation and the antithesis of the true Christian spirit, and with no small measure of regret they bowed to the inevitable.

But it is doubtful, speaking dispassionately, whether the concession had the desired effect. That it had some effect no one will deny. That it increased the number of the congregation to the extent hopefully anticipated can hardly be supported by evidence, for the congregation of today is composed, in the main, of members whose forebears were torch-bearers in the dark days of two hundred years ago, men and women who have been bred in the Unitarian tradition and who are held together by a bond that only death can sever. Every year their ranks grow thinner. The "Great Reaper" takes toll of them, and the gaps they leave behind are not easily filled. Though the Sunday School is attended by no fewer than 160 scholars, relatively few of them grow up to be members of the chapel. After reaching their teens they depart and do not return. Despite every effort to interest them in the spiritual world the material world offers them more alluring attractions. For all that, the condition of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd today compares favourably with the neighbouring nonconformist churches. It is not untrue to say that in no chapel in the village are the services so well attended, in no place of worship in the district are there more social and religious activities.

One of the most virile organistations connected with the chapel at the present time is the Women's League. It was founded in 1929 by the joint efforts of Mrs. J. R. Evans and Mrs. Lewis Edwards. Mrs. Evans was elected President, and Mrs. Edwards, Secretary. The contribution the League has made towards the funds of the chapel is, to say the least,

praiseworthy. Repeated reference has been made by the chapel officers to the excellent work its members are doing.

The League was not formed, however, with the specific object of helping the chapel financially. There was another motive. It was to bind the lady members together in a spirit of Christian fellowship, a fellowship in which social and cultural activities were to be given premier place. In that respect it has more than justified its existence. Its labours range from organising "Sales of Work" to discussing subjects of a high standard; from knitting and sewing to decorating the chapel for the harvest services.

Another movement connected with the chapel which deserves special mention is the Dramatic Society. It is a society that vies with the Women's League in its desire to be of some help to the cause. Since Rev. J. Marles Thomas accepted the pastorate eleven years ago not a winter has passed but that a drama has been performed in the Schoolroom to packed audiences. The performances are usually held for a whole week. During the last war the Society on several occasions placed itself at the disposal of the local War Comforts Fund with results that were highly pleasing. The producer is Rev. J. Marles Thomas whose work in that capacity has evoked glowing encomiums from dramatic critics of standing.

It is remarkable how persistently time rings its changes. When the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd staged its first play, nearly eighty years ago, the local nonconformist churches regarded the innovation as a disastrous fall from Christian grace. The members of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd thought otherwise. To them even the Bible itself was drama, drama in its supremest sense and the view then generally held, that the stage was a place where only sin and frivolity were encouraged, was, as they saw it, only partly true. Sublimated and properly directed, the stage, they argued, could be used to give dramatic expression even to religion and ethics, and time has proved how right they were.

This is the view held in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd today. To the Dramatic Society, composed as it is of young people, the congregation gives generous support. This is as it should be,

for no social movement affords a better opportunity for the expression of individual qualities and the development of human personality than the stage. To those young men and young women who, by nature, are aloof and retiring and apt to feel that there is no other contribution they can make to the regular exercises of their church, it affords excellent opportunities to cultivate their latent talents. This view, however, is now shared by other churches and chapels in the village, for each, quite rightly, has today its own Dramatic Society.

Another change that the passage of years has brought about is that which has taken place in religious tolerance. The old bitter cry against the Unitarian faith is now hardly ever heard. The senseless quarrels over dogmas and creeds which caused so much animosity between friends, and even between members of the same family, in former days, are, to all intents and purposes, things of the past. As education advances, denominational wranglings recede. As doctrinal differences are explained away by a more intelligent study of the scriptures, narrowness of spirit ceases to exist, with the happy result that a closer friendship prevails between other denominations and our own today than at any time perhaps since the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was first built. Proof of this, if proof were needed, is found in the fact that our minister is often engaged to bury and marry members of religious persuasions to which, creedally, he does not belong—a thing unheard of in Cefn Coed forty or fifty years ago.

Much as I would like to do so, it would be impossible for me to pay individual tribute to all those who are shouldering the burden at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd today. Grateful reference, however, must be made to Mr. Tom Lewis, the chapel treasurer. Few are more concerned about the welfare of the chapel than Mr. Lewis. His family have been connected with the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for nearly a hundred and fifty years. He is a nephew, twice removed, of Evan Lewis (of whom I have already written) many of whose qualities he seems to have inherited. Nothing weighs heavier on Mr. Lewis' spirit than the fear that the chapel may find itself in financial difficulties, and it is not perhaps an overstatement to say that he would

rather see a whole street of houses laid waste than to see the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd desecrated and destroyed. He is now the only remaining member of the chapel who attended Rev. J. Hathren Davies' school. Deeply fond of music he has been deputy organist for years, and as the "Chairman of the Congregation" he presides over all the chapel gatherings.

To close this chapter without alluding to the generous assistance the Hen Dy Cwrdd has received both from the General Assembly and the Church Aid Sustentation Fund, London, would indeed be base ingratitude. Tucked away in the hills of Wales though our chapel is, it is not forgotten in the far away metropolis, and it is not without reason that our Secretary has repeatedly stated that were it not for the assistance rendered by these two Societies our chapel could not have survived.

The Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, as we have seen, is the oldest place of worship in the village. It is the oldest *nonconformist Chapel* in all the surrounding valleys. Its backward view is two-hundred years. What of its forward view ?

We are living in a material age, an age in which men think in terms of machines, statistics and inventions. The intense religious passion of former years has cooled into dull indifference. Organised religion, we are told, will soon have so declined that it will exert very little, if any influence, on human society. Public worship, it is asserted, will be no longer necessary to the Christian way of life. I do not concur with this view because to me religion, like life itself, is indestructible and will persist as long as this green earth of ours lasts. Man, I think, will always honour piety, revere the Divine and bow the knee to the Unknown and the Unseen. If, however, time, which can devour all things except the deepest longings of the human heart, will prove my faith to be based on what is today known as wishful thinking, and the thousands of the little Bethels of Wales will become museum pieces of antiquarian interest only, I cannot resist cherishing the hope that one of the last doors to be closed will be that of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

THE OFFICERS OF THE CHAPEL TODAY ARE:—

Minister—Rev. J. Marles Thomas, M.A.

Secretary—Mr. Lewis Edwards.

Assistant Secretaries—Mr. Howel Giles Simon; Mr. Tom Lewis, J.P.

Treasurer and Chairman—Mr. Thomas Lewis.

Vice Chairman—Mr. D. B. Jones, J.P.

Precentor—Mr. Rees Powell.

Organist—Mrs. Lewis Edwards, A.T.C.L.

Assistant Organists—Mr. Thomas Lewis; Miss Vaynor Jenkins.

Organ Blowers—Masters Meirion Davies; Ellsworth Davies; Clive Norgrove.

Communion Stewards—Mr. Tom Chambers; Mr. Eleazer Jones; Mr. T. Lewis; Mr. D. B. Jones: Mr. T. Lewis, J.P.; Mr. Emlyn Watkins; Mr. Morgan Morgans; Mr. Dd. Robt. Lewis (now deceased).

Caretakers—Mr. and Mrs. Chris Prosser.

President Women's League—Mrs. Lewis Edwards, A.T.C.L.

Secretary Women's League—Miss Doris Simon.

Treasurer Women's League—Mrs. J. R. Evans.

Superintendent Sunday School—Mr. Lewis Edwards.

Deputy Superintendent Sunday School—Mr. D. B. Jones, J.P.

Superintendent Sunday School (Primary)—Mrs. Lewis Edwards.

Secretary Sunday School—Miss Marian Lewis.

Treasurer Sunday School—Mr. Emlyn Watkins.

Secretary Sunday School Bank—Mr. Evan David Arthur, B.A.

Financial Secretary Sunday School Bank—Miss Doris Simon.

Treasurer Sunday School Bank—Mr. D. B. Jones, J.P.

President Young People's League—Miss Betty Jones.

Chairman Young People's League—Mr. David B. Thomas.

Secretaries Young People's League—Miss Joan Watkins; Miss Marion Lewis.

Treasurer Young People's League—Mr. Vivian Hopkins.

Secretary Dramatic Society—Mrs. Cyril Griffiths.

Treasurer Dramatic Society—Mrs. Emlyn Watkins.

Producer Dramatic Society—Rev. J. Marles Thomas, M.A.

Scout Master—Rev. J. Marles Thomas, M.A.

Assistant Scoutmaster—Mr. Tom Chambers.

Troop Leader Master—Mr. David B. Thomas.

Leader of Band of Hope—Rev. J. Marles Thomas, M.A.

Trustees—Mr. Lewis Edwards (*Chairman*); Mr. Eleazer Jones (*Vice-Chairman*); Mr. Emmanuel Lewis (*D*); Mr. John Rees Evans; Mr. Richard Jones (*D*); Mr. William Morgan; Mr. Richard Hughes (*D*); Mr. Thomas Lewis; Mr. David Robert Lewis (*D*); Mr. Chris Prosser; Rev. David T. Evans; Mr. Morgan Morgans; Mr. William Watkins.

Sunday School Teachers (*Primary*)—Mrs. Lewis Edwards, A.T.C.L.

Sunday School Teachers (*Junior*)—Miss Anita Jones; Miss Gwen Chambers; Miss Thelma Morgan; Mrs. David Thomas; Miss Betty Jones; Mrs. Emlyn Watkins; Mrs. Willis; Mrs. Ben Davies; Mrs. B. Williams; Miss Joyce Ullyet; Miss Vaynor Jenkins.

Sunday School Teachers (*Intermediate*)—Miss Irene Thomas; Mrs. C. Dunley; Mr. Tom Chambers; Mrs. May Morgan.

Sunday School Teachers (*Senior*)—Mr. D. B. Jones, J.P.; Mrs. Marles Thomas; Mrs. J. R. Evans; Mrs. Richard Lewis; Rev. J. Marles Thomas, M.A.

Sunday School Precentor—Mr. Lewis Edwards.

Sunday School Organist—Mrs. Lewis Edwards, A.T.C.L.

Assistant Teachers—Mrs. David T. Davies; Mrs. Prosser Morgan; Mrs. C. Prosser; Mrs. Meredith; Miss Joan Watkins; Miss Betty Thomas; Miss Joan Davies; Miss Violet Jones; Miss Winnie Templeman; Miss Joyce Wathan; Mr. Vivian Hopkins; Mr. David B. Thomas.

CHAPTER IX

THE LITERATURE OF THE TOMBS.

To know when the graveyard was first opened it is necessary to consult the graveyard itself. On the chapel wall (outside) facing the school-room may be seen an ancient, weather-beaten headstone on which is inscribed the following verse :

Er mwyn i'r byw gael gweld a chofio
Darllenwch hyn i'r oes a ddelo
Martha William oedd y cynta
O neb erioed a gladdwyd yma
Oed, ein Harglwydd Crist yn gyfan
Mil, saith cant, deuddeg a deugain
Y nawfed dydd o Chwefror cofia
Pan rowd ei chorph i briddio yma.

(So that the living may know and see,
Read this to ages yet to be,
Martha William was the first
Of all who here are laid in dust
The age of Christ our Lord, mark you,
One Thousand seven hundred and fifty two
The ninth of February, forget ye not,
When her body here was laid to rot).

"Gwernyfed", a well-known Merthyr bard and antiquary, stated in the *Ymofynnydd* some years ago that "Martha William" was the daughter of Siôn Llewellyn, and that his informant was Catherine Jenkins, Twynyrodyn, one of Siôn's descendants.

This is probably therefore the "Martha" mentioned in one of Siôn's verses :

Fe aeth yr hen fuwch Rosy
Yn hesb heb ddafan ganti
Beth wnawn ni mwy o Fartha fach ?

Relative to this stone one of the chapel ledgers contains this entry : "2 Nov., 1834. A stone wall-piece to the memory of Martha William on the expence of the congregation, 16/-. And 8/3 gift of Robert Roberts, Stonecutter. This was the

first that was buried at Coedycymmar. A charity [contribution] towards erecting the stone was received from Thomas Llewellyn Taylor, late Sergeant in His Majesty's services—6d." One of the Sergeant's forenames suggests that he was in the line of the Siôn Llewellyn descent.

It will be noted that between Martha William's death, and the erection of a stone to her memory, eighty-two years had elapsed. What, it may be asked, prompted the congregation to erect the memorial after so long an interval? The reply seems fairly obvious. It was manifestly not to rescue virtue from obscurity, nor merit from oblivion, because not the slightest reference to those qualities is contained in the epitaph. The only plausible explanation seems to be that some of the members of the congregation with antiquarian propensities desired to save from forgetfulness, not Martha's life, virtuous, even saintly, though it may have been, but the lone fact that,

> . . . She was the first
> Of all who here are laid in dust.

