

P1 DAVIS, John. *Tom's Escape. Merthyr Tydfil: Printed by John Davis, [1849].*
1 p. 17 cm.

This poem was not included as a separate item in *Welsh Mormon Writings*, as at first glance it did not appear to be connected to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But a closer examination leads one to believe that it is in reality an allegory of John Davis's conversion to this new religion in Wales.

The caged songbird named Tom probably represents John Davis while he was still affiliated with Nonconformity, any religion in Britain that does not conform to the Church of England. After receiving baptism into the Latter-day Saint faith in April 1846 Davis kept his conversion secret from friends and family at first. And when it did become known a few months later, efforts were made to entice him back to his former religious persuasion.

But Davis resisted and died a faithful Latter-day Saint thirty-six years later. In the first stanza of the poem the songbird escapes (John Davis escapes from Nonconformity). In the second stanza efforts were made to recapture the bird (Davis's former co-religionists attempt to bring him back into their fold). And in the third stanza it becomes obvious that the bird is gone forever (Davis makes it clear that he will never return to Nonconformity).

Although this short poem was never advertised in any of the Latter-day Saint publications in Wales it was included in Davis's 1853 collection of his works entitled "The complement; or a collection of treatises, songs, and letters, pertaining to the Latter-day Saints" (*Welsh Mormon Writings*, item 71).

The poem is dated 27 April 1848, ten months before John Davis moved from Carmarthen to the area of Merthyr Tydfil known as Georgetown, given as the place of publication. Thus it appears that the poem was written while Davis was still in Carmarthen and published after his move to Merthyr Tydfil.

TOM'S ESCAPE.

POOR TOM, the caged green linnnet,
A prisoner long had been;
The flower pots and myrtle
Were all the world he'd seen.
One day he gain'd more freedom,
And had to play about;
But he, the rogue, unheeded,
Right thro' the door flew out.

“Tom's gone! Tom's gone!” was shouted,
“He's gone to the pear tree!”
There Tom was 'midst the blossoms,
A prisoner just got free!
In view they brought his prison,
With choicest things within,
To welcome him to enter,
But Tom they fail'd to win.

Good bye! thou blest with freedom;
Go, preach the snares of man,
And duly warn thy comrades
To shun them, if they can;
Go, tell them of the prison
That man had made for thee;
And be thou, like the poet,
A friend to Liberty.

April 27, 1848.

J. DAVIS