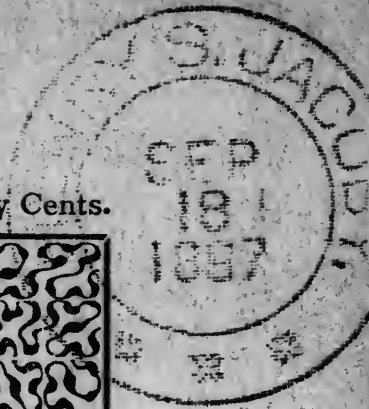


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# Eminent Methodists.

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## Susanna Wesley.

By Bishop C. B. Galloway.

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AUGUST, 1896.

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## EMINENT METHODISTS.

SERIES FOR 1896.

### Announcement.

THIS is the eighth number of a series of booklets which will be issued monthly by the Epworth League of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It will embrace twelve biographical sketches of eminent Methodists, written by Bishop O. P. Fitzgerald and Bishop C. B. Galloway. The names of these distinguished authors is a pledge of the highest excellence, and we bespeak for our booklets a wide circulation. They will include the following:

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## MRS. SUSANNA WESLEY.

1670-1742.

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### PARENTAGE.

**I**T has been said of the pious mother of St. Augustine that she “is better known by the branch of her issue than by the root of her parentage.” Her memory is linked not so much to the family of her father as to the undying glory of her son. Though most honorably descended—an inheritor of even patrician blood—this saying may be applied with equal appropriateness to the mother of the Wesleys. The eminent and enviable place accorded her in history is the honor of having borne, trained, and dedicated to God the sons whose fame will be co-eternal with the gospel of a free and full salvation. She will be remem-

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bered not as the daughter of Dr. Annesley, but as the mother of John and Charles Wesley. Yet though the fame of her sons has overshadowed the name of her father, from him she inherited those remarkable traits and sterling virtues that gave them greatness. Dr. Samuel Annesley, her father, was one of the giants of his day. Born in the shire of Warwick, renowned for its military heroes and as the home of Shakespeare, he was early devoted by his parents, in solemn vows and prayers, to the work of the ministry. When a mere child, already filled with the spirit of his high calling, and to thoroughly equip himself for his great life work, he began reading twenty chapters a day in the Holy Scriptures, and continued the practice to the end of his life. At Oxford he was known for piety and diligence. Daniel Defoe, who knew him intimately, thus happily describes his early virtues :

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His pious course with childhood he began,

And was his Maker's sooner than his own.

As if designed by instinct to be great,  
His judgment seemed to antedate his wit.

Early the vigorous combat he began,  
And was an older Christian than a man.  
The Heavenly Book he made his only school,

In youth his study, and in age his rule.

He became a minister of great power and eloquence. His voice was potent in all the ecclesiastical conflicts of that stormy age. Persecuted because of his nonconformity, he displayed the inherent energy of his family by an unswerving, manly independence. No command of king, nor heel of tyrant, could fetter his faith or crush his conscience. History tells that one of his persecutors fell dead while preparing a warrant for his arrest. Yet with the strength of the lion he united the gentleness of the dove. Full of tenderness and sympathy his minis-

### Mrs. Susanna Wesley.

try abounded in true benevolence. The minister that officiated at his funeral exclaimed: "O, how many places had sat in darkness—how many ministers had starved—if Dr. Annesley had died thirty-four years since!"

After a faithful and fruitful ministry of more than half a century, he died in 1696, exclaiming: "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness—satisfied, satisfied!" He was tenderly loved by all who knew him. So strong was the attachment of his noble relative, the Countess of Anglesea, that she requested on her deathbed to be buried in his grave. Cromwell appreciated his eminent worth, and appointed him to an office at St. Paul's. Richard Baxter pronounced him wholly consecrated to God. The nonconformists considered him a second St. Paul.

Such was Dr. Annesley, the noble father of Susanna Wesley. Of her mother little is known, so we can never estimate how much the



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world owes to her for the rare gifts and graces that ennobled and adorned her remarkable daughter. Doubtless from her she inherited those almost unexampled domestic virtues that rendered historic the rectory of Epworth, and in which was born the Methodist reformation.