By erecting this memorial the congregation of that day did the local historian a good service. They provided him with the only reliable date, as far as is known, bearing on the first enclosure of the burial ground.

On the right hand bottom corner of the stone are engraved these words.

"R. Roberts, Merthyr, Fecit," (R. Roberts, Merthyr, made me).

Robert Roberts was a member of our chapel, and for some years the superintendent of the Sunday School. He was born near the historic Court House, Merthyr in 1794, and was a weigher at Cyfartha Iron Works. He was a man of considerable mental power, and had a thorough knowledge of the Welsh metrical and alliterative metres. So deeply was he versed in these difficult rules of Welsh poetry that his services were frequently in demand as an adjudicator in the principal Eisteddfodau of his time. He was an ardent friend of Rhys Hywel Rhys of Vaynor. Rhys who, by trade, was a sculptor, infused into Robert Roberts a love of "letter-chipping," and though Roberts had intended learning the trade only as a

hobby, he became so proficient in it that he eventually relinquished his calling as a weigher, and adopted monumental work as his regular vocation. His lettering on Martha William's memorial is an excellent example of his work, and has won high praise from sculptors of our own day.

It is to Robert Roberts, I am convinced, that we owe almost everything that is known of Rhys Hywel Rhys. Indeed, were it not for Roberts, a comprehensive history of Rhys would probably never have been written. The old mathematician and philosopher of Vaynor died in 1817. One by one his friends and intimates followed him to the grave. Those who had met him in the flesh, and had first-hand knowledge of his talents were getting fewer with each passing year. Memories of him were daily growing dimmer, and were in danger of being obliterated altogether. Meanwhile, no one, so far, had attempted to write the story of his eventful life. It was felt by his many admirers that something should be done, and done soon, if Rhys' life-story was to be preserved for future generations.

Then a strange coincidence occurred. Or was it so very strange after all? Is it not possible that the incident was deliberately designed? At all events, on Easter Monday 1846 an Eisteddfod was held in the "Kings Head" Dowlais, and the promoters offered a prize for the best essay on Rhys' life. After much persuasion, for he was a very modest and reticent man, Robert Roberts reluctantly decided to compete for the prize. He had three advantages in his favour. In his early life he had "been to several schools"; he wielded a facile pen, and no one then living knew more than he about the subject of the essay. The result, therefore, was a foregone conclusion. His effort was adjudged by far the best in the competition.

Tom Stephens, the famous author of "The Literature of the Kymry" and other Welsh classics, who was probably the adjudicator, described Roberts' composition as "orwych,"[1] and stated that reading it had given him much pleasure. This pleasure, he said, he wished to share with the readers of

[1]Exceptional.

the *Ymofynnydd*. With his usual literary perspicacity, Stephens, presumably, saw that unless he intervened Roberts' essay would be consigned to the dust and cobwebs of some forgotten upper shelf. With the successful competitor's consent Stephens, consequently, forwarded the essay to the *Ymofynnydd* and in due course it appeared in the pages of that journal. Thus was saved for posterity the only authentic account of Vaynor's most historic character.

It seems to the present writer that everything that has appeared on Rhys Hywel Rhys' life since 1846 can be traced to Roberts' winning essay. I have before me Charles Wilkins' "History of Merthyr Tydfil," and on comparing the chapter on Rhys Hywel Rhys with Roberts' composition in the *Ymofynnydd* the source of Wilkins' information is obvious.

A short time before he died Robert Roberts returned to live in Merthyr, and became a member at the Unitarian Church at Twynrodyn. When he passed away, however, on the 12th May, 1852, his body was conveyed to "Coedycymmar" and was buried in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd graveyard. The last rites were performed by his own Minister, Rev. Mr. Lunn, but to Rev. Owen Evans was delegated the task of delivering the valedictory address.

Exactly where in our graveyard Roberts lies cannot be stated. I have searched in vain for it. Though he gave far less worthy men than himself a sort of chiselled fame, no memorial seems to have been erected to indicate the place of his own repose. But men like Roberts do not "live" in grave-stone inscriptions. The eulogy of the tomb is only for a time. A little longer, and it will be completely obliterated and will pass from all human recollection. Total obscurity, however, will not be the fate of Robert Roberts as long as his account of Rhys Hywel Rhys' life is read and remembered.

The graveyard, when it was first enclosed from what was then a wooded upland, was smaller than it is today. It was enlarged in 1853.

During the devastating cholera epidemic of 1849, when 1,433 people in Merthyr alone died from the scourge, the Hen Dy Cwrdd burial ground was fed, so to speak, to satiety. In it every day there appeared fresh mounds. Since those appalling times a large number of head-stones have been

removed, but even now a sufficient number remain to illustrate how extensively the graveyard was used in past years to bury the dead of parishes other than our own. Until the Cefn cemetery was opened in 1858 it was one of the principal burial places in the whole neighbourhood. Thomas Hughes (1810—1877) who was Sexton for thirty-two years is stated to have buried in it "2,000 people".[1] After the cholera had abated, and most of the available ground had now been utilised, the graveyard boundaries were extended, and it was then that the ground which runs to a peak above South Terrace was enclosed.

When the acquisition of this ground was under consideration the younger members of the congregation felt that the piece of land now known as the "Twyn" should be purchased also, but the older members demurred. Why they demurred is not stated.

I have heard it said that the "Twyn" was once offered to the chapel for burial purposes by the local authority conditionally upon the congregation agreeing to the payment of rates. The congregation, however, adopted a cautious attitude. It was feared that if rates were paid on the "Twyn" after its enclosure, a rate might be levied on the whole burial ground. The offer was, therefore, declined. The "Twyn" was then offered as a sight for a Manse, this offer, too, was not entertained.

The belief has been prevalent that the "Twyn" did actually belong to our church some time in the past, but I have found nothing in my researches to support this view.

But it was not only because of the paucity of cemeteries in the locality, of course, that the demand for graves in our burial ground was so considerable. Deep-laid in every Welshman's nature is a melancholy affection for the "country churchyard." He loves to think, when in pensive mood, that his loved ones, after keeping the faith and finishing the course, lie dreamily in some upland solitude, or amidst the quiet beauty of some sheltered glen. He chooses his ultimate abode in the same way as he chooses the house in which he proposes to live

[1] "Yr Ymofynnydd."

—with meticulous care. And the longer the ground has been hallowed by the passage of time and refined associations, the deeper and fonder is his affection for it. That strange, unfathomable feeling persists in our own mundane days. One of the biggest problems confronting the Hen Dy Cwrdd in recent years is to find room in our graveyard for those who desire that their dust shall mingle with that of their kindred.

As we wander silently from sepulchre to sepulchre and contemplate the lives of those who now lie so still at our feet, it is remarkable that, such a large number of people whose religious convictions were entirely opposed to our own, chose—and still choose—to lie, at last, in the shade of our ancient yew.

Originally the walls around the grave-yard were only about half the height they are now. It is interesting to note the reason. To put it briefly, it was in order that the uninterrupted view of the "mouldering heaps" might remind the base and irreverent of their ultimate end!

There was, however, another reason—much less grim. Whilst the sinful and depraved might turn their eyes away from the graveyard with shuddering disgust, the pious regarded the sight with spiritual solemnity and awe. As they passed by, on their way to the service in the chapel, remembrance of "those that slept" softened their minds, and prepared their thoughts for the prayers and devotions in which they were soon to join. A transitory glance over the low walls, earthly cares were forgotten, and the mind brooded over the frail mortality of human life.

As time wore on, however, opinions on this matter changed radically. The graveyard now was considered too sacred a spot for the prying eyes of the vulgar and irreligious. Moreover, the superstitiously inclined raised their voices in terrified protests. Dismal stories live long in remote country villages, and in those days "Coedycymmar" was far removed from the noise and bustle of busy towns. In the deep gloom of the witching hours spirits were stated to be lurking in the shadows of the Yew tree. White-robed women noiselessly stalked from tomb to tomb. Ghostly funeral trains passed silently into the graveyard at midnight, and weird, mournful cries pierced the night air! After sun-set, therefore, timorous villagers made a long detour rather than pass the "fynwent" on their

way home, and in the end the congregation resolved to raise the graveyard walls to their present height.

It appears that in the very early days the burial ground was not so bare of ever-greens as it is now. It was then girdled with a well-trimmed laurel hedge, and was rich with the green verdure of cypress and yew. But as the demand for grave-space grew more acute the trees had to be up-rooted.

The prevailing flower of remembrance was the white rose—the emblem of purity. A bush adorned almost every grave. One who used to recall the picture told me that when the roses had blown, and the petals had rustled to the ground "the graveyard looked as though it had been strewn with snow-flakes." The pleasing effect could be plainly observed from Clwyd-y-fagwyr.

As might be expected, the burial ground provides us with many quaint and original epitaphs. Until about half-a-century ago there was behind the chapel a tombstone which contained the French phrase "Vive le grande Waterloo" (long live the great Waterloo) the person buried there having been laid to rest in 1815—the year of that famous battle.

Hard by, there also could have been seen the following couplet by the Scotch poet Robert Burns.

> "If there's another life, he lives in bliss
> If there is not, he made the best of this".

A grim truth is expressed in these Welsh lines :—

> Cryf, ffol, gwan, doeth, balch, isel, cas, a'r glan
> Cânt bydru yn y bedd yn ddiwahan.
>
> (Strong, foolish, weak, wise, proud, bitter, and the fair
> Shall in the grave decay without distinction there).

Here is a verse that was written under unusual and pathetic circumstances. It bespeaks the deep emotion of a grief-stricken father who emigrated from "Cefn Coed y Cymmar to Australia in 1849." The lines were written on the eve of the father's departure in a burst of unavailing tears :—

> Farewell, dear babe, a long farewell,
> I'm going to seek a foreign shore
> In hopes to meet again in heaven
> And there to dwell for evermore.

On the head-stone which was erected on a grave near the school-room but which has since been destroyed, was this epitaph. It was recited to the writer by Mrs. Hannah Jones now over eighty-five years old, who committed it to memory when her father, Dafydd Tomos ,was the sexton and caretaker. It was written during the Crimean war.

Gorweddaf yma'n dawel ymhlith y pryfed man,
Can's Crist fy mrawd a dwymodd y gwely o fy mlan,
D'oes yma son am ryfel na therfysg o un rhiw,
Ond pawb yn llechu'n llonydd nes clywed udgorn Duw.

(I here in peace am lying midst worms and snails and stones
Christ my brother warmed for me the bed where rest my bones
There is no talk of battle nor din here neath the sod
All are lying quietly till sounds the horn of God).

Nearby there is a stone which chronicles the death of four victims of the cholera of 1849. Their ages were, twenty-six, nineteen, eleven, and seventeen years respectively. The first three died on the same day, and the other expired twelve days later.

Whilst wandering in the graveyard and trying to decipher the lines on the lichen-covered headstones, what strikes one as very remarkable is that so many of the old inscriptions were written in English. Yet, hardly a word of that language was spoken in the locality at that time. The people were monoglot Welsh, and Welsh was their common, every-day speech. Can it be that English inscriptions were more fashionable, and that the poorer classes followed the example of the wealthier Wayne and Lyndon families? I am informed that the English inscribed on some of the earlier gravestones—now unfortunately lost to us—was, to say the least, very imperfect. Here is an inscription written in 1827. It may still be seen. The grammar speaks for itself. If the names of the family concerned are any indication of their nationality, they were obviously Welsh.

"In Memory of 4 sons of William and Mary Richard named William and 2 David and they are all died in their infancy".

It will be observed that not only is the grammar defective, but the arithmetic as well. In the old days, epitaphs were

usually written by sextons, who, more often than not, were illiterate. It was a sexton perhaps who wrote the foregoing.

It was "Gwernyfed" who preserved for us this epitaph. He himself copied it from a grave-stone.

"O Grave. To thee I now entrust
This sacred heap of precious dust
Keep it safely in the tomb
Till the husband comes to ask for room".

On the headstone of a little child of two summers were inscribed these pretty lines :—

"Ehedodd ar hoyw aden
Ow, was bach, ei oes i ben".

(On agile wing,
Alas, dear boy, his life flew to its close.)

Faint through braving the storms of a century and a quarter there is a verse on a moss-creeping gravestone underneath the yew tree that is as beautiful in its simplicity as it is old and dim. It was written to embalm the memory of a little child of sixteen months. The child's father, William Williams, Llwynmolgoch, Vaynor, was, so the verse implies, illiterate :—

"Dan y garreg ger llaw'r Ywen
Man lle gorwedd nawr mewn hedd
Dyre yma, gwn y medru
Ddarllen i'm ei sgrifen fedd".

(Neath the tombstone nigh the Yew Tree
Where in peace reclineth he
Come thou with me, well I know thou'lt
Read to me his Elegy).

