## CHAPTER XIV.

### WESLEY'S PREACHERS.

NO leader of a great religious movement was ever more happy in his helpers than Wesley. It would be hard indeed to find a finer band of men than the early Methodist preachers. They generally travelled their circuits mounted on horseback, with saddle-bags, containing their scanty wardrobe and a stock of Methodist books for sale in the Societies. The horse was scarcely less important than his master in days when the preacher's "round," or circuit, sometimes embraced a county or two. For a quarter of a century Thomas Olivers rode one horse that a friend purchased for five pounds and gave to him when he went to his first circuit. He travelled comfortably upon it not less than a hundred thousand miles. This, however, was a model horse, "such another as, in many respects, none of my brethren could ever boast of."* John Pritchard was less fortunate. His horse became sick, and the poor itinerant had to travel on foot during one winter and spring about twelve hundred miles.† The early minutes, which may be said to contain the "whole duty of a Methodist preacher," do not forget one cardinal point. It is asked in 1765, "Are all the preachers merciful to their beasts?" "Perhaps not. Every one

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* "Early Methodist Preachers," ii., 73. † *Ibid.*, vi., 267.

ought—1. Never to ride hard. 2. To see with his own eyes his horse rubbed, fed, and bedded."

Wesley's first preachers had a daily baptism of privation and persecution. Mob and magistrate conspired to drive them out of the towns and villages where they came to labour. One of Wesley's itinerants wrote to him in October, 1744, about the violence of the Cornish mob, and informed him that Mr. Westall had been committed to the House of Correction at Bodmin as a vagrant. "I pray you," says Wesley, "for what pay could we procure men to do this service? to be always ready to go to prison, or to death?" Nelson, Maxfield, and others were pressed as soldiers. Thomas Mitchell was thrown repeatedly into a deep pond till he was insensible; then his clothes were covered with paint. These pioneers of Methodism had a hard and long struggle with the mob. Even after Wesley's position and character had begun to command general respect his humble itinerants had to face much rough usage; but they were true heroes, who counted all troubles light in order to win men for Christ.

In addition to all other privations, the early preachers had a long struggle with poverty.* John Downes' widow had only one sixpence in the world at the time of her husband's death; John Jones' clothes scarcely sufficed to pay the thirty-seven and threepence which his modest funeral cost. At first the circuits provided for any preacher who laboured among them. His wife, if he had one, was without any provision. Four shillings a week was the sum afterwards allowed for a wife, with a sovereign per quarter for each child. When the husband was at home eighteen-pence a day was allowed for his board, a deduction being made if he went out for a meal.†

* See p. 231.

† Southey's "Wesley," ii., 61.

In 1752 it was arranged that the preachers should receive stipends of twelve pounds a year,* in order to provide themselves with clothes, etc. Board and lodging was found by the Societies. "Two meals and horse one night, 1s.," an entry in the accounts of "The Dales" circuit, shows the average cost of entertainment. Up to this time the stewards of the various Societies provided the preachers with what they needed, and sometimes gave them a trifle † for travelling expenses. Ten years after this date, however, we find that Thomas Taylor, then stationed in Wales, had neither quarterage nor travelling expenses. He was generally entertained by the friends. Sometimes a shilling or half a crown was put into his hand. Fortunately he had a little money of his own, on which he drew for expenses. His horse, with its saddle and other equipments, cost him nine pounds. Some of the first preachers supported themselves by the labour of their own hands; others married wives with property, or, like Taylor, had a little stock of their own. By the year 1763 what is called "a competent provision" had been made for the preachers' wives and a weekly allowance for their little children. Kingswood School provided education and clothing for the elder boys.‡ Out of the collection for the school some money allowance was also made to a few sons and daughters of the preachers. The failure of many circuits to raise the usual allowance for the preachers wives threw such a heavy burden on the Contingent Fund that in 1788 Wesley made a special appeal to the Societies to provide for those who laboured among them. The Contingent Fund was raised by a yearly collection

* Myles' "Chronological History."

† Tyerman, iii., 551.

‡ "Minutes of the Conference," i., 590.

in the classes to meet law expenses and reduce chapel debts, etc. The year after this appeal the call upon it was reduced from nine hundred and three pounds to five hundred and sixty-eight, but the relief was temporary. In 1790 it rose to one thousand pounds.

The school for preachers' sons at Kingswood was one of Wesley's favourite institutions. In 1739 the foundation of a school for the colliers' children had been laid by Mr. Whitefield, but the whole burden of its building and maintenance fell on Wesley. He hoped to make it a school for his people, and for many years several of the Methodist families sent their children. In 1748 it was enlarged, and a public collection was made for it in the Societies, which has been continued ever since. Wesley prepared school-books for use there, and watched over the religious life of the inmates with constant care. Every sign of religious quickening cheered him, but he often mourned that he could not make Kingswood all he wished. He planted two rows of trees in the grounds, and lived long enough to preach under their agreeable shade in the summer-time.

The three names that head the list of Wesley's lay-preachers are John Cennick, Joseph Humphreys, and Thomas Maxfield. Wesley says, "Joseph Humphreys was the first lay-preacher that assisted me in England, in the year 1738." * There was at this date no distinctively Methodist Society, so that Humphreys' help must have been given in the Society at Fetter Lane. On September 1st, 1740, he first began to assist Mr. Wesley at the Foundery. John Cennick, schoolmaster-elect at Kingswood, had begun to preach there in June, 1739. He had gone from Bristol to hear a young man read a sermon under a sycamore tree in Kingswood, but the reader did

* Works, iv., 493.

not come, and Cennick reluctantly took his place. Wesley was asked to forbid his preaching, but he encouraged him to proceed, so that Cennick was constantly employed in the neighbourhood of Bristol. Humphreys and Cennick both left Wesley during the Calvinistic controversy in 1741. Thomas Maxfield's name, though it does not stand first, is associated with the most remarkable incident in the early history of lay-preaching. He was one of Wesley's converts at Bristol. On May 20th, 1739, he began to roar and beat himself on the ground so violently, that it took six men to hold him. With a single exception, Wesley never saw any one "so torn of the evil one." Maxfield found peace whilst Wesley was praying with him. He seems to have travelled for some time with Charles Wesley as a companion and servant. Once he was left in London to meet and pray with the members at the Foundery during Wesley's absence. Insensibly he passed from prayer and exhortation to preaching sermons. His word led to many conversions. When the news reached Wesley, he hurried to London to check this irregularity. His mother, then living at the Foundery, asked him the reason of his evident dissatisfaction. "Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher, I find," was his answer. She reminded him of her own objections to lay-preaching, and then added, "John, take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him yourself." The Countess of Huntingdon also wrote to say how much she was astonished by Maxfield's power both in preaching and in prayer. When Wesley heard for himself, he could only say, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good." Thomas Westall, another of the first preachers, also found a friend in need. Wesley thought of silencing him,

but a pious old lady at Evesham, Mrs. Canning, said, "Stop him at your peril! He preaches the truth, and the Lord owns him as truly as He does you or your brother." *

Maxfield's recognition as a lay-preacher prepared the way for the extension of Methodism throughout the United Kingdom. Without such machinery the Great Revival could only have been local; now its "circuits" began to stretch all over the country. Dr. Barnard, Bishop of Londonderry, who visited Bath for his health, ordained Maxfield. Wesley had recommended him warmly to his Lordship, and the Bishop told him,† "Sir, I ordain you to assist that good man, that he may not work himself to death." Maxfield remained with Mr. Wesley more than twenty years. He was intimately associated with George Bell, the Life Guardsman, whose extravagancies caused so much mischief in the London Society in 1763. Maxfield was appointed to take a service at the Foundery on April 28th, 1763, but refused to do so. Wesley had gone to Westminster to preach, but walked back to the Foundery as soon as he heard this news, and preached from Jacob's complaint, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved!" Maxfield's position as one of Wesley's helpers had led to his marriage to a lady of considerable fortune, but he had no sense of gratitude. In later years, however, Wesley did not refuse to renew the intercourse. He preached at Maxfield's chapel in Ropemaker's Walk, Little Moorfields, in 1783, but he reports soon afterwards that Maxfield was clearly convicted by the testimony of unexceptionable witnesses of lying and slandering his old friends for twenty years.

A finer man than Maxfield was John Nelson, the Birstal mason. Southey says he "had as high a spirit and as

* Moore, ii., 11. † Works, iii., 131.

brave a heart as ever Englishman was blessed with." He came to London to work at his trade, and found peace under Wesley's first sermon in Moorfields. He had long been grappling with the great questions of life, and attended all places of worship where he thought he might find guidance. He slept little, and awoke from horrible dreams shivering with terror. Whitefield's preaching did not relieve his distress. At last he heard Wesley. When the preacher ascended the pulpit, Nelson says, "My heart beat like the pendulum of a clock, and when he spoke, I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me." Nelson soon found the rest he sought. He was lodging with a family that objected to so much preaching and praying. They even asked him to seek another home. But before the time came for him to leave Nelson's consistency and earnestness had won them over. They went with him to Moorfields, and one of them was converted. His employer was pushing on the building for the Exchequer near Westminster Hall, and pressed Nelson to work on Sundays, but he stood firm, and won the Sunday rest for his fellow-workmen as well as for himself. He had not spoken to Wesley, but he took care to hear him or his brother every Sunday, and persuaded many of his comrades to go with him. He was so zealous for the souls of others, that he even hired one man to hear Wesley preach. It was a good speculation. The man afterwards assured Nelson that it was the best thing both for him and his wife that ever man did for them.

Nelson's first conversation with Wesley is singularly interesting. The Yorkshire mason had often wished for an opportunity to speak with one to whom he owed so much. One day he attended the Sacrament at St. Paul's, where Wesley was, and contrived to walk with him after service towards the Foundery. They talked together all

the way from St. Paul's to the farther end of Upper Moorfields. "It was a blessed conference to me," says Nelson. "When we parted, he took hold of my hand, and, looking me full in the face, bade me take care I did not quench the Spirit." This was Nelson's only interview with Wesley in London. Just before Christmas he returned to Yorkshire. There he was led to tell the story of his conversion. His opinions were soon noised abroad, and people of all denominations came to hold controversy with him, so that his house used to be filled with visitors as soon as he came home from work. Some would ask questions, or argue with him; others stood by to listen. Nelson always took care to have prayer before they separated, and soon eight persons had found rest for their souls. In this humble way a great work broke out. Nelson did not attempt to preach, but read some portion of Scripture, exhorted the people to observe what they had heard, and closed his meetings with prayer. For some time six or seven were converted every week. During all this while Nelson had no correspondence with Wesley. Peter Böhler, after his return from America, visited him and greatly strengthened his hands. Nelson was at this time much troubled by some of the Moravians, and felt that he would give ten pounds, if he had it, for an hour's conversation with Wesley. One night he dreamt that both the Wesleys were sitting at his fireside. John Wesley said, "I will stay but a few days now; for I must go into the north, and return at such a time, and stay with you a week." A few months later they did visit him, and he heard the very words of his dream.

A neighbour who attended his services was going up to London, and said he would like to hear Wesley, whom Nelson called his father in the Gospel. He brought a

letter from the Yorkshire mason asking Wesley's advice in his perplexities. Wesley told the man to say that he would be at Nelson's house the following Tuesday. On May 26th, 1742, Wesley met this devoted worker. From this time the brothers became frequent visitors to Birstal, and Nelson's way was soon opened to wider usefulness. He laboured in various parts of Yorkshire with great success; then Wesley called him to London. His clothes were so worn out in the Lord's service, that he was not fit to obey the call, but in this emergency a tradesman of the parish brought him a piece of blue cloth for a coat and black cloth for waistcoat and breeches. The Yorkshire mason was now ready to start for London.

A neighbour who was going there allowed Nelson to ride his horse sometimes while he walked himself. In this manner the new itinerant entered the metropolis. He then pushed on to join Wesley at Bristol. Wesley was on his way to Cornwall. John Downes and Nelson went with him; but as they only had one horse between them, they generally set out before Wesley and his companion Mr. Shepherd. When they reached St. Ives, Nelson worked at his trade, preaching as opportunity served. Poor Downes was soon seized by a fever. Nelson was better able to bear the hardships of this rough life. For three weeks he and Wesley slept every night on the floor. The mason's great-coat made a fairly comfortable pillow for Wesley, but Nelson had to lay his weary head upon Burkitt's "Notes on the New Testament." One morning, about three o'clock, Wesley turned over, and finding his companion awake, clapped him on the side. "Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer: I have one whole side yet." The skin was rubbed off the other. Hospitality was at a discount in those days. It was a rare thing for any one to offer meat or drink to the poor preachers

in Cornwall. After one service Wesley stopped his horse to pick the blackberries, saying to his companion, "Brother Nelson, we ought to be thankful that there are plenty of blackberries; for this is the best country I ever saw for getting a stomach, but the worst that ever I saw for getting food. Do the people think we can live by preaching?" Nelson replied that a friend had given him a capital meal of barley-bread and honey. Wesley told him he was well off. He himself had intended to ask for a crust of bread at Morva, but forgot to do so till he got some distance from the house.

On May 4th, 1744, Nelson was pressed for a soldier by an alehouse-keeper at Adwalton, near Birstal, who felt that his craft was in danger. For a long time he could gain no redress. He refused to fight or to accept soldier's pay, and had to suffer much for his religion. Neither threats nor promises, however, could silence Nelson. He fearlessly reproved sin and preached to crowds of people wherever his regiment marched. At last a substitute was provided by his friends, and Nelson was set at liberty. He still followed his business as a mason, but was incessant in his labours as an evangelist. In 1750 he was stationed to a circuit as a regular preacher, and laboured with great blessing for twenty years. This brave soldier of Jesus Christ died on July 18th, 1774, at the age of sixty-seven.

John Downes, who shared his horse with Nelson on the way to Cornwall, was another of the zealous itinerants, who had his full share of the privations and successes of those days. He suffered so much from ill-health that in 1751 Wesley set him to superintend his printing. The journal for November 4th, 1774, pays warm tribute to the genius and devotion of this noble man. Wesley never forgot the meed of honour due to his heroic fellow-

workers. On his testimony Downes is acknowledged as the mechanical genius of early Methodism. He did not hesitate to say, "I suppose he was by nature full as great a genius as Sir Isaac Newton." When he was a boy at school, he astonished his master by proving an algebraical proposition in a better way than that given in his school-book. Soon afterwards he was sent into Newcastle with a clock to be repaired. He watched the workman, then returned home, made himself tools, and soon finished a clock of his own, which went as well as any in the town. One morning whilst Wesley was shaving he noticed Downes "whittling the top of a stick." He found that the itinerant was making a likeness of his leader, which he intended to engrave on a copper plate. The second engraving which he made from a folio portrait of Wesley by Williams was prefixed to the "Notes upon the New Testament." After a long conflict with pain, sickness, and poverty, John Downes died at the age of fifty-two. Charles Wesley visited his widow. "She had one six-pence in the world, and no more." A friend had received her into her house, and her calm submission and peace of mind surprised all who saw her.*

Thomas Walsh, an Irish Papist, became one of the grandest of Wesley's lay-preachers.† He had been trained in the strictest obedience to Rome, but was led to join the Church of England through the instrumentality of an elder brother, who was trained as a priest, but forsook Popery through reading the Bible. Walsh heard the Methodist preachers, and joined the Society in September, 1749, when he was about nineteen years old. He was soon rejoicing in the love of God. When he opened his mind to Wesley about his call to preach, he

* Works, iv., 34; Moore's "Wesley," ii., 262. † See p. 231.

was requested to send an account of his conversion and experience. He received the following answer :—

"My dear Brother,—It is hard to judge what God has called you to till trial is made. Therefore, when you have an opportunity, you may go to Shronil, and spend two or three days with the people there. Speak to them in Irish."

Walsh's gifts were soon recognised. His roughness of address and his dialect offended some, but the power of God was manifest in his preaching. He had his full share of the perils of his new vocation. Seventy-eight men took an oath to oppose him. Armed with clubs, they met him a mile from the town of Roscrea, where he intended to preach, and offered to bring either a priest or a clergyman to argue with him. Walsh told them that he did not concern himself with opinions, but preached against sin of every kind. The opponents were much mollified by his appeals to their conscience, but when he refused to promise that he would not visit the place again, they determined to put him into a well, which they had prepared for that purpose. Walsh escaped this fate, but was taken by the back and thrust out of the town when he attempted to preach in the street. At Bandon, where he was cast into prison by the magistrate, who was also the Rector of the place, he preached through the window to all who could hear his voice. The people, in their sympathy for the young preacher, brought bedding and provision for him and the companions who accompanied him to prison, and the magistrate soon found it prudent to set him at liberty.

Walsh became the Apostle of Ireland. His perfect command of Erse everywhere won him a hearing, and he had a large share in the spread of Methodism in his own country. His knowledge of the Scriptures was profound. The study of Hebrew was a passion with him. Wesley says that he was the finest Hebrew scholar he ever met.

He could tell how often any word was found in the Hebrew Bible and what it meant in each place. He often attended the synagogues and conversed with the Jews, for which work his studies gave him a special fitness. Wesley calls him "that blessed man." He did not remember any preacher who in so few years had been used for the conversion of so many souls. Walsh died of consumption in 1759, in the twenty-eighth year of his age. His incessant study, his abstemiousness, and his prodigious labours, all contributed to this painful loss, but Wesley always considered Walsh a martyr to loud and long speaking. He carefully entreated his preachers to beware lest excitement should lead them to commit the same error.

John Jane deserves a place in the record of Methodist martyrs. At Holyhead, in March, 1750, Wesley, on his way to Ireland, overtook Jane, who had set out on foot from Bristol with three shillings in his pocket. He had spent seven nights on the road, for six of which he was entertained by entire strangers. He reached Holyhead with one penny left. A few months later Jane's rough life closed. A walk from Epworth to Hainton on an exceedingly hot day threw him into a fever, from which he never recovered. He spent his last days at the house of a good woman, but no nursing could save him. He passed away with a smile on his face. His last words were, "I find the love of God in Christ Jesus." His clothes, stockings, hat, and wig were not thought sufficient to meet the funeral charges, amounting to thirty-seven and threepence. All the money he had was one shilling and fourpence, "enough," Wesley adds, "for any unmarried preacher of the Gospel to leave to his executors." Wesley makes another reference to this devoted man in connection with his visit to Colne in 1776. He preached to a multitude of people, and scarcely ever saw a congregation

where men, women, and children stood in such rapt attention drinking in the word, "and this in the town," he adds, "wherein, thirty years ago, no Methodist could show his head! The first that preached here was John Jane, who was innocently riding through the town, when the zealous mob pulled him off his horse, and put him in the stocks. He seized the opportunity, and vehemently exhorted them to 'flee from the wrath to come.'" Jane had been dead for more than a quarter of a century, but Wesley had not forgotten his labours, nor had those labours been without the abundant blessing of God.

Wesley was often compelled to employ men of little or no education. But he did his best to rouse the desire for self-improvement. During the Lent of 1749 he met at Kingswood as many of the preachers as could be spared from their circuits, and read lectures to them, as he used to do to his pupils at the University. Seventeen assembled, whom he divided into two classes. To one of these companies he read "Pearson on the Creed," to the other Aldrich's "Logic." He also read "Rules for Action and Utterance" with both. Many references to similar gatherings are found in the journals. Wesley sometimes chose a book of philosophy, and pointed out its merits or its mistakes. When he was not particularly engaged in London, he spent an hour in this way with his preachers. The work gave him great satisfaction. In November, 1764, he writes, "Many pupils I had at the University, and I took some pains with them. But to what effect? What is become of them now? How many of them think either of their tutor or their God? But, blessed be God! I have had some pupils since who well reward me for my labour. Now 'I live;' for 'ye stand fast in the Lord.'" In December, 1757, he spent some days quietly at Lewisham in finishing "A Preservative against Unsettled

Notions in Religion," designed for all the Methodists, but chiefly for the young preachers. His "Christian Library," consisting of selections made from the best works on divinity, was another proof of his care for the education both of preachers and people.

James Wheatley, who was expelled in 1751 for immoral conduct, brought slanderous accusations against his brethren, which led the Wesleys to institute a careful examination into character. Charles Wesley made a tour of inquiry, with happy results. The charges were found to be groundless. From that time investigation into ministerial character has been one of the fundamental principles of Methodism. It is still made year by year.

Wesley expected his preachers to be the mainspring of his Societies. At Londonderry, in June, 1771, he met the singers, whom he had joined together two years before. The preachers had paid no attention to that part of their work, so that all Wesley's previous care was fruitless. "And no wonder," he adds; "for nothing will stand in the Methodist plan unless the preacher has his heart and his hand in it. Every preacher, therefore, should consider it is not his business to mind this or that thing only, but everything." Wesley was proud of his preachers. The first Sir Robert Peel greatly esteemed the Methodists. He often attended their chapels, and most of his Lancashire works were under the management of members of the Society, who rendered him excellent service. He once asked Wesley to breakfast with him during a Lancashire Conference. Wesley promised to do so on condition that he might bring some of his children with him. At the appointed hour he appeared, accompanied by thirty-six of his itinerant preachers.*

* *Wesley Banner*, 1850, p. 114.

The health of his preachers often gave Wesley grave concern. He did not fail to point the sad moral of such losses as that of Thomas Walsh, who, "by violent straining of his voice, added to frequent colds," * brought on the consumption which snatched him away in the strength of his years. John Cowmeadow was "another martyr to loud and long preaching." Wesley tried to save his life by his favourite specific: "I took him to travel with me." But it was too late. The poor preacher revived a little, but soon relapsed. Wesley steadily set his face against "that vile custom" of one man's preaching three times a day to the same congregation week after week, which he felt was enough to wear out the body and mind both of the speaker and his hearers.† His journals and the Minutes of Conference bear constant witness to Wesley's loving watchfulness over the men who laboured with him in the Gospel. St. Paul's care for Timothy is a true picture of Wesley and his "helpers."

Wesley's rule over his preachers and people has been branded as arbitrary. Henry Moore, who was well able to judge, says that his "*arbitrary power*, so called, was exercised from first to last in keeping his associates to that *work of God*, that wholly religious design and employment, which they all professed to embrace as their duty and calling when they joined him. And from this he certainly would not consent that any of them should swerve. In everything else he was, even by their own account, a father and a friend." ‡ Henry Moore enjoys the reputation of having contradicted Wesley more than any man in England.§ But Wesley encouraged him to speak his mind, and only liked him the better for his

* Works, ii., 451.
† *Ibid.*, iv., 493.
Moore, i., iv.
§ Tyerman, iii., 567.

plainness. Wesley administered a neat rebuke to one of his preachers, who was irritated because a young itinerant found fault with one of his seniors. "I will thank the youngest man among you to tell me of any fault you see in me; in doing so, I shall consider him my best friend." * Wesley felt the care of his Societies a burden put upon him by Providence, which he durst not lay down. He had not sought authority, but he was determined to use what had come on him unawares as wisely as he could for the glory of God and the best interests of the Methodist people.† If he erred at all in the use of his power, it was in his forbearance. "I have been too tender of these men," he once said to Moore in reference to two recalcitrant preachers; "*you* should have opposed my receiving them again. You know I halt on that foot." The history of George Bell's fanaticism confirms Wesley's verdict upon himself. Whilst expecting his preachers to be faithful to the great evangelical doctrines which he taught, he gave them abundant liberty. He instructed Joseph Benson to say to one of his critics, "I never undertook to defend every sentence of Mr. Wesley's. He does not expect or desire it. He wishes me and every man to think for himself."

The annual Conference was the great event of a preacher's year. The first of these Conferences, held at the Foundery, opened on Monday, June 25th, 1744, and lasted for the rest of the week. The Wesleys, four other clergymen, and four Methodist preachers were present. Mr. Hodges, Rector of Wenvo, Mr. Piers, Vicar of Bexley, Samuel Taylor, Vicar of Quinton, in Gloucestershire, and Mr. Merriton, from the Isle of Man, were the clergymen;

* Tyerman, iii., 567. † Works, viii., 312.

Thomas Richards, Thomas Maxfield, John Bennet, and John Downes the preachers. Downes lived and died in the ranks; the other three itinerants left Wesley. On the Sunday before this first Conference opened, a love-feast was held, and the Sacrament was administered by five clergymen to the whole of the London Society Next morning the Conference opened with solemn prayer. Charles Wesley preached with much power, and baptised a man called Samuel Holloway, "who felt in that moment the great burden taken off." The first Conference was thus inaugurated by a conversion. The doctrines and discipline of the Society were carefully considered. Every one was entreated to speak freely whatever was in his heart. The result of the conversations on doctrine forms a body of practical divinity, which must have unravelled many knotty questions for the rising theologians of Methodism. The conversation on sincerity shows the breadth of tolerance which characterised these discussions. "But can it be conceived that God has any regard to the sincerity of an unbeliever?" Answer: "Yes, so much that if he persevere therein, God will infallibly give him faith." "Is not sincerity all in all?" Answer: "All will follow persevering sincerity. God gives everything with it, nothing without it."

Wesley's name for his itinerants was "preachers" or "helpers." The preacher whose name stood first in the appointment for any circuit was the assistant, now known as the superintendent, who had oversight of all the work of the circuit. "In what view may we and our *helpers* be considered?" was another question. "Perhaps as extraordinary messengers (*i.e.*, out of the ordinary way), designed—1. To provoke the regular ministers to jealousy. 2. To supply their lack of service towards those who are perishing for lack of knowledge."

Wesley's twelve rules of a helper are still cherished as the guiding principles of a Methodist preacher:—

"1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never *while* away time, nor spend more time at any place than is strictly necessary.

