

The life of John Birchenall : including autobiography, extracts from diary, sketches, aphorisms, etc. / by the rev. A.J. French ; with a portrait, and introduction by J.H. Rigg.

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THE LIFE OF
JOHN BIRCHENALL

M.R.C.S., F.L.S.

REV. A. J. FRENCH, B.A.



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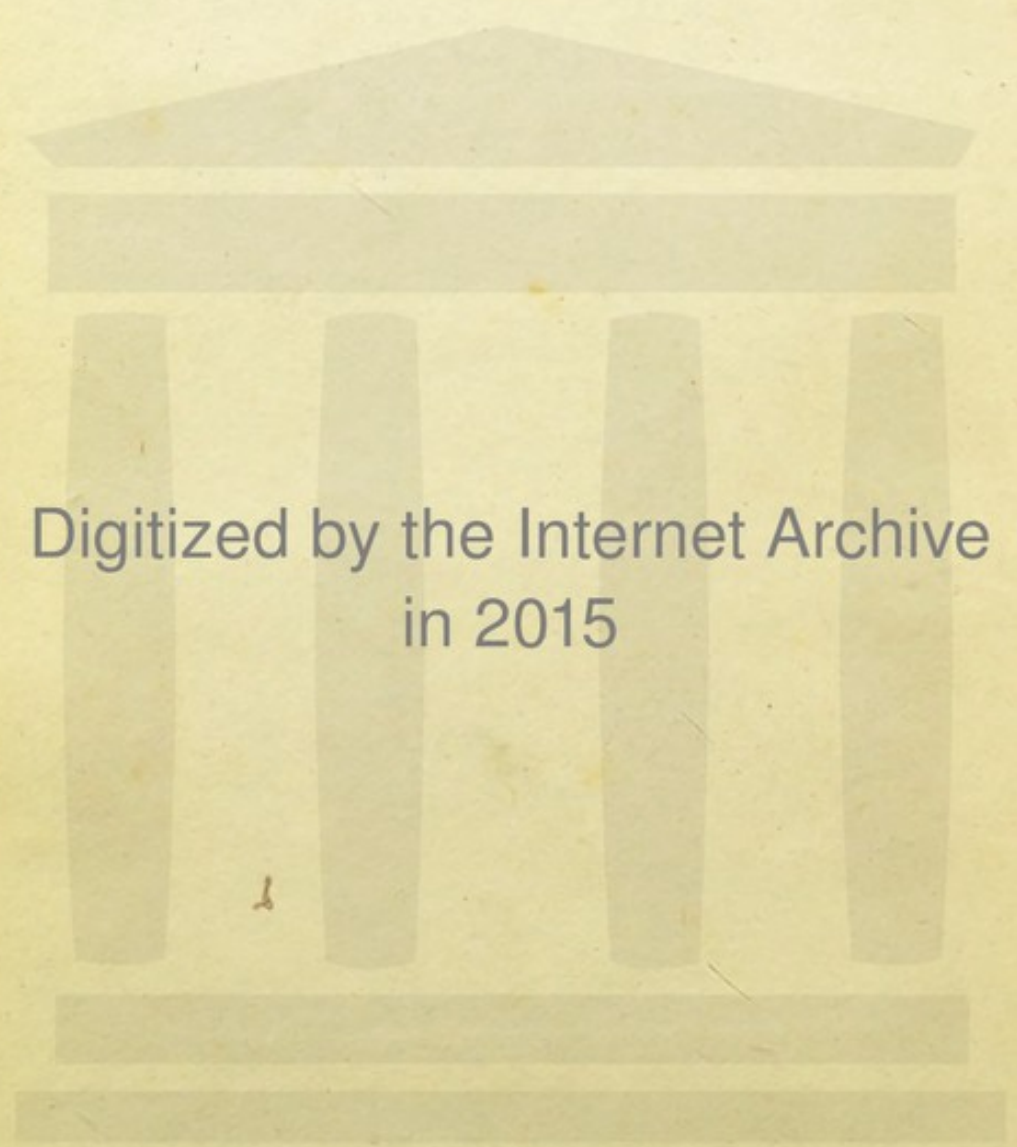
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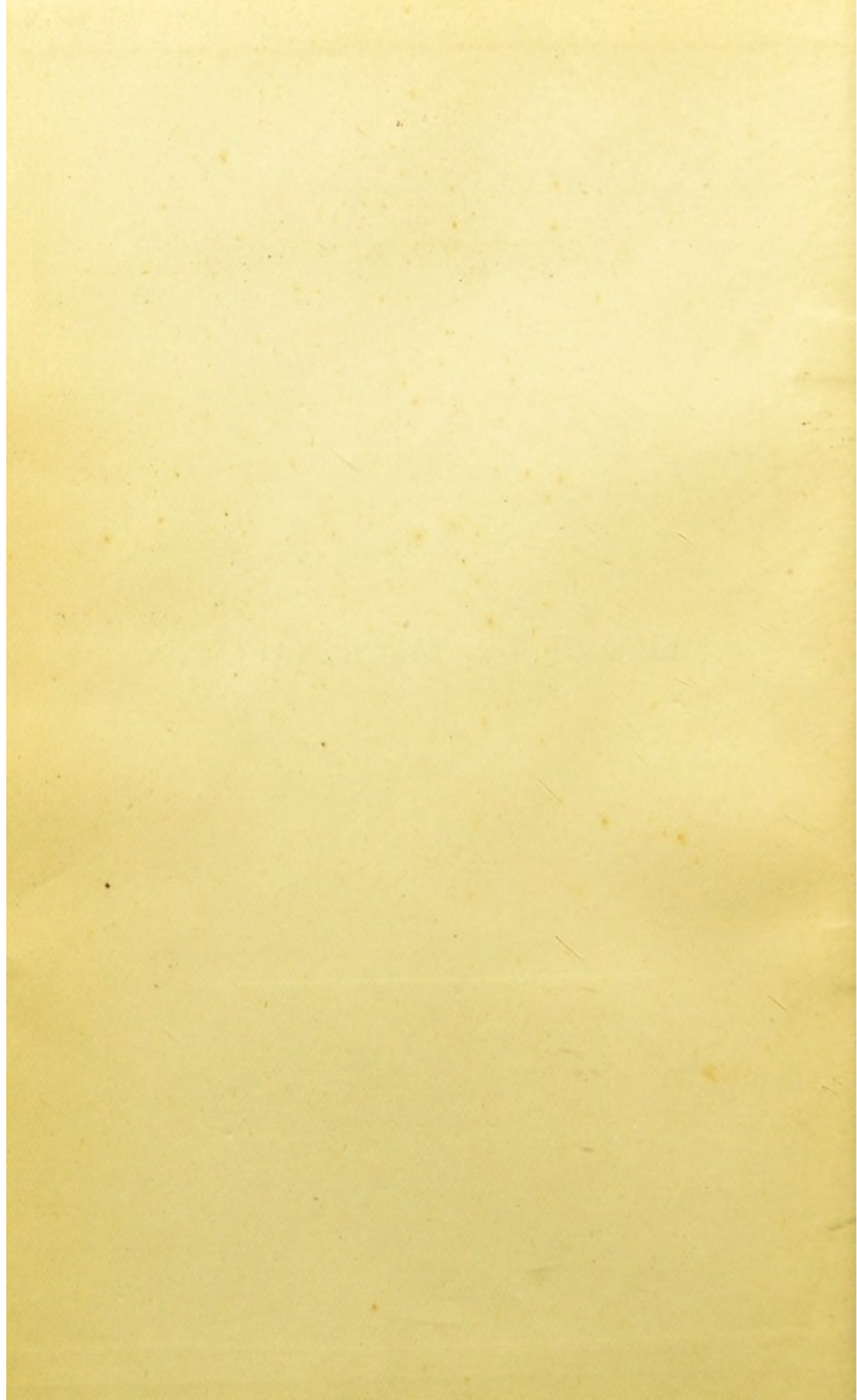


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Amos Jones.

LIFE OF DR. BIRCHENALL.







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Yours affectly
L. B. Richmond

THE LIFE OF
JOHN BIRCHENALL,

M.R.C.S., F.L.S., OF MACCLESFIELD.

*INCLUDING AUTOBIOGRAPHY, EXTRACTS FROM
DIARY, SKETCHES, APHORISMS, ETC.*

BY THE

REV. A. J. FRENCH, B.A.,

TUTOR IN MATHEMATICS AND PHILOSOPHY, DIDSBURY COLLEGE, NEAR MANCHESTER.

With a Portrait,

AND AN INTRODUCTION BY THE

REV. J. H. RIGG, D.D.

London:

WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE,

2, CASTLE STREET, CITY ROAD,

AND 66, PATERNOSTER ROW.



AUTHOR'S PREFACE.



THE testimony of Dr. Rigg, in the Introduction which follows, will explain the appearance of another biography. Characters like that here depicted are sufficiently rare to make it desirable, when they do appear, that some memorial of them should be preserved. The materials, in the present case, were happily ample, and it was the wish of many that such a memorial should be prepared forthwith. Accordingly, at the instance of Dr. Birchenall's executor, Mr. George Cox, I addressed myself to the task, and can truly say it has been a labour of love. "A great book," it has been said, "is a great evil." I have therefore been sparing both in selection and comment, aiming only at a worthy portraiture of one who was confessed by all that knew him to be no ordinary man. How far I have succeeded in this design must be left for his friends, and the general public, to decide.

I will only add, that though the subject of this biography did not seek any other than a Surgeon's

qualification for medical practice, yet the title of "Dr." was so universally conceded to him in the neighbourhood in which most of his days were spent, that I did not feel at liberty to withhold it in this account of his long and useful career.

INTRODUCTION.



I HAVE been asked to write a brief introduction to the following memoir, and it gives me pleasure to contribute the few lines which alone it is within my power at this time to write, as a testimony to the character of the saint whose memory it is the author's privilege to embalm in the pages of this interesting and very valuable volume.

I knew Mr. Birchenall well for many years before his death. He was intimate, indeed, with my parents, and, perhaps yet more, with my sisters for twenty years, and I shared the friendship by which my family was bound to him. He was at once medical attendant and spiritual adviser to them, as to so many more.

So far as I may presume to have an opinion, Mr. Birchenall was the saintliest man I have known. For depth and richness of experience, for unintermitting consecration of life in active service, united to habits of the strictest self-examination and of intense spiritual meditation,—“sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus,”—and for perfect consistency of character during more than half a century, I have neither known nor

read of any Methodist layman who might compare with him, nor any saint of former days in any land to whom he seemed to be inferior. John Fletcher was not, I believe, a holier man than John Birchenall.

Mr. Birchenall's life has, besides, a special value, because it is the life of a Methodist saint, who was at the same time a man of very wide culture. As a professional man, he had a deservedly high reputation, and kept abreast of the advancing medical science of his long lifetime. But he was also an accomplished linguist, being not only a well-read "classic," but also master of several modern languages, and an oriental scholar of wide and various erudition. He was, moreover, addicted to mental science, and turned his metaphysical knowledge and faculty to excellent account as a class-leader and a confidential friend, in dealing with cases of spiritual distress and perplexity.

Mr. Birchenall's personal appearance was that of an ascetic, and his habits of living agreed with his appearance. But in disposition he was kindly, sympathetic, and, within carefully guarded limits, very social. Severe on himself, he was gentle and of liberal spirit to others.

It is wonderful how so strict a Christian, who cultivated no popular arts, who indulged no sinful compliance, who was a firm supporter of all rightful authority and precedent, was nevertheless so universally respected, and so widely beloved, with a love of exceeding delicacy and reverence. Doubtless, how-

ever, the true Christian love which was at the basis of his own character, his untiring benevolence, his unceasing and unstinting generosity, both in the way of service and of charitable gifts, his remarkable and unaffected modesty,—a more humble and retiring man I never knew,—these qualities, combined with and perfectly humanizing, if I may so speak, the almost other-world character of his piety, furnish the explanation of the fact that, saint as he was, few, if any, ever spoke evil of him. He was revered not only by Christians, but by the whole population. He was among them as an angel of goodness.

He was a superior and powerful preacher, instructive and impressive, a fervid prayer-leader, a class-leader of great penetration and of amazing influence with the members of his classes. He was not only a skilful medical attendant, but an assiduous spiritual pastor, visiting not only his own "members," but the poor and needy in all directions, and any, of whatever degree, to whom his way was opened, and who needed his spiritual counsel.

The following pages show him as he was, and trace his career clearly throughout. In this volume Methodist biography gains a new treasure,—we have but few great treasures of this kind. Modern Methodism has possessed—and has lost—in Mr. Birchenall one linking it not unequally with the saintliest histories of early Methodism. The town of Hester Ann Rogers is now also the town of John Birchenall,

whose memory is fully worthy to be linked with hers. If ever there was a Christian who was continually going on to perfection, and who came as near to his goal as, according to our lights, a "man in Christ" may come, such was, I believe, John Birchenall.

JAMES H. RIGG.

May 8, 1881.

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LIFE OF JOHN BIRCHENALL,

M.R.C.S., F.L.S.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND EARLY ASSOCIATIONS.

JOHAN BIRCHENALL, son of John and Rebecca Birchenall, was born at Macclesfield on the 25th January 1800. He was the eldest of thirteen children, all possessing well-marked characteristics, and exhibiting a strong family likeness. The names of his brothers and sisters were Isaac, Elizabeth, Joseph, Sarah (who died in infancy), Jane, William, James, Mary Ann, Thomas, George, Sarah, Rebecca. They all died in the faith and hope of the Gospel, most of them after many years of consistent and devoted piety.

John Birchenall, senior, was a cotton manufacturer, carrying on business in partnership with his brother at the Lower Heys Mill, on the north side of the town. At the time of his son's birth he had by diligence and thrift attained a position of respectability and influence. He had for some years exercised his gifts as a local preacher in connexion with the Methodist Church, and was in the habit of entertaining its ministers under his hospitable roof. Of his personal

character, it will be enough to say that it was moulded by his religion. He "feared God with all his house."

Dr. Birchenall was equally favoured in his parentage on the maternal side. His mother, a daughter of Mr. John Lomas, of Hollinsclough, Staffordshire, was a woman of deep piety and strong common sense. Her father was a truly devoted man. The story of his conversion and subsequent Christian course is graphically narrated in a little volume committed to the press by his grandson a few years before his own death.¹ It is impossible to peruse this simple record without being struck with the genuineness and depth of the religious life it portrays, and the close affinity between the character therein exhibited and the one that lies immediately before us. Of his grandfather, Dr. Birchenall speaks in terms of deep reverence and affection. Permitted in his youth occasionally to visit Hollinsclough, he marked the godly walk and saintly demeanour of the good old man, and retained to his own last days the savour of his humility and deadness to the world. In proof of the esteem accorded to his worth, it may be stated that, when on business journeys in various parts of the country, it was no uncommon thing for Mr. Lomas to be invited to preach in chapels belonging to other denominations as well as in those of his own. Among others, Charles Simeon, of Cambridge, set a high value upon his piety and gifts, and frequently requested him to exhort at his religious meetings. All the influences which surrounded the childhood and youth of John Birchenall were in harmony with those we have described.

¹ *Memorials of the late Mr. John Lomas.* Macclesfield: J. S. Wright.

At the time at which this biography begins, Macclesfield had not attained anything like its present dimensions. At the census of 1801 its inhabitants numbered 8743, less than one-fourth of the present population; and there was no material increase until the extension of the silk-trade through the introduction of machinery. It was, in fact, a quiet country town; and if it had not been situated on the highway to London from the north, its intercourse with other parts of the kingdom would have been very limited indeed. The journey to the metropolis occupied an entire day and night; and this tardy transit, if successfully accomplished, was deemed, to use the Doctor's own language, "the culminating point of expedition."

In somewhat earlier days than these, however,—days in which stage-coaches would have seemed miracles of invention,—a descent had been made upon the neighbourhood by a man, the celerity of whose movements owed little in point of facilities to good roads and swift conveyances, and derived nothing in the way of impetus from motives of merchandise or any other kind of earthly gain. John Wesley first preached "near Maxfield" on the 8th of November 1745. His visit left more lasting marks upon its history than that of the Pretender and his forces, which dates within a month of the same day. The history of Methodism in Macclesfield has been too well told by Mr. Smith¹ to need detailed reference here. Suffice it to say that at the close of the eighteenth century the great evangelical movement had gained a firm footing in the town, if it had not

¹ *The History of Methodism in Macclesfield*, by the Rev. Benjamin Smith. Wesleyan Conference Office, 1875.

indeed made complete conquest of it. Nowhere had evangelical principles more thoroughly leavened the population; nowhere had Methodism exhibited a nobler type,—a type in which fervour and sobriety, thorough appreciation of the spiritual elements of religion and practical observance of its ethics, commingled in beautiful proportions. Take as one illustration the character of Hester Ann Rogers, one of the saintliest of the excellent women whose spirits caught the primitive fire. Take as another instance the enterprising John Ryle, the first silk manufacturer in Macclesfield, and the first of that class to espouse the principles of Methodism, the object of the scorn and then of the admiration of his fellow-townsmen, ere long the Methodist alderman and mayor, and from whom the Bishop of Liverpool¹ traces his descent. What largely aided the progress of the movement was the twenty-five years' ministry—closing with the century—of the well-known David Simpson. His fervent spirit diffused itself far and wide in the locality. The large church built for him by Mr. Charles Roe, cousin to Mrs. Rogers, was crowded to the doors whenever he preached. His catholicity was as broad as his piety was deep. In no other town of its size was so much sympathy with Methodism manifested within the bounds of the Establishment. The question of the relation of Methodism to the Church was for the time settled in the only way in which it can ever be settled, viz. by a practical minimizing of the

¹ On the 22d of January 1881, Bishop Ryle inspected his grandfather's tablet at Sunderland Street Chapel. The tablet had been repaired at his expense. About 150 persons were present. The Rev. J. S. Jones, Chairman of the District, addressed the Bishop on the occasion, and the Bishop replied in suitable terms.

distinction. The two organizations were separate then almost as much as they are now, but High Church pretensions did not then widen the breach created everywhere by the collision between zeal and indifference. The sympathy we speak of has not died out to this day, and the Establishment has not been the loser. There are at this time twice as many churches in Macclesfield as there are Methodist chapels, and all are more or less flourishing.

It may aid our conception of the early religious surroundings of John Birchenall if we quote a fact or two from the work above mentioned. The present Sunderland Street Chapel, the second on the same site, was opened within a few days of his birth. It cost £2400, a large outlay at that time for a small country town. Among the original seatholders were five of the aldermen of the borough; and the seat-rents for three-quarters of a year, gathered exclusively from the gallery, exceeded £148. The esteem in which the circuit was held connexionally is manifest from the character of the appointments. Twice within four years it was manned by three men each of whom became subsequently President of the Conference, besides eight others at different times who attained the same honour. But better than any amount of external influence was the spiritual tone of the church, and its primitive zeal and simplicity. Of all its sons, none drank more deeply into this spirit than John Birchenall; and, as the sequel will show, none did more to perpetuate it to succeeding generations.

Before proceeding to the autobiographic record in which he details the story of his conversion, we may complete the picture of his early associations by the

following sketches, culled from his own private memoranda. They display powers of minute observation and description which were thoroughly characteristic of the man, and are all the more interesting from their having been written after he had passed his seventieth year :—

“The dwelling in which I first saw the light was situated on the edge of the river,¹ then a pure pellucid stream, from the banks of which, in the summer season, the kingfisher darted upon the finny tribes and the angler plied his line. It was skirted on the other side by green fields quite to the northern boundary of the town. The noble elms by which the cottage was sheltered have all been cut down, and permanent dwellings have superseded the tall and beautiful hedges which fenced the lane on its eastern side. My own impressions were taken at a subsequent period, as we changed our place of abode for Hurdsfield Cottage when I was little more than two years old.

“Our new residence stood on an elevated plateau about a mile from the town, of which, and a wide expanse of country in every direction, there was a fine perspective : the lofty mountains of Flint and Carnarvon skirting the south-western horizon, while, looking northward, might be descried the hills of Lancashire, with the smoke of some of its larger manufacturing towns. In a direct line to the west, the Alderley ridge defined the boundary of the fertile lowlands of Cheshire beyond ; and the Kerridge and Easebury range, running from north to south, intercepted the view of the rocky ridges stretching on to the eastern horizon. A narrow lane led to the house from the highway to Chapel-en-le-frith and the Peak ; and a few paces farther stood the quiet village of Higher Hurdsfield. Here a road diverged from the highway into the Buxton road.

¹ The so-called Bollin, though this is a misnomer, the true Bollin running through Bollington. The A.S. name was Jordan (the river).

“North-east of the village lay the Swanscoe estate, a ridge of the New Red Sandstone running along it from east to west. On its grassy slope was a plantation of larch and ash, of somewhat advanced growth, in which the jay and the magpie nested in their season. There were also numerous open shafts, from which coal had been, or was being, procured; and as this lay here within some twenty or thirty feet from the surface, it was brought up in baskets by means of the windlass. This portion of the estate was circumscribed in olden times by a stone wall of considerable strength, the foundation of which in my earlier days was still existing. There is a current tradition that the workman employed in its construction was at liberty to choose his wages between a penny a day and a peck of meal. There is a scooped-out valley on the northern side of the ridge, upon which, within the memory of the oldest inhabitants of the neighbourhood, there was a swannery, that had doubtless given a designation to the estate.

“In the vicinity of Hurdsfield were many small farmsteads, some of them in sheltered and secluded situations, this part of the country being hilly and undulatory. The most picturesque of these was the one below our house. It was at the foot of a densely-thicketed wood, where almost every variety of the songsters of the grove might be found in the earlier months of summer, and through which a purling brook kept up a perpetual monotonous murmur. The house itself was sheltered on its exposed side by majestic sycamore trees, and it was embosomed in ivy, which must have been nearly coeval with its erection. In its branches the bullfinch was accustomed to build her nest, but this beautiful warbler has long since disappeared from the neighbourhood. The unbroken quietude of this locality made it the early resort of birds of passage; the cuckoo heralding the approach of summer, while martins and swallows fixed their nests, the one

under the eaves, the other within the rafters, of the farmhouse and its out-buildings; as did the white-throats and red-starts in the crannies and holes of the latter.

“The seasons in their annual succession were, with slight variations, of pretty uniform character. A genial spring, commencing at the latter end of March or the beginning of April; a brilliant summer, often of four months’ duration; a propitious autumn, shortened, however, by the severity of an early winter. Frost and snow were the ordinary conditions at the winter solstice; and the latter I have known to fall for two or three days and nights continuously, when there has been no remission of the gale which scattered it over the country. It was no unusual thing, in the days of my boyhood, for the deeper lanes to be blocked up in mid-winter by drifts of snow to the depth of from fifteen to twenty feet, and for the hedges to be covered; and as these heavy snow-storms were generally succeeded by frost, roads had to be cut through the solid drifts to render travelling at all practicable. In the early part of the nineteenth century the streets of Macclesfield (as elsewhere) were lighted by oil-lamps, and these were but few and far between, so as to serve rather ‘to make darkness visible’ than to answer any directly useful purpose. Hence a person who would thread his way on a moonless night through the town, or the alleys and lanes contiguous to it, would have to do it by the aid of lantern and candle, or of hand-lamp reflectors. Robberies on the highway, however, were comparatively rare; and as there were now no desperadoes scouring the country after the fashion of Dick Turpin, the public mind was seldom disturbed by outrages of this description, save and except that the mails were occasionally stopped and plundered by a gang of ruffians.

“Nevertheless, there were other and greater causes of anxiety and alarm. The first Napoleon was scaring the governments of Europe, like a blazing comet, by the

rapidity and brilliancy of his military achievements, and by the rigorous terms of his dynastic policy; and as the policy of the English Government was directly antagonistic, and our entire military and naval resources were engaged in the struggle, the public were held in painful suspense as to its probable issue. Then there was the contemplated invasion of England on the part of the French military dictator, and a muster for this purpose of armed battalions on the heights of Boulogne, which for vastness and completeness was only surpassed by the army he commanded for the invasion of Russia. Military enrolments therefore became a necessity for our national defence, as well as for a contingent for the army; and bands of volunteers and of militia were in course of constant training for this twofold purpose. Moreover, there were restless spirits in our own country, animated by the principles of the French Revolution, flitting across the political horizon; and a system of watch and ward, by a succession of patrols, was adopted in many places for the nightly security of the inhabitants. I have in my possession a printed arrangement for the town of Macclesfield, in which the name of every respectable householder figures in this capacity.

“For so small a town, the educational advantages of Macclesfield were fully commensurate with the exigencies of the times. The Grammar School, it is true, had long become a highly classical boarding institution, to which the scions of the gentry and nobility were sent as preparatory to their university course. Moreover, it was restricted to the sons of members of the Established Church, and as there were very few even of these who desired a first-class education for their sons, the benevolent design of the royal founder (Edward the Sixth), as it regarded the town itself, was altogether frustrated. But then there were commercial day-schools, which had been established by the late Rev. D. Simpson, as supplementary to the Sunday school, to meet the emergency; and as a thorough English educa-

tion (inclusive of mathematics) was furnished by these, and one of the four masters employed was a competent classical scholar, they were very popular.

“The state of morals in the town would bear a favourable comparison with that of more recent times. Vice and immorality there were, but not in anything like the same proportion as now. Drunkenness and profane swearing and Sabbath-breaking were not in anywise so common as they have since become; and the commission of crime, except when a general riot obtained, was very infrequent. Vicious habits had not put on the same effrontery as is now witnessed, and licentiousness was held in abhorrence. To make the picture complete, it may be observed that infidelity was so far from having any hold of the public mind, that the decease of an avowed deist was regarded by the community at large as the removal of a moral pest from the social atmosphere.”

CHAPTER II.

EDUCATION AND CONVERSION—MENTAL AND MORAL CHARACTERISTICS.

1800—1820.

THE story of Dr. Birchenall's life up to his twentieth year is well told in the following autobiographic record, which was written in 1848:—

“‘Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness.’

“The day of my birth, January 25th, 1800, I have always regarded with sacred (though to myself with humiliating) interest, because it is the one distinguished in the Calendar as the day of St. Paul's conversion.

“I had many blessings of the upper springs in promise from early life. My father's house was open to the devoted servants of Jesus in the Methodist body without exception, most of whom then entertained have entered into rest, though a few remain, in years and public estimation hoary and honourable; and I have gracious recollections, not a few, of effectual fervent prayers offered to God on my own behalf, and on that of the family, the benefits of which have been realized in subsequent years.

“The preliminaries of my education I received at the school of a maiden lady in Macclesfield, who, with her mother, had the tuition of children of both sexes. A scrupulous attention was paid to our morals, and rules

of propriety in our general conduct were taught and enforced in a series of lessons, which, as I was of a sober and thoughtful turn of mind, I readily apprehended and reduced to practice. The great lesson, however, which a Higher than they was evermore inculcating, by suggestive as well as by direct intimations, was this, 'The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.'

"I was next transferred to the care of the so-called Presbyterian minister (though he was of Unitarian sentiments doctrinally), for he was the only public teacher who had received a learned education, and the Grammar School at the time was more restrictive in the application of its resources. As I was a favourite pupil, he took more than ordinary pains in order to my advancement, and when reading the New Testament in Greek, gave (I believe with the best intentions) very minutely his own expositions of divers passages. I was too young, however, to discriminate on theological peculiarities, and I could therefore only give a prompt and child-like assent to his observations; for I looked up to him with profound reverence and an almost filial affection. My separation from him in after years, bowed down as he then was with the infirmities of age, he assured me by letter was one of the severest trials he had ever known. When I went away I had just entered upon a course of elementary mathematical instruction, and on one occasion, when absorbed with certain algebraic calculations in a remote and quiet part of the school, my mind suddenly and sensibly received an extraordinary development. In power and freedom, it seemed as if I had acquired a new faculty.

"In my fifteenth year my father took me and a younger brother to a respectable commercial and classical school in Chester. This was, in many respects, the commencement of a new era in my history. My pursuits, my associations, my seasons of relaxation, assumed a somewhat new and distinctive character. Of the gentlemen who had the direction of this estab-

lishment, and their associates in the tutorship, I have a respectful and affectionate remembrance. Our classical teacher was a young man of first-rate erudition, and a candidate for orders; but his purpose was never realized, as he died of fever in the third term of my curriculum. He showed me, however, a correspondence on the subject in Greek, with, I think, the then Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry. He had no successor while I remained. Twice in the week my evenings were devoted to the acquisition of Hebrew grammar, under the tuition of a professor of Oriental languages, who is also long since numbered with the dead. He was a member of the Independent congregation of Queen Street, and a capital Hebraist, as I gathered from his epistolary communications, in this language, with a Jewish Rabbi, who paid him a very high compliment on the subject. My associates in the Latin class were three, all the sons of respectable men, and very intelligent; but the sprightliest was the younger son of a Mr. Blagg, an attorney at Cheadle in Staffordshire. He had the wittiest faculty I ever knew for getting over a difficulty; and in our recitations he not unfrequently disarmed the incidental severity of our preceptor by his expedients in this way, and turned the gathering frown into a sudden burst of pleasantry and expostulation. In Greek I stood alone. On one occasion I was examined as to my proficiency in this department by Mr. Stolterforth, a very distinguished Hellenist residing in the neighbourhood, and formerly the Archididasculus of our own school; and the minute explanations which he gave of the armour worn by Homer's warriors interested me greatly. In the English class I had an associate from among the youths of the Principality, Phillips by name, whom I highly esteemed for the good qualities of his mind and of his heart; and from him I took lessons occasionally, out of school hours, in the Welsh language.

“The most important advantages, however, accruing to me from my sojourn in Chester were of a religious

character. My father, in his solicitude for our well-being in a moral point of view, had engaged, on our behalf, the kindly interest of the two Misses Williams, and of Mr. Bowers's family, from whom we received tokens of Christian kindness, which made a deep impression on our youthful minds; indeed, I may say the conversations, the affectionate counsels, the exemplary walk, the urbanity, and the prayers of my new friends were the means, under the Divine blessing, of forming my religious character. By the ladies named first I was taken to the class of Mr. Howie, an aged pensioner, and the gunner of the castle, and moreover a valiant soldier of the Lord Jesus. He had a numerous array of members, many of them from the more respectable walks of life, others ship artisans, or persons of kindred occupations; but the simplicity, the pious fervour, the perfect fellowship which pervaded the whole, could not fail to remind a thoughtful person, on his first visits, of the primitive forms of Christianity, and to awaken gracious emotions. Of the leader I may just observe, that though I have since known many excellent men, and some who were deeply devoted to God, one who lived so much 'within the veil' as did Mr. Howie, I have not yet had the happiness to find.

"I left school with a strong bias towards the Christian ministry. I had felt this from early life, but the feeling was greatly strengthened by my recent association with some of the 'excellent of the earth.' I found delight in the dwellings of Jacob and in the courts of Zion, and I earnestly desired to dwell in the house of the Lord. There were two obstacles, however. I conceived the warrant of a preacher of righteousness to be involved more in the Divine designation and anointing than in the simple inclination of the heart to the office; that a man's experience of the things of God, as preparatory to the engagement, should be grounded in the Spirit's testimony to his personal adoption; and that it should be of such an order as would enable him to say, 'That

which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.' Now, though I feared the Lord greatly, and had often been comforted, to the witness of the Spirit I considered myself a stranger; and so long as this continued, I would not, I durst not, entertain the thought of speaking in the name of the Lord. Then there was my natural diffidence; in ordinary circumstances an occasional trouble to me, but an insuperable barrier to the exercises of the pulpit, though I fondly hoped this would be remedied altogether when I could assure my heart before God. Meanwhile I concerted plans for the improvement of my mind, prosecuted Greek with avidity, practised on the flute, etc., until I found my desires heavenwards languishing and dying.

"It was at this juncture that my father proposed I should go down to the factory and assist in the business of the warehouse. To this I had not much reluctance, because I thought it would afford me an opportunity of waiting the openings of Providence. I laboured from morning to night, for many months together, commended by my associates for regularity, for diligence, for business aptitude; and the little leisure I could command I devoted to the purposes above named. I went to class as usual, I retired at stated seasons for prayer; but my heart was on other things; and with the exception of a casual awakening, when a sudden and alarming providence occurred, I was in a state of moral slumber.

"As the autumn drew on, my mind, which was naturally sentimental and reflective, took a complexion from its associations. The falling leaf, the gathering cloud, the sighing gale, the early decline of day, spoke to the inward man of time in its seasons and mutations, and carried me beyond its boundaries to the eternal and infinite. I became pensive and meditative. A crowd of religious impressions were awakened, under the influence of which I sought guidance and relief in the means of grace, and in reading religious biography, particularly the records of the lives and labours of the first Methodist

preachers, in the former volumes of the *Arminian Magazine*. The vail was now taken away. One night, after retiring to rest, a giddiness seized me, with a sense of swooning. I imagined I was going to die; I knew I was not prepared to stand before God; it seemed as if

‘The pit its mouth had opened wide,
To swallow up its careless prey.’

I sprang out of bed; uttered a groan; and fell upon my knees, half dead with horror and trepidation. As soon as I had recovered myself, my cry was that the Lord would graciously show me His mercy. I passed the night in hourly apprehension of being sent to my own place, calling upon God with groans, and sighs, and many tears, until, wearied and exhausted, I fell into a slumber just before daybreak. Oh, how grateful, when I awoke, to find myself reprieved from immediate perdition!

“My eternal interests now absorbed all my thoughts and anxieties. To Roman and Grecian literature I bade adieu, as I thought, for ever. My life became a life of prayer, but of sore temptation withal; I was haunted in every place by horrible suggestions; and though I strove against them with all my might, they greatly aggravated my distress. The weekly music lesson was now before me. I had to play an accompaniment, and my instructor had an exquisite perception of harmonic tones. Hurried, excited, and tremulous, I saw nothing before me but disgrace and severity. When the time arrived, I took up my flute, played a short passage, but was obliged to stop, for my mind was assailed with blasphemous insinuations against the Holy Spirit. ‘Why don’t you go on?’ Mr. D. exclaimed; ‘begin again.’ I did so, but could not proceed. ‘Play the passage alone,’ roared my master, turning from the piano with an ominous frown, which on my next abortive attempt, however, when he had scanned me from head to foot, softened into sympathy. ‘What is the matter?’ he inquired. ‘I am not well, sir,’ I replied; for I was

somewhat indisposed in body; and what other explanation could I have given of myself to a theatrical performer? 'God bless me!' he added; 'go home and nurse yourself.' The permission was a final one, for I had closed accounts but a few days before for the former series of lessons. I returned no more; and I there and then shut up my flute, solemnly determining that it should never see the light of day until I could sing one of the songs of Zion.

"There was but little probability that this would ever be realized, for I now conceived that I had sinned 'the sin against the Holy Ghost.' An Egyptian darkness fell upon my spirit, for the blackness of darkness for ever seemed to be inevitable. I cried to God without ceasing, but it was under inexpressible horror and anguish; it was a day of clouds, for the weather was gloomy and tempestuous, and above, beneath, around, within, there were no utterances, save the continued knell, 'He will be favourable no more.'