Of the large number of verses in the Welsh alliterative metres found in the graveyard the following is probably one of the best :—

"Pob glan, pob oedran bydrant—pob einioes
Pawb anwyd ddiflanant
Pob lliw, llun, pawb ant
Pob graddau—pawb gorweddant".

(The fair and aged shall decay
All who are born shall pass away
All hues, all forms they all pass by
All great, all small, at last must die.

HEAD-STONE, FORMERLY ON GRAVE OF MARTHA WILLIAM (*E. Warrilow*)

THE GRAVE OF REV. JOHN HATHREN DAVIES

(E. Warrilow)

No one in the more romantic days of our fathers could pass with cold indifference the grave of Martha Wayne. She lived at Hafod, Rhondda Valley and died on the 14th July, 1877, aged eighty-seven years.

In the early blushes of her maidenhood she had cherished dreams of matrimonial felicity, but unhappily had been jilted by her lover. An eye-witness of her funeral informs me that, after the committal service was over, a wooden box, tied with red ribbon, was solemnly dropped into the grave. It was a memento of faded dreams. It contained her love letters which she had treasured for nearly seventy years. Having lived alone, Martha Wayne wished to rest alone. She is the only tenant of the tomb.

On the grave of the local herbalist was once visible this "englyn" :—

Safwch ; dyma fedd Rees Evan—annwyl
Ac enwog yn mhobman,
Lleshau myrdd trwy'r llysiau mân
A'n gwella 'fewn ac allan.

(Rees Evan lies just here so pause !
Well known his fame, here round about,
By herbal draughts, he cured the sick,
And made them well inside and out).

The memory of the village mid-wife is perpetuated thus :

Wele'r fan mae Ann yn huno
Byd wraig gallwych yma'n priddio
Derbyn wnaeth i'r byd yn hyglod
Tua saith cant o fabanod.

(Here lieth Ann, to dust she has now been wrought
She to this world seven hundred babies brought).

A memorial stone of unusual interest may be found between the Yew tree and the entrance to the chapel. It was erected to the memory of Ann Thomas of Dreinos, Vaynor. Dreinos was a small farm-house which stood on the ground now occupied by the Vaynor Quarry. She was the wife of William

Tomos Siôn,[1] and died on the 24th October, 1782. Ann was reputed to be the first person in the parish to drink tea.

I gather from contemporary literature that tea, in Ann's day, cost 18/- per pound, and could only be afforded by "physicians, noblemen, grandees and merchants, etc." That it was too expensive for the poorer classes goes without saying. The local miners and crofters worked hard and long. Their struggle for existence was incessant and grim, and in spite of their thriftiness there was always the hideous possibility that they might end their days in the "Union"—the greatest degradation of all. Luxury was out of the question. "Paying her way" was every housewife's chief concern. The price of a pound of tea then was more than a full week's wages.

Ann Thomas, however, despite her meagre means had, by some unknown stratagem, been able to procure a small quantity of the "foreign leaf," but she had a horror of her gossipy neighbours discovering her "secret." Fearing that her cunning would be detected, and that she would be exposed to the charge of gross extravagance, she kept her tea-leaves in the drawer of her long kitchen table, and when she wanted a cup of the delicious beverage, she ordered her maid-servant to stand guard on the door step and watch for the approach of unwanted visitors. In return for her faithful vigil the maid was given a cup of tea herself. By means utterly unknown to Ann—but perhaps not so utterly unknown to the maid—the secret was whispered to the idle gossips of the country side and soon the whole parish was agog with excitement. So came to an end poor Ann's tea drinking carousings.

When, in after years, she passed away, a stone was erected on her grave on which was carved a representation of two cups and a sugar basin. The cups have no handles. Handles were a later innovation. The stone is believed to be the work of Rhys Hywel Rhys of Vaynor.

The question has often been asked, why did Rhys carve the crockery upside down? No satisfactory answer can, of

[1]William Tomos Siôn was reputed to be one of the first in the Parish of Vaynor to use a horse-drawn cart. Before the advent of the cart, manure was conveyed to the fields in panniers (cewyll) strapped to the backs of horses. The cart, of course had no wheels. It was known as "cart llusg," and was pulled along the ground like a sleigh.—T.L.

course, be given. But is it not possible that the inverted cups and basin signify that there was now no further use for them? Do they not denote the "Finis," the end of Ann's overt tea-sippings? What other reason could there be? We know that Rhys Hywel Rhys was a bit of a wag, but that it was a prank on his part, as I have heard it repeatedly said, is difficult to believe.

An incident occurred in the graveyard about sixty years ago that lived in the memory of those who witnessed it. A well-known sportsman who was a famous "shot" was being buried, and whilst the service in the chapel was proceeding two men walked leisurely to the grave side to await the arrival of the body. On the soil, which had been dug up from the grave, they perceived a dead woodcock. It had not been shot, but had the appearance of having died a natural death. How it came there to die was never discovered. What lent an air of mystery to this strange happening was that the man whose remains were being committed to the earth, had, in his time, been an expert shot of these birds.

There lies in the graveyard a victim of bull-baiting. His name was Thomas Edwards and he lived in Aberdare. He was only a youth, and had come over to witness the baiting of a bull near Morlais Castle. The enraged beast crashed into the spectators, and young Thomas in an attempt to save others wrestled with it and was gored to death. It is stated that this tragedy so shocked the devotees of the sport that bull-baiting in the Merthyr district was, soon afterwards, discontinued. The young man's father, Edward Thomas Edwards was a poet of some standing and was a member of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Aberdare. Edward Thomas Edwards died in November, 1840, at the age of eighty years and was buried with his son.

In Wales, in the olden days, such was the solemn respect paid to the dead by a passing wayfarer that if a tramp met a funeral procession in the street or on the highway, he not only paused and uncovered until the cortege passed by, but often joined the mourners, and accompanied them to the grave side.

That simple-hearted custom is seldom observed in our own day. The writer, however, can distinctly remember it being observed on one occasion in the year 1910, and so impressed

was he by what he saw that he penned a short account of it to the local paper. This is what he wrote :—

"While attending a funeral last Saturday afternoon, I saw one of the most pathetic sights that ever met my gaze. Walking in front of the procession from the "Stocks"—where he joined us—to the Hen dy Cwrdd was a young man whose clothes were tattered, and whose boots had long since ceased to cover his blistered feet. He appeared weary and worn, and looked as if he had walked many a long mile that day. As he entered the Chapel he removed his ragged cap, and, obviously awe-struck, silently walked down the aisle, and sat in the second pew from the pulpit. With his eyes fixed upon the minister, he listened attentively, and when a divine truth that especially appealed to him was uttered, he nodded his unkempt head in wistful assent. When the prayer was offered he reverently bowed his head.

The service over, he accompanied us to the grave side, and after the singing of the hymn, with his shabby cap clutched in his hand, gazed for some time into the open grave, and then, without speaking a word to anyone, wended his way passed the tombstones, and was soon lost to view".

Thousands now lie in the graveyard whose lives are familiar to none. For all the present generation know of them they might as well not have lived. There is no one to remember them in the hey-day of their prime. To summon them from oblivion, to mentally resurrect a few of the quaintest of them will not therefore perhaps be amiss.

A century ago there used to be at Cefn Isaf a place called "Twll." In this "Twll" there was a house, and in this house there lived an old woman named Betty. Her surname is not known to us, but we know that she was called "Betty o'r Twll." Her house was small and mean ; the rafters were low and lumbersome, and had probably been cut in some neighbouring wood. There were no plastered ceilings then in the homes of the poor. They were embellishments enjoyed only by the rich. The floor of Betty's dwelling was made of clay, and as you entered through the doorway you had to pierce the gloom before you could see the bedraggled form of its unkempt occupant seated in the darkest corner. For, in those days all workmen's cottages were badly lighted. On every window a tax was paid. Even when the sun shone brightly, the interior of the houses was dark and dim. And so it was with Betty's hovel, for hovel it was. Through the small square window, which had never been made to be opened, a faint

glimmer of light struggled valiantly. The air, as might be expected, was anything but pure. What little oxygen there was to keep Betty breathing, entered by way of a chink under her badly fitted and dilapitated door. In the grate a wood-fire crackled and spluttered—wood that Betty herself had gathered in bundles and carried home on her bowed back from the Ffrwd lanes and Llyn-y-Fainc woods. Should you enter when one of these embers was aflame you would see how unadorned and bare was the house, and how damp were the walls. There were no pictures except a faded mourning card, that time and the smoke from the wood-fire had made indecipherable. On the mantelpiece, stuck in its own tallow, was a solitary candle.

Prior to the forming of the Merthyr Union in 1836, and as a matter of fact, for many years after that, many of the Guardians of the Poor were men of no education and often, of little human sympathy. There was no Public Assistance Institution in those days and the guardians employed Betty to accommodate the socially degraded in that hovel of her's which, judged by modern hygienic standards, was too insanitary to lodge a pig. Here the tramp was housed for the night, and here unmarried mothers gave birth to their unwanted children. For her services Betty received from the Guardians a few paltry shillings weekly.

Then again, there was Pegi Siôn Rees. She was one of the most popular figures in the whole country side. She was, so to speak, the village crier. Everybody knew Pegi, just as everybody knows the postman today. Indeed, it is difficult to decide which she most strongly resembled—the postman or the crier. She carried no letters like the former and rang no bell like the latter : yet she was a conveyer of tidings.

Back in the eighties and nineties of the last century, when a family was visited by some misfortune, and the spectre of want hovered above their home, the system adopted to relieve them of their improvidence was to hold a concert or a lecture, or even a "Raffle" or a "Penny Reading." The number of people who were thus assisted ran to several dozens.

In Pegi's time, that is over a century ago, indigent families were aided in a more interesting, if less spectacular,

way. Immediately it became known that a bread winner had fallen a victim to some incurable disease, or had met with an accident at his work which rendered him incapable of following his employment for a considerable length of time, a bevy of housewives gathered together to devise ways and means of proffering a helping hand. Their method of rendering the desired aid was to hold a series of "Cottage Teas." Whether these miniature tea parties were to be held in the kitchen or the parlour depended upon the size of the apartment. Every housewife on the "Women's Committee" was expected to hold a Tea, in turn, in her own dwelling. She was also expected to provide her own food, and her own crockery. Owing to the limited space, only a few could attend the party at the same time—usually about half a dozen. The charge for admission was sixpence, but a shilling would be gratefully accepted. The proceeds were handed over to the impoverished family.

The following afternoon a tea would be given at another cottage, possibly at the other end of the village, or, perhaps only a few doors away, and not until the list of hostesses was exhausted were the repasts discontinued. Principally, of course, the project was devised to help a neighbour in distress, but that the women foregathered to hear the latest bit of gossip cannot be ruled out altogether!

Naturally, the carefully-preserved cups and saucers from the age-old corner cupboard were called into requisition, as well as the best possible culinary skill of the hostess. No effort was spared to provide an assortment of delicious pastries. A running commentary on the most recent village events, to the accompaniment of the clicking of knitting-needles was a prominent feature of the gathering, and not until the shadows under the furniture ("y mae'n tywyllu dan y celfi") denoted the approach of night did the party disperse.

It was Pegi Siôn Rees' duty to make the teas publicly known. To say that she personally communicated the news to every household in the village would be perhaps an extravagance, but she certainly visited most of them. Where she knew the necessaries of life were already scarce she passed by. She, however, always took exceeding care to make her errand known to those who were liberally blessed with this

world's goods. As might be expected, she was often-times, during her peregrinations confronted with a locked door. She frequently found that people were not at home, and would not return for some time. But Pegi was not to be beaten. To execute her duties thoroughly she carried about with her a piece of chalk with which she put a cross on the door-post near the latch. When the housewife on her return observed the chalk-mark she knew that Pegi had been there in her absence, and had news for her. In a few minutes she might have been seen hurrying off to Pegi's house in Field Street where she was informed of the date and place of the proposed teas.

Pegi knew everything of importance and unimportance concerning the daily life of the villagers. She was the despair of those who wished "to keep a secret" and could not keep the secret themselves! No clandestine lover ever escaped the eagle eye of Pegi. When someone fell gravely ill she was a bulletin incarnate. She knew exactly the daily condition of the patient, and when rumours, devoid of any foundation, were circulated, an assertion by Pegi to the contrary put all minds at rest. To unsavoury scandal she gave short shrift. A baseless assault upon someone's character she vigorously denounced.

Publicising the teas, however, was not the only duty imposed upon Pegi. The respectable Welsh villager, generally speaking, is loth to admit that he is in straitened circumstances. It is his nature in these things to be secretive. But to conceal the traces of poverty altogether is a superhuman task. The grim truth is revealed in the wan faces of the children, and the bedraggled condition of their garments. The care-worn cheeks of the mother tell their own tale. It was an essential part of Pegi's duties to investigate covertly these cases, and report the circumstances to the organisers of the "Cottage Teas."