"2. Be serious. Let your motto be, 'Holiness to the Lord.' Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.

"3. Converse sparingly and cautiously with women, particularly with young women.

"4. Take no step towards marriage without solemn prayer to God and consulting with your brethren.

"5. Believe evil of no one unless fully proved; take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction you can on everything. You know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.

"6. Speak evil of no one, else *your* word, especially, would eat as doth a canker; keep your thoughts within your own breast till you come to the person concerned.

"7. Tell every one what you think wrong in him, lovingly and plainly, and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your own heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom.

"8. Do not affect the gentleman. A preacher of the Gospel is the servant of all.

"9. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; no, not of cleaning your own shoes when necessary.

"10. Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them, and that for conscience' sake.

"11. You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most.

"12. Act in all things, not according to your own will,

but as a son in the Gospel, and in union with your brethren. As such, it is your part to employ your time as our rules direct: partly in preaching and visiting from house to house, partly in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labour with us in our Lord's vineyard, it is needful you should do that part of the work which the Conference shall advise, at those times and places which they shall judge most for His glory.

"Observe, it is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care merely of this or that Society, but to save as many souls as you can, to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and, with all your power, to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord. And, remember, a Methodist preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in the Methodist discipline. Therefore you will need all the grace and sense you have, and to have all your wits about you."

The early Conferences laid the foundations of Methodism on a firm basis. Its preachers were knit together by their doctrine and their discipline. Difficulties of every kind vanished when all thus met face to face. At the Conference of 1751, Wesley says, "The more we conversed, the more brotherly love increased." He expected to hear many objections to the first Methodist doctrines, but none were raised. "We seemed to be all of one mind, as well as one heart." Before the session closed Wesley mentioned whatever he thought amiss or wanting in any. His words were received with love and with serious attention, so that not one seemed to go away discontented. In 1753 and 1754 the same spirit of unity and love finds emphatic recognition in the journals. The early Minutes show that the first Conferences were largely employed in considering the fundamental doctrines of Methodism and

the practical work of her preachers. During the last twenty years of Wesley's life the oversight of the growing organisation occupied more and more of the attention of the Conference.

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NOTE TO PAGE 212.

Another story may illustrate the poverty of the early Methodist preachers. Dr. Lyth, in his "History of Methodism in York," says that one of the itinerants rode into that city one Saturday to preach on the Sunday. On Monday he had to find eighteen-pence for his horse. He had no money, nor had the steward any funds, so the horse was detained. In this emergency the steward's daughter took the ribbons out of her Sunday bonnet, sold them for more than was required, paid the bill, and gave the balance to help the preacher on his way.

NOTE TO PAGE 226.

Thomas Walsh was buried near Limerick, but no monument was raised to his memory. Dr. Albert S. Hunt, one of the representatives from America to the English Wesleyan Conference of 1886, has recently provided a stained glass memorial window to be placed in the new Methodist chapel built in the Irish village where Philip Embury and Barbara Heck, the pioneers of Methodism in New York, resided before they sailed for the New World.

## CHAPTER XV.

### LOVE AND MARRIAGE.

WESLEY has sometimes been represented as an enthusiast whose asceticism and laborious itinerant life effectually crushed those tender feelings which would have made him an ardent lover or a devoted husband. That theory can be maintained no longer. We have already had occasion to refer to his feeling towards Miss Hopkey in Georgia. But this was not his earliest attachment. Wesley's first love was Miss Betty Kirkham, the younger sister of his friend Robert Kirkham, one of the earliest of the Oxford Methodists. Her father, the Rev. Lionel Kirkham, was a clergyman at Stanton, in Gloucestershire. On February 2nd, 1727, Robert Kirkham addressed a boisterous letter to his friend at Oxford, which begins, "With familiarity I write, dear Jack." Wesley had now been Fellow of Lincoln for nearly a year, and was Greek Lecturer and Moderator of his college. There was no Oxford Methodism till about two years after the date of this letter. Kirkham writes, 'Your most deserving, queer character, your worthy personal accomplishments, your noble endowments of mind, your little and handsome person, and your obliging and desirable conversation have been the pleasing subject of our discourse for some pleasant hours. You have often been in the thoughts of M. B." (Miss Betty), "which I have curiously observed, when with her alone, by inward smiles and sighs and abrupt expressions concerning you.

Shall this suffice? I caught her this morning in an humble and devout posture on her knees. I am called to read a *Spectator* to my sister Capoon. I long for the time when you are to supply my father's absence. Keep your counsel, and burn this when perused. You shall have my reasons in my next. I must conclude, and subscribe myself, your most affectionate friend—and *brother* I wish I might write—Robert Kirkham." *

No particulars of Robert Kirkham's life after he left Oxford have been caught by any Wesleyan biographer. In Mrs. Delany's Life, however, there seem to be two references. In February, 1756, she tells her sister that Miss Sally Chapone, daughter of her old friend Sarah Kirkham, had to leave her. "She is under an engagement, made for her by her uncle Kirkham, to spend three weeks or a month with a young gentlewoman that Dr. Hinckley is going to be married to." The young ladies were to stay with a Miss Prescot and then go to Charleton. This doctor, a physician at Guy's Hospital, married Miss Marcon, daughter of a merchant of Ludgate Hill, the following November.† In May, 1772, Mrs. Delany tells her nephew, the Rev. John Dewes, "Mr. Kirkham has not been heard of since I received my brother's letter, though strict inquiry has been made after him."

Wesley did not burn his friend's letter. His sister Martha wrote him on February 7th. She had been eagerly expecting to hear from him, "but when I knew that you were just returned from Worcestershire, where, I suppose, you saw your *Varanese*" (Betty Kirkham), "I then ceased to wonder at your silence; for the sight of such a woman, 'so known, so loved,' might well make

* *Wesleyan Times*, February 26th, 1866.
† Mrs. Delany's "Letters," ii., 407.

you forget me. I really have myself a vast respect for her, as I must necessarily have for one that is so dear to you." This letter shows that Wesley's feeling toward the young lady was well known to his sister. Kirkham directs his letter, "Lincoln College, Oxford, by the Worcester carrier." This will account for Martha Wesley's description of his journey as a visit to Worcestershire. It was evidently made to the Kirkhams at Stanton. For more than three years Wesley kept up a correspondence with Miss Betty Kirkham. He spoke of her in the tenderest terms, and the friendship seemed to be leading to the result the young lady's brother so ardently wished. In 1731, however, it was broken off. The probability is that she married a Mr. Wilson. Mrs. Delany writes from Killala, June 28th, 1732, "Poor Mrs. Wilson! I am sorry for the shock her death must have given Sally, whose tenderness must sometimes take the place of her wisdom; but I hope, when she considers the great advantage her sister in all probability will receive by the exchange she has lately made, that she will be reconciled to the loss of a sister that has given her more woe than happiness. Pray, has Mrs. Wilson left any children?"*

Wesley's sister Emilia wrote to him on August 13th, 1735,† "Had you not lost your dear Mrs. C——n, where had your love been fixed? On heaven, I hope, principally; but a large share, too, had been hers: you would not have been so spiritualised, but something of this lower world would have had its part of your heart, wise as you are; but being deprived of her, there went all hope of worldly happiness." "C——n" evidently refers to Mrs. Capoon or Chapone. That lady, however, was married in 1725.

* Lady Llanover's Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany, i., p. 360.

† Stevenson's "Wesley Family," p. 271.

Wesley's attachment was to her younger sister. It is not surprising that Emilia Wesley should have made a mistake in the name. Perhaps we may conclude that Mr. Badcock refers to a disappointment in love in one part of his letter to the *Westminster Magazine.** "By an incident of domestic life I see his genius clouded, and the clearest reason muddled in the school of Mysticism. Devoting himself to silence and solitude, he exerted all the powers of his mind on the darkest and most inexplicable dogmas of school divinity."

Wesley's correspondence with Mrs. Delany, then Mrs Pendarves, opens up another interesting field of investigation, and throws considerable light on the young collegian's character. The lady was the elder daughter of Bernard Granville, brother of Lord Lansdowne. She had been married at the age of seventeen to Mr. Pendarves, a Cornish gentleman, who left her a widow in 1724, at the age of twenty-three. Before her marriage she had lived much at Whitehall with her aunt Lady Stanley, who had apartments there as a maid-of-honour. Her marriage to a fat, gouty, and ungainly man, forty-three years older than herself, who in his later years became addicted to intemperance, was a great trial to the young lady; but happily she was soon set free from the yoke. As a widow Mrs. Pendarves lived in London, paying visits to her friends in the country and in Ireland. She afterwards married Dr. Delany, who became Dean of Down. Lady Llanover's volumes show that she mixed in the best London society, and was greatly esteemed at Court. George III. and his queen honoured her with their intimate friendship, and even provided her a house at Windsor, that they might have daily intercourse with one whom they profoundly admired.

* 1774, p. 180.

As a girl Mrs. Delany had formed a warm friendship for Sarah Kirkham, who afterwards married Mr. Capoon or Chapone. Mrs. Chapone was a woman of brilliant wit and rare intellectual gifts. One of her letters on behalf of Mrs. Elstob, a literary lady in distress, became the leading topic of discourse at a royal drawing-room in 1730. Mrs. Pendarves says on January 4th, 1736, "Sally would shine in an assembly composed of Tullys, Homers, and Miltons. At Gloucester she is like a diamond set in jet; their dulness makes her brightness brighter." Mrs. Pendarves often spent her summers with her mother and sister at Gloucester. In this way Wesley seems to have become acquainted with this brilliant lady and her family. He corresponded with her mother and sister as well as herself. A letter to Mrs. Granville dated "Lincoln College, December 12th, 1730," shows Wesley's high esteem for her. The young tutor evidently finds it difficult to play the part of spiritual adviser. "I have, therefore, little reason to expect that He will direct any motion of mine to that end, especially when the particular end proposed relates to one who is far advanced in the great race which I am but lately entered upon, if, indeed, I am entered yet. What shall I say to such a one as is almost possest of the crown which I dimly see afar off?" He adds a postscript: "My brother joins with me in his best respects both to yourself and those good ladies whom we love to call your family."* Dr. Rigg, after a careful study of the whole subject, has reached the conclusion that Mrs. Granville's daughter, Mrs. Pendarves,† succeeded to the place Miss Betty Kirkham had held in Wesley's affection Mr. Lecky endorses that opinion.

* Mrs. Delany's "Letters," i., 269.

† "Living Wesley," p. 56.

The correspondence with her had alread/ begun. According to the custom of the time, the friends bear fancy titles. John Wesley is Cyrus; Charles is Araspes. Mrs. Pendarves is known as Aspasia, Miss Granville, her sister, as Selina. Betty Kirkham is Varanese, V., or Vnse. Some of the letters are given in Mrs. Delany's Life and Correspondence, but fuller extracts, as deciphered from Wesley's own manuscripts by Mr. G. J. Stevenson, will be found, with explanations of the fancy names, in the *Wesleyan Magazine* for 1863, and in Dr. Rigg's "Living Wesley." Mrs. Pendarves had been trifled with by Lord Baltimore, who won her affection and then made some pretext for breaking off the intercourse. He was married on July 20th, 1730. She bore her trial with great patience, and from that time her correspondence grew more serious. Wesley's first letter to her, dated August 14th, 1730, seems to have accompanied some copies of Miss Betty Kirkham's letters to him. "While I was transcribing the letters, these last monuments of the goodness of my dear V., I could not hinder some sighs, which, between grief and shame, would have their way. Not that I was pained at seeing my utmost efforts outdone by another's pen, but I could not, I ought not to, be unmoved when I observe how unworthy I am of that excellent means of improvement. I trust so unusual a blessing of Providence has not been utterly useless to me. To this I owe both the capacity and the occasion of feeling that soft emotion with which I glow even at the moment when I consider myself as conversing with a kindred soul of my V." On September 14th he writes, "My dear V. informs me you are going yet farther from us, but cannot inform me how soon." Other letters refer to Miss Betty's ability to write on high and serious subjects, and to her deep piety. "I do not wonder," Wesley says, "that Aspasia is thus minded, any more than I did

at the temper of dear Vnese., under the sharpest pain that an embodied spirit can know. You will easily take knowledge of those words, if you have not heard them before, 'When I was in the greatest of my pains, if my strength would have allowed, I would gladly have run out into the streets to warn all I met that they should save themselves from pain sharper than mine.'"

In the early summer of 1731 Wesley had met Varanese, and enjoyed a time of almost uninterrupted conversation with her. He speaks of it with a lover's fervour. "'On this spot she sat,' 'Along this path she walked,' 'Here she showed that lovely instance of condescension,' were reflections which, though extremely obvious, could not but be equally pleasing, and gave a new degree of beauty to the charming arbour, the fields, the meadows, and Horrel itself."* This was perhaps their last meeting.

Wesley's correspondence with Mrs. Pendarves was carried on regularly till her journey to Ireland. She sought his advice for herself and her friends. Wesley pointed out the perils to religious character attendant on the gaieties of fashionable life in which she moved. "That London is the worst place under heaven for preserving a Christian temper, any one will imagine who observes that there can be none where its professed, irreconcilable enemies, 'the lust of the eye' and 'the pride of life,' are more artfully and forcibly recommended." The advice was not all on one side. When Wesley was accused of being "too strict" at Oxford in July, 1731, he asked Aspasia's opinion, and laid his defence before her. The reply was flattering. "O Cyrus, how noble a defence you make! and how are you adorned with the beauty of holiness! You really are in a

* "Living Wesley," p. 66.

state to be envied. . . . How ardently do I wish to be as resigned and humble as Cyrus. . . . Company is come, and will not allow me a long conversation. I cannot always submit to this sort of life. It encroaches too much. Adieu!" Less than three weeks afterwards she writes again. "While I read your letters I find myself carried above the world; I view the vanities I left behind with the disdain that is due to them, and wish never to return to them. But, as it is my lot to dwell among them as yet, I will at least endeavour to defend myself from their assaults; and, with your assistance, I hope to baffle and turn aside their sting. As from every evil we may extract good, so in this particular I have great consolation, that, weak and insignificant as I am, I have sometimes found means of maintaining the honour of a great God when I have heard the blasphemer say, 'Where is now their God?' At such an instant, how have I wished for a capacity equal to the mighty cause!"

In the earlier part of this correspondence, Wesley's style is cumbrous, and his compliments somewhat fulsome, but the letters on both sides bear evidence of deep religious earnestness and high mutual esteem. When Mrs. Pendarves visited Dublin in 1731, she asked Cyrus to address his letters to her mother's residence at Gloucester, but afterwards begged her sister to send him her Dublin address, that he might write direct. Readers of her Life will notice how entirely Mrs. Pendarves neglected all her correspondents save her sister during her long stay in Ireland. It is not strange therefore that Wesley shared the common fate. In March, 1732, six months after she had asked her sister to send her address to him, she tells her, "Cyrus by this time has blotted me out of his memory, or if he does remember me, it can only be to reproach me; what can I say *for* myself? What

can I indeed say *to myself*, that have neglected so extraordinary a correspondent? I only am the sufferer, but I should be very sorry to have him think my silence proceeded from negligence; I declare 'tis want of time."* She still took a lively interest in Wesley's work. In a letter to her sister on April 11th, 1733, she says, "As for the ridicule *Cyrus* has been exposed to, I do not at all wonder at it; religion in its plainest dress suffers daily from the insolence and ignorance of the world; then how should that person escape who dares to appear openly in its cause? He will meet with all the mortification such rebels are able to give, which can be no other than that of finding them wilfully blinding themselves and running headlong into the gulf of perdition, a melancholy prospect for the honest-hearted man who earnestly desires the salvation of his fellow-creatures." †

In the summer of 1734, after nearly three years' silence, Mrs. Pendarves wrote again to her old friend. Her first sentence shows her self-reproach: "I never began a letter with so much confusion to anybody as I do this to Cyrus." She had been full of shame and reluctance to write after her long delay and neglect, but had broken through this feeling, and was willing to "suffer any reproach rather than lose the advantage of Cyrus's friendship." Wesley's answer shows that he had no hope of doing his correspondent further service. "Alas, Aspasia! Are you indeed convinced that I can be of any service to you? I fear you have not sufficient ground for such a conviction. Experience has shown how much my power is short of my will. For some time I flattered myself with the pleasing hope; but I grew more and more ashamed of having indulged it. You need not the support

* Life and Correspondence, i., p. 343. † *Ibid.*, i., p. 410.

of so weak a hand. How can I possibly think you do (though that thought tries now and then to intrude itself still), since you have so long and resolutely thrust it from you? I dare not, therefore, blame you for so doing. Doubtless you acted upon cool reflection. You declined the trouble of writing, not because it was a trouble, but because it was a needless one. And if so, what injury have you done yourself? As for me, you do me no injury by your silence. It did, indeed, deprive me of much pleasure, and of a pleasure from which I have received much improvement. But still, as it was one I had no title to but your goodness, to withdraw it was no injustice. I sincerely thank you for what is past; and may the God of my salvation return it sevenfold into your bosom! And if ever you should please to add to those thousand obligations any new ones, I trust they shall neither be unrewarded by Him nor unworthily received by Aspasia's faithful friend and servant, Cyrus. Araspes, too, hopes you will never have reason to tax him with ingratitude. Adieu!"

So closes this remarkable correspondence. Wesley had gained force of character since he indulged in the high-flown and scarcely orthodox compliment of his first letter. "I spent some very agreeable moments last night," he then said, "in musing on this delightful subject" (the excellencies of his fair friend) "and thinking to how little disadvantage Aspasia or Selina would have appeared even in that faint light which the moon, glimmering through the trees, poured on that part of our garden in which I was walking. How little would the eye of the mind that surveyed them have missed the absent sun! What darkness could have obscured gentleness, courtesy, humility, could have shaded the image of God? Sure none but that which shall never dare to approach them, none but vice, which shall ever be far away!"

The following letter, given in Mrs. Delany's Life,* shows that John Wesley still kept up some correspondence with her younger sister, Miss Granville, whose comparatively retired life at Gloucester gave her more leisure. Her portrait and her letters leave a pleasing impression of this charming and devout young lady on the minds of readers of her sister's Life. Lady Llanover says that the letter to Miss Granville is without signature. She does not seem to be aware that it is from John Wesley. Charles was on his voyage to England at this date, and the letter bears its writer's name in every line. The seal was a cross, and the English postmark December 7th.

"*To Mrs. Ann Granville, in Gloster.*

"SAVANNAH, *24th September*, 1736.

"The mutual affection, and indeed the many other amiable qualities, of those two sisters one of whom is lately gone to a happier place, would not have suffered me to be unmindful of your friend and you had I had nothing else to remind me of you. I am persuaded that heavy affliction will prove the greatest blessing to the survivor which she has ever yet received. She is now very cheerful, as well as deeply serious. She sees the *folly* of placing one's happiness in *any creature*, and is fully determined to give her whole heart to Him from whom death cannot part her.

"I often think how different her way of life is at Savannah from what it was *at St. James's*, and yet the wise, polite, gay world counts her removal thence *a misfortune*. I should not be at all grieved if *you* were fallen into the *same misfortune, far removed from the pride of life,*

* I., p. 581.

*and hid in some obscure recess*, where you were scarcely seen or heard of, unless by a few plain Christians and by God and His angels.

"Mr. Rivington will send your letter, if you should ever have leisure to favour with a few lines

"Your sincere friend and most obedient servant.

"Do you still watch, and strive, and pray, that your heart may be right before God? Can you *deny yourself, as well as take up your cross?* Adieu!"

The two sisters were the Miss Boveys. Charles Wesley says in his journal for June 20th, 1736, "Walking in the trustees' garden" (at Savannah), "I met the Miss Boveys, whom I had never been in company with. I found some inclination to join them; but it was a very short-lived curiosity." On July 10th, Miss Becky died suddenly. Two days before Mr. Oglethorpe when with them had spoken of sudden death. She said, "If it was the will of God, I should choose to die without a lingering illness." Her sister asked, "Are you, then, always prepared to die?" She replied, "Jesus Christ is always prepared to help me. And little stress is to be laid on such a preparation for death, as is made in a fit of sickness." On the Saturday, after tea, her sister, seeing her colour change, asked if she was well. She received no answer. The doctor, who was passing by, was called in, and told them she was dying. He tried whether bleeding would restore her, but she bled about an ounce, leaned back, and died! Wesley went to the house as soon as he heard the painful news, and begged that they would not lay her out, as it might be a swoon. Any such hope, however, had soon to be abandoned. "I never saw so beautiful a corpse in my life," he says. "Poor comfort to its late inhabitant! I

was greatly surprised at her sister. There was, in all her behaviour, such an inexpressible mixture of tenderness and resignation. The first time I spoke to her, she said, 'All my afflictions are nothing to this. I have lost not only a sister, but a friend. But it is the will of God. I rely on Him, and doubt not but He will support me under it.'" Almost the whole town was present at the funeral.

Edmund Burke told Dr. Johnson that Mrs. Delany "was a *truly great* woman of fashion; that she was not only the woman of fashion of the *present age*, but she was the *highest-bred woman in the world* and the woman of fashion of all ages; that she *was* high-bred, great in every instance, and *would continue* fashionable in *all ages*."* One glimpse of Mrs. Delany's feeling about the Wesleys in later life is caught in her Life.† Her friend Miss Hamilton had a long conversation with her at Bulstrode on December 4th, 1783. "She told me she *had known* the two Mr. Wesleys (the Methodist preachers); she knew them when they were young men. They lived near her sister when they were students at Oxford. They were of a serious turn, and associated with such as were so. These brothers joined some other young men at Oxford, and used to meet of a Sunday evening and read the Scriptures, and find out objects of charity to relieve. This was a *happy beginning*, but the vanity of being singular and growing *enthusiasts* made them endeavour to gain proselytes and adopt that system of religious doctrine which many reasonable people thought pernicious." Mrs. Delany had adopted the current opinion as to the motives of the Wesleys. The lady of fashion, devout as she always was, could not

* Life and Correspondence, vi., 12. † VI., 175.

understand a life spent for the salvation of the common people.

We must now pass to other scenes. When Charles Wesley was married to Miss Sarah Gwynne, the daughter of a Welsh magistrate, on April 8th, 1749, his brother, who performed the ceremony, says, "It was a solemn day, such as became the dignity of a Christian marriage." He was looking forward to similar happiness for himself. The previous August he had suffered from a troublesome bilious headache at Newcastle, where he was nursed by Grace Murray, a young widow, thirty-two years old, foremost in all Christian work there. She was born at Newcastle, but removed to London when she was eighteen. Two years later she married a sailor, who belonged to a Scottish family that had lost its estates during the rebellion of 1715. The death of her infant child led Mrs. Murray to attend the Methodist preaching. Her husband bitterly opposed her views; but she held her ground, and at last won him over. Wesley's first sermon produced a great effect on her mind. "Is there any one here," he asked, "who has a true desire to be saved?" "My heart," she says, "replied, 'Yes, I have.'" Wesley continued, "My soul for thine if thou continue lying at the feet of Jesus!" On this word she took hold, but it was some months before she found rest.

In 1742 Mr. Murray was drowned at sea. His widow returned to Newcastle, where she afterwards became housekeeper at the Orphan House,* had a hundred members in her classes, met a "band" each day of the week, and visited the neighbouring villages to read and pray with the people. At Wesley's request, she went to nurse one of the preachers at the Orphan House, but

* Life of Mrs. Bennet.

some disagreement with another inmate led her to return to her mother's. After spending six months in London she went back to the Orphan House, with the same result. Two years of great spiritual depression followed, but in the autumn of 1745 for the third time she became a member of the Methodist family. Besides her classes and her visits to the sick and to the country Societies, Grace Murray was the nurse of the preachers. She had at least seven of these hard-worked itinerants as her patients. One of them, John Bennet, was under her care for six months.

This was the woman whom Wesley resolved to make his wife. When he proposed to marry her, in August, 1748, she answered, "This is too great a blessing for me; I can't tell how to believe it. This is all I could have wished for under heaven." Ten days later, when Wesley had to leave Newcastle, he expressed his conviction that God intended her to be his wife, and hoped that when they met again they would not have to part any more. Grace Murray begged that she might not lose him so soon, so Wesley took her with him through Yorkshire and Derbyshire, where "she was unspeakably useful both to him and to the Societies." She remained at Bolton, in the circuit of Bennet, whom she had nursed at Newcastle. He was really Wesley's rival. Grace Murray vacillated strangely between her lovers, and even wrote to Wesley to say that she thought it was her duty to marry Bennet. In April, 1749, however, a week after Charles Wesley's marriage, she went with Wesley to Ireland. For three months she was his constant companion. She examined all the women in the smaller Societies, settled the female bands, visited the sick, and prayed with the penitent. She anticipated all Wesley's wants, acted as his monitor when she thought she saw

anything amiss in his behaviour, and graced her position in such a way that Wesley's esteem and affection daily increased. At Dublin they entered into a solemn contract of marriage.