"Half frenzied, half paralyzed, I got through the avocations of the day; but the midnight hour was again to be passed, and it might be the hour of my doom. I lay down at length, but it was in deep and dread suspense; I kept watch, but it was over desolation and dreariness; and when the day dawned and the shadows fled away, the shadow upon the dial had increased rather than diminished.

"From the Friday to the Sabbath there was no gleam of light. I had retired on this day about noon to give expression to my distress, when opening the Bible shortly afterwards this Scripture met my eye, 'I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth,' etc. It was a little reviving to me in my bondage, for 'light is good' to the man who is immured in a dungeon; but it was quickly succeeded

by sadness and gloom, for I 'knew not the voice of the Lord.'

"A great deliverance, however, was at hand. After drinking deeply of the cup of bitterness, my knees smiting together, convulsed with anguish of soul, almost wholly unfitted for business, and the spirit ready to fail before Him, the Lord looked upon my distress. On the Tuesday at noon I withdrew into my closet in extreme despondency. I said to myself, 'I will call upon God once more: I am on the brink of the yawning gulf: yet a little while, and I shall sink to rise no more: I cannot be worse in this world than I am at present: it will be a final effort, for there is but a step between me and death.' I sank upon the floor, and with clasped hands, and plaintive moans, implored the pity of the Most High. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, my burthen was removed, my distress was at an end, my heart was filled with love and peace and joy; the shadow of death was turned into the brightness of the morning, and I exclaimed, 'O Lord, I will praise Thee, for behold now Thou comfortest me.'

"Never shall I forget the deliverance of that day (Nov. 5, 1816); it was a salvation quite from hell to heaven. Many a blessed baptism from above have I since been favoured with, but in fulness of joy, in thrilling rapturous emotion, this exceeded them all; it was emphatically life from the dead. It continued with me through the day, and it closed my eyes in sweet refreshing sleep, and hallowed my slumbering upon the bed.

"I had flattered myself that the days of my mourning were now ended, that the warfare was accomplished, and that I should henceforth 'walk in the light of the Lord;' but when the morning appeared, I found myself enveloped by obscurity, for the day-spring from on high had not yet visited me again. I turned my eye inwards, but the living waters had retired, and there was an

ebb-tide. I had yet to learn that the life of the Christian is a life of faith, that all his springs are in the Lord, and that the river of life issues from the throne. Of my acceptance with God on the previous day I had not the shadow of a doubt, but I imagined that the covenant relation must secure to the soul a continuous current of comfort in Christ, if not of joyous emotion; and, in my blindness and folly (though I did not then understand my errors), I would have made my experiences in this way the ground of my confidence toward God. I looked at myself, instead of looking to Jesus, and this made way for perplexity and doubt; I leaned to my own understanding, when I should have been reposing on the foundation laid in Zion, and the tottering wall gave way, and brought me again into the dust of confusion and abasement.

“I was imprisoned once more, but it was in the dungeon of my own mind. I mourned as before, but it was because of the absence of light in my own dwelling, and it was after a different fashion; for the Lord had already ‘a great deliverance wrought’ in bringing me out of Egypt, and I had a gracious presentiment that He would comfort me again.

“Many weeks, nevertheless, rolled away, of sighing and of sadness, but there was no comforter to relieve my soul. I did, indeed, occasionally taste that the Lord is gracious, but had no permanently realizing experiences of the love of God our Saviour, though I sought them earnestly and with tears. Oh, the blindness of the human mind! I was seeking to renew myself unto repentance, when I ought to have beheld ‘the Lamb of God.’ I supposed that a state of penitence must dispose the Divine Being at once to be gracious, irrespectively of any other consideration. I was continually coming to God, but it was not according to the Scriptural mode. Of the sacrificial character of Christ I had just and evangelical views, but of His directly mediatorial relation in the justification of a

sinner, I had but a confused conception; and though I deemed the atonement of Jesus to be the ground of our forgiveness with God, I supposed that the motive with the Deity in its bestowment was involved in repentance, thus ignorantly separating the reason from the principle with which in the Divine mind it is necessarily associated.

“My prayers now returned into my own bosom, but I could not divine the true cause. Had the two-edged sword gone deep enough? had I sorrowed sufficiently after a godly sort? These, and such like, were the questions I was continually propounding to myself, and I found a ready answer in the negative; for by my own reasonings I was as fully shut up as to the economy of grace as if the Lord had not revealed Himself to me at all.

“One error quickly makes room for another by the laws of mental association. To my ordinary abstemiousness there must therefore now be joined rigorous weekly fastings, and a course of absolute self-mortification; the intervals of business were to be distributed to certain exercises, with scrupulous exactness; my communications were to be few, and very guarded, because of the ‘divers vanities’ involved in a multitude of words; and all the means of grace were to be punctiliously attended, not so much for purposes of immediate edification as that I might not leave undone any of the things which ought to be done.

“In seeking to be delivered, however, from the bondage of the flesh, I found myself in danger of falling again under the bondage of the mind; for with the return of spring my animal spirits recovered somewhat of their former elasticity, and with them my literary and musical tastes revived. To mortify the body I found it comparatively easy, but to mortify the mind was like flaying myself alive. I scarcely durst take Virgil and Homer again into close companionship; but I judged that my prepossessions would be somewhat

gratified, and a straight path kept open for my feet, if I gave myself for the present to the study of the Scriptures in their original tongues. Conscience, the supreme arbiter within, decided otherwise; it could hold no affinity with anything but the blood of the covenant, for eternal interests were at stake, and to have confidence towards God was of infinitely greater importance than to have the mind informed and stored, however carefully and judiciously this might be compassed. To these monitions my judgment was obliged to bow, and I therefore shut myself up to the simple and prayerful perusal of the word of God, and of such treatises on experimental and practical religion as fell in my way.

“I had shown an occasional inclination in former days to the medical profession. There was a moral difficulty in the way. A maternal uncle, whose memory my mother cherished most sacredly, while training for this profession in Sheffield, sank under the pressure of its numerous and arduous engagements, and returned to his father’s house to finish his brief career. His dying charge to his sister was that she would never allow a son of her own to prosecute the same vocation. But as a favourable opening now occurred at the public dispensary, and as it would afford me the privilege of living at home, the matter was submitted to me, with suitable premonitions, nevertheless, as to difficulties, and trials, and heavy responsibilities. There was but a short interval in my deliberations, for I was flushed with anticipation. The former years of my apprenticeship would only hold me employed for five hours a day, and the remainder of my time would be at my own disposal. I should be more fully withdrawn from secular influences, and might the more speedily find ‘the way of life.’ The grave objections urged by my mother I put in abeyance. They might all fall to the ground; for if the Lord should give me a commission to preach the Gospel of the kingdom within the stated

term, the difficulties supposed would never be realized. I determined in the affirmative.

“It is well, when a man’s heart deviseth his way, that the issues thereof are not known. My master was a clever and enterprising surgeon, and an enthusiastic and accomplished anatomist. I had not long been articled when I was required to familiarize myself with the various parts of the dry skeleton, as the preliminary to a course of dissections. This was a matter which had not entered into my calculations at all, and it was utterly abhorrent to every one of my feelings and sentiments; but the Rubicon was passed, and there was no way of retreat. To be sure, it was but another mode of ministering to my self-mortification; but then it was the last I should have chosen, and it was the less tolerable because it was altogether out of the province of my own control. I tacitly acquiesced to the emergency, took home with me the bones of the spinal column first, and the rest in succession. I secreted them in my private chamber, and by the aid of Monro’s manual soon mastered the whole series; but it was the most sorrowful lesson I had ever learned, for it was interlined with poignant reflections as to my own folly, and with fruitless wishes that the deed could be cancelled.

“I mourned again before the Lord, but there was no voice, nor, as it seemed, any that regarded; and in solitude and in bitterness extreme, I exclaimed over and over again, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ Mr. S. had already the nucleus of a museum, and his heart was set upon its enlargement. To this he devoted his leisure, his energies, his expedients; and he soon enriched it with numerous specimens of comparative as well as human anatomy. Some portion of my own time was necessarily occupied in this way, and though for a long time my services were rendered with more or less of repugnance, I thereby acquired information

and facilities on these subjects but rarely accruing in the medical noviciate.

“My evenings, when not thus employed, I devoted to self-communing and prayer,—in the closet, in the recluser walks of our own garden, or in the thickly-wooded dingle remote from town. The world, in its social relations, was little better than a wilderness to me. It was at this period that the works of Mr. Law came into my hands. I read them with uncommon zest and attention, for the maxims therein contained accorded with my habits of thinking on religious subjects, and his portraitures of individual character I distinctly recognised; for I had myself witnessed, among persons professedly religious, examples not a few of notorious inconsistency.

“From the writings of Mr. Law I turned to those of the founder of Methodism, equally clear and forcible, but of surpassing purity and value in an evangelical point of view. To these I added the works of the sainted Fletcher, all of which became as familiar to me as the Scriptures themselves; indeed, the *Appeal* and the *Address to Earnest Seekers of Salvation* of the latter were, by frequent perusal, thoroughly imprinted on my memory.

“I now began to see more clearly than before the importance of faith in the economy of justification, but I was still practically encumbered by a portion at least of my own *moral* economy. I could not imagine that the discipline under which I had brought myself was of no value whatever in the Divine account. 'Tis true, it had not after all brought me to God; but then it was because faith in Jesus had not been interposed and grounded upon it. I had yet to learn the secret of self-renunciation, for it was a mere change of position with which I was deluding myself, and I was not prepared to surrender it. Practically I could not yield it, for it had a *moral* use certainly; nor could I concede it in theory, for I thought the conclusion inevitable,

that that which possesses a *moral* value must of necessity have an *evangelical* value also.

“There were seasons when the Holy Spirit was graciously moving to draw me out of my entrenchments, if I may so express myself; but I was slow to recognise this fruit of His operations. I was conscious that my scrupulous observance of the exercises of devotion, public and private, had a hallowing tendency; but all this I held in little account so long as I had not the Spirit’s testimony. In my new situation I had found ample room for the exercise of self-government, for there were many trespassers upon the laws of kindness and forbearance among the applicants for medical relief. Between the two, my character, religiously and morally, was in process of transformation.

“My indenture now drew to a close. It was a season of deep anxiety and of close searching of heart. I knew not what was before me, but I was painfully sensible of the lack of something within; and to be turned adrift upon a tumultuous sea, without the comforting and assuring presence of Jesus, was not very encouraging. By long and prayerful pondering over the subject, and the aid of Mr. Wesley’s works, I had detected the fallacy of my own reasoning as to the ground of a sinner’s acceptance with God; and I now laboured to bring my mind to faith in its *exclusive* exercise. It became the established rule of my judgment, and occasionally every faculty of the inward man was brought under its influence, for the good Spirit was at hand to help my infirmities; but my consolation in Christ did not abound, because I did not yet understand the importance of faith in its *habitually* appropriative operation. That was a lesson brought out by a subsequent and gradual process.”

At this point it may be well to interrupt the thread of the Doctor’s own narrative, in order that we may form some idea of the personality now introduced to

us. Our sketch of his outward man must be deferred to a later chapter; his mental and moral characteristics may here be briefly portrayed. Even at this early age, when he had barely passed his majority, these characteristics were, many of them, fully developed.

Dr. Birchenall possessed an intellect of very considerable range and power. Hardly any department of human learning can be mentioned with which he had not more or less affinity. One of the most prominent features was his facility in acquiring languages. This displayed itself, as it generally does where it exists, at an early period of life. With Greek and Latin he was familiarized, as we have seen, in early boyhood. To these he soon added more than a whole family of Oriental tongues,—Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, Arabic, Persic, Coptic, and Ethiopic. These were followed, as opportunity offered, by the principal languages of modern Europe,—French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese,—besides the ancient tongue of our forefathers, Anglo-Saxon, and a language that is at once ancient and modern, viz. the Welsh. His knowledge of most of these languages was accurate and well-digested, enabling him to enjoy the several literatures belonging to them. A striking illustration of his linguistic powers is to be seen in a little manuscript volume in my possession, entitled, *A Summary of Ethiopic Words, deduced (in lack of a lexicon) from Ludolf's Ethiopic Psalter*, to which is appended a short grammar of the language, compiled in the same way.

It is not always that a taste of this kind is united to the philosophizing faculty. The one demands a habit of attention to minute details which, unbalanced,

might easily make the subject of it a slave to form. The other demands a generalizing power which might as easily degenerate into a presumptuous dogmatism and a lofty indifference to facts. The union of the two preserves both from abuse. Language then becomes the instrument of thought, not its gaoler; while thought submits itself without reluctance to the patient investigation of the materials out of which its judgments should be formed. While thus ranging abroad in search of knowledge, Dr. Birchenall was far from being indifferent to the literary power and wealth of his native country. The references to English authors with which his diary abounds are a sufficient proof of that; and I need not mention, what must already have become obvious, his perfect command of elegant and idiomatic English.

There is a region of thought that lies midway between the metaphysical domain and that of the material world, abutting upon both,—I mean the science of quantity and number, the realm of pure and applied mathematics. Here also Dr. Birchenall's mind worked vigorously, although I do not think he travelled so far in this direction as in some others.

So far we have been following lines common to the old world and the new. We might find many parallels to such a student as we have now been describing among those great scholars who sprang up about the time of the Reformation. Indeed, we might go farther back, and imagine the Doctor in the seclusion of some old monastery, perusing manuscripts from morning to night; or farther back still, and imagine him taking his seat among the pupils of the great Grecian philosophers. Such occupations would have been eminently

congenial to his original mental habitudes. But hitherto I have only described one aspect of his mind; there was another side to it, that which it turned to the external world, the world of nature, of experimental science and of the fine arts. Here, indeed, I do not think his mind wrought at first so freely and spontaneously as in the other direction. Not that his powers of observation were defective. His love of nature amounted to a passion, but it was of nature as reflecting the moods of his own mind. The patient scrutiny of the phenomena of nature, whether found in the structure of the human body, in the various forms of animal and vegetable life, or among the inorganic elements that enter into the constitution of the earth, is something very different from this. To a mind accustomed to the internal activities I have already alluded to; it is no easy task to turn to a wholly different order of things. To discard symbol and dwell upon facts, and these facts that are ever varying in their outward form—to master, for instance, the details of our physical frame, the varieties of human temperament, the changes incident to growth, maturity, and decay, the symptoms of the two hundred diseases which prey upon mankind, the range of resources which in various combination nature has provided for their relief—all this demanded a wholly different order of mind. There are not wanting evidences—we meet with them in this record—that the Doctor shrank from this. At least he shrank from finally committing himself to a profession which would involve the renunciation, to a certain extent, of his most cherished pursuits. But here the moral qualities of his nature come conspicuously into view. And the professional

career of Dr. Birchenall may be held up to the imitation of young men, as furnishing the example of a mind not wilfully indulging its own humours, but bracing itself to unwelcome tasks, and learning at last to find its delight in them, because they formed its appointed course of duty.

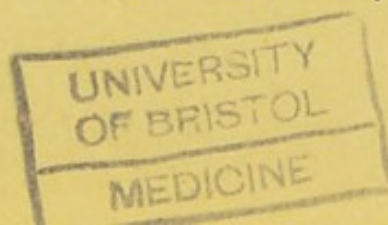
We shall have completed our survey of Dr. Birchenall's intellectual endowments when we have mentioned the fine imagination which, in him as in all the higher orders of mind, places the mental products at the service of a sensitive emotional nature, and confers upon them an ideal beauty. There are not wanting indications of an interest in the fine arts. In his youth he cultivated music with zeal and assiduity, and though afterwards he ceased from its practice, yet he understood the theory, and was able to play on several instruments. For poetry, painting, and sculpture he had an innate love, and in regard to these he acquired a taste and a knowledge which entitled him to rank as a connoisseur and a judge. Indeed, it is plain that sentiment in his case was only preserved from undue preponderance by stern conflict with hard realities in daily life; just as the tendency to the abstract and metaphysical was kept in healthy check by the necessity for minute external observation, and the habit of solitary meditation by the claims of public religious duty.

Thus we see that Dr. Birchenall possessed a wonderfully well-balanced mind. All the great powers were present in harmonious combination, and all were developed in their turn, some as the result of natural bent, the rest through the ordination of Providence.

A few words must be said here about his moral, in

so far as these can be distinguished from his spiritual, characteristics. As in all the children of truly Christian parents, it is hard to separate grace from nature. From both the paternal and maternal side, but especially the latter as represented in the person of his maternal grandfather, there was inherited a strong instinct of veneration, early issuing in a well-marked religious bias. This was the root of the whole character, and the soil in which it was planted was favourable to its growth. Hence, though not averse from the sports of boyhood, the subject of this biography was characterized from the first by a seriousness beyond his years. His bodily temperament, the bilious-nervous, was of an order that predisposed the possessor of it to sober estimates of human life, and of his own powers in relation to life's duties. Difficulties were thus often magnified to his sensitive apprehension which vanished in the hour of stern encounter. Once entered on, that encounter brought out rare capacities of endurance. Such a man was likely to weigh well his plans before putting them into execution, to be cautious in initiating new enterprises, but buoyant and enthusiastic, as well as tenacious and persevering, when once they were begun. From the same causes we should expect to find the affections slow to entwine themselves around new objects, but firm in their attachment when once formed. A high sense of dignity, and a keen appreciation of the rights and duties of friendship, were a necessary corollary of all the rest.

It is easy to see into what faults Dr. Birchenall's temperament would have betrayed him, if they had not been restrained by Christian principle, or refined away by Divine grace. His was not that easy-going



habit of mind which the turmoil of life cannot ruffle. If he had allowed it to become so, his temper would have been impetuous, his spirit proud. Those who knew him best saw that while in some respects nature had been simply improved by grace, in others grace had subdued if not extinguished nature.

So far we have seen what Dr. Birchenall was in virtue of original endowments. Apart from the supernatural influences that moulded his whole character and permeated his whole life, he would have been no common man. He would have been intelligent, learned, active, industrious, and probably in any calling successful. But without the transforming touch of the Divine Artificer, he might have been but a selfish worldling, the very opposite, in fact, of what he was. The record that has been laid before the reader shows how a man of his calibre faced those great problems which every man must practically answer by the volitions of his accountable life. In one respect, indeed, the task that lay before the Doctor was simplified. Vital Christianity had from the beginning been so thoroughly interlaced with the fibres of his being, that it was not easy for doubt to find an entrance. But a mind like his, cautious, philosophical, discriminating, could not be credulous. His faith reposed upon the unassailable foundations of an enlightened and comprehensive reason. I shall not be misunderstood when I say that, while his adherence to Christianity was far from being the result of unreflecting sympathy, yet so dear to him were the truths of revelation, that scepticism in his eyes appeared almost synonymous with blasphemy. So far, then, his task was simple. He had not to grope his way to the

reasonableness and necessity of revelation: of that he was always persuaded.

But something more than this was needed. A luminous and instructed intelligence, an habitually serious disposition, a pious and godly training, a scrupulously upright walk, may co-exist with utter blindness to the first principles of spiritual life. John Birchenall was already equipped with various learning,—for he was a precocious youth,—when, in his seventeenth year, he found himself confronted with the solemn question, “What must I do to be saved?” The importance this question assumed in his eyes is obvious on the face of the record: it was nothing less than an infinite importance. It meant for him, as it means for every man, “How shall I escape the wrath to come? How shall I find mercy with an offended God? How shall I live here so that hereafter I may rise to the felicities of heaven? How shall I prepare for the vision and fruition of God? How shall this human be for ever clothed upon with the glory and purity of the Divine?” To this question not only the secret document we have now read, but the public testimony of a life extending over two generations, affords the answer. Human learning here availed but little. The strong man bowed under the pressure of this burden: the youthful aspirant after the treasures of earthly knowledge cast aside his useless trappings, and became as a little child that he might enter into the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER III.

LONDON—WALKING THE HOSPITALS—A GALLERY OF
PORTRAITS.

1821-1823.

WE have now to follow John Birchenall to scenes widely different from those of his youth. He was now to be thrown into the society of hundreds of young men, intent, no doubt, on gaining a full equipment for the duties of their future vocation, but in the meantime greeting the liberty of thought and action accorded to opening manhood with an eagerness and zest which make this period of life one of considerable peril. John Birchenall was prepared for the emergency. His principles were by this time well established, and they were fortified by habits of devotion. The advantage of this he found during his two years' sojourn in the metropolis. While not exposing himself unnecessarily to temptation by too free an intercourse with his fellows, he took care on every suitable occasion to indicate by significant tokens the course he meant to pursue. Thus he escaped the perils which beset the young adventurer who, loosed from his moorings, sets sail on an unknown and dangerous sea. We will leave him to tell his own tale :—

“On the approach of the winter session (1821-22) of the medical and surgical classes, I left home for London to connect myself with the hospitals of the Borough. It was on Saturday evening that I arrived in the metropolis. My first care on the following day was to visit the family of Dr. Warren at Chelsea. It was a new thing to me to have to walk by three or four miles of continuous buildings; indeed, the general features of the city were novel and characteristic, but its dissipation, and what appeared to me the almost universal desecration of the Sabbath, affected me deeply. Dr. Warren was not at home, but Mrs. Warren received me with much kindness, and I walked with her to the chapel, Sloane St. Terrace, and heard a very encouraging sermon by good Mr. Taylor, then of the Mission House, from ‘My grace is sufficient for thee.’

“I entered upon my hospital avocations with many misgivings, for I was surrounded by several hundreds of young men of every shade of character. I was almost alone, having no companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus; but I was kept from the evil, for the Lord stood by me and strengthened me. My Sabbaths were spent most happily in the families of Dr. Bunting and Dr. Warren alternately; or, by special invitation, at the house of my leader, Mr. Higgs, of the Borough, a respectable and highly estimable man. It was at his class that I formed an acquaintance with Dr. E. Clarke, who made the ascent of Mont Blanc in the summer of 1825, in company with Captain Markham Sherwin. He was a young man of brilliant parts, and accomplished, in a literary and scientific point of view, beyond his years. The only other intimate friendship I contracted among the medical pupils was with a nephew of the late Mr. Michael Thomas Sadler, of Leeds [who represented Newark in Parliament from 1829 to 1832].

“The interval between the two winter sessions I spent at home. I would have contented myself with

the single qualification for general practice, but this was overruled by my father. I returned with a heavy heart, for, morally, I was not a whit more prepossessed in favour of London than at the beginning; and I knew that the imperative duties of the dissecting-room would subject me to the invidious observation of the students. Again the Lord ministered to my instruction and comfort. On the Sabbath morning after my return I had gone, with the younger Mr. Higgs, to the chapel in Lambeth Road. Good Mr. Josiah Hill was in the pulpit; his text was, 'So Daniel was taken up out of the lions' den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.' The sermon, in material, in sentiment, in style, was peculiar and engaging; and it was accompanied by a hallowing influence.

"I renewed my connexion with the classes, and entered upon my various engagements again in the fear of the Lord. It was soon found that I had anatomical discrimination and tact, which the mere theorist cannot command; and this secured for me the good opinion and respect of many, who would otherwise have passed me by in contempt. We had a wide field of observation at the united hospitals, particularly in the operative department, owing in part to Sir Astley Cooper's celebrity. On one occasion I witnessed the removal, by the chain saw, of the spinous processes, for fracture of the dorsal vertebræ. Mr. Tyrrell was the operator. The operation had been performed once before by the younger Mr. Clive; but as it was not ultimately successful in either case, it has never, that I know of, been repeated."

It may be useful to supplement the autobiography by the following account, which will throw further light on Mr. Birchenall's life in London and its associations:—

"I entered the classes of the combined schools at the hospitals of St. Thomas and Guy's, connecting myself

with the lectures on general science, as well as those which were strictly professional, or collateral thereto. Some of these were delivered at the early hour of seven; the latest (Sir A. Cooper's) terminating at nine P.M. The copying out in full of the notes taken daily at five or six lectures, with the duties of the dissecting-room and those of the hospitals, left no time for amusement or recreation; and I could rarely retire to rest before three in the morning. I bore up under the pressure of engagements so arduous and unremitting during the whole of the first session, although I was very sensible that the air of the city, and the want of daily exercise, were operating prejudicially upon my health. When I returned to London, however, for the ensuing season, my digestion got deranged, and my breathing at times embarrassed; the dyspeptic condition being aggravated by the want of a variety of suitable food, and by the liberal use of tea as my latest repast; and then my previous duties, which had assumed a greater importance in prospect of my final examination, were more than usually oppressive. Happily, at the close of the earliest period allowed by the College for our appearance before the examiners, I passed the usual ordeal with credit, if not with applause; and in a few days afterwards bade adieu to the assiduous and trying duties by which the professional competency and future career of every medical student have to be determined.

“In the review of our course of medical and surgical instruction and its associations, I may just glance at the qualifications, personal and professional, of a few of the lecturers.

“Sir Astley Cooper impressed me as the handsomest man I had ever seen. Of respectable parentage, tall, robust, and well-proportioned, he possessed a naturally easy and dignified carriage, which frequent intercourse with the *élite* of society had tended to improve. Nevertheless, socially, his manner was genial and affable.

Although verging on threescore years, there was the freshness and hilarity of one in the vigour of his days. With a countenance radiant with intelligence, an eye accustomed to take in at a glance any deviations from the ordinary and healthy conditions of humanity, and a mind prompt with suitable expedients for their relief, to which should be added an occasional smirk of good humour and gaiety, he possessed personal qualities which, with his habits of close practical observation, fitted him, beyond any of his contemporaries, to occupy the highest position in the profession. There was a freshness and a raciness, too, in the lectures he delivered, which tended to augment their intrinsic popularity.

“Mr. Green, our anatomical lecturer, like Sir Astley, whose niece he married, was very tall, but the reverse of genteel in person and carriage. His countenance, which was sallow, had been disfigured by small-pox; and as the lower extremities were disproportionately long, and he wore tight pantaloons, a gait anything but easy did not commend him to those among us who were captivated by appearances only. There was a certain stiffness and coldness, too, in his manner, which rendered him somewhat unapproachable. As a lecturer, he was tedious, deliberate, and unimpressive. His mind, however, was of a very superior order. A disciple and friend of Coleridge, he was profoundly metaphysical, was highly accomplished as a classical scholar, and well versed in French and German literature. When some ten or a dozen of my fellow-students were, like myself, preparing for the final examination, he invited us to his house one evening to make us familiar with the interrogatory forms, anatomical and surgical, by which, in the presence of the Court of Examiners, we might possibly be embarrassed. Here we saw him in a brighter and more sociable aspect, his disposition in private life being manifestly kindly and benignant; and we left his habitation with a grateful recognition of the attention and solicitude he had accorded to us in this emergency.

“Dr. Blundell was our early morning lecturer on the practice of midwifery, and in the evening in the department of physiology. He had a large run of patients of the class to whom his morning lecture applied, and it was somewhat amusing when it occurred, as it frequently did, that he had been engaged through the night, to see him enter the theatre, before the day had dawned, with unshaven chin, in a seedy dress, and with a moody expression of countenance. Even then he was prompt and effective on all questions of practical interest. His physiological lectures, however, developed his oratorical powers the most completely. His intellect was then fully awake; and as he had a finely appreciative scientific turn of mind, and an easy and correct elocution, together with a flexible and not unmusical voice, to myself it would have been a high gratification if his addresses to us on these occasions had been more frequent or more prolonged.

“A Mr. Allen was our lecturer in the analytical department of chemistry, on electricity and galvanism, on astronomy, and the laws of mechanical and physical force. He was a member of the Society of Friends, somewhere about threescore years of age, rather below the middle size, had a neat, round figure; and with a beautifully clear benignant eye, a fair ruddy countenance, and a manner singularly unpretentious and accessible, he was deservedly esteemed and popular. He was one of a deputation afterwards commissioned by the Society of Friends in London to go to Russia for the purpose of obtaining permission of the Czar that the Scriptures might be circulated in his country, the Bible Society being desirous to further this object. In addition to the jealousy that might have been thereby awakened amongst the hierarchy, there were two obstacles in the way, the serfdom and consequent ignorance and degradation of the masses, and the haughty and exclusive bearing of the nobility. Nevertheless, the deputation was very courteously re-

ceived by Alexander, and if the feeling of the Emperor on this question could have been carried out, without risk to his person or government, the Bible would long ago have been in the hands of very many of his subjects in their vernacular tongue."

We have other memoranda of Dr. Birchenall's London sojourn in the diary which he now began to keep; but as they consist for the most part of notes on hospital practice, lectures, and anatomical dissections, they will scarcely profit the general reader. The above sketches will show that the medical student possessed a sufficiently observant mind; and they do not need to be eked out by such statements as the following, which we might continue to an indefinite extent:—"Nov. 8, 1822.—Dissected the crico-arytenoidei, the crico-arytenoidei laterales, thyreo-arytenoidei, arytenoidei obliqui, arytenoideus transversus, thyreo-epiglottideus and aryteno-epiglottideus." It will be more to our purpose to complete the gallery of portraits of which one section has already been given.

The following is a series of sketches, taken from the life, of pulpit celebrities whom Dr. Birchenall heard in Macclesfield, London, or Liverpool during the early part of the present century. The interest of these sketches is twofold. They are interesting in themselves, as bringing before the mind, in a kind of panorama, some of the leaders of the great evangelical movement, who lived at a time when the original impetus was yet unspent, and when the modern organisations by which men seek to conserve its force and regulate its development were but in embryo. True, some of the figures that will pass before us are familiar to many through study of their written

memoirs, if not of their living personalities. But the present series has its value as being the work, not of many, but of one, and that one an independent though interested observer. Some persons named in it, who did not stand out prominently before the public eye, are nevertheless worthy to be remembered.

The sketches are interesting also in relation to the subject of this memoir. They not only exhibit the keen discrimination, faithful memory, and pictorial skill of Dr. Birchenall; they also show what kind of influences were at work in youth and early manhood upon his plastic nature,—influences which, while not detracting from his individuality, could not but leave an ineffaceable impress upon his mind and heart:—

“The connecting link in my own recollections between the race of preachers in actual operation and those who had preceded, was Mr. Jos. Bradford (Mr. Wesley’s companion in travel), in person above the ordinary stature, large-boned, robust, and hale. He had the air of a man who had seen much service, and though unpretentious and frank naturally, there was in his carriage an indication of the ascendancy which had been acquired by previous habits and associations.

“On two distinct occasions Dr. Coke paid a visit to Macclesfield. He combined in himself, with remarkable shortness of stature, a rotundity of figure bordering on corpulency, and a short, quick, firm step, with a carriage easy and dignified. He had a fair complexion, a sparkling eye, an open intelligent countenance, radiant alike with benevolence and truthfulness. His voice was a falsetto, compressed and reed-like in its impassioned enunciations; nevertheless, it was accompanied by a style at once simple and forcible, and by an earnestness of manner which rendered it interesting and impressive. It was a novelty to see a minister in

our own pulpit arrayed in canonicals; and this distinctive feature in the case of Dr. Coke was sure to be transferred to the chambers of imagery of a youthfully susceptible mind. On the latter of these two occasions he baptized an infant brother of mine, together with the infant son of the late Mr. Allen, both being named Thomas in commemoration of the event.

“The former Mr. Theophilus Lessey, Mr. John Riles, Mr. Samuel Taylor, Messrs. Braithwaite and Gloyne, Mr. (Dr.) Townley, Mr. (Dr.) Warren, Mr. John Hughes, the Welsh archæologist, Mr. Jonathan Barker, and Mr. James Gill, with many others, are names honoured and revered for the excellence of their character, and for their work’s sake. The last two in the series were men upon whom the Lord put the most distinguished honour in the awakening and conversion of sinners. This was emphatically so in the case of the one last named. He had been a missionary in Gibraltar, had some degree of scholarship, and a taste for the sciences; but all this was ignored in the pulpit. The absolute purity of the Divine mind, the holiness of the moral law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, ‘the terror of the Lord,’ the certainty of a coming judgment, the precarious tenure of human life, the love of God to a fallen world, the atonement of Jesus, the call of the Gospel, the city of refuge, the work of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit, the joys of heaven and the torments of hell; these were the topics upon which he would dwell, enforcing them with earnest pathos, in tones never surpassing the ordinary vocal inflections.

“These were amongst the palmy days of Methodism in Macclesfield. The generation that had passed away had borne along with it some of the fairest plants of paradise; but there was in the Methodists of the period, inclusive of the first two decades of the present century, taking the society as a whole, more elevation of character, and not less energy; and the men and women of that day professing godliness were ‘living

epistles' of 'unconspicuousness, gravity, sincerity,' known and read of all men.

"When my father took myself and a younger brother to school at Chester, we called on Mr. (Dr.) Warren at Northwich, and at dinner we met Mr. John Bowers, Mr. W.'s associate in the ministry. This was the first year of his itinerancy, and I have still vividly before me his youthful appearance, his primitive ministerial garb, and his retiring and somewhat painfully bashful expression of countenance. His next circuit was Macclesfield, where he took to wife a young lady with whose family I was intimately acquainted.

"Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Beaumont occupied the pulpit on one Sabbath whilst I resided in Chester. It was shortly after his reception into the ministerial sphere of labour amongst us. His text in the morning, Num. xiv. 24, 'But my servant Caleb,' etc., pointed to the intimate connection between fidelity and fruition; and although it was evident that he laboured under some embarrassment, owing to the natural defect in his enunciation, there were indications of the mental power and effectiveness of the future orator.

"Coincident with the initiation of Mr. Bowers into the Wesleyan ministry was that of Mr. John Rigg, Macclesfield being one of his first circuits. In person he was tall, erect, and well-proportioned, and had a commanding appearance, with a shade of the military in his carriage. Nevertheless, in his intercourse with others he was unostentatious and unobtrusive. In the social relation he was courteous and kind, in the domestic circle eminently genial and affectionate. He had clear and correct perceptions, and a nicely-balanced judgment. His discourses were distinguished by methodical arrangement, terseness, and sententiousness; and although there was but little of the emotional in their delivery, they were always practical, and usually impressive. In his official character, and in the exercise of discipline, there was a blending of gentleness and

urbanity with fidelity and firmness ; and in his general deportment an air of sobriety, which gave expressiveness to a life of uniform piety, and a dignity and a grace to his ministerial character.

“ During the District meeting of 1813, Mr. W. Ault, one of the six missionaries taken out by Dr. Coke for India and Ceylon, was entertained at my father’s house. He had a cheerful though pensive air, and he was the first to fall a victim to a change of climate and the arduous labours of a newly-formed mission.

“ At the District meeting of 1814, our superintendent, Mr. Jonathan Barker, announced for one of the five o’clock morning services that Mr. Isaac Keeling would be the preacher, repeating his name emphatically as a young man of more than ordinary intellectual promise. The eulogy was well sustained on the following morning, by a discourse from Ps. lxvi. 3, ‘ Say unto God, How terrible art Thou in all Thy works,’ replete with illustrations from the material world and the physical universe, and with pertinently suggestive moral reflections.

