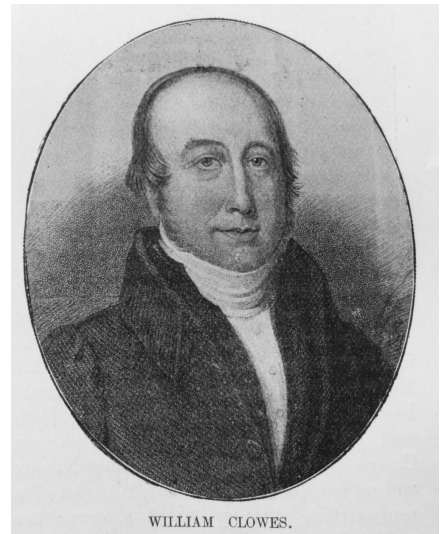


Sidelights on the History and Personality of the Venerable William Clowes

Chapter I

Transcription of Article in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by J.T. Horne

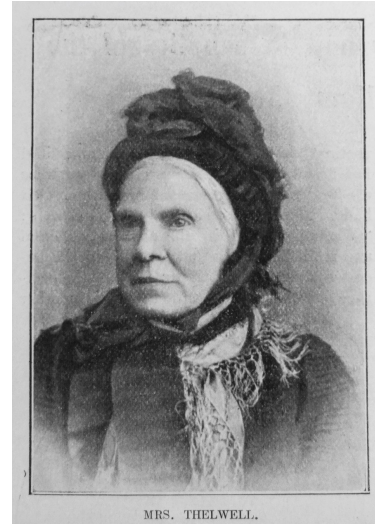
To the student of psychology William Clowes is an interesting character. It is possible that some of our readers have shared our feelings in reading his biographies. We have studied, practically, all the Clowes literature, yet we have always felt that something has been lacking in the presentation of his character by the writers. The subject has been hazy; the lense has not been sharply focussed, and the picture has been enveloped in mist. We have seen a strong nature, a fertile, magnetic personality, - a grand and successful Evangelist. But what produced such a character? To say that it was "the Grace of God" is to give but a partial answer, for William Clowes was not an ordinary man made extraordinary by "the Grace of God." He was naturally uncommon, and when he responded to the wooings of the Divine Spirit, that Agent simply made his nature do the work for which he was created. We believe that he was never so much himself as when he acted under the direct influence of the Spirit; because he was then brought up to the fullness of all which he possessed, but which up till that time had lain dormant. There is much that pertains to the Divine action upon the human soul which eludes our grasp, but we are warranted in saying that the Spirit produces no results in a man for which there is not already existing an adequate cause. *The Spirit never creates new faculties*, but He makes use of those already appointed for producing the desired results. All evidence tends to show that there is no action of the Divine upon the human soul except in the line of already established powers and faculties; and these the Spirit arouses to extraordinary power and efficiency. He gives the man the benefit of the whole power of his own mind.



In our study of Clowes character we were constantly seeking this fuller knowledge respecting his ancestry, temperament, and family relations, that we might better trace the workings of the eternal laws which God had written in his nature. Emerson says: "We look to find in the son every mental and moral property that existed in the ancestor . . . we care to examine the pedigree . . . which resulted in this mother wit, delicacy of thought, and robust wisdom." When we removed into the district where Clowes was born, and became acquainted with the present representatives of his family, and heard their stories and gathered the incidents which they still tell illustrative of his doings; and as we came to know the people with whom he was familiar, or their descendants, who still live around Tunstall and Burslern, we came to a better understanding of the man. To sit by the fireside and hear of him from living lips; to be told of the marvellous power with which he swayed the thousands at his Camp Meeting services, or of the holy awe which rested upon his congregations as he preached in the chapels at, and around Tunstall is to get a different idea of Clowes from any shown in the published books dealing with his Evangelistic career. Sometimes our heart has been "strangely warmed" as Mrs. Thelwell has told of the interviews between Clowes and her father, the

late James Nixon; and we have often wished for “the pen of a ready writer,” that we might preserve her sayings for the profit of others. It was our custom after such conversations to write down many of her stories, and it is from this store that we propose to select our sidelights.