Pegi was a widow, and had seen better days. Her husband, John Rees, was a shoeing smith, and by dint of hard work had saved sufficient money to purchase a number of houses, but later in life, he was involved in a costly litigation over a toll-gate dispute, and nearly all his savings were lost. This so preyed upon his mind, and affected his health that he

languished and died in the prime of his manhood. Pegi afterwards, as a means of implementing her meagre income took to publishing the Teas, the "Meths," the "Suppers," and other village functions incident to that time for which she received no more than a miserable pittance.

A contemporary of Pegi Siôn Rees was Beti Siôn Harri. Pegi and Beti had much in common. Both were widows, and both were obliged to earn a living by odd means.

Beti's proper name was Elizabeth Harris, and was the wife of John Harris. The petty conventionalities of today were in Beti's time totally absent. Hardly ever was a villager addressed as "Mr." or "Mrs." These were courtesies which were meant only for cultivated society. To use them savoured too much of false refinement. The cottagers preferred the more homely custom of addressing one another by their Christian names. Moreover, in a little rural community, where similar surnames abounded, Beti Siôn Harri was far more distinctive that Mrs. Elizabeth Harris.

Beti's life was an arduous one. It allowed for little leisure. It was a perpetual struggle. She lived in Cefn Isaf, and her little cottage was mean enough. But if her meals were plain her physique was amazingly robust. In the fruiting season she used to walk a few days a week to Cwmdu, near Crickhowell, to fetch apples and plums to retail them from door to door in Cefn. To shorten the journey she avoided the main roads, and walked across the trackless mountains past Dol y Gaer. She, however, didn't walk alone. She had her faithful donkey with her, and on its back she conveyed the goods home. When winter came, and fruit was no longer obtainable, she transferred her energies to "pounding sand."

A century and less ago, an ordinary dwelling with a carpet on the floor was a rarity. Floors that had not been made of specially prepared earth were covered with flagstones. After the flagstones had been thoroughly washed they were sprinkled with pounded sandstone. This sandstone Beti Siôn Harri hawked from Cilsanws Mountain on the back of her donkey, and after crushing it into minute particles with a hammer for hours at a stretch, she purveyed it about the village and sold it at a few coppers "a tin."

On the 16th December, 1868 a violent thunderstorm broke over the locality. So severe was it that strong men trembled, and women and children wept. It began in the early afternoon, and continued with unabated vigour until six o' clock in the evening. Then the clouds rolled away, and the villagers resumed their respective duties.

That afternoon Beti and her two donkeys (the mother and colt) had repaired to the wild uplands of Cilsanws to procure another supply of sandstone. When the storm subsided, and darkness had already set in, there were no signs of Beti's return. The neighbours grew anxious, and fearing something sinister had happened they summoned assistance. That evening people walking along the Pandy road wondered why the brow of Cilsanws was the scene of so many roving lights. They later learned that Beti was missing, and the inhabitants, numbering many scores, each equipped with a storm lamp, were scouring the mountain for her.

Just before midnight when a group of men were searching that part of the hill which lies between Vaynor House and the golf course, they found Beti and her two donkeys lying together dead. On examination, it was found that, hard by, a deep trench had been cut and large stones hurled many yards away. Neither of the bodies, however, bore marks of injury. It was concluded that a thunder-bolt had fallen and that Beti and her two faithful quadrupeds were suffocated by the fumes.

A few months afterwards a subscription list was opened to erect a memorial on the scene of the tragedy. Some contributions were made, but the scheme never materialised.

In the early days the inhabitants of our village were very superstitious. On All Hallows Eve in particular, a ghost straddled every stile. Every lane was infested with moaning phantoms; ghostly lights flickered mysteriously in every churchyard, and the dreaded "Corpse candle" (Canwyll y corff) stalked at nights in the very streets! There were some stout hearts who, of course, in the noon-day light, dismissed all this as figments of a diseased mind, but when night fell they had a special respect for a dark and lonely road. Deeply immersed in spirit lore, the old people loved the weird and uncanny. It was a state of mind that was due, no doubt, to

the gloom of their religion, and its resultant melancholy abstractions. Lack of education was also possibly a contributory factor.

Be that as it may, poor Beti Siôn Harri's end had been clearly forseen! A few nights prior to her death a "pastai" (a sort of supper) was held in the Bridgend Inn at the bottom of High Street.

An old lady who had attended the supper, when wending her way homewards at midnight, was horrified on reaching Tabor Chapel, to see a strange light meandering its way towards her from Cilsanws mountain. Nearer and nearer the light floated in the night air like a weary gull at the mercy of the blast. Her marrow seemed to freeze, and, trembling in every limb, she sat down on the stone which still protrudes from the Tabor graveyard wall. Silently and eerily the apparition passed by. Then in a few minutes she saw it hover like a brilliant halo above the Hen Dy Cwrdd burial ground where, in a dead hush, it was soon engulfed by the all-pervading night!

The following day the village was in the throes of a superstitious ferment. The people met in small groups on the street corners and pavements. They spoke in subdued tones and quiet voices. Something dreadful was going to happen on Cilsanws mountain. And it did happen! Beti Siôn Harri's end had been foreseen!

Within close proximity to Beti Siôn Harri lies Henry "Jimmy" John, in his day, a notable humourist and practical joker. The John family were associated with the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for many decades. The "Henry John" who wrote on the flyleaf of the first hymnal in 1799 that it was "is book" was probably one of them.

Henry Jimmy John was an excellent whistler, and could imitate the song of almost any bird in the grove. When he warbled in his garden on a fine evening in early summer, thrushes and blackbirds competed vociferously with him from the topmost branches of the neighbouring trees; and even the homely sparrow twittered more noisily in the eaves in the forlorn hope of silencing his loud and powerful song. A pretty story is told of him.

An old lady kept a small sweet shop in her two-roomed house in Pont y Capel Road. In addition to her home-made toffee, and her much-favoured chunks of cold rice pudding, she sold in the thirsty days of summer what was known then as "small beer"—a delicious herbal beverage which she made largely of nettles and dock leaves. Business, on one occasion, was heart-rendingly slow. The old lady was at her wits' ends what to do. Her rent was due, and she had no money with which to pay it. Quite casually, she mentioned her distress to Henry Jimmy John. Henry listened patiently, sympathetically. He was obviously moved to pity, but said nothing. Meanwhile his jokeful mind was working furiously.

The evening of the following day was beautifully fine. The air was calm and serene, and when the last glow of sunset was fading behind Penmoelallt, Henry, alone and unobserved, made his way to the woods in Godre'r Coed. There he concealed himself behind a leafy bush. Soon the dingle resounded with the liquid gurglings of a mysterious bird. They were the rhapsodies of the nightingale! The news flashed through the village like wild fire. In a few minutes Pont y Capel Road was thronged with people, all listening with bated breath to the woodland's queen of song!

It was said that the "eos" had visited the local woods once or twice before, but because she had been disturbed by people who approached her solitary domain too closely, she had never returned. No one, therefore, on this occasion, ventured near the river side. The people were content to lounge and linger within hearing distance. The miners and puddlers had only just returned home from work, and they were thirsty. Thirst, of course, had to be quenched, and quenched within ear-shot of the nightingale's rapturous melody.

The scene around the old lady's modest shop was soon a sight to behold. Business was so brisk that the excited old lady could hardly cope with it. The shadow on her face perceptibly cleared. The hitherto woe-begone countenance rapidly changed into an orb of joyous smiles. Her bottles of small-beer were quickly diminishing. Husbands treated their wives, amorous youths treated their sweethearts, and grubby little children bought up all the toffee!

Then Henry Jimmy John stole from his hiding place, and not until the news that the nightingale had been heard at Cefn had travelled far and wide did the villagers know they had been gulled. Meanwhile the instigator of the plot chuckled mischievously. His object had been achieved. The old lady's rent was assured. So also was her weekly allowance of "High Dry" snuff!

Musing beside the grave of Benjamin Davies, one is reminded of a popular story of one's childhood—"Buy Your Own Cherries."

Benjamin Davies was locally known as Benni'r Crydd, and, as the latter appellation implies, he was, by trade, a shoe-maker. As a youth, he was much addicted to indolence, and had the reputation of being one of the most pronounced tipsters in the village. From early morning until late evening he spent his time outside the local inns eagerly waiting for someone to invite him in to have a drink. Quaffing ale appeared to be his sole preoccupation. This was his conception of unalloyed pleasure. Taking part in a drunken brawl was one of his special delights. He was, however, rarely the aggressor. Lurking somewhere in his nature were those qualities that go to the making of a decent citizen. In after years, he became one of the most respected residents of the village, and proved that the strongest man, after all, is he who can master his own weaknesses. The incident that brought about his conversion is worth recording.

It was customary after a wedding in Benjamin Davies' day for the contracting parties to repair to some Tavern to commemorate the event in music and dance. This festivity was called the "rally." A friend passing up the street, when the convivialities were in progress was, if seen by the bride or bridegroom, called in to drink their health and happiness. It is almost superfluous to say that Benni'r Crydd was on the alert for all functions of this nature.

One day, however, in spite of his having paraded for sometime outside an Inn where a "rally" was being held, no one invited him to join in the frivolity. He knew that he had been seen, yet he was left outside ignored and despised. Hurt to the quick, he began to think. He sank into a deep reverie. How foolish he was to allow himself to be humbled to the

very dust in this way. Why should he be the object of everyone's contempt? Why not abandon the life-of-a-sot and turn over a new leaf? From that moment Benni became a changed man. His mind was irrevocably made up. The wayward path which he had traversed for so many years abruptly came to an end.

Benjamin Davies returned to his shoemaking, and prospered. His business increased daily and, in due course, he was obliged to engage three or four men to assist him. In a few years he was a comparatively wealthy man, and built a row of houses in Cefn Isaf (now pulled down). The houses were known as "Tai Benni." As proof of the high position he had achieved in the social life of the village he held on several occasions the much coveted office of "Cwnstab." Benni'r Crydd was now addressed by everyone as "Mr. Davies," and his generosity in Cefn Coed was proverbial.

In the proud days of his success those who, in bygone years, had despised and boycotted him, now indulged in every stratagem to gain his favour, and many attempts were made by the local churches to entice him into their brotherhood; but Benjamin Davies had a long memory. He would have none of it. When, he retorted, he was poor, followers of religion, like the Pharisee, passed him on the other side. They sniffed the air with disdain, and cared little for the safety of his soul or for its future felicity. To the last therefore he refused to associate himself with any form of organised religion.

In the graveyard, too, lies Dafydd Lewis, father of Evan Lewis, and, incidentally, great-grandfather of the present writer. He took an active part in the famed Merthyr Riots of June 1831. He was one of those who headed the Cefn contingent of rioters to beyond Tan y Darren Farm and the slopes of Y Ddarren Fawr, where they made energetic use of the loose boulders that abound there to intercept the Highlanders on their way from Brecon Barracks to Merthyr. Dafydd Lewis, though he could neither read nor write, was of a thoughtful turn of mind, and held somewhat advanced views on political questions. Hatred of wrong and oppression moved him, at times, to violent action, and such was his courage and prowess with the gun that if called upon to

exchange shots with a highwayman on the Turnpike Road, he would give an excellent account of himself. He was not, as far as I know, an actual member of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, but he was certainly a faithful adherent to it.

When the riot broke out outside the Castle Hotel at Merthyr and the soldiers opened fire upon the mob, Dafydd Lewis was one of the sixty persons who were badly wounded.[1] Sixteen persons, it will be recalled, were killed in the fray. A musket-ball finding a gap between two boards lodged itself in Dafydd Lewis' arm. Bleeding profusely he hurried home, and Dr. Davies of Cyfarthfa was called in to dress the wound. Dafydd, at that time, lived in a small cottage, long since demolished, at the back of the Station Hotel. The day following the incident, one of the military doctors, serving with the Highland Regiment, having heard that Dafydd was one of the civilian casualties of the previous day, called at his home to ascertain the extent of his injury, and, if need be, to attend to his wound. The object of the military doctor's visit, however, was misconstrued. The motive was misunderstood. Local feeling against soldiers was intensely bitter. Immediately the doctor's presence was made known, a hostile crowd gathered around the patient's house. The position was ugly. The mob, brandishing guns and bludgeons, vowed they would put the doctor to death. Come what may, Dafydd Lewis was not to be taken away. That would only be done over their dead bodies.

Then Dr. Davies of Cyfarthfa arrived upon the scene. He had come to see how Dafydd Lewis was progressing. When he heard the threats of the infuriated villagers—threats that might be put into execution at any moment—Dr. Davies tried to pacify them. His appeal to their better nature, however, fell on deaf ears. The crowd persisted in clamouring for the army doctor to come outside. At last he appeared on the doorstep, cool and unruffled.