“ Our missionary anniversaries now began to assume a certain degree of importance, like those of the principal towns in Yorkshire and other places ; and it was not difficult, on their recurrence, to engage the services of the leading ministers in the connexion, Messrs. Bunting, Watson, Newton, and others. There were also popular laymen in the Wesleyan body, two of whom visited Macclesfield more than once—William Dawson and Jonathan Saville. There was much of the dramatic in both—the serio-comic in their shades of resemblance ; more, however, of genius in the former, at least more of the force and versatility of dramatic genius. Nevertheless they were, if not equally so, yet similarly effective speakers on the missionary platform ; and the pulpit discourses of the first-named were always honoured in the awakening and conversion of sinners. Poor Saville was dwarfish and deformed. He had been a parish apprentice with a man who had

treated him most cruelly; in addition to his ordinary privations, inflicting upon him blows the violence of which on one occasion caused fracture of the thigh-bone, which crippled him for life; but withal he had a fine head, and an open, intelligent, manly countenance.

“The celebrated Mr. Samuel Drew came from Liverpool to officiate on one of the anniversaries of the Roe Street Sunday school. There was but little of the clerical in his appearance, and he still bore, in the unpretentious bluntness of his manner, the personal characteristics of the artisan. There was, however, a roundness and compactness of cranium, indicative of mental power, which its grizzled and shaggy hair could not conceal; and the numerous furrowed lines on his forehead bore witness to the long-continued and urgent demands which had been made upon the exercise of this power. His text was Luke xiv. 12-14. He argued the question of benevolence first in the light of a purely ethical philosophy, and then in the light of a revealed Gospel, regarding the text (if I remember rightly) as the dictate of a higher moral law, rather than as that of the sanctified instinct of our humanity. It was the first time I had listened to a purely metaphysical discourse, except once when Mr. France was passing through Macclesfield, and it gave a little impulse to the faculty of mental abstraction (which was not altogether dormant at the time), the employment of which in subsequent years has formed an agreeable occupation in my moments of seclusion and retirement from the ordinary engagements and cares of life.

“As a Christian minister, Dr. Bunting embodied in himself, in a very high degree, the twofold qualification, ‘power with God and with men.’ Mr. Robert Wood, in chasteness and perspicuity of style, in impressive sobriety of manner and in felicity of expression, came nearest to him as a preacher; emphatic also, like Dr. Bunting, but very impassioned withal. I have heard many others who, if not equally eloquent with Dr.

Bunting, have been equally clear, convincing, and rousing; but for devoutly reverent, earnest, powerful pleading with God in the pulpit, none that could bear a favourable comparison with him. In confession of 'the errors of the people,' Mr. M'Lean appeared to possess the same analytical skill; but as one who could also 'make intercession' on their behalf, under deep sympathy with the Divine mind as to the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and compassion for the souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus, Dr. Bunting had no equal within the range of my own observation.

"I happened to be in Manchester at the time of Conference in 1827, and was present when Mr. Watson, as ex-President, delivered his memorable charge, in Oldham Street Chapel, to the young ministers who were about to be received into full connexion, from 2 Tim. i. 7, 'For God hath not given us,' etc. His solemn and majestic mien, his unobtrusively dignified manner in the presence of so many ministers of various talents and accomplishments, his vividly luminous expositions of Divine truth, conveyed in language elevated and impressive, rendered all the more striking and emphatical by suitable Scripture metaphors,—these brought into prominence in their natural beauty and sublimity by his own exquisite perception of their practical relation and significancy, uttered, too, in the tones of a voice of more than usual gravity, bordering in its cadences on the sepulchral, altogether gave to his message an abiding and undying interest, whilst keeping the form and manner of the preacher before the eye of the mind, as a spectacle of transcendent moral grandeur, like that of one of the ancient seers.

"Dr. Newton was gifted with natural qualifications, as 'the eloquent orator,' above all his brethren in the Wesleyan ministry. His robust and commanding figure, his frank, manly, and intelligent countenance, his full and benignant eye, his easy and graceful movements, his vivid perceptions, his fine moral sense,

his smooth and copious phraseology, enunciated by a bass voice of extraordinary melody and power, together with the facility with which he could adapt the utterances of the tongue to the exigencies of the moment, taking up circumstances and incidents apparently trivial, and transforming them by the force of a glowing genius into means of fascinating interest and instruction ; all this, and much more that cannot well be expressed, made him the most popular and attractive speaker, both on the platform and in the pulpit, in the Methodist body. As a preacher he was expository and suasive, addressing himself to the understanding, to the judgment and affections, and carrying his hearers along with him by the energy of a superior intellect, and the sympathies of a genially earnest and catholic spirit. There were occasions, however, when he dealt with the conscience in the light of 'the terror of the Lord,' but even then it was only to 'persuade' men to be reconciled unto God.

"Dr. Adam Clarke, at the culminating point of his public career, had an enviable notoriety for pre-eminent literary attainments. An accomplished Oriental scholar, with stores of general learning ; in Biblical and Rabbinical lore especially distinguished ; familiarly acquainted with the languages of western Europe, and through these with its archæology ; he was thereby admirably qualified for the office at one time assigned to him by the British Government, in order to the selection of materials from the national archives for the prosecution of the historical arrangement of Rymer's *Fœdera* ; and he occupied a foremost position amongst his compeers owing to his various multitudinous acquirements. With a mind earnestly prepossessed in favour of evangelical truth and richly imbued therewith, there were found also associated the aphoristic wisdom of the sage and the philosophy of the man of science. His discourses were radiant with exhibitions and illustrations of the wisdom, goodness, and

faithfulness of God, in nature, in providence, in grace, delivered in a style perfectly artless and transparent; and although they appeared to be elaborated at the time from the vast resources he had ever at command, there was always a freshness and raciness throughout, which made them highly interesting and popular.

“I heard Dr. Raffles deliver an address at a public meeting in Liverpool, soon after he came to that town. His countenance, which had the freshness and bloom of youth, was radiant with intelligence, and had an air of self-confidence, bordering, as it appeared to myself, on self-complacency. How changed, as pastor of the Great George Street congregation, some thirty or forty years later! The eloquent orator still, but what sobriety in his demeanour, how chastened, how devout, how full of sympathy!

“Dr. M^cAll had a very rare combination of physical and mental endowments. In figure he was rather tall, of elegant physical conformation, of highly nervous temperament, genteel in his carriage, although, owing probably to his recluse and studious habits, this when in company was somewhat lacking in freedom and ease. His countenance had the equable and composed impress of a pious and reflective intellect; pale, except when lighted up with the animation of the pulpit; with a greyish-blue, penetrating eye. Classically accomplished and brilliantly eloquent, the finely-modulated, silvery tones of his softly flexible voice fell upon the ear with a peculiarly captivating charm. His earlier discourses had at times more of the analytical and abstruse than was adapted to the modes of thinking of his congregation; nevertheless, there was usually a practical peroration of general interest. There was but little action in the pulpit, except that which was required occasionally for the adjustment of the gown. His sermons became more practical after he removed from Macclesfield to Manchester, although there were occasions when he would pour forth a torrent of sublime and philosophi-

cally discursive eloquence. No public speaker that I have ever listened to could compare with Dr. M'All for rapidity of enunciation, except the Rev. James Parsons of York, who at the commencement of his ministerial career somewhat surpassed him in this faculty; but there was a musical distinctness ever in the cadences of the former which was wanting in the latter, and which the graver and deeper tones of his voice rendered inaudible at the close of a protracted paragraph.

“In the latter end of the year 1822, if I mistake not, I entered the Tabernacle, City Road, on my way to Dr. B.'s, and heard the late Rev. J. Parsons from John xx. 20, 21. His tall, slight figure, his fervid earnestness, his rapid elocution, riveted with breathless attention the large and respectable congregation worshipping there, as well as many strangers; and their attention was the more sustained because the voice of the preacher was lacking in tone and fulness, and lapsed at the close of a prolonged sentence into the inaudible, or nearly so. There was a striking difference in his enunciation forty years afterwards. There was now the deliberate utterance of a man of advanced age, rendered distinctly impressive by judicious culture and mature experience, and animated by the subdued fervour of an ambassador of Christ.

“During the latter period of my residence in London (1822), Dr. Edmund Clarke took me along with him on one Sunday morning to hear Mr. Irving in his chapel at Hatton Garden. It was at the commencement of his notoriety as a pulpit orator of extraordinary energy and power, and in the densely packed congregation were some of the *élite* among the Members of Parliament and of the British Cabinet. He had the genuine Caledonian figure, tall, large-boned, muscular, with a profusion of black glossy hair, flowing down upon his shoulders and falling back in natural ringlets, and a dark, lustrous eye, peering around from under arched and bushy eyebrows. His majestic form, the solemn gravity of his manner,

his earnest intuitive gaze, to the significance of which, in some of his moods, a natural squint contributed not a little, coupled with a voice of considerable compass, grave and sonorous in its inflections, and the gesticulations of an arm that in spiritual exercises seemed to cleave unto the sword, together gave him a physical command over his auditory, by which they were unconsciously prepossessed for the commission he bore as an uncompromising preacher of righteousness. Moreover, his skilful and humiliating exposure of the deceitfulness of the human heart, and of the deceptableness of unrighteousness, in all its ramifications and subtleties, his fierce and fiery denunciations of insincerity and hypocrisy, in the world and in the Church, his startling fulminations against the expediency which he conceived to be taking the place of moral principle, in high quarters especially, and of the spurious liberalism which threatened to loosen the bonds of social sympathy and brotherhood; all this, clothed in language copiously and sublimely pertinent and forcible, rolling along in protracted paragraphs of increasing majesty and energy, until the whole terminated by the seal of the eternal doom, must have shaken to the centre the souls of the temporizing statesmen and religionists who might happen to be present on the occasion."

CHAPTER IV.

RETURN TO MACCLESFIELD—PROPOSED MISSION TO
PALESTINE—THE ISSUE—RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

1823-1826.

AFTER walking the hospitals and obtaining a diploma as surgeon, it might be supposed that John Birchenall's thoughts would naturally turn to a course of medical practice. But the bent of his mind was by no means toward the profession he ultimately embraced. A far higher ambition had long filled his soul, and now it seemed likely to be gratified. The eminent ministers with whom he had been associated during his stay in London had not failed to gauge his moral and intellectual worth. And as a mission to Palestine was at this time contemplated by the Missionary Committee, the peculiar qualifications of the young medical student pointed him out as a suitable person to accompany the regular agents of the Society in the capacity of a medical missionary. Proposals to this effect were accordingly made to him, before his return to Macclesfield, by Dr. Warren and Mr. Joseph Taylor. Immediately after his return (Feb. 17, 1823), Mr. Roberts, the second minister, also told him he had for some time viewed him in

connection with the ministry. But there were obstacles in the way. "My father inquired," he says, under date 27th of February, "into my views relative to the practice of my profession. I told him my mind on the subject. I supposed it would have occasioned considerable uneasiness. I was not mistaken. I feared wounding the feelings of my parents, or I should have disclosed my mind sooner." "28.—I felt the force of my father's remark made this morning, 'Some of the best of your days are thus thrown away,' alluding to my wish to quit the profession of medicine. My mother was angry, thinking it mere caprice. I could make no reply, but committed my integrity in the matter to Him who searcheth the hearts, overwhelmed with sorrow." "March 1.—To-day my father intimated my future business. I received it as a Divine appointment, and hope it will be for the best." And what was the "future business" that was to take the place of the dreams which had been haunting him so long, and which seemed now on the very verge of realization? "March 3.—To-day I entered upon my new employment in the silk warehouse." So the young linguist, mathematician, philosopher, must not be permitted to become a divine. He was not to be "promoted over the trees" of the Lord's right hand planting, but to a desk in a silk factory. We hardly know which to wonder at most, the sternness with which the parental mandate was issued, or the meekness and humility with which it was obeyed. But it will be asked, What was the reason of this? Where was the Christianity of the father and mother who could withhold their son from such a glorious career? The truth

is, that there is an explanation, and it is not the too frequent one of earthly affection smothering Christian zeal, much less of sordid motives predominating over benevolent ones. John Birchenall, senior, was in the right; but how much he was in the right, John Birchenall, junior, did not at this time know. The honour and credit, nay more, the very subsistence of a large family were at stake. By a mysterious providence, the responsibility for their support was very soon transferred from the father to the eldest son, and though not in the way at this time indicated, the son became the mainstay of the family, and so continued long years after his father was laid to his rest.

There are one or two features in this account upon which we cannot but dwell. One has been already alluded to, his obedience to the will of God as expressed to him through the will of his parents. He thought he was a better judge of the position than they were, but that did not weigh with him. He knew that their manner was dictatorial and unnecessarily harsh, but that did not alter his duty. The command was peremptory, and though he had now for some years passed his majority, he submitted, "in the fear of the Lord." Another noticeable point, closely connected with the former, is to be seen by comparing the above account with the statements of the last chapter. From the latter it is obvious that he threw his whole soul into his medical studies; from the former, that he most ardently desired to embrace another calling. It is plain, then, that in his case inclination was not the mainspring nor the limit of active energy. He could swim against the stream of his own predilections. Indecision was not

the plea for inactivity. He did not wait for better opportunities, but embraced those that offered, and looked to God for help and deliverance. That help and that deliverance came, but not in the way he had fondly hoped. The Christian ministry was kept before his mind from this time onward for seven years, as the object of his most ardent desire and solicitude, but he was not privileged to enter it.

There is yet another question that arises on a review of this important crisis. What was the nature of the motives that prompted the wish to enter the foreign field? The "missionary fever" had just begun to take possession of the Methodist Connexion: was it the romance of a novel and distant enterprise that captivated the youthful imagination? The contemplated sphere, the Holy Land, was above all others fitted to attract such a mind: was it the manifold interest gathering round the places trod by "those blessed feet" that commended the undertaking in his eyes? So far as the following records may be trusted, the answer must certainly be in the negative. These impulses may have had their place, but it must have been a very subordinate one, for through all the references to the subject that are scattered up and down the diary, there breathes but one aspiration,—first to know the will of God, and then to do it. Love to Christ and love to souls, these are the commanding motives of the missionary; and they were those of the young man before us, who never ceased to be a missionary in heart.

The following extracts will illustrate all that we have said, and also—what we have not touched on—his early religious experience. In introducing them,

we must admonish our readers that they do but represent the early stages of his pilgrimage:—

“1823. *April* 6.—Mr. Kirkpatrick in the morning from Luke xviii. 18–23. I have often suspected that excessive attachment to books has deprived me of spiritual blessings. I am somewhat confirmed in this opinion. May the Lord pity my blindness, and raise my affections to more sublime engagements!

“7.—My mind greatly unsettled. To relieve it, the flute, electrical experiments, etc., were resorted to. I found that a mind awake to the importance of spiritual interests loathes pleasures arising from things terrestrial. I feel utterly disqualified for mental engagements and intellectual improvement.

“8.—I was ashamed at class, so few spoke of a present salvation; neither could I say that my own soul was happy. I seemed to myself to be a hindrance to the rest. Amongst others, Charlotte Nixon affectionately and fervently prayed for me.

“9.—A day of humiliation. In uncertainty as to the course I should pursue. The family wish me to resume the medical profession. It is not merely a sacrifice of personal feeling, as my mother intimated, but a sacrifice of spiritual interests that deters me, looking onward to the endless future. I would assist my parents in their present embarrassment in the best way I can; but as I alone must be responsible in matters affecting my salvation, the law of conscience prohibits my making dangerous concessions.

“*June* 28.—Oh, the preciousness of time! The opportunities that have glided away unimproved!—1. At school; 2. in the warehouse; 3. during my apprenticeship; 4. in London, etc. How shall I answer to it? Twenty-three years of my life already gone. Golden days! now numbered with ‘the years beyond the flood.’ How infatuated have I been! Charmed with beauty, learning, etc.; eagerly grasping at them,

whilst 'wisdom which is truly wise' has been neglected. What distraction, what tumult, have taken possession of my breast! When the fervour of hope has subsided, and calm reflection has taken its place, the 'melancholy void,' a mental chaos, hath been realized. Still destitute of the grace which harmonizes every faculty of the soul, and sanctifies every emotion of the breast. Purpose, through Divine assistance, to make my spiritual interests my supreme solicitude.

"29.—Heard Mr. Kirkpatrick in the morning from Acts iii. 19–21, in the evening from Isa. xxxv. 8–10. Under both discourses I was quickened, as also at the love-feast in the afternoon. Several (whose testimony I have no reason to dispute) bore witness to the truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Alas! I have not yet entered upon the threshold of the holy of holies.

"*July* 1.—My mind burthened with unbelief, but at times desiring and hoping for salvation. In the evening read Mr. Pawson's sermon on Isa. l. 10, and from it derived some encouragement. At class I was confounded whilst Ch. N. was praying. She has enjoyed the witness of the Spirit, assuring her of her part in the Redeemer's blood, for six years. From the day of her conversion to the present her experience has been unequivocal, growing in grace and in the knowledge of God. She hath daily communion with the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. I too might have been by this time comprehending with the saints of the Most High the greatness of redeeming love. Oh, when shall I begin to live!

"5.—My soul through the whole of the day earnestly desiring the image of God. 'There is a spirit in man,' and in it a consciousness that dignity was originally impressed upon its nature. Divine grace rescues it from degradation, present and eternal, and elevates it to its pristine nobility. 'Pardon and holiness and heaven' are the grand steps in the Divine arrangement.

I long for assurance as to the first, that the rest may be secured. The Lord condescends to regard my breathings after Him, and animates me with gracious hopes. I have thought much to-day of the relation in which the militant and glorified saints stand to each other."

During the summer of 1823 it became evident that no course remained open to John Birchenall but to devote himself to the duties of the medical profession.

"With this object in view," he says in the autobiographic record, "I went over to Sheffield to procure surgical instruments, and to spend a little time with my relatives there. It was during the sittings of the Conference, and I had many opportunities of attending its public services; it was the first occasion of the kind that had ever occurred to me, and it has ever been remembered with the liveliest interest."

"The address of the ex-President, Dr. Clarke, was replete with wisdom of the highest order; and it was delivered with an earnestness of manner, and a chaste simplicity of style, in delightful accordance with its great object. As a whole, I never expect to hear anything like it again. It was grounded on Paul's advice to Timothy, 'Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine,' etc. When urging upon the young preachers the importance of consecrating all their powers to the service of Christ, he made a fine allusion to the elevated forms of talent among the preachers by whom he was surrounded, all sanctified by associations of this kind. He observed that the success of Methodism depended on the use it had made of the vital resources of Christianity, in the publication of a Gospel commensurate, in its freedom and fulness, with the moral necessities of our fallen humanity; and he stated that a peer of the realm, a member of the British Cabinet, had spon-

taneously expressed a similar conviction in a recent conversation with himself on the subject. In pressing home the great importance and obligations of the Christian ministry, and the constant regard which should be paid by those engaged in it, especially to their relations to God and eternal things, he quoted a Persic couplet, which, aided by his own comments at the time, conveyed impressions with reference to the ubiquity and omniscience of the Divine Being which were altogether new to me. 'Our face is toward Thee in all our ways; Thy face is toward us in all our intentions' (see Clarke's *Commentary*, Ps. xxvii. 9)."

Returning to the diary, we find the same two things uppermost,—spiritual growth and the call to the ministry :—

"1823, *Aug.* 14. — Have recently returned from Sheffield, on a visit to my relatives there during the sittings of Conference. I was much edified by the public services, and came home with purposes solemnly renewed, to devote myself to the interests of Christ's kingdom.

"20.—In reading the life of Mr. Fletcher lately, I discovered the importance of forming a right estimate of spiritual blessings, and was convinced, on reflection, that I had undervalued many such communications, because they did not come up to the standard of my wishes at the time; and for want of thankfully improving them, they had been withdrawn. Last evening, in humbly approaching the throne of grace, I found liberty of access; my doubts yielded, as I simply exercised faith in the atoning sacrifice, and a measure of peace and filial confidence flowed into my soul. To-day I have been aspiring heavenwards, expecting a fuller manifestation of Divine influence; and as Mr. Kirkpatrick was discoursing this evening from 1 Tim. iv. 8, I perceived more clearly than ever the insuffi-

ciency and comparative worthlessness of a merely external religion, and the transcendent excellence of true godliness.

“23.—To-day my sister Jane came into my little place of study to inquire what she must do to be saved. The epileptic fit with which she was seized three weeks ago, and a dream she had a few nights afterwards, have been the means of her awakening. Her distress is very great, and I felt great pleasure in directing her to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

“30.—In the afternoon I took a walk over Kerridge ridge. From hence is a prospect which, for extent and variety, is unequalled in this part of the country. The western declivity is noted for its quarries of freestone; the opposite slope has numerous pits which once yielded coal. In one of these a young man, who had been a neighbour and associate of mine in early life, was killed three years ago. He had stepped aside to pluck some wild raspberries which he saw hanging over the mouth of the pit, when the stone against which he was leaning gave way, and he was precipitated upwards of fifty fathoms. To him this mysterious event was doubtless eternal gain, for he had been recently converted to God, and on the previous day, which was the Sabbath, in conformity with the wishes of his friends of the New Connexion, he had spoken from a passage of Scripture. His text, as a first and last, was peculiarly appropriate, ‘The time is short;’ and the remarks he grounded upon it, it was observed, were delivered with a fervour and impressiveness in character with the importance of the subject. I met him in the evening returning from the appointment as I went with the brethren of the prayer leaders’ plan to the Lane End workhouse. There was something in his countenance on this occasion peculiarly radiant and benign; but little did I suppose that it was to be our last earthly salutation, and that within twenty-four hours from that

period he would have exchanged the joys of holiness for the joys of heaven.

“To-day I received a letter from Mr. Taylor of the Mission House relative to a proposed mission to Palestine. I can only say with reference to its importance on the one hand, and the difficulties that rise up before me on the other,

‘The wide, the unbounded prospect lies before me,
But shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it.’

“*Sept. 1.*—Went to Manchester on business. Called on Mr. Roberts, and laid before him and Mrs. R. the proposal of Mr. Taylor. They think it providential, and advise me to seek the Divine direction. I saw Mrs. D. (sister to Mrs. R.). To both I am under the greatest obligation for their kind attention to my spiritual interests when at school in Chester.”

“I had not been in practice more than three months,” says the autobiography, “when I was required by my father to go to Liverpool, to aid for a time a younger brother in the management of a drug establishment which he had recently taken most unadvisedly. My absence for twelve months, and the events which transpired in the interim, made a serious change in my professional prospects in Macclesfield. I derived some advantages, however, by my residence in Liverpool; among others the acquisition, to some extent, of the French and Italian languages, the latter of which was taught me by an accomplished refugee, a member of the Florentine Academy.”

During this period the records of Dr. Birchenall's spiritual life are wanting. On his return, however, they recommence.¹ We add a few more of these early entries, not because they indicate a more than ordinary acquaintance with the things of God,—though they

¹ It was during this period of absence from his native town that Brunswick Chapel was opened.

are marked by much simplicity and fervour,—but because by them we may the more easily estimate the extent and depth of the work which was soon to be wrought in his soul. That work made all the difference—we say it without fear of contradiction—between an ordinary and an extraordinary Christian. These records also bring out his love of nature and his power to paint its scenes in the hues with which a pensive fancy loves to clothe them. Let us linger on them while we may, for other and deeper interests will soon invite our attention:—

“1825. *June* 16.—Rose this morning under a measure of the sacred influence with which I closed my eyes last night. Found access at the throne of grace at noon in secret; and was much edified by the exalted views and experience of Lady Maxwell, as contained in her biography. Have to lament evermore my comparative lack of holy, humble love, and the little use I seem to be of in the world and in the Church. I wish to recommend the religion of Jesus, to diffuse the savour of grace, wherever I come. At class I covenanted that all I do and say be one great sacrifice to Him who hath redeemed me to Himself by His most precious blood.

“*July* 7.—I have been turned aside, like a broken bow, and the vows of the Lord have been forgotten. Oh that I were at all times faithful with myself, and steady to the purposes so often renewed! I am in danger from several quarters, most of all from things in themselves lawful and proper. Was much edified at class to-night. Our leader appears to be alive to the privileges of the New Covenant, and the experience of the members was highly animating. Blessed be God for vital religion! I hope to enjoy more of this. I intend to-morrow to be a day of humiliation.

“8.—Found but little freedom in prayer throughout

the day, the exercise, in the review of the past, tending rather to my reproach. Regarding myself in the light of the rules of society, I soon discovered that I was grievously wanting; but I came to the blood of sprinkling, and pleaded its efficacy in the removal of guilt and the bestowment of grace; and the Lord heard, and in the evening condescended to answer, and to raise my drooping spirit.

“*Sept. 1.*—I was this evening on the spot where my juvenile years were chiefly spent. I thought of the days that were long since gone by. Here I learnt to hallow and read the word of God; here I was taught to form my thoughts in prayer; and here those early impressions of the Holy Spirit, which I hold in sacred remembrance, were graciously bestowed. What a difference, thought I, between the J. B. of that day and the J. B. of the present! How trivial, comparatively, the obliquities of that period when put into the balance with the errors of maturer years! What might I have been but for preventing grace? The little I know, and the little I experience of the best things, is owing, under God, to parental care. I was involuntarily led to exclaim, Lord, what shall I do to acknowledge Thy mercies, and my obligations to those to whom, subordinately, I owe my life, my all? An important sphere of labour, which has occupied my thoughts and anxieties for many years, presented itself, but there were grave difficulties in the way. I tried, therefore, to withdraw my mind from this subject, and walked on, in silent contemplation of the objects around. It was the decline of day; the last beams of the sun had glittered in the glade, and the red-breast was warbling her vespers from the turret of a tottering building. The surface of each pool was calm and unruffled, except from the occasional plunge of the waterfowl or the rat tenanting its fens. The owl had ventured from his dormitory, and was wafting his unwieldy bulk over corn-fields recently shorn; the hare had forsaken her

covert, and was scouring the fields, with timorous and hesitating pace. I turned my eye upon the visible heavens. Mars was far in the south, glimmering a lurid light; and Jupiter appeared to be fast receding towards his apogee. I thought of Him who,

‘Beyond the bounds of time and space,
Shines forth for evermore,’

and was humbled into adoration, under a sense of my insignificance and the majesty and mercy of God. I opened my Greek Testament, and by the faint receding light I read, *τρέμων τε καὶ θαμβῶν εἶπε· Κύριε, τί με θέλεις ποιῆσαι, κ.τ.λ.* (Acts ix. 6). Were these words in answer to the anxious inquiry I had been uttering a little before? I deprecate all irreverent and curious consultation of the sacred oracles, but I remember a similar coincidence. At the period referred to I was in especial perplexity. I had ever regarded myself as designed for the office of the Christian ministry, and humbly conceived that some gifts and qualifications had been conferred in order thereunto. I judged that these had been misimproved, and inferred that they would not now be acknowledged by the Lord in this way. I very much wished, however, for a solution of this question. I walked out shortly afterwards into the plantation below our house, and taking my New Testament from my pocket, with no further intention than to benefit by St. Paul's advice to Timothy, I opened on these words, *Ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλήσις τοῦ Θεοῦ* (Rom. xi. 29). All that I can do, however, is to cleave unto the Lord, and wait the issues of His providence. I quickened my pace, for the shades of evening were drawing around me. The current of my thoughts was undisturbed, except by the wailing of the lapwing, which the tread of my foot had roused, or by the rumbling of the distant stage-coach. I quitted the fields for the highway. The moon was just peering above the eastern horizon, splendid and majestic even in her wane. The bat was fluttering on silken wing.

I was musing on these 'parts of His works,' of whom so 'little is known' at present, until, as I neared the town, my attention was called away and absorbed in the busy hum of men.

"16.—Walked over to Hollinsclough, on a visit to my grandmother. Found her in the eve of her days, quietly waiting for her change. How changed the place since the death of my grandfather! The numerous tribes of bees, once busy and gay, had ceased to live; they survived him who had colonized them barely twelve months. The vine and the fig tree were running wild for want of the hand which had formerly checked and directed their luxuriance; whilst the sighing fir trees, and the murmuring brook as it dashed down the hill, and wended its hurried course through the dingle, served but to connect the present with the past in sad impressiveness. On former occasions we had gathered the hop or the bean in company, or tended the bed of affliction in the cottage of the villager, whilst our evenings were cheerfully and happily spent by the fire-side in conversation on scriptural or medical subjects. There stood the arm-chair, solitary and unoccupied. The eye which had heretofore beamed therefrom with intelligence and joy was no more to be seen. No early greetings at the breakfast table. The chimes at this hour, always to my ears plaintive, were peculiarly so during this visit. How applicable, thought I, to the present state of things here, as compared with the former, is the evening dirge of the citizens of Rome, on the faded grandeur of that once queen of cities, 'Non è piu come era prima!'

"Nov. 16.—I have not, in every instance, used all that tenderness for the character of others which I ought to cherish. I purpose that no one shall in future suffer disparagement by any communications of mine. I want more humility, more self-abasement, in honour to esteem others before myself. I resolve, in the fear of God, to labour for this.

“ 18.—Attended the operations on the eye by Messrs. D. and F. Walked to Bollington in the afternoon. I could not say with Horace, ‘*Curis vagor expeditus.*’ My anxieties, however, were soothed by the recollections which this season of the year brings with it, of ‘the mystic joys of penitence.’ How hallowed are those incidents in human life which mark a new and important era! The gloominess of this day awakened emotions which the bright and cloudless and serene summer’s sky never could awaken. The purling stream, the flying cloud, the southern gale, sweeping through the leafless branches of the forest trees, whispered to me in accents indescribably plaintive and sweet. I was led involuntarily to exclaim, ‘Take, Lord, the purchase of Thy blood; set me apart for Thyself; let my affections be entwined around Thy cross; and all my enjoyments be in connexion with Thyself.’ Saw C. H. on my return. The Lord is carrying on the work of grace in his heart. May he give all diligence, for it is manifest the days of his pilgrimage will soon be ended.

“*Dec.* 28.—Waked with C. H., reading during his intervals of repose in Dante’s *Inferno*.

“ 31.—C. H. was thought to be dying through the day. He was inexpressibly happy, however. Every change of posture, and every draught of water, was sanctified by praise. A. B. called in the evening. On her leaving the room he said to her, ‘Remember these words, Prepare to meet thy God. And tell M. R.,’ he continued, ‘to take the same counsel. Say to J. R., my dying advice is, Begin to serve God. Tell him a flower, when offered in the bud, is no mean sacrifice.’ I stayed with him till two in the morning. David Birtles had called towards midnight, and when the clock announced the new year, we sang at C.’s request the usual hymn; and after it Pope’s ‘Dying Christian to his soul.’

“1826. *Jan.* 4.—This morning C. H. put off mortality. I regretted that I was not with him in his last moments, but his end was peace.”

CHAPTER V.

SHOWERS OF BLESSING.

1827-1828.

IN the extracts which close the last chapter we have seen evidence of a gradually maturing piety. But, as we have already intimated, they scarcely do more than present the ordinary experiences of a young Christian possessing an enlightened intelligence, a refined taste and keen sensibilities, not without a tinge of pious mysticism. There is little to indicate the extraordinary range and vigour of the spiritual activities which were soon to follow. Such activities are rarely the product of a measured and orderly quietism. They seem to demand for their genesis those seasons of overwhelming grace in which, as in a late spring, the spiritual nature undergoes a rapid and astonishing transformation, and the germs of a nobler life, long struggling against adverse influences, burst forth into a fruitful and far-spreading luxuriance. Such a season was now vouchsafed to the faith and prayer and zeal of those who, in this part of the Lord's vineyard, were athirst for showers of blessing. The appointment in 1828 of the Revs. John Walsh and W. O. Booth to the Macclesfield circuit, as colleagues of the Rev. John Pilter, who was already on the ground, awakened large

expectations among the people, expectations that were not disappointed.

In the measures employed by these devoted servants of God, they had the hearty co-operation of their lay brethren; and foremost among the number was the staid and thoughtful, but earnest and susceptible, young medical practitioner. Not that he committed himself without inquiry to this unwonted course of action. He scrupled at first, as others have done in similar circumstances, to countenance anything like irregularity. But he soon found himself graciously constrained to sacrifice not merely the etiquette of professional dignity, but even the rigid proprieties of order, to the exigencies of a great spiritual crisis. Like many more whose hearts God had touched, he feared to prescribe limits to the Holy One of Israel, and, abandoning his scruples, threw himself with all the ardour of a generous and sympathetic spirit into the projected course of labour. The result was the conversion of a multitude of souls and the edification of the church generally, and withal a seal set upon his own heart which remained unbroken till life's latest hour. The abiding influence of these engagements he was ever prompt to acknowledge. But let us hear the account from his own lips, as given in the autobiography, written twenty years later. The first paragraph will show that he could not as yet resign all thoughts of the Christian ministry:—

“At the instance of certain of my friends, I allowed myself to stand as a candidate for the Wesleyan ministry, at the District meeting held in Leek in 1827, having occupied the position of local preacher a little more than the requisite period. I passed the usual examina-

tions, without any reservation as to the disposal of Conference; any appointment, at home or abroad, I should have hailed as a distinguishing favour from above, though my leanings were altogether in the direction of a foreign station. Neither the one nor the other was in the arrangements of Providence. How far a designation to the *work* of the Christian ministry, as distinguished from the *office*, was in the counsels of the Holy One of Israel, I must leave to be determined at the judgment of the great day.

“The autumn of the ensuing year was a memorable period in my religious history. A fresh impulse appeared to be communicated to the society generally, by the preaching of the men whom God had graciously sent among us; and this was greatly strengthened by a course of pastoral visitations, to which they were severally devoted. I soon found myself insensibly drawn to the social means, some of which—the prayer-meetings, for example—I had not attended with anything like regularity for some time previously. It was not long ere I caught the mantle of the men whose hearts had been stirred up to seek mercies of the God of heaven upon themselves and our Zion. To one of these especially—Peter Turner—I felt my heart knit, as was the soul of Jonathan to that of David. An occasion soon offered which afforded us opportunities of frequent intercourse; this was a very gracious revival of the work of God, which commenced at Michaelmas, and continued, with but little interruption, for two or three years. Hitherto I had known my friend only in the capacity of a local preacher, our official reception in this department being coincident; now I beheld him in a more direct and social relation to the Church of Christ, for his heart was in the work of the Lord. Our conversations were exclusively on the interests of the Redeemer’s kingdom, and on our personal piety in its practical bearing upon this great matter. I soon found that my friend had far overstepped the line by which my own religious experi-

ence had been hitherto circumscribed, and that I had been slumbering over more enlarged views, and over convictions which ought to have been thoroughly influential. I awoke as one out of sleep; my mind was deeply and permanently affected with a sense of my past unfaithfulness; and my prayer from day to day was for mercy, and a closer walk with God.