Susanna Annesley was born in London during her father's ministry there, and was the youngest child in a large family of a "quarter of a hundred." But few incidents of her early childhood have been preserved as prophecies of her subsequent great renown. She was carefully and thoroughly educated, having accurate knowledge of French, and it is supposed also of the Latin and Greek. Few authors have ever written the English language with more classic elegance and rhetorical accuracy. She had a terseness of style and facility of illustration that gave both force and beauty to all her writings. Though living at a

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time when the higher education of women found few advocates or apologists, she studied with unwearied diligence, and became a scholar of rather varied culture.

In childhood she displayed her father's independence of thought and character. The story is told that at the early age of thirteen years she examined the whole controversy between Churchmen and Dissenters, and, though her father was an eminent Dissenting minister, decided in favor of the Established Church, and became a member thereof. It is a fact that she changed her views and left the communion of her father, but it may be that there was a "tenderer influence" at work—Samuel Wesley, a "sprightly, intelligent youth," who was a frequent and welcome visitor to the home of Dr. Annesley. That characteristic independence gave her a discriminating judgment of men and books, and made her a faithful



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guide to her sons during all their philosophical doubts and fears. Though thus remarkably gifted intellectually, she had none of the singularities of genius. She is rather distinguished for poise of character—for the “balance and completeness” of her faculties. The writings of Thomas à Kempis, Bunyan, Jeremy Taylor, and other such authors, furnished the food on which her young mind fed and throve.

In addition to rare mental endowments and the graces of an unusual culture, she had brilliant personal attractions. She was very beautiful. One biographer, describing a portrait made near the time of her marriage, says: “Her features were slight, but almost classical in their regularity.” Dr. Adam Clarke, in speaking of a fine portrait by Sir Peter Lely of one of her sisters, a charming woman, says: “One who well knew them both said that, beautiful as Miss Annesley appears, she

**Mrs. Susanna Wesley.**

was far from being as beautiful as Mrs. Wesley.”

**SAMUEL WESLEY.**

Among the many visitors to the home of Dr. Annesley for counsel and consultation was Samuel Wesley, a young student for the ministry. Here he met the beautiful and gifted girl destined to be the companion of his long and laborious life—the joy and inspiration of his early hopes and the sweet benediction of his declining years. He was a young man of fine talents, tireless industry, and fervent piety. His love for poetry was a consuming passion. From him Charles Wesley inherited a poetic genius that gave him foremost place among the great hymnists of the ages, and to whom we are indebted for the inspiring liturgy of Methodism. Samuel Wesley published several elaborate works in verse, among them “A Life of Christ,” “A History of

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the Old and the New Testaments," and a Latin dissertation on the book of Job, besides a number of fugitive pieces of more or less merit. His work on Job displayed profound learning and accurate scholarship. As a preacher he was able and faithful. His unyielding tenacity of opinion at times involved him in unnecessary antagonisms. His integrity was almost intolerant. To him a good conscience was of more value than popular favor. When the "Declaration" of James II. was ordered to be read in the churches, suspecting it to be an insidious design of the papacy, he not only refused to read it, but preached a vigorous sermon against it with all the vehemence of righteous indignation.

Such was Samuel Wesley, who won the fair hand of Susanna Annesley, and to whom he was married in 1689, when she was yet but nineteen years of age. At this time the young clergyman had a curacy

### **Mrs. Susanna Wesley.**

in London at thirty pounds a year. Here he labored with great zeal and acceptability until the autumn of 1890, when he moved to South Ormsby, in Lincolnshire, with a "living" of fifty pounds a year. After six or seven years spent in this parish, supplementing his meager living by the ceaseless labors of his pen, they removed, with six children, to Epworth, to spend the remainder of his life in tireless toil, and supporting a large family on two hundred pounds a year. This "living" was conferred at the request of Queen Mary, to whom he had dedicated a volume in token of her patronage of learning.