But we have also heard other illuminating incidents from the children of persons who knew Clowes, and we shall also draw from this source. We remember going for a walk one evening in company with a friend whose father knew Clowes intimately. Our journey took us along the road which leads from Tunstall to Harncliffe, past Turnhurst Hall, at one time the residence of the celebrated James Brindley, the great canal engineer. As we were passing the Hall he called my attention to the fact that it was along this road the band of Tunstall Methodists walked to that epoch-marking Lovefeast at Harncliffe, where Clowes first met Daniel Shubotham. We shall have more to say about him later. During this Lovefeast he says, “the clouds of darkness and temptation which had settled on my soul were dispersed, and the flame of God’s love expanded throughout all my powers.” We called attention to the lack of information respecting Clowes’ movements about this time, and he volunteered the statement that his father had told him that Clowes was accompanied by the brothers Nixon, of whom there were three living at Tunstall, and on the return journey Clowes was so over-joyed that “he was singing nearly all the way.” As we walked we watched the daylight die and the historic Mow faded into the night; the stars came out in the sky, whilst the great flames from the blast-furnaces illuminated the surrounding country, making it as light as day. To Clowes all this was familiar ground. However much the district has changed, enough remains for the imagination to reconstruct the old places and people them with their associates.

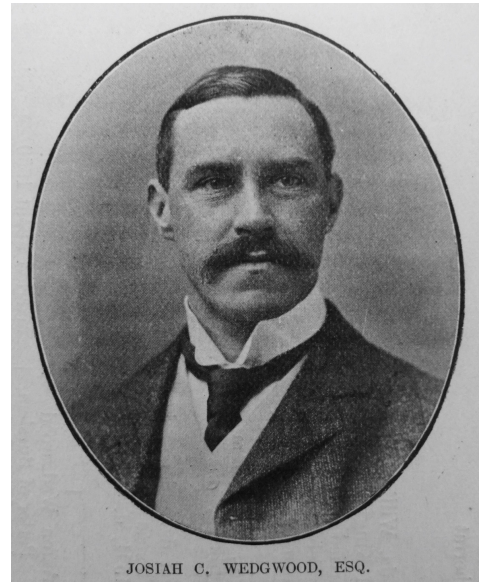


We propose to tell some of these things which we have learned to help to a better understanding of the man. He was pre-eminently a Staffordshire person and combined in his character in a very special degree the lights and shades, the strength and weaknesses of the typical North Stafford product.

His pedigree has been given by various writers, and Clowes himself refers to his relationship to the royal potter, Josiah Wedgwood, the founder of the Etruria Works. But his connection with this branch of the Wedgwood family is very remote, and does not count for much. Those who have written on this subject have, evidently, gained their information from the published biographies of Josiah Wedgwood or from “Ward’s History of Stoke-on-Trent,” or have been satisfied with Clowes’ own statement on the subject. As to the value of Ward on this point, it may suffice if we quote from a letter written by Josiah C. Wedgwood, Esq., a gentleman most ardently attached to archaeological and genealogical studies. We have had considerable correspondence with him on this subject, and finding that in some respects he differed from the local historian, in reply to our enquiry he wrote, “Ward is quite out of date. My version of the pedigree is as correct as modern research can make it. I have all the evidences, but don’t think they would interest you, and they are very long.”

Now pedigree was a very important factor in the personality of Clowes, still it is difficult to determine how much of his subsequent success ought to be traced to the momentum of heredity.

Certainly it was a great controlling influence, and we must give due recognition to his kinship with these two ancient families of Clowes and Wedgwood. So far as we know it has never been shown that his father descended from an ancient Staffordshire house, and we, therefore, put on record a few facts concerning his heritage, which we are able to do through the kindness of Mr. Wedgwood, who has compiled the following table from legal documents in his possession.



CLOWES FAMILY.