The mob, as soon as they saw him, grew more excited than ever. Forcibly, they deprived him of his sword, and ordered him to go on his knees to pray. Convinced now that his end

[1]Richard Lewis (Dic Penderyn) aged 23 was hanged in Cardiff goal Aug. 1831 for taking part in the riot, and killing a soldier.

was imminent, the doctor pleaded for mercy. He explained that he asked for mercy, not for himself, but for the sake of his young family at Brecon. When he left home, he said, the previous day, his wife was at the point of death—this was afterwards proved to be true—and all he asked was to be permitted to see her before she passed away. His appeal was sympathetically listened to, but he was not liberated. The leaders held counsel together. They decided that his freedom would have to be conditional. He was told that he would be permitted to ride his horse unmolested until he reached "Ty Cockyn" (Pen y Bryn now). If, after reaching that point, he could out-distance the range of their guns, liberty would be his. The military doctor accepted the condition. Mounting his sleek cob, he slowly rode away. The moment he reached "Ty Cockyn," his spurs were vigourously applied, and his horse made a tremendous leap forward. In a moment the valley rang with the rattle of musketry. In the distance could be heard the clatter of hooves in a mad gallop. The rider had got away safely.

Standing erect in his stirrups, and looking back at the now somewhat subdued but expectant mob, he waved his feathered helmet triumphantly aloft, and continued to do so until a bend in the road concealed him from view.

Man, here in the graveyard, is, with all his pomp and struttings, of small account. In this lonely place away from the world of every-day things, he is nothing. He is out-lived even by the trees, and not the least interesting "monument" in the graveyard is the old Yew. Its correct age cannot be established. It is known, however, that it is much older than the chapel. It grew originally near a small thatched cottage called "Ty'r Ywen"[1] (Yew Tree House). In after years Ty'r Ywen was demolished but fortunately the stately old tree from which it derived its name was left to grow unhindered.

In bygone days the Yew Tree was more beautiful to behold than it is today. Its symmetry has been rather marred in recent years by the compulsory lopping off of the

[1] "Ty'r Ywen" stood where "Plas Yr Ywen" is now.—T.I.

gnarled and tortuous lower branches. Their penetration into the nearby public road hindered vehicular traffic and the Local Authority ordered the removal of the obstructive limbs. Its beauty so captivated David Martineau (son of the renowned Unitarian theologian, Doctor Martineau) who visited our chapel under the auspices of the Sustentation Fund Committee in 1888, that he would have liked to have it removed and planted in his spacious garden in London.

About 1761, a headstone with a quaint history was erected somewhere in the graveyard. It was in the days of Rhys Hywel Rhys of Vaynor. Rhys, at that time, lived in Blaenglais Farm, Pontsarn, where eleven generations of his family had lived before him. Tired of Vaynor's quiet glades, Rhys made up his mind, like Dick Whittington, to seek fame and fortune in far away London. Accompanied by a young man named Williams of Penpound, he made the journey on foot. Resting by day under hedgerows, and sleeping by night in any comfortable barn that might catch their tired eyes, the two youths—they were only sixteen—at last reached the great Metropolis. For food on their way thither they did odd jobs for farmers who were not always hospitable, and bathed their feet and quenched their thirst in way-side streams.

Williams found a job in a paper-mill, and meeting, soon afterwards, with an accident whilst at work he was removed, much to Rhys' distress, to Guy's Hospital where he died. News, in those days, travelled slowly, particularly to remote mountain regions, but at last the melancholy tidings from Rhys reached his father in Vaynor. Anxious about his roaming son, Hywel Rhys decided to tramp to London in search of him. Everyone knows that all Anglican Churches lie eastwards and, knowing this, Hywel set his direction by them. After walking for many weeks he arrived in London footsore and bewildered and, in due course, found his son working in a monumental yard.

Meanwhile, Rhys, through the perfidy of a former employer, had nearly been sold into slavery and sent to Morocco and was pleased to return with his father to the quiet of his native parish.

Safe at last amidst the scenes of his childhood, Rhys gave a tearful thought to his friend who lay in an unvisited grave in

TIMOTHY THOMAS' COTTAGE-SCHOOL AND LIME-KILN TODAY

(E. Warrilow)

BLAENCANNAID—1947 *(E. Warrilow)*

the swirl of London, and carving a headstone in memory of him, erected it reverently in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd "iard". It is unfortunately no longer visible.

Many a mouldering stone is a chronicle; many a faded epitaph is history. A few paces away from the resting place of Rev. Owen Evans lie Robert and Lucy Thomas, Waunwyllt. The Thomases are renowned in local annals, for their spirit of commerical adventure and business acumen. Material success and its attendant splendour was once their lot. Looking down upon their tomb today, the observant eye catches signs of neglect and inattention—another proof of the transitory and fugitive homage the world pays to its dead. How true the old Welsh adage, "Tir anghof yw'r bedd."

Robert Thomas opened a coal level in Waunwyllt, near Abercanaid, about 1828, and when he died in 1833, his widow, together with her son William, took over the control of the mine. For a time Lucy Thomas sold the coal in Merthyr, but as the Glamorganshire Canal from Cyfarthfa to Cardiff had been constructed in 1790, it occurred to her that she might be able to dispose of the produce of her colliery in places further afield. In due course, she found a market for it in Cardiff. She transported it there at first in baskets on the backs of mules and afterwards in barges on the canal. From Cardiff it was shipped by sea to London. That was the beginning of coal exporting in South Wales. Lucy Thomas has been described as the "mother of the Welsh Steam Coal Trade". She died on the 27th September, 1947. As I have already stated, she often, in her young days, attended the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd with her mother who was a member there.

A contemporary of Lucy Thomas was William Jones, Y Telynwr (Harpist), who found a resting place not far away from her. William Jones was taught to play the harp, so beloved of the villagers a century ago, by the eminent Dr. Frost and had carried off prizes in some of the leading Welsh eisteddfodau. He played the harp at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, where he was a member, scores of times, and was in much demand in all the revelries that were held on winter evenings in the spacious kitchens of the more prosperous neighbouring farms. Sometimes, on his way home in the early hours, with only a high-riding moon to keep him company, he would

sit on one of the door-steps in High Street, and soon the villagers were awakened from their slumber by the twanging harmony of his strings! The harp of his old teacher, Dr. F. E. Frost, is now in the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery.

Carved on a plain headstone in the centre of the graveyard is a grotesque figure of "Duwies Fardd" (The Goddess of Poetry). The stone marks the grave of William Davies "enwog fardd Coed y Cymmer." William Davies, who was a folk poet of the old school, died on the 29th August, 1854, aged fifty eight. On his gravestone is inscribed this verse written in one of the most difficult of Welsh alliterative measures :—

Gwyddai droiadau dae'r odiaeth—dyn
Adwaenai rhifyddiaeth.
Anianydd a phrydydd ffraeth
O gyrhaedd mewn rhagoriaeth.

(He had knowledge of the revolving universe,
And of Mathematics.
He was a naturalist and a witty poet,
And well ahead in achievement).

The knowledge William Davies possessed—and for a working man it was considerable—was self-acquired. According to a metrical description he wrote of a foot-race which took place in Cwm Tâf in 1814, between Howel Richard of Vaynor, and Thomas Llewellyn of Penderyn, he had an excellent command of the Welsh language, and was not unacquainted with the strict rules of Welsh prosody. It is obvious, on the other hand, that his knowledge of English was lamentably defective. Asked by William Crawshay, by whom he was employed, to write a few lines in rhyme on the Cyfarthfa Castle, then being built, William Davies produced this literary gem :

"Behold the stately building
Rock work, it was now erecting
A castle is a costly thing
And will last for ever lasting".

It was a more gallant than a successful attempt, but could an Englishman, writing in Welsh, have done better?

A character of the good old stamp, outwardly rugged and unpolished, was Rowland Thomas, known throughout the

locality as "Rolly Llanbradach." He was a cousin of the foregoing William Davies and, like Davies, had a natural bent, but in a greater degree, for the sciences. His favourite study was geology. Of modest and low estate (he was a miner) he forged his way, without patronage or encouragement, into a sort of local eminence by patient study, and became an authority on the subject nearest his heart. Rolly was one of those men (and in those days they were many) who had been blessed with genius but not with the opportunities of cultivating it. He was born in Aberystwyth in 1879, and tramped to Clwydyfagwyr with the "bard of Coed y Cymmer" in search of employment. The two cousins, having common interests, were, all their lives, devoted friends, and, at last, were laid to rest only a short distance away from one another.

Rowland Thomas, in his early days, carried out an odd experiment. He was anxious to know whether inanimate objects, like animate objects, grew with the years. To satisfy his curiosity he buried a stone in his garden for twenty years, carefully weighing it before he did so. No increase in the weight of the stone, of course, was observed. In 1853, over the assumed name of "Idris Ddu" he published a booklet written in Welsh, entitled, "Traethawd ar Gawg Mwnawl Deheudir Cymru: hefyd cyfansoddiad o'r gwahanol Fwnau a'r achos o Lo Carreg, Glo Rhwym, etc". (An essay on the Coal Basin of South Wales and the composition of the various Mines and the reason for Anthracite Coal, Binding Coal, etc.). The booklet, when it appeared, was adjudged the work of an expert. A copy of the booklet is in the Cardiff Free Library.

Rowland Thomas was also a poet of no mean merit. His compositions were of the homely rather than of the elegant and polished brand. Some of them were published under the pseudonym "Tubal Cain". Rowland Thomas died on the 26th December, 1856. On his gravestone is the following englyn :—

"Ow ! edrych dyna fedd Idris—annwyl
Enwog bo'r uchel bris,
Dwr ddybryd gwalia ddibris
Oedd marw'r bardd mawr ei bris".

He deserved a better epitaph.

His great grandson is Mr. David T. Lewis, B.Sc., Ph.D., who, until he removed from the district, was an active member in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

It was my father, who was interested in local lore, who related to me the following story. The incident occurred soon after the graveyard was enclosed in 1752.

On the Brecon Beacons, in those days, far more sheep grazed than in our own day and more shepherds, in consequence, were engaged to tend them. In that age the towns had not, as yet, begun to encroach upon the country side. The sleeping valleys were not disturbed by the shrill scream of the steam whistle. Tractors were non-existent. The surrounding hills were not defaced by giant electric pylons, and the "needs of the war office," was a phrase that was rarely, if ever, heard. In short, the highly mechanised life of modern civilisation was in its infancy.

It was a custom with the shepherds of the Brecon Beacons to meet on Sunday mornings in summer, on the plateau of Pen y Fan, 2,907 feet above the level of the sea for conversation and company. The shepherds came there from all directions; from the Cwm Tâf Fawr, and Cwm Tâf Fechan valleys, from the Glyn and from the Tarrell. Thoughtful and meditative because of their close association with nature, and poetic and fanciful for the same reason, they discussed all manner of subjects from religion to sheep, and from long tailed mountain ponies to local folk-lore or the last village illness or death. This weekly meeting in the immemorial silence of the peaks was one of their few means of mental relaxation. It provided them, in truth, with an opportunity for much desired fellowship. For weeks at a time, particularly during the lambing season, they lived on the hills, sleeping in improvised stone-huts and warming their kettles over peat fires. They went down to their homes in the valleys only when their store of food needed replenishing.

A favourite form of sport in the locality then was wrestling (moelyd cwmp), and the best exponents of the art were to be found among shepherds. The reason is obvious. Roaming over the steep flanks of the Beacon ranges gave them stout limbs and powerful thews, and although their strength was

ungainly rather than elegant it provided them with all the necessary qualities of successful wrestlers.

One Sunday morning on Pen y Fan the discussion turned on wrestling, and following a challenge thrown out by one young shepherd to another, a contest took place. The bout was long and exciting. The deep ravines echoed to the loud clamour of the spectators as each one urged his favourite to greater effort. Momentarily oblivious in the commotion of the proximity of the precipice the spectators intervened too late and the two youths, with legs and arms still firmly interlocked, rolled over the edge of the cliff to their death hundreds of feet below.

There is a legend that for long years afterwards the witnesses of the tragedy, when seated around their wintry fires, used to relate to their families that when the contest was at its grimmest a pair of buzzards riding the wind high in the blue dived frantically to ground level as though in an attempt to give warning of the approaching peril.

One of the victims of the calamity hailed from Cwm Tâf, and his remains were interred in our graveyard, but the "turf that wraps his clay" is now unepitaphed and unmarked.

A century or so ago there lived in Cwm Tâf a quaint character known to every one in the valley as "Wat y Bugail." Wat was a tall, powerful man of flawless physique and it was said that he could pull a loaded cart like a horse. His crook, cut in a hazel-wood in Godre'r Fedw and shaped with a knife in his hut on the hill when it rained or a gale blew him indoors, was so big that none of his fellow shepherds could possibly mistake it for his own. He had a store of strange beliefs, and it was a custom with him to carry a potato in his pocket to ward off rheumatism and other common ailments. Of massive girth though he was he had a horror of the "Tylwyth Teg" (fairies), which he firmly believed teemed on the hills. However thick the fog on the mountains, he could always find his way home. He loved his sheep just as he loved the unrestricted freedom of the open air, and when, in winter, his sheep were buried in deep drifts of snow he would weep like a child, and in whistling wind and iron frost

frantically dig them out. His talk was of simple country things, of hedges and harvest, of clouds and larks in the sky.