After their return to England, she travelled with Wesley from Bristol to London and Newcastle, so that for five months they were scarcely separated. At Epworth Bennet came and said that Mrs. Murray had sent him all Wesley's letters. Wesley was now convinced that she ought to marry Bennet, but when he wrote her a line to this effect, she ran to him "in an agony of tears, and begged him not to talk so, unless he designed to kill her." Her conduct during the next few days showed strange weakness and irresolution, but she assured Wesley, "I love you a thousand times better than I ever loved John Bennet in my life. But I am afraid, if I don't marry him, he'll run mad." At Newcastle she expressed her strong determination to live and die with Wesley, and urged him to marry her immediately. No doubt this would have been the proper course. But Wesley first wished to satisfy Bennet, to secure his brother's approval, and to inform the Societies of his intention. One of the preachers was admitted to their confidence, in whose presence they renewed their contract. This preacher then went off to satisfy Bennet in Derbyshire. Wesley wrote to his brother at Bristol. The tidings filled Charles Wesley with dismay. He had married a lady of birth and position, and was overwhelmed by the idea that John should marry a woman who before her marriage had been a servant. He started in haste for the north to avert what he considered would be nothing less than a general disaster

From Newcastle he followed his brother into Cumberland. They met at Whitehaven. Charles told him that

their preachers would leave them and their Societies would be scattered if he married so mean a woman. John replied that he wished to marry her, not for her birth, but for her own character and worth. Her neatness, her carefulness, her strong sense, and her sterling piety had won his highest esteem. She was "indefatigably patient and inexpressibly tender; quick, cleanly, and skilful; of an engaging behaviour, and of a mild, sprightly, cheerful, and yet serious temper; while, lastly, her gifts for usefulness were such as he had not seen equalled." Finding that he could not move his brother, Charles returned alone to Newcastle. At Hineley Hill he met the lady, and after kissing her, said, in his usual impulsive manner, "Grace Murray, you have broken my heart." She rode with him to Newcastle, where Bennet had arrived from Derbyshire. She fell at Bennet's feet and begged forgiveness for using him so badly. Within a week she had become his wife.

Whitefield invited Wesley to Leeds, where he broke the painful news to his friend. Next day Charles came with the husband and wife. He greeted his brother with the hard words, "I renounce all intercourse with you but what I would have with a heathen man or a publican." Whitefield and brave John Nelson, who were present at the interview, prayed, wept, and entreated till the brothers fell on each other's neck. Wesley kissed Bennet without uttering a word of upbraiding. He also made such explanations to his brother in a private interview, that Charles entirely exonerated him and laid all the blame on Grace Murray.

This disappointment was the greatest trial of Wesley's life. He opened his heart in the following touching note to Mr. Thomas Bigg, of Newcastle:—

"LEEDS, *October 7th*, 1749.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—Since I was six* years old, I never met with such a severe trial as for some days past. For ten years God has been preparing a fellow-labourer for me by a wonderful train of providences. Last year I was convinced of it; therefore I delayed not, but, as I thought, made all sure beyond a danger of disappointment. But we were soon after torn asunder by a whirlwind. In a few months, the storm was over; I then used more precaution than before, and fondly told myself, that the day of evil would return no more. But it too soon returned. The waves rose again since I came out of London. I fasted and prayed, and strove all I could; but the sons of Zeruiah were too hard for me. The whole world fought against me, but above all my own familiar friend. Then was the word fulfilled, 'Son of man, behold, I take from thee the desire of thine eyes at a stroke; yet shalt thou not lament, neither shall thy tears run down.'

"The fatal, irrevocable stroke was struck on Tuesday last. Yesterday I saw my friend (that was), and him to whom she is sacrificed. I believe you never saw such a scene. But 'why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?'

"I am, yours affectionately,

"JOHN WESLEY." †

Wesley saw the woman he had lost at Leeds three days after her marriage. He did not meet her again till 1788. John Bennet soon left Mr. Wesley, and took with him all the hundred and twenty-seven members at Bolton save nineteen. The whole Society at Stockport joined

* The time of the fire at Epworth. † Works, xiii., 162.

him with the exception of one woman. At Bolton Bennet spoke bitterly of Wesley, and accused him of preaching nothing but Popery. He afterwards became the pastor of a Calvinistic Church at Warburton,* near Warrington, where he died in 1759, at the age of forty-five. His widow conducted weekly meetings for prayer and fellowship, and carefully brought up her five boys. She afterwards removed to Derbyshire,† where she again joined the Methodists, and was active in good works of every kind. One of her sons became minister of a chapel on the Pavement in Moorfields. When she visited him in 1788, Thomas Olivers met her and told Wesley that she would like to see him. Henry Moore gives a beautiful description of the meeting: "Mr. Wesley, with evident feeling, resolved to visit her; and the next morning, he took me with him to Colebrooke Row, where her son then resided. The meeting was affecting; but Mr. Wesley preserved more than his usual self-possession. It was easy to see, notwithstanding the many years which had intervened, that both in sweetness of spirit, and in person and manners, she was a fit subject for the tender regrets expressed in those verses which I have presented to the reader. The interview did not continue long, and I do not remember that I ever heard Mr. Wesley mention her name afterward." Mrs. Bennet died in 1803, in the eighty-fifth year of her age.‡

The verses to which Moore refers are entitled "Reflections upon Past Providences, October, 1749." The thirty-one stanzas, of six lines each, describe the course of Wesley's love, the history and attractions of the lady, and the cruel blow which had robbed him of his blessing.

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* "Warbutton" (Life of Mrs. Bennet).

† Moore, ii., 171 ‡ *Ibid.*, ii., 171.

Wesley also bears witness to his own susceptibility to female charms:—

Oft, as through giddy youth I roved,
And danced along the flowery way,
By chance or thoughtless passion moved,
An easy, unresisting prey,
I fell, while love's envenomed dart
Thrilled through my nerves, and tore my heart.

Borne on the wings of sacred hope,
Long had I soared, and spurned the ground,
When, panting for the mountain top,
My soul a kindred spirit found,
By Heaven entrusted to my care,
The daughter of my faith and prayer.

In early dawn of life, serene,
Mild, sweet, and tender was her mood;
Her pleasing form spoke all within
Soft and compassionately good;
Listening to every wretch's care,
Mingling with each her friendly tear.

I saw her run, with wingèd speed,
In works of faith and labouring love;
I saw her glorious toil succeed,
And showers of blessing from above
Crowning her warm effectual prayer,
And glorified my God in her.

No one can read the poem from which these verses are culled without regret that such a woman should have been torn from Wesley. Whatever weight may be allowed to Charles Wesley's objections, Grace Murray's devotion to the work of God and her rare capacity for usefulness far outweighed them. She cannot be acquitted of extreme weakness. But it must not be forgotten that her position was one of great difficulty, and at the last she was overcome by the severe pressure brought to bear upon her.

Her gifts eminently fitted her to become Wesley's helper, and the Societies lost much by her marriage. But the gravest aspect of the case is the matrimonial disaster which afterwards befell Wesley. Had he married Grace Murray, John Wesley would never have committed the fatal mistake of marrying Mrs. Vazeille.

This marriage took place on February 18th or 19th, 1751. The lady was the widow of Noah Vazeille, a London merchant, of Fenchurch Street. She had four children and a fortune of ten thousand pounds in the three per cents., which Wesley took care to have settled on herself and her children. The marriage was a great trouble to Charles Wesley. A fortnight before it took place, his brother sent for him and told him that he was resolved to marry. "I was thunderstruck," Charles says, "and could only answer, he had given me the first blow, and his marriage would come like the *coup de grace.* Trusty Ned Perronet followed, and told me, the person was Mrs. Vazeille! one of whom I had never had the least suspicion. I refused his company to the chapel, and retired to mourn with my faithful Sally. I groaned all the day and several following ones under my own and the people's burden. I could eat no pleasant food, nor preach, nor rest, either by night or by day."

This remarkable extract shows that Charles Wesley objected to his brother's marriage in itself, quite apart from any considerations about the lady. He did not even inquire who was to be his sister-in-law. His own marriage must have shown him how hard it was to leave home for weeks and months together. Mrs. Vazeille was no stranger to him. He had met her in July, 1749, at the house of Edward Perronet, on the very day that his brother embarked from Ireland with Grace Murray. His description of her as "a woman of a sorrowful spirit" shows

that she sought spiritual help in Methodist circles. Next May Charles took her with him to visit the Gwynnes at Ludlow. She then returned with him and his wife to London, by way of Oxford, where he showed her the buildings and gardens. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wesley were afterwards her guests for eight or nine days in London.

His marriage to Mrs. Vazeille was hastened by an accident which Wesley had on the middle of London Bridge. In hastening from the Foundery to Snowsfields to take leave of the congregation before he started on his northern journey, his feet slipped on the ice. He fell with great force, the bone of his ankle striking on the top of a stone. With much pain and difficulty, he took his work at Snowsfields and at West Street, but he could not preach at the Foundery. The journey to the north was now quite out of the question. Wesley took up his quarters at Mrs. Vazeille's, in Threadneedle Street, where he "spent the remainder of the week partly in prayer, reading, and conversation, partly in writing an Hebrew Grammar and 'Lessons for Children.'" The conversation interests us most. It no doubt led to Wesley's marriage on the following Monday or Tuesday. He was not able to set his foot to the ground, and preached kneeling on Sunday, the 17th, and on the Tuesday after, so that he must have been a remarkable bridegroom.

A fortnight later he set out for Bristol, "being tolerably able to ride, but not to walk." His wife remained in London. Charles Wesley had met his sister-in-law before John left town. During his brother's absence he called and assured her that he was perfectly reconciled. He also brought his wife to see her, and took all opportunities of showing his sincere respect and love. Such was the state

of things when Wesley returned to London. He stayed a few days to settle the business which had brought him back. Then he set out for the north. "I cannot understand," he says, "how a Methodist preacher can answer it to God to preach one sermon or travel one day less in a married, than in a single state." He told Henry Moore that he and Mrs. Wesley agreed before the marriage that he should not preach one sermon or travel one mile the less on that account." "If I thought I should, my dear," he told her, "as well as I love you, I would never see your face more."

This marriage was soon seen in its true light. At Bristol, only four months after the wedding, Charles Wesley found his sister-in-law in tears. He expressed his love and desire to help her, heard her complaints about his brother, took her to his own home, and sent her away not a little comforted. Next day he had further conference with her and his brother, which "ended in prayer and perfect peace." Mrs. Wesley travelled with her husband extensively during the first four years of their marriage. She accompanied him to the north of England, to Cornwall, and to Scotland. In April, 1752, Wesley was able to report to his friend Mr. Blackwell, the banker, "My wife is, at least, as well as when we left London; the more she travels, the better she bears it." He was afraid that she would not understand the behaviour of a Yorkshire mob, but there had been no trial of that kind up to the time he wrote. "Even the Methodists are now at peace throughout the kingdom." Eight days later she had her "baptism of fire" at Hull, where the mob attended their carriage, throwing in whatever they could lay their hands on. Wesley tells us that he was himself screened by the large gentlewoman who sat on his lap; he says nothing about Mrs. Wesley.

The efforts which Charles Wesley made to secure peace at Bristol were successful for the time, but in November, 1752, the venerable Vicar of Storeham says that for many months Mrs. Wesley had nursed her warmth and bitterness; he also mourns over her angry and bitter spirit. When Wesley was thought to be dying of consumption in 1753, he begged his wife and his brother to forget all that was past. Charles was quite ready to do so, but added a significant hope that Mrs. Wesley "will do as she says." Two years later he tells his wife, "I called, two minutes before preaching, on Mrs. Wesley at the Foundery; and in all that time had not one quarrel." * He was evidently afraid of her malice. He begs his wife to be courteous without trusting her. Mrs. Wesley's absurd jealousy of her husband acted like fuel to her violent temper. When Wesley was in Cornwall in 1755, he sent a packet of letters to Charles Perronet, which she opened. She fell into a passion when she found there a few simple lines addressed to Mrs. Lefevre. In February, 1756, Wesley wrote to his friend Sarah Ryan, "Your last letter was seasonable indeed. I was growing faint in my mind. The being constantly watched over for evil; the having every word I spoke, every action I did, small and great, watched with no friendly eye; the hearing a thousand little tart, unkind reflections in return for the kindest words I could devise,

> Like drops of eating water in the marble,
> At length have worn my sinking spirits down.

Yet I could not say, 'Take Thy plague away from me,' but only, 'Let me be purified, not consumed.'"

In January, 1758, after many severe words, Mrs. Wesley

* C. Wesley's "Journals," ii., 213, 217, 247.

left her husband, vowing that she would never see him more. In the evening, while he was preaching at the chapel, she came into the chamber where he had left his clothes, searched his pockets, and read a letter she found there addressed to Sarah Ryan. Wesley afterwards found her in such a happy temper as he had not seen her in for years. But though the letter had touched her deeply, she was not cured. She seized Wesley's papers, and put them into the hands of his enemies; she interpolated words to make them bear a bad construction, and published them in the papers. She once shut up Charles Wesley and her husband in a room, and began to tell them their faults with that detail and force which made Charles call her "my best friend." He won their release at last by quoting Latin poetry—a device which he had once tried with good effect on his voyage from Georgia—till their keeper was glad to let her prisoners escape. In her fits of jealousy, Mrs. Wesley would order a chaise and drive a hundred miles to see who was with her husband in his carriage when he entered a town.* John Hampson, one of Wesley's preachers, told his son that he once went into a room in the north of Ireland where he found Mrs. Wesley foaming with rage. Her husband was on the floor. She had been dragging him about by his hair, and still held in her hand some of the locks that she had pulled out of his head in her fury.† Hampson found it hard to restrain himself when he saw this pitiable sight. "More than once she laid violent hands upon him and tore those venerable locks which had suffered sufficiently from the ravages of time." ‡

A letter published in the *New York Critic* during the summer of 1885 will show what Mrs. Wesley was:—

* Hampson, ii., 127. †Tyerman, ii., 110. ‡ Hampson, ii., 127.

"COLEFORD, *October 23rd*, 1759.

"DEAR MOLLY,—I will tell you simply and plainly the things which I dislike. If you remove them, well. If not, I am but where I was. I dislike your showing any one my letters and private papers without my leave. This never did any good yet, either to you or me, or any one. It only sharpens and embitters your own spirit. And the same effect it naturally has upon others. The same it would have upon me but that (by the grace of God) I do not think of it. It can do no good. It can never bring me nearer, though it may drive me further off. And should you do as you often threaten me, then the matter is over. I know what I have to do. In all this you are fighting against yourself. You are frustrating your own purpose if you want me to love you. You take just the wrong way. No one ever was *forced* to love another. It cannot be: love can only be won by *softness;* foul means avail nothing. But you say, 'I have tried fair means, and they did not succeed.' If they do not, none will. Then you have only to say, 'This evil is of the Lord; I am clay in His hand.'

"I dislike (2) not having the command of my own house, not being at liberty to invite even my nearest relations so much as to drink a dish of tea without disobliging *you*. I dislike (3) the being myself a prisoner in my own house, the having my chamber door watched continually, so that no person can go in or out but such as have your good leave. I dislike (4) the being but a prisoner at large even when I go abroad, inasmuch as you are highly disgusted if I do not give you an account of every place I go to and every person with whom I converse. I dislike (5) the not being safe in my own house. My house is *not* my castle. I cannot call even my study, even my bureau, my own.

They are liable to be plundered every day. You say, 'I plunder you of nothing but papers.' I am not sure of that. How is it possible I should? I miss money too, and he that will steal a pin will steal a pound. But were it so, a scholar's papers are his treasure, my journal in particular. 'But I took only such papers as relate to Sarah Ryan and Sarah Crosby.' That is not true. What are Mr. Landey's letters to them? Besides, you have taken parts of my journal which relate to neither one nor the other. I dislike (6) your treatment of my servants (though, indeed, they are not properly mine). You do all that in you lies to make their lives a burden to them. You browbeat, harass, rate them like dogs, make them afraid to speak to me. You treat them with such haughtiness, sternness, sourness, surliness, ill-nature, as never were known in any house of mine for near a dozen years. You forget even good breeding, and use such coarse language as befits none but a fishwife.

"I dislike (7) your talking against me behind my back, and that every day and almost every hour of the day; making my faults (real or supposed) the standing topic of your conversation. I dislike (8) your slandering me, laying to my charge things which you know are false. Such are (to go but a few days back) 'that I beat you,' which you told James Burges; that I rode to Kingswood with Sarah Ryan, which you told Sarah Rigby; and that I required you, when we were first married, never to sit in my presence without my leave, which you told Mrs. Lee, Mrs. Fry, and several others, and stood to it before my face. I dislike (9) your common custom of saying things not true. To instance only in two or three particulars. You told Mr. Ireland 'Mr. Vazzilla* learnt Spanish in a fort-

* Mr. Vazeille, her former husband.

night.' You told Mr. Fry 'Mrs. Ellison was the author as to my intrigue in Georgia.' You told Mrs. Ellison 'you never said any such thing; you never charged her with it.' You also told her, 'that I had laid a plot to serve you as Susannah was served by the two elders.' I dislike (10) your extreme, immeasurable bitterness to all who endeavour to defend my character (as my brother, Joseph Jones, Clayton Carthy), breaking out even into foul, unmannerly language, such as ought not to defile a gentlewoman's lips, if she did not believe one word of the Bible.

"And now, Molly, what would any one advise you to that has a real concern for your happiness? Certainly (1) to show, read, touch those letters no more, if you did not restore them to their proper owner; (2) to allow *me* the command of my own house, with free leave to invite thither whom I please; (3) to allow me my liberty there, that any one who will may come to me, without let or hindrance; (4) to let me go where I please, and to whom I please, without giving an account to any; (5) to assure me, you will take no more of my papers, nor anything of mine, without my consent; (6) to treat all the servants where you are (whether you like them or no) with courtesy and humanity, and to speak (if you speak at all) to them, as well as others, with good-nature and good manners; (7) to speak no evil of me behind my back; (8) never to accuse me falsely; (9) to be extremely cautious of saying anything that is not strictly true, both as to the matter and manner; and (10) to avoid all bitterness of expression till you can avoid all bitterness of spirit.

"These are the advices which I now give you in the fear of God, and in tender love to your soul. Nor can I give you a stronger proof that I am your affectionate husband, JOHN WESLEY."

Mrs. Wesley often left her husband, but returned again in answer to his entreaties. At last she went off with part of his journals and various papers, which she would not restore. On January 23rd, 1771, he writes, "For what cause I know not, my wife set out for Newcastle, purposing 'never to return.' *Non eam reliqui; non dimisi; non revocabo.*" Mrs. Wesley seems to have remained with her daughter, Mrs. Smith, at Newcastle till the following year, when her husband visited the town. She then returned with him to Bristol. She might have been very useful but for her vile temper. At a little inn on the Yorkshire moors she spoke a few words to the woman of the house while Wesley talked to an old man. Both of these were deeply affected. In 1774 a petulant letter shows that she was still with her husband, but still of the same spirit. She died at Camberwell in 1781, when Wesley was in the west of England. On October 14th he says, "I came to London, and was informed that my wife died on Monday. This evening she was buried, though I was not informed of it till a day or two after."

She left her money, which had been reduced from ten to five thousand pounds, to her son. To Mr. Wesley she simply bequeathed a ring. The stone erected over her grave in Camberwell churchyard described her as "a woman of exemplary piety, a tender parent, and a sincere friend."* Whatever she may have been in these respects, she was one of the worst wives of whom we have ever read. She darkened thirty years of Wesley's life by her intolerable jealousy, her malicious and violent temper. Wesley would never sacrifice his duty to personal feeling, but though he

* The part of Camberwell churchyard in which Mrs. Wesley was buried has been taken into the main road, so that no trace of her grave is now to be found.

was a roving husband, a more tender or pleasant companion no woman could desire. He repeatedly told Henry Moore that he believed God overruled this prolonged sorrow for his good; and that if Mrs. Wesley had been a better wife, and had continued to act in that way in which she knew well how to act, he might have been unfaithful to his great work, and might have sought too much to please her according to her own desires.

The most charitable view of Mrs. Wesley's conduct is that she suffered from some mental unsoundness. Scores of papers* in her own handwriting, bearing witness to her violent temper, seem to warrant this conclusion. She had begun life as a domestic servant,† and her querulous, discontented spirit under the inconveniences of itinerant life showed that she never gained any true refinement or good feeling.

* Jackson's "Charles Wesley," ii., 569. † Tyerman, ii., 115.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WESLEY'S JOURNALS

WESLEY'S journals form the finest picture that we possess of the Evangelical Revival in its whole compass and extent. His own history and the history of Methodism are alike found in those wonderful pages. Letters and papers embedded there preserve some of the most important incidents in the life of the Epworth parsonage. The persecutions and labours of his preachers and members there described show how many humbler workers shared the enthusiasm and the reproach of the Wesleys. The journals, however, are not merely a history of the Great Revival and of Wesley's life; they also form a storehouse of information about English manners during the eighteenth century. The modes of travel, the perils and hardships of the road, the aspect of English towns, the characteristics of English society, are all illustrated here. Wesley's extensive reading and his fine critical insight also make his journals a treasure-house of literary notes. His epitomes of books, with salient facts told in one or two bright sentences, his keen criticism or warm commendation, must have been an intellectual stimulus to hosts of readers who would never have heard of such subjects had it not been for his luminous remarks. His Societies thus had the full benefit of his wide and judicious reading. Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying" first led Wesley to take a more exact

account of his time. He wrote down in a shorthand diary the way in which he spent every hour. His time of rising, his preaching, his studies before breakfast, all labours of the day in fact, were faithfully recorded here. On the first page of these diaries he always wrote, "I resolve, 'Deo juvante'—

"1. To devote" (to retirement and private prayer,) "an hour morning and evening—no pretence or excuse whatsoever.

"2. To converse *κατὰ Θεόν*" (in the sight of God); "no lightness; no *ἐυτραπελία*" (jesting).*

Moore says that this diary was in after-years distinct from his journal. The preface to the first published journal, however, states that the variety of scenes which Wesley passed through during his mission to Georgia induced him to transcribe the more material parts of his diary, adding here and there such reflections as occurred to his mind. In this way the journals were prepared. The earlier parts were published in the interest of Methodism, that the calumny and slander then rife might be silenced by a plain narrative of the facts as to its founding and its purpose. The complete journals, still preserved in twenty-six bound volumes, have never been printed. Copious extracts were made by Wesley himself and issued in twenty-one parts, the successive instalments being eagerly expected by a host of readers. The first entry of the published journals is on October 14th, 1735, when Wesley took boat to join the *Simmonds;* the last, on October 24th, 1790, describes his services at Spitalfields Church and St. Paul's, Shadwell.

The literary criticisms are well illustrated by Wesley's trenchant judgment on Machiavel, whom he read on his

* Moore, ii., 433.

return from Savannah in 1737. He says, "In my passage home, having procured a celebrated book ('The Works of Nicholas Machiavel'), I set myself carefully to read and consider it. I began with a prejudice in his favour, having been informed he had often been misunderstood and greatly misrepresented. I weighed the sentiments that were less common; transcribed the passages wherein they were contained; compared one passage with another, and endeavoured to form a cool, impartial judgment. And my cool judgment is, that if all the other doctrines of devils which have been committed to writing since letters were in the world were collected together in one volume, it would fall short of this; and that should a prince form himself by this book, so calmly recommending hypocrisy, treachery, lying, robbery, oppression, adultery, whoredom, and murder of all kinds, Domitian or Nero would be an angel of light compared to that man."* When he read Mandeville's "Fable of the Bees," in April, 1756, Wesley felt that "Machiavel had been far outdone. The Italian only recommends a few vices, as useful to some particular men, and on some particular occasions; but the Englishman loves and cordially recommends vice of every kind, not only as useful now and then, but as absolutely necessary at all times for all communities!"

Wesley's freedom from prejudice and breadth of view may be illustrated by two other critiques. In riding from Evesham to Bristol in August, 1742, he read over the Life of Ignatius Loyola,† "surely one of the greatest men," he says, "that ever was engaged in the support of so bad a cause. I wonder any man should judge him to be an enthusiast. No; but he knew the people with whom he had to do; and setting out (like Count

* Works, i., 44. † *Ibid.*, i., 393.

Z——) with a full persuasion that he might use guile to promote the glory of God or (which he thought the same thing) the interest of His Church, he acted in all things consistent with his principles." Wesley's comment on "The History of the Puritans" is another of those calm, judicial summings-up which must have helped so largely to promote a true understanding among his people of the problems of religious history. He says, "I stand in amaze: first, at the execrable spirit of persecution which drove these venerable men out of the Church, and with which Queen Elizabeth's clergy were as deeply tinctured as ever Queen Mary's were; secondly, at the weakness of those holy confessors, many of whom spent so much of their time and strength in disputing about surplices and hoods or kneeling at the Lord's Supper." Baxter's "History of the Councils," which he read in August, 1754, led him to use strong words: "What a company of execrable wretches have they been (one cannot justly give them a milder title) who have almost in every age since St. Cyprian taken upon them to govern the Church! How has one Council been perpetually cursing another, and delivering all over to Satan, whether predecessors or contemporaries, who did not implicitly receive their determinations, though generally trifling, sometimes false, and frequently unintelligible or self-contradictory! Surely Mahometanism was let loose to reform the Christians! I know not but Constantinople has gained by the change." The history of the Church of Scotland called forth the forcible remark, "The work of God does not, cannot need the work of the devil to forward it. And a calm, even spirit goes through rough work far better than a furious one."*

* Works, iii., 254.

Wesley's reading was of wide compass. We catch glimpses of him in the library of his own college and of the Bodleian at Oxford.* He also seems to have availed himself of the books he found in the homes of friends in all parts of the country. In Ireland he studied local histories, so that he was in full sympathy with the surroundings of the people. Anson's and Cook's voyages, Rollin's and Robertson's histories, and kindred works were read and noticed in his journals. Philosophy and divinity were carefully studied. Wesley also took a lively interest in science. Huygens' "Conjectures on the Planetary World," which he read on the way from Canterbury to London, convinced him that the moon was not habitable. Everything was set at the service of his Societies. He translated a beautiful story from Ephraim Syrus, whom he considered to be "the most awakening writer of all the ancients," for their benefit, and did his utmost to awaken among them a love of knowledge.