- 1327 Subsidy Roll. Benedict del Clou's' (of the Clough or Cloud) paid taxes In Heaton and Lowe.
- 1333 Subsidy Roll. Benedict del Clough, ditto, (the same man).
- 1565 John Clowes buys land in Cheddleton (three houses and 160 acres!)
- 1587 John Clowes the elder and John Clowes the younger and Nicolas Clowes and Theophila, his wife, sell the same property.
- 1609 Thomas Clowes and Elizabeth his wife, and Lawrence Clowes and Margaret his wife sell twenty-six acres in Leek for £80.
- 1610 William Clowes and heirs buy twenty-one acres in Heaton.
- 1610 Robert Clowes and heirs buy eighty acres in Heaton for £41.
- 1610 Thomas Clowes buys from Sir Walter Aston common rights on Morridge Moor for £60.
- 1612 William Clowse (sic), and Thomas Malkin buy land in Rushton James.
- 1617 William Clowes, gentleman, buys two houses and 170 acres in Heaton from William Thorley for £120 (probably a nominal not the *real* purchase price).
- 1701 William Clowes witnesses a grant of Thomas Fenton of Hollinhouse to Josiah Meade of land in Crowborough.
- 1657 William Clowes occupied a house in Burslern. } Ward's
- 1742, 1750 Same house occupied by Thomas Clowes. } "Stoke on Trent"

In examining old documents kept in the Burslem Parish Church we saw the following which show the connection of the family with that place. "May 1707. Richard R. Clowes, his + mark, as Churchwarden." The following is taken from the same old register. "Thomas Clowes, old Churchwarden, 1746 short accounted for by sittings, four shillings and fourpence (and also is to pay six shillings for wine). N.B. - The four shillings and fourpence being due to Sneyd Hamlet, from Burslem."

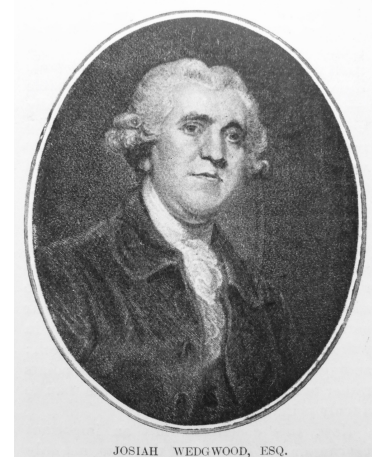
These prove that Clowes is an old Staffordshire name, and Mr. Wedgwood writes: "The name of Clowes occurs frequently in the immediate neighbourhood of Tunstall from 1327 to the present day. The name was originally 'of the Clough,' or 'of the Cloud,' springing directly from that hill 'The Cloud,' which looks down on Congleton, and on the sides of which William Clowes so often preached. It is impossible with the material now at our disposal, to trace our William Clowes step by step back to Benedict of the Cloud, of the days of Edward II., but in view of this discovery, there can

be no possible doubt that the Clowes family, like the Wedgwood family, have always been in Staffordshire – as farmers, potters, preachers.”

When we turn to his maternal ancestry we can trace the family connection step by step. It may be interesting in passing to note that two explanations have been given of the name “Wedgwood”; and like that of Clowes, it springs from territorial possessions. One explanation finds it in the Anglo Saxon

Waeg-wude, which may either signify a waving wood, or a way-side wood. The other traces it to *Woden’s wood*, from *Woden*, the Mars of the Northern nations, and the *wooded* territory of 431 acres, which now forms the hamlet of Wedgwood. The members of this Wedgwood family in Staffordshire are so numerous that they might almost be described as a “Clan.” There are old deeds and charters

which speak of a Wedgwood residing at a place called Weggewood, a hamlet in Staffordshire about four miles west of Newcastle-under-Lyme; and in 1370, in the thirteenth year of Edward III., Thomas de Weggewood was frank pledge of this place. The Wedgwoods of Haracles, near Leek, descended from this family, and the appended table gives the connection of William Clowes’s mother with this house.



References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1906/35