### **EPWORTH.**

Epworth, the market town of Lincolnshire, is famed in the early military annals of England, but will ever be best known in history as the home, for forty years, of Samuel and Susanna Wesley, and the birth-

### **Mrs. Susanna Wesley.**

place of their apostolic sons. The old parish church, with its square and stately tower, still crowns the highest eminence in all the "Isle of Axholme." The Trent, with the windings of the Idle, Tom, and Don Rivers, forms "a river islet;" Epworth is therefore called the "Metropolis of the Isle." There was the home for forty eventful years of as interesting a family group as ever distinguished the history of English households. Of the nineteen children born to the honored parents, who hailed each as a special gift of God, thirteen were raised to youth, and ten lived to mature age. Though surrounded by the ignorant and profane, oppressed with the burdens of poverty, and several times basely persecuted, the Epworth rectory was ever the home of peace, happiness, intelligence, and piety. Like true missionaries they sought to lift the people to a higher spiritual, intellectual, and social level.

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One writer says of their parishioners that "the upper classes were small landowners, dreadfully careful of their cash, and living chiefly on bread, buttermilk, ash heap cakes, eggs, and flour puddings. The ladies wore the gowns and cloaks which had so well served their ancestors before them. The memory of the oldest inhabitant could not recall ever seeing a farmer arrayed, at any one time, in a complete suit of new clothes." Such surely were not associations very agreeable to the taste of the accomplished Mrs. Wesley, yet for them she labored with a zeal that knew no abatement and a faith that felt no flagging. From these people, stung by the stern rebukes of the faithful rector, they suffered opposition even to persecution. Twice the rectory was fired by a rabble, the second time totally consumed, including the manuscripts and library of the indefatigable minister. Mrs. Wesley came near per-



### Mrs. Susanna Wesley.

ishing in the flames ; and little John, then just six years of age, sleeping in a room upstairs, was only rescued by the interposing hand of Divine Providence. When all were found to be safe from the flames, the venerable father and pastor exclaimed : “ Come, neighbors, let us kneel down ; let us give thanks to God. He has given me all my eight children ; let the house go, I am rich enough.” Millions at this day on earth, and shining ranks of glorified ones in heaven, blessed, if not redeemed, by the agency of his son, respond to that prayer of thanksgiving. A moment more, and the great founder of “the people called Methodists,” before his apostolate began, would have passed away in a chariot of fire.

### THE TRUE WIFE.

As a wife—excelling in all wifely virtues—Mrs. Wesley ranks as a model of noblest type. With a

### **Mrs. Susanna Wesley.**

lofty conception of the sacred and responsible duties of the marital relation, she endeavored with perfect conscientiousness to pay her bridal vows. Theirs was a union of sound judgment and purest affection, a holy plighting of heart to heart. They found in each the elements of highest worth. Mrs. Wesley was an abiding source of strength and hope to her husband in all the arduous labors of his laborious life. Without her prudent economy and really marvelous management, he never could have achieved so much. The rector knew books, but he was very innocent of business affairs. This simple couplet from his own pen shows how passionately he adored and admired the really great woman :

She graced my humble roof and blessed  
my life,  
Blessed me by a far greater name than  
wife.

Accomplished and refined, well fitted

### Mrs. Susanna Wesley.

to grace the most brilliant occasion or exalted social position, with a glad heart and unwearied hands she devoted herself to the modest duties of a clergyman's wife. Though careful to make a small stipend support a large family, dreading sometimes to hear the sheriff's rap at the door to conduct her poor husband to prison for debt, she yet wore a smile of contentment, and cheerfully trusted in Providence to make all things work together for good. No repinings ever escaped her lips, though often cumbered with a load of care. She saw her home, with all its contents, burned to the ground. She saw her husband carried off to jail by a ruthless, soulless creditor, yet with true Christian fortitude she bore up without murmur or despair. In the darkest hour of their trials the venerable rector exclaimed: "All this, thank God! does not in the least sink my wife's spirits." In a letter to the Archbishop of York she said:

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“I have learned that it is much easier to be contented without riches than with them.”

It is hardly possible, however, that two persons, alike distinguished for independence of judgment and tenacity of opinion, always saw eye to eye on every question. As illustrative of the fact that they did not an amusing story is told, which, if founded on truth, is doubtless an exaggeration. It is said that in their family devotions the rector discovered that his wife did not respond with an “Amen” when he prayed for the king. Not believing in the rightful title of the Prince of Orange, this she could not do. Thus said her husband: “Surely if that be the case, we must part; for if we have two kings, we must have two beds.” He left, so the story goes, and went to London, where, as “Convocation man” to the diocese of London, he resided for quite a year. On his return, Queen Anne having ascended

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the throne and all occasion for estrangement being removed, domestic harmony was entirely restored. The incident is puerile enough; but if true, it rather indicates the petulance of the rector than the obstinacy of his ever loving companion. Most any conscience ought to be content with earnest and regular praying to the Lord, without forcing everybody to say "Amen" to every petition. But there is such spiritual morbidity even in this day.