His historical criticisms are singularly interesting. Wesley doubts "whether Judas claims so hot a place in hell as Alexander the Great," whose deliberate murder of his old friend Clitus "was a virtuous act in comparison of his butchering poor Philotas and his good old father, Parmenio, and even this but a little thing compared with the slaughter of thousands, both in battle and in and after taking cities, for no other crime than defending their wives and children." He was convinced of the innocence of Mary, Queen of Scots, and pronounced Elizabeth "as just and merciful as Nero, and as good a Christian as Mahomet." Mr. Woodrow's "History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland" led him to say of Charles II., "Bloody Queen Mary was a lamb, a mere

* Works, i., 317.

dove, in comparison of him!" Mr. Walpole's "Historic Doubts" convinced him that Richard III. was extremely handsome, and was clear from all the atrocities laid to his charge. Whatever may be said of these opinions, they must have helped to stimulate historic inquiry. Wesley's singularly candid mind was always open to receive fresh light on every subject.

Poetry has its fair place in these criticisms. On September 5th, 1769, he notes that he read over large part of Homer's *Odyssey* during his Cornish journey. He had always imagined it was like Milton's *Paradise Regained*, "the last faint effort of an expiring muse." He now found out his mistake. After alluding to some blemishes, he adds, "But his numerous beauties make large amends for these. Was ever man so happy in his descriptions, so exact and consistent in his characters, and so natural in telling a story? He likewise continually inserts the finest strokes of morality (which I cannot find in Virgil); on all occasions recommending the fear of God, with justice, mercy, and truth. In this only he is inconsistent with himself: he makes his hero say 'Wisdom never lies,' and—

> 'Him, on whate'er pretence, that lies can tell,
> My soul abhors him as the gates of hell.'

Meantime he himself, on the slightest pretence, tells deliberate lies over and over, nay, and is highly commended for so doing, even by the goddess of wisdom." Wesley commonly read history, poetry, and philosophy on horseback, having, as he said, other employment at other times.* When he travelled in his own carriage in later life, he always took books with him. He thus spent ten hours a day as retired as if he had been in a wilderness.

* Works, iii., 393

When he was not travelling, he never spent less than three hours, often ten or twelve, alone.*

Wesley in early life seems to have been a connoisseur of pictures, but he soon denied himself every luxury to help the starving poor. One art-criticism is worthy of Ruskin.† In August, 1780, he says, "While I was at Bath, I narrowly observed and considered the celebrated Cartoons, the three first in particular. What a poor *designer* was one of the finest painters in the world! 1. Here are two men in a boat, each of them more than half as long as the boat itself. 2. Our Lord, saying to Peter, 'Feed My sheep,' points to three or four sheep standing by Him. 3. While Peter and John heal the lame man, two naked boys stand by them. For what? Oh, pity that so fine a painter should be utterly without common sense!" After preaching at Winchester in October, 1781, he went with great expectation to see the celebrated painting in the cathedral of the "Raising of Lazarus." "I was disappointed," he said. "I observed—1. There was such a huddle of figures, that, had I not been told, I should not ever have guessed what they meant. 2. The colours in general were far too glaring, such as neither Christ nor His followers ever wore. When will painters have common sense?"

The journals are crowded with entries which throw light upon the England of the eighteenth century. At Allandale Town in 1748 he mentions that he had a very large congregation when he preached near the Cross,‡ "it being the general pay-day, which is but once in six months."§ He was at Alnwick in 1753 on the day when sixteen or seventeen youths who had completed their

* *Methodist Magazine*, 1799, p. 564.
† Works, iv., 189.
‡ Works, ii., 106.
§ *Ibid.*, ii., 288.

apprenticeship were made free of the Corporation. These unfortunates were compelled to walk through a great bog, expressly preserved for this purpose, which took some of them up to the neck, and many of them to the breast. In May, 1765, he was amazed at the honesty of Londonderry. Such a thing as theft was scarcely heard of. No one hesitated to leave his house open all day, and the door on the latch at night.

Few men watched the growth of towns so carefully as Wesley. In April, 1755, he describes Liverpool as one of the neatest, best-built places he had seen in England. "I think it is full twice as large as Chester; most of the streets are quite straight. Two thirds of the town, we were informed, have been added within these forty years. If it continue to increase in the same proportion, in forty years more it will nearly equal Bristol. The people in general are the most mild and courteous I ever saw in a seaport town, as indeed appears by their friendly behaviour, not only to the Jews and Papists who live among them, but even to the Methodists (so called)."* Bath has also an honourable place. He thought that there were no buildings in England like those recently erected in that city. They had not only added a second Crescent, with two beautiful rows of houses, near Ludstown, but a whole town on the other side of the city, which was swiftly increasing every day. Birmingham in 1790 seemed three times as large as when he saw it fifty years before.†

Wesley availed himself of every opportunity afforded by his itinerant life to see the fine scenery or the historic scenes of the country. His visits to the Land's End must serve as an illustration of his interest in the grand sights

* Works, ii., 326. † *Ibid.*, iv., 482.

of nature. After service one Sunday evening in September, 1743, he says, "We went down, as far as we could go safely, toward the point of the rocks at the Land's End. It was an awful sight! But how will these melt away when God ariseth to judgment! The sea between them does indeed 'boil as a pot.' 'One would think the deep to be hoary.' But 'though they swell, yet can they not prevail. He hath set their bounds, which they cannot pass.'" * Fourteen years later he was there again.† "We rode to the Land's End. I know no natural curiosity like this. The vast ragged stones rise on every side, when you are near the point of land, with green turf between, as level and smooth as if it were the effect of art. And the rocks which terminate the land are so torn by the sea, that they appear like great heaps of ruins." When he was eighty-two, he clambered down the rocks to the very edge of the water. "I cannot think but the sea has gained some hundred yards since I was here forty years ago." ‡

Westminster Abbey was familiar ground to Wesley. We catch a pleasant glimpse of him there in March, 1771, with a friend from the country, to whom he was showing the tombs. A few years before he had taken a "serious walk" there. § "What heaps of unmeaning stone and marble! But there was one tomb which showed common sense, that beautiful figure of Mr. Nightingale, endeavouring to screen his lovely wife from death. Here indeed the marble seems to speak, and the statues appear only not alive." This entry throws light on the later visit. "The two tombs with which I still think none of the others worthy to be compared are that of Mrs. Nightingale

* Works, i., 431.
† *Ibid.*, ii., 424.
‡ Works, iv., 319.
§ *Ibid.*, iii., 160, 424.

and that of the Admiral rising out of his tomb at the resurrection day. But the vile flattery inscribed on many of them reminded me of that just reflection,—

> If on the sculptured marble you rely,
> Pity that worth like his should ever die!
> If credit to the real life you give,
> Pity a wretch like him should ever live!"

In December, 1780, we find him at the British Museum with some friends who had begged him to accompany them. "What an immense field is here for curiosity to range in! One large room is filled from top to bottom with things brought from Otaheite, two or three more with things dug out of the ruins of Herculaneum. Seven huge apartments are filled with curious books, five with manuscripts, two with fossils of all sorts, and the rest with various animals." He adds a comment that lays him open to criticism: "But what account will a man give to the Judge of quick and dead for a life spent in collecting these?" Sir Ashton Lever's museum, which he visited the previous January, greatly interested him. He thought that for natural curiosities it was not excelled by any museum in Europe. All the beasts, birds, reptiles, and insects were so admirably arranged and preserved, "that if you saw many of them elsewhere, you would imagine they were alive. The hippopotamus in particular looks as fierce as if he were just coming out of the river; and the old lion appears as formidable now as when he was stalking in the Tower."

Wesley found time to make one curious experiment. On the last day of 1764, "remembering how surprisingly fond of music the old lion at Edinburgh was," he determined to try whether this was the case at the Tower. He went there with some one who played the German flute. This friend "began playing near four or five lions; only

one of these (the rest not seeming to regard it at all) rose up, came to the front of his den, and seemed to be all attention. Meantime a tiger in the same den started up, leaped over the lion's back, turned and ran under his belly, leaped over him again, and so to and fro incessantly. Can we account for this by any principle of mechanism? Can we account for it at all?" A pleasant half-holiday this for the busy itinerant!

Wesley's interest in natural history is familiar to all readers of his journals. Nothing escaped his notice. In 1774 Wesley rode from Glasgow to Greenock with two of his preachers. One of them, Thomas Rutherford, had often travelled that road, but when Wesley asked him the name of a gentleman's seat, he was compelled to say that he did not know. The old man taught his young friend a fine lesson. "When I can learn nothing else," he said, "I like to learn the names of houses and villages as I pass them." Between Northampton and Towcester, in October, 1773, he met with the largest elm he ever saw. It was twenty-eight feet in circumference, six feet more than one there was some years before in Magdalen College walks at Oxford. The passion for gardening had now taken firm hold of England.* At Mr. Gordon's curious garden in Mile End, "the like of which, I suppose, is hardly to be found in England, if in Europe,"† Wesley learned the real nature of the tea-tree, and gives a careful description of the difference between green tea, Bohea, and Paraguay.‡ He had seen the most celebrated gardens in England, but gave the palm to Mr. Hoare's at Stourton.§ At Dumfries in 1788 ‖ he found five very large public gardens, which yielded greens and fruit in abundance. When he was

* Lecky, i., 524. † Works, iv., 39. ‡ *Ibid.*, iv., 47.
§ *Ibid.*, iv., 87. ‖ *Ibid.*, iv., 418.

first in Scotland, he says that "even at a nobleman's table, we had only flesh meat of one kind, but no vegetables of any kind; but now they are as plentiful here as in England."

Pages might be filled with Wesley's descriptions of his visits to noblemen's seats and other mansions in all parts of the kingdom. He was familiar with all the great houses of England: Wentworth House, the splendid seat of the Marquis of Rockingham,* Lord Salisbury's seat at Hatfield,† the Duke of Abercorn's in Ireland,‡ and Hampton Court, "far the finest palace which the King of England has," he visited in the later years of his life. His friends in Bristol took him, in September, 1788, to see Blaise Castle§ and Lord Clifford's seat near King's Weston.‖ Such visits were happy breaks in his constant round of labour. One Irish proprietor wins a high tribute. In May, 1787, Wesley took a walk with some friends to Castle Barnard. The improvements made by its owner had given it, he says, almost as pleasant a situation as Rockingham House, in Yorkshire¶ (evidently "Wentworth House," the seat of the Marquis of Rockingham). "Mr. Barnard much resembles, in person and air, the late Sir George Saville. Though he is far the richest person in these parts, he keeps no racehorses or hounds, but loves his wife and home, and spends his time and fortune in improving his estate and employing the poor. Gentlemen of this spirit are a blessing to their neighbourhood. May God increase their number!"

Wesley's journal shows that he visited Lord George Gordon, in answer to two urgent messages from that unfortunate nobleman begging for an interview. On Tuesday,

* Works, iv., 340.
† *Ibid.*, iv., 353.
‡ Works, iv., 459.
§ *Ibid.*, iv., 438.
‖ Works, iv., 132.
¶ *Ibid.*, iv., 340.

December 19th, 1780, he spent an hour with him in his room at the Tower. The conversation was upon Popery and religion. Lord George seemed well acquainted with the Bible, and had quite a library of books in his apartment. "I was agreeably surprised," Wesley says, "to find he did not complain of any person or thing; and cannot but hope his confinement will take a right turn, and prove a lasting blessing to him." In June, 1787, he writes, "I had the pleasure of a conversation with Mr. Howard, I think one of the greatest men in Europe. Nothing but the mighty power of God can enable him to go through his difficult and dangerous employments. But what can hurt us, if God is on our side?"

Remarkable instances of genius were especially interesting to Wesley. His tribute to John Downes has been already given.* In May, 1776, he saw at Carlisle "a very extraordinary genius, a man blind from four years of age, who could wind worsted, weave flowered plush on an engine and loom of his own making, who wove his own name in plush, and made his own clothes and his own tools of every sort. Some years ago, being shut up in the organ-loft at church, he felt every part of it, and afterwards made an organ for himself, which, judges say, is an exceeding good one. He then taught himself to play upon it psalm tunes, anthems, voluntaries, or anything which he heard.† I heard him play several tunes with great accuracy, and a complex voluntary. I suppose all Europe can hardly produce such another instance. His name is Joseph Strong. But what is he the better for all this if he is still 'without God in the world'?"

The varied extracts we have given may illustrate the wide range of Wesley's interest in men and things. He

* P. 220. † Works, iv., 73.

was learning to the last day of his life. The burden of all the Churches, which rested on him for half a century, never destroyed his vivacity nor weakened his interest in men and things around him.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### LEADING EVENTS UP TO THE DEATH OF WHITEFIELD.

FOR fifteen years after Methodism was introduced into Newcastle, John and Charles Wesley were both full of labours. The Societies were spreading over all the country. In 1757 the age of riots and mobs was past. Methodism was organised, and was making rapid progress. Both the brothers were married. On April 8th, 1749, Charles had been married to Miss Sarah Gwynne, daughter of Marmaduke Gwynne, of Garth, an eminent Welsh magistrate, who was a warm friend of Methodism. His home at Bristol was one of the happiest to be found in that city. John Wesley's disastrous marriage was made in February, 1751.

At the end of 1756, Charles Wesley's active itinerancy seems to have come to an end. Henceforth, with some exceptions, he confined his labours to London and Bristol. By this means the burden of the Societies fell more heavily than ever on his brother. Charles Wesley had been greatly blessed during the earlier years of the Evangelical Revival. He had the happy faculty of leading his hearers to instant decision. His soul seemed aflame with devotion. His pathos and his appeal swept away every barrier. No labours had wearied him; no mob had daunted him. Now, however, there was a change. It was not easy for him to tear himself from his family. His health, too, was broken, and in some matters he was not quite agreed

with his brother. All these causes seem to have combined to withdraw him from the more active itinerancy.

By the time he thus withdrew his brother's health was happily re-established. At the end of 1753, Wesley's friends thought that his days were numbered. He retired to Lewisham, near London, the home of his friend Mr. Blackwell, with all the symptoms of a rapid decline. On the night of his arrival there, "to prevent vile panegyric," he wrote his own epitaph :—

Here lieth the Body
of
JOHN WESLEY,
A brand plucked out of the burning,
Who died of consumption in the fifty-first year of his age,
Not leaving, after his debts are paid,
Ten pounds behind him,
Praying,
"God be merciful to me, an unprofitable servant."

He ordered that this, if any, inscription should be placed on his tombstone. Charles Wesley hurried to London, and did his best to take the oversight of Methodism, but he plainly told the Society there that if his brother died, he could never fill his place. After five weeks at Lewisham, Wesley went to drink the water at the Hot Well, Bristol. His health was in a precarious state for a whole year, but he was then able to resume his itinerant life. This period of retirement was fruitful. Wesley began to prepare his "Notes on the New Testament," one of the doctrinal standards of Methodism, "a work which I should scarce ever have attempted," he says, "had I not been so ill as not to be able to travel or preach, and yet so well as to be able to read and write."

When Charles Wesley retired from the more active itinerancy, there were seventy to eighty itinerant preachers labouring in the United Kingdom. These coadjutors were

introducing Methodism into all parts of the country. In the summer of 1747, one of them crossed over to Ireland, where he had such success, that he urged Wesley to come without delay. On August 9th, 1747, Wesley, therefore, landed at Dublin. From this time the work rapidly spread throughout Ireland. Mr. Tyerman calculates that Wesley crossed the Channel forty-two times, and devoted at least six years of his life to Ireland.*

Four years later Wesley paid a short visit to Scotland, at the earnest entreaty of his friend Captain Gallatin. He had no intention to preach across the Border, nor did he imagine that any one would wish him to do so. But he soon learned that the Scots were eager to hear him. At Musselburgh, where his friend's regiment was then quartered, a great congregation assembled, and "remained as statues from the beginning of the sermon to the end," though they were often grossly inattentive in their own kirk. This was Wesley's introduction to Scotland.† At Edinburgh one of the bailies came with an elder of the kirk to beg Wesley to spend some days with them. His plans would not permit him to stay, but he promised that his companion Christopher Hopper should come back the next week to spend a few days. Wesley was often cheered by the rapt attention of a Scotch congregation in later years, though he was also disappointed by their apparent spiritual insensibility. Societies were formed in various places, and though they were never large, much good was done, especially in encouraging and stimulating other Churches. These were the chief events of Methodist history up to the year 1757. The relations of Methodism to the Established Church caused anxious debate at the Conference of 1755 and the following year, but that

* Tyerman, i., 557. † Works, ii., 229.

important subject must be reserved for a separate chapter.

Though Charles Wesley's more active itinerancy closed in 1756, the two historic centres of Methodism still shared his labours. In the metropolis he often stayed for months together, administering the Sacrament to the Society every Sunday, and labouring with great acceptance. His letters show that his ministry was never more blessed than in these days. His prayers at the Sacrament often seemed to open heaven, and the whole congregation was moved by his powerful appeals. About the time his brother's labours were narrowed down to the two chief centres. Wesley found one of the most valuable of all his co-workers in this second age of Methodism. On March 13th, 1757, finding himself weak at Snowsfields, he prayed that God would send him help. His Sunday work in the metropolis was equal, he says, to preaching eight sermons. The Sacramental service at West Street, his West End chapel, near the Seven Dials, was often attended by six hundred persons. Wesley's prayer for assistance was answered. As soon as he had finished his sermon at West Street, whither he hastened after preaching at Snowsfields, John Fletcher, who had that morning been ordained priest, appeared to help him. "How wonderful are the ways of God!" says Wesley. "When my bodily strength failed, and no clergyman in England was able and willing to assist me, He sent me help from the mountains of Switzerland, and a helpmeet for me in every respect! Where could I have found such another?"

Fletcher was not quite thirty. He afterwards became Vicar of Madeley, in Shropshire, married Miss Bosanquet, a native of Leytonstone, one of the saints of Methodism, and was Wesley's adviser and helper until his death in 1775. He was not spared to be Wesley's successor,

for which position he seemed so admirably qualified in many respects, but he rendered inestimable service to the cause by that seraphic piety in the presence of which discord died away, and the hearts of the most bitter opponents were melted into love. The share he took in the Calvinist controversy by the publication of his famous "Checks" entitles him to the high praise of being one of the keenest and at the same time most truly Christian controversialists that any Church has possessed. Isaac Taylor says,* "The Methodism of Fletcher was Christianity, as little lowered by admixture of human infirmity as we may hope to find it anywhere on earth."

Fletcher's help was the more precious to Wesley because he had many troubles at this time. Thomas Walsh died in Ireland in 1759, in the twenty-eighth year of his age. "Oh, what a man," says Wesley, "to be snatched away in the strength of his years!" Fletcher was another Thomas Walsh for Wesley. A heavier blow than Walsh's death was the defection of Thomas Maxfield in 1763. In 1760 Wesley says, "That glorious work of sanctification which had been at a stand for near twenty years" broke out among the people.† It began in Yorkshire, then spread to London and through most parts of England, till it reached Dublin, Limerick, and all the south and west of Ireland. Wherever it came, all branches of the work of God revived and increased. Wesley preached on this subject in all his Societies, and was greatly cheered by the quickened devotion of the people.

In London the movement was unhappily attended with a wild fanaticism which soon blighted all its gracious fruits, and gave the Society there a blow from which it did not recover for years. On the last day of 1762

* "Wesley and Methodism," p. 118.

† Myles' "Chronological History," p. 72.

Wesley says, "I now stood and looked back on the past year, a year of uncommon trials and uncommon blessings. Abundance have been convinced of sin; very many have found peace with God; and in London only, I believe full two hundred have been brought into glorious liberty. And yet I have had more care and trouble in six months, than in several years preceding. What the end will be, I know not; but it is enough that God knoweth." George Bell, who had been a corporal in the Life Guards, professed to find entire sanctification in March, 1761. It soon became evident that this man was a mischievous fanatic. He began to hold meetings of his own, declared that God had done with preaching and Sacraments, and that none could teach those who were renewed in love unless they enjoyed that blessing themselves. On November 24th, 1762, Wesley stood where he could hear Bell without being seen. He prayed for nearly an hour with great fervour. Wesley afterwards told him what he did not like, and treated him and his associates with characteristic moderation.

Maxfield allied himself with Bell, and caused a serious division in the Society. Some of the members went so far as to tell Wesley that they would have no more to do with him, but would follow Mr. Maxfield. A climax was reached in 1763. Bell prophesied that the world would come to an end on February 28th. Wesley did his best to counteract this mischievous prophecy, but it greatly terrified some weak people. Prayer-meetings were held through the night. Some persons remained in the fields, fearing an earthquake. Happily Bell's career as a prophet was cut short by his arrest and imprisonment. He recovered from his religious fanaticism to become an ignorant infidel and a radical reformer. Maxfield resigned his connection with Wesley at the end of April. He took

with him two hundred of Wesley's members, and preached to a large congregation of his own in Little Moorfields. Wesley visited him in his last illness, and preached in his chapel, but, as we have seen, he was never able to acquit him of dishonourable conduct. The London Society lost four hundred members by this deplorable outburst of fanaticism.

Nothing, however, could long check the progress of Methodism. Before 1758 Wesley had visited every part of Ireland except the county of Sligo. He found it had the largest population of any Irish county. He counted eight villages in less than seven miles, and Sligo itself seemed as large as Limerick. He also visited the descendants of the settlers who had come from the Palatinate, half a century before. They had no minister, and were become notorious for drunkenness, cursing, swearing, and utter neglect of religion. Methodist preaching had been a great blessing to this community. An oath was now rarely heard among them, or a drunkard seen in their borders.* In 1760 Wesley found three such towns in this German settlement as could scarcely be found anywhere else. There was neither cursing, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, nor alehouse among them. Most of these settlers were afterwards scattered, but they carried the germs of Methodism to the New World. Wesley's ministry in Ireland was remarkable for its success among the military. "The first call of Methodism there," he said, "was to the soldiers." These brave fellows often formed Wesley's body-guard. Their officers occasionally tried to prevent their attendance at Methodist services, but they also were frequently warm friends of the work. Sometimes Wesley preached near the barracks,

* Works, ii., 451.

where no mob durst venture to molest him for fear of the soldiers. Sometimes they escorted him to his lodgings, or cleared a preaching-place and kept order whilst he spoke.

During the whole of this period, from the retirement of Charles Wesley to the death of Whitefield in 1770, Methodism spread rapidly. The Conference that met in August, 1770, reported a membership of 29,406, under the care of a hundred and twenty-one preachers, in fifty circuits. The fiftieth circuit was "America," where four preachers were now at work. There were a hundred members in New York not included in this return. Philip Embury, an emigrant from the Palatine settlement in Ireland, reached there in 1760. For five years religion languished among the early settlers. But in 1765 the zeal of a devout woman, Barbara Heck, led them to begin Methodist preaching. Captain Webb, then on military duty in the States, preached in his regimentals. He greatly strengthened the hands of the little Society, and attracted many hearers. He also wrote an account of the work to Wesley, asking for help. In the Conference of 1769 the appeal from America was presented. "Who is willing to go?" Wesley asked. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor at once volunteered, and Methodism soon struck its roots deep into American soil.

In 1767 a great effort was made to reduce the debt on Methodist chapels. There were now a hundred in all parts of the country. The debt was £11,383. Wesley drew up a statement, which he sent to his friends, with a short note asking their assistance. £5,000 was contributed the first year, £2,000 the next. Another appeal yielded £1,700 more, but as new chapels were springing up in all parts of the kingdom, fresh debt was constantly contracted. In 1770 the old debt stood at £5,671, the new at £1,287. It taxed all Wesley's resources for many years to deal with this difficulty, caused by the vast extension of Methodism.

On September 30th, 1770, George Whitefield died in America. The later years of his life had been mainly devoted to the New World. Since the Calvinist controversy of 1741 he and the Wesleys had worked apart. The breach of friendship was indeed soon healed. Whitefield preached in Wesley's chapels, and regarded both his old friends as brothers. In September, 1769, he left for America, after spending four years in England. The previous February Wesley says, "I had one more agreeable conversation with my old friend and fellow-labourer George Whitefield. His soul appeared to be vigorous still, but his body was sinking apace." Whitefield was greatly cheered on his arrival in America by the prosperity of Bethesda, his orphanage near Savannah. It was almost free from debt. Two new wings had been built, one hundred and fifty feet long, and other buildings were being pushed forward. The Governor and council of the colony received him with public honours.

His tour through the States was marked by all his old ardour. His health seemed to be restored. He lost no opportunity of preaching, and was heard with delight by enthusiastic crowds wherever he went. To Charles Wesley, whom he always loved with special tenderness, he wrote, "I can only sit down and cry, 'What hath God wrought!' My bodily health is much improved, and my soul is on the wing for another Gospel range. Unutterable love! I am lost in wonder and amazement!" The day before his death he preached for two hours to a vast open-air congregation. His feelings completely carried him away, so that he was scarcely able to stop. He afterwards went on to Newburyport, where he was expected to preach next day. Whilst he was at supper the pavement in front of his host's house and the hall of the house itself were crowded with people, who could not

wait till the morrow. Whitefield was worn out. He said to a clergyman who was present, "Brother, you must speak to these dear people; I cannot say a word." Taking a candle, he hastened to his room. On the stairs he paused. He could not resist the appeal made to him by the presence of the eager people. He yielded to the impulse, and spoke on till the candle which he held in his hand burned away and died out in its socket. At two o'clock next morning Whitefield awoke his travelling companion. His asthma was coming on again. He sat in bed praying for his friends and his work, then hastened to the window, panting for breath. Medical help was called in, but all was in vain. At six o'clock the great orator of the Revival had entered into rest.