“The first public service I attended in connection with the revival brought the answer. There was an extraordinary influence upon the people. As the brethren engaged in supplication successively, many were bowed down, and cried out in the disquietude of their spirits. In the general excitement, a question arose in my own mind as to the tendency of the irregularities thereby occasioned, though I was morally indisposed to entertain it, by reason of my own pressing spiritual necessities. Just at that moment Mr. Walsh called upon me to pray. I had uttered but a few words when I felt myself inwardly constrained to plead, with all the earnestness I could command, that Jesus who was ‘manifested in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil,’ would bare His arm, and avenge us of our adversary. I can never forget what immediately followed. The sacred fire descended upon my spirit, for the first time in my religious history, and glowed within me with holy ardour for the salvation of men and the extension of the kingdom of Jesus. The brethren present were astonished beyond measure at the enlargement I received,—for my praying exercises especially had heretofore been marked by great sobriety,—but I was deeply abashed myself, for I was at the feet of Jesus, and from that hour I felt myself baptized into His kingdom. I was now athirst for holiness of heart. To be fully sanctified to God, to be a vessel unto honour, to be a witness for Jesus, and to minister unto the saints, comprehended the whole of my desires. I sought, by much prayer and great singleness of eye, to have these great objects secured. In doing this I found that the

exercises of my faith must have a distinctness unto Christ my 'Sanctification,' even as they had previously had when He was apprehended as my 'Righteousness.' I found myself sensibly growing in grace, and acquiring, by the general outpouring of the Spirit, great freedom in prayer, and a holy confidence in intercession for others; but there were roots of bitterness occasionally springing up to trouble and defile. I had no rest in my spirit as long as I found within the remains of the carnal mind. I pleaded for its destruction; I saw this to be involved in the gracious provisions of the 'better covenant;' and I looked to the 'Faithful and True Witness' that I might share in the blessedness of the pure in heart. I did not look in vain. The Lord fulfilled the word on which He had caused His servant to trust; He cleansed from all unrighteousness; He gave me a new heart, 'all praise, all meekness, and all love;' and on its fleshly tablet He wrote His pure and perfect law. From this time Jesus was ever present to my mind, as the Source of spiritual life, as the High Priest of my profession, and as my Great Exemplar. I received of His fulness; I drew nigh to God in His name, with deepest reverence, but with extraordinary confidence and power; I endeavoured to walk as He had walked; and I laboured unweariedly from day to day for the promotion of His glory. His great and glorious name was so hallowed in me that it could not be mentioned by any one reverently but my lip would quiver with emotion, and the tear would glisten in my eyes. I strove to keep the issues of my heart by constant self-communing and self-renunciation, 'holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.' I dwelt among my own people; and to the best interests especially of the society, I devoted all my anxieties and energies. To be 'an example to the believers, in word, in conversation, in spirit, in faith, in purity,' was my highest ambition."

It will interest our readers to compare the above

account with the corresponding portion of the diary. They describe the same series of events, and harmonize well with each other. But in the one we have the free and unpremeditated utterances of the heart while the events themselves were in progress, in which hope alternates with fear, and joy with sorrow, because the issue is unforeseen. In the other we have the glad and grateful testimony of mature judgment calmly reviewing the past, expounding its secrets and applying its lessons, and filling out by the aid of memory what the haste of the occasion left untold. In the one we see the soldier putting on his armour; in the other we hear him tell the story of the fight. The following are the paragraphs referred to, as written down from day to day:—

“1828. *Sept.* 29. — Our quarterly meeting was held this day. A blessed influence, the result of yesterday’s love-feast, was upon us; harmony and co-operation in the work of God brought together all concerned; and the Spirit of interceding grace was poured out upon the brethren.

“*Oct.* 6.—We held a love-feast at the Brunswick Chapel this afternoon, as it is the Wakes week, and a time of general dissipation. Several of the friends expressed themselves very confidently that we were on the eve of a revival. A watch-night service in the evening, from which I was detained by a professional engagement.

“7.—Went, by appointment, with Mr. Booth and several of the brethren to Broken Cross, others being disposed of for Hurdsfield with Mr. Walsh. Mr. B. preached from Ps. lxii. 1. We then prayed in succession, and it was not long before a mighty influence descended upon us. One and another in the congregation fell down and cried for mercy, and obtained it, to

the joy of their hearts. One person, who came to the chapel unconcerned, was awakened, brought into deep distress, and introduced into the liberty of the children of God in the course of the service; and one or more of the friends were fully sanctified to God. We broke up soon after nine, praising and blessing God. The evening was wet, or the attendance would have been much larger.

“8.—At Hurdsfield last evening the schoolroom was thronged. Many persons were in deep distress, and six or eight found peace with God. This afternoon, at the prayer-meeting in Sunderland Street Chapel, there was soon a murmuring, as of persons under anxious concern about their eternal interests. Just at this juncture Mr. Walsh called upon me to pray; immediately I felt emboldened to ask largely. The little prejudices that remained against noisy meetings gave way, for I was breathing earnestly after God myself, and I had an irresistible conviction, ‘This is the work of the Spirit.’ My expectations were enlarged; my voice was raised; the brethren seemed to catch the impulse; our faith was strengthened mightily, and it appeared as if the Lord descended among us in power and much glory. Many were brought into blessed liberty as the brethren went on to intercede; and my soul rejoiced in God my Saviour, in that He had regarded the low estate of His servant. At 6 P.M. Mr. Walsh preached from 1 John iii. 2, a truly appropriate and excellent sermon. At the prayer-meeting afterwards, several obtained peace with God; and some of the brethren who had heretofore stood aloof from what they deemed irregularities, entered fully into the work, gratefully acknowledging the finger of God.

“9.—Met Mr. W. by appointment at a small cottage in the environs of the town, where we have weekly preaching. We had a gracious opportunity. Here I began to weep with those who were in distress; to wrestle with them in prayer; to point them to the

Lamb of God; and to rejoice with them when they received the garment of praise. Oh, how sacred, how delightful the exercise! My previous sentiments, as to professional dignity and propriety, were humbled and rectified, and my spirit became as a weaned child.

“10 and 11.—These have been ‘good days.’ My soul is growing in grace; my faith is fixed on Jesus; the world is crucified to me; and my spirit is in the dust of self-abasement. After the band-meeting, where, for the first time in this way, I bore my testimony for the Lord, I had many precious promises applied with reference to the full sanctification of my spirit, a great work which has yet to be accomplished.

“15.—During the gracious visitations here recorded, I have had strong conflicts with the powers of darkness. My first and last thoughts each day, as I have endeavoured to stay my mind upon God, have been associated with harrowing suggestions from the wicked one. I find safety in Jesus only. His name is my strong tower.

“18.—Our social meetings are honoured by the salvation of souls on every occasion; and the junior official men especially have entered fully and cordially into the work.

“24.—A profitable band-meeting this evening. Had much liberty before retiring to rest in pleading for the destruction of the carnal mind, and the last verse of the first of Isaiah, together with the fourteenth of the thirtieth chapter, was constantly recurring. O Lord, bring near that gracious hour.

“*Nov.* 12.—Mr. Sargent in the evening at Brunswick Chapel, from ‘There is joy in the presence of the angels of God,’ etc. The select band afterwards; a ‘time of refreshing.’ I feel a Divine persuasion that the Lord hath fully sanctified my spirit.

“13.—Light shines upon my path; my union with God continues; my soul longs for His fulness; and the ordinances are means of grace indeed. I seem to be

only just beginning to live, and have many fears lest I should lose what I have received. A few weeks ago I thought how important it is that every religious duty should be an act of consecration. I now begin to see more fully into the duty. Within these few days it has appeared to me that every temporal blessing should be acknowledged by a similar covenant, that all may be done to the glory of God.

“ 18.—We had a blessed meeting this morning at our private band ; all enjoying the Spirit's testimony to our full sanctification. How we rejoiced together ! But Brother Turner far outstrips us all. Well, I will follow, through the help of God, though it be *haud passibus aequis* ! Was much tempted when I got home. The psalms for the morning, however, were very encouraging, particularly the 91st. Glory be to God ! my evidence of His perfect love has been to-day much clearer than ever before. To keep up my union with the Lord, I find it necessary to do everything in the spirit of cheerful sacrifice, and nothing enables me to do this but a life of faith.

“ 23.—When I got home I found a letter from the Mission House. I do not see the way clear. I laid the matter before the Lord, and pleaded with Him for direction, but received no answer.

“ 26.—Wrote to Mr. Morley, stating my present difficulties as to the proposal. The voice of Providence appears to say, ‘ Stand still.’ ”

On two points out of many suggested by these paragraphs it may be needful, before passing on, to make a few remarks. One has reference to the outpouring of the Spirit here referred to, and the Doctor's views of such visitations ; the other, to his views as to the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification. With regard to both it may be said that, whatever they were, his views were neither hastily formed nor loosely held.

Essentially, they remained unchanged to the end of his days. It should be added that, however ardent his piety, natural temperament would not incline him to the sanguine extreme. His mind, moreover, was profoundly analytic, his reading even at this period extensive, and his opportunities of observation by no means limited. Yet we shall find him a consistent and fearless advocate of those modes of Christian operation currently, though perhaps unfortunately, styled revivalistic, and of those forms of Christian privilege which are expressed by the terms holiness and perfect love.

But let us guard against misapprehension. In respect to the first subject, he did not overlook the presence of the human element in such scenes as have been described; but, on the other hand, he was equally convinced that that element alone was not a cause sufficient to produce such effects. Through all the imperfection and fallibility of the human instruments he discerned the gracious influence of the Divine Agent. And while welcoming at all times the gentler operations of the Spirit, he also honoured those mighty workings under which the knees smite together and the joints are loosed, and the cry of the prophet is echoed, "Woe is me! for I am undone." The following contrasted statements, taken from his aphorisms, will show that he was aware of the perils that beset the work of God on either hand. "There are many who cry, 'O Lord, revive Thy work,' who have no sympathy with Jesus in His yearning pity and burning charity toward the souls redeemed by His blood." "Those are the first to stand in doubt as to the genuineness of the work of God who stand aloof from it."

He was always a steady adherent to the views

expressed above. No one knew better than Dr. Birchenall that emotions, taken alone, do not form a sure index to character, much less an effectual renovator of it. But he also knew that the mere presentation of truth to the intellect will never regenerate the heart. He believed that religion was meant for the whole man. "Our moral sentiments," he said, "have a profounder basis than our processes of thought." They have "more to do with the instinctive and emotional in our humanity than with that which is purely mental."

In regard to the extent of the Spirit's operations in the heart, his conclusions were in like manner well weighed. The diary shows that the subject had for many years occupied a place in his thoughts. The doctrine held by Dr. Birchenall was that of John Wesley and John Fletcher; and he held it, not because it was theirs, but because he believed it to be that of the Scriptures. His statements as to personal experience in the autobiography are remarkably clear; and if those of the diary are but brief, from the charge of vagueness and indefiniteness they will at least be free. In a paragraph written toward the close of his long life he has corroborated the statements just referred to. This paragraph may be regarded as embodying his view of the essential constituents of the experience known as "perfect love:"—

"When the Lord brought me into the glorious liberty of the redeemed, the following were the evidences of my fuller covenant relationship:—1. A constant sense of moral helplessness, sometimes a painful sense, but associated therewith a sense of dependence upon God. 2. Constant looking to Jesus as the source of my

strength and security. 3. Constant spiritual conflict. 4. Habitual watchfulness. 5. Tenderness of conscience. 6. Deadness to the world. 7. Genuine humility and self-renunciation. 8. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness. 9. Supreme love to God. 10. An abiding concern for His honour and glory. 11. Ardent love for the brethren. 12. Earnest desire for the salvation of others. 13. The spirit of prayer, of holy confidence towards God, of 'power with the Angel.' 14. Of gratitude and praise. 15. The Spirit's testimony increasing in clearness and permanency. 16. Abiding testimony of my own conscience."

CHAPTER VI.

OFFICES IN THE CHURCH—RENEWED NEGOTIATIONS WITH
THE MISSION HOUSE—THE ISSUE—RESOLUTIONS.

1829—1832.

THE devotion of the young medical practitioner had not been overlooked by the members and office-bearers of the Methodist Society in Macclesfield. His many talents and various learning, his deep seriousness, his sympathy with all who named the name of Christ, and especially with the afflicted and the destitute, his self-denying activity and maturity of judgment, together with his ardent strivings after a high standard of Christian experience, all marked him out in their eyes as destined for eminent usefulness. It is not surprising, therefore, that he was early solicited to enter upon the more spiritual of the many offices which the Methodist Church throws open to the zeal and charity of her laymen. So early as 1818 he had begun to exercise his gifts as a prayer-leader, by taking part in the numerous cottage-services which were regularly held in various parts of the town. His introduction to the office of local preacher did not so immediately ensue, as it frequently does, on the more informal modes of action. It was delayed, first by doubts about his call, and then by his course of medical study.

According to the autobiography, he must have commenced his labours in this capacity some time in 1826, but of the circumstances in which he did so no record is preserved. Of course, this step had reference to the fuller designation to the work of the ministry on which his heart was set. Although his desire in this respect was not gratified, he did not relinquish his local ministrations. Throughout his long career he occupied the pulpit at intervals, to the profit and satisfaction of the people, whether in the small country places or in the larger town chapels. Indeed, in the latter especially, Dr. Birchenall's appointments soon came to be anticipated as occasions of special interest, not only by the regular congregations, but by members of other churches. Of the character of his discourses we will speak by and by.

Another office, of scarcely less importance, and to which for nearly half a century Dr. Birchenall applied himself with extraordinary diligence and success, was that of class-leader. Of the value of the class-meeting, both as a means of spiritual edification and as a bulwark of church order, he had a deep and abiding conviction. He knew—none knew better—that for all the purposes of healthy church increase there needs free interchange of thought and feeling among individual members. He saw that the very idea of a church, as a corporate body existing solely to nurture and diffuse spiritual life, involved some such provision for “the communion of saints.” Desire for fellowship seemed to him a native instinct of the new creature. And how that could come to be shunned as a yoke which in the freshness of “first love” is always hailed as a privilege, he could only understand as a

symptom of spiritual decline. The blending of various orders of mind and grades of society, which usually obtains in Christian fellowship, he held to be a priceless advantage. Nothing would so effectually break down those artificial distinctions which differences of birth and education naturally engender, and which the pride and selfishness of the human heart seek rather to strengthen than otherwise. Nothing else would offer so powerful a check to the disintegration that means death.

In proportion to his estimate of the importance of this office was Dr. Birchenall's solicitude to discharge its duties. Considering the tax levied upon his time and energies by a ceaseless round of professional engagements, he might well have claimed exemption. But the voice of the Church was to him the voice of God, and he durst not refuse to obey it. He knew the difficulties that would beset his path, the incessant demands that would be made upon his knowledge alike of human nature and of the things of God, upon his spiritual sympathies, and sometimes upon his evangelical faithfulness and his personal forbearance and candour. He knew that to teach others Divine wisdom he must himself be taught of God, that he who would enforce godly precepts must set a godly example, and that spiritual fervour can only be sustained by corresponding moral fidelity. And from this time forward his eye was fixed more steadily than ever on the maintenance of a consistent walk and a spotless character. With what results his success as a class-leader may, among other evidences, serve to show. His one class speedily became two, and the two multiplied again into four; and for more than

thirty years he had above a hundred members under his care.

The following extracts from the diary will illustrate, among other things, the spirit in which he entered upon this department of his work:—

“1829. *March* 31.—Mr. Bunting, on his return from a visit to Birmingham, called this evening; inquired as to my prospects with reference to the ministerial work, etc. At present all is dark and perplexing.

“*April* 14.—Learned to-day that I was appointed last evening to take charge of Mr. B.’s class. The information caused me no little emotion and misgiving.

“*May* 5.—Greatly blessed in meeting the class for the first time. The members seem to be desiring the best things. Oh for wisdom and grace to go in and out before them!

“30.—I trust I am growing in grace. Many have been the gracious visitations with which I have been favoured of late, in the ordinances, public and social, and in the cottages of the sick and destitute.

“*June* 5.—My soul is constantly waiting upon God, though I have but little sensible comfort. I have thought that this may be owing in part to the low state of body which the *res angustae domi* necessarily occasion; and then I have demands upon me from every quarter which do not in any wise appertain to me, but which I allow in my jealousy for the cause of Christ rather than for my worldly interests.

“*Sept.* 27.—Mr. Bell is lately come among us. He has the spirit of his Master in a blessed measure, and we are expecting that he and his excellent colleagues will be made a very great blessing in the circuit. I was called away from the love-feast, which was a little disappointment; but I saw the hand of the Lord in it afterwards. I was summoned to a poor woman who was fast sinking under disease of the heart. On inquiry, I found she had been seeking salvation for

some time, but had not received a sense of the Divine favour. While I was at prayer, she broke out in earnest pleading, and in a short time was enabled to believe with the heart unto righteousness.

“*Oct. 1.*—A shower of grace at my class; the members all alive to God, and one and another apprehending Christ as their ‘Sanctification.’

“*2.*—A day of humiliation—our quarterly fast. I have never seen so good an attendance on these occasions before. The Lord has showed me to-day some of my ‘errors.’ He has admonished me that my union with Himself depends, as to its intimacy, on my uniform fidelity to Him; and that great fervour of spirit will lose its character if it be not maintained in this association.

“*8.*—At their private band the brethren renewed their solemn purpose to live for God alone.

“*Dec. 17.*—Brothers Turner and Faulkner returned to London.¹

“*18.*—My mind very low, anxious to be employed on a missionary station; wondering what may be the result of the Committee’s deliberations respecting me. At noon, in my retirement, I opened on a passage which surprised and somewhat staggered me—Jer. xlii. 9, 10.

“*25.*—Had a great blessing early this morning; and oh, what meltings of heart did I feel as the singers were going around! Our juvenile missionary meeting was well attended, and a gracious season.

“*27.*—At the love-feast in the afternoon, observed that I had thought of late the Lord must be preparing me for some arduous undertaking, or for the kingdom of heaven. When I got home in the evening, found a letter from Mr. Morley, containing proposals for my going abroad.

¹ To proceed to their several destinations as missionaries. Mr. Faulkner went to Newfoundland, and afterwards laboured in English circuits.

“28.—Laid the matter before my father, who dare not raise any objection, lest the call should be of God.

“1830. *Jan.* 1.—Wrote to Mr. Morley, having made the subject a matter of much prayer.

“8.—A letter to-day from Mr. Morley, inviting me to London. I believe it will be best for me to go. I shall then be determined, one way or the other, for life.

“15.—My mind is very low. I am greatly afraid of doing wrong; and my friends all exclaim against my going out. At class there was a general lamentation. The affection of the people is more than I can bear. O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

“17.—Beset with arguments and expostulations on every hand. At the prayer-meeting in the evening the friends commended me to the Divine disposal with much fervour and affection. My father saw Mr. Bunting yesterday. He wished me to defer my journey.”

The last few entries refer to what was always regarded by Dr. Birchenall as the turning-point in his career. It was indeed a most important crisis. For seven years his mind had been exercised with regard to his providential vocation. The great question was now to receive its final settlement. In the following extract from the autobiography we see how this was brought to pass. In perusing it, the reader will remember that the sphere of labour contemplated was not then what it is now, nor what it became a few years after this date. The mission to Tonga was established in 1826 by the Rev. John Thomas, recently deceased. I remember his giving (in Brunswick Chapel, Macclesfield) a vivid description of his landing, the captain of the vessel in which he sailed refusing to do more than put him and his wife ashore, on account of

the character of the inhabitants. See also Moister's *History of Wesleyan Missions*, p. 352.

“A mission to the Friendly Islands had recently been established. In January 1830 it was proposed by the missionary secretaries that I should embark in it, in company with Peter Turner, who was already at the Mission House. I was encompassed with difficulties: the claims of the family and the voice of the society on the one hand, strong personal convictions and obligations on the other. I made the proposal the subject of constant prayer, but as my perplexity continued, I determined on going up to London, for the purpose of conferring and advising with the secretaries in person. While there, a friend took me on the Sabbath from Hinde Street Chapel, where Dr. Clarke had been preaching, to Bayswater; and after dinner introduced me to the Doctor in the house of the friend under whose hospitable roof he afterwards departed this life. I had an hour's conversation with him on the subject which had brought me to town. He said, in conclusion, with his characteristic affability, ‘My brother, your way is not yet open, though I would not have you consider it to be finally closed. You must wait the intimations of Providence, and hold yourself in readiness for anything the Lord may appoint at a future time.’ Mr. Watson's judgment was equally explicit with reference to the present call; he considered a demur on the part of a missionary candidate as absolutely conclusive against his eligibility. My mind was relieved. No subsequent application of the kind was ever made, except once by friendly inquiry on the part of Dr. Bunting, on an occasional visit to Macclesfield. My journey to London I felt to be the turning-point in my history, and I renewed my covenant with God on my return, well satisfied and assured that I should stand in my lot at the end of the days.”

So ended the negotiations with the Mission House. They had been conducted on both sides with characteristic delicacy and earnestness. I have before me the letters of the secretaries. They exhibit on the part of the writers a strong sense of the value of the services which such a man as Dr. Birchenall might be able to render in the foreign field, as the coadjutor of John Thomas, "the apostle of Tonga." But when full explanations were made of the difficulties which hedged up his way, it was seen at once that they were of such a nature as to preclude all further action. To the judgment of such men as Dr. Clarke and Mr. Watson, the aspirant to the honours of a life among newly-reclaimed savages could not but bow. He returned home satisfied that his life-work lay among his own people; and none more heartily acquiesced in the decision than those over whose souls he had been called to watch, and to whom he seemed on the point of bidding a final farewell.

It would be an injustice to the memory of a devoted servant of Christ, and indeed to the memory of Dr. Birchenall himself, whose bosom friend he was, to pass away from this subject without some reference to the character and career of Peter Turner, who did at this time proceed to the field of labour to which he had hoped to be accompanied by his fellow. Peter Turner was a very different man from Dr. Birchenall. Simple and comparatively untutored in his mental habits, it seems at first sight strange that he should have exerted an influence almost amounting to an ascendancy over the cultured and refined mind of the young medical man. But the mystery is easily explained. There was an elevation in the tone of his religious experience,

and an inexhaustible energy in his spiritual life, which constituted a great charm for one who, like-minded as he was, lacked something at first of his friend's sanguine and buoyant enthusiasm. What Dr. Birchenall needed at the outset of his career was an impulse from some mind of the more practical order, to lift him out of his meditative mysticism and launch him along new lines of Christian enterprise. It was just such an impulse that Peter Turner gave, and it called forth energies that were never afterwards relaxed. It should be added that the benefit of this friendship was not all on one side. If Peter Turner helped John Birchenall spiritually, he received in return intellectual stimulus, for which he was ever afterwards grateful.

Carrying with him the same zeal which had made his influence so great among the companions of his youth, Peter Turner became a burning and shining light in the distant isles of the sea. The great awakening that took place in the Friendly Isles in 1834 was largely due to his labours. Proceeding to the Navigators' Islands at the request of his brethren, his progress through that group was truly apostolic, whole tribes turning to God from dumb idols, and experiencing the benefits of the common salvation. Such was the hold he gained upon the natives of Samoa, that when, through an arrangement of the home authorities, this sphere of labour was abandoned to the London Missionary Society, the converts refused to forsake the form of Christianity in which they had been instructed. For forty years the churches Peter Turner had planted kept together, with no other pastors than those raised up from time to time among themselves or native teachers sent from Tonga. At the end of that period

our missionaries re-entered the field, irreparable mischief having been wrought in the meantime through lack of effective discipline. The separation from his spiritual children which he was thus called to sustain was a lifelong grief to Peter Turner, in which he had the sympathy of many, and particularly of his old friend and correspondent. His course throughout was honourable and useful. After spending the best of his days in the islands, he settled in Australia, and there passed away to his reward in 1873.

Set free now from the perplexities inseparable from such protracted uncertainty as to his vocation, Dr. Birchenall girded himself anew for his work. It may be well at this point to insert a series of resolutions which he formed for the regulation of his religious and social life. They were drawn up, as will be seen, at various times. But they all bear the same marks of a settled purpose to make the most of life—to make the best, in the best sense, of both worlds. Without such resolutions, whether formally expressed or not, moral excellence is never attained. How well and faithfully these were kept the remainder of this biography will prove. The terms in which some of them are expressed may serve to show that the reticence which his friends might sometimes complain of was with Dr. Birchenall a point of prudence, if not of duty:—

“ 1826.—Visit but seldom; never continue in company more than two hours, and on no account return to a party when once you have left it.

“ Whoever may be present, never stay by your patients longer than duty requires. Your conduct in this respect ought to insinuate that a sick-room is not the place for topics of ordinary conversation.

“ 1829. *Jan.* 30.—Resolve (*Deo juvante*) in future to pray more, visit less ; think more, speak less.

“ *Feb.* 6.—Never go out to supper, or your practice will suffer, and you will be unfitted for mental application.

“ In contemplation of a stated religious ordinance, never allow yourself to be detained in company till the hour arrives ; as far as possible, prepare the temple of your heart for the Divine presence and teaching. Be solicitous for *habits* of devotion.

“ Friday has not always been scrupulously observed as a day of fasting ; in future let it be thus religiously regarded. Read Kempis on the morning of this day ; the Pentateuch and the writings of Jeremiah for the matin lessons ; the epistles to Timothy and Titus for the evening ones. Try to recount the failings or sins of the week on these occasions, and right humbly deplore the same before the throne of mercy.

“ Endeavour in every possible way to redeem the time ; let there be no loitering in your interchanges of friendship with others, no appendages of chit-chat to your customary salutations.

“ Labour for singleness of mind in every undertaking ; a multitude of subjects overpowers the spirit of man.

“ You profess the fullest affiance in the special providence of God ; see to it that there be no practical misgiving on this subject. You hold it as a duty, arising out of this acknowledgment, to visit the poor professionally when called upon, in despite of the present unparalleled depression of trade, and in the face of a gratuitous local provision on behalf of the indigent sick.

“ Pay strict attention to your health. It is an invaluable blessing, a sacred talent of incalculable worth.

“ 1831. *Aug.* 16.—*Mecum statuo* (*D. J.*). To husband time well, to employ it aright, to rise earlier, to work while it is day. To be serious in intention, in spirit, in deportment. To be watchful at home and abroad. To keep a faithful record, daily, if practicable. To say

little of self. To keep a list of persons for whom I regularly intercede. To avoid all guile of every possible kind.

“1831. *April* 13.—To get on well in respect to both worlds, I clearly perceive I must be a man of much prayer.

“I must resume my Hebrew studies; Greek also with vigour.

“I must sermonize more in order to my own edification, and that of others.

“I intend to be more patient in the investigation of disease.

“To be more studious of those subjects which bear on medical practice.

“To cut off occasions of fashionable trifling.

“1832. *March* 6.—Met a few members of my classes with a view to the forming of a new class. See many errors into which I have fallen heretofore in the course of my duties as a leader. How are they to be remedied for the future? Determine, in the fear of the Lord, and in reliance on His grace:

“1. To be more faithful. To find out the real state of each individual, allowing no subterfuges, no pretexts, no evasions. To be at a little more pains (more lengthy in advice, caution, reproof) from time to time with the doubtful than with the rest. To see them often at home.

“2. To conclude by a quarter after nine at latest.

“3. To allow no brother or sister to speak or pray long, and to stop them short if they trespass in these points. To keep them to their own experience and necessities in both respects.

“4. To enforce the rules by exposition, argument, expostulation.

“5. To caution them regularly and solemnly against evil-speaking and unprofitable conversation.

“6. In general, not to sing after the final prayer.

“7. To take no ticket at the quarterly visitation, except for the sick or infirm.

“ 8. To restrict myself in prayer to five minutes, unless under circumstances of extraordinary influence.

“ 9. To compress advice, ordinarily, within the minute.

“ 1834. *Feb.* 22. — Let your Saturday evenings be occupied in future (as far as possible) with the analysis of subjects pertaining to Christian experience.”

Some of the results of these Saturday evening meditations will be found at the close of this volume.

CHAPTER VII.

TRIALS, AFFLICTIONS, AND CONSOLATIONS.

1832-1834.

HITHERTO our attention has been occupied mainly by Dr. Birchenall's spiritual exercises. We must not overlook the temporal circumstances which, at the outset particularly and more or less through life, gave to those exercises peculiar force and significance. The career of a medical man frequently opens amid chilling discouragements and the "deferred hope" which "maketh the heart sick." In the case of Dr. Birchenall this period of probation, so to term it, was, if not unusually protracted, unusually severe. He saw "the end of the Lord" in this, and there is no doubt that it was abundantly accomplished. Indeed, the fine gold of the sanctuary never purges off its dross so effectually as in the furnace of affliction; and it is the mark of a genuine Christian still to covet heart purity, though purchased at the price of much suffering. How thoroughly the Doctor learned this lesson will be seen from the following supplement to the autobiography.

"My earliest inward exercises, when I entered upon the theatre of public life, consisted in the trial of faith.

This originated in the altered condition of the family, from a state of abundance, in a handsome and commodious dwelling-house, with interesting surroundings, to a confined cottage in the extreme level of the township of Hurdsfield. The discredit attaching to a bankruptcy, a rare occurrence in Macclesfield at this period, had taken hold of the public mind, so that my own endeavours to feel my way into medical practice (living, as I was obliged to do, with my father's family) were largely frustrated. But when we were in extreme exigency, the Lord, by marvellously unlooked-for means, sent me a little professional pecuniary aid from time to time. We had peace, also, evermore in our borders, and I do not know that I ever witnessed a repining look, or heard a poignant reflection upon those who had hurried on this downward course. The way of man is not in himself, and by the arrangements of a mysterious Providence it is not unfrequently hedged in by thorns, lest he should wander into devious paths. I had entered upon the pilgrimage of life with mine eye upon the promised land, but its journeyings thitherward were so circuitous and intricate for forty successive years, and the cloud when it rested on my tabernacle so frequently fringed with discouragement, that I could only maintain my ground and hold on my way by looking to the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

“After the lapse of some three or four years the Lord favoured me with a little enlargement in the practice of my profession, insomuch that I saw the way open for removing to a better and more commodious house in the same locality. Some time prior to this (in 1831) my father had fallen asleep in Jesus, and my widowed mother and the fatherless children were brought thereby into still closer sympathy, as my only earthly heritage. But I was happy in God, and, as opportunity served, actively engaged in His service. This tended greatly to lighten the load of daily care and perplexity; and on the Sabbath at least my mind was uniformly freed from

all such associations, so that by the influence of the means of grace 'I rode on the sky,' or, if otherwise engaged, sat at the feet of Jesus. The time would fail me to enumerate the two classes of experiences up to the period when I entered into the married state, but the record is on high.

"The person to whom I was united in marriage was the widow of the man who had recommended me to the quarterly meeting as a local preacher on trial. My affections were engaged long before they were disclosed. Mutual esteem prepared the way for reciprocal affection, and when the conjugal pledge was given, I felt that the seal of heaven was upon the ordinance.

"Socially, and in the domestic relation, I was now in a genial atmosphere, but the demands upon my resources were greatly increased. My mother and sisters had to be provided for in a distinct habitation, and a married brother, out of situation, involved me in further liabilities. Even this was overruled for good. I took him to compound my medicines, and shortly afterwards he was awakened and savingly converted to God. The maintenance of three families—my mother's, my brother's, and my own—was necessarily very onerous, but I cast my burthen on the Lord, and He sustained me. I look back upon the trial of faith, and the sustaining and delivering hand of the Most High, with mute and adoring astonishment. There were many occasions, during the entire period, when it seemed as if I were on the eve of deliverance from trouble; but again the deep waters passed over my soul, and for a time I sank lower than before. Nevertheless, I clung to the promise given to me in my earlier season of sorrow and perplexity, for it had been repeated again and again, and, raising my head under disquietude and discouragement, with the righteous held on my way. These were days of outward gloom, illumined occasionally by a benign providential ray, but all within was usually calm and serene. My heart cleaved to the Lord, for all my

sympathies converged towards His kingdom; and although my thoughts were sometimes drawn aside unduly to other things, and the Spirit grieved for the time, I never lost my hold of the mercies of the covenant."

The reader will have noticed the tendency of Dr. Birchenall's mind both to seek a sanctified use of afflictions and also to set over against them the mercies and consolations by which they were relieved. Chief among these must be counted his marriage. In Mrs. Birchenall he had "a help meet for him." A member of the same church, she shared his deep devotion to the interests of Christ's kingdom and his ardent attachment to the members of Christ's body. At the same time, she possessed qualities which fitted her not only to sympathize with his most cherished pursuits, but also to restrain, when necessary, his self-consuming activity. Her prudence was the proper counterpart to his zeal. She saw, more clearly than he could be expected to do, how important it was that physical strength should be husbanded, if spiritual efficiency was to be maintained. And to her careful tendance—joined with that of faithful servants, who ministered affectionately to both—he no doubt owed the prolongation of his life through more abundant labours even to extreme old age. His marriage union was not blessed with children, but his home was ever the abode of heartfelt peace, the serenity of the Doctor's mind, unbroken amid all storms, diffusing itself throughout the household, and making every inmate a partaker of the benefit.

"1832. *May* 31.—Have entered into a new relationship, I hope in the fear of the Lord. My mind is much

impressed with the sacred and important duties which devolve upon me. I purpose, in the strength of grace, to take the word of God for my rule, the Holy Spirit for my guide, and the whole armour of God for my defence. I do resolve, God being my helper, that whether as a husband, or as a son, or as a brother, I will exemplify the Christian character; that in the family, and in the world, and in the church,

‘My soul shall live for God alone,
And all within me speak His praise.’

“*June 2.*—To-day I received an application from an attorney in Liverpool relative to a bond into which I entered, many years ago, for one of my brothers, and which I supposed had been cancelled. I laid the letter before the Lord, and besought Him to interpose on my behalf. He answered me by Prov. xx. 22, 24. I have written a full explanation, and calmly wait the result.

“*June 5.*—The following, out of Corbet’s *Self-Employment in Secret*, afforded me much comfort in my closet at noon:—‘If God single me out for special great suffering, I have no reason to judge amiss of it. For such is the state of things in the world to come, that some individuals must of necessity suffer for the good of the people; and why not I as well as another? God is my owner, and He may do with me as with any other, even as He pleaseth; and He is my Father, and He will use me well, and make me sufficient amends for all my suffering; and I shall be no loser, but an exceeding gainer thereby in the end.’ The character of the ancient worthies was often recurring to my mind in the after part of the day: ‘They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.’

“*June 11.*—The ‘cares of this life’ occupied my mind in the former part of the day, and somewhat depressed

me. When I returned from my morning engagements I sought relief in prayer. Opened the word of God on Isa. xxxvii. 8, and read the whole narrative. Was served immediately afterwards with the copy of a writ on the bond. The attorney advised that I should go over to Liverpool, and see the parties, in order to an amicable arrangement. My confidence in the Lord is unshaken, well knowing that He has a thousand ways of deliverance. The 13th of Hebrews came in the course of reading at family prayers in the evening. How cheering the coincidence! The 5th and 6th verses of this chapter determined me, a few months ago, to decline a lucrative and honourable professional alliance, lest I might thereby remove myself from under the immediate providence of the Almighty; and the passages, with their connections, were peculiarly encouraging.

“*June 12.*—Set off for Manchester about four o’clock. Had to walk all the way. When there, took the first train,¹ and arrived in Liverpool about noon. Had much walking in very heavy rain, and much anxiety, but the Lord undertook for me, and the matter was satisfactorily adjusted. A heavy thunderstorm as I returned, but got home safely about ten, having rode seventy miles and walked thirty-five or thereabouts; much fatigued, but happy in God.

“*June 27.*—Have found at times great poverty and barrenness in the commencement of a fast; and have been tempted to waive it altogether, or to remit its exercises; but so soon as my mind has been made up to attend to the duty, my peace has returned, and communion with God in the same proportion. Such has been the experience of the day.