### THE MODEL MOTHER.

As a mother Mrs. Wesley won her crown of fadeless glory. The Lord honored her with what the rector himself called "a numerous offspring, eighteen or nineteen children." The ten reared to manhood and womanhood bore the impress of their mother's genius, and to her gave highest praise for their training and success. From under no mother's eye has there ever gone

### Mrs. Susanna Wesley.

forth a more remarkable family of sons and daughters. To discover the secret of her success, one must analyze the mother's distinguishing characteristics, and study the plans and principles she adopted for the education of her children. She had an exalted conception of the responsibility and *honor* of motherhood. Her children were not considered a burden or a calamity, but with old Jewish pride she hailed each as the manifest token of God's special favor. Rightly to train them for large usefulness and eternal happiness was her constant study and earnest prayer. To great firmness she united an almost exhaustless patience. Said her husband on one occasion: "I wonder at your patience; you have told that child twenty times that same thing."

"Had I satisfied myself by mentioning the matter only nineteen times," replied Mrs. Wesley, "I should have lost all my labor. You



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see it was the twentieth time that crowned the whole."

The training of her children was according to strict method, but "without mechanical rigor." They were like other children, merry and frolicsome, but never rude and offensive. For their physical education she had special care. Their sleeping and eating were regulated according to her own good judgment. They never ate between meals, and ate without question or comment the food prepared. When a child reached its first anniversary it was "taught to fear the rod and *cry softly.*" And it is authoritatively stated that "not one of them was heard to cry aloud after it was a year old." However skeptical I might be in accepting such a story of an ordinary household, I think it quite true of the Wesley family. Disrespect or rudeness to servants never escaped due punishment. In addressing a domestic they were re-

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quired to say : " Pray, give me such a thing." On the fifth birthday of each child she began its education, and on the evening of the first day, with only one exception, they had thoroughly mastered the alphabet.

For their religious culture she had a pious mother's tender solicitude. They were taught to pray regularly, and never to eat without asking a blessing upon their food. She wrote three volumes with her own hand to be used as text-books for her children : a manual of doctrine, a dissertation on the Apostles' Creed, and an exposition of the Ten Commandments. But to her religion was more than correct theology. So every day she conversed and prayed with her children. " I take such a proportion of time," she writes, " as I can best spare every night to discourse with each child by itself. On Monday I talk with Molly ; on Tuesday, with Hetty ; Wednesday, with Nancy ; Thurs-

**Mrs. Susanna Wesley.**

day, with Jacky; Friday, with Patty; Saturday, with Charles; and with Emilia and Sukey together on Sunday." No wonder she was so divinely blessed in the spiritual growth and life of her children. Such devotion can never escape divine benediction. Would God that there were more such mothers in the Church to-day! In the midst of his active and distinguished career John Wesley thus wrote to his wonderful mother: "If you can spare me only that little part of Thursday evening, which you formerly bestowed upon me in another manner, I doubt not that it would be as useful now for correcting my heart as it was then for forming my judgment." With the learned Dr. Adam Clarke, I am now ready to say: "Such a family I have never read of, heard of, or known; nor since the days of Abraham and Sarah, and Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, has there ever been a

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family to which the human race has been more indebted.”

**RULES OF FAMILY GOVERNMENT.**

After the facts given above, I am sure that every reader would like to see the “*method*” by which this wonderful mother achieved such remarkable results. They may aid in the right ordering of other homes. In a letter written to John Wesley, dated Epworth, July 24, 1732, she says: “According to your desire, I have collected the principal rules that I observed in educating my family.” Here are the “rules:”

The children were always put into a regular method of living in such things as they were capable of from their birth, as in dressing, undressing, changing their linen, etc. The first quarter commonly passes in sleep; after that they were, if possible, laid in their cradles awake and rocked to sleep; and so they were kept rocking till it was time for them to awake. This was done to bring them to a regular course of sleeping, which at first was three hours in the morning and

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three in the afternoon—afterwards two hours, till they needed none at all.