It had long been agreed between Wesley and Whitefield that the survivor should preach his friend's funeral sermon. On November 18th the solemn service was held in the Tottenham Court Road Tabernacle. An immense multitude assembled from all parts. Wesley's voice was strengthened, so that even those about the doors heard distinctly. "It was an awful season," he says. "All were as still as night. Most appeared to be deeply affected, and an impression was made on many, which, one would hope, will not speedily be effaced." He preached the sermon again at the Tabernacle in Moorfields the same afternoon, and at Greenwich on the following Friday. "Here likewise I trust God has given a blow to that bigotry which had prevailed for many years."* On January 2nd, 1771, he says, "I preached in the evening, at Deptford, a kind of funeral sermon for Mr. Whitefield. In every place I wish to show all possible respect to the memory of that great and good man."

* Works, iii., 421.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FROM THE DEATH OF WHITEFIELD TO THE DEATH OF CHARLES WESLEY.

BEFORE the news of Whitefield's death reached England, another Calvinistic controversy had broken out. At the London Conference in August, 1770, various suggestions were made for the revival of the work of God where it had grown feeble. One of these led to years of angry debate. "Take heed to your doctrine," ran the famous Minutes. "We said in 1744, 'We have leaned too much toward Calvinism.' Wherein?

"1. With regard to *man's faithfulness.* Our Lord Himself taught us to use the expression. And we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadfastly to assert, on His authority, that if a man is not 'faithful in the righteous mammon,' God will not give him the true riches.

"2. With regard to *working for life.* This also our Lord has expressly commanded us. 'Labour'—ἐργάζεσθε, literally 'work'—'for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.' And, in fact, every believer, till he comes to glory, works *for* as well as *from* life.

"3. We have received it as a maxim, that 'a man is to do nothing in order to justification.' Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God should 'cease from evil, and learn to do well.' Whoever

repents should do 'works meet for repentance.' And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?

"Review the whole affair.

"1. Who of us is *now* accepted of God? 'He that now believes in Christ, with a loving, obedient heart.'

"2. But who among those that never heard of Christ? He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, according to the light he has.

"3. Is this the same with 'he that is sincere'? Nearly, if not quite.

"4. Is not this salvation by works? Not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a *condition.*

"5. What have we then been disputing about for these thirty years? I am afraid, about words.

"6. As to *merit* itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: we are rewarded '*according to our works,*' yea, '*because of our works.*' How does this differ from *for the sake of our works?* And how differs this from 'secundum merita operum,'—as our works *deserve?* Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot.

"7. The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions is drawn from matter of fact. God does, in fact, justify those who, by their own confession, neither feared God nor wrought righteousness. Is this an exception to the general rule? It is a doubt, God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure that the person in question never did fear God and work righteousness? His own saying is not proof; for we know how all that are convinced of sin undervalue themselves in every respect.

"8. Does not talking of a justified or a sanctified state tend to mislead men, almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment, whereas we are every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing

to God, according to our works, according to the whole of our inward tempers and our outward behaviour?"

These Minutes were intended for the preachers. So that much is here taken for granted. The answer to the question, "Who of us is *now* accepted of God?" shows that works were only a *condition* of salvation. No one in the Conference had any doubt on that point. The Minutes were a counterblast to Antinomianism, which had "spread like wildfire"* among Wesley's Societies at Norwich, Manchester, Dublin, and other places. Charles Wesley's visit to Manchester in 1756 shows how the Antinomians laboured to spread their licentious teaching among the Methodists. Similar attempts were painfully familiar to Wesley's preachers. They understood clearly that whilst they preached justification by faith, they must urge all to maintain good works. Lady Huntingdon, who had become a strong convert to Calvinism, looked on these Minutes in a different spirit. Her friendship with the Wesleys was now broken off. She even went so far as to say that she could "burn against"† the Minutes. Her Ladyship had founded a college at Treveca for training ministers, of which Fletcher was president, Joseph Benson classical tutor. In January, 1771, Benson was dismissed because he defended the Minutes. Fletcher wrote his views upon them to her Ladyship. He explained them according to Wesley's sentiments, and approved the doctrine, though he did not consider the Minutes cautiously worded at every point. He then resigned his connection with the college.

Wesley addressed a letter of expostulation to the Countess, in which he calmly pointed out certain faults which he had observed in her with great concern. As

* Fletcher's "Checks," i. and ii. † Wesley's Works, xi., 285.

the time for the next Conference approached, she and her relative and adviser—the Hon. and Rev. Walter Shirley—prepared to enter their protest. A letter was widely circulated calling on all who agreed with them to go in a body to the Conference and "insist upon a formal recantation of the said Minutes." Lady Huntingdon wrote to Charles Wesley enclosing a copy of the circular which had been issued. It bore the offensive title "Popery Unmasked." She expressed her conviction that "all ought to be deemed Papists who did not disown" the Minutes. Charles Wesley showed what he thought of this communication by endorsing it with the words, "Lady Huntingdon's LAST. UNANSWERED BY JOHN WESLEY'S BROTHER!"

The circular received so little support that her Ladyship and Mr. Shirley changed their tone. The day before the Conference met each of them addressed a letter to Wesley expressing their regret at the unbecoming language of their printed circular. They asked whether he would receive a deputation, so that a better understanding might be reached. Wesley fixed the third day of the Conference. Only eight people came, all of whom were under Lady Huntingdon's personal influence. Mr. Shirley then read the letters in which he and the Countess apologised for the language of the circular, and hoped that the "submission made was satisfactory to the gentlemen of the Conference." He at once assented to the wish of the assembled preachers that the apology should be made as public as the obnoxious circular. After further discussion Wesley and all his preachers who were present, save Thomas Olivers, who would have nothing to do with "a patched-up peace," signed a declaration expressing their entire adhesion to the doctrine of justification by faith and their abhorrence of justification by works as a most

perilous and abominable doctrine. A few days later Mr. Shirley sent a written acknowledgment that he had mistaken the meaning of the Minutes.

It might now have been hoped that this controversy was ended. Fletcher, who had received one of Mr. Shirley's circulars, had carefully examined the Minutes and drawn up "Five Letters to the Hon. and Rev. Author of the Circular." This manuscript he sent to Wesley, leaving him to print it or not as he thought fit. Wesley resolved to print without delay. When Fletcher learned the result of the Conference, he wrote to a friend in Bristol to ask that the pamphlet might be kept back for the present. He felt that the Minutes must be vindicated, but wished to make some modifications that would render the letters more palatable to Mr. Shirley. Their publication, however, had been announced, and Wesley was not at Bristol to stop the press, so that the "Five Letters" soon appeared.

The controversy assumed a painful and angry form. Wesley had little share in it. Fletcher was the champion of the Minutes. His "Checks to Antinomianism," issued one after another during the prolonged struggle, are noble specimens of polemical divinity. For convincing argument, invincible charity, and high-toned courtesy, Fletcher has on all hands won the highest praise. Thomas Olivers, one of Wesley's preachers, who was now editor of his Magazine, proved himself a powerful champion on the Arminian side. Augustus M. Toplady, Sir Richard Hill, and his more famous brother Rowland Hill, were unsparing antagonists. For more than nine years Wesley was exposed to their virulent attacks. Soon after the foundation of City Road Chapel was laid in 1777, Rowland Hill published a pamphlet entitled "Imposture Detected, and the Dead Vindicated; in a Letter to a Friend; containing some gentle strictures on the false and libellous harangue, lately

delivered by Mr. John Wesley, upon his laying the first stone of his new Dissenting meeting-house, near the City Road." What the strictures were may be seen from some expressions. He called Wesley "the lying Apostle of the Foundery," "a designing wolf," "a dealer in stolen wares," and asserted that he was "as unprincipled as a rook, and as silly as a jackdaw, first pilfering his neighbour's plumage, and then going proudly forth, displaying his borrowed tail to the eyes of a laughing world."

Wesley calmly pursued his work. Charles Wesley had come to live in London the same year that the little deputation of Calvinists visited the Conference at Bristol in 1770. His daughter Sarah has preserved an anecdote which shows Wesley's tranquil fidelity to his work amid all his troubles.* He had promised to take his niece with him to Canterbury and Dover some time about 1775. The day before this journey, to which the girl was looking forward with peculiar pleasure, her father learned that Mrs. John Wesley had plundered her husband's bureau and taken out some letters on which, by interpolating words and misinterpreting spiritual expressions, she had managed to put the worst construction. These she read to some Calvinists. They were to be sent to the *Morning Post.* Mr. Russell, a Calvinist, and an intimate friend of Charles Wesley's, told him of this plot. He had heard the letter read, but suspected that they were forgeries, and wished that Wesley should try to clear up the matter.

Charles Wesley, who was far more jealous of his brother's reputation than his own, at once set out for the Foundery. His daughter never forgot the manner in which he announced the result of that visit to her mother on his return to Marylebone. "He is," he said, "a most

* MS at Headingley College.

extraordinary man; I placed before him every evil consequence which could result from his leaving London, the stumbling-blocks he might cast in the way of the weak, the advantage he gave to his enemies, the importance of his character; and when I had finished, he replied with the utmost calmness, 'When I devoted to God my ease, my time, my fortune, my life, did I except my reputation? No. Tell Sally I will take her to Canterbury-to-morrow.'" It was proved that the letters had been mutilated, and no scandal ensued.

Wesley had looked forward with great pleasure to his brother's removal from Bristol to London. He often wished to consult him about important matters affecting their Societies. Though they met at Bristol and London, it was very desirable that they should have closer intercourse. The benefit of this change of residence was, however, minimised in consequence of a generous offer made by one of Charles Wesley's friends. This lady, Mrs. Gumley, gave him the lease of her town house in Chesterfield Street, Marylebone. The fine house was well furnished and provided with every comfort. But it was three miles from the Foundery. This was a serious drawback. Wesley was too busy a man to spare time for frequent visits at so great a distance.

In January, 1774, a hydrocele, which had greatly troubled Wesley for a considerable time, was successfully removed in Edinburgh. In the summer of 1775, when in the north of Ireland, he lay down one extremely hot afternoon on the grass in a friend's orchard. For forty years he had been accustomed to rest in this way, and had never taken any harm. Now, however, he fell asleep on his face. When he awoke, he felt slightly unwell, but was able to preach with ease to a vast congregation. Next day his stand was so arranged, that a

strong, sharp wind blew full on the side of his head whilst he was preaching. This was on the Wednesday. He was soon in a high fever, and at a friend's house near Lisburn was compelled to take to his bed. His strength was utterly gone. He could not even turn himself; his memory entirely failed; his tongue was much swollen, and as black as a coal; and for some time neither heart nor pulse seemed to beat. About three o'clock on the Sunday morning he appeared to be in the agonies of death. His pulse beat about a hundred and thirty times a minute, his flesh was like fire, and he was convulsed from head to foot. Mr. Gayer and his family were Methodists, and had abundant means. Nothing which their kindness could suggest was left untried. Joseph Bradford, one of Wesley's preachers, was his travelling companion. He nursed the invalid with a mother's care. On the Thursday after Wesley came to Mr. Gayer's, Bradford brought some medicine in a cup, saying, "Sir, you must take this." He thought, "I will, if I can swallow, to please him; for it will do me neither harm nor good." It at once caused vomiting; the heart and pulse began to play, and from that time Wesley steadily gained strength. On Saturday he was up all day, on Sunday he spent several hours in the downstairs parlour, and on Wednesday he travelled thirty miles towards Dublin. The newspapers had already announced that he was dead. John Fletcher wrote to Charles Wesley urging him to stand in the gap if his brother was removed. He suggested that a committee of the oldest and steadiest preachers might assist him to bear the burden. The blow which Fletcher feared was, in God's mercy, averted. Methodism was not then able to spare its head. No provision had yet been made for carrying on the work after Wesley's death.

The great event of home Methodism during this period was the erection of City Road Chapel. Since 1739 the Foundery had been the headquarters of Methodism. In 1743 Wesley had secured a West End centre, which is still standing, in West Street, near the Seven Dials. Southwark and Spitalfields had also good chapels. On April 21st, 1777, Wesley laid the foundation of his Methodist cathedral. "The rain," he says, "befriended us much, by keeping away thousands who purposed to be there; but there were still such multitudes, that it was with great difficulty I got through them to lay the first stone." In a sermon on the words, "According to this time, it shall be said, What hath God wrought!" he described the rise of Methodism at Oxford, its mission in Georgia, the exclusion of himself and his friends from the English churches; he also explained the nature of Methodism and its relation to the Church of England. All who heard the venerable preacher must have seen by what a strange path God had led him up to that memorable day.

An appeal for help in this great undertaking was sent to all the country Societies. Wesley wrote urging them to assist the parent Society, which had for many years contributed largely and willingly to their necessities. The burden of raising funds fell on Wesley himself. He made collections for the work in all parts of the country. We catch one glimpse of him and his faithful companion, Thomas Taylor, standing on either side of the path at Keighley after Wesley had preached. Hat in hand, they thus gathered seven pounds for the new chapel.* Wesley spent much time in London attending to all details of the building. Sunday, November 1st, 1778, was the opening

* Tyerman, iii., 243.

day. Wesley describes his new chapel as perfectly neat, but not fine. Many were afraid that the crowds who came from all parts would have caused much disturbance. Everything was quiet and orderly, however. Wesley preached in the morning on part of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple, and in the evening on the hundred and forty and four thousand standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion. "God was eminently present."

The prayers of the Church of England were read here both morning and evening by an ordained clergyman. At first the pulpit was occupied almost entirely by Charles Wesley and other clergymen, but before long care was taken that the London preachers should not be excluded from the chief metropolitan pulpit. Many advantages were reaped by the erection of this commodious chapel. The covenant service was held there on the 1st of January, 1779. "At length," says Wesley, "we have a house capable of containing the whole Society." The dwelling-house which is still standing on the south side of the chapel (No. 47, City Road) was the home of Wesley and his preachers, to which they were glad to remove from the ruinous premises at the Foundery. In this house Wesley died. In the burial-ground behind, he rests in peace, surrounded by more than five thousand of his devoted preachers and members. The Foundery was a decaying building, quite unworthy of Methodism, which had spread over England and Ireland, found its way to Scotland, planted stations in the West Indies and the United States, and now numbered forty-seven thousand members. The time had, therefore, come when it was essential to provide some better centre than the Foundery.

The work in America was spreading rapidly. In 1776 there were 3,148 members. The war with England threw everything into confusion for a time. Whilst City Road

Chapel was being built, three of Wesley's preachers returned to England. Francis Asbury was left alone. He was the Wesley of America. For forty-five years he travelled over the rough settlements of the States as extensively as Wesley did at home. Bogs, swamps, prairies, mountains, and rivers were fearlessly crossed by this heroic itinerant. Every day he read a hundred pages, and spent three hours in private devotion. Though his colleagues had left him in 1777, there were thirty-four itinerants who had been called out to the work in America itself and nearly seven thousand members.

Methodism spread through the States by leaps and bounds. Wesley was greatly exercised by the position of his people there. They had no one to administer the Sacraments. Many of the English clergy of the country had withdrawn or ceased to officiate on account of the war. At best there had been but few of them, and many Societies were far beyond the reach of their ministrations. In 1780 Wesley wrote to Dr. Lowth, Bishop of London. He had presented a petition to his Lordship for the ordination of some pious man who might minister to the needs of the people in America. His request was not granted. Dr. Lowth replied that there were "three ministers in that country already." Wesley answered that from sad experience he knew that the greater part of the missionaries in America were men who had neither the power nor the form of godliness, "men that lay no claim to piety, nor even decency." His whole letter shows how he mourned over the spiritual destitution of America.

Matters reached a crisis in 1784. During the previous ten years 12,915 new members had been added to the American Societies. They now numbered 14,988. Asbury pleaded urgently for help. He was in a difficult position. In 1779 the preachers in the south had arranged that

three of the oldest men among them should ordain the rest. Asbury prevailed on them to give up the administration of the Sacraments till he could communicate with Wesley. His appeal stated that "a minister and such preachers" as Wesley could fully recommend would be very acceptable. Asbury's ardent desire was to see Wesley himself in America. That was clearly impossible; but at the Conference of 1784 Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey were appointed. A month later Wesley, with the assistance of the Rev. James Creighton, a clergyman who had become one of his staff in London, solemnly set apart Dr. Coke as "Superintendent" over the American preachers and Societies. Asbury was to be his colleague, with equal powers. They were to ordain others to administer the Sacraments. After Dr. Coke had been set apart for his office, he assisted Wesley and Creighton to ordain Whatcoat and Vasey as elders, with power to administer the Sacraments in America.

Wesley had now taken a decisive step. He was fully convinced in his own mind that he was a Scriptural ἐπίσκοπος, but only the most pressing necessity drove him to exercise the power of ordination. All other plans for meeting the necessities and claims of his growing Societies in America had failed. He therefore was compelled to take this step. Next year, after careful deliberation, he yielded to the judgment of his friends, and set apart three of his well-tried preachers to administer the Sacraments in Scotland. "I trust," he says, "God will bless their ministrations, and show that He has sent them." Other preachers were afterwards ordained for the colonies and for Scotland, and several also for England.

Charles Wesley was greatly disturbed by his brother's ordinations. He was not fully conversant with the necessities of the case, nor was he a practical man, like John

Wesley. He wrote an urgent letter begging him to stop and consider before he had quite broken down the bridge. Wesley had not acted under a sudden impulse. He had carefully weighed the matter and made good his position. He could not therefore yield to his brother's appeal. By-and-bye Charles Wesley's fears subsided. He saw that some of his apprehensions were groundless, and was able to leave the issues of the work to Him who had guided every step of its marvellous development.

Methodism only gained a legal constitution in 1784. For two years the Birstal Chapel case had awakened grave concern. A new preaching-place was required, and to give the trustees security for the money advanced for its erection, another deed was prepared. The trustees insisted that they and the leaders should have power to appoint preachers for their chapel after the death of the Wesleys. At one time it seemed as though Wesley would be compelled to leave these obstinate trustees with their chapel on their hands, and build another for his Society. He was determined to resist to the last any arrangement which would transfer the appointment of preachers to the trustees. His firmness, together with some timely concessions, brought the matter to a happy issue.

This struggle showed the necessity for some legal settlement to save Methodism from going to wreck after its founder's death. Before the matter was settled Wesley's life was in imminent danger. During the Bristol Conference he was seized with "a most impetuous flux," which was followed by violent and almost constant cramp. Three doses of opium stopped the cramp, but took away speech, hearing, and power to move, so that Wesley lay like a mere log. No one expected his recovery. Joseph Bradford, his old nurse, was with him. "I have been reflecting on my past life," the old man said to him;

"I have been wandering up and down between fifty and sixty years, endeavouring, in my poor way, to do a little good to my fellow-creatures; and now it is probable that there are but a few steps between me and death; and what have I to trust to for salvation? I can see nothing that I have done or suffered that will bear looking at. I have no other plea than this:

I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."*

Wesley rallied from this severe attack, but the eighteen days of suspense had shown clearly that there was no time to be lost. Dr. Coke had read to the Bristol Conference the opinion of counsel, to the effect that the members of the Conference should be enrolled, and measures taken for the perpetuity of the body. On February 28th, 1784, Wesley executed his Deed of Declaration, which has been called the Magna Charta of Methodism.† It was enrolled in Chancery a few days later. A legal constitution was now given to the Conference. The deeds on which Methodist chapels had been settled for many years reserved to Wesley the power to appoint preachers; after his death his right was to pass to Charles Wesley; and if William Grimshaw survived both the brothers, he was to exercise it. The Deed of Declaration contained the names of one hundred preachers who were to form the Methodist Conference. They were to meet once a year, to fill up vacancies in their own number, appoint a president and secretary, station the preachers to various circuits, admit proper persons into the ministry, and have general control over the Methodist Societies. The act of the majority was to bind all. Careful provision was made for various contingencies. There were one

* Moore, ii., 389.
† Isaac Taylor's "Wesley and Methodism," p. 286.

hundred and seventy Methodist preachers at the time when this deed was executed. Some of those whose names did not appear in it were much hurt by the omission. Wesley himself chose the members of the Conference, and no man knew better than he who were most eligible. Considerable feeling was caused, however, by his selection, and five malcontents retired from the ranks. The following year Wesley published a defence of his conduct. To the argument that all the preachers should have been placed on the deed he justly objects that it would have doubled the expense of meeting and have left all the circuits without preachers during the Conference. He says that he had chosen the persons who seemed most suitable. "I did my best; if I did wrong, it was not the error of my will, but of my judgment."

Charles Wesley died on March 29th, 1788. His brother was in Staffordshire at the time. He was singing with his congregation Charles Wesley's hymn,

> Come, let us join our friends above,
> That have obtained the prize,

at the very hour when the poet of Methodism joined the company in heaven. By a mistake in the address of the letter, news of his brother's death did not reach Wesley till the day before the funeral. He was then at Macclesfield, so that he could not join the sorrowing company in the little graveyard of the old parish church at Marylebone, near Charles Wesley's residence. A fortnight later, when he attempted to give out his brother's hymn on "Wrestling Jacob" at Bolton, he broke down at those touching lines,

> My company before is gone,
> And I am left alone with Thee.

The patriarch burst into a flood of tears, sat down in the pulpit, and buried his face in his hands. The singing

ceased, and all the congregation wept together. In a little while Wesley recovered himself, and was able to proceed with a service never to be forgotten by those who were present.

On his return from the north in the middle of July, Wesley spent an hour with his "widowed sister and her children." "They all seemed inclined," he said, "to make the right use of the late providential dispensation." He did everything in his power to supply his brother's place to his niece and his two nephews—the famous organists. When Sarah Wesley needed change of air, he begged her to consult Dr. Whitehead, his favourite physician, and promised her ten or twenty pounds if she went to Harrogate. No one could have been more tenderly careful of the widow and her children. It was a great grief to Wesley that the brother with whom he had been so intimately associated at the University and in Georgia, as well as throughout the course of the Great Revival, should have refused to be buried at City Road. That ground was unconsecrated. Charles Wesley was too stout a Churchman to consent to his burial there. He preferred to rest in the graveyard of the parish in which he resided. The brothers therefore lie apart. John Wesley sleeps under the shadow of the metropolitan church of Methodism; Charles rests with his wife and two sons behind the old parish church of Marylebone.

## CHAPTER XIX

### WESLEY'S CHURCHMANSHIP.

WESLEY'S Churchmanship has been much debated. At Oxford and in Georgia he was undoubtedly a stiff High Churchman. What he afterwards described as the "vehement prejudice of my education"* had sunk deep into his mind. No one was more scrupulously exact in his obedience to all the rubrics and customs of the Church of England. Both his father and his mother were converts to that Church from the ranks of the Nonconformists, and his elder brother Samuel was a strong Churchman. With such home influence and a long residence at Oxford, we are not surprised to find that both John and Charles Wesley brought trouble on themselves by their conduct in Georgia. Charles insisted on trine immersion as the only proper form of infant baptism. Parents were not quite willing to have their children thus plunged three times into the water. John Wesley pursued the same method. The second magistrate of Savannah had his child baptised by another clergyman because he would not allow Wesley to treat it in this fashion.

Dr. Rigg says,† "The resemblance of his practices to those of modern high Anglicans is, in most points, exceedingly striking. He had early and also forenoon service

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* Works, ii., 6.

† "Churchmanship of John Wesley," pp. 28, 29.

every day; he divided the morning service, taking the Litany as a separate service; he inculcated fasting and confession and weekly communion; he refused the Lord's Supper to all who had not been baptised by a minister episcopally ordained; he insisted on baptism by immersion; he rebaptised the children of Dissenters; and he refused to bury all who had not received episcopal baptism. One thing only was wanting to make the parallel with our moderns complete: there is no evidence that he believed in the 'conversion of the elements' by consecration, or in their doctrine of the Real Presence."

In 1749 Wesley received a letter from John Martin Bolzius, which he inserted in his journal. Bolzius assures him that "the sincere love to his worthy person and faithful performance of his holy office which he had felt in Georgia was not abated, but increased." Wesley adds, "What a truly Christian piety and simplicity breathe in these lines! And yet this very man, when I was at Savannah, did I refuse to admit to the Lord's Table, because he was not baptised; that is, not baptised by a minister who had been episcopally ordained. Can any one carry High Church zeal higher than this? And how well have I been since beaten with my own staff!"*

Wesley's voyage home from Georgia in 1738 was a time of great heart-searching. "I, who went to America to convert others," he wrote, "was never myself converted to God." Peter Böhler, whom he met in London, led him into the way of faith. The great change which he then experienced in his temper and views almost justifies Miss Wedgwood's words, "Wesley's homeward voyage in 1738 marks the conclusion of his High Church period." This was certainly the beginning of a "new

* Works, ii., 160.

dispensation." The course of events still further modified Wesley's position. He and his friends found themselves shut out of the pulpits of the Church just when they were fully prepared to preach the Gospel. In his sermon preached on laying the foundation of City Road Chapel, Wesley states, that on his return from America he was in haste to retire to Oxford and bury himself in his beloved obscurity, but he was detained in London week after week by the trustees of the colony of Georgia. Meanwhile he was urged to preach in various churches, where "vast multitudes flocked" to hear him. After a time he was shut out of church after church. The reason given was usually, "Because you preach such doctrines." Wesley had therefore to choose between silence and irregularity. Hence arose the first field-preaching. Wesley could scarce reconcile himself to this strange method when he stood in Whitefield's congregation at Bristol, "having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church."* His feeling about lay-preaching and his hurried journey to London to stop Thomas Maxfield's sermons have been already referred to.

