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Welsh Revival

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Box 11_39 (Welsh Revival, 1904–1909)

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ORGIES OF HYSTERIA.

Welsh Devotees Burst Into Laughter and Weeping.

REVIVAL SCENES ECLIPSED

Pandemonium was let loose at the Park Hotel, Cardiff, during the meetings held there by religious enthusiasts in connection with the "Pentecostal" movement. At times the proceedings recalled a menagerie when the animals are being fed. The devotees lashed themselves into hysteria, laughing like hyenas, growling like bears, or groaning like beasts in pain. Reverence could not be detected anywhere. Not even the wildest frenzies of the Evan Roberts revival four years ago equalled these exhibitions. Sensible Christian people, who attended the meetings, looked on with bewilderment, and either laughed outright at the contortionists or pitied their palpable feeble-mindedness.

The proceedings partook at the outset of the characteristics of a revival meeting, fervent prayers being offered from all parts of the room. "Amen" and "Hallelujahs!" and cries of "Praise God!" punctuated every supplication. As the prayers proceeded so did the fervour of those present. Some swayed to and fro in their excitement, while others gave expression to their emotions by shouts of joy.

Ungovernable Emotion.

The rising of Mr. Smith Wigglesworth, of Bradford, was the signal for extraordinary manifestations of ungovernable emotion from many of those present, some calling aloud in an apparent ecstasy of joy, while others burst into hysterical laughter. The speaker's declaration that "the New Theology" had risen from hell and "would have to go back" was received with boisterous fervour, including loud cries of "Clywch, clywch."

The speaker proceeded to describe the restoring to a man of his eyesight recently, after his conversion. Events like those, he said, showed that God was with them, that the power of Pentecost was as great to-day as ever. Another instance given was of a man who had had a bad leg for many years and who told the speaker that he was almost beginning to feel that God would not heal him. He (the speaker) said, "Cheer up, cheer up." "And God speedily came," he added, "for the power of God fell on him and rolled him over on the floor like a potato, and while he was there He took and healed him, and the man suddenly stood up and exclaimed, 'It's all right now!'"

Now and again one or other of those at the penitent table would burst into apparently uncontrollable paroxysms of laughter, while another man who had curled himself up in the corner near the piano made his voice heard ever and anon in a sort of gibberish of the most weird character.

As time went on the excitement increased in the most extraordinary fashion. Very soon pretty well everybody present was groaning as though in terrible pain. Suddenly above the din and babel of moans was heard a shrill voice thrice repeating, "I want the fire, Lord."

A delicate-looking young man was next seen writhing on the floor between the chairs. Then a wild peal of laughter, "Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" grated upon the ear, and while it was being repeated from another quarter a grey-headed old man at the table yelled at the top of his voice, "Oh, the blood! the blood! the blood! the blood!" Another who took up the cry exclaimed, "Blood, blood, blood, blood," twenty or thirty times, and a tall thin man, with hands raised aloft, shouted "Praise 'Im! Praise 'Im! Praise 'Im!" Mr. Wigglesworth moved from one to another, clapping his hands and exclaiming, "Go on, go on, go on"; "that's the way, that's the way; it's the blood, blood, blood, blood all the way."

Shouts of Exultation.

Groans came from every side. Some of those present were rolling on the floor; a big, powerful man stood erect, his chest heaving with fierce emotion, his eyes rolling, his face working as if in torture. Finally, he burst into apparently meaningless laughter. All the while the noise was deafening. There were piercing cries as for mercy, fierce shouts as of exultation, moans as of distress, and wild bursts of laughter. A strong man with his head on the form sobbed as though his heart would break. Now and again some of the suppliants at the top of the room sprang to their feet and pressed their hands to their sides as though they had been shot. A little man kneeling on the floor near the piano gave tongue to a strange language which was neither English nor Welsh, nor of any recognised language, now and again was heard the triumphant "Diolch" in the stentorian tones of a Welshman from the hills.

The tension was terrible, and one wondered how much longer it could last. Many of those at the top end of the room were in a state bordering on exhaustion. One young man who stood on his feet swaying to and fro, and with clenched fists, and tears streaming down his face, was literally gasping for his breath. It came as a positive relief when one of the leaders of the meeting, taking advantage of an outburst of song from one of the women present, suggested that they should close with the Doxology.