"Wat," like most, if not all, of his neighbours, was illiterate, and yet he seemed to have in him an element of inborn genius. When alone in the solitude of the mountains, he had a way of finding out the time of day that was unique. He spat on his hand and, examining the bubbles, knew by their varying hues, how far the day was spent. Physicists, to whom I have spoken on the matter, tell me that Wat's method of time-keeping, though perhaps not infallible, was not inconsistent with modern scientific discoveries. The amazing thing is that a man who knew nothing of the natural sciences, who knew, in fact, nothing of the simplest books, could have been so observant of the workings of nature as to note the effect of sunlight upon certain forms of liquid.

One day, a denser mist than that which had so often obscured the Beacons from the old shepherd's view shrouded his eyes for ever and his body was brought down to the Hen Dy Cwrdd to be buried.

Some time perhaps in the future (and it may not be far distant) the graveyard at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd will be compulsorily closed. Sanitary considerations will dictate its end. Time, the leveller, will sweep away its lichened, leaning memorials, and, indeed, it may be built upon. The lush green of its grass will have to give way to stone and cement. It is a wistful thought. If, therefore, in writing these pages I have rescued from extinction the simple story of some of those who rest in its earth I feel that something, at least, has been done to perpetuate their memory.

It is fitting perhaps that we should take leave of the burial ground where, for nearly two centuries tears have flowed unrestrained, on a melancholy note. Consigned to its bosom in 1917 was all that was mortal of John Lewis who had been deputy precentor at the Hen Dy Cwrdd from his late 'teens. He met his death in one of the local collieries when only in his thirty-fifth year, and the following elegy, in Welsh, was written by me in memory of him.

CWMGLO—1947

CWM CAPEL (*From a water-colour by Henry Williams*)
SION LLEWELLYN'S COTTAGE IN RIGHT FOREGROUND)
(*Reproduced by E. Warrilow by permission of the Merthyr Museum Committee*)

FY MRAWD.[1]

GALAR Gerdd a ysgrifenwyd ym mrig yr hwyr ym mynwent dawel a henafol yr Hen Dŷ Cwrdd ar Gefn Coed Cymer, ger Merthyr Tydfil.

Perl-ddagrau gloewon dreiglant dros fy ngrudd,
Ac amled ynt a gwlith y nos ar lwyn
Mewn distaw ddôl ; a mi yn llesg a phrudd,
Fe ddiog droellant hwy dan wrando 'nghŵyn.

Ym mro y bedd fin nos ym Mai yr wyf,
A huno gylch fy nhraed mae 'ngheraint cun ;
Ac nid ä'r su sy'n mrig yr ywen lwyd
Byth mwy i dorri ar eu hyfryd hun.

Yr huan ter dros orwel poll a â,
A'r llwynog chwim o'i ffau yn fuan ffy,
Yr olaf frân a'i dunos gynar hed
I irfrig llwyfen ger y Gurnos gu.

Dros lawnt a bryn, yn dawel fel y gro,
Fe daena Anian fud ei heirian glog ;
Y gwenyn ânt yn chwyrn i'w cychod brau,
A pher i'm clust yw deunod mwyn y gog.

Ar frigyn ban fe gân mwyalchen lon
Ei hwyrol salm cyn dyfod nos i'r llwyn,
A'r llygaid-dydd eu hemrynt eu sy'n cau,
A miri'r plant sy'n tewi yn y "Twyn".

Dynesu wnâf at dwmpath ger y mur
Yn drist fy nhrem, a chur o fewn fy mron ;
Fan yma gwelaf dorchau blodau crin
A ddengys imi laith orweddle John.

Ie, dyma'r fan y rhoed ef yn ei gell,
Ymhell o'r byd a'i drwst a'i ing a'i wae :
O boed i'r glâs a dyf pan ddel yr haf
Roi to o wyrdd ar ben ei dy o glai.

Bererin llesg, os yma y doi ryw ddydd
I grwydro'n synn, y gweryd hwn na sang,
Rhag gloesi 'mron sy'n brwydro dan ei briw,
A brathu 'nghalon drom ag ingol bang.

Fe orffwys yma un a fu'n ei oes
Yn swyno bro â seiniau'i beraidd gân ;
O'i fewn fe lysg y gerdd yn eiriau fflam
Enynnai delyn lon ei fynwes lân.

---

[1]This Elegy first appeared in "*Cymru*" in July 1917.

Os hoffet wybod a fu'n fawr ei barch,
A'i buchedd front fu'n byw, ai un o hedd—
Dylaset, ddydd ei angladd, wrando'r côr
A gweld y dorf aneirif gyleh ei fedd.

Claer fflach y cledd a thwrf y magnel broch
Nis denodd ef o lwybrau hedd i'r gâd,
A bryniau gwynion gwledydd dros y donn,
Ni themtiodd ef i gefnu ar ei wlad.

Yn ol i'r "Fu" fy meddwl fyn fy nwyn,
A seiniau clych fy mebyd ddônt i'm clyw,
Cyn dod o'r dyddiau blin, a phan 'roedd mam
A John yn nhre, yn lle o dan yr Yw.

Hoffed fai canu wedi hirddydd blin
Rhyw emyn hen a roisai inni hedd ;
Ond gorwedd 'nawr ein pen caniedydd pêr
Ymysg y meirwon mud yng ngweryd bedd.

Mor amî y daeth i holi'm helynt i,
A gwên ei wyneb fel y wawrddydd lon ;
O gylch fy nhân mwynhaodd oriau lu,
A mêl i'w fin oedd cusan "Shan" a "Mon".

Pan loes a ddaeth i'm bwth ar grib y bryn,
A minnau'n wyw dan bwys fy nhrallod blin,
Bu ef imi yn dŵr i'm dal i'r lan—
O gwae fy myd ! rhaid brwydro'n awr fy hun.

Mi gerddwn, gwnawn, hyd bellter eithaf byd,
Nes methu o'm traed yn hwy a'm cludo i,
Pe gwyddwn y cawn eto ganfod John,
A'i gael yn ol fel cynt i'n cartref ni.

Mi roddwn, gwnawn, holl gyfoeth cread Duw,
A pherlau têr y byd a'i emau lu ;
Ond O mor ofer bellach, ydyw'm cri,—
Rhy dda y gwn nas rhoir yn ol i mi.

Ni chân y ddeilen fyw mo gwmni'r erin,
A dyn rhag annedd trane a geidw draw ;
Ond yma cysgu yn ddi-fraw a wnawn
Nes rhoddi o'r wawr ar gân y ceiliog daw.

Di, fyfyr doeth, pe gallet ddadrys im
Gyfrinion mŷg y trane,—dirgelion bedd,—
A chodi'r llen sydd rhyngof i a'm câr,
Byrlymai 'niolch it' fel tarddle hedd.

Ond pam yr wylaf yn fy ngofid mwy ?
Fe'm dygir innau'n fuan trwy y donn,
Caf wedyn weled yn fy nisgwyl draw,
Ar las y glennydd pell, fy ngeinfrawd John.

Cefn Coed Cymer. MAB Y MYNYDD.

APPENDIX.

THE TRUST DEED.

THE Trust Deed speaks for itself. It reads as follows:—"THIS INDENTURE made the twenty-eighth day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty four between JOHN PERROT of the parish of Gelligaer in the County of Glamorgan Esquire and EVAN JACOB of the parish of Eglwysilan in the same County Gentleman of the one part and JOSEPH OAKEY, Gentleman, JOSEPH COFFIN, Tanner, WILLIAM WILLIAMS, Watchmaker, JOHN THOMAS, of Tydfil's Well, Miner, WILLIAM LYNDON of Cyfarthfa, Coker, WILLIAM BEYNON of Nantygwenith, Mason, MORGAN DAVIES Coedcae Brynteg Miner, DAVID GRIFFITH of Georgetown Machine Weigher, all of the Parish of Merthyr Tydfil, JOHN JONES of Coed Cymer Weaver, JENKIN HARRI Weaver, THOMAS HARRI Weaver, all of the Parish of Vaynor in the County of Brecon, DAVID DAVIES of Cwm Rhondda in the Parish of Llantrisant in the said County of Glamorgan Gentleman, and MATTHEW WAYNE of Tonypandy in the Parish of Eglwysilan in the said County of Glamorgan Gentleman, of the other part WITNESSETH that for promoting the Christian Religion as professed by Protestant Dissenters of the Denomination of Presbyterian at Coed Cymer in the said parish of Vaynor in the County of Brecon aforesaid and for enabling the professors of the same religion of the Denomination aforesaid more conveniently to exercise the forms of their Religious worship and other ordinances of their persuasion at Coedycymer aforesaid AND also in consideration of five shillings of lawful money of Great Britain to the said JOHN PERROT and EVAN JACOB now paid the receipt whereof is now acknowledged THEY the said JOHN PERROT and EVAN JACOB have and each of them hath given granted bargained and sold and by these presents do and each of them grant bargain and sell unto the said JOSEPH OAKEY, JOSEPH COFFIN, WILLIAM WILLIAMS, JOHN THOMAS, WILLIAM LYNDON, WILLIAM BEYNON, MORGAN DAVIES, DAVID GRIFFITHS, JOHN JONES, THOMAS HARRI, JENKIN HARRI, DAVID DAVIES and MATTHEW WAYNE and all other persons (if any)

parties hereto of the second part their heirs and assigns ALL that Chapel or Meeting House situated at Coed Cymer aforesaid in the said perish of Vaynor in the said County of Brecon together with the Vestry room yard and burial ground and all other premises thereto belonging TOGETHER with all and singular the buildings stables yards privileges easements heriditaments and appurtenances whatsoever to the said Chapel and premises belonging or in any wise appertaining AND the reversion and reversions remainder and remainders yearly and other rents issues and other profits of all and singular the Chapel hereby given granted bargains and sold at intended so to be and every part and parcel thereof AND all the estate right title interest use trust property profit possession claim and demand whatsoever both at Law and in Equity of them the said JOHN PERROT and EVAN JACOB and each and every one of them into out of or upon the same premises and every part and parcel thereof with their and every of their appurtenances AND all deeds evidences and writings relating to or in any wise concerning the same now in the custody or power of the said JOHN PERROT and EVAN JACOB or which they can obtain or procure without suit at Law or in Equity TO HAVE and to hold the said chapel tenements heriditaments hereby bargained and sold with their appurtenances unto and to the use of the said JOSEPH OAKEY, JOSEPH COFFIN, WILLIAM WILLIAMS, JOHN THOMAS, WILLIAM LYNDON, WILLIAM BEYNON, MORGAN DAVIES, DAVID GRIFFITH, JOHN JONES, THOMAS HARRI, JENKIN HARRI, DAVID DAVIES, and MATTHEW WAYNE and all other persons (if any) parties hereto of the second part their heirs and assigns for ever upon the trusts and for the ends intents and purposes hereinafter expressed declared and contained of and concerning the same AND it is hereby declared and agreed that the said hereditaments bargained and sold as aforesaid are respectfully bargained and sold upon the trusts hereinafter declared (that is to say) UPON Trust that the Trustee or Trustees for the time being shall from time to time and at all times hereafter permit the said meeting house and premises to be used occupied and enjoyed as a place of public Religious Worship for the service of God by the Society of Protestant Dissenters of the Denomination called Presbyterian AND also by each such other

persons as shall hereafter be united to the said Society and attend the worship of God in the said Chapel or meeting house AND also at all times and for ever hereafter permit the said room called the Vestry room to be used with and be appendant to the said Chapel or meeting house for the use and benefit of the said Society and the said piece of ground called the Burial Ground to be used with and be appendant to the said Chapel or meeting house as a burial ground AND permit such person or persons as shall be nominated jointly by the men and women or the major part of them being members of the said Society and communicants therein at any meeting for that purpose duly assembled to receive and take all such voluntary subscriptions and other sums of money as shall from time to time be paid or subscribed by any person or persons whomsoever towards the support of the public worship of God in the said Chapel or meeting house AND for defraying the expenses and charges attending the same or as shall be contributed for the benefit or support of the Minister for the time being officiating therein AND permit to officiate in the said Chapel or meeting house such person or persons of the Denomination of Protestant Dissenters called Presbyterians not of Calvanistic principles as the said members of the said Society of the major part of them men and women and communicants therein TOGETHER with the major part of the trustees at a meeting duly assembled for that purpose shall from time to time at their will and pleasure elect to officiate as their Minister or Pastor in the Chapel or meeting house and at their will or pleasure to suspend or dismiss for immorality neglect of duty or for holding Calvinistic principles and elect some other fit and proper person in his place or stead or to re-elect or restore him according to their will and pleasure PROVIDED ALWAYS and it is directed that when and so often as of at any time after there shall be only three acting Trustees of the said Trust Estate remaining the vacancy in the appointment of so many additional persons being Protestant dissenters of the Presbyterian Denomination aforesaid as will make up the number of Thirteen Trustees such appointment to be made by the major part of the men and women members and communicants as aforesaid who shall be present at a meeting to be convened for that purpose and with the consent and

approbation of the surviving and continuing trustees or Trustee or major part of them and that all such conveyances shall be made and executed at the expense of the Trust Estate or the funds of the congregation attending the said Chapel or meeting house as shall be necessary or deemed advisable for vesting the said Trust Estates in the then Trustees or Trustee jointly with such additional trustees AND that of every meeting for the purpose of aforesaid there shall be a public notice given on the two Sundays next preceding the day of meeting during the time of divine service and that the meeting shall not be held earlier than the second Wednesday succeding such Sunday when notice was last given and that no person shall be entitled to a vote on any of the matters aforesaid unless such person shall be and have been a member and communicant of the said Society or a Trustee therein for the twelve calendar months next preceding such meeting and that the Trustees and Trustee for the time being shall be entitled to deduct and retain all the costs charges and expenses of and attending the execution of the Trusts reposed or to be reposed in him or them under or by virtue of these presents IN WITNESS WHEREOF the said parties to these presents have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written."