At the end of December, 1745, to his brother-in-law, Mr. Hall, who was urging the Wesleys to leave the Church of England, he wrote as follows: "We believe it would not be right for us to administer either Baptism or the Lord's Supper unless we had a commission so to do from those bishops whom we apprehend to be in a succession from the Apostles." He holds that field-preaching is contrary to no law, and though he is not clear about the

* Works, i., 185.

legality of lay-preaching, he maintains that, even if illegal, it is an exempt case in which he cannot obey with a good conscience. One point has special interest. Wesley expresses his belief that the threefold order of ministers —bishops, priests, and deacons—is not only authorised by its Apostolical institution, but also by the written Word. "Yet," he adds, "we are willing to hear and weigh whatever reasons induce you to believe to the contrary."*

Mr. Hall may have referred him to a book on the subject. At any rate, he writes three weeks later, "I set out for Bristol. On the road I read over Lord King's 'Account of the Primitive Church.' In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draft; but if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a Church independent of all others!" † Lord King, the writer who thus influenced Wesley, died in 1734, having been Lord Chancellor for eighteen years. From the position then taken Wesley never withdrew.

In the year 1755 there was a crisis in Methodism. Some of the "preachers" were accustomed to absent themselves from the services of the Church, and went so far as to administer the Lord's Supper to those who held that close relationship with the Church of England could not be maintained or who felt unable to go to the Lord's Table at church with comfort or profit. The two sons of Mr. Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham (whom Charles Wesley used to call the Archbishop of Methodism), Joseph Cownley, a preacher of remarkable ability, and Thomas Walsh were at the head of this movement. The Wesleys

* Works, ii., 4—6. † *Ibid.*, ii., 6.

spent some time together at Birstal before the Leeds Conference of 1755 reading a book on Dissent written by a Dissenter. Thus prepared, they went to its session. After three days' careful discussion, all fully agreed "that whether it was lawful or not to separate, it was no ways expedient." * Charles Wesley, full of painful forebodings, rode off to London the morning after the debate, and before the end of the month printed a poetical "epistle" to his brother on the subject which was uppermost in his mind and heart. He read it two nights in succession to large congregations in London.

Wesley did not share his brother's forebodings. He was perfectly satisfied with the concessions made by his preachers, and found wherever he went that the Societies were far more firmly and rationally attached to the Church than ever they were before. In 1758 he published his twelve "Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England." The conciliatory spirit which breathes in this pamphlet shows how careful he was to interfere with no man's liberty. "It would be well," he says, "for every Methodist preacher, *who has no scruple concerning it*, to attend the service of the Church as often as he conveniently can." Charles Wesley added a postscript, in which he expressed his approval, and declared his intention to live and die in communion with the Church of England. Two years later three preachers stationed in Norwich began to administer the Sacraments in that city. This step was taken entirely on their own responsibility. Charles Wesley was greatly excited. He sent a letter to his brother beginning with the ominous words, "We are come to the Rubicon." He also wrote to various preachers entreating them to discountenance and oppose the conduct

* Jackson's "Charles Wesley," ii., 78.

of their brethren at Norwich. John Wesley went quietly on his way, and this cloud soon passed.

The ordinations for America in 1784 roused all Charles Wesley's fears. Lord Mansfield told him that ordination was separation. Charles at first felt that the life-long partnership between himself and his brother was dissolved, and wrote several earnest letters of expostulation to Wesley. In his brother's reply occurs the famous sentence, "I firmly believe I am a Scriptural ἐπίσκοπος, as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove." Four years before he had expressed his conviction that he had as much right to ordain as to administer the Sacrament. Holding such views, Wesley took the step which his brother deplored, and ordained Dr. Coke as Superintendent of American Methodism. When Coke reached the States, he was instructed to ordain Asbury as his Co-Superintendent. We have seen that other ordinations to the ordinary work of the ministry in America, Scotland, and even in England * followed. In 1789 he requested his assistant, William Myles, an unordained preacher, to assist him in giving the cup to the communicants at Dublin. Such facts effectually disprove the statement that Wesley was a High Churchman, in the modern sense of that term, to the end of his life. Within seven years after his evangelical conversion the prejudices of his education had been thoroughly shaken, and in many respects entirely removed.

The step Wesley took in 1784 was the natural outgrowth of the conviction reached on reading Lord Chancellor King's book in 1746. He had carefully abstained for nearly forty years from taking action, but

* See p. 297.

the destitute condition of his American Societies at length drove him to make provision for the administration of the Sacraments. It is desirable to add that in a letter written to Lord North on behalf of the American colonists, Wesley describes himself as "a High Churchman, and the son of a High Churchman," but this refers to his political attitude as a clergyman, not to his doctrinal position.

Another question has great interest. Did Wesley intend his Societies to separate from the Church? He must have been strangely wanting in sagacity if he did not discern the drift of Methodist thought and feeling. The Wesleys had done all they could to bind their Societies to the Church. Their members at Bristol were at first constant communicants at St. James's Church, near the preaching-place in the Horse Fair. That was "our parish church" in Bristol. In London St. Luke's was the parish church for the Foundery Methodists. Even so late as December, 1789, eleven years after the opening of City Road Chapel, Wesley gives it this name. The connexion had been little more than a name, however, for many years. Wesley was at a very early date compelled to administer the Lord's Supper to his own people in London and Bristol. On Sunday, April 12th, 1741, after the "bands" of Kingswood had been denied the Sacrament at Temple Church, Bristol, Charles Wesley, who had himself been repelled, with many others, administered the Lord's Supper in Kingswood Schoolroom. "Had we wanted an house," he says, "I would justify doing it in the midst of the wood." When Wesley opened his West Street Chapel on May 29th, 1743, the Lord's Supper was regularly administered there every week to the London Methodists. In October, 1770, after Charles Wesley left Bristol, and there was some fear of an interruption of the arrangements which had been in

force for many years, the brothers, at the request of their friends, arranged to administer the Lord's Supper at Bristol every other Sunday.*

Bristol and London were, however, favoured Societies. The country Methodists fared badly. Sometimes they were repelled from the Lord's Table; not seldom they were compelled to receive the Sacrament from a minister who either persecuted them or lived a life utterly unworthy of his profession. Wesley did his utmost to keep his members to the parish churches. He took care to attend himself, and earnestly exhorted the Societies to be regular in their attendance. But he found many difficulties. When he examined one Society in Cornwall, he discovered that out of ninety-eight persons all but three or four had forsaken the Lord's Table. "I told them my thoughts very plain; they seemed convinced, and promised no more to give place to the devil." †

Wesley's journals show what pains he took to promote good feeling between the clergy and the Methodists. He visited the clergy to clear up any misunderstandings, and rejoiced over every manifestation of friendliness on their part. Sometimes he refers to the devout and practical preaching he heard when he went to church with his people. In later years he was often asked to take the pulpit himself. After one such service in Wales he writes, "The bigots of all sides seemed ashamed before God, and, I trust, will not soon forget this day." ‡ Some of the sermons he heard at church grieved him deeply. A preacher at Birmingham in the Old Church, on July 14th, 1782, spoke with great vehemence against these "harebrained itinerant enthusiasts." "But," adds

* Wesley's Works, iii., 418. † *Ibid.*, iii., 16.
‡ Works, iii., 374.

Wesley, "he totally missed the mark, having not the least conception of the persons whom he undertook to describe." In one church he heard part of Bishop Lavington's "Papists and Methodists Compared" read for a sermon, but that did not lessen his own congregation in the afternoon.

During the last years of Wesley's life, the clergy generally learned to regard him as a friend. In January, 1783, after referring to two sermons preached in London, at St. Thomas's and St. Swithin's, he says, "The tide is now turned; so that I have more invitations to preach in churches than I can accept of." In December, 1789, he makes the same remark. His ordinations led some of his people to suppose that he was about to separate from the Church. Finding a report of this kind spread abroad in Bristol, in September, 1785, he openly declared on the Sunday evening that he had no more thought of separating from the Church than he had forty years ago.

Wesley's Deed of Declaration, his ordinations, and the licensing of his chapels and preachers under the provisions of the Toleration Act show, however, that he was more careful for the continuance of the work than for any formal connection with the Church of England. He did not allow that he separated from the Church, and told the Deptford Society in January, 1787, that if they had their service in church hours, they should see his face no more. Next year, however, general liberty was given to hold services at such times wherever people did not object, except only on the Sacrament Sunday. Wesley took all possible care that Methodism should not perish with his death. The principles which eventually led to separation were extending and taking deeper root. The connection with the Church was gradually becoming slighter, and the

united Societies were gaining step by step a complete organisation of their own. Wesley's death removed the last barrier to complete independence. It was surely better, in the interests of religion, that Methodism should have the Sacraments duly administered by her own preachers than that the unsatisfactory arrangement existing at the close of Wesley's life should be maintained in order to avoid separation.

Wesley found many true helpers in the Church of England. The Rev. William Grimshaw, curate of Haworth, in Yorkshire, deserves the first place in the list of his clerical coadjutors. He became one of Wesley's assistants in 1745. Grimshaw took charge of two large Methodist circuits. In addition to his own parish duties, he met classes, conducted lovefeasts, and preached with awakening power, sometimes as many as thirty sermons a week. Wesley's itinerants always found his house their home. Sometimes he would give up his own bed and sleep in the barn because his Methodist friends had filled all his rooms. Grimshaw died in 1762, after sixteen years of unceasing devotion.

Wesley told Dr. Byrom in 1761 that he divided his assistants into regulars, half-regulars, and irregulars.* Madan and Romaine, he said, belonged to the second class. At that time Wesley was surrounded by a band of active workers among the clergy. In March, 1757, John Fletcher had sought holy orders, at Wesley's suggestion. After his ordination he became Vicar of Madeley, but to the end of his life he was the most valuable of all Wesley's helpers in the Church of England. He relieved him of the burden of the Calvinistic controversy in 1771 by his "Checks to Antinomianism," travelled with

* "Journals," ii., 629.

him to encourage the Societies, and kindled anew the fire of devotion as often as he appeared among the preachers at their annual Conference. Wesley hoped that Fletcher would have in some measure filled his place after his death. But all such hopes were frustrated by the death of the Vicar of Madeley in 1785. Fletcher owed his conversion to Methodism. The service which he rendered to its Societies and preachers was invaluable. Wesley wrote his friend's life. "Within fourscore years," he says, "I have known many excellent men, holy in heart and life, but one equal to him I have not known, one so uniformly and deeply devoted to God. So unblamable a man in every respect I have not found either in Europe or America, nor do I expect to find another such on this side eternity." *

The year after Fletcher's ordination the Rev. John Berridge, Vicar of Everton, invited Wesley to visit him. He soon became an earnest ally. His church was crowded with people who came ten, twenty, or thirty miles to hear the awakened clergyman, and he laboured as an itinerant evangelist with great success. Sometimes he travelled a hundred miles, and preached ten or twelve sermons a week. Scenes like those which broke out under Wesley's preaching at Bristol and Newcastle became frequent under his ministry. Scores fell on the ground, and were carried to the Vicarage. Romaine, then lecturer at St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, was also a firm friend, and suffered much in consequence. He often had to address the crowds at St. Dunstan's Church with a lighted taper in his hand, because the churchwardens refused to light the building for the Methodist clergyman. Martin Madan, a witty young lawyer, went to hear Wesley that he might afterwards

* Works, xi., 365.

mimic him among his friends. When he returned to the coffee-house, they asked him if he had "taken off the old Methodist." "No, gentlemen," was the reply, "but he has taken me off." He became a popular evangelical clergyman, and travelled with Romaine, Wesley, Lady Huntingdon, and Henry Venn, then curate of Clapham, who afterwards became Vicar of Huddersfield, and laboured with great success in the surrounding district. Berridge and Madan took the Calvinistic side in the controversy of 1771. Berridge did himself little credit by his grotesque writing. Madan did not publish anything on that controversy, but revised Rowland Hill's writings and supported the Calvinistic party.

Vincent Perronet, the Vicar of Shoreham, who died in 1785, at the ripe age of ninety-two, was for thirty-nine years the intimate friend and adviser of the Wesleys. Two of his sons became Methodist preachers. Their father retained his parish, but made it a model Methodist circuit. The Wesleys and their itinerants often visited Shoreham, where they were greatly cheered by his unwavering faith and constant kindness. The great awakening spread rapidly among the clergy. When Romaine began to preach evangelical truth, he could only reckon up six or seven clergymen of evangelical views, but before his death in 1795 there were more than five hundred.*

The most notable figure in Wesley's staff of clerical helpers in the last years of his life was Dr. Coke. Expelled from his curacy because of his zeal and fervour, Coke boldly cast in his lot with Methodism in 1777. Wesley often said that Coke was a second Thomas Walsh to him.† The people flocked from all parts to hear the

* Life of Henry Venn, p. xiv.

† Jackson's "Charles Wesley," ii., 381.

man whom persecution had driven into the Methodist ranks. He relieved Wesley of many burdens in his old age, and devoted himself with unwearying zeal to the care of the Societies. Coke is best known as the Missionary Bishop of Methodism. He made many voyages across the Atlantic, and died in May, 1814, on his way to Ceylon with a band of missionaries.

## CHAPTER XX.

### PREACHER, WRITER, AND PHILANTHROPIST.

AS a preacher, Wesley was remarkable for simplicity of style and force of argument. Whitefield was an impassioned orator; Charles Wesley carried everything before him by his deep emotion and his forcible application; John Wesley appealed to the reason with irresistible power. "His attitude in the pulpit was graceful and easy; his action calm and natural, yet pleasing and expressive; his voice not loud, but clear and manly; his style neat, simple, perspicuous, and admirably adapted to the capacity of his hearers."* Henry Moore, his biographer and intimate friend, says that when he first heard Wesley preach, he thought it strange that a man who spoke with such simplicity should have made so much noise in the world. He paid a great tribute to the sermon, however, for he said that he remembered more of it than of any he had ever heard.†

Wesley early learned this art of simplicity. As a young man, he once preached a highly finished sermon to a country congregation. The people listened with open mouths. He saw at once that they did not understand what he said. He struck out some of the hard expressions, and tried again. Their mouths were now only half open. Wesley, however, was resolved to carry them entirely

* Hampson, iii., 168.

† Mrs. R. Smith's Life of Henry Moore.

with him. He read the sermon to an intelligent servant, and got her to tell him whenever she did not understand. Betty's "Stop, sir," came so often that he grew impatient. But he persevered, wrote a plain word over every hard one, and had his reward in seeing that his congregation now clearly understood every word. Wesley's journals show what a lofty estimate he set on St. John's First Epistle. It was evidently his own model. He expounded it in his Societies, and advised every young preacher to form his style upon it. "Here," he says, "are sublimity and simplicity together, the strongest sense and the plainest language! How can any one that would 'speak as the oracles of God' use harder words than are found here?"*

His first extempore sermon was preached in All Hallows Church, Lombard Street, in 1735. He went there to hear Dr. Heylyn, but as he did not come, Wesley yielded to the request of the churchwardens and preached to the crowded congregation.† On the last Sunday of 1788, he preached again in that church. He told the attendant that as he was going up the pulpit stairs in 1735, he hesitated, and returned in much confusion to the vestry. A woman (the church-keeper) asked what was the matter, and when she found that Wesley had no sermon, she put her hand on his shoulder with the words, "Is that all? Cannot you trust God for a sermon?" Her question produced such an effect upon him that he preached with great freedom and acceptance, and never afterwards took a sermon into the pulpit.‡

* Works, iii., 146, 230, 483. † *Ibid.*, iv., 68.

‡ *Methodist Magazine*, 1825, p. 105. These facts were printed on a broad sheet by a Methodist churchwarden of All Hallows, and a copy, strongly framed, is hung up in the vestry of that church.

Wesley preached in gown and cassock even in the open air.* His clear voice was heard throughout Gwennap Amphitheatre. At Birstal in 1753 he was afraid that the people would not hear, but even those who sat in John Nelson's windows, a hundred yards off, distinctly caught every word.† On another occasion it was found by measurement that his voice could be clearly heard for a hundred and forty yards. Sometimes he took his stand on tables, sometimes on walls. At Haworth, where his friend Grimshaw was the minister, Wesley found a little platform erected outside one of the church windows. After prayers the people flocked into the churchyard. Wesley then stepped through the window, and addressed the multitude gathered from all parts.‡

The power of his preaching is evident from every page of the journals. There were cases of imposture and hysterical excitement, but allowing for these, no preaching of the Evangelical Revival produced such effect on the conscience as John Wesley's. John Nelson, who had long been seeking peace, felt his heart beat like the pendulum of a clock when he heard him at Moorfields, and thought the whole discourse was aimed at him. His words were often "as a hammer and a flame." § He tells us that when speaking on the righteousness of faith he was constrained to break off in the midst of his discourse. "Our hearts were so filled with a sense of the love of God, and our mouths with prayer and thanksgiving. When we were somewhat satisfied herewith, I went on to call sinners to the salvation ready to be revealed." ‖ At one place a number of people were seated on a long wall built of loose stones. In the

* Works, i., 430.
† *Ibid.*, ii., 291.
‡ *Ibid.*, iii., 67, 260.
§ Works, i., 343.
‖ *Ibid.*, i., 380.

middle of Wesley's sermon this wall fell down all at once. None screamed; few altered their position. No one was hurt; they simply seemed to have dropped into a lower seat. During this strange incident there was no interruption of the sermon or of the marked attention of the congregation.*

The scenes in Epworth churchyard in 1743 bear witness to Wesley's power as a preacher. The gentleman drinking in every word, Wesley's personal appeal to him, and his touching answer, "Sinner indeed"—that incident forms one of the most impressive scenes of Wesley's ministry.† The conquest of the mob at Bolton‡ in 1749 is not less striking. At York in 1753 Wesley says, "I began preaching at seven, and God applied it to the hearts of the hearers. Tears and groans were on every side, among high and low. God, as it were, bowed the heavens and came down. The flame of love went before Him; the rocks were broken in pieces, and the mountains flowed down at His presence." Finding many fashionable people in his congregation at the Court House at Castlebar in 1771, he says, "I spoke with such closeness and pungency, as I cannot do but at some peculiar seasons. It is indeed the gift of God, and cannot be attained by all the efforts of nature and art united." His beautiful expressions, "God Himself made the application,"§ "Truly God preached to their hearts,"‖ show how he recognised the Divine blessing.

The applications of Wesley's sermons were never slurred. The discourses in the Scotch kirks struck him as specially defective in this respect.¶ On one occasion

* Works, ii., 55.
† See p. 164.
‡ See p. 185.
§ Works, iv., 83, 277.
‖ *Ibid.*, iv., 486; v., 293.
¶ *Ibid.*, iv., 155.

he speaks of the excellent truths he there listened to, but adds, "As there was no application, it is likely to do as much good as the singing of a lark."* His own experience in Scotland was not encouraging. Though he never met with people who loved preaching like his friends across the Tweed, he often felt helpless in the presence of those self-contained hearers. "Use the most cutting words, and apply them in the most pointed manner, still they *hear*, but *feel* no more than the seats they sit upon!"

Wesley was always careful in his choice of texts. A young gentleman at Armagh, in June, 1787, observed that he had quite mistaken his subject—his sermon was suitable for the vulgar, but not for gentlefolk.† He did not know Wesley's method, however. A friend once complained because he preached to a respectable congregation from the words, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" That text would have done for Billingsgate, but not for such hearers, was the criticism. Wesley replied that if he had been in Billingsgate, he should have preached from "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It was his rule to preach the Law to the careless. ‡ To speak of justification by faith before people desired to find it was, he felt, only likely to do harm; when people were "ripe for the Gospel," then Wesley preached it with power. He availed himself of all circumstances that might render his message impressive. A passing bell was tolling out as he stood in Llanelly churchyard, and led him strongly to enforce the words, "It is appointed unto men once to die." § A lady of great ability, deep piety, and a fine person had died between two of his visits

* Works, iv., 272.
† *Ibid*, iv., 384.
‡ Works, iv., 95, 460.
§ *Ibid.*, iv., 165.

to Castle Cary. Wesley therefore earnestly applied the words, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave." "All the people seemed to feel it."

Wesley was sometimes so drawn out, that he scarcely knew how to close his sermon. At Berwick in 1748* the word of God was "as a fire and a hammer." He began again and again after he thought he had done, and his words grew more and more weighty. At Stanley, near Gloucester, in 1739,† he preached on a little green near the town. "I was strengthened," he says, "to speak as I never did before; and continued speaking near two hours, the darkness of the night and a little lightning not lessening the number, but increasing the seriousness, of the hearers." Twelve days later at Cardiff almost the whole town came together. Wesley spoke on the Beatitudes with such enlargement of heart, that he knew not how to give over, so that they "continued three hours." When expounding the ninth chapter of Romans at the Foundery during the Calvinistic debates of 1741, he was constrained to speak an hour longer than usual. At Birstal, in April, 1745, he writes, "I was constrained to continue my discourse there near an hour longer than usual; God pouring out such a blessing, that I knew not how to leave off." Three years before he had another long service there. "I began about seven, but could not conclude till half an hour past nine."‡ Twelve days later he was holding his farewell service in Epworth churchyard. A vast multitude had assembled from all parts, among whom Wesley continued nearly three hours. Even then he and his congregation scarcely knew how to part. In the last years of his life his sermons were generally short,

* Works, ii., 105. † *Ibid.*, i., 229. ‡ *Ibid.*, i., 375.

seldom more than half an hour in length.* In 1765 Wesley says that he preached eight hundred sermons a year.† During his half-century of itinerant life he travelled a quarter of a million miles, and delivered more than forty thousand sermons. Such a restless and far-reaching itinerancy exerted an enormous influence on behalf of evangelical religion throughout the United Kingdom.

Leslie Stephen‡ pays a high tribute to Wesley as a writer. "He shows remarkable literary power; but we feel that his writings are means to a direct practical end, rather than valuable in themselves, either in form or substance. It would be difficult to find any letters more direct, forcible, and pithy in expression. He goes straight to the mark, without one superfluous flourish. He writes as a man confined within the narrowest limits of time and space, whose thoughts are so well in hand, that he can say everything needful within these limits. The compression gives emphasis, and never causes confusion. The letters, in other words, are the work of one who for more than half a century was accustomed to turn to account every minute of his eighteen working hours."

Wesley's service to popular literature entitles him to a distinguished place among the benefactors of the eighteenth century. Most of his writings and his brother's hymns were published at prices that put them within the reach of all. Many were in the form of penny tracts, so that even the poorest could purchase them. In 1771 to 1774 he published an edition of his own works, in weekly numbers of seventy-two pages, stitched in blue paper, at sixpence each. They were afterwards issued in thirty-two small volumes. Particular attention was paid to the

* Whitehead, ii., 467. † Works, iii., 211.

‡ "History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," ii., 409.

quality of the paper, and new type was cast for this work. Whilst this edition was passing through the press, Wesley writes, "I have laboured as much as many writers; and all my labour has gained me, in seventy years, a debt of five or six hundred pounds." * In later years, however, he found, to his surprise, that his cheap publications had made him rich.† He created an appetite for reading among his people, and as the Societies grew, the demand for his books became enormous.

Wesley published little before his mission to Georgia. A collection of prayers for every day in the week, published in 1733, was the beginning of his strength. Next year he prepared an abridgment of Norris's "Treatise on Christian Perfection." His father's letter of advice to a young clergyman, a sermon of his own on "The Trouble and Rest of Good Men," and the "Imitation of Christ," in two editions, were printed in 1735. He also published a hymn-book at Charlestown, America, in 1737. This represents Wesley's literary activity before 1738. From that time to the end of his life he made as abundant use of the press as of the pulpit. His journals represent the history of the Evangelical Revival. The hymnology was mainly his brother's contribution to the great cause to which they were both devoted heart and soul. John Wesley took his share in this work, however. One original hymn of his, a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer in three parts, will be found in the present Wesleyan Hymn Book.‡ There may be others, but as the early collections of poetry were published in the name of both brothers, we have sometimes no means of ascertaining what hymns John Wesley himself may have contributed. His translations from the

* Works, iii., 503. † *Ibid.*, vii., 9. ‡ Nos. 235, 236, 237.

German, however, bear witness to his power as a poet. There are twenty-one of these in the Wesleyan Hymn Book, with one from the French and one from the Spanish. They are not mere translations. Wesley enriches the thought, and adds greatly to the force of the original. In January, 1740, Molther, the Moravian minister at Fetter Lane, asked Wesley to supply him with a rendering of a German hymn. To this request Methodism owes one of its most treasured hymns:—

> Now I have found the ground wherein
> Sure my soul's anchor may remain,
> The wounds of Jesus, for my sin
> Before the world's foundation slain,
> Whose mercy shall unshaken stay
> When heaven and earth are fled away.*

One of his finest translations is from Scheffler. We can only quote one verse:—

> I thank Thee, uncreated Sun,
> That Thy bright beams on me have shined;
> I thank Thee, who hast overthrown
> My foes, and healed my wounded mind;
> I thank Thee, whose enlivening voice
> Bids my free heart in Thee rejoice.†

Tersteegen's hymn beginning

> Thou hidden love of God ‡

was translated by Wesley in Georgia in 1736.§

Wesley not only contributed to the preparation of the Methodist hymnology: he taught his people to sing. In 1742 he published "A Collection of Tunes as they are

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* Wesleyan Hymn Book, No. 189.
† *Ibid.*, No. 210.
‡ *Ibid.*, No. 344.
§ "Christian Perfection."

commonly sung at the Foundery." Mr. Lampe, the theatrical composer, who was converted by reading Wesley's "Farther Appeal," rendered good service to Methodism by preparing a tune-book for the use of the united Societies. In sending Boyce's "Cathedral Music" to his brother as a present for his eldest boy, Wesley adds, "A little you can perhaps pick out for the use of our plain people." His preachers were expected to take special oversight of the singing. "Exhort every one in the congregation to sing," he says; "in every large Society let them learn to sing; recommend our tune-book everywhere."