When turned of a year old, and some before, they were taught to fear the rod and cry softly; by which means they escaped abundance of correction that they might otherwise have had, and that most odious noise of the crying of children was rarely heard in the house, but the family usually lived in as much quietness as if there had not been a child among them.

As soon as they were grown pretty strong they were confined to three meals a day. At dinner their little tables and chairs were set by ours, where they could be overlooked; and they were suffered to eat and drink (small beer) as much as they would, but not to call for anything. If they wanted aught, they used to whisper to the maid that attended them, who came and spake to me, and as soon as they could handle a knife and fork they were set to our table. They were never suffered to choose their meat, but always made to eat such things as were provided for the family.

Mornings they always had spoon-meat, sometimes at night; but whatever they had, they were never permitted to eat at those meals of more than one thing, and

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of that sparingly enough. Drinking or eating between meals was never allowed, unless in case of sickness, which seldom happened. Nor were they suffered to go into the kitchen to ask anything of the servants when they were at meat; if it was known that they did so, they were certainly beaten, and the servants severely reprimanded.

At six, as soon as family prayer was over, they had their supper; at seven the maid washed them, and, beginning at the youngest, she undressed and got them all to bed by eight, at which time she left them in their several rooms awake, for there was no such thing allowed of, in our house, as sitting by a child till it fell asleep.

They were so constantly used to eat and drink what was given them that, when any of them were ill, there was no difficulty in making them take the most unpleasant medicine, for they durst not refuse it, though some of them would presently throw it up. This I mention to show that a person may be taught to take anything, though it be ever so much against his stomach.

In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their will, and bring them to an obedient



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temper. To inform the understanding is a work of time, and must with children proceed by slow degrees, as they are able to bear it; but subjecting the will is a thing that must be done at once, and the sooner the better; for by neglecting timely correction, they will contract a stubbornness and obstinacy which are hardly ever after conquered, and never without using such severity as would be as painful to me as to the child. In the esteem of the world they pass for kind and indulgent, whom I call cruel, parents; who permit their children to get habits which they know must be afterward broken. Nay, some are so stupidly fond, as in sport to teach their children to do things which in a while after they have severely beaten them for doing. When a child is corrected it must be conquered, and this will be no hard matter to do, if it be not grown headstrong by too much indulgence. And when the will of a child is totally subdued, and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of the parents, then a great many childish follies and inadvertencies may be passed by. Some should be overlooked and taken no notice of, and others mildly reprov'd; but no willful transgression ought ever to be forgiven children, without chastisement,

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less or more, as the nature and circumstances of the offense may require.

I insist upon conquering the will of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual; but when this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents till its own understanding comes, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind.

I cannot yet dismiss this subject. As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children insures their after wretchedness and irreligion. Whatever checks and modifies it promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident if we further consider that religion is nothing else than doing the will of God and not our own; that the one grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness being this self-will, no indulgence of it can be trivial, no denial unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on this alone; so that the parent who studies to subdue it in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving a soul. The parent who indulges it does the devil's work—makes religion impracticable, sal-

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vation unattainable—and does all that in him lies to damn his child, soul and body, forever.

The children of this family were taught, as soon as they could speak, the Lord's Prayer, which they were made to say at rising and bedtime constantly, to which as they grew bigger were added a short prayer for their parents and some collects, a short catechism and some portion of Scripture, as their memories could bear.

They were very early made to distinguish the Sabbath from other days—before they could well speak or go, They were as soon taught to be still at family prayers and to ask a blessing immediately after, which they used to do by signs before they could kneel or speak.

They were quickly made to understand that they might have nothing that they cried for, and instructed to speak handsomely for what they wanted. They were not suffered to ask even the lowest servant for aught without saying. "Pray, give me such a thing;" and the servant was chid if she ever let them omit that word.

Taking God's name in vain, cursing and swearing, profaneness, obscenity, rude, ill-bred names, were never heard

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among them; nor were they ever permitted to call each other by their proper names without the addition of brother or sister.