JOHN PERROT,	JOHN THOMAS,	JOHN JONES,
EVAN JACOB,	WILLIAM LYNDON,	THOMAS HARRI,
JOSEPH OAKEY,	WILLIAM BEYNON,	JENKIN HARRI,
JOSEPH COFFIN,	MORGAN DAVIES,	DAVID DAVIES,
WILLIAM WILLIAMS,	DAVID GRIFFITHS,	MATTHEW WAYNE

The following entries may be found at the outside of the Trust Deed :—

SIGNED SEALED and DELIVERED being first duly stamped by the within named JOHN PERROT in the presence of THOMAS THOMAS, EVAN DAVIES, Surgeon.

SIGNED SEALED and DELIVERED by the within named EVAN JACOB in the presence of EVAN DAVIES, SURGEON, EVAN EDWARD, SURGEON, Caerphilly.

SIGNED SEALED and DELIVERED by the within named JOSEPH OAKEY, JOSEPH COFFIN, WILLIAM WILLIAMS, JOHN

THOMAS, WILLIAM LYNDON, WILLIAM BEYNON, MORGAN DAVIES, DAVID GRIFFITHS, JOHN JONES, THOMAS HARRI, and JENKIN HARRI in the presence of RHYS DAVIES, Postmaster, EVAN DAVIES, Surgeon.

SIGNED SEALED and DELIVERED by the within named DAVID DAVIES and MATTHEW WAYNE in the presence of THOMAS EDWARDS, Bedlinog, EDMUND WILLIAMS.

This is the INDENTURE of BARGAIN and SALE (marked A) referred to in the AFFIDAVIT of DAVID DAVIES before me this 16th day of April, 1862.

Frank James.

A Commissioner to administer Oaths in Chancery in England.

It will be noted from the above that the first batch of Trustees were appointed on the 28th October, 1834.

No more appointments were made until 1st July, 1874. The particulars are as follows :—

"At a meeting of the members of the Presbyterian Denomination of the Old Chapel, Cefn Coed, Parish of Vaynor, County of Brecon, held this 1st day July 1874 after proper notice according to the Deed, the following persons were nominated and appointed to be Trustees for the said Chapel in addition to the surviving Trustees.

(*Signed*) EVAN LEWIS, MAY ROSE HILL, CEFN COED.
WILLIAM HUGHES, POST OFFICE, Do.
RICHARD WILLIAMS, MINER, CEFN ISAF, Do.
WILLIAM HARRIS, WEAVER, CEFN COED.
CHRISTMAS EVANS, BREWER, HEOLGERRIG.
JOHN THOMAS, SMITH, CHAPEL HOUSE, CEFN COED.
WILLIAM DAVIES, COEDCAE COLLIERY.
JOHN HUGHES, POST OFFICE, CEFN COED.

Witnesses

DAVID THOMAS, CHAPEL HOUSE.
EVAN THOMAS, SMITH, CEFN COED.

Out of the thirteen appointed in 1834 it will be seen from the above that five of them were living in 1874—forty years later.

After the elapse of twenty-nine years it became again essential to fill in the gaps caused by the removal through death of the old Trustees. Appended is a copy of the memorandum.

"MEMORANDUM of the choice and appointment of New Trustees of the Unitarian Chapel or Meeting House, and Burial Ground known as the Hen Dy Cwrdd situated at Cefn Coed y Cymmer in the Parish of Vaynor, in the County of Brecon, at a meeting duly convened and held for that purpose in the said chapel on the 25th day of February, one thousand nine hundred and three, Rev. John Hathren Davies of Cefn Coed y Cymmer in the Parish of Vaynor, Breconshire, Chairman.

NAMES and description of all Trustees at the constitution or last appointment of Trustees made on the first day of July One thousand eight hundred and seventy four :—

RICHARD WILLIAMS, of CEFN ISAF, CEFN COED, MINER.
WILLIAM HARRIS, OF CEFN COED, WEAVER.
CHRISTMAS EVANS, OF HEOLGERRIG, BREWER.

NAMES and descriptions of all the Trustees in whom the said Chapel, burial ground and premises now become legally vested.

First : Old continuing Trustees :—

RICHARD WILLIAMS, now of Twynrodyn, Merthyr Tydfil, Miner.
WILLIAM HARRIS, HIGH STREET, CEFN COED, WEAVER.
CHRISTMAS EVANS, HEOLGERRIG, MERTHYR TYDFIL, BREWER.

Second : New Trustees now chosen and appointed :—

WILLIAM JONES, 120, HIGH STREET, CEFN COED, ENGINE TENDER.
EVAN WILLIAMS, 14, CROMWELL STREET, MERTHYR TYDFIL, LABOURER.
RICHARD JONES, 61, HIGH STREET, CEFN COED, COLLIER.
WILLIAM MORGAN, 2, MAESTEG COTTAGES, CEFN COED, MASON.
REES JENKINS, 69, HIGH STREET, CEFN COED, RAILWAY GUARD.
JOHN REES EVANS, 6, NORMAN TERRACE, MERTHYR TYDFIL, ASSISTANT SCHOOLMASTER.

GEORGE MORGAN, 1, MARSTEG, CEFN COED, MASON.
LEWIS LEWIS, 3, GRAWEN HOUSES, CEFN COED, COLLIER.
RICHARD HARRIS, 38, PONTYCAPEL ROAD, CEFN COED, CONTRACTOR.
SIDNEY ANTHONY, 1, TRIANGLE, CEFN COED, PLATE LAYER.

DATED this twenty-fifth day of February, one thousand nine hundred and three.

SIGNED SEALED and DELIVERED by the said John Hathren Davies as Chairman of the said meeting at and in the presence of the said meeting on the day and year aforesaid in the presence of

(Signed)
John Hathren Davies
Chairman of the said Meeting.

Frank T. James, Solicitor, Merthyr Tydfil.
Daniel Lewis, 17, Lower Vaynor Road, Cefn Coed.

Copy of letter written to Rev. Owen Evans in 1846.

"At a meeting held after due notice at the Old Meeting House at Cefncoed y Cymmer on the 22nd of Feby 1846 for the purpose of taking into consideration the notice which the congregation received from its Minister the Revd. Owen Evans on the fourth of last month Mr. Jones, of Aberdare, being in the chair :—

It was unanimously resolved,

(1) That we exceedingly regret to learn that our revered Pastor has formed an intention to leave us for the purpose of going to the Glasgow University.

(2) That without presuming to form an opinion upon the propriety for a [1]man of his age to form such an unusual plan for improving his abilities to serve his fellowmen we can no less than be extremely grieved for the loss of his services which for the last eight years have been of unparalleled utility and success amongst this congregation.

[1]Owen Evans was then 38 years old.

(3) That we therefore most sincerely invite him to continue his services among us and give up all thought of leaving a place in which he has been of such eminent service to the cause of Christ until it pleases God to call him to his reward.

(4) That we entreat[1] him to consider the exceedingly great difficulty we shall find to procure the services of an honest man and a sincere Christian endowed with abilities sufficient to edify us in the soul cheering doctrines of divine revelation and accept this our earnest and unanimous solicitation to continue his services among us.

Signed on behalf of the meeting by the Chairman,
[2]J. Jones, Aberdar."

Copy of the licence which gave Rev. Owen Evans legal authority to preach :

County of the Borough of Carmarthen — I Grismond Phillips, Esquire, Mayor, and one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for the said County Borough,

Do hereby certify that Owen Evans, a student at the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, did this day appear before me and did make and take and subscribe several oaths and declarations specified in an act made in the fifty second year of the Reign of King George the Third instituted an act to repeal certain acts and amend other acts relating to Religious Worships and Assemblies and Persons teaching or preaching therein.

Witness my hand this First day of February one thousand eight hundred and twenty seven.

Gris. Phillips,
Mayor."

---

[1]The appeal had the desired effect. Owen Evans relinquished the idea of going to Glasgow.

[2]J. Jones was minister of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon and was the father of the late Rev. R. J. Jones, M.A. also of H.D.C., Trecynon.

LABURNUM HOUSE.—This house was once the residence of Rev. Owen Evans and the site which it occupies is by far the oldest in the village. Before Owen Evans purchased it, it was known as Castell Dedeu (Tydius Castle), the Dedeu being a corrupt form of Tydfil, one of Brychan Brycheiniog's numerous daughters, and was originally a kind of monastic institution. When the house was in course of being altered for Mr. Evans the masons came across a stone with a rudely-carved female figure, which had about it a suggestion of the obscene. The stone was examined by the late Rev. R. J. Jones, M.A., Aberdare, the well known bibliophile, who has left a record to that effect. Owen Evans did not know whether the stone was taken away by one of the masons or built into the house. At any rate, the standard of morality maintained by the monks when they occupied Castell Dedeu was not very high. The monks must have lived there hundred of years ago. Henry VIII ordered the smaller monasteries to be closed in 1536 because of the vices of the monks.

INVESTMENT.—The sum of £88/11/3 from which interest is still being received, came into the possession of the chapel under unusual circumstances. A dispute arose between Rev. Thomas Davies (1759—1832) and one of his members, William Lewis, over a garden boundary. William Lewis alleged that Rev. Thomas Davies, in building a wall to enclose his garden, had encroached upon his (William Lewis') ground. William Lewis with apparently more anger than justice, objected strongly. The dispute seems to have lasted for some time, and many affidavits were sworn ; and although Rev. Thomas Davies, according to the records, conducted himself throughout with due propriety and in a manner consistent with his calling, William Lewis was not so amenable to reason. The story is a long one but the upshot of it was that both sides resolved to settle the matter in a court of law.

Rev. Thomas Davies, unlike his opponent who was a prosperous local butcher, was a man of negligible means, and some of his friends, inside and outside the chapel, feeling that injustice was being done to him opened a subscription list to help him defray the costs of the litigation. Whether the

support, financial and otherwise, given to the Minister disconcerted William Lewis is not recorded, but the fact remains that he took no further action in the matter.

Meanwhile £60/0/0 had been collected. What was now to be done with the money? Rev. Thomas Davies consulted the subscribers with the result that the collection was handed over to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd "in the name of Rev. Thomas Rees." This Rev. Thomas Rees (1777—1864) was, at the time, minister of Gellionen Chapel. He was a LL.D. and a F.S.A.

According to the date of one of the affidavits the dispute between William Lewis and Rev. Thomas Davies arose in 1805. The £60 was invested by Rev. Thomas Rees and produced an interest, over a period of years, of £28/11/3.

Dowlais Unitarian Chapel.—This Chapel has now passed into other hands. It was built in 1882, but the Unitarians of Dowlais held services in the town about a century or more ago. Before they started meeting for public worship in the long room of the "New Inn", they attended the services at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. Encouraged by Rev. Owen Evans they decided to found a cause of their own, and met in the "New Inn" for years. After the death of Owen Evans in 1865, however, the congregation disbanded and the more loyal of them, returned to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. Prominent among these was David Davies.

David Davies was a man of deep religious convictions. I heard him described as "an out and out Unitarian." He wielded in the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, and in Dowlais, considerable authority. He was a native of Cardiganshire and removed when a young man to Dowlais where he took an active interest in choral singing. Music in Dowlais lost one of its most ardent lovers when he died on the 19th June, 1885 at the early age of thirty-nine. His funeral was attended by the "Dowlais Choir" who sang hymns en route to the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd graveyard under the conductorship of David Evans, father of Harry Evans, F.R.C.O. the famous Dowlais conductor, afterwards of Liverpool.