Wesley's "Sermons" had an enormous circulation. They must not be taken altogether to represent his ordinary preaching. The substance of his discourses is doubtless to be found in them, but they were prepared for the press rather than for the pulpit. The first series, consisting of fifty-three sermons, was published in four small volumes between 1746 and 1760. These four volumes, with Wesley's "Notes on the New Testament," form the doctrinal standard of Methodism. Henry Moore says that after some years of labour in all parts of the country, Wesley felt the necessity of preparing some concise, clear, and full "body of divinity" to guide his preachers and people. After thinking much on this subject, he retired to the house of his friend Mrs. Blackwell at Lewisham, where he composed at several visits the first four volumes of his sermons.* He simply took his Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament with him. His purpose was to furnish "plain truth for plain people." "My design," he says in his preface, "is, in some sense, to forget all that I have ever read in my life."

One paragraph of the preface is so striking a revelation

* Moore, ii., 403.

of his motives and methods, that we must not omit it. Wesley never wrote anything more lofty in its tone. "To candid reasonable men, I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God, just hovering over the great gulf; till a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing, the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came down from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it; here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri.* Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book, for this end: to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of lights. 'Lord, is it not Thy word, If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God? Thou givest liberally, and upbraidest not. Thou hast said, if any man be willing to do Thy will, he shall know. I am willing to do; let me know Thy will.' I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. I meditate thereon, with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God, and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach."

The Second Series consists of sermons prepared for his Magazine, and published in four volumes in 1788. They

are not so doctrinal, and have more variety and literary illustration. Other sermons were published afterwards. That on "Faith is the evidence of things not seen" was finished only six weeks before Wesley's death. His pen was busy to the last. In March, 1790, he wrote his sermon on the Wedding Garment. "My eyes," he says, "are now waxed dim; my natural force is abated. However, while I can, I would fain do a little for God before I drop into the dust." Wesley's "Notes on the New Testament" are singularly concise. His great aim was to make them as short as possible, that the comment might neither swallow up nor obscure the text. His revision of the text is admirable. Readers of the Notes were put into possession of some of the best results which the New Testament Company gave the public in 1881.

Wesley's Christian Library, in fifty volumes, was his boldest literary venture. He abridged the choicest works of practical divinity, beginning with the Apostolic Fathers. He wished to place the whole range of such literature within the reach both of his preachers and his people. This publication entailed a loss of two hundred pounds. It is remarkable that he did not lose more by so great an undertaking. Wesley's Magazine, of which the first number was published in January, 1778, laid a heavy literary burden upon him. His editor was not competent for the revision of the press, so that many errors crept into its pages, greatly to Wesley's distress. The *Arminian Magazine* gave Methodism an official organ, in which its distinctive teaching could be explained and defended. But its hold on the Societies was largely due to the fact that all phases of Methodist life were preserved in its pages. The biographies of preachers and Methodist people make its volumes a mine of history. For a Methodist a place in the Magazine was something like a niche in the Abbey for

a statesman or a poet. The Magazine, which has been issued monthly ever since 1778, was never so attractive or popular as it is to-day.

Wesley's "Appeals," published in 1744 and 1745, did much to explain the true character of Methodism. They vindicate Wesley's position and work with mingled dignity and tenderness, which must have been irresistible with reasonable men. His desire for the salvation of others breathes in every line of the "Earnest Appeal." He calmly weighs all objections, and shows how faithful Methodism was to the doctrines of Scripture and the Church of England. Doddridge wrote to him in 1746, "I have been reading (I will not pretend to tell you with what strong emotion) the fourth edition of your 'Farther Appeals,' concerning which I shall only say, that I have written upon the title-page, 'How forcible are right words!'"* Three months before the date of this letter, Wesley mentions in his journal† that two clergymen who had just read his "Farther Appeal" invited him to call on them. "I thought," he adds, "the publication of this tract would have enraged the world above measure. And, on the contrary, it seems nothing ever was published which softened them so much!" On January 6th, 1748, Wesley was visited by "Counsellor G——, many years eminent for an utter disregard of all religion." A lady, whom he had attacked for her Methodism, said to him, "Sir, here is a fuller answer to your objections, than I am able to give." She handed him a copy of the "Earnest Appeal." By this he was thoroughly convinced that there was something in religion. He told Wesley all that was in his heart, and was much affected at the watchnight service he attended. The same "Appeal" led to

* Moore, ii., 101. † Works, ii., 6.

the conversion of Mr. Lampe, who had been a Deist for many years.* In September, 1748, Wesley took breakfast at Wadebridge with Dr. W——, who had been for many years "a steady, rational infidel. But it pleased God to touch his heart in reading the 'Appeal;' and he is now labouring to be altogether a Christian." The prejudice which Mrs. Gwynne, of Garth, Mrs. Charles Wesley's mother, felt against the Wesleys, melted away when she read this "Appeal."

Controversial writing was always distasteful to Wesley. When he began to write his second letter to Bishop Lavington, who had compared the Methodists to the Papists, he describes his task with a sigh.† "Heavy work, such as I should never choose; but sometimes it must be done. Well might the ancient say, 'God made practical divinity necessary, the devil controversial. But it is necessary: we must "resist the devil," or he will not "flee from us."'" "Oh that I might dispute with no man!" he says on another occasion. "But if I must dispute, let it be with men of sense."‡ Wesley's controversial writings are brief and direct. The real issue is kept resolutely in view; all disguises are torn away; not a word is wasted. Wesley was attacked from every quarter by men of all shades of thought, but his skill in argument and the strength of his cause brought him off victorious in these encounters. When he discovered errors of scholarship, he did not mention them in his reply, but sent a private letter to the writer. For this he received the special thanks of some of his most distinguished opponents.

The controversy with Dr. Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, was one of the most painful Wesley ever had. Southey

* Works, i., 532. † *Ibid.*, ii., 247.
‡ Moore, ii., 415; Southey, ii., 212.

considers that he did not treat the Bishop with the urbanity which he showed to all other opponents. The fact is that Lavington, who wrote anonymously, indulged a spirit sadly unbecoming such a subject and such a writer. Miss Wedgwood says,* He "deserves to be coupled with the men who flung dead cats and rotten eggs at the Methodists, not with those who assailed their tenets with arguments, or even serious rebuke." Wesley clearly pointed this out: "Any scribbler with a middling share of low wit, not encumbered with good-nature or modesty, may raise a laugh on those whom he cannot confute, and run them down whom he dares not look in the face. By this means, even a comparer of Methodists and Papists may blaspheme the great work of God, not only without blame, but with applause, at least from readers of his own stamp. But it is high time, sir, you should leave your skulking place. Come out, and let us look each other in the face." The controversy continued for two years. It is pleasant to add that in August, 1762, a fortnight before the Bishop's death, Wesley was at Exeter Cathedral. "I was well pleased," he says, "to partake of the Lord's Supper with my old opponent, Bishop Lavington. Oh, may we sit down together in the kingdom of our Father!"

Wesley's masterly treatise on "Original Sin" was written in answer to Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, whom Fletcher calls "the wisest Arian, Pelagian, and Socinian of our age." In this work Wesley carefully observed his own rule laid down in a letter to Dr. Taylor himself, whom he greatly esteemed "as a person of uncommon sense and learning." "We may agree," he says, "to leave each other's person and character absolutely untouched, while

* "John Wesley," p. 313.

we sum up and answer the several arguments advanced as plainly and closely as we can." The treatise has therefore permanent value as a careful discussion of the important subject of which it treats.

Wesley's tracts are models of brevity and of searching appeal. "A Word to a Sabbath-breaker," "A Word to a Drunkard," "A Word to a Smuggler," "A Word to a Methodist," are the titles of some of these vigorous writings. They were composed in moments of quiet, snatched during the incessant labours of his itinerancy, and were spread broadcast through the country. Wesley was one of the pioneers of tract-writing and distribution. "Two-and-forty years ago," he writes, "having a desire to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than any I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny apiece, and afterwards several larger. Some of these had such a sale as I never thought of; and by this means I unawares became rich."* One glimpse of Wesley's literary activity at the age of eighty-three is given in his journal for September, 1786: "I now applied myself in earnest to the writing of Mr. Fletcher's life, having procured the best materials I could. To this I dedicated all the time I could spare till November from five in the morning till eight at night. These are my studying hours. I cannot write longer without hurting my eyes." By such unwearied labour the press as well as the pulpit was made to serve the cause of the Revival.

Wesley's charity was only limited by his income. At Oxford he lived on twenty-eight pounds, and gave away the rest.† As his income increased, his charities extended. He thus distributed more than thirty thousand pounds during his lifetime.‡ He received an allowance of thirty

* Works, vii., 9. † See p. 65. ‡ Moore, ii., 434.

pounds a year from the London Society; the country Methodists very occasionally paid his travelling expenses. Wesley's private charities were drawn from the income of his Book Room. In 1782 he spent £5 19*s.* on his clothes, gave away £356 himself, and £237 13*s.* through his book steward. In 1783 the amount expended was £832 1*s.* 6*d.*; in 1784, £534 17*s.* 6*d.*; in 1785, £851 12*s.*; in 1786, £738 5*s.*; in 1787 (including travelling expenses), £961 4*s.*; in 1788, £738 4*s.*; in 1789, £766 and travelling expenses, £60. Even this statement does not fully represent the case. Samuel Bradburn said that between the Conference of 1780 and that of the following year Wesley distributed more than £1,400 in private charities.* He told Bradburn in 1787 that he never gave away less than £1,000 a year.

One or two instances will show how much Wesley did to relieve those in distress. At Bath he gave four guineas to save from jail some one who had already been arrested.† In London, in February, 1766, a gentleman who had been defrauded of a large fortune, and was now starving, called upon him. Wesley wished to help him, but he had run short of money. He therefore asked him to call again. Just before the time appointed some one put twenty guineas into Wesley's hands, so that he was able to clothe this man from head to foot and send him back to Dublin. Once, when his chaise stuck fast in an Irish slough, he walked forward, leaving his friends to get the carriage out. A poor man who had been turned out of doors because he could not pay twenty shillings due for rent overtook him in deep distress. When Wesley gave him a guinea, the man knelt down in the road to pray for his benefactor.‡

* Tyerman, iii., 616. † Dunn's Life of Adam Clarke, p. 73.
‡ Works, iv., 123.

Then he cried out in his joy, "Oh, I shall have a house! I shall have a house over my head!" Whenever poor people thanked him, Wesley used courteously to lift his hat.* His patience was sometimes sorely tried. A clamouring crowd of beggars once surrounded his carriage at Norwich. He turned round and asked somewhat sharply whether they thought he could support the poor everywhere. Entering his carriage, he slipped, and fell. "It is all right, Joseph," he said, "it is all right; it is only what I deserved, for if I had no *other* good to give, I ought at least to have given them good words." †

Wesley's personal charity was only a part of his service for the poor. For more than forty years all the class money given by the London Society, amounting to several hundred pounds a year, was distributed to those who were in distress.‡ He did not confine his care to his own Societies. At Bristol, in January, 1740, the severe frost threw many out of work. They had no assistance from the parish, and were in the last extremity. Wesley made three collections in one week, and was thus able to feed a hundred, sometimes a hundred and fifty, a day. The twelve or thirteen hundred French prisoners at Knowle, near Bristol, whom he visited in October, 1759, also found in him a zealous friend and helper. The evening after his visit he preached a special sermon, in which he pleaded for these strangers so earnestly, that the sum of twenty-four pounds was raised to provide them with warm clothing. Wesley also wrote a letter on their behalf to *Lloyd's Evening Post*. The distress they suffered from want of clothing was soon abundantly relieved.

* Tyerman, iii., 616.

† Everett's "Adam Clarke Portrayed."

‡ Moore, ii., 108.

Wesley was a father to the Methodist people. In November, 1740, he tells us that the clothes brought by friends who could spare them were distributed among the poor of the London Society. An arrangement was also made at the same time by which for four months the Society room at the Foundery was turned into a place for carding and spinning cotton.* Twelve of the poorest members were thus employed and maintained for very little more than the produce of their labour. Next May Wesley made another request for clothing and for contributions of a penny a week. He wished to employ all the women who were out of work in knitting, for which they were to be paid the ordinary price. Whatever they needed in addition to their earnings was to be added. Twelve persons were appointed to inspect the work, and visit all the sick in their district every other day. In 1743 London was mapped out into twenty-three divisions, for each of which two volunteer visitors were appointed.† Great spiritual and temporal good was the result. The sick and poor were both relieved and comforted by these timely ministries.

In 1744 Wesley raised fifty pounds by a collection for the deserving poor, which he began at once to lay out on clothes and shoes. Ten days later he made another collection; then he went through the classes begging for further help. The appeal to the classes and three collections yielded about two hundred pounds, with which three hundred and sixty or seventy poor people were provided with clothing.‡ Similar efforts were made in other places. At Newcastle he made a collection to relieve the poor, and at one place in Ireland the clergyman of the parish

* Works, i., 292. † *Ibid.*, viii., 254.
‡ *Ibid.*, i., 451, 455, 458.

stood at the door after Wesley's sermon to receive the people's help for a family in trouble.* Sometimes Wesley was overwhelmed by the distress with which he had to cope. In November, 1750, he began to take an account of all his people who were in want, but the numbers increased so fast upon him, particularly about Moorfields, that he "saw no possibility of relieving them all, unless the Lord should, as it were, make windows in heaven." On the last day of 1772, the great embarrassment caused by the necessities of the poor drove him and his officers to special prayer.

At Bristol, in September, 1783, Wesley collected ninety pounds for his poor members. But the most touching and interesting glimpse of the aged philanthropist is in January, 1785, when he was in his eighty-second year. At the new year coals and bread were distributed among the poor of the Society. Wesley saw that they needed clothes also, and set out to beg the money. The streets were filled with melting snow, which lay ankle-deep on the ground, so that his feet were steeped in snow-water nearly from morning to evening.† Four days of such travelling all over London brought on a violent flux; but his friend Dr. Whitehead came to his relief. Two years later Wesley made another begging tour of the metropolis, which yielded two hundred pounds. Six or seven of his people gave ten pounds each, but Wesley was disappointed that he did not find forty or fifty to help in the same way. He was anxious to provide for two hundred cases of distress.

One of the most useful of Wesley's funds was a lending stock. It began in July, 1746, with a capital of about thirty pounds, out of which two hundred and fifty-five persons were relieved in eighteen months.‡ The capital

* Works, ii., 413, 443. † *Ibid.*, iv., 295. ‡ *Ibid.*, ii., 17, 81, 270.

was afterwards raised to fifty pounds, and more than twenty years later Wesley's "strong words" lifted it to one hundred and twenty pounds. The stewards attended every Tuesday morning to do business. Loans of twenty shillings and upwards were made, to be repaid weekly within three months.* Mr. Lackington, the bookseller who secured the shop in which he started business through the kindness of the Methodists, received a loan of five pounds from this fund in the year 1774 to increase his little stock of books. He prospered so greatly that the year after Wesley's death his profits for the twelve months were five thousand pounds.† For a long time he sold one hundred thousand volumes annually. Lackington says ‡ that he has known Wesley give ten or twenty pounds at once to tradesmen who were in need. He adds that "in going a few yards from his study to the pulpit, Wesley generally distributed a handful of half-crowns to poor old people of his Society." The charity schools at the Foundery and West Street also rendered great service.

Wesley's medical knowledge helped him to relieve much suffering. In 1746, the same year that the lending stock was started, he began to give medicines to the poor. Thirty came the first day.§ In six months six hundred cases had been treated; two hundred were sensibly better, fifty-one thoroughly cured. This was done at an expense of thirty pounds.‖ This success led Wesley to form a dispensary at Bristol, which soon had two hundred patients. Wesley's shrewd

* Works, viii., 257.

† Life of James Lackington, Letters 21, 40, 41; also Lackington's "Confessions."

‡ Life, Letter 29.

§ Works, ii., 39, 59, 81.

‖ *Ibid.*, xii., 83.

observations on medical works show how carefully he sought the best light of his time. Electricity greatly interested him. During the first year he supplied medicines to the poor he went, with some friends, to see the electrical experiments in London.* He carefully read Dr. Franklin's "Letters" and Dr. Priestley's "ingenious book."† We find him advising a woman, who was suffering from a stubborn paralytic disorder, to try the new remedy.‡ She was electrified, and found immediate relief. Wesley afterwards procured the proper apparatus, and ordered several persons to be electrified.§ From this time he fixed certain hours every week, then an hour every day, "wherein any that desired it might try the virtue of this surprising medicine." Patients became so numerous, that they had to be met at four different parts of London. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, Wesley says, received unspeakable good.‖ He himself was no stranger to the benefits of electrical treatment. After his serious illness in Ireland his hand shook so that he could hardly write his name. A drive of four or five hours over very rough pavement electrified him so thoroughly, he tells us, that his hand was quite steady. In 1780 we find a medical man in attendance twice a week, for three hours each time, at the chapel-house in West Street, London. He prescribed and provided medicines for any who showed their tickets of membership or came with a note from Wesley or his preachers. If any were too ill to come, they were visited in their own homes.

Wherever Wesley went he made use of his medical skill. His favourite remedy for consumptive tendencies

* Works, ii., 73.
† *Ibid.*, iii., 280, 311.
‡ *Ibid.*, iii., 279.
§ Works, iii., 388.
‖ *Ibid.*, iv., 50.

was a country journey, and several friends were invited to share his itinerancy with a view to the restoration of their health.* His "Primitive Physic," of which a twenty-third edition was published in the year of his death, grew out of his medical attention to the poor. For nearly thirty years before its publication he had made anatomy and physic the diversion of his leisure hours. He had studied them with special attention before he went to Georgia. His dispensary in 1747 was started with the assistance of an apothecary and an experienced surgeon. Wesley himself now studied medicine more carefully. He published his "Primitive Physic" in 1747 or 1748. Its quaint remedies often provoke a smile. Pounded garlic applied to the soles of the feet was a "never-failing" remedy for hoarseness and loss of voice. Boiled nettles and warm treacle were sovereign cures for colds and swellings.† An eminent medical man, however, some years ago pronounced the book incomparably superior to any non-professional work of the same date.‡

A writer in the *Gloucester Times* § states that a poor widow, who had several times heard Wesley when he was in that district, was in deep trouble about her only daughter, who was worn to a shadow with a distressing cough, and had severe pains in her side and back. Her skin was yellow, and her legs much swollen. Whilst sitting one day in great distress, a neighbour looked in and asked if she was not aware that her friend Mr. Wesley was preaching that night at Gloucester. The widow at once resolved to ask his advice for her child. Wesley listened to her

* Works, ii., 240; iv., 82.
† *Ibid.*, iv., 46, 192; ii., 132.
‡ Rev. Romilly Hall's Lecture on Wesley.
§ July, 1885.

sad account, and said that he would call next morning. "I am to preach at Tewkesbury at twelve o'clock, and shall pass your cottage." When he came, he told the girl, "I have thought over your state, and will give your mother a remedy which, with God's blessing, I trust will do you good; and if God spares my life, I will call upon you when I come this way again." The medicine led to the girl's complete restoration. In March, 1790, exactly a year after his first visit, Wesley came again. He said to the widow, "I see that you are blessed by God with faculties to use the medicines mercifully given by God for our use, so that I will instruct you in some further remedies that I have discovered lately, and as my body will soon be laid with the clods of the valley, waiting for the resurrection, I shall like to give you these remedies. Use them for God, and may He bless you, and be with you." Wesley left with her a small manuscript, in his own handwriting, containing instructions for the treatment of prevalent diseases. They won for the widow the name of "the village doctor." Her daughter's son, who became a skilful physician in the north of England, afterwards acknowledged that Wesley's remedies, handed down to him by his grandmother, had been the most successful he had prescribed during fifty years of professional life.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### WESLEY'S LAST YEARS AND DEATH.

WESLEY made two pleasant excursions with some friends to Holland in the summers of 1783 and 1786. The notes of his tours show how thoroughly the old man enjoyed the change of scene. Nothing seemed to escape his attention. The cleanliness of the streets and houses was such that he could not find a speck of dirt. The women and children seemed the most beautiful he had ever seen. "They were surprisingly fair, and had an inexpressible air of innocence in their countenances." He had much pleasant intercourse with pious people, and returned to his work at home refreshed and cheered by his three weeks of holiday. In the summer of 1787 Wesley spent nearly four weeks in the Channel Islands. Methodism had already been introduced into those lovely islands. Wesley's visits greatly encouraged the workers there. He preached every day to large congregations, and was everywhere received with marked respect. The beauty and fruitfulness of the islands made a great impression on him, whilst the kindness of friends and the pleasant change of scene added to his preaching tour the charm of a summer holiday.

Wesley lived three years after his brother Charles. Those years were full of honour. The Methodist Societies felt that their founder could not long be with them, and hung eagerly upon his lips. His visits to all parts of the

country were public holidays. Multitudes thronged to listen to the venerable preacher, who had endeared himself to all by his labour of love. Increasing infirmities did not check his restless itinerancy. On the first anniversary of his brother's death he landed at Dublin on his last visit. He remained in Ireland for three months and a half. Gravel Walk House, he says, was "filled as I never saw it before; and they all seemed to hear as for life." Another of his congregations was a brilliant assembly. Honourables and Right Honourables were present, and he felt that all were given into his hands. At Pallas, near Limerick, all the neighbouring gentry came to hear him. No place would hold the crowd, so that Wesley was obliged to stand outside. "The people, as it were, swallowed every word; and great was our rejoicing in the Lord."

Such scenes marked every step of Wesley's progress through Ireland. One instance may show how he was received in the homes of the people. When he was about to leave a house where he had stayed, "one and another fell on their knees all round me, and most of them burst out into tears and earnest cries, the like of which I have seldom heard; so that we scarce knew how to part." When Wesley embarked for England, on July 12th, 1789, multitudes followed him to his vessel. Before he went on board they sang a hymn together; then Wesley fell on his knees and implored God's blessing on their families, their Church, and their country. It was a bitter but a blessed hour. Not a few fell upon his neck and kissed him. The ship moved from the shore he was nevermore to see whilst the venerable patriarch stood on deck, with his hands lifted in prayer for Ireland.*

The vessel was the *Princess Royal*, of Parkgate, the

* Tyerman, iii., 578.

neatest and most elegant packet Wesley had ever seen. The company on board was exceedingly agreeable, and he slept as well as if he had been in his own bed. Next day he shut himself up in his chaise on deck and read the life of a man who claimed to be the premier nobleman of Ireland, one of the most cool, deliberate, and relentless murderers Wesley ever heard of. He felt such interest in this extraordinary story, that he had already devoted nearly two pages of his journal to an account of him. In the evening Wesley and his friends sang a hymn on deck, which soon drew the company around him. Without delay he began to preach on "It is appointed unto men once to die." All seemed affected by the solemn message. This was a fitting close to Wesley's visits to Ireland.

On his return to England, he suffered much from thirst and fever, but Dr. Easton, whom he consulted in Manchester, gave him medicine, which soon relieved him. A month after he landed from Ireland he paid his last visit to Cornwall. At Falmouth the change wrought by God's grace filled him with thankfulness. "The last time I was here," he writes, "above forty years ago, I was taken prisoner by an immense mob, gaping and roaring like lions. But how is the tide turned! High and low now lined the street, from one end of the town to the other, out of stark love and kindness, gaping and staring as if the King were going by. In the evening I preached on the smooth top of the hill, at a small distance from the sea, to the largest congregation I have ever seen in Cornwall, except in or near Redruth. And such a time I have not known before since I returned from Ireland. God moved wonderfully on the hearts of the people, who all seem to know the day of their visitation."

Wesley's reception at other places was equally enthusiastic. He had scarcely ever spent such a week in Cornwall

before. More than twenty-five thousand assembled at Gwennap Amphitheatre, the scene of so many memorable Cornish services. When he made a passing call at Marazion, the preaching-place was filled in a few minutes, so that he could not refrain from giving them a short sermon. In the market-place at St. Ives, on August 25th, 1789, "well-nigh all the town attended, and with all possible seriousness." "Surely," he adds, "forty years' labour has not been in vain here." This was Wesley's last visit to Cornwall, the Methodist county.

Wesley's health was wonderful. He had suffered much on several occasions from the family gout,* of which his mother died, but abstemiousness and constant exercise had helped him to throw off this weakness. In 1782 he writes, "I entered into my eightieth year, but, blessed be God, my time is not 'labour and sorrow.' I find no more pain or bodily infirmities than at five-and-twenty. This I still impute (1) to the power of God, fitting me for what He calls me to; (2) to my still travelling four or five thousand miles a year; (3) to my sleeping, night or day, whenever I want it; (4) to my rising at a set hour; and (5) to my constant preaching, particularly in the morning."