“*Aug. 9.*—Am reading Bramwell’s life for the third time. Am astonished at the meagreness of my piety. Oh, I must watch, pray, weep, fast, strive! My eyes have been partially closed, they are just opening again;

¹ The Manchester and Liverpool Railway having been opened two years before.

but, oh, what dulness! Lord, lighten Thou mine eyes, that I slumber no more.

“*Aug. 10.*—A day of deep and painful humiliation. The body humbled, tempted of the devil; my spirit abashed, on account of my little improvement in the best things. Most concerned that in secret my prayers are often so languid, that I do not ‘wrestle’ more, like Jacob. I am well persuaded that Satan will allow me to attend to anything else unmolested—to the ordinances of religion; to every relative duty; to works of piety and works of mercy. He will suffer me to fast and afflict the body; to sympathize with and relieve the indigent and the destitute; nay, even to pray long, and pray loud, and pray often; but to *pray in the Holy Ghost*; to use holy importunity at the throne of grace; to keep the eye steadily fixed upon the hope of our calling, salvation to the uttermost—a being changed into the image of our glorified Redeemer, one with Him as He is one with the Father; to have the fervour of prayer enkindled from above, sustained by growing spirituality, and guided by the promise; to have the faith which laughs at impossibilities, and cries, ‘It shall be done;’ to have the heart enlarged; to hunger even while we are fed; to thirst while we are refreshed; to sigh and pant and cry out for more, even while we are receiving largely from the Lord; to have the soul expanded and expanding to comprehend ‘the breadth and length and depth and height,’ till our spirits are filled with the Divine fulness, and the tabernacle falls, and glory crowns the whole,—this, and this alone, in our individual relation, is what the devil cannot endure; and against this will all his cunning, art, malice, and power be arrayed in tremendous and unceasing conflict.

“*Dec. 12.*—Attended the funeral of C. S. She was sister to the young man who was advocate on the infidel side in the debate I held with that party a few years ago, and whom I never think of but with deep concern that his talents should be so unhappily perverted. I

was a little surprised that I should have been called in to this case; and foreseeing that the affliction would be unto death, I earnestly desired that the Lord might have the soul of my patient 'for a prey.' For some time my solemn and almost affectionate exhortations were treated with indifference; the answers I received to my inquiries as to her views and feelings on religious subjects were evasive, and a frigid listlessness brooded over her spirit, which almost paralyzed me. I determined to be clear of her blood. I brought eternity before her in all its dread realities; pointed out her danger; preached Christ as the only hope and refuge of men; and followed up the whole by solemn assurances as to my own experience in the things of God, and the purity of my motives in thus reasoning with her of righteousness and of judgment to come. She was much moved, but maintained perfect silence. I asked permission to pray with her, which was granted by the mother. I prayed with much enlargement, and some degree of hope. I saw her again, but found her, if possible, more insensible than before. Not a word could I elicit on any subject; still I was resolved not to go away without prayer. I knelt down. Her sister was in tears; she alone was unmoved, and with chilling indifference allowed me to take leave of her. I saw her no more for nearly a fortnight; then I found a striking change. The Lord had humbled her mind, subdued and chastened her spirit, touched and enlarged her heart with His mercy and love, and opened her mouth in confession and thanksgiving. She referred to her early religious impressions; thanked God that they had never been entirely effaced; acknowledged Christ as her Saviour; made an affecting allusion to her brother, and the unhappy tendency of his principles; wept over the profaneness of others of the family, but cherished a hope on their behalf, arguing from her own salvation that nothing was too hard for the Lord. She now thankfully acquiesced in proposals for prayer, and

devoutly and fervently joined in its exercise ; and when I came away took leave of me with affectionate solicitude, hoping that I would soon see her again. I did so several times ; was with her when she expired, and, amid the tears of most of the family, commended her to God.

“ 1833. *Jan.* 27.—This morning A. B. escaped to glory. I was with her a short time before her departure. A sweetly solemn and sacred influence has rested upon my spirit the whole of the day in consequence : this is always the case when a Christian friend leaves the body.

“ *Feb.* 2.—Tried this morning, first, with the worldly spirit of professors of religion, and the many forms of substitution for Christ and His salvation with which men are beguiling and pleasing themselves ; next, with the interrogatories of one who professes to be a searcher after truth of every kind, historical, philosophical, religious, but who appears to have very little concern for the truth as it is in Jesus ; then with the unreasonableness of the unprincipled and designing ; afterward with the specious pretences of some who cover with a covering which is not from above, and of others who overrate their spiritual attainments ; and lastly, and above all, with myself, that I should have so much still to deplore that is faulty, in the midst of so glorious a gospel day. Was reminded, by the case of some, of a saying of Gregory Lopez : ‘ Father Losa, most men can talk well on religious subjects ; let us try to live well.’

“ *March* 10.—Preached at Onehouse from Eph. i. 13, 14. Went with much fear and trembling. When I got there, opened on Isa. xlix., which poured light upon my mind and consolation into my breast in respect to this particular duty. Had great liberty. Took tea with Mr. H. afterwards. What hath God wrought here in a short time ! A young man living upon his own estate, brought up among gay society, for many years a companion of such as have their portion in this life ; now serious, thoughtful, and diligent in the means of

grace, and his kitchen a preaching place for our own people. A blessed season to my soul at the prayer-meeting. Oh, what liberty I was favoured with in intercession both as to the feeling and expression! How gracious, when the Spirit gives us utterance! I pleaded the Redeemer's ancient promise, 'If ye abide in me,' etc., and made a complete consecration of myself to the Lord, and was answered. Glory, glory to God for ever! I had this day discovered to me the pre-eminent importance of fellowship with Christ in His sufferings in order to my being very eminent for piety and communion with God. I must follow the Man of Sorrows from the manger of Bethlehem to Gethsemane and to Calvary, must meditate on His sufferings, sympathize with Him, weep, sigh, groan, bleed, die with Him, in order that I may become one with Him for ever. Who would not make any sacrifice for so glorious a privilege? Nay, why should it be deemed a sacrifice to be emptied, abased, bruised, when the Redeemer hath hallowed this path of life? And when all this is endured in fellowship with Him, is it not the most distinguished honour and glory of a redeemed spirit?"

It was not by many cares only, temporal and spiritual, that Dr. Birchenall's spirit was tried. The arduous discipline to which he subjected himself, and the heavy tasks he imposed upon his frame, at length told upon his physical energy. The wonder is that the effects were not sooner apparent, and that he did not succumb altogether to the strain. But his constitution was wonderfully elastic, and the regimen that would have been fatal to many seemed somehow to keep him alive.

One of the first notes of bodily enfeeblement occurs in connexion with his attendance, in July 1833, on an assembly held once a year among the wilds of

Derbyshire, and known as "the Woodlands love-feast." This service is still kept up, and is always attended by multitudes of people from a remote distance. Nor does the spiritual character of the gathering decline. Indeed, much of the primitive spirit of early Methodism lingers among the societies scattered over the Derbyshire hills, and some of the most active and useful ministers of the body at the present time caught their first evangelical impulses among these simple country folk. The delineation of the abnormal physical, or rather psychical, state that accompanied this first serious illness is curious, as illustrating what many have experienced without being able to describe :

"1833. *July 7, Sunday.*—Set off early this morning for Hathersage, to visit my brother William, and to go with him to the Woodlands love-feast. On my arrival I found that he had been gone some time. After an hour's rest I set out for the place alone, reaching it in time, after a tedious ride. We had a blessed shower of grace. Mr. Longden, from Sheffield, conducted the love-feast. There were many men present, mighty in the Lord, from different parts of Yorkshire and Derbyshire. My own soul was abundantly blessed, humbled, and subdued before the Lord, and I returned very happy in God. We had a tremendous storm of thunder and lightning, with rain and hail, during the service, and heavy rain for the last few miles in returning, to which I was exposed without any additional clothing.

"8.—Returned home through Middleton Dale, Miller's Dale, and Buxton, having rode near 50 miles on the preceding, and 36 or thereabouts on this day. Finding my professional engagements favourable, I applied leeches to my throat, the previous bronchial irritation having become greatly aggravated by the drenching rain to which I was exposed on the Sabbath. Lost much

blood, and was alarmingly ill in the night, erysipelas having supervened, which was followed by a severe fit of coughing, and radiations of such intense pain that I lapsed into a deathly faintness. Just then my E. awoke, and by the faint twilight discovered that I was gasping irregularly and faintly, as if on the eve of expiring. It was some time before I came to myself; and during the interval I seemed to be undergoing a forcible and involuntary separation from things material and sensible, to a mere consciousness of existence in a new state of being; with a bare perception that I was some way or other entering into it, and that unless I made an effort to regain my former physical consciousness (although this seemed impracticable), the separation would become complete. Together with this, there was an indefinable impression that my hour was not yet come. The struggle prompted by these associations must have given a slight impulse to the heart, inasmuch as I found myself the next moment in a material atmosphere; first by the tingling usually set up in the brain after a fit of syncope, and then by the familiar voice of my beloved wife and companion. This is the third time I have experienced this train of emotion from fainting,—the first time from loss of blood, and the second from a blow upon the knee from my horse,—very different from anything I have felt in a common syncope. The febrile reaction confined me to bed the whole of the following day, and left me much enfeebled, and unfitted for work for some days more; but the Lord was very gracious, and my medical friends were kind and helpful in the emergency.

“*Aug. 9.*—Much blessed in prayer with Sister Boothby, who is staying a few days with us. She is in a very delicate state of health, but in a sweet frame of mind. Went to the prayer-meeting intending as a matter of prudence not to pray myself, but afterwards felt constrained to alter my purpose, as there was a long and deadly pause in the early part of the meeting. Prayed with fervour, but durst not give full utterance to my

feelings. My E. reasoned with me when I got home. I am often in a dilemma, because I cannot pray publicly in general without praying with my whole soul, and consequently injuring more or less the mortal part; and my friends take knowledge of this, and judge accordingly.

“*Sept. 15, Sabbath.*—Up early. Much blessed at the early prayer-meeting, and in meeting my morning class. The residue of the Sabbath passed away in a continued struggle between the willingness of the spirit and the weakness of the flesh, and at times too with the powers of darkness. The band-meeting, though, was a very blessed season. We are now much reduced in number, but I have much hope concerning those who remain. Sister P—r has been fully sanctified to God since I last met this little company.

“*Sept. 17.*—Have to maintain a constant strife (in the absence of sore temptation) with the proneness of nature to indolence. Indeed, a suspension of hostilities on the part of Satan appears to be often a stratagem to get me into supineness and its fearful consequences—loss of spirituality and of fervour. Find it useful, among other means, to make opportunities of visiting the members of the church who are in affliction. Blessed to-night with E. B. She is near glory. Class afterwards a time of quickening. Spoke to the people with great plainness, and the Lord applied the word.

“*Sept. 23.*—Determined this morning on enlarging our vestry at the old chapel. Mr. Farrar in the evening, from ‘I live, yet not I,’ etc.; a blessed sermon. The leaders’ meeting a time of much harmony. Mr. S. takes exception at the noisy meetings, and shrewdly suspects I am at the bottom of the irregularities. I assured him we should mend as we got more religion, with which I hope he was satisfied for the present.

“*Oct. 12.*—Yesterday and to-day have felt much weariness of body owing to long horse exercise, allowing of no intermission for a fortnight or thereabouts—not

even a few days' suspension of the same. My private exercises have been thereby much interfered with for the last day or two, and I have not had that delightful access nor (under the hurry of travelling) that holy breathing after God which I have found latterly. Satan has taken advantage of this difference in my frame of mind, and has harassed me sorely with temptation. I withstood him in the faith, but had a degree of jealousy over myself lest I might have grieved the Spirit of the Lord in some way unknown to myself. Was not fully assured on this subject until, in the midst of this afternoon's hurry, I knelt by the bedside of one of my patients, an old disciple, and prayed with her. Then the Lord answered for Himself, and we had a special blessing. To-night, in my room, the streaming glory pervaded my spirit, and brought me into sweet and very sensible union with my living Head."

The last few entries will give some hints of the strain now put upon Dr. Birchenall's energies, mental, moral, and physical. It must be left to the reader's own imagination to fill up the outline. In some respects the task will be easy. It is not difficult to find examples of medical men who literally sacrifice themselves to the duties of their profession. They are to be found in every large town, if not in every country village. But it is not so common to find spiritual ministrations blended, wherever possible, with the temporal; to find a wide sphere of unpaid labour in both kinds outside the regular practice; and to find, superadded to these, various weekly engagements at fixed hours, involving all the responsibilities both of stated pulpit service and of a species of pastorate over more than a hundred souls. Such was the accumulated load that was at this time, and for many long years, cheerfully borne by the subject of this biography.

It is no wonder that the above allusions to delicate health should be followed by these more serious ones:—

“1833. *Dec.* 11.—Am just recovering from the relapse of fever, but am helplessness itself. Tuesday was the first day I was able to sit up at all, and then but for very short intervals. I opened the precious volume of life in the evening, and was much comforted. Yesterday I bore up rather better: read in my English Bible a good deal at different times, also a little in the Greek Testament, and two chapters in the Septuagint, when I became greatly fatigued, and was obliged to close the book. To-day I find a still greater aptness for reading. Looked over the early Minutes, and read a little in my Hebrew Bible, as well as the Septuagint. My spirit is, I hope, at the feet of Jesus. The lessons of humiliation and meekness which I have been taught in this affliction will not, I trust, be forgotten ever. Oh, the obligations I am under to my God and King and Deliverer! I will sing of mercy and judgment. The praises of my God shall flow from my lips, and fill my tongue. Bless the Lord, O my soul, who reneweth thy strength, and visiteth thee with His mercy and loving-kindness. Within these few days my E. has been very unwell indeed, evidently of fever; but the Lord has been entreated, and there appears to-day good reason to hope that the complaint will soon be quite controlled. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!

“*Dec.* 15.—The Lord still holds me in solemn suspense in respect to life. Was seized early this morning with spasm of the bowels, which, from the character and seat of the obstruction, I thought would terminate in inflammation. This in my present state of body, humanly speaking, would have been fatal in a few hours. I was not fully relieved until evening. My E. too has been worse. I had been pleasing myself in the course of the night with the prospect of a Sabbath of uninterrupted

communion with God in His word and in prayer. Surely the purpose of the Lord will be accomplished in this. Oh for grace that will hallow every chastening of the Divine hand!

“*Dec. 19.*—Thus far this has been a week of much sorrow and disquietude of heart. My E. has suffered a relapse, and has been confined to bed since Sunday; and what has rendered her case more aggravated is the peculiar state of her body, so that medicines which in cases of fever are directly indicated could not be employed for fear of a peculiar perversity of operation which they invariably superinduce. The exhaustion which this peculiar type of fever entails is truly alarming. I have cried to the Lord on her behalf, and at times have had a gleam of hope. At the lowest of times I have been able to bow my sinful head. To-day Mrs. Moss called to say that Miss Boothby is near death. I had hoped until the last week or two that I should yet be with her when she should enter the stream of Jordan, and, as I have witnessed her faith and patience in life, that I should in like manner have the privilege of seeing the same exemplified in her dying moments. Well! good is the will of the Lord. I desired her answer to the following interrogatories a few days ago, as her latest living testimony to the power of Divine grace:—1st. Is Christ increasingly precious? 2d. Do you feel perfect resignation to the Divine will in all things? 3d. Is your hope full of immortality? Though but able to speak in a very faint whisper, she desired Mrs. M. to say that she could with Divine confidence answer all three inquiries in the affirmative.”

The last entry will show how spiritual ministrations were still in some degree carried on in the face of physical and mental prostration. With the new year the Doctor rallied, and had soon the joy of seeing the stroke of bereavement which had been

threatening him averted. Renewed health and restored mercies were ever the signal for fresh labours and a more profound consecration. Hence such records as the following:—"It has been much upon my mind, now, for some time, 'Redeem the time,' 'What thou doest do quickly,' 'Set thine house in order.' I am endeavouring to do so; God is helping me, and I hope to see His goodness, and to sing of mercy to the end." The lessons taught in the hours of affliction were not forgotten. Indeed, they were being continually repeated in the ever-recurring frailties of the outward man. Hence his comments on "feverishness, great lassitude, and a frequent and troublesome cough," are, "I do not sit sufficiently loose from earth, in general, though my treasure is above, and my hopes are beyond the flood;" "I am perhaps too anxious for a partnership with Jesus in the round of His active ministrations; but if 'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand,' I must get a fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, that I may attain to the resurrection of life."

Of all the conflicts which Dr. Birchenall was called to sustain, none were more fierce and incessant than those he waged with "principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places." The entry for August 10, 1832 (p. 95), may be quoted in illustration. In this he only shared the experience of all who "will live godly in Christ Jesus." Here as elsewhere he accepted without cavil the teaching of Scripture, and that the more readily as he found it corroborated by the testimony of his own spirit. The language he employs on this subject is unusually precise and emphatic. It indicates not only the strongest

conviction as to the reality of supernatural assaults and assistances, but also clear discrimination of both from the purely natural movements of his own mind. Such language, uttered by one who, so far from being an ignorant enthusiast, was equally well versed in mental philosophy and natural science, deserves to be pondered. In our rebound from the extravagances of a morbid spiritualism, we have been perhaps carried too far in the opposite direction. Our position in regard to this question is not a matter of indifference. Clear and sharp definition of the provinces of good and evil must gain something from clear and sharp definition of the personalities who respectively preside over them. The man who underrates Satanic agency, as an element in the problem of probation, will soon call in question the operations of the Spirit of God. And how, apart from these two elements, it is possible to account for every variety of moral character, from Paul to Borgia, and from Moses to Joe Smith, must be left to the consideration of those who reject them, and who are nothing if not believers in the relation of cause and effect. With such difficulties the scheme of Scripture is not clogged. Awful as are the responsibilities which its revelations impose upon us, they are such as the conscience of humanity instinctively owns. And they are accompanied by privileges so gracious, that hope is kindled no less than fear, and both become ministers of salvation.

It must ever be remembered that spiritual insight is largely dependent on spiritual fidelity. Those have no right to challenge the discoveries made to faith, who have yet to learn what the life of faith and the walk of faith mean. Such persons may not understand

statements like the following, but they should pause before they criticise them. To other minds they may convey, not only a definite meaning, but a very practical form of instruction:—"I have a more distinct spiritual apprehension of the different persons in the Trinity; and this is often most clear when the enemy is hurling his fiery darts at me in blasphemous suggestions against the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. These fiery conflicts I have had to sustain, in succession, for several weeks; generally when I have had leisure for meditation, or have bowed my knee in private prayer. Glory be to God! I overcome through the blood of the Lamb."

In this last sentence we have the secret both of the strength in which he carried on the warfare, and of the successful issue to which he was enabled to conduct it. The doctrine is no new one to our readers, but it is stimulating to see it in such living and powerful manifestation. Watching and fasting, praying and working, meditation and study, were only subsidiary aids: in and through all we see inscribed the sacred legend, "This is the victory that overcometh," not only "the world," but the devil, "even your faith."

We will close this chapter with a few more quotations from the Doctor's diary, which exhibit the whole field of battle from various points of view. One remark only we must add, with reference to the benefit of such close communion with the spiritual world, viz. the light reflected from it on his own needs and those of the Church and mankind at large. The word of God itself shone out more distinctly in the rays of the eternal throne; and by the same illumination he saw in vivid outline the plans of the arch-enemy, the wiles

by which he sought to ensnare both himself and other less wary souls. Hence the sorrows of his heart were enlarged, and, by the force of spiritual sympathy, in the very hour of his own triumph they sprang up and intermeddled with his joy.

“1834. *Feb.* 22.—The enemy has buffeted me sorely of late. He has grounded his temptations, at times, upon my numerous engagements and incumbrances, upon the unreasonableness of some, the lack of integrity in others, upon the low state of religion among us, as a body, and the supineness manifested (practically) by almost all the official men in the society; at other times, upon the settled infirmity of body I have to sustain, unfitting me for much labour either in the church or in my ordinary avocations, the necessity that is laid upon me notwithstanding to exert myself in both respects, frequent colds superinduced thereby, and an aggravated condition of throat and chest as the consequence, in each successive instance—and not unfrequently, strong temptation grounded *in* these various infirmities. In the one case, temptations to unbelief, to discouragement, to an arraignment of Providence, etc.; in the other, to impatience, to fretfulness, or to indolence and self-gratification. Glory to God! I am not overcome of the wicked one. I consider Him faithful who hath promised, ‘I will build you and not pull you down,’ etc. The way I know not: of the end I am certain.

“*April* 13.—Am getting nearer the throne. It is by prayer, and faith, and constant circumspection; and yet I am nothing. I am abashed: never saw myself so vile, so worthless: I am struggling into life: but oh! the opposition, the dulness, the conflicts. Have a lively perception of the dangers on every hand, in things secular and things spiritual; from the flesh, and from the mind. Satan does not, in general, seek my ruin by things without, so much as by the liabilities of my

nature to error, to supineness, to evil. I am kept by the power of God. Was much struck with those words this morning :

‘ The praise that to Thy name belongs,
Hourly with lifted hands I’ll pay.’

When will my soul be all gratitude, all love ? I must leave the things that are behind : nothing is more clear. Pleasures, cares, joys, sorrows, temptations, persecutions, and everything else, as it occurs, must be met at once by vigorous faith and hope and love, and slain, and overcome, and left on the field. This gives freedom of soul, and victory indeed, and enhances the amount of glory for ever.

“*April 18.*—Much tempted of the wicked one. Often, when engaged in prayer, Satan thrusts sore at me that I may fall ; by professors and by profane persons, and by legions of dire malicious fiends ; by the various occurrences of life, and of business ; in the hurry of engagements, and the noiselessness of the closet ; in the full tide of holy joy, and more abundantly still in the privation or failure of sensible comfort. At all times faith comes in to my aid, and the mercy of God holds me up.

“*April 25.*—Oh ! what a week of spiritual conflicts ! I have been amazed at the power of the enemy, and at my continuance amidst the fiery darts of the wicked one. I have appeared to stand in the front of the combat, and the battle has waxed hotter and hotter, from day to day. When every other attempt of the adversary failed, he tried to rout me by terror. On Wednesday night, when I retired to bed, as I bowed my knee, a horror of great darkness fell upon my spirit ; and it appeared as if all intercourse with heaven had closed, for a season. I again raised the shield of faith, and called mightily upon God for His succour and help ; when He graciously interposed, and rebuked the tempter. Yesterday and to-day I have been grievously harassed. I was ruminating on these things in my room this

afternoon, it being a day of humiliation, and bustle, and consequent weakness of body. I opened on the destruction of Sennacherib's army, 2 Chronicles xxxii. It was a word in season; it was the sword of the Lord, which at once put to flight all the armies of the aliens, and all was peace in an instant. I had now leisure to review all the horrors and dangers of the past. I imagined that the exercises of my faith had not always been sufficiently direct; that the Captain of my salvation had not always been kept in my eye; and, by consequence, that I had resisted with less of inward peace and stability than I might have maintained, and fought with more hurry and impetuosity than I should have done, if my eye had been more single, and my spirit calmly stayed on Jesus for direction and help."

Let us also listen to the burst of grateful joy which hailed the approach of deliverance for himself and the church:—

"*April 21.*—Happy in God. My spirit hallowed into attention to the Spirit's teaching and influence, and into the way of duty and the order of Providence. The prince of darkness continues his warfare; he has hemmed me in, so to speak, on every side; occasionally, however, within the last week, he has tried, in the fluctuations of trade, etc., to induce me to capitulate. To-day, when in my room, he repeated his suggestions; 'that prospects in business were gloomy, and misery and want certain.' I smiled at the tempter, and looked upward. Jesus instantly drew near, and whispered, 'I will never leave thee, I will never, never forsake thee.' I replied, 'I believe it, Lord.' I then looked back upon the seasons of my greatest emergency: it was asked, 'When I sent you without purse and scrip, lacked ye anything?' I answered, 'Nothing. Glory be to God! I believe Thou wilt deliver, and save to the end.' The heavenly sweetness that attended this visitation of my

Lord and Master, exceeded everything in my previous experience, that of Friday excepted.

“26.—Got through the pecuniary cares of the week, notwithstanding the depressed state of trade. The enemy pointed me, several times, to the contrast between my own case and that of some professors of religion. I smiled and held on my way. Blessed be God! I don't say,

‘ magno de flumine malle,
Quam ex hoc fonticulo, tantundem sumere.’

‘I would rather draw my supplies from a large river than from this rivulet.’ And why? For fear, in that *river*, I should, some time or other, be drowned in destruction and perdition; and because, ‘all my springs are in Thee.’

“27.—We had a blessed class-meeting. Such power throughout, as I think I have hardly ever witnessed. I now saw into the meaning of the temptations of the past week, and the comment that was given me yesterday upon them. There were many afflicted in body and in mind present; and the power of the Lord was present also to bind and to heal.

“28.—I had a deep and exquisite sensibility on behalf of immortal souls, while engaged in prayer at noon: it came upon me the moment I bowed my knee. I thought of some in my classes, who have not yet found peace; and instantly such power was communicated in intercession on their behalf as I have very rarely been favoured with. I went on to plead for the society, for the Church, for the world, and I was answered in a blessed fellowship with Jesus, as the Mediator between God and man.

“*May 4.*—We had a memorable season at the prayer-leaders' love-feast, to-night, in the old vestry. The brethren came in the spirit of the means, and in prayer and faith. The Lord answered: there was a mighty moving; and several found peace; two of my own members. We separated at ten in peace and harmony. We are looking forward to a revival.”

CHAPTER VIII.

PROGRESS AND POWER.

1834-1839.

THE prognostications of the last few extracts were not slow to be fulfilled. Spiritual souls are ever on the watch for "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." They wake while others sleep: they work while others flag. And when the season of special grace arrives, the set time to favour Zion, they are not taken at unawares. While their less watchful brethren are rousing themselves from their torpor, bemoaning their past unfaithfulness, and laboriously unbending faculties stiffened through long disuse, these have their loins girt and their weapons furbished, and are ready at once to form their ranks and to obey the signal which bids them advance to meet the foe. So it was with the subject of this biography at the blessed crisis which was now at hand. Not that he was the only one who at this time "looked for redemption" in Israel. There were many men and women like-minded with himself, and their long patience through a period of comparative discouragement was now to be rewarded by an abundant outpouring of the Spirit from on high. The visits of some eminent servants of God, whose names are

still dear to every Methodist heart, mightily helped forward the movement. On the 8th of May, William Dawson preached the Brunswick Chapel anniversary sermons, and held a society meeting in the afternoon. We are tempted to dwell on this last feature, but must content ourselves with calling attention to the good old practice of meeting the society as a whole. The preacher selected two of his favourite themes, discoursing in the morning from "Be not afraid, only believe," and in the evening from "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting." At the evening prayer-meeting the flame broke out: many were in distress, and several found peace. The ministers upon the ground saw that the tide was turning, and seized the favourable moment. Five o'clock morning prayer-meetings were established, and the ordinary means of grace became channels of extraordinary blessing. The Doctor was among the foremost workers, and his spirit "rejoiced for the consolation." Hence such records as the following:—"The arm of the Lord is revealed in the society. This week numbers have believed with the heart unto righteousness. The preachers are encouraged; the leaders are united; and we have the prospect of an extensive and glorious work."

Of these "days of the Son of Man," one of the most glorious was that described in the next entry. John M'Lean and Henry Longden were both men of great faith and zeal, and were at that time both in their prime. The record of their visit will be perused with interest.

"1834. *June* 30. — Our quarterly meeting. After dinner we had a blessed baptism of the Spirit, while Bro. D. B. and J. B. were engaged in prayer. We were

expecting Mr. M'Lean and Mr. Longden, from Sheffield, to visit us : they came into the chapel just as we rose from prayer. A party took tea in company with them at Mr. Farrar's. We were much encouraged by the accounts they gave us of the work in Sheffield. Mr. M'Lean preached from Luke v. 26 afterwards ; and Mr. Longden gave an exhortation, or rather an account of what they are in the habit of witnessing. We had a prayer-meeting after this ; and the mighty power of God came down upon the assembly. Great numbers were in distress, and at least fifty persons found peace with God. Hallelujah ! the Lord of Hosts is with us. We did not leave the chapel until half-past eleven."

Again, in July, we have a three days' visit from a well-known clergyman, the Rev. R. Aitken. Impatient of his ecclesiastical bonds, this zealous ambassador of Christ was at that time preaching among the Methodists. Ultimately he returned to the bosom of the Established Church, and accepted a charge at Pendeen, Cornwall, not far from the Land's End. Here it was thought by many that his light would be put under a bushel, and would speedily become extinct. But it continued to burn, if not always with a steady flame. I remember a most moving sermon preached by him at Penzance, from Canticles v. 11, fanciful in treatment, but powerful in application, and full of tenderness and unction. One of his sons is the Rev. W. H. M. Aitken, whose extraordinary career as a "missioner" is well known. Of the father's visit to Macclesfield in 1834 we have the characteristic record : "Numbers were awakened, numbers quickened on each occasion. I do not know that I ever witnessed such overwhelming manifestations of Divine influence."

At the ensuing Conference two of the three ministers had completed their term of service. It must have been a matter of deep solicitude, both with the superintendent, Mr. Elijah Morgan, and his lay brethren, to secure suitable successors to those who were leaving, and whose labours had been so signally owned of God. It was well for the Macclesfield Circuit that to Thomas Moss and John Farrar there could be found as successors such men as G. H. Rowe and John Rattenbury. The latter, recently taken to his reward, is well known as having been from the outset of his career the very type of a fervid and successful evangelist. There is no need to describe his peculiarly winning and suasive ministry. That task has been amply performed in the memorial drawn up by Dr. Smith and the lamented Dr. Punshon. But nowhere, probably, was his ministry exercised with greater effect than in Macclesfield from 1834 to 1837. Perhaps an exception ought to be made in favour of his next appointment, to Leeds, during which Leeds was favoured with one of the greatest revivals it ever witnessed. But who shall say how much of the holy influence which he carried with him to that circuit was obtained under the mighty baptisms that were vouchsafed at the time we speak of?

The gracious visitation was exceedingly opportune. It was a time of general agitation among the Methodist Societies, arising out of the case of Dr. Warren. As Dr. Warren had once travelled in Macclesfield, it would have been wonderful if some did not sympathize in his proceedings. A small party was actually formed, and ultimately joined the Association. But the bulk of the Methodist Society abode in the old paths, and

gained during the period a large accession to their ranks. As for Dr. Birchenall, it need scarcely be said on which side his sympathies lay. Though of liberal sentiments on every point of ecclesiastical polity, he saw clearly that the hand of the Lord was not in the division, nor could he permit personal friendship with the author of the strife to influence for a moment his views of duty.

The following passage shows how the spirit of controversy was exorcised:—

“1835. *Jan.* 1.—Our quarterly meeting was marked by much altercation on subjects of recent agitation. It was at length agreed, however, that all should be merged in feelings of brotherly kindness and charity; and this oneness of purpose secured to us, in prayer afterwards, the ‘one baptism’ of the Spirit of our common Lord.”

Such a record as the next seems naturally to follow:

“2.—I have seldom witnessed such an influence at a public prayer-meeting as we were favoured with to-night at the vestry. The partition walls were broken down. Mr. Rattenbury, who conducted the meeting, was in a blessed frame of mind; and the brethren mingled their supplications for one common and determinate object, the work of God, in all its dependencies, throughout the circuit; and the record is on high. I bore away from the altar a measure of the holy fire. Glory be to God!”

The extent of the gracious visitation is indicated by the increase in the membership. Going back for the sake of comparison to the first year after the separation of Buxton from Macclesfield, we find that in 1815

the numbers in the latter stood at 1030. In 1825 they had risen to 1350, in 1830 to 1610, and, having stood for some years at a still higher figure, they reached in 1835, the year of the division, a total of 1861, being an increase, for twelve months only, of nearly 200. But this was not the final limit, for in each of the next two years the returns were exactly 2000. Of course, in such an abundant harvest some chaff would mingle with the wheat, and the next few years show that a sifting process was at work. But the membership averaged about 1800 until the time of the Wesleyan reform movement, the effects of which were sensibly apparent in diminished numbers, though not so disastrously here as in many places.¹

In any work of God the co-operation of zealous and judicious laymen is of vital importance. That co-operation was, throughout these years of extraordinary blessing, cheerfully rendered by a host of devoted men, but by none more effectively than Dr. Birchenall. Not now a novice, as in the previous great revival, but a practised combatant in spiritual warfare, it was his delight to plunge into the thick of the fray, and to rescue precious souls from the grasp of the oppressor. Nor was he less skilful in training up young converts as good soldiers of Christ, and teaching them to turn their arms against the common foe. Hence we meet with many instances of conversion under his sermons, and many references to careful tendance of the flock of Christ. Thus the very next entry to the one last quoted reads:—“*Jan.* 3.—Learnt, to-night, that a young woman was awakened while I was speaking at

¹ The contribution of the Macclesfield Circuit to the Centenary Fund amounted to £2348, 19s. 2d.

Rainow, in my last appointment, and that she is earnestly seeking salvation. This is cheering, but it is only so because of its bearing upon the eternal happiness of the individual herself, and upon the glory of the Redeemer." Again, under date Jan. 30 :—" We never had such a measure of the Divine glory at the Thursday class as last night. We were all more or less baptized with it. . . . The Lord is working in our society : numbers were saved at the new chapel on Sunday evening, and such a spirit of intercession was poured upon the people at the vestry to-night as I have very seldom witnessed."

Many more such passages might be quoted, but let us hear one or two of a different kind, which will bear witness to the holy jealousy of this watchman on the walls of Zion, both over himself and the people :—" *Jan. 17, 1835.*—My mind lapsed into a contemplation of the great and glorious perfections of the Deity, His purity, His justice, His grace. Oh, how near was the great and incomprehensible Jehovah to my spirit ! My soul was filled, irradiated with the glory ; but I never saw so fully into the meaning of that scripture, ' The son of man that is a worm,' as on this occasion. I was driven at once to the great atonement, its mystery, its blessed adaptation, its transcendent glory : then I was brought into the most sensible fellowship with Jesus as the High Priest of our profession ; and the spirit of intercession was poured upon me for my relatives, the Church, my Christian friends, one in particular who seems to need special assistance from above." The following day, being the Sabbath, he goes out as usual to visit his patients, " but with a heart broken on account of the irreligion that prevails

and the general profanation of the Sabbath." "Feb. 22.—Have been laid aside since the last date (the 4th). Have had humiliating discoveries of my defects, and withal much of Divine mercy." "March 19.—A day of deep sorrow, of unutterable distress. I could form no estimate of it, except as a participating in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. The prospect of meeting my class and the members of the band and my evening's engagement at Bollington was next to insupportable. But the Lord answered for Himself on each occasion, and the power of God fell upon the congregation as I was speaking from Rev. i. 18." "Aug. 2.—In sweet peace throughout the day, but burthened with a load of spiritual care. The experience of most in my classes is by no means encouraging. Spoke closely on the subject. Find I am sometimes in danger of a neglect of fidelity, through fear of grieving or offending the weak. Oh, the difficulty of maintaining the due tone of Christian character, in private and official life! 'We have the mind of Christ.' This is the secret, 'the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind.'"