In 1876 David Davies and others revived the Unitarian cause in Dowlais and chose as their meeting place the long

room of the "Camford Inn." The second attempt proved more successful than the first, due, in a large measure, to the guidance and encouragement given by Rev. J. Hathren Davies. Hathren preached at the "Camford" often, and when in 1882 a chapel was built in White Street, he took a leading part in its erection. So anxious was he to see the cause grow and prosper that whenever week-night meetings of unusual interest were held there he took along with him a number of his own congregation at Cefn Coed to swell the gathering.

The first settled minister at Dowlais was Rev. Wm. Jenkins. He was followed by Rev. D. Ivor Davies, who, I think, was followed by Rev. W. J. Davies, author of "Hanes Plwyf Llandyssul."

Rev. Philip Charles.

It will be recalled that Rev. Philip Charles altered his name into "Rev. Mr. Phillips." The cause for his so doing has always been a mystery to me. I think I have now discovered the reason.

In November 1933 the late Rev. Lewis Davies, B.A., Vicar of Cefn Coed, drew my attention to a "List of Baptisms" which he had found among his ecclesiastical records. The list was reported to have once belonged to Rev. Philip Charles of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, and, believing this to be true, the Vicar handed over the document to me to be filed with other records in the repository of our Chapel.

I now find, however, that at the time Rev. Philip Charles was minister of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, another Rev. Philip Charles was curate-in-charge of Vaynor Parish Church. The list of baptisms I have referred to therefore must have been made by the latter, and was in no way connected with the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. It is a strange coincidence that two ministers bearing the same rather unusual name should be living in the same parish at the same time. Indeed, the two Charles were then the only two Christian ministers in the whole parish, and it may be safely stated, I think, that confusion, if not unpleasantness, arose over the delivery of their letters. I know that the friendship between the two clerics was strained. Confusion possibly also arose over other ministerial matters and to avoid its continuation the Unitarian minister changed his name into "Rev. Mr. Phillips."

MURAL TABLETS.

Four marble tablets bearing the following inscriptions may be seen on the wall facing the gallery inside the chapel.

Y MAEN HWN
A OSODWYD ER COF PARCHUS AM
EVAN EVANS, Ysw., HEOLGERRYG
YR HWN A FU YN NODDWR HAELIONUS
I ACHOS DUW YN Y CAPEL HWN
AC A FU FARW MAWRTH 3YDD, 1886
YN 77 MLWYDD OED
"COFFADWRIAETH Y CYFIAWN SYDD FENDIGEDIG."

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
THE REVND. THOMAS DAVIES WHO WAS 43 YEARS MINISTER OF THIS CHAPEL AND DIED THE 10TH DAY OF MARCH, 1832 AGED 73 YEARS.

ALSO MARGARET WIFE OF THE SAID THOMAS DAVIES WHO DIED THE 4TH DAY OF JANUARY, 1819, AGED 58.

THOMAS, ELDEST SON OF THE SAID THOMAS DAVIES AND MARGARET HIS WIFE, WHO DIED 11TH DAY OF MARCH, 1831, AGED 38 YEARS.

DAVID THEIR SECOND SON WHO DIED 18TH DAY OF APRIL, 1797 AGED 2 YEARS.

WILLIAM THEIR FOURTH SON WHO DIED 16TH DAY OF FEB., 1800, AGED 12 DAYS.

DAVID DAVIES, SURGEON, THEIR THIRD SON WHO DIED 14TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1832, AGED 35 YEARS.

ALSO CATHERINE ELIZABETH WIFE OF THE SAID DAVID DAVIES, SURGEON AND DAUGHTER OF HOULSON HARRIS, ESQ., FORMERLY OF SWANSEA BUT LATE OF DOMINICA AND HER INFANT WHO DIED SEPT. 1825, AGED 30 YEARS.
"BLESSED ARE THEY WHO DIE IN THE LORD."

THIS MARBLE IS INSCRIBED TO THE
MEMORY OF JOHN LEWIS OF THIS
NEIGHBOURHOOD WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
APRIL 28, 1814, AGED 67.

ALSO OF JEMIMA LEWIS
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE AUGUST 10, 1815, AGED 18 YEARS

THEY WERE INTERRED IN THE
ADJOINING YARD

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
MARY DAUGHTER OF MATTHEW WAYNE
BY MARGARET HIS WIFE
DAUGHTER OF WILLIAM WATKIN
OF PENMOELALLT IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD,
WHO DIED APRIL 29TH, 1813, AGED 6 YEARS.

ALSO ABRAHAM THEIR SON
WHO DIED FEB. 26TH, 1820, AGED 7 MONTHS.

ALSO OF MARGARET WIFE OF THE ABOVE NAMED
MATTHEW WAYNE, ESQ., WHO DIED SEPT. 13,
1843, IN THE 59TH YEAR OF HER AGE.

ALSO MATTHEW WAYNE, ESQ., WHO DIED
7 MARCH, 1853, IN THE 73RD
YEAR OF HIS AGE

ALSO OF WATKIN WAYNE THEIR SON
WHO DIED AT TY MAWR, RHONDDA,
APRIL 16, 1869
IN THE 54TH YEAR OF HIS AGE

THEY WERE INTERRED ON THE
NORTH SIDE OF THIS BURIAL GROUND.

Behind the pulpit there is a brass tablet to the memory of Rev. Owen Evans and his wife. It reads thus :—

IN
LOVING MEMORY
THE REV. OWEN EVANS
FOR TWENTY SEVEN YEARS MINISTER OF THIS CHAPEL
BORN APRIL 23RD, 1808, DIED JAN. 9TH, 1865

AND MARGARET, HIS WIFE
WHO FOR FIFTY TWO YEARS WORSHIPPED IN THIS CHAPEL
BORN FEB. 2ND, 1834, DIED MAY 10TH, 1897.

THIS TABLET IS ERECTED BY THEIR DAUGHTER
MRS. WILLIAM JAMES AND THEIR SON REV. E. D. PRIESTLEY EVANS

The inscription on Hathren's memorial reads as follows :

ISOD
Y GORPHWYS GWEDDILLION
Y PARCH. JOHN HATHREN DAVIES
GWEINIDOG YR HEN DŶ CWRDD
AM DDEUDDEG MLYNEDD AR HUGAIN
DYNGARWR, GWLADGARWR,
HANESYDD, DYSGAWDWR
GANWYD HYDREF 29AIN, 1855
BU FARW MAWRTH 12, 1910

"Y MAE EFE WEDI MARW
YN LLEFARU ETO."

CYFODWYD Y BEDDFAEN
HWN GAN LU O'I
EDMYGWYR, MEDI 1911.

GOSODWYD Y GARREG HON
ER COF AM
SION LLEWELLYN
YR HWN A YMADAWODD
Â CHWMGLO YN 1747
I SYLFAENU'R ACHOS YN Y FANGRE HON.
GANED TACHWEDD 30, 1691.
BU FARW IONAWR 1, 1776.

Erys ei enw yn fythol wyrdd.

Names of Ministers and dates of their incumbencies as recorded on a brass plate in the pulpit.

Richard Rees	1747—1749
Philip Charles	1749—1790
Thomas Davies	1790—1832
Daniel Davies...	1832—1837
Owen Evans	1837—1865
Isaac Thomas Williams	1867—1873
John Hathren Davies	1877—1910
John Carrara Davies	1910—1918
Thomas Eric Davies	1918—1925
Thomas Lewis Jones	1931—1935
John Marles Thomas	1936—

The above tablet was unveiled by the late John Henry James, Vaynor, about 1904. John Henry James was a member of the well-known James family, Solicitors, Merthyr, who, sixty years ago were the leading Unitarians in that town.

ADFYFYRION

Dichon nad amhriodol fydd i mi roi ffarwel i hyn o Hanes yn y Gymraeg, oblegid, wedi'r cyfan, Cymraeg oedd iaith yr emyn a'r bregeth, yr araith a'r gân yn yr Hen Dŷ Cwrdd am dros gan mlynedd a hanner, ac o ran hynny, Cymraeg, fel y nodais yn barod, yw i raddau eu hiaith heddiw. Fe'm beiir gan rai efallai, yn ddigon naturiol, oherwydd i mi ysgrifennu, hyd yma, yn Saesneg. Ni wneuthum hyn heb reswm.

Gyda throad y ganrif hon lluchiodd dros ardal Cefn Coed don ysgubol o Saesneg a gwelodd y Gymraeg yma dro enbyd ar fyd. Dylifodd y llifeiriant i mewn drwy ddrysau yr Hen Dŷ Cwrdd ac ar waethaf pob ymdrech methwyd a'i gadw yn ôl. Er mai Cymry pybyr oedd eu rhieni aeth ein pobl ifainc yn Saeson uniaith, ac ni chlywid mwyach acen y Gymraeg yn yr ysgol Sul. Pe bawn felly wedi adrodd stori'r capel yn Gymraeg, prin, yn sicr, a fyddai nifer fy narllenwyr ac ofer, o ganlyniad, a fyddai fy llafur a'm hymgais.

O'm rhan fy hun, nid yn llwyr o'm bodd y traethais fy llên yn Saesneg. O gofio mai yn nosbarth y Parch. J. Hathren Davies y cefais, pan yn hogyn, y gipdrem gyntaf ar borfeydd gwelltog a meysydd hudolus llenyddiaeth Cymru, teimlaf weithiau fy mod wedi bradychu fy iaith a'i haberthu ar allor iaith yr estron. Fe wêl y crâff, felly, mai nid o ddifaterwch ac, yn sicr, nid o falais, at y Gymraeg, yr ysgrifennais yn Saesneg. Yn wir, heddiw, ym mhrynhawn-ddydd fy oes, hyfryd i mi yn nhawelwch yr hwyr ydyw gwrando, megis o bell, ar glychau arian yn y gwynt yn galw i'm côf yn ôl atgofion melys am yr hen bererinion â adnabum yn fy nyddiau cynnar. Eithr os gwanychodd y Gymraeg yn yr Hen Dŷ Cwrdd yn y cyfamser, ni pheidiodd y sêl grefyddol, ni ddistawodd y weddi daer, ni oerodd y Ffydd. Erys rhain yn eu gwres cyntefig, ac o farnu yn ôl sefyllfa boddhaus yr Hen Dŷ Cwrdd heddiw nid gwir i gyd, os gwir o gwbl, yr hen ddywediad "pan gyll Cymru ei hiaith fe gyll ei henaid."

Syndod cyn lleied y gŵyr y genhedlaeth bresennol am hanes bore capeli eu tadau. Cofiaf i mi beth amser yn ôl ofyn i'm dosbarth yn yr ysgol Sul faint a wyddent am Flaencannaid a Chwmglo, a'r erlid truenus a fu yno. Synnais at eu

hanwybodaeth. I rai ohonynt nid oedd Blaencannaid a Chwmglo ond enwau niwlog. I'r lleill, nid oedd yr hen fangreoedd cysegredig hyn yn bod o gwbl. Gwyddai fy nisgyblion, yn dra manwl, hanes gwaedlyd Trafalgar a Waterloo, a gyddent yn fanylach fyth am helyntion difoes Harri'r Wythfed a'i amryw wragedd, ond am y cynni crefyddol yng Nghymru dair canrif yn ôl ni wyddant ond y peth nesaf i ddim. Nid dyma yr unig siom a gefais. Holais hwynt ymhellach parthed gweinidogion enwocaf ein capel megis Owen Evans a Hathren Davies. Edrychasant arnaf fel meirwon mud. Gyda'r bwriad o symud y gwarth a'r sarhâd hwn yr ymgymerais a'r gorchwyl sydd bellach wedi ei orffen.

Cyflwynaf y gyfrol i'r gynulleidfa, ac i bwy bynnag a deimla ar ei galon i'w darllen, gyda phob gwyleidd-dra, ac os ynddi rywle y tramgwyddais yn erbyn rhywun neu rywrai na chreded neb mai o fwriad y'i gwneuthum. Nid i beri loes yr ysgrifennais ond i roddi darlun, gore y medrwn, o fywyd ym Mlaencannaid a Chwmglo a'r Hen Dŷ Cwrdd cyn dod o'r dyddiau blin sydd heddiw wedi ein dal.

Un gair arall cyn sychu ohonof fy ysgrifbin. Gwn y caiff fy llyfr ei farnu, ac efallai, ei lymfarnu, eithr cofier hyn, cofnodais yr hanes fel y'i gwelais drwy'm spectol i ac nid drwy spectol neb arall, ac os byddaf yn teimlo weithiau mai rhywun coethach ei iaith a pherffeithiach ei ddawn a ddylai fod wedi cymryd at y gorchwyl sugnaf gysur o gofio'r hen, hen ddihareb :

"Mwyned cân yr eos
Nid archodd Duw y frân i dewi."