On January 1st, 1790, he wrote, "I am now an old man, decayed from hand to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much; my mouth is hot and dry every morning; I have a lingering fever almost every day; my motion is weak and slow. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labour: I can preach and write still." Henry Moore, who lived with Wesley at this time, was surprised at this description. Wesley still rose at four, and went through the work of the day with much of his old vigour, and with astonishing resolution. His own state-

* Works, xiv., 266.

ment, therefore, sets Wesley's devotion to his work in a striking light. One of the most interesting services of the year was held in West London. "I preached a sermon to the children at West Street Chapel. They flocked together from every quarter; and truly God was in the midst of them, applying those words, 'Come, ye little children, hearken unto me; and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.'"

On the 1st of March, 1790, he issued a circular giving the dates for his visits to various towns in his northern journey. He still caught and treasured up those pleasant little facts which give such life to his journals. Wigan, for many years proverbially called "wicked Wigan," was not what it once had been. The people, he says, "in general had taken a softer mould." Other touches show that Wesley's interest in everything he saw was unabated. Crowds assembled to hear him. On Sunday, August 4th, he preached at the cross in Epworth market-place to such a congregation as was never seen in the town before. A correspondent of the *Methodist Recorder** mentions that he had conversed with an old Methodist in one of our villages who "stated that a large number of Wesley's admirers accompanied him on the way from one town or village to his next appointment, never leaving him till they were met by another company coming from an opposite direction, to whom they safely delivered their precious charge." The women walked on one side of the road, and the men on the other. Such scenes were frequent in these last days.

When he visited Colchester on October 11th, Wesley had a wonderful congregation. Rich and poor, clergy and laity, assembled to do honour to the old man and

* November 6th, 1885.

listen to his message. Henry Crabb Robinson heard him in the great round meeting-house. One of his preachers stood on each side of him in the wide pulpit, holding up the veteran. "His feeble voice was barely audible; but his reverend countenance, especially his long white locks, formed a picture never to be forgotten. There was a vast crowd of lovers and admirers. It was for the most part a pantomime, but the pantomime went to the heart. Of the kind, I never saw anything comparable to it in after-life." After the people had sung a verse, Wesley rose and said, "It gives me a great pleasure to find that you have not lost your singing, neither men nor women. You have not forgotten a single note. And I hope, by the assistance of God, which enables you to sing well, you may do all other things well." A universal "Amen" followed. A little ejaculation or prayer of three or four words followed each division of the sermon. After the last prayer, Wesley "rose up and addressed the people on liberality of sentiment, and spoke much against refusing to join with any congregation on account of difference in opinion." *

Crabbe, the poet, who heard him a few days later at Lowestoft, was much struck by Wesley's venerable appearance and the way in which he quoted Anacreon's lines with an application to himself:—

Oft am I by woman told,
"Poor Anacreon! thou grow'st old;
See, thine hairs are falling all:
Poor Anacreon! how they fall!"
Whether I grow old or no,
By these signs I do not know;
But this I need not to be told,
'Tis time to *live*, if I grow old.

* "Diary, etc., of Henry Crabb Robinson," vol. i., p. 20.

At Lynn every clergyman in the town was in his congregation, except one who was lame. "They are all," he says in one of the last lines he wrote in his journal, "prejudiced in favour of the Methodists, as indeed are most of the townsmen, who give a fair proof by contributing so much to our Sunday-schools, that there is near twenty pounds in hand."

The rest of the year was devoted to short journeys in his "home circuit"—the counties lying around London. His last "field-preaching" was at Winchelsea on October 6th, 1790. Many a pilgrimage has been made to the large ash-tree under which Wesley took his stand. The tree was near a ruined church. Most of the inhabitants of the place listened while he spoke from those words, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent, and believe the Gospel." "It seemed," Wesley wrote, "as if all that heard were, for the present, almost persuaded to be Christians." One who was with him bears witness that "the word was attended with mighty power, and the tears of the people flowed in torrents." The old field-preacher had not lost his power.

In these last days people gazed on Wesley with veneration as he passed through the streets. He returned their friendly greetings in the words of his favourite Apostle, "Little children, love one another." In 1790, the summer before his death, he ceased to keep any account of his personal expenditure. "I will not attempt it any longer," he writes, "being satisfied with the continual conviction that I save all I can and give all I can; that is, all I have." No entreaty could make the old man omit any duty. His constant prayer was, "Lord, let me not live to be useless!" At every place he visited he gave the Society his last advice "to love as brethren, fear God, and honour the king." He generally

closed these touching services with the verse which he gave out so often in the family circle at the preachers' house in City Road:—

> Oh that, without a lingering groan,
> I may the welcome word receive,
> My body with my charge lay down,
> And cease at once to work and live!

Wesley fully intended to make his usual journey to the north in March, 1791. He sent his own carriage and horses to Bristol, and secured places for himself and friends in the Bath coach. That journey, however, was never taken. He preached at Lambeth on February 17th.* When he returned to City Road, he seemed unwell, and said he thought he had taken cold. Next day, however, he read and wrote as usual. In the evening he preached at Chelsea, but his cold compelled him to pause once or twice. On Saturday the fever and weakness increased, but he was able to read and write. The following day, February 20th, he rose early, but was so unfit for his Sunday's work,† that he lay down again for a few hours. When he awoke, he said, "I have not had such a comfortable sleep this fortnight past." In the afternoon he slept an hour or two, then two of his discourses on the "Sermon on the Mount" were read to him, and he came down to supper. On Monday he seemed better and dined at Twickenham. He preached for the last time in City Road Chapel on Tuesday evening. Next day he preached at Leatherhead on "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near." This was his last sermon.

* These were some of his appointments on the Plan for the Preachers in London (January to March, 1791). This Plan is printed in Stevenson's "History of City Road Chapel," p. 118.

† Spitalfields at ten; City Road at five.

His last letter was written on Thursday from Balham to William Wilberforce. It shows both the old man's sympathy with the wrongs of the slave, and his warm interest in Wilberforce's great mission. Wesley had become familiar with the horrors of slavery during his residence in America, and Wilberforce was well known to his brother Charles and himself.

"LONDON, *February 24th*, 1791.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Unless the Divine Power has raised you up to be as Athanasius, *contra mundum*, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils; but *if God be for you, who can be against you?* Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, '*be not weary in well-doing.*' Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it.

"Reading this morning a tract, wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a *law* in our colonies that the *oath* of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this!

"That He who has guided you from your youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things is the prayer of, dear sir, your affectionate servant,

"JOHN WESLEY."*

One could wish for no more beautiful close to Wesley's

* Moore, ii., 437.

correspondence than this trumpet-peal to the young soldier who was stepping out to his life-long struggle. The letter is a prophetic epitome of the history of emancipation.

About eleven o'clock on Friday morning Wesley returned to City Road to die. He sat down in his room, and desired to be left alone for half an hour. Some mulled wine was then given him, and he was helped to bed, where he lay in a high fever. On the Saturday he scarcely moved. If roused to answer a question or take a little refreshment, he soon dozed again. On Sunday morning, February 27th, he got up, took a cup of tea, and seemed much better. As he sat in his chair he looked quite cheerful, and repeated the lines,—

Till glad I lay this body down,
Thy servant, Lord, attend;
And, oh! my life of mercies crown
With a triumphant end!

The friends who were present talked too much, so that he was soon exhausted, and had to lie down. About half-past two he told those who were about him, "There is no need for more than what I said at Bristol. My words then were —

I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

His head was sometimes a little affected by the fever, which rose very high. In the evening, however, he got up again. Whilst he sat in his chair he said, "How necessary it is for every one to be on the right foundation!

I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.

We must be justified by faith, and then go on to full sanctification." Next day he slept much. He repeated one

verse three or four times: "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." After a very restless night he began to sing,—

All glory to God in the sky,
And peace upon earth be restored!
O Jesus, exalted on high,
Appear, our omnipotent Lord!
Who, meanly in Bethlehem born,
Didst stoop to redeem a lost race,
Once more to Thy people return,
And reign in Thy kingdom of grace.

Oh, wouldst Thou again be made known.
Again in Thy Spirit descend;
And set up in each of Thy own
A kingdom that never shall end!
Thou only art able to bless,
And make the glad nations obey,
And bid the dire enmity cease,
And bow the whole world to Thy sway.

He lay still a while, then asked for pen and ink. When they were brought, he was too weak to use them. Some time after he said, "I want to write." The pen was put into his hand, and the paper held before him. "I cannot," he said. Miss Ritchie, one of the company, answered, "Let me write for you, sir; tell me what you would say." "Nothing," he replied, "but that God is with us."

In the afternoon he wished to get up. While his clothes were being brought, he broke out singing with such vigour that all his friends were astonished:—

I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers;
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures

Happy the man whose hopes rely
On Israel's God: He made the sky
And earth and seas, with all their train;
His truth for ever stands secure,
He saves the oppressed, He feeds the poor,
And none shall find His promise vain.

These were the last lines Mr. Wesley "gave out" in City Road Chapel when he preached his last sermon there a week before. When helped into his chair, Wesley seemed to change for death. This was on Tuesday afternoon, March 1st. With a weak voice, he said, "Lord, Thou givest strength to those that can speak and to those that cannot. Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that Thou loosest the tongue." He then sang—

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Who sweetly all agree.

Here his voice failed, and he gasped for breath. His mind seemed to wander. "Now we have done," he said. "Let us all go." He was laid on the bed from which he rose no more, and after sleeping a little, begged those around him to pray and praise. The friends who were downstairs were called up. Wesley's fervour of spirit and his loud "Amen" to the petition that God would continue and increase His blessing upon His servants' work showed how fully he joined in these devotions. After they rose from prayer he grasped their hands and said, "Farewell, farewell." When some one entered, he strove to speak. Finding that his friends could not understand what he said, he paused, and with all his remaining strength, cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us." "Then, lifting up his dying arm in token of victory, and raising his feeble voice with a holy triumph not to be expressed, he again repeated the heart-reviving words, 'The best of all is, God is with us.'"

When Mrs. Charles Wesley came to see him, he thanked her as she pressed his hand, and endeavoured to kiss her. His lips were moistened; then he broke out in the words of the grace he used before meals, "We thank Thee, O Lord, for these and all Thy mercies. Bless the Church and King, and grant us truth and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, for ever and ever." Other words fell from his lips; then he called those who were in his room to join in prayer. His fervour was remarkable, though his bodily strength was fast ebbing away. During the night he often attempted to repeat the forty-sixth Psalm, but he was too feeble. He was heard, however, to say, "I'll praise—I'll praise." A few minutes before ten o'clock the next morning, Wesley found the long-sought rest. Joseph Bradford was praying. His niece, Sarah Wesley, and a few friends, knelt around his bed. The last word they caught was "Farewell." Then, as Mr. Bradford was saying, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and this heir of glory shall come in," without a lingering groan, Wesley passed to the presence of his Lord. His friends, standing around the bed, sang together—

Waiting to receive thy spirit,
Lo! the Saviour stands above,
Shows the purchase of His merit,
Reaches out the crown of love.

Wesley died on Wednesday, March 2nd, 1791, in the eighty-eighth year of his age. The day before the funeral his body was laid in the City Road Chapel, near the entrance. A heavenly smile lingered on his face. The crowd that came to take a last look upon the man to whom they owed so much was said to number ten thousand persons. It was, therefore, thought desirable to bury him between five and six in the morning. No

notice was issued till a late hour the previous evening, but some hundreds of people were present. A biscuit was given to each of the company in an envelope, on which was a portrait of Wesley in his canonicals, with a halo and a crown. According to directions in his will, the coffin was borne to the grave by six poor men, each of whom received a sovereign, as Wesley desired.

The funeral service, on Wednesday, March 9th, was read by the Rev. John Richardson, who had been one of Wesley's clerical assistants for nearly thirty years. When he came to the words, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to take unto Himself the soul of our dear FATHER here departed," loud sobs took the place of silent tears. Wesley was laid in the vault which he had prepared for himself and the preachers who died in London. The inscription on his tomb says that "this great light arose (by the singular providence of God) to enlighten these nations." "Reader," it adds, "if thou art constrained to bless the instrument, give God the glory." At ten o'clock on the morning of his burial, a funeral sermon was preached in City Road Chapel by Dr. Whitehead, one of Wesley's preachers, who had retired from the itinerancy, and had long been his favourite physician. He was now one of the London local preachers. Black cloth draped the front of the gallery and the pulpit Every corner of the building was crowded. All were in mourning with the exception of one woman, who wore a piece of blue ribbon in her bonnet. When she noticed her singularity, she pulled out the ribbon, and threw it under her feet. She became the ancestor of the well-known family of Gabriels. One of her sons was Lord Mayor of London; another, the late Mr. J. W. Gabriel, was the senior trustee and steward of City Road Chapel at the time of his death.

Wesley's will provided that all profits arising from the sale of his books should be devoted to the support of Methodism. Eighty-five pounds a year was to be paid out of this amount to his brother's widow, according to the arrangement made at her marriage. Some other bequests were made to friends or to Methodist objects. Wesley's manuscripts were given to Dr. Coke, Dr. Whitehead, and Henry Moore, "to be burnt or published, as they see good."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### WESLEY'S APPEARANCE, CHARACTER, AND WORK.

JOHN WESLEY, like all the Epworth family, was short of stature. He measured not quite five feet six inches, and weighed eight stone ten pounds. He seemed not to have an atom of superfluous flesh, but was muscular and strong. His face was remarkably fine, even to old age. A clear, smooth forehead, an aquiline nose, an eye the brightest and most piercing that can be conceived, conspired to render him a venerable and most interesting figure. In youth his hair was black; in old age, when it was white as snow, it added fresh grace to his appearance, which was like that of an Apostle. He wore a narrow plaited stock, and a coat with a small, upright collar. He allowed himself no knee-buckles, no silk or velvet in any part of his dress.*

Wesley was scrupulously neat in his person and habits. Henry Moore never saw a book misplaced or a scrap of paper lying about his study in London. His punctuality and exactness enabled him to transact the enormous work which rested on him for half a century with perfect composure. He once told a friend that he had no time to be in a hurry. "Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry, because I never undertake any more work

* Hampson, iii., 168.

than I can get through with perfect calmness of spirit." He wrote to all who sought his counsel, and had perhaps a greater number of pious correspondents than any man of his century.* He did everything deliberately, because he had no time to spend in going over it again. Moore says that he was the slowest writer he ever saw. Wesley once said to his brother Charles's youngest son, "Sammy, be punctual. Whenever I am to go to a place, the first thing I do is to get ready; then what time remains is all my own." † His coachman was expected to be at the door exactly at the moment fixed. If anything detained his carriage, Wesley would walk on till it overtook him. Every minute, both of day and night, had its appointed work. "Joshua, when I go to bed, I go to bed to sleep, and not to talk," ‡ was his rebuke to a young preacher who once shared his room and wished to steal some of Wesley's precious moments of repose for conversation on some difficult problems. To one who asked him how it was that he got through so much work in so short a time, he answered, "Brother, I do only one thing at a time, and I do it with all my might." §

His extensive reading, his vast experience, and his natural amiability of temper combined to make Wesley a singularly interesting and welcome guest. Dr. Johnson greatly enjoyed his company. "John Wesley's conversation is good," he said, "but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have his talk out, as I do." This is high praise from the greatest talker of the eighteenth century. Wesley once

* Works, xii., 332, 408; xiv., 288.

† MS. Reminiscences in British Museum.

‡ Reynolds' "Anecdotes of Wesley."

§ *Ibid.*, 57.

dined with the Doctor. He had set apart two hours for this visit. Dinner, however, was an hour late. Wesley was therefore obliged to get up immediately it was done. His sister, Mrs. Hall, who was Johnson's intimate friend, tried to soothe the lexicographer, who was greatly disappointed at the departure of his guest. "Why, Doctor," she said, "my brother has been with you two hours." "Two hours, madam!" was his answer; "I could talk all day, and all night too, with your brother." *

Wesley's cheerfulness under all privations is one of the most notable features of his life. At the close of 1780 he writes, "I do not remember to have felt lowness of spirits for one quarter of an hour since I was born." Twenty-five years before he had told his friend Mr. Blackwell that his companions were always in good humour when with him, and that he could not bear to have people about him of any other spirit. "If a dinner ill-dressed, a hard bed, a poor room, a shower of rain, or a dirty road, will put them out of humour, it lays a burden upon me greater than all the rest put together. By the grace of God, I never fret; I repine at nothing; I am discontented with nothing. And to have persons at my ear fretting and murmuring at everything is like tearing the flesh off my bones. I see God sitting upon His throne, and ruling all things well." †

Wesley was greatly beloved in the homes where he was entertained during his long itinerancy. He would spend an hour after dinner with his friends, pouring forth his rich store of anecdotes, to the delight of young and old. "He was always at home and quite at liberty." ‡ He generally closed the conversation with two or three

* Moore, ii., 480. † Works, xii., 183.
‡ Preface to Reynolds' "Anecdotes of Wesley."

verses of some hymn strikingly appropriate to the occasion, and made every one feel at ease by his unaffected courtesy and his varied conversation. Two years before his death his friend Alexander Knox had an opportunity of spending some days in his company. He endeavoured to form an impartial judgment of the venerable evangelist. The result was that every moment afforded fresh reasons for esteem and veneration. "So fine an old man I never saw! The happiness of his mind beamed forth in his countenance. Every look showed how fully he enjoyed

**The gay remembrance of a life well spent.**

Wherever Wesley went, he diffused a portion of his own felicity. Easy and affable in his demeanour, he accommodated himself to every sort of company, and showed how happily the most finished courtesy may be blended with the most perfect piety. In his conversation we might be at a loss whether to admire most his fine classical taste, his extensive knowledge of men and things, or his overflowing goodness of heart. While the grave and serious were charmed with his wisdom, his sportive sallies of innocent mirth delighted even the young and thoughtless; and both saw in his uninterrupted cheerfulness the excellency of true religion. No cynical remarks on the levity of youth embittered his discourses. No applausive retrospect to past times marked his present discontent. In him even old age appeared delightful, like an evening without a cloud; and it was impossible to observe him without wishing fervently, 'May my latter end be like his!'"

Wesley's relations to children and young people set his character in a peculiarly attractive light. His visits were eagerly anticipated by his young friends. He provided himself with a stock of new money, and often gave them

one of these bright coins. He would take the children in his arms and bless them, reconcile their little differences, and teach them to love one another. In his last years he greatly rejoiced at the rise of Sunday-schools all over the country, and preached sermons on their behalf in various places. The singing of the boys and girls selected out of the Sunday-school at Bolton seemed to him a blessed anticipation of the songs of angels in our Father's house. One who loved children more than Wesley it would be hard indeed to find. "I reverence the young," he said, "because they may be useful after I am dead." The boys on Guy Fawkes Day always found him a kind friend. His nephew says that he used to give his present with one condition: "Here, my boys, is something for you on condition you do not drink more than will do you good." *

Wesley and a preacher of his were once invited to lunch with a gentleman after service. The itinerant was a man of very plain manners, quite unconscious of the restraints belonging to good society. While talking with their host's daughter, who was remarkable for her beauty, and had been profoundly impressed by Mr. Wesley's preaching, this good man noticed that she wore a number of rings. During a pause in the meal he took hold of the young lady's hand, and raising it, called Wesley's attention to the sparkling gems. "What do you think of this, sir," said he, "for a Methodist's hand?" The girl turned crimson. The question was extremely awkward for Wesley, whose aversion to all display of jewellery was so well known. But the aged evangelist showed a tact which Lord Chesterfield might have envied. With a quiet, benevolent smile, he looked up, and simply said, "The hand is very beautiful." The young lady appeared at

* MS. Reminiscences in British Museum.

evening worship without her jewels, and became a firm and decided Christian.

In 1821 Wesley's niece sent Adam Clarke a sketch* of some incidents in his life, in which she says, "His distinguished kindness to me from the earliest period I can remember made an indelible impression. I can retrace no word but of tenderness, no action but of condescension and generosity." She clearly shows how great a mistake it was to represent Wesley as stern and stoical. "It behooves a relative," she adds, "to render this justice to his private virtues and attest from experience that no human being was more alive to all the tender charities of domestic life than John Wesley. His indifference to calumny and inflexible perseverance in what he believed his duty has been the cause of this idea." Miss Wesley has also given a charming description of their visit to Canterbury in 1775. "He said in the carriage, 'You are just the right age to travel with me. No one can censure you and I.' The instances of his tender care are fresh in my mind. As we journeyed the weather was very cold. The preacher who rode on horseback by the side of the carriage at the first stage brought a hassock, with some straw, to keep his feet warm. Instantly he asked, 'Where is one for my little girl?' Nor would he proceed till I was as well accommodated as himself. You knew him. Did you ever see him inattentive to the feelings of others when those feelings did not impede his plan of usefulness? As we proceeded he pointed out every remarkable place we passed, and condescended to delight and instruct with the same benign spirit which distinguished him in public. I remember reading to him part of the way Beattie's 'Minstrel,' a book then lately published, and which, he

* The original notes are in the possession of Mr. G. J. Stevenson.

said, as I loved poetry, would entertain me, making remarks as we went on upon the other poems. He would not allow the people to call me up till six in the morning, though he himself preached at five, and always procured me the most comfortable accommodation in every place where we sojourned.

"My brother Charles had an attachment in early life to an amiable girl of low birth. This was much opposed by my mother and her family, who mentioned it with concern to my uncle. Finding from my father that this was the chief objection, he observed, 'Then there is no family, but I hear the girl is good.' 'Nor no fortune either,' said my mother, 'and she is a dawdle.' He made no reply, but sent my brother fifty pounds for his wedding dinner, and, I believe, sincerely regretted he was crossed in his inclination (as she married another). But he always showed peculiar sympathy to young persons in love." *

Southey's beautiful and appreciative Life of Wesley has one blot which he himself afterwards recognised, and was prepared to remove. He had accused Wesley of ambition. After the publication of his book he was convinced that he had misinterpreted the character of the man whom he so highly honoured. "Mr. Alexander Knox," he wrote to Mr. Nichols in 1835, "has convinced me that I was mistaken in supposing ambition entered largely into Mr. Wesley's actuating impulses. Upon this subject he wrote a long and most admirable paper, and gave me permission to affix it to my own work whenever it might be reprinted. This I shall do, and make such alterations in the book as are required in consequence." He made the same promise to Dr. Adam Clarke. Southey never

* The original letter is preserved at Headingley College, Leeds.

published a second edition himself, and thus the alterations were not made. His son, the Rev. Cuthbert Southey, gave a similar promise to a member of the Wesley family, but it was never fulfilled. Wesley's whole life is an answer to the charge of ambition. No man would have more enjoyed learned leisure or more delighted in the intercourse of men of talent than he. Yet he deliberately gave his life to the common people. His days were spent among the poor. He set himself to bring the masses to Christ, and to that purpose he was faithful for more than half a century. Wealth had no temptation for him. He gave away a great fortune to the suffering and distressed. The violence of the mob and the fierce attacks which for so many years issued from the press never caused him to swerve from his work. His desire was to do good, to do as much for the salvation of the world as he could, and do it in the best and wisest way.

Lord Macaulay's judgment that Wesley possessed as great a genius for government as Richelieu is repeated on every hand. In a confidential letter to his sister, Mrs. Hall, dated November 17th, 1742, Wesley acknowledges with gratitude the gift he possessed for the management of his Societies. "I know this is the peculiar talent which God has given me," are his words. No great statesman ever watched the course of public opinion more carefully than Wesley watched the progress of events in Methodism. He did not think out a system and force it on his people. There is no special evidence of inventive power in Wesley's administration. He himself speaks of his want of any plan for financial matters.* His rule over the united Societies owed its success to the fact that he was always avail-

* Works, viii., 248; xiii., 148.

ing himself of the fresh light which experience gave. Methodist organisation was a gradual growth. Local experiments which approved themselves in practice were introduced into all the Societies. Leaders, stewards, and lay-preachers, the main instruments in spreading and conserving the results of the Evangelical Revival, were all the fruit of this growth. Wesley did not set his heart on such means, but when circumstances suggested them he saw their vast advantages, and soon incorporated them into his system. This method Wesley pursued from the beginning of the Revival to the last day of his life. It is the most marked feature of his work. One might almost say that he never looked a day before him. He sometimes laid himself open to the charge of slackness in dealing with such disturbers as George Bell, but he was never willing to move till the way was plain. His field-preaching, his chapel-building, his calling out preachers, and his Deed of Declaration all supply illustrations of this spirit. Methodist polity and Methodist finance were built up step by step. No man had a more candid mind than Wesley. He learned from every one, and was learning till the last day of his life. Such a spirit in the leader gave confidence to preachers and people. Charles Wesley would have forced Methodism into his own groove, and have shattered it to pieces in the attempt. His brother was willing to leave his cause in the hands of God and to wait for the unfolding of events which should mark His will. No cause was ever more happy in its head; no people ever loved their chief as the early Methodists loved John Wesley.

At the Conference before Wesley died, there were 71,463 members in his Societies in the Old World, 48,610 in the New. America had 108 circuits, just as many as there were in England, Scotland, and Ireland. The latest

returns show that, including 30,924 on its mission fields, there are now about 468,000 members under the care of the Wesleyan Conference in England, with 2,540 ministers and missionaries. Separate Conferences have been formed for France, Australia, Canada, South Africa, and the West Indies. The Methodist family throughout the world now numbers about five and a quarter million members, under the care of some thirty-three thousand ministers. If the Sunday scholars and attendants on public worship be added, the number would reach about twenty-five millions. If Wesley were with us to look upon the marvellous growth of his Societies, and to watch the enormous activities of the Church of England and other evangelical communions at home and abroad, he would preach again from the text he chose when he laid the foundation stone of City Road Chapel: "What hath God wrought!"