So again, under various dates, Dr. Birchenall speaks of "great distress for the souls to whom he has been speaking in the name of the Lord;" of "an impression that some of his members could not bear his faithful dealing, though administered in much affection;" of "spending an hour in intercession for the members of his classes, of the band, and of his family, bringing them each before the Lord by name, together with his select Christian friends;" of "Satan after the early services bringing upon him a flood of distress from the affairs of this life, a subject that rarely affects him on the Sabbath, and so immersing him in sorrow, though

there was no breach made in respect of the graces of the Spirit at the time ;” of “feeling as if persons of all classes regarded him with abhorrence, and yet, by the mercy of God, receiving more of the mind of Christ ;” of “finding it necessary to retire for a few minutes into one of the pews of the chapel, in order to pour out his sorrows and solitudes on behalf of the members into the bosom of Jesus.” His care extended to individuals. A flood of sorrow comes upon him : he knows not why. Calling on a sick member, he finds the mystery explained. She has been the subject of peculiar conflict, and he has been bearing her burden. The arm of the Lord wrought deliverance, and they sang His praise. Again, “The father of Sister P. was saved to-night while we were at prayer with him : indeed, the answer was given at the band some weeks ago, as we were interceding for the unconverted members of our families.” So also he “found another member of his classes had lapsed into strong prejudice and bitterness of spirit ; but Christ arose and stilled the tempest, so that there was a great calm.”

But let us hear him a little more at length. The following will illustrate his mode of bearing witness for his Lord :—

“1836. *Nov.* 9.—Sister H. of the Primitive Society, and a woman of deep communion with God, called to request me to visit a neighbour of hers, who is near the eternal world, and in a state of blind and Pharisaic security. I went with her in the evening ; and while she was sitting by, and waiting upon God for His blessing, I endeavoured, in the plainest and most forcible way, to draw aside the veil that was on his heart. His self-confidence was shaken by the power of God, and we got hold of the Lord in prayer for his salvation. I

was mightily assailed by the powers of darkness. I doubt not this brand will be plucked from the burning.

“1837. *Jan.* 1.—The covenant renewed in the afternoon. Had much liberty at Langley in the evening from the parable of the Virgins. By the way overtook an avowed infidel in a state of intoxication. Shot an arrow into his conscience which I hope he will not easily get rid of. Returning, prayed with an old man of eighty who has lived without God. He is near death, but I have hope concerning his salvation.”

How striking is the following passage :—

“*Jan.* 8.—I was ruminating this morning after the prayer-meeting on the purport of the covenant. Was led to ask myself, ‘How may I maintain it? How may I be found in the due and constant observance of its spirit, so as to come as near as possible to the letter of it?’ It was answered, ‘Let every ordinance of God, let every child of God, let every mercy of God, let every creature of God, be in the place of a memento.’”

The following entry possesses more than ordinary interest. It was the Doctor’s practice to retire, as often as he could, for meditation and prayer, to a secluded spot in the outskirts of the town, not far from the home of his youth. Many are the records of visits to this place, but none more striking and full than this :—

“1838. *Oct.* 23.—Walked out again this afternoon, for purposes of meditation and prayer. The drifting cloud, the autumnal gale, the seared and falling leaf, the grove of oaks of a former age, and the limpid stream, wending its interrupted course, in softly murmuring cadences, through the hallowed dell, all accorded well with my purposes and prepossessions. I joined the music of the glade by a hymn of thanksgiving; and then engaged in supplication for my family and Christian friends. I

implored mercy for myself, and grace for every emergency ; and then gave myself to the Lord by a hymn of consecration. I prayed again and again that the offering might be confirmed. I pleaded with the Lord ; I said, I would be sincere in this matter ; and now that no eye is upon me, but the eye of God, and no ear is nigh, save the ear of mercy, I would earnestly implore, in the presence of Jehovah, in the presence of my Immanuel, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, my Comforter and Sanctifier, in the presence of the holy angels and of the glorified, and under the wide expanse of the visible heavens, grace to enable me to walk before my house in a perfect way, and to furnish me for every good word and work, in the world and in the Church. Alas ! who is sufficient for these things ? Thou knowest, Lord, my ignorance and feebleness : I stand in need of constant supplies of wisdom and holy influence, and I implore the same at Thy hands. Thou knowest the tendency there is in my spirit to supineness ; the numberless errors by which I am encompassed ; the weariness which so often oppresses my body, and the care which oppresses my mind, indisposing me alike to active duty and devotional exercises. I am in danger, too, from the blessings of Thy providence, of resting in the gifts themselves, rather than in the hand of the Donor ; and in this way of cleaving to the dust, instead of aspiring heavenward : but I desire to shake myself from all ungenial influences, and to plume my wing. Let me be aided in this by the heavenly Dove ; send the Spirit from Thy throne, to quicken and to save. I wish to tread in the steps of Jesus ; in all lowliness of mind, in all long-suffering, in all holy obedience, in the purity of faith unfeigned, in the vigour of Christian hope, in the fervour and constancy of Divine love, to follow the Lamb. Clothe me, Lord, with righteousness ! clothe me with humility ! clothe me with charity ! clothe me with purity ! Let me live to show forth Thy praise, to serve some holy purpose in Thy sanctuary. I ask not, I

desire not, to be a vessel of gold, or of silver; but a vessel unto honour; it may be of stone, or of wood; let it be of the last and lowest description, if so be that the heavenly influences may flow thereby unto others: only let the creature be abased, and Thy name alone glorified, and all shall be well: then affliction and tribulation, and toil and infamy, will all be well. Hear me, Lord, in this, before I leave the place. Hear me! for the day declineth, and the shadows of evening are drawing over me. Confirm the covenant unto Thy servant. Let me live to show the world Thy blood. Let me be seen upon the highway, with my loins girt about, beckoning to the weary and labouring traveller to bear me company to Zion. If I have obtained mercy through the atoning blood, oh! tell me, 'I know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in My sight.' To Thee, alone, let me live; to Thee, alone, let me die; and be in Thy presence for ever. Amen! Even so, Lord Jesus! ratify the covenant by the atoning and redeeming seal."

In such exercises as these we discover the secret of Dr. Birchenall's constancy in the religious life. Prayer, ardent and importunate, that embraced the whole range of his spiritual needs and took a firm hold on the promises of God, that went out in earnest intercession for the souls of men and brought down a present answer, this was what gave unity and consistency to his outward life, and made his converse with those about him a continual incitement to holy living. One more instance of his godly ministrations will fitly close this chapter:—

"1839. *Nov.* 5.—M. O. has been recently confined, of her first child. I was sent for to attend her; subsequently, I found her labouring under puerperal mania, with a high degree of febrile excitement. In the course of her hallucination, she told me, under great perturba-

tion, that she was once in the right way, but had got out of it. I endeavoured to soothe her mind, by kindly expressions, and by gracious assurances of the Divine mercy and goodness; but went no further at the time by reason of the disordered state of her intellect. By the good providence of God, she is now fully recovered, weakness excepted. On my visit this morning, I found her alone. 'Well now, Mary,' I observed, 'I understood you to say, a few days ago, that you were once in the way of righteousness, but had unhappily wandered out of it.' 'O yes!' she replied, with a sorrowful look, and shake of the head. 'But you desire to get into the right way again?' 'I do indeed,' she replied with great emphasis and feeling. 'Then are you not at present right with God?' 'No, sir! I cannot say that I am.' 'But you believe the Lord is willing to restore you now?' 'I do,' she rejoined with tears. 'Then look for it now, while I pray with you.' I knelt down; the power of the Lord came upon us at once, and she shouted the high praises of God. It was a gracious token to me, for it was the very day of my own espousals."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOLAR—THE PREACHER.

1840.

WE have already described the character of Dr. Birchenall's mind, and shown how comprehensive was the range of his early studies. From certain expressions that dropped from his pen in the autobiographic record, and from our silence on the subject in subsequent chapters, it may have been supposed that many of these pursuits were allowed to lapse. And had it been so, the pressure of multiplied cares and duties might have been pleaded in justification. But there is ample proof that this was far from being the case.

One evidence to the contrary may be found in the fact that he was through life a collector of rare and curious works in many departments of literature. Of course this is not enough in itself. Many a man becomes a book-hunter whose motives are of no higher order than those which lead men to pursue the chamois or the buffalo. With many the interest is purely mercenary, or only refined by an admixture of antiquarian sentiment or artistic taste. It was not so with Dr. Birchenall. A genuine antiquarian, no doubt, he was, but his books were not selected simply to gratify the love of acquisition or to awaken the

admiration of the bibliomaniac. They were intended not for show but use. And the sobriety of his tastes is seen not only in the character of the collection, but in the absence of sumptuous bindings and editions *de luxe*; while his nice discrimination and sympathetic interest are evinced by the almost fastidious neatness which governed the arrangement of his treasures, and the excellent state of preservation in which they were found after his death.

But we have more direct evidence than this. The Rev. John Farrar remembers him as not only "a zealous and efficient leader, and a talented and popular local preacher," but also as "a hard student, especially in his profession." No doubt the study of medicine would hold a prominent place, and scarcely less so science in its more general aspects. But his early studies were never altogether laid aside, and certainly the fruits of them were never lost. In proof of this we may cite the incidental evidence of the diary. I say incidental, because the diary was avowedly kept for spiritual purposes only. It is not a record of his labours, either in the study or out of it. But it teems with apt quotations from all sorts of authors in all sorts of languages, such as could only have been made by one familiar with their writings.

A few samples will illustrate our meaning, and at the same time exhibit the versatility of the Doctor's mind. "I had with me," he says, on one occasion, "the inimitably beautiful poems of Buchanan, and was greatly interested with his version of the 41st Psalm. How different, thought I, are the judgments of men and the judgments of God; how superior the condition here eulogized, the *beatus ille* of this

psalm, to the *beatus ille* of Horace; how preferable its immunities, to those delineated by the poet of the Augustan age!" Under misgivings in reference to certain monthly addresses to his classes, he is comforted by the following from Marcus Antoninus: 'Ο λόγος δὲ καὶ κοινὸν καὶ ἴδιον καρπὸν ἔχει, καὶ γίνεται ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοιαῦθ' ἕτερα, ὁποῖόν τι αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ λόγος. Εἰ μὲν δύνασαι, μεταδίδασκε, κ.τ.λ. "But every discourse has its products, both of a public and private kind, and there spring from it effects as various as the discourse itself. If thou art able, therefore, teach new truths." Taunted one day with a want of frankness in his professional capacity as compared with other medical men, à Kempis consoles him with: "Probandus es adhuc in terris, et in multis exercendus. . . . Quod aliis placet, processum habebit: quod tibi placet ultra non proficiet. Quod alii dicunt audietur: quod tu dicis, pro nihilo computabitur. Petent alii et recipient: tu petes, nec impetrabis." "Thou must yet be tried and in many respects exercised while thou livest on the earth. . . . What pleases others shall prosper: what pleases thee shall not succeed. What others say shall be heard: what thou sayest shall be accounted nothing. Others shall seek, and find: thou shalt seek, and not gain thy suit." In reference to preaching he says, what many can ratify: "There are many occasions in my public exercises when I am placed within this dilemma, *τολμᾶν ἀνάγκη καὶ τύχῳ καὶ μὴ τύχῳ*. 'I must venture, whether I succeed or fail.'" Proposals of partnership are courteously declined on the ground of Heb. xiii. 5, "and moreover,

*Ὁρῶ γὰρ ἡμᾶς οὐδὲν ὄντας ἄλλο πλὴν
Εἰδῶλ' ἢ κούφην σκιάν.*

In other words, my days are like a shadow that declineth." Camoens, the great Portuguese poet, supplies a portrait for which one of his own flock might have sat, whose funeral sermon he is called to preach.

"Hum riso brando, e honesto,
Hum doce e humilde gesto,
Hum despejo quieto, e vergonhoso ;
Hum responso gravissimo, e modesto ;
Huma pura bondade, manifesto
Indicio da elma limpo e gracioso."

Which my colleague, the Rev. J. D. Geden, renders freely :

"A vivid, artless smile ;
A sweet and unpretending carriage ;
A gentle, bashful look ;
Speech, full of dignity, and modest ;
An unaffected kindness, the outward token
Of what was in the soul, serene and winsome."

Again, he bows in resignation to the Divine will, for it is continually recurring to him, "This evil is from the Lord, and I well know (here follows a Persian sentence, which Mr. Geden renders), That is not affliction which comes from above." His place of rural seclusion recalls—

"Qua pinus ingens albaque populus
Umbram hospitalem consociare amant
Ramis et obliquo laborat
Lympha fugax trepidare rivo :"

"where the lofty fir-tree and the white poplar delight to weave with their boughs a hospitable shade, and the fleeting waters laboriously murmur along their winding course" (Hor. *Car.* II. 3) ; and the vault of heaven under which he bowed—

"Micante inter ignes
Luna minores :"

“the moon glittering among the lesser fires.” And, again, the rustling of numberless leaflets in the glade recalls the *ἀδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα* of Theocritus. I have in my possession a small manuscript volume containing more than a hundred passages from the above and many other poets, all in the Doctor’s own neat handwriting.

Studies of this kind were probably only resorted to by way of recreation, and as a relief from severer application. Occasionally the Doctor seems to have cast a wistful glance at regions which he once delighted to traverse, but now could only cursorily visit. Thus, under date 15th Sept. 1837, he says, “Have found a strong inclination since Monday to the prosecution of my former studies. The feeling has been occasioned by the sight of two Arabic manuscripts in the possession of a person who resides in the vicinity of Macclesfield, and whose father had brought them with him many years ago from Egypt or Palestine where he had travelled.” But he is admonished to beware. And the very sources of the admonition themselves indicate a pretty wide latitude of lawful reading. They are John Milton, Thomas Walsh, Marcus Antoninus, and Richard Baxter. Of these monitors, we will only quote the first:

“ That not to know at large of things remote
From use, obscure and subtile, but to know
That which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime wisdom.”

If, however, he sometimes delighted to ramble in the elysian fields of classic poetry, it was not through any disdain of home-born literature, even in its plainest prose. Theology was a field he delighted to cultivate.

And though all the Greek and Latin Fathers were to be found upon his shelves, together with their notable compeer, Ephrem Syrus, yet the diary bears more frequent traces of modern, and especially of English, masters in divinity. The later German developments he did not much affect, though they were not unrepresented in his library. But wherever sterling sense and sacred fervour joined in one, there he settled, as a bee settles on the sweetest-scented flower and lades itself with the ambrosial nectar. The produce of his industry in this case also, or a portion of it, may be seen gathered in a mass of brief quotations in a small manuscript volume. Here are enshrined such names as Pearce of Birmingham, Staunton, Flavel, Mrs. Fry, Niebuhr, Bernard, Manton, Miss Tytherington, Caryll, Sharon Turner, Madame Bourignon, Edwards, Carstairs, T. Fuller, T. Watson, Bengel, Baxter, Perronet, R. Watson, Bramwell, Mrs. Fletcher, Junius, Burnet, Chevalier Ramsay, Gouge, Brook, Job Scott, R. Alleine, Armelle Nicholas, Rostan, Augustine, Mrs. Dutton, Gataker, Dyer, Fénelon, Vitringa, Bishop Wake, Peter Poiret, Jer. Taylor, Horneck, John Fletcher, Calamy, Jacomb, the Marquis of Argyle, Case, Savonarola, A. Clarke, Herbert, Quarles, Ludolph, Miss Bissaker, J. Wesley, Berridge, Howe, and De Renty. Besides these, there is a mass of papers containing extracts from writers on other subjects connected with almost every field of human research and inquiry.

All this of course would only prove him to be a wide reader. But there are two manuscript books of "occasional thoughts and reflections," containing pithy original observations, which show that the philosophic

depth and penetration of Dr. Birchenall's mind were proportionate to his literary breadth. The contents of these two books alone would, if printed, fill more than a hundred pages.¹ In addition, there are several lengthy disquisitions, on the Psalms, on the Revelation, and on other subjects connected with the criticism of the Holy Scriptures. These bring us face to face with the central subject round which, in his intellectual system, all others constantly revolved. The place of the Word of God in his thoughts and affections may be estimated by the pre-eminence assigned to its literature in his valuable collection. Of subsidiary aids to its interpretation it would be tedious to speak. But of volumes containing in whole or part the mere text of Scripture in various languages, the number in the catalogue amounts to seventy, from Walton's Polyglott in five large folio volumes through every intermediate size to the smallest duodecimo. And many of these, from the references in the diary, appear to have been in constant use. Truly, if there were any idolatry at all in the Doctor's mind, it would seem to have been the pardonable idolatry of the Word of God. Yet in the course of my numerous interviews with him in his last days I do not remember the least expression savouring of excessive attachment to earth, even in this most spiritualized form. The following entry in his diary will, however, be easily understood:—

“1843. *May* 21.—Attended an occasional service at the Roe Street Chapel this morning. Mr. Ely, from Leeds, officiated: his text Deut. xxxiv. 1: the subject

¹ A selection of these aphorisms will be found in the Appendix.

delightfully interesting. The tear instinctively filled my eye when he mentioned the Bible as one of the sources of edification and comfort to which the saint has to bid adieu, when he is taken to the rest which remains for God's people; and I could not help then feeling that this would be a serious deprivation, if 'the tabernacle of the testimony' were not 'opened in heaven.'"

From this sketch of his intellectual resources it will be inferred that the Doctor's pulpit ministrations must have been of no common order. And there is ample proof that it was so. His popularity as a preacher was great, and extended beyond the bounds of his own circuit. And it was not the evanescent popularity of a gaudy and flippant rhetoric. Those who came to hear Dr. Birchenall expected indeed that his sentiments would be clothed in chaste and perspicuous language, for this was ever the characteristic of his ordinary utterances. But they could always be confident also that any discourse of his would be based on sound criticism, and veined throughout with vigorous thought; that, as it was the offspring of profound conviction, so it would be delivered with intense earnestness; that in his application he would deal as faithfully with the consciences of his auditory as he had done in his exposition with the mind of the Spirit; that he would not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, now wielding the terrors of the law and now offering the consolations of the Gospel; and that it would be no fault of his, if, before the close of the service, the whole congregation were not bowed in deep humiliation before the mercy-seat, and penetrated through and through with a sense of the Divine

majesty and condescension in Christ. These features of his preaching are plainly stamped on every one of the sermons contained in the volume which, a few years before his death, was printed for private circulation. It is to be wished that these sermons could be reprinted. They abound in minute descriptive analyses of the Christian character and life, and in discussions of the principles of redemption, such as will always be welcome to the sincere student of revelation, and are peculiarly needed in an age of licence in thought and laxity in discipline.

As to his modes of preparation for the pulpit Dr. Birchenall has left no formal record. But from casual hints dropped here and there in the diary, it is pretty obvious what his method was. Passages of Scripture having been applied to his mind with peculiar energy, he would meditate upon them, using all necessary helps to their elucidation, until a connected outline stood clear before his mental eye. A complete mastery of the subject having been thus obtained, he proceeded to deliver his message, trusting for utterance to what some would call the inspiration of the moment, but others, and he among them, the assistance of the Holy Spirit. After the first delivery he would commit his thoughts to paper, giving point and accuracy to what had been crude or ungraceful in its first suggestion to the mind. Thus were combined the advantages of the extempore and memoriter methods, and the finish ensured by the one set off without constraining the freedom of the other. But he alone can safely copy this method whose mind, like Dr. Birchenall's, is ever spontaneously assimilating truth. Such a man is always preparing for the pulpit.

One advantage of this method is that it enables the preacher to seize passing occurrences and turn them to account. An instance of this occurs in the diary, which, though of a somewhat painful nature, we cannot withhold. "*May* 15, 1836.—At Langley in the evening. Here we had a melancholy occurrence. At the opening of the service, D. W., a patient of mine, labouring under hydrothorax, came into the chapel, and, when he got into the gallery, fell down and almost instantly expired." Such an event, taking place at the very beginning of the service, and happening to one to whom the preacher stood in the relation of medical attendant, might be supposed to have had an unnerving effect. But it was not so. The preacher descended from the pulpit, ascertained by personal investigation that all human help was unavailing, and then returned to his post. The rest of the record is, "I had been in great perplexity as to a text, and suitable matter for this people; but when we had disposed of our attentions to the deceased, God gave me a word of admonition from 'Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.'"

Of course, there would be times when the mind seemed to be shut up, and recoiled upon itself in the vain effort to find some suitable topic. This is an experience not peculiar to any one method of preparation, or to any one species of mental temperament. The greatest men have been subject to it, and I do not know that the memoriter preacher has here any advantage over the extemporaneous. He may put a sheet of paper before him, but the blankness of the paper may only reflect the blankness of his mind. It is most important upon such occasions to avoid undue

solicitude, and never to let the feeling of interest die away into despair. Give the mind something to work upon, and it will soon recover its tone. Such, no doubt, would have been the Doctor's advice, for he knew the difficulty well. Perhaps he would have added, "Give yourself to prayer, and trust in God." One such experience we may quote with profit. It shows how deliverance waits on trial, and suggests a lesson too often overlooked, that the state of the congregation frequently has a powerful influence upon the preacher's mind:—

"1840. *Aug.* 30.—At Langley in the evening from 'The judgment was set,' etc., Dan. vii. 10. I have never experienced so much previous desolation: the Word of God was altogether a sealed book, as it often is when I have to speak in the name of the Lord. But this was not all. I was all distress within. The divinely gracious influence of the afternoon meeting had fled away, as the cloud before the whirlwind flies, and not a trace was left behind. I could not entertain a single thought propitious either to myself, or to the people; nor could I (as I sometimes can) find relief at the mercy-seat. It seemed as if the Spirit had taken His flight, and as if nothing but inevitable and utter confusion was before me. My distress continued when I was in the pulpit. I found access in prayer, until I became intercessory, and then I perceived my spirit again under oppressive limitations. When I opened the sacred volume, I was utterly bewildered. There was no obvious connexion between the lesson and the text; and where the choice was to fall in respect to the latter I knew not, for I could not divine the mind of the Lord in the matter. Indeed, it seemed to be altogether a matter of indifference what Scripture should be taken up. But when the record was opened, the

Lord uttered His voice, and that a mighty voice. I have had liberty before, in this and other places, and commanding influence shed from heaven upon the people; but as a whole, nothing to equal this. It seemed as if the word were clothed throughout with the lightning and the thunder of Sinai. Oh that the effects may be seen after many days! Had some conversation afterwards with Brother C. as to the state of the society and congregation, which appears to be anything but prosperous. Returned under much exhaustion and muscular weariness."

The Doctor's services as a preacher extended beyond his regular appointments on the circuit plan. He was frequently invited to preach in chapels belonging to other denominations. And in his catholicity of spirit he loved thus to fraternize with Christians of every name. Sometimes he was called upon to preach special sermons in neighbouring towns and villages. The following entry has reference to such an excursion:—

"*Nov.* 11.—Rode over to Mayfield to preach occasional sermons on behalf of the Sunday school: in the afternoon from Ps. *xlvi.* 12–14, in the evening from *Matt.* *xiii.* 43. As I left the chapel on the former occasion, I was accosted by a respectable female who had been one of my earliest patients, and who owed her recovery from a highly dangerous inflammation, under Divine providence, to my attentions. She is now a member of our Society, and had come with her husband from Ashbourne to see me. Grace hath given to her countenance a finer and a softer expression, so that it was some time before I could recognise her.

"Mr. Tomlinson walked with me to Mr. Brown's the following morning, where we breakfasted. Mr. B. accompanied me afterwards to the mansion of J.

Russell, Esq., occupying a fine elevation, with a densely wooded upland behind the house, skirted by a beautiful river, which receives the tributary waters of the Hants and the Manifold, as they emerge by several wide openings in the rock after flowing underground for some miles. Near to this spot is a curious rustic alcove with a stone bench, on which it is said Congreve wrote his play of *The Bachelors*. Attached to the church in front is a mausoleum containing a deathbed scene in a group of raised figures, one of Chantrey's.

"We took our horses and rode down Dovedale, which I had long wished to visit. I do not wonder that Rousseau should have passed so much time here when in England, and that old Isaak Walton, the celebrated angler, should have so much frequented the banks of the Dove in this locality. The sublime and the beautiful are here finely blended in rich and continuous variety. There is a good painting of Walton at an inn at the head of the dale.

"Returning, took tea with Mr. and Mrs. Cooper, of Leek, and arrived home about seven, grateful for all the mercies of my covenant-keeping God."

CHAPTER X.

THE CHRISTIAN DISPUTANT—PORTRAIT OF A FRIEND.

1840-1842.

ONE form of service rendered by Dr. Birchenall to the cause of Christ I have not yet adverted to: I mean his occasional appearance in public as a disputant on behalf of revealed religion as against the atheists and secularists of the day. For service of this kind his philosophical and scientific habitudes well fitted him. So early as 1830, while yet a candidate for the Methodist ministry, he appears to have entered the lists against some champion of infidelity; and to this reference is made in the diary, as quoted above, under date Dec. 12, 1832. Of this discussion the only record is that contained in the subjoined letter. It will sufficiently illustrate the position he assumed, and the skill with which he defended it:—

“*March* 1830. To Mr. Matthew Longden, Rainow.—My dear Sir,—I had a numerous array of the disciples of the infidel school at my disputation, and the interest seemed to be augmented on each successive evening.

“Having first established the existence and properties of matter, and having obtained a concession as to the

distinction between those qualities of bodies which are essential and those which are secondary or accidental merely, I assumed as my first proposition, that intelligence could not be an attribute of matter, or it would be found in all its arrangements and modifications, which supposition involves a direct absurdity: and, secondly, to suppose it to be the result of a peculiar organization, does not relieve us of the difficulty, because vital power takes precedence of organic development, in other words, certain vital arrangements in the germ or ovum are necessarily presupposed, as the formative cause of organization; none of which are essential to matter, though they are made dependent upon it for their specific manifestations. Having now arrived at the question of immaterial existences, I was pressed with the manifestations of intelligence and combination in the lower animals, and the consequences, to the system of revealed religion, of supposing that immortality is the result of immateriality, because immateriality must be conceded, according to my own theory, as the basis of intelligence; and then it would follow that immortality is not peculiar to man, and therefore requires no revelation to denote it. To this I answered, that we were agreed as to the premises, but nothing beyond: that intelligence supposes an immaterial existence; but that immortality cannot be the necessary result of immaterial existences; because, in that case, they would be, in their own nature, independent and absolute: that, as it respects intelligence, there may be a wide difference in the character and composition of that which produces it, even when the manifestations are similar; that identity of crystalline form is not necessarily connected with identity of chemical composition; that nitre and quartz, for example, on the one hand, and alum and the diamond on the other, approximate more nearly in their obvious character than do the manifestations of intelligence in man and the animals below him, respectively: that though, in the former

cases, matter is confessedly the basis, as the intelligent principle is in the latter, the two classes of crystals, at least, physically similar, are so distinct, according to the laws of combination, that one of the two in each class admits of chemical analysis, while the other is elementary, for aught that is known at present; that the doctrine of a future state addresses itself to combinations of intelligence with a moral sense in man peculiar and characteristic, in its relations and capabilities. Many other questions were started, in the course of the discussion, not at all relevant to my proposition, some of them carrying their own refutation, for example, the eternity of matter, and of motion as essential to matter; which I showed to be physically impossible, inasmuch as it must affect all the particles of matter equally and simultaneously, and be subversive of all the known arrangements which come under our cognisance, the laws of aggregation, of chemical affinity, etc., as well as the sublimer relations of the great physical universe.—Yours very truly, J. B.”

The following fragment of a private conversation will show how the Doctor bought up every opportunity of pressing the claims of Christianity on those disposed to neglect them:—

“Conversation between J. B. and Mr. Newton, the free-thinker, at the funeral procession of Mr. J.”

“J. B. ‘Now that we are in friendly conversation, allow me to ask, were you not once a member of our Society?’

“Mr. N. ‘Yes, I was: and it might be about the time to which we have been referring.’

“J. B. ‘And now, allow me to ask further, had you the enjoyments of religion at the time?’

“Mr. N. ‘I was very well satisfied with it; but a

change afterwards passed upon my sentiments, which I deemed more rational than those which I had previously espoused.'

"*J. B.* 'Then it would appear that it was a mere change of sentiment. I have often wondered whether you are as comfortable in your present position as I presumed you must have been under the influence of the Christian religion.'

"*Mr. N.* 'Yes, I am quite satisfied with the change; not that I had ever any fault to find with the other system.'

"*J. B.* 'No right-minded man could take exception at that which is intrinsically excellent; but I would like to know the ground of your present satisfaction.'

"*Mr. N.* 'I take everything to be under the control of an all-wise and all-powerful Creator, and that everything tends to good.'

"*J. B.* 'But moral evil cannot be in harmony with the moral government of God.'

"*Mr. N.* 'I think everything tends to the same result, under the same superintendence.'

"*J. B.* 'But to make that which is in itself evil an element in the moral government of the Divine Being, is to make Him the author of it.'

"*Mr. N.* 'I believe everything that exists is from the same source of existence.'

"*J. B.* 'Which is a direct impeachment, as you must perceive, of the wisdom, and righteousness, and goodness of the Supreme Being.'

"*Mr. N.* 'The question as to the origin of evil is one of acknowledged difficulty.'

"*J. B.* 'That is very true; but the fact itself is before us, and we are not at liberty to dispose of it by imputations on the Divine attributes and perfections; least of all by a theory which involves contradictory propositions.'

"*Mr. N.* 'There is much mystery hangs over the subject, on which side soever you range yourself.'

“*J. B.* ‘Granted. All ultimate questions must be, at present, out of the range of the human intellect; but there is, to say the least, a show of reason on the one side which is wanting on the other.’

“*Mr. N.* ‘I have read Archbishop King’s essay, which yielded me no satisfaction, and I am decidedly of opinion that both good and evil are from the same source.’

“*J. B.* ‘And yet all pagan nations felt the absurdity of this theory, and supposed two opposite principles.’

“*Mr. N.* ‘They did; but all metaphysical subjects leave the human mind where they found it at first.’

“*J. B.* ‘They allow you, nevertheless, the exercise of sober judgment.’”

Even when he did not himself throw down the gauntlet, he was ready to second with advice and encouragement those that did. About the period we have now reached, a public lecturer of some note visited the town, and delivered a series of addresses on the errors and abominations of Socialism, holding discussions with some of its principal advocates. Dr. Birchenall followed with eager interest the course of the debate, and kept up a correspondence with the lecturer. We give the letters entire:—

“To John Brindley, Esq. Park Street, *Nov.* 17, 1840. —Dear Sir,—Your ingenious etymological distinction of last evening, between *recollection* on the part of man, under certain circumstances, and *recognition* on the part of the brute, under similar circumstances, was intended, I presume, to denote a specific difference (an essential difference) as to the sentient principle of the two, and to establish thereupon the exclusive presumption of immortality with reference to the former. I think you will perceive, on a little reflection, that the difficulty in the

comparison instituted is not thereby fully met, because similar phenomena indicate a similar cause, and terms somewhat synonymous must express subjects not specifically (essentially) remote. How are we to explain the various instincts and habits of animals, except on the supposition that they are governed by laws of mental association and moral affinity, or something very nearly resembling these? If this be the fact, there is an analogical approximation in the exercises of the sentient principle, in the brute, to those of the same principle in man; and we are obliged, in conceding immateriality to both, to go beyond perception, and memory, and mental combination, and social affection, in order to determine the characteristic difference upon which presumptions of immortality can be based; and this can be fairly established only on the spirituality of the sentient principle in our own species. Individuality characterizes the brute no less than the human being, the living determining principle within continuing the same under the physiological changes incident to all living organisms. No logical deductions, therefore, can safely be made, from these premises, as to the immortality of the human soul. In fact, immateriality and immortality appear to be perfectly distinct questions, the one not necessarily involving the other. My own conceptions on the subject are these: that immateriality, simply considered, is an attribute common to all animals, through every gradation, under various and almost endless modifications: that it is the principle of life and intelligence, and moral feeling, under all the modifications exhibited: that it is associated, in man, with spiritual sense, a distinct attribute; and that it is owing to this association that we have all the sublime and distinguishing manifestations of intellectuality, of reason, of conscience, of religion: that immateriality, under these two important but widely different phases, is natural to man on the one hand, to the beast on the other: that extinction of the living principle at death,

with all its powers and associations, when this principle embodies no elements essentially indestructible, is as natural a result in the case of sentient organization, as it is, under the same circumstances, in the vital insentient manifestations of the vegetable kingdom. You are doubtless aware that there is a statement in canonical Scripture confirmatory of these views and distinctions (Eccles. iii. 21). Assuring you of the very high estimate I entertain of your labours in the cause of truth, of virtue, and religion, and apologizing, if I have at all misapprehended the drift of your argument, for thus obtruding myself upon your notice, and at all trespassing upon your time,—I remain, dear Sir, yours very respectfully,
J. B.”

“To John Brindley, Esq. Nov. 20, 1840.—Dear Sir,—My logical exercises, for many years, have been inductive, rather than dialectical, owing to the character of my professional avocations. You will not be surprised, therefore, if I request you to do me the favour to correct a material error in terms in my first communication. It was suggested by a hasty perusal of your syllabus of this morning. *Essential* difference was the point for which I supposed you to contend, in the comparison on the faculty of association. *Specific* difference on the question I allow; but do not, at present, understand the *essential* difference, except under the qualifications to which I subsequently adverted. ‘Subjects *essentially* remote,’ in a succeeding paragraph, not *specifically* so; for cognate terms may, with more propriety, be applied to matters of merely specific difference.—Yours most respectfully,
J. B.”

“To John Brindley, Esq. Park Street, Nov. 25, 1840.—Dear Sir,—In looking over the printed syllabus of queries propounded to you, yesterday, I was amused with the shifts and subterfuges into which the sceptical

and the captious had been driven by the force of argument: one person, raising what he conceived to be a theological difficulty, on a question of pure theism; a second roundly declaring his sheer ignorance on the subject of free agency, by placing it in direct antagonism with the laws by which it is regulated and determined; a third admitting the conclusions of a previous lecture, but starting a difficulty on the premises upon which they were based: and, on the other hand, in listening to your replies, I was no less delighted with the admirable tact you displayed in confronting objectors on their own ground.

“On tattooing of the skin, in sailors and others, I thought you less felicitous. Physiologists have determined that the phenomenon in question is owing to encystment of the colouring matter employed in the experiment, and this supposition admits of a very easy solution. The injury sustained is upon the *rete mucosum*, the most delicate, the most vascular of all the living membranes, that only excepted which is most intimately concerned in the process of nutrition: in each successive puncture there is the effusion of a globule of blood, which is instantly coagulated by the chemical agent, and, thus chemicalized, it is equally unfitted for the action of the absorbents, and for transmission into the vital current. Thereupon an effort of the *vis formativa* is made to isolate the chemical compound from the living structures by which it is surrounded; and a factitious membrane is formed of sufficient density for the purpose, by which a physiological guarantee is provided for the security and comfort of the part, under these adventitious circumstances. If the death of the part, or of the sentient extremities of the nerves, were in the series of changes, the very agencies supposed would be immediately and effectively employed for its removal. We find this matter further illustrated in similar investments of extraneous substances lodged in the body, as musket-balls, etc., and in morbid growths, sarcomatous

and osseous tumours, for example. In all these cases, the interior and contiguous portion of the membrane is more closely reticulated than the rest, in order that it may not be subjected so directly to the ordinary or accelerated processes of absorption. I have recently been in attendance upon a case which exemplifies most fully the importance of these indications in the animal economy, a case of spinal irritation in a fine and otherwise healthy subject.