There was no such thing as loud talking or playing allowed, but every one was kept close to business for the six hours of school. And it is almost incredible what a child may be taught in a quarter of a year by a vigorous application, if it have but a tolerable capacity and good health. Kezzy excepted, all could read better in that time than the most of women can do as long as they live. Rising out of their places, or going out of the room, was not permitted, except for good cause; and running into the yard, garden, or street was always esteemed a capital offense.

For some years we went on very well. Never were children in better order. Never were children better disposed to piety or in more subjection to their parents till that fatal dispersion of them, after the fire, into several families. In those they were left at full liberty to converse with servants, which before they had always been restrained from; and to run abroad to play with any children, good or bad. They soon learned to neglect a strict observance of the Sab-

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bath, and got knowledge of several songs and bad things, which before they had no notion of. That civil behavior, which made them admired when they were at home by all who saw them, was in a great measure lost, and a clownish accent and many rude ways were learned, which were not reformed without some difficulty.

When the house was rebuilt, and the children all brought home, we entered on a strict reform; and then was begun the custom of singing psalms at beginning and leaving school morning and evening; then also that of a general retirement at five o'clock was entered upon, when the oldest took the youngest that could speak, and the second the next, to whom they read the Psalms for the day and a chapter in the New Testament—as in the morning they were directed to read the Psalms and a chapter in the Old Testament—after which they went to their private prayers before they got their breakfast or came into the family.

There were several by-laws observed by us:

“1. It had been observed by us that cowardice and fear of punishment often lead children into lying, till they get a custom of it which they cannot leave.

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To prevent this, a law was made that whoever was charged with a fault, of which they were guilty, if they would ingenuously confess it, and promise to amend, should not be beaten. This rule prevented a great deal of lying, and would have done more, if one in the family had observed it. But he could not be prevailed on, and therefore was often imposed upon by false colors and equivocations, which none would have used but one, had they been kindly dealt with; and some, in spite of all, would always speak truth plainly.

"2. That no sinful action, as lying, pilfering at church or on the Lord's day, disobedience, quarreling, etc., should ever pass unpunished.

"3. That no child should be ever chid or beaten twice for the same fault; and that, if they amended, they should never be upbraided with it afterwards.

"4. That every signal act of obedience, especially when it crossed upon their own inclinations, should be always commended, and frequently rewarded, according to the merits of the case.

"5. That if ever any child performed an act of obedience or did anything with an intention to please, though the performance was not well, yet the obedience



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and intention should be kindly accepted, and the child with sweetness directed how to do better for the future.

“6. That propriety be inviolably preserved, and none suffered to invade the property of another in the smallest matter, though it were but of the value of a farthing, or a pin, which they might not take from the owner without, much less against, his consent. This rule can never be too much inculcated on the minds of children, and from the want of parents or governors doing it as they ought proceeds that shameful neglect of justice which we may observe in the world.

“7. That promises be strictly observed, and a gift once bestowed, and so the right passed away from the donor, be not resumed, but left to the disposal of him to whom it was given, unless it were conditional, and the condition of the obligation not performed.”

### **THE DEVOUT CHRISTIAN.**

As a Christian Mrs. Wesley was conscientious and devout. Amid all the multiplied cares and duties of her numerous household, she never neglected her private devotions nor abated her parish duties. From

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childhood she adhered rigidly to one rule, "not to spend more time in amusements in one day than she spent in meditation and prayer." Religion was the delightful atmosphere of her home. The Epworth rectory was a very sanctuary of glad hearts and cheerful song. Mrs. Wesley's religious life was distinguished by great prayerfulness. For divine strength and guidance she constantly besought the Lord. "Two hours of the day, one in the morning and another in the evening, with an occasional interval at noon, were consecrated to secret communion with God." Another practice, which she recommended to others, was scrupulously observed through life: "Make an examination of your conscience at least three times a day, and omit no opportunity of retirement from the world." In a letter to John on one occasion she said: "I see nothing in the disposition of your time but what I approve, un-

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less it be that you do not assign enough of it to meditation, which is, I conceive, incomparably the best means to spiritualize our affections, confirm our judgment, and add strength to our pious resolutions, of any exercise whatever."

During her husband's absence in London she had worship in her own house with the children and servants. At one of these Sunday afternoon meetings at the rectory a few neighbors were present. They enjoyed the occasion, reported it, and the next Sabbath the number increased, until at length as many as two hundred came. When the matter was reported to her husband, while approving "her zeal and good sense," he stated several objections to its continuance. In reply Mrs. Wesley wrote to her honored husband in substance as follows:

I heartily thank you for dealing so plainly and faithfully with me in a matter of no common concern. The main of

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your objections against our Sunday evening meetings are, first, that it will look particular; secondly, my sex; and lastly, your being at present in a public station and character—to all which I shall answer briefly.

As to its looking particular, I grant that it does; and so does everything that is serious, or that may in any way advance the glory of God or the salvation of souls, if it be *performed out of the pulpit* or in the way of *common conversation*; because in our corrupt age the utmost care and diligence have been used to banish all discourse of God or spiritual concerns out of society, as if religion were never to appear out of the closet, and we were to be ashamed of nothing so much as professing ourselves to be Christians.

To your second, I reply that, as I am a woman, so I am also mistress of a large family; and though the superior charge of the souls contained in it lies upon you, as head of the family, and as their minister, yet in your absence I cannot but look upon every soul you leave under my care as a talent committed to me, under a trust, by the great Lord of all the families of heaven and earth. I thought it my duty to spend some part of the day in reading to and instructing my family, especially in your absence, when, having

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no afternoon's service, we have so much leisure for such exercises; and such time I esteemed spent in a way more acceptable to God than if I had retired to my own private devotions. This was the beginning of my present practice; other people coming in and joining with us was purely accidental.

Your third objection I leave to be answered by your own judgment.

From the above it will be seen that Mrs. Wesley had no thought of assuming the functions of the pulpit, but her "irregularity" consisted in conducting family worship at the rectory, to which the neighbors were attracted, and from which they were not excluded. Her point was that more should be done for the salvation of souls "out of the pulpit." Thus was her life a constant and holy ministry. The priestess of a happy family, her offerings of faith and love will be a fragrant and eternal sacrifice unto the God and Father of all flesh.

On the 25th of April, 1735, Sam-

**Mrs. Susanna Wesley.**

uel Wesley, the toil-worn rector and devoted husband, passed to the better land. Just outside, and near the east end, of the old church where he had faithfully ministered for so many years he was gently laid to rest. The tomb is a flat stone, supported by brickwork, on the face of which is the following inscription composed by Mrs. Wesley herself.

Here  
Lyeth All That Was  
Mortal of Samuel Wesley,  
A.M. He was Rector of Ep-  
worth 39 Years, and Departed  
This Life 25th of April, 1735,  
Aged 72:  
And as he Lived so he Died  
In the True Catholic Faith  
Of the Holy Trinity in Unity,  
And that Jesus Christ is God  
Incarnate: And the Only  
Savior of Mankind.

Acts iv. 12.

Blessed are the Dead  
Which Die in the Lord, Yea  
Saith the Spirit That They May  
Rest From Their Labours and  
Their Works Do Follow Them.

Rev. xiv. 13.

Some years after the ascended rector had been laid beneath that



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tomb his distinguished son stood upon it and preached to a vast congregation gathered in the silent city of the dead. Denied his father's pulpit and a place at the chancel where his mother used to kneel, at the request of eager multitudes he made a pulpit of that father's tomb, and talked of the heaven to which he had gone.

With a sad heart the now aged mother of the Wesleys passed out of the old parsonage, so tenderly interwoven with the dearest memories of an eventful life, to spend the remnant of her days among her devoted children. They vied with each other, in gentle ministries, to make the evening of her life peaceful and happy. Among them she moved a wise counselor, and an inspiration to holy endeavor. Having trained her children for God, she acquiesced readily whenever and wherever he called them, however great her sacrifice. When John Wesley was

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entreated by Gen. Oglethorpe and others to go as a missionary to the North American Indians and the settlers in Georgia, he declined, pleading the loneliness of his widowed mother. He would not lay another stroke on her already bruised and aged spirit. At last, however, he agreed to go if his mother interposed no objection. Her consent would be interpreted as confirming the call of Providence. When consulted, instead of objecting as was natural, if not justifiable, she readily consented, and added these divinely inspired words: "Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice were they all so employed, though I should never see them more."

Her consecration was well-nigh perfect. Because of joyous experience she had late in life when taking the communion, the idea obtained and found place in Mr. Wesley's Journal that she did not until then experience the inward consola-

### Mrs. Susanna Wesley.

tions of divine grace. And in the inscription on her tomb is this line :

“A legal night of seventy years.”

But Dr. Adam Clarke clearly disproves the statement, and shows that from early life she had the conscious “favor and approbation of God.” Five and twenty years before that especial baptism of the Spirit at the communion service she writes of “a constant sense of God upon the soul,” and rapturously exclaims : “*I do love Thee.*” Again, she says : “Give God the praise for any well-spent day. But I am yet unsatisfied, because I do not enjoy enough of God. I would have my soul more closely united to him by faith and love.” And years after she writes : “Every degree of approach toward him is, in the same proportion, a degree of happiness.” One who had such joyous fellowship with her Lord was certainly not in “legal night.”

Methodism owes much to the

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mother of the Wesleys. With Isaac Taylor we may say with grateful reverence: "Wesley's mother was the mother of Methodism." Her apostolic sons, in all their evangelistic labors, had their mother's warmest sympathies and constant prayers. To her wise counsel and calm foresight Methodism is indebted for lay evangelism, which converted that great revival into a spiritual revolution, and established the mightiest ecclesiasticism of modern times. During Mr. Wesley's absence in the North of England Thomas Maxfield, without other authority than the call of the Holy Spirit, began preaching to the "Old Foundry" congregation. Mr. Wesley was shocked at such "irregularity," and hastened to London to stop a scandal; but fortunately for the world, he first met his mother, whose will and judgment, even at the height of his fame and power, had for him the authority of law. She said: "My

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son, I charge you before God, beware what you do; for Thomas Maxfield is as much called to preach the gospel as ever you were." Mr. Wesley heard him, was convinced, and Maxfield became the first of that long line of lay preachers that have carried the gospel round the world.

And doubtless many of the plans and measures elaborated in the "United Societies" had their origin in the family government of the Epworth parsonage.

In a house connected with the Old Foundry church in London Mrs. Wesley spent her last days. Surrounded by all her children, on the 23d of July, 1742, she peacefully fell asleep in Jesus. Her dying words were: "Children, as soon as I am *released*, sing a psalm of praise to God." And they did. That blessed parting testimony has been preserved in one of Charles Wesley's funeral hymns, and sung to the comfort of bereaved millions:

**Mrs. Susanna Wesley.**

Lo! the prisoner is *released*,  
Lightened of her fleshly load;  
Where the weary are at rest,  
She is gathered in to God!

John Wesley himself officiated at the funeral in presence of "almost an innumerable company of people." Over the open grave he preached a sermon from this text: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books, according to their works."

A plain stone was placed at the head of her grave, with an elaborate inscription. But the stone and inscription were both unsatisfactory. A new monument has been erected, on which are these words:

**Mrs. Susanna Wesley.**

Here lies the body of  
MRS. SUSANNAH WESLEY,  
Widow of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, M.A.  
(late Pastor of Epworth, in Lincolnshire),  
Who died July 23, 1742,  
Aged 73 years.

She was the youngest Daughter of the  
Rev. Samuel Annesley, D.D., ejected by  
the Act of  
Uniformity from the Rectory of St. Giles's,  
Cripplegate, Aug. 24, 1662.

She was the Mother of Nineteen Children,  
of whom the most eminent were the  
REV. JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY:  
the former of whom was under God the  
Founder of the Societies of the People  
Called Methodists.

In Bunhill Fields, near the dust of  
Bunyan, the immortal dreamer; of  
Dr. Watts, the sweet psalmist; of  
Daniel DeFoe, the beloved of chil-  
dren to the last generation; and just  
across the street from City Road  
Chapel, her mortal remains await  
the glad morning of the resurrec-  
tion. In the emulation and imita-  
tion of her radiant virtues may the  
Church preserve a perpetual mem-  
ory of the mother of the Wesleys!  
With Dr. Clarke, I am ready to  
say: "Many daughters have done  
virtuously, but Susannah Wesley  
has excelled them all."