“Excuse the liberty I have again taken. As my communications are strictly confidential, you are under no obligation to notice them, except as the alternative of Horace directs, *Si quid novisti rectius, istis candidus imperti*,¹ etc.—Yours truly and respectfully, J. B.”

The gentleman to whom the first of these letters was addressed, Mr. Matthew Longden, of Rainow, was one of Dr. Birchenall's most intimate friends. Of him he speaks in the highest terms, as possessing all the qualities that make friendship desirable. The following is a sketch of his physical, mental, and moral characteristics from the Doctor's facile pen. No name accompanies the document, but there is no one else to whom it can with any probability be supposed to refer. Some light will be reflected from the picture upon the limner's own character. What he admired in another he may well be thought to have coveted for himself, especially where to covet was in some measure to possess. Physically and intellectually, as often happens in fast friendships, the resemblance was not so close, the two being in some respects rather the complements than the counterparts of each other:—

¹ Hor. *Epp.* lib. I. 4.

“ An understanding spirit, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, observing all things, and going through all understanding ; kind, steadfast, sure ; loving the thing that is good ’ (Wisdom).

“ His head presents some of the finer points of phrenological development—rotundity, firmness, comprehensiveness. It is covered with a profusion of deep black hair, generally long and dishevelled, like the locks of Bellona, or the lank capillitious covering of wild Peter of Germany. The eyes are dark-brown, well set, and prominent, full of depth, of expression, of fire, as the case may be—the general indication being that of thought and of purpose, fixed and direct ; the eyebrows are arched, the countenance usually pallid, the face manly and well be-whiskered, in its ordinary mood tranquil,—susceptible, nevertheless, of all the modifications of expression, from grave to gay. In stature he is about the middle size, muscular and plump, with a disposition to obesity, which his regular and active habits have under constant keeping. There is ample pectoral development, and lungs, one might imagine, to use one of his own similes on the subject, like india-rubber. The voice is in fine keeping with these provisions, deep and sonorous, a bass of great compass and power, and capable, if it had been under the control of a professional, of the finest, richest, and most diapason intonations ; not that he is himself insensible to the charms of music, but it is melody rather than harmony which pleases him, and it is to choral exercises alone that his own voice is so admirably suited. His pedestrian movements are short and quick, showing the man of business and of despatch, though they are occasionally under arrest to the higher powers, when his countenance assumes a prone and grave and meditative aspect. Indeed, if you follow him from morn to dewy eve, you discover that he is emphatically a man of one purpose and of one business.

“ Regard the qualities of his mind, well defined by the motto at the head of this paper. It is intellect rather than genius, the substantial characteristics of mind adapting themselves to the varied and multiform avocations and the great and pressing purposes of life. Viewed in this association, there is equal versatility and vigour in its energies. It matters not what the subject to which his capabilities may be addressed; give him but palpable material and a legitimate object, and he will take hold of its elements, he will eye them in their associations, and follow them into all their ramifications and details. ‘Nothing conquered, nothing won,’ is the maxim of his indomitable spirit; and on he goes through thick and thin, nothing wearied, nothing discouraged, until he has vanquished every difficulty and brought the whole matter within the empire of his own achievements. With facilities for gliding unobtrusively from one branch of trade to another, it is not to be supposed that he would pass unnoticed in the business world. Accordingly, while some have regarded him with respect, the eye of the less enterprising and mercenary has often been upon him for evil; but he has pursued the even tenor of his way, regardless of the envy and jealousies of others, fortified and sustained by honourable convictions. *Quanto majore animo honestatis fructus in conscientia quàm in fama reponatur.*

“ In social life—we limit our observations here to friendships unalloyed, for in his intercourse with society on the large scale he holds himself under some reservations, but in the circle exclusively social—he is free as air, frank, affable, buoyant, confiding. In conversation you have much of bluntness and playfulness combined. He has an instinctive perception of mental and moral incongruities, and he takes care that others shall behold them in bold relief also. By a smart antithesis, by a blunt ridicule, by comparisons as remote as the language of the exact sciences and the dialects of Caffraria, he instantly exposes the matter,

and raises a laugh at its expense when perhaps he least intended it. Let but the fitful offences of some men of high or low degree be named, and the obliquities of Cuvier's animal kingdom will be ransacked, or the false proportions of some rustic piece of architecture, or the physical or mental deformity of some luckless wight well known to fame, will be under tribute for pertinent points of illustration. If a principle be in question, especially if it be in the form of an acknowledged maxim, you have some proverb of the ancients, or some homely modern adage of equal validity, to warrant its reception.

“The character of our friend's mind is syllogistic rather than metaphysical. An amusing incident occurs to us in illustration of our alternative position. He once strayed, out of sheer curiosity, into a chapter in Drew's psychology, but, wearied with its mazes, he found himself rapidly advancing into the category of the seven sleepers. A dilemma is never lost upon him, and he instantly made a prudent retreat, pledging himself to his wakeful genius that, if he might be allowed for once to escape without costs, he would never again venture upon forbidden ground. On the other hand, set before him obvious and undeniable principles, positive or reflex axioms or maxims, and he has an almost intuitive perception of their character and practical bearings, and he will immediately furnish cogent instances as to their application in trade, in civil government, in social and religious life.

“A knotty question is on the tapis, a question in theology or on some other subject of moral interest: he falls back upon his chair, the head gently obeys the laws of gravitation, inclining slowly to the dip of the horizon, the eyes meanwhile fixed in the plane of the ecliptic: now you have a fine example of mental introversion. His eye is upon the chief speaker: not a muscle is in play, except those which are insensibly occupied in the functions of life: he takes an intellec-

tual gauge of the whole argument: he waits in breathless suspense for the solution of the difficulty. If it come before him in the shape of a novelty, he gravely assents to it by a nod of the head: if in accordance with his previous conceptions, he shows that he was in the secret by significant intimations that it was involved in his prior convictions. The subject of theology naturally introduces us to his religious character.

“The religious character of our friend is marked by feeling: it is the emotion occasioned by deep and all-absorbing interest, and sustained evermore by the breath of life. In his religious exercises he is eminently devotional: he sings with the spirit, and he prays with the spirit: he is truly in earnest herein; in supplication devout, fervent; in intercession importunate, vehement. It is easily perceived by those who are like-minded that there is the seal of Heaven upon his aspirations. The moral condition of the world presses upon his spirit: he is painfully affected by it, and he pleads before the mercy-seat for the eternal interests of the human family.

“He is a Wesleyan Methodist of the ancient school, and he regards Methodism as a religious community rather than a religious polity, of which simplicity and sincerity are the elements of affinity. Every deviation from the one or the other he holds to be a direct infringement of the fundamental canon.

“Let it not be supposed that he is insensible to the advantages of well-directed intellect in the exhibition of truth; no! he has too much good sense for that; but he would have the leading features of the Gospel stand forth in bold relief, like the grand and massive framework of a noble piece of architecture, or like the pile of velvet, rich and lustrous, covering the design and skill of the artist. The outer garb of religion, too, is a matter which our friend deems worthy of all attention. He has but small patience with the conformity which is manifested by professors at the present day to the spirit and manners of the age; and he

has been heard to insinuate, on more occasions than one, that if he might only be allowed to regulate the outward adornings of the Christian world, he would speedily reduce them to their primitive dimensions and precision.

“The kingdom of Christ with him is essentially militant, though by the bye he is no millenarian in the militant sense of the term; and to talk of an armistice, or to conceive of such a thing as preliminaries of peace, would be to do violence to all his convictions on the subject. ‘Pacific manifestations! What a deeply-laid plot of the devil! No, sir, we show no quarter in the opposite direction: extermination is on our banner, and by God’s help we will have it, and if you will not go along with us in this, there are others that will.’ It is an inviolate article of his creed that there is no peace to the wicked, and he appears to have embodied a clause in his interpretation of this Scripture to ensure their ceaseless annoyance while in quest of this commodity. He regards the Gospel as the ministration of death, no less than the ministration of life; and he would rather a great deal, in the present state of society, that its overtures were tendered from Mount Ebal than from Mount Gerizim. Blessing, nevertheless, is what he contemplates ultimately; life to the world lying in wickedness, and a healthy condition of the Church. He has a perfect horror of suspended animation in matters of business, and especially in matters of religion; and one would divine that he has adopted on these subjects the twofold motto, perpetual motion in the one case and perpetual inspiration in the other.”

Great was the lamentation of Dr. Birchenall at the removal of his friend when he had barely passed the meridian of life. The following extract tells the story, and in it we see beautifully blended the offices of Christian friendship and professional zeal:—

“1842. *Dec.* 31.—The year has closed upon me with

one of the most mysterious and afflictive providences I have ever known. My old, and intimate, and highly gifted friend, Mr. L., was seized three weeks ago with a severe cold, which was aggravated on the following day by his preaching exercises at Broken Cross, and hurrying home in the evening without refreshment. He struggled on, however, until the following Saturday evening, when he came to tea, as usual, but complained of great indisposition. I furnished him with such medicines as I thought likely to relieve him, and fully expected to hear, in two or three days, of his convalescence. He improved slowly in the course of the week; but a serious error in his diet, on the Saturday ensuing, occasioned much disturbance in the stomach and bowels, which yielded nevertheless to the remedies employed in two or three days more, and on the Wednesday and Thursday especially, I deemed the case to have arrived at a favourable resolution. On the Friday, in the afternoon, I set out to visit him, as usual, under great languor and weariness, and in a cold and foggy atmosphere; and as I went up Kerridge Hill, took out my Greek Testament to refresh my spirit with its instructions, when I opened on a passage which I did not then understand, as it seemed to intimate that a tragical scene was at hand. I turned to another Scripture, which appeared to denote that the conflict which I had sustained, for some days, in my visits to my friend (owing to great physical weakness), was to be no longer with flesh and blood, but a mental conflict, little imagining what was before me. When I got to the house, I found my patient had slept well through the night, and had been as well as usual in the former part of the day, but had been seized with sub-acute inflammation of the bowels, which spread rapidly. I hurried home, communicated my most serious apprehensions to Mrs. B., and, before returning with such appliances and medicines as were necessary, retired to plead with God on his behalf. I found no access when

I asked for his life; but in interceding for spiritual blessings, the heavens appeared to drop down upon me from above. I hastened back with an experienced medical friend, and remained until two in the morning; but, long before that hour, I saw that the decree had gone forth. We conversed together, as we were able, on the great matter of personal salvation, and prayed with much of Divine influence. I returned, soon after daylight, and found my beloved friend still living, though not able to speak. He extended his arm, and grasped my hand affectionately, again and again. Mr. H. came up shortly afterwards. He recognised him also, and gave him his hand, though the effort was a manifestly final one. Oh, the anguish of that hour! I lifted up my heart in prayer to his Father and my Father, to his God and my God, and besought Him to grant me one request, the last that I could prefer on behalf of my dying friend and brother. I said, 'I ask not for signs, for I know he is in covenant with Thee, and that Thou art about to take him to Thyself; but I should regard it as a token of loving-kindness to myself, no less than to my friend, if I might be spared the pain of witnessing the ordinary last convulsive struggles of mortality.' His breathing became less and less laborious, shorter and less distinct, until without a murmur, or the slightest movement of the body, or of a muscle of the countenance, it ceased altogether, imperceptibly, as it appeared to us. We knelt down, his wife and sister, and his two friends, commended his spirit to the Lord, and implored mercy upon ourselves and the family; and then left the house, sorrowing most of all that we shall see his face no more in the house of the living."

On the 15th of January 1843, Dr. Birchenall preached a funeral sermon for his friend in Rainow chapel.

CHAPTER XI.

PROFESSIONAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE—CRITICISMS AND SKETCHES.

1843-1847.

DR. BIRCHENALL had now attained a position of influence as one of the foremost medical men in the town. At the outset he had many competitors, and among them some who had once belonged to the same religious denomination as himself, but who had forsaken it for filthy lucre's sake. These viewed his rise with feelings of jealousy, that were not always restrained within the bounds of professional etiquette, not to say private courtesy. The habitual reserve which he was obliged to maintain towards men of sentiments so opposite to his own would perhaps, unconsciously to himself, sharpen their animosity. To such men he was a puzzle, as every spiritual man is and must be to those who have their portion in this world. Gradually, however, the perplexities arising from this condition of things were removed by the removal of those who occasioned them. Into the circumstances connected with these changes it is not needful to enter, although it would be easy to do so without wounding any susceptibilities, since the persons concerned, with all their relatives, have long since passed

away. But I have called attention to these facts in order to show, what would scarcely be believed by those who only knew him in his later days, under what weight of disadvantage the Doctor's sterling worth had to assert itself, and how the same Providence that at first hemmed him in with difficulties in due time made a way for his escape. It was also necessary to advert to these facts in order to illustrate how, in a mind keenly alive to the proprieties of life in its finest and most delicate relations, the spirit of meekness and forbearance did not fail until that which taxed their exercise was taken away, and instead the opportunity for offices of love and kindness was unexpectedly offered and eagerly embraced. The following statement bears out what I have said. It has reference to one of the parties alluded to.

"His professional connexions," says Dr. Birchenall, "both in town and country had at one period assumed a character and reputation and stability altogether unprecedented. His success appears, however, to have been his ruin. It led to the too free and irregular indulgence in stimulants, and his practice began to wane. He became nervously fitful and desponding, and lost his self-confidence. He could no longer meet the eye of the public; he shut himself up in his own room, became petulant with the members of his household, and soon broke out into fits of passion and acts of violence, by which his attendants were in perpetual jeopardy of their lives. I called to see him occasionally, for he had handed over to me in trust the most select of his patients, and these connexions I held together until he should be capable of resuming his practice. It was necessary, however, in the

interim to have him confined to a lunatic asylum. A few days before he was sent away, his wife sent for me in great perturbation, entreating me to try to calm him down from a state of extreme excitement, by which he had been held all through the night up to that hour. He had locked himself up in his bedroom, the door of which was opened when I announced my name, but as quickly closed and locked again when I had entered. I found him flushed with anger, his full blue eye glistening with menace. He set his foot upon mine as he closed the door, and, regarding me with a determined and somewhat ominous look, said, 'There! you do not leave this room without my permission.' To add to the tragical in my surroundings, his razor was steeped in a glassful of oil in the window seat, and his watch, with exposed disc, placed beside it. I listened quietly to his complainings and objurgations, hoping that by and by the effervescence would subside, and a way open for my departure. To have contended with him would have been the extreme of folly. About noon the hurried restlessness and pacing of the room gradually subsided, and I could then ask permission to withdraw, on the ground of my professional engagements. He unlocked the door, opened it, and liberated me from this somewhat anxious state of suspense.

"He returned from the asylum, but not to his practice: this had passed away, and he was in a state of imbecility. He lingered a few years, and passed quietly away. He was frequently visited by our ministers, and there was hope in his death."

In another case there was, if possible, a still more tragic ending to a career that opened with flatter-

ing prospects. A young doctor and his wife were returning in their carriage from a complimentary visit to another member of the profession, when the horse took fright and the conveyance struck against one of the metallic posts in Parsonage Green. Both occupants of the carriage were thrown out and suffered concussion of the brain, and both died from the effects of the collision on the following day. Dr. Birchenall was summoned to attend them, and for that purpose left his own bed, to which he was confined at the time by indisposition; he watched by them in company with another medical man for eight hours, though it was obvious from the first that all human help was unavailing; and then returned to bed, not to rise from it for a fortnight, through the aggravation of his own complaint by the unseasonable exposure.

Passing from these painful details, we may observe that, as adversity did not break the Doctor's spirit, so neither did prosperity enervate it. The following record, which occurs early in the diary, reveals the secret of his safety:—"Oct. 14, 1837.—Was ruminating on the leadings of Providence, and was led to ask myself, as I have often done before, 'Why did the Lord bring me into the prominence and apparent elevation of my present situation?' I feel assured it was not that I might find a resting-place, for greater necessity is laid upon me thereby to labour and toil, and to fulfil my days as an hireling. Besides, labour and care have now become comparatively easy, and at the lowest of times the toil is lightened by the persuasion that I am serving my generation according to the will of God. What, then, could be the purpose of the Lord in this, but that the purity and vigour of

faith might become more conspicuous for a little season, and then that I be gathered to my fathers, and enter the rest prepared for the people of God?" In other words, the Lord had lit his candle, and had put it upon a candlestick: he conceived that the purpose was that it should give light to all in the house, and he resolved that, in the wider sphere thus opened, he would let his light shine. How many whose last days have been darkened would, like Dr. Birchenall, have been blessed in their latter end as in their beginning, if, when riches were multiplied, they had remembered Him in whose hand our life is, and whose are all our ways!

It will help us to estimate the extent and pressure of the labours in the midst of which he carried on what he still regarded as the main business of life, if we quote a paragraph or two, exhibiting the amount of work that was often crowded into twenty-four hours. On the 9th of August 1835, for instance, he attended his early morning class, and probably the seven o'clock prayer-meeting which preceded it, according to invariable custom; spent the forenoon in professional visits; met his afternoon class at two and the band-meeting at three; after this he set out for Rainow, distant three or four miles, along a road of as steep gradients as any engineer ever planned; "returned in much weariness, intending to retire to rest as soon as practicable, but was called away into a distant part of the country, and detained all night." One would have thought that on this occasion, at least, the customary spiritual ministrations might have been dispensed with, especially as he was among Christian people. But no: the opportunity was too good to be lost. "J. S. is a man of

God, emphatically such, and his elder sister is a woman of extraordinary faith and fervour of spirit." And so the record runs: "Had a blessed season in prayer before I came away." A few days later we read: "Called into the country at one this morning, and much engaged subsequently till late in the evening, but in sweet and heavenly serenity of mind throughout."

Many such entries as these might be quoted, but we will content ourselves with one or two more. "Sept. 20, 1841.—Called up at half-past one, and detained until sunrise. This is the third alternate night that I have spent professionally, and the exhaustion occasioned thereby and by the services of last evening" (he had closed his busy Sabbath by preaching at Langley) "has been very oppressive." A few days later: "My physical and mental energies have been deeply prostrated all the week until to-day, when I found some returning elasticity: walked fifteen or sixteen miles with but little weariness, partly in the evening, *imminente lunâ*." Many a man would take a walk of fifteen or sixteen miles, and perhaps transact business by the way, without thinking he had accomplished an extraordinary feat. But how many would be likely to wind up the day in such a manner as this, "Got to the prayer-meeting, and was edified, though the attendance was small"? If we dip a little deeper into the diary, we shall find the same course of things at a later period than is now occupying us. On the 1st of January 1848, he "returned at half-past one from an engagement; was called up again at four to a protracted and difficult case, which did not terminate till noon; at which hour I had upwards of

forty cases to visit in every extreme of the town and neighbourhood. Closed at eleven, as I supposed; but was then summoned to a distant part of the town, which completed the avocations of the day." Completed, that is to say, the temporal avocations. But there remained a duty that he could not forego, and so it follows: "At family prayer afterwards this scripture occurred in White's *Diatessaron*, 'But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.'" A word in season this to a man wearied with forty-eight hours of almost continuous toil. The following day was the Sabbath, and was spent in the usual manner, concluding with a country appointment. The number of patients daily visited ranged from forty to sixty for very many years.

It is plain that nothing could have sustained the spiritual life in the midst of so many distractions but a steadfast singleness of aim, what Sir T. F. Buxton speaks of as essential to success in life generally, "a purpose once fixed, and then death or victory." The purpose in this case was the very highest. But its intrinsic nobleness and imperative obligation cannot of themselves secure constancy in the pursuit. The purpose must be renewed again and again in the strength of grace, and its freshness maintained by inward devotion and outward activity. This Dr. Birchenall well knew, and as he never ceased to strive, so he never ceased to grow in grace. If detained by engagements from the house of God, he mourned his loss, and strove to make up for it by increased attention to private devotions, retiring to his sylvan oratory or pausing by the roadside to pour out his soul before God. If even this was precluded, he

strove by watchfulness to guard the issues of his heart, until through some break in the round of his secular duties he could again give himself to prayer. This temper of mind comes out into fine relief in the following extract:—"I am sometimes ready to conclude that it is morally impossible to grow very sensibly in grace, or to be strong in the Lord, when all around is dreary and barren. I was rebuked this morning, under reasonings of this kind, by 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow up as the cedar of Lebanon.' Here, thought I, is verdure and luxuriance in the arid wastes of the desert, and vegetable life in its most enduring and majestic forms in the region of tempests and perpetual snows."

After all, taking one day with another, what to him seemed a dearth of the means of grace would to many seem a plethora. The early Sunday services, the prayer-meeting from 7 to 8, and the class from 8 to 9, in his enforced absence from the forenoon preaching, were especially prized. They gave a tone to the Sabbath, and the Sabbath gave a tone to the week. It is of little use to quarrel with the habits of society, otherwise it would be easy, from the records before us, to administer a reproof similar to that dealt out by Benjamin Franklin to the inhabitants of Paris when he was ambassador there. As readers of his life will remember, the sturdy American gravely informs the somnolent citizens that, by the simple act of unclosing the shutters, he had discovered that at midsummer it was broad daylight in Paris many hours before Paris was awake. We will quote our record at all events, as serving to show what sort of scene sometimes greets the eyes of the early riser, even in the heart of a

manufacturing town, or on the heights above it, at least on that day of the week on which tall chimneys do not belch forth their volumes of smoke:—

“1841. *Sept.* 12.—The Sabbath dawned (after so much of cloudy and tempestuous weather) in the brightest radiancy. It seemed, as I went out a little after six, as if the landscape had been greeted for the first time with the purest lustre of heaven’s own light, and a fairy orient breeze swept adown the hills into the lengthened plains, as if to reanimate spirits of ethereal mould. The lightsome breath of praise led the way at the early services, for the good hand of God was clearly seen in making the outgoings of the morning to rejoice, and right hallowing was the exercise to our spirits.”

While so high a value was set on the social means, the preaching services had their due place in his esteem and affection, whether on the week-day or the Sabbath. Here as elsewhere, however, spiritual profit was his aim. Not that he could not relish the beauties of an artistic discourse, or criticise the faults of a rambling one. But his appetite was keen enough to assimilate the plainest food, and he could not find fault with the Lord’s messenger, who broke to him the bread of life. The criticism held in abeyance at the sanctuary might afterwards assert its office; but even then it would be in the privacy of the closet, not in the social circle. Some specimens of such criticism may here be given: “Heard Mr. — in the evening from Isa. xl. 8. There was much excellency in the theological department of the discourse, but the mind had been so preoccupied with the skill of the artist, that it is to be feared the effect would be lost for the

most part." Again: "The spirit of intercession in the opening of the evening service, but in the early part of the sermon my mind disturbed by the very artificial style of the preacher. Was enabled, by Divine grace, to take captive my thoughts and imaginings on the subject, and was then prepared to relish the various excellences of the discourse, and to feel the mighty application with which it closed." "Mr. S. in the evening from 2 Cor. iii. 18. A fine ideal exposition of the passage, developing a grand moral purpose." "Mr. L. from Tunstall at the old chapel in the evening, from 'An highway shall be there.' Style plain, clear, forcible, fervid: a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, possessed too of considerable naturally dramatic powers. The word was accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit, and the cloud of glory filled the house." "The anticipations of the people were awake to Mr. Rattenbury's visit on the Brunswick anniversary, and it seemed as if a cloud had spread itself over our horizon, charged with fertilizing influences." "Heard Mr. B. at the new chapel; clear, convincing, practical, but savouring more of the eloquent orator than of the ambassador for Christ." "Mr. C. delivered a powerful and awakening sermon from 'What shall it profit a man,' etc. During the former half of the service I seemed to be rather in the dissipated atmosphere of the world than in the house of God, which was probably occasioned by the number of persons who attend on Mr. C.'s ministry, led by curiosity, or by a relish for the dramatic powers of the preacher, more than for the force and solemnity of his message. There was an affecting illustration of the word of the Lord unto

Zerubbabel, 'Not by might nor by power,' etc., in the very slender attendance which marked the subsequent prayer-meeting." Wise words these, and worthy of being pondered, by preachers and hearers alike. It has been said, on good authority, that there existed at one time among the Doctor's papers a second gallery of portraits, containing a pen and ink sketch of every preacher that had in his day occupied the Macclesfield pulpits. If so, it is quite certain that it was never intended for the gaze of the public, and it is probable that it was long ago committed to the flames, the artist himself being the incendiary. But if he sometimes criticised their performances, he loved the men, both for their own and for their work's sake.

As in the public, so in the more private means of grace, profit was the first and last consideration—profit, not in the narrow sense of mere excitation of feeling, but in the more comprehensive sense of a quickening influence diffused through all the soul, giving light to the intellect, sensibility to the conscience, and energy to the will. Nothing could satisfy the Doctor's mind which fell short of this. The class-meeting in his hands, therefore, was neither an arid waste of formality nor a forcing-house of unnatural vegetation, but a trim and well-stocked garden, whence every noxious plant was weeded, and where every wild growth was diligently pruned. It did not suffice him to inquire minutely into every member's state, and out of the treasury of a cultivated mind to furnish counsel, rebuke, or comfort, according to the occasion: he must communicate, as opportunity offered, systematic and continuous instruction. Hence

his monthly lectures on the epistles to the seven churches, or other searchingly practical portions of Scripture: hence also his occasional exposition of the rules of the society. Hence such a record as this: "Read at class John Wesley's sermon 'On the Cure of Evil-Speaking.'" Though some were offended at his plain dealing, the majority were edified. Nor can there be a more striking proof of the harmony between his private character and his official relationships than the fact that the following members of his family or household met in one or other of his four classes,—most of them at the same time,—viz. his wife, his mother, one of his brothers, his youngest sister, his maternal aunt and her daughter, his aunt on the father's side, a young woman who lived in the house in the capacity of sempstress, his first groom, his fourth groom, his first senior maid, and his first, second, and third junior maids.

It is natural to expect that many would catch the spirit of such a leader, and emulate his zeal and devotedness to God. To enumerate these would be impossible. Many of the leading members and office-bearers of the Macclesfield societies of the present day were at one time or another under his care. Many more have left the town, and are elsewhere adorning the doctrine of the Gospel which they learnt from his lips. Of these some entered the ranks of the ministry, such as the late Revs. J. D. Brocklehurst, E. Collier, and John Weatherill, the Revs. G. Follows, G. Latham, and J. Crump. Many more have fallen asleep. Of these last there are two, both females in comparatively humble life, of whom the Doctor has inserted sketches in his diary, which we will here

subjoin. They do honour alike to the subjects of them, and to him who watched over their souls:—

“Grace Harrison, who was a member of my class (of Irish and Roman Catholic parentage), was a woman of strong common sense, of sober judgment, and of deep and earnest piety. Her communion with God was the most intimate of any woman I have ever known. Her nights, as well as her days, were often occupied in prayer and praise and intercession; and in this latter exercise, for the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom especially, she was accustomed to call upon God with strong crying and tears. She was attentive to the duties of her household; very diligent in the means of grace, in visiting the sick, and in offices of kindness and self-sacrifice among her ungodly neighbours and others, from many of whom she suffered reproach and persecution. To this was added, by a permissive Providence, a long course of domestic trial and privation; but in the deepest waters she uniformly raised her head, and glorified God in the fires. I have seen her, under every form of trial and conflict, invariably in patience and meekness and long-suffering possess her soul; and when ruffled by sudden provocation, instantly lift up her eyes to heaven, and implore mercy on the offender. Her countenance, ordinarily serenely composed, was oftentimes lit up with joyous emotion; and it was never marred by sorrow and anguish of soul, except when travailing in birth on behalf of the world lying in the wicked one, or when the interests of Christ’s kingdom were compromised.

“Esther Pyatt was the finest specimen of feminine moral excellence and piety of all the young women who were converted to God during the revival of 1828–29. In stature inclining to tall, of neat and elegant figure, of easy and, for her position, of rather graceful carriage, of modestly retiring habits, of quick perception in matters affecting the Christian character especially,

there was a quiet charm in her own which made her an object of interest with all who knew her. Her physical and, for the most part, psychical peculiarities appear to have been transmitted from the paternal line; her father being tall and slender, with a frame and countenance rather feminine than manly. He brought his wife, whose maiden name was Baxter, from Kidderminster. She was a descendant, in the paternal branch, of a near relative of that holy man of God, Richard Baxter. She had a physical frame the reverse of that of her husband, of fully average height, bony, and robust. Her countenance was strikingly in keeping with the effigies of her sainted ancestor, its broad, hard lines of expression, its gravity, its steadfast, discriminating look, its inflexible purpose, with full, dark, hazel-coloured eyes, and a complexion in keeping with them, dusky and slightly bronzed. She had a quick perception, a mind indicative of sterling common sense, of genuine probity and steadiness of purpose, prior to her conversion; and as she met in one of my classes afterwards, I had an opportunity of gauging her entire Christian character. It was my happiness to see the three brought into the way of salvation, and to close their eyes as they fell asleep in Jesus, the father seeking and obtaining mercy in his last affliction."

In May 1845, Esther Pyatt passed away in the full triumph of faith. Dr. Birchenall preached her funeral sermon at Brunswick Chapel to a large congregation, taking as his text Rev. xiv. 4, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," etc.

With two testimonies of religious experience, contrasted but not opposed, we will close this chapter.

"1843. *July 2.*—Conducted the annual love-feast at Bosley Brooks in the afternoon. It was a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Observed, with reference to my own experience, 'When I first

apprehended Christ as my sanctification, I was borne as on eagle's wings for several successive years; the means of grace were wells of salvation to my spirit, and my public exercises in the Church of Christ were undertaken with promptitude and delight. The pressure of worldly care, however, increasing infirmities, and a great increase of spiritual responsibility in the enlargement of my classes, from time to time, together with deep convictions of practical unfaithfulness, have, for several years past, brought me into the dust; so that my engagements are generally now undertaken under much perplexity and misgiving; and though I have often great freedom in pleading with God and in pleading with men, I am a comparative stranger, though not to peace, yet to joy in the Holy Ghost.'

"1845. Aug. 31.—Glory be to God! I am growing in grace; am looking evermore to Jesus, to His fidelity, His sufficiency, His immutability; to the anchor of my hope; to the sure word of prophecy; to the redeeming purpose, in the presence of the Comforter, His guidance, His hallowing testimony, His indwelling; to the intrinsic importance and the paramount obligation of the duties of the Christian life, the daily cross, the witness for Christ, the practical imitation of the Redeemer *minimis et majoribus*. Oh, what freedom! what boldness! what joy in the Holy Ghost! The trials of life sweep over my head, and I hasten to be swallowed up of everlasting life."

CHAPTER XII.

THE MOUNT OF GLORY AND THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION —REFLECTIONS.

1848—1853.

BETWEEN the date of our last extract and that at the head of this chapter, the entries in Dr. Birchenall's diary are few. The year 1848, so memorable for its great political events, had for him a peculiar personal interest, arising from the complexion which his religious experiences at that time assumed, —experiences that left an indelible mark upon his memory, and indeed upon his whole character. The impression of his mortality, always present to his mind, now took the form of an abiding anticipation of future blessedness, as something very near and very real, and likely to be consummated within a definite interval of time. It is true that the event did not justify the expectation—his sun was not to go down at noon—and in this he was, to speak plainly, disappointed. But the end of the dispensation, for so we must term it, was nevertheless answered. From this time forward his face was steadfastly set toward the New Jerusalem; its golden gates were always within view; and so joyfully did he contemplate its glories, that not only the fear of death but even the

love of life seemed almost taken away, and he could say without any exaggeration, "I long to be dissolved." Of course this hope of glory was not always equally bright, but it was always burning within his breast; and, so far from unfitting him for ordinary duties, it rather called forth in the discharge of them the motives and the resources of an extraordinary zeal.

It is not necessary to dwell at length on these peculiar experiences, though it would be easy to do so, for there are more than fifty allusions to the subject during the year. One or two extracts may be given. On the 31st December 1847, he writes: "My first thoughts on awaking were, 'How near must be the end of life, seeing that I shall soon have completed my forty-eighth year!'"—"Jan. 1, 1848.—My first impression this morning as I bowed my knee on my return (at half-past one) from a professional engagement, was, 'This year thou shalt die.'" That the impression occasioned no disquietude is manifest from the following:—"Jan. 2.—Have entered on a new year in peace and in spirituality, though in breathless and wearisome attention, day by day, to my customary avocations. Asked myself this question to-day, 'If this were to be the last year of my life, how should I live?' My answer was, 'As I am living at present:' for I know not under existing circumstances that I could live otherwise; and I know not of anything that I require but the supply of the spirit of Jesus. 'This, only this, will I require, and freely give up all the rest.'"

The presumption of an early dissolution was an exceedingly natural one to a man in his circumstances. The extent of his labours has been already adverted to

(p. 158), and that they were telling upon his physical energies is evidenced by many records of temporary enfeeblement and exhaustion. The bronchial organs were seriously impaired, and frequently occasioned complete prostration for days and weeks together. As it rolled on, the year was continually bringing forth new omens of the impending change, such as texts of Scripture applied to the mind either in private reading or in public ministrations, passages of various authors lighted on, or verses of hymns sung, all tending to deepen the impression that heaven was at the very doors. Happily for others, if not for himself, the omens were falsified by the issue, and he lived to serve God in His lower temple for another generation, still, like Simeon and Anna, "waiting for the Consolation of Israel," and speaking of His coming "unto all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

A passage or two will show how blessed was the influence resting on the Doctor's mind during the year :

"1848. *Oct.* 1.—A very memorable love-feast at the old chapel. I sat on the mount of glory. There were many valiant men in Israel present,—a few of them strangers,—and many a noble testimony was borne for the Lord our Righteousness and Sanctification. It was a solemn season to me on all hands, for I took it to be the last occasion of the kind I should ever enjoy upon earth.

"*Nov.* 26.—With desire have I desired to see this day—the last, as I presume, in the monthly series of my appointments at the morning prayer-meeting [*i.e.* as conductor of the service]. I feared that I might not be able to fulfil it, as I went to bed under much indisposition; but I rose at five, almost free from feverishness. We had a hallowing influence: many of my old

friends and companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus were present. At class afterwards I was favoured beyond my ordinary exercises, speaking to the members, in succession, as it were from the top of Pisgah. In my professional engagements I found it good to visit Christ in His afflicted members, and to bear my testimony in public places against the profanation of the Sabbath."

Had the Doctor's desire been granted, and his career terminated at this time, a suitable text for his funeral sermon might have been found in Isa. lvii. 1, "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come," or "gathered from the evil." A thick cloud was already lowering, not only upon this part of the Lord's vineyard, but upon all the borders of Methodism. When it broke it was not in gentle showers, nor even in soft snowflakes, but rather in hailstones and coals of fire. Into the causes of this visitation it is not our business to inquire, though they are not far to seek. There were in Methodism certain relationships that from the beginning had not been precisely defined. They needed, and would in all probability soon have received, patient investigation and peaceful settlement, in virtue of the law of growth and expansion which seems to be inwrought into the texture of every living thing. But unscrupulous men, working in the dark, stirred up unworthy passions, and produced by their writings general suspicion and alarm. Strong measures were adopted to put down the evil—measures that in another state of the public mind would have been esteemed righteous and necessary, measures such as had been acted on a hundred times before. In the actual condition of things these measures were misunderstood, and, being skilfully misrepresented to

the public mind, served only to fan the rising flame. Soon the whole Methodist Connexion was in a blaze, and scenes were enacted over which we may well draw a veil.

How did the subject of this biography comport himself at this crisis? As we have already intimated, he was a man of liberal sentiments. Though anxious mainly for the spiritual interests of the churches, or, as we ought rather perhaps to say, *because* he was thus anxious, he was not without well-defined views of ecclesiastical polity. He desired to see everything in Methodism placed on the broadest basis compatible with internal unity and order. He valued, for instance, the recent changes in her economy, not for their own sake, but as likely, by widening the area of responsibility, to secure greater confidence in the administration, and so to leave the minds of men more free to pursue the ends for which the organization exists. But the movement of 1849 never had his sympathies. The experience of 1835 had taught him the value of unity; and the deepened religious life of the interval, together with the sobering influence of a ripened judgment, confirmed his early convictions. He saw that neither progress nor stability could result from divisive proceedings, which spurned the bonds of truth and charity, and which began by subordinating the interests of the Church of God to those of a party, and ended by sacrificing both to the gratification of personal spleen. His influence, therefore, was on the side of order, and well was it for the Macclesfield societies that they had such a man in their midst. To the calumnies of fiery demagogues he lent no ear: he prayed God that the disturbers of

the public peace might not be permitted to visit the neighbourhood, and he strove in every way to preserve the imperilled unity of the churches. His efforts, joined with those of his brethren, so far succeeded that there was no open rupture; and the scenes of violence enacted elsewhere did not disgrace his native town. But the canker of jealousy disintegrated to some extent the body of Christ, and the sad consequences were for some years visible in diminished numbers, declining funds, and, what is worse, decaying piety.

“1850. *June 7.*—Mr. Dobson, a clergyman who is on the deputation of the London committee for the Evangelical Alliance, met our committee this afternoon. All the clergy of the neighbourhood, who are members, were present; as they were also at the prayer-meeting in the evening, at the Association schoolroom. On this occasion Mr. D. delivered an address, clear in evangelical sentiment, even as a morning without clouds, and glowing with Christian interest and sympathy, which impressed every heart. It was to my own soul a very sacred occasion. I had been tempted, from the general disposition just now manifested by all the other divisions of the Wesleyan body, and by the Dissenters generally, to take advantage of the present agitation in our own body, even while nominally connected in many instances with the Evangelical Alliance, to absent myself from those places, at our monthly meetings, which all such ministers and friends represent. I felt, however, that by so doing I should be practically compromising the great principle of Christian love, in some of those finer manifestations so admirably delineated by an apostle in 1 Cor. xiii., and so beautifully illustrated and exemplified in the character of our common Lord.

“*Aug. 25.*—Mr. S. died this morning. How low and

unworthy must all merely earthly pursuits now appear to him! But 'Wisdom giveth life.'

"I was greatly affected, when I got home at noon, by some disclosures made to Mrs. B. by a member of society, with reference to the general disaffection of our people. I retired and wept before the Lord, for my heart was broken when I considered that the popular contempt of God and His cause should thus be forwarded by His professed friends. At the Sacrament in the evening I sat at the feet of Jesus in sadness, though in hallowed composure of spirit.

"*Sept. 30.*—Awoke under the influence of yesterday, my mind hallowed and stayed on God. It was easy and natural to say, 'Thee will I love, my strength, my tower,' 'Thee will I love, my joy, my crown.' Called on Bro. — to entreat him not to make void his stewardship among us. His father, Mr. Tomlinson, Mr. Brocklehurst, and Mr. Marsden were present. Alas! many of the brethren 'have dealt deceitfully,' and our friend is somewhat committed to the line of conduct they have marked out for themselves.

"I cannot bring myself to believe, from the threatening position they assumed on Wednesday evening, that they will succeed in organizing an agitation in the town. I had an assurance on the 22nd, when the exercises of the day closed, that no sower of discord would be allowed to come hither. I prayed, after much fruitless argument, and left the brethren, weeping over my young friend as I took my leave.

"*Nov. 5.*—The day on which the Lord brought me up out of the horrible pit. When I had entered upon its duties, I soon found myself in a 'weary world.' I often find it so, chiefly as the servant of others. The angels have no experience of this kind, though they also minister in our fallen world; but then they do not inhabit bodies of clay.

"Hallowed composure, however, was the element in which I moved; for the Lord had spoken at an early

hour, and though I had a deep inward consciousness of personal unworthiness and destitution, it was sanctified and sustained by a child-like dependence, a 'divine simplicity,' harmonizing well with my experiences when I was born of God.

"At class I was opposed and harassed by the power of the adversary. A brother who has been identifying himself of late with those who say, 'Report, and we will report it again,' came in for the first time during many months, and it seemed as if a legion of adverse spirits at once took possession of the meeting. Had a great blessing at Bro. H.'s afterwards, on the occasion of Bro. Wadsworth's spiritual anniversary.

"*Nov. 7.*—I find abundant room in my daily walks and avocations for the exercise of charity, and meekness, and gentleness, and mercy, and long-suffering, and patience, and confidence toward God. The social elements, both in the world and in the Church, are so disturbed, that the kingdom within is shaken to its foundation, and the withering curse pronounced against the man who maketh flesh his arm appears to be just at the door. I make the Lord my refuge, and find Him daily a very present help."

It is plain from the last extracts, that although the glory still lingered on his brow, the Doctor had now come down from the mount. As in every other afflictive dispensation, so in this, Dr. Birchenall sought to know the end of the Lord, as it respected his own soul's interests. He was jealous over himself with a godly jealousy, and searched his heart to see whether he could detect there any root of bitterness which, springing up, might trouble and defile the Church of God. Not that he could reproach himself with neglect of duty, or with complicity in the unfaithfulness which seemed to be bringing down

God's judgments upon His people. To have done so would have been to impeach the grace of God itself, which had been so diligently sought and plentifully bestowed; nay, it would have been to discredit the faithfulness of Him to whom he continually looked to keep him from falling. He could truly say to his people, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Nevertheless, he viewed this painful dispensation as a call to holy mourning and deeper looking into the perfect law. Hence such records as the following: "I have been deeply affected of late with the state of most professors of religion, having, I fear, little but the form of godliness, and am very jealous lest I should myself become the occasion of spiritual supineness and spiritual death to others." This twofold work of humiliation, first on behalf of others, and then on their own behalf, is at all times a profitable exercise for those who desire to keep their hearts right in the sight of God and their feet steadfast in His covenant. By blending the two, sorrow for the evil that is in the world is preserved from the taint of pride and censoriousness. In the extracts that follow we see this process of self-abasement carried out very thoroughly, and as if with the set purpose of turning the mischiefs of sin into the occasion for new triumphs of righteousness:—

"1850. *Sept.* 22.—In prayer found the Lord graciously near, as I endeavoured to bow before Him in lowliest reverence. When I got to the vestry, I perceived that I had not thus waited in vain; a deep and abiding sense of my vileness and of my faithlessness had been awakened, with sorrow and contrition of heart. My morning duties were quickly despatched, and I hastened

to shut myself up, for purposes of prayer and intercession. The intervals I employed in reading Baxter's *Conversing with God in Solitude*.

“In the conscious presence of the Lord my Righteousness, I seemed to have before me an open door of experience; and it would have been easy to have turned to joy in the Holy One of Israel, but I was rather inclined, by the temper of my own mind, and somewhat moved thereto by the Spirit of grace, to yield to holy mourning in the Divine presence. At class there was much of sacred influence, ‘The spirit of convincing speech,’ ‘The spirit of refining fire,’ but with less of comfort to my own spirit than such occasions usually furnish, as I had to maintain a constant effort to crane up myself, so to speak, in order that I might, both in the form of doctrine, and in fervour and earnestness of manner, become the mouth of the Lord to the people. I found it difficult, when the meeting was over, to return to my former exercises; though I felt it to be highly expedient that I should continue to ‘grieve for the affliction of Joseph,’ and to mourn over the world lying in the wicked one.

“‘The burden of the Lord’ appeared to be laid down for the time; and it was not until I realized, by a distinct apprehension, the person and preciousness of Jesus in His own house (though I had made unceasing efforts for this purpose), that I could again get into the dust.

“1851. *June 24.*—Began the day in God's house: it was under deep searching of heart because of others; but it was not long before I was driven home by the rebuke of a fiery law. I was deeply abashed, and instantly put on sackcloth. I went out to my ordinary engagements, drinking the wine of astonishment. I was filled with confusion; for I had been taken from the evils around to a scene of corruption within, so odious and offensive that I could scarcely regard myself as any better than a painted sepulchre. I prayed with my

patients in subdued accents; for the spiritual strife of the last few days had left me but little physical energy; and a sight of myself had deprived me of all confidence toward God, except the reverential awe of a disobedient child. I retired in the afternoon to mourn over abounding iniquity."

Throughout this time of rebuke there were not wanting seasons of gracious visitation, both upon the Doctor himself and the people generally. If at one time his heart sinks within him as he crosses the threshold of the chapel, "because of the desolation which appeared," at others he is able to speak of "a moving among the people," of "an extraordinary influence at the prayer-meeting," of "the love-feast being well attended," and of "a persuasion that we shall again see the kingdom of God come in power." So also he speaks of "strong confidence, Divine fervour, liberty into the Holiest, tenderness of spirit, pure love to God, and the anointing seal of the Holy One," as being "conjoined with much sorrow of heart in the experiences of the day."

The circuit was manned throughout this period by men eminent for piety, wisdom, and pulpit power. Such names as Corbett Cooke, Nehemiah Curnock, W. R. Rogers, and John Rigg, are a sufficient testimony of that. On the appointment of Alexander Bell for a second time, in the year 1850, great hopes were entertained of a speedy and general revival of the work of God. But these hopes, so far as they rested on a merely human arrangement, were quickly cut off. Mr. Bell had not laboured many months in the circuit before he was smitten by mortal disease, and taken away in the midst of his years and his usefulness.

Dr. Birchenall was present at the closing scene, and "when the mortal affliction was past, in the presence of the family, gave glory to God that the warfare of His servant was ended, and implored His blessing on the survivors." One of his last sayings deserves to be recorded. When asked by Dr. Birchenall one morning how he felt, he replied, "Well, my appetite fails, my strength fails, my memory fails; but, glory be to God! my faith does not fail."

There was also a young man stationed in the town about this time whose labours were greatly owned of God, the Rev. Joseph Mood. To him, as to all young ministers, Dr. Birchenall was especially drawn, and there are frequent references to his faithful service. Still, it is manifest that the work of God was being carried on under great disadvantage, and the Doctor's mind was alive to the fact. The following paragraph illustrates the intense earnestness with which he pleaded before God on behalf of his stricken flock as well as on his own behalf:—

"1850. *Dec.* 8.—This week has been oppressive and dull, for I have had much physical weakness; but little energy in prayer; and only a small degree of quickening influence. I feel assured, too, that the state of mind is greatly aggravated, at all times, by the spiritual supineness and torpor of many in my own classes; and that my ordinary experiences take their complexion, in some sort, from the state of those for whose best interests I am called to watch. I dealt with all possible plainness with these to-day; indeed, I was constrained so to do by the pressure of distress under which I groaned. There was a mighty adverse struggle when I opened the afternoon meeting, and in the presence of the people I made my complaints unto God. I pleaded with Him

of righteousness, on the ground of my sincerity ; of faithfulness and truth, on the part of a covenant-keeping God ; of mercy, on the ground of growing infirmities, and numerous other duties and cares intervening from time to time, to indispose and disqualify me for prompt and efficient attention to so sacred a matter as the care of immortal souls. I pleaded the insurmountable difficulties which the unfaithfulness of others was continually interposing against the discharge of my stewardship ; how that the grand adversary was evermore frustrating the Divine glory, and pouring contempt upon the right ways of the Lord, by the practical inconsistency of His professed followers. I spread before Him a broken heart : with lowly reverence I complained of the experience of many weeks, of the frequent hidings of His countenance, so that the sorrows of my heart had been thereby enlarged ; of my official dulness and ineffectiveness ; how that He had hedged up my way, and set darkness in my paths, so that when I would go forward, He was not there, or backward, I could not perceive Him ; how often I had been troubled in His presence ; and though to be confounded in the face of His own people was a light thing in itself, it was most grievous and intolerable when I had reason to believe or to fear, ‘an enemy hath done this.’ I entreated the Lord to arise and plead His own cause ; for the sake of the people, for the honour of His great name, and if it seemed good in His sight, for my own sake also. I was in an agony of distress ; and I besought the Lord to vindicate His own righteousness, or to blot me out of His book, for I was just at the point to die, because of the profanation of the grace and truth involved in the glory of the mystery of the redemption ; The deepest solemnity pervaded the meeting afterwards the spirit of tenderness governed my addresses to the members respectively ; and we closed with earnest and prayerful resolves to live nearer to God.”

Before bringing this chapter to a close, we cannot but call attention to some of the many striking passages which illustrate the various aspects of the Divine life, and which will furnish food for meditation to all who desire, amid the temptations and trials of the world, to set their hearts on the true riches :—

“1850. *Oct.* 15.—I think there has been, in the experience of to-day, more of the serenity of self-complacency than of that which is the direct work of the Holy Spirit.

“*Oct.* 24.—All still within, but a stillness that would soon end in death, if the breath of life were not to pass over it. Endeavoured to stir up my heart to Divine things.

“1851. *March* 21.—The sentence of death which had been in the outward man through the former part of the week, has to-day been transferred to the inner, by rebukes and offences, which have wonderfully helped forward the main business of the day, self-humiliation. I endeavoured to sink into a state of composure, and meekness, and charity; and God, who quickeneth the dead, made the trials the means of my spiritual reanimation.

“*April* 17.—I think a rill from the fountain of life flowed through the desert land, for in prayer the friends who engaged seemed to have a vital connexion with the throne, and with Him who sitteth thereupon.

“*May* 20.—I went out to a full morning's engagements, and had not made my usual Friday arrangements for visiting the members of my classes, and in the haste and pressure of other duties I felt but little inclined to step aside for this purpose: however, I got into a part of the town in the course of the morning where the cross was lying, and took it up in the fear of God, which tended to keep me from sinking.

“*July* 29.—I was looking over the ways of Provi-

dence in my history, this morning, and the end of the Lord in afflictions. I am well aware that these are among our choicest mercies, as they are designed to make us free from all below. Nevertheless, I frequently find an indisposition to 'die daily.' I have often experienced the benefit of the severest trials, in bringing me nearer to God; but though I ever earnestly desire a full Divine conformity to all my Saviour's blessed will, I cannot embrace the trial when I see it from afar. From this I discover that the end is my business, and the providential means the Lord's; and that it is our wisdom not to embarrass the exercises of our faith by fears with reference to our constancy as to the future, but to rest in the Divine sufficiency, and in the gracious promise, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'

"I am often tried by the indiscretions of my patients (after serious and protracted afflictions, which have well-nigh exhausted all my patience as well as all my expedients), and the breaking up again of recruiting health and vigour consequent thereupon. I had a case of this kind this morning, but did not think it wise to take exception; and it was well I did not, for the Lord showed me, when I went out, that it was but a faint picture of my own inadvertencies and errors in a spiritual point of view."

Dr. Birchenall was not the only man who had reason to write as under in those days of Connexional strife:—

"31.—The musings of the day (some of them) were in the following channel:—That the Divine purposes in the various exercises of this life may be accomplished, it is sometimes necessary that a fair reputation should be sullied by ruthless hands; nay, that, in some cases, the very hand which has dealt liberally of the honour which cometh from man, should (if not intentionally,

unwittingly) be employed in undermining a character which the labour and circumspection of many years have been the means, under the Divine blessing, of securing. To die with Christ, however, is, I know, the direct way to live with Him; and a violent death, I am aware, is a quicker process for accomplishing the ends of mortality than the ordinary course of disease. The ways of Providence, at first sight, often constrain me silently to exclaim, 'Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself!' Under motions of this kind to-day, the Lord came to my relief by this scripture, 'I will guide thee with mine eye;' from which I gathered that the mode of guidance for the Lord's people is so peculiar and intimate, that it can only be recognised by those who are in familiar intercourse with Him."

At the beginning of this chapter we found the Doctor on the mountain-top, and have seen in the course of it how he had to come down into the valley of humiliation. The following passage seems to connect the two classes of experiences. It was written shortly after a brief sojourn in North Wales: perhaps its rugged defiles may have suggested the imagery:—

"1850. *Sept.* 22.—A blessed measure of the influence of yesterday remains, when I was with the faithful in the holy mount, though I have had to come down again into the plain of Jordan. I found it necessary to descend by a different path from that by which I went up, inasmuch as the attempt to do so by the same path induced more or less giddiness: indeed, I have generally found that to avoid slipping in my descent from certain elevations, my eye must be turned for the time from visions of brightness to the insecurity which attends the path of the believer, especially in all his transitionary movements, and to the apostolic injunction, 'Be not high-minded, but fear.'"

With one more quotation from the spiritual itinerary we will quit this desolate region :—

“1853. *June 27.*—Many months have elapsed since I last noted my experience in the things of God, months of sore exercise, officially and socially; for there has been dissension and discord in the societies, with its sad results, spiritual languor and discouragement among the sincere, and spiritual death among the unwatchful and the froward. My classes have been seriously disturbed by these causes and influences; and I have groaned under the pressure of a dense and chilling atmosphere. I trust the sky is now brightening, and that I shall yet behold better days.

“I have had many, many blessings from the throne during the interval; such as have led me again and again to bear my testimony to the sufficiency of Divine grace, for these as well as other emergencies.”

CHAPTER XIII.

TESTIMONIES—SKETCH OF OPINIONS.

1854—1860.

THE records of the diary from this time onward are less full than those of earlier years, owing to the pressure of multiplied duties and cares, together with some diminution, as time rolled on, of bodily vigour. As my own recollections of Dr. Birchenall do not begin till 1860, the period marked at the head of this chapter would be almost a blank but that I am able to fall back on the testimonies of some excellent ministers, who knew him before or during the time referred to. Others might have been appealed to, and would, no doubt, gladly have furnished similar accounts; but considerations of space have compelled me to limit the number. Mr. Ball travelled in the Macclesfield circuit from 1855 to 1858. Mr. Follows was a member of the Sunday morning class at an earlier period still. Mr. Crump met with the Doctor from 1859 to 1864. The last two gentlemen I asked to describe more particularly the character of Dr. Birchenall's leadership.

The Rev. G. Follows writes:—

“It is pleasant to go back in thought to call up the presence of Dr. Birchenall in the class-room where I

first and best knew him. Immediately following the Sunday morning prayer-meeting, punctual to the minute, and as often without book as with it, a well-chosen hymn, most devoutly given out, with a quickness of utterance, sharp and clear, which never diminished, but rather intensified, its reverent and spiritual sentiment, and then a brief but most fervent prayer, opened a meeting where were learnt some of the choicest lessons of our spiritual life. Almost as by spiritual intuition Dr. B. seemed to discern the spiritual condition of his members; a terse question, which went direct to the heart, brought out a testimony of joy or sorrow, of discouragement or hope, which was answered by a few well-chosen words, accompanied by such a nervous and spiritual force that 'correction, instruction in righteousness,' left thoughts and influences directly tending to build up and perfect the work of God in the soul. Composed as the class was of young men who read and thought, mental difficulties mingled with the spiritual testimony, but the force of the leader's spiritual life, and his knowledge of the 'deep things of God,' soon silenced the secret gainsayer of the heart; and, fresh as the morning bathed in summer dews, the soul went forth anxious for earnest service in the Master's vineyard. Across the long space of years I seem to hear those nervous tones of voice, that close packing of 'sought out' and 'acceptable words,' which carried with them illumination and strength, awakening strong desire to live as near to God as the speaker, whose known life emphasized their meaning; for in the countenance, speech, spirit, and bearing of Dr. B. there was everything to commend the exhortations so earnestly pressed upon the young men of his class.

"As a medical man of extensive practice, it might be thought that it was only in the class that the leader knew his members. But it was not so, for in his rounds of mercy for bodily healing the opportunity was taken to call at the home of the member, especially if absence

from class had voluntarily or involuntarily taken place. If the young men of his class went to other towns, they were still objects of his solicitude, and letters followed, freshening the friendship and encouraging the devotion. To use his own words in a letter to the writer of this sketch, 'They form an element in my secret devotional exercises.'"

The Rev. J. L. Ball writes :—

"In my recollections of Dr. Birchenall during my residence in Macclesfield, there is no incident which stands out from the usual even tenor of his godly life. I think that during that period (1855-58) his days, though active, were not eventful, nor marked by anything beyond the routine of his professional engagements and religious activities. His patient, untiring zeal, his gentleness of spirit, his single aim to do good, and the beautiful consistency of his character, on whatever occasion or in whatever circumstances it might be brought into view ; his good words and prayers at the bedside of his patients ; all these were distinctive of no one day above another, but of all the year round ; and all are blended together in my memory as forming a fine example of *uniform* piety. He went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men. His wise counsels, though never obtruded, were ready when needed, and were always valuable and welcome to a young minister. I never met his class at the quarterly visitation without feeling a desire to exchange places with him for the time, and to listen to the advices and remarks which would flow from so ripe an experience of the things of God. No one could be in his company without feeling himself to be in the presence of a man who loved and served Christ. He was a remarkable instance of power with men resulting from power with God. Though so modest and retiring in matters of Church government, his judgment when known would often go far to decide a question. The quiet pervading daily influence of his

saintly life told not only upon the Church, but upon the town. His name was a power on the side of Methodism and evangelical religion, and the purity of his character a rebuke which silenced opposers and gainsayers. None would dispute that Dr. Birchenall at least was a Christian indeed."

The Rev. J. Crump writes:—

"My observations of Dr. Birchenall were made when I was between sixteen and twenty-one years of age. He was one of the holiest men it has been my privilege to know.

"As a class-leader, his characteristic gift was that of keen spiritual discernment. Through the most confused or hackneyed relation of experience he would read the true state of the heart. This was manifest from the invariably appropriate and pointed character of the counsels, warnings, rebukes, encouragements, which he gave to each member. Sometimes by a sudden direct question he would instantly reveal to a brother the formal or lukewarm state into which he was unconsciously sinking, and send him to his closet with deep searchings of heart and fervent pleadings for quickening grace.

"With every phase of spiritual life he seemed perfectly familiar, and could always minister to spiritual necessities out of his vast resources of personal experience and Scripture knowledge. In the most incisive style he would rouse and warn the Laodicean in his ease and the Pharisee in his pride. He would tenderly sympathize with the suffering, clearly resolve the doubts and difficulties of the tempted, and stimulate all in the exercises of faith and prayer, and in the pursuit of holiness. By close acquaintance with the sacred tongues, and deep prayerful meditation in the Scriptures, he was enabled to expound or apply a text with marvellous felicity, and so as permanently to fix its point and meaning in the memory. In the guidance and instruc-

tion of young converts he displayed tenderness, sympathy, and wisdom; and in explaining and enforcing the privilege of the present realization of 'entire holiness,' his rich experience enabled him to be eminently useful. His holy fervour in prayer seemed contagious, so that the coldest heart would not long unite with him in that exercise without feeling a glow of spiritual warmth. To meet regularly in his class was to have the constant privilege of a strong incentive and subtle allurements to holy living.

"His method of conducting the class I attended was diversified to suit young men, of whom it was mainly composed. Occasionally he would expound a suitable portion of Scripture. At other times he would hold a prayer-meeting, in which he would make a point of encouraging the younger ones to engage. If any declined to respond to his call, a kind but solemn rebuke followed, which prevented a repetition of the failure.

"He was accessible in the privacy of his home. Any of his members might carry to him their private troubles, whether temporal or spiritual, and always find him ready to bestow his precious time and exquisite skill, his tenderest sympathy and wisest counsels. His kindness to me in two important crises of my religious history I shall ever hold in grateful remembrance. In a season of great spiritual conflict and thick darkness, when Giant Despair had firmly gripped me, he welcomed me to his house, and prayed and sympathized with me again and again. Afterwards, when I was anxiously weighing the question whether I should offer myself as a candidate for the ministry, it was he who counselled and led me to the final decision.

"In times of gracious revival his soul overflowed with holy joy. When Dr. and Mrs. Palmer were holding special services in Brunswick Chapel, it was said he was present at every service, and in the prayer-meetings which followed their addresses, led the way

to the throne of grace in mighty and effectual supplication. In the love-feasts heaven seemed to come down to earth as we listened to his recital of his experiences in 'the deep things of God.'

"Once only did I hear him preach, and cannot attempt to characterize him as a preacher.

"Not long ago I met a young man who was a member of his class at the same time I was. He had backslidden into the world, but he said that the sheer weight and influence of Dr. Birchenall's character had saved him from infidelity. He never could absolutely reject the Christianity which had moulded a character so pure and beautiful as Dr. Birchenall's."

One passage from the diary dating from this period we must quote before passing on. It will show that in the middle of his sixth decade Dr. Birchenall was the same man as in his second or third:—

"1855. *June* 10.—The trial of faith continues from day to day: this is my ordinary experience. Sometimes the Lord brings my feet into a broad place; most especially when the end of the trial has been answered. At all times I prove the Divine fidelity; most promptly and most signally when my spirit is kept in confiding composure. In the full salvation of the Gospel I see a place of broad rivers and streams, and I do on some occasions get within its current; then I am borne aloft as on the waves of the sea; but I have as frequently to go down into the depths of self-abasement.

"I think my spirit is more disturbed by the influence of my ordinary engagements than it was in my earlier religious career: in the professional associations of the humbler walks of life there was less that is exciting. I ordinarily take the Lord with me into my daily occupations, but sometimes lose Him for a time in a crowd of engagements. This never occurs except when I presume to go before Him: if I follow, I meet with no

obstruction. Should I discover my error, and force my way through the bustle, I may meet again with my Guide; otherwise I do not find Him again so sensibly (unless some of my subsequent engagements be sanctified by prayer) until I get into the quietude and retirement of my own room."

We will devote the remainder of this chapter to a short sketch of Dr. Birchenall's opinions, referring our readers to the "Aphorisms" at the close of this book for fuller illustration of them.

At the outset, we may say that, whatever they were, Dr. Birchenall's opinions were not mere echoes of those of other men. Actually, it will be found that his theological system—with which everything else was in harmony—was that of "the people called Methodists;" and how well defined that is need not be told here. But we should err if we supposed that he accepted his creed on hearsay. His literary acquisitions made it easy for him to frame his scheme from a very wide induction, and his generalizing faculty made it almost a necessity that he should weld his conceptions into a homogeneous whole. His aptitude for both processes will appear in many of the aphorisms, in which subjects the most widely sundered are made to shed unexpected light upon each other.

Happily there were in this case, as in others, certain safeguards against error. First, there was the moral safeguard of early training. Religion for him was not outraged by marked inconsistency between the doctrine and the practice of its professors. He had always before him, in his father's household and

that of his grandfather, the unanswerable argument of holy living. This was further strengthened by the direct influences of the Holy Ghost, sanctifying the instinct of veneration, and not suffering the inquiring intellect to fall a prey to vain and presumptuous curiosity. Then came the trials of life—a stern and sore discipline. The storms that would have driven some vessels from their moorings only proved to him the strength of his sheet-anchor. But, over and above all this, must be mentioned the fairness and impartiality of his mind, a native quality which not every thinker possesses, and which the training we have described would serve to perfect, not to warp.

In tracing the outline of Dr. Birchenall's opinions, we are first struck with his mental attitude toward the friendly, but sometimes rival, claims of revelation and philosophy. The manly confidence of the thinker seems to be blended with the childlike humility of the believer. He recognised the powers of the human mind, and boldly prosecuted its most abstruse researches; those, namely, which it institutes into its own nature and the validity of its own operations. He also recognised the limits of the human mind, and contentedly forbore inquiry when he found that some problems were insoluble. So, likewise, with revelation. The "things that are revealed" he expected to endure the most crucial tests. But even revelation, he knew, must have its bounds, and beyond them he dared not push his speculations. Meantime, whatever antinomies there might seem to be between the findings of the human mind and the discoveries of the Divine, he was well persuaded, were in appearance only, and that there was in reality a most substantial

agreement, since all truth must be one. Therefore he bowed to the dicta of inspiration with the same implicit faith as he did to the postulates of intuition, and humbly waited till the veil should rend, and he should know as he was known.

The general outline of the Doctor's creed being that of the Church to which he belonged, there is no need to examine it in detail. The aphorisms mainly dwell upon contested points, and show how carefully he watched the course of theological and other controversy. We must be content to draw attention to the most important of them. On all that pertains to Christ's person and work, his utterance is clear and emphatic. Renouncing as impracticable the attempt to solve the mystery either of Christ's personality or of the hypostatic union, he nevertheless kept the balance even between the view that merges the human in the Divine, and that which sacrifices the Divine to the human. With especial earnestness does he insist on the glory due to the Holy Ghost. On the doctrine of the Spirit, he knew, must hang all that concerns both the Church in its corporate capacity and the salvation of individual believers.

On these two points we must dwell a little, beginning with the latter. The Doctor felt the importance of maintaining the reality of the work of grace in the heart, as that of an Agent, distinct alike from the human subject upon whom He works, and from the human instrument He may employ in the accomplishment of His designs. He saw how complex a thing was the nature upon which the truth was brought to bear, how subtle the connexion between the thoughts of the head and the purposes of the heart, between the processes of the

mind and the states of the body. But, while making allowance for this, and assigning to each part of the intricate mechanism its proper functions, he could not but ascribe the efficacy of every gracious operation to the Divine Spirit that informs and actuates the whole. Hence, while insisting on the necessity of rational conviction, he could not discard spiritual emotion: he believed that sympathies, under the Spirit's guidance, are an effective and legitimate auxiliary to syllogisms. Neither could he forget man's physical investiture in view of his immaterial essence: every breath of the material atmosphere, and every ebb and flow of the animal spirits, being under the control of the same Spirit, were all means to an end—the sanctification of man, body, soul, and spirit, to the service and glory of the Triune God.

There was the same jealousy as to the prerogatives of the Holy Ghost in His relation to the Church. Granting the necessity of outward organization in order to the maintenance of her moral purity, the Doctor nevertheless held strongly that the basis of her corporate fellowship is to be found in mystic union with her Lord and Head. Therefore he could not permit the temporal gradation of the officers of the Church to override, much less to destroy, the spiritual equality of all its members. The highest dignitaries in Christ's household were to be its lowliest servants: their honours and their responsibilities were in his view commensurate. By a logical sequence, the external relations of the Church were to be as unworldly as its internal. The bearing of this on Sacerdotalism and Erastianism will be obvious to every reader.

The Doctor's antagonism to the pretensions of priestcraft is all the more striking, if viewed side by side with his antiquarian predilections. Everything old had a charm for him, except old errors, old superstitions, old abuses. The rime of ages lost its beauty as soon as it was found to be defiled by the trail of "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." His opposition to claims founded upon the traditions of the past did not spring from ignorance of the past, or from want of power and disposition to appreciate its glories. But these glories were as nothing to him in comparison with the imperishable beauty of eternal truth. In the one he saw the hectic flush indicative of spiritual decay: in the other the warm glow of vigorous life, continually replenished from an unfailing source. Therefore he never felt the witchery of the spells of Rome, much less of Rome's feeble imitations. Knowing the pride of the human heart, he suspected everything like ecclesiastical assumption. Hence amid the sonorous cadences of Jeremy Taylor his ear detected jarring notes. The prestige of a great name could not stop his mouth in the presence of such sentences as these: "There are a certain sort of sins which are remediable, and cognoscible, and judicable, and a power was dispensed to a distinct sort of persons to remit or retain those sins."¹ "If it (the sacramental bread) be a holy and separate or Divine and mysterious thing, who can make it—ministerially I mean—and consecrate or sublime it from common and ordinary bread, but a consecrate, separate, and sublime person?"² "Direct

¹ *The Divine Institution of the Office Ministerial*, section 2 (ed. of 1655).

² Ditto, section 5.

sympathy," was the Doctor's comment, "with the symbolism of the reredos and the pyx." So also, to go back farther, much as he loved to ponder the sayings of Ephrem Syrus, the great Syrian father and the founder of public hospitals, he could not brook certain statements which seemed to favour the dogma of the immaculate conception. Nor did his reverence for the character of Ignatius, to go back farther still, hinder him from discerning the germ of the apostolical succession in such phrases as *τοὺς δὲ πρεσβυτέρους ὡς συνέδριον Θεοῦ, καὶ ὡς σύνδεσμον ἀποστόλων*, and *χωρὶς τούτων ἐκκλησία οὐ καλεῖται*. His inference was, either that the epistle in which they occur was not genuine, or else that they afford "a painfully affecting corroboration of St. Paul's remark, that the mystery of iniquity in the visible church had already an existence."

The Doctor's views on the privileges and obligations of the Christian life are too well set forth in the pages of his diary to need any exposition here. But we may call attention, in passing, to his strong words as to the necessity of continual self-renunciation, and, conjoined with that, of a vigorous exercise of the active graces, in order to a complete development of the image of God within the soul. With the laxity and sentimentalism of some modern forms of Christianity he had no sympathy whatever. What it is customary to distinguish as the subjective and the objective in religion he maintained in steady equipoise and harmonious relation. The truth of God revealed to the soul, and the life of God generated within it, were to him the indispensable factors of true religion. On the subject

of a future state, also, his teaching gave forth no uncertain sound.

On one other theological topic only will we touch; not the Calvinistic controversy, though that is represented in the selection, but the doctrine of the Second Advent. On this point, also, his views were fully formed and unambiguously expressed. He was a student of prophecy, as some of his manuscripts plainly show. But in the examination of it the sober intellect kept well in hand the impulses of a generous heart. The dreams of Millenarianism did not fascinate his fine imagination: the current of his sympathies was held in check by a superior principle, and flowed, like Siloa's brook, fast by the oracles of God. Two letters upon this subject, written for the benefit of an inquiring friend, sufficiently define his position. And as the mischief of such speculations seems somewhat on the increase, the perusal of these letters may help to settle some unstable minds. We will therefore insert them at the close of this chapter.

Equally repulsive to him with the vagaries of religious fanaticism were the presumptuous conceits of science, or rather of some of its enthusiastic devotees. He was fully aware that the "scientific imagination" is as prone to run wild as that of the worshipper of the Madonna; that the very earnestness necessary to abstruse research disqualifies for the exercise of sober judgment; and that the limitation of the mind's activities to a small field of observation engenders a narrowness which enormously diminishes the chances of impartial inquiry and the discovery of truth.

Without, therefore, impugning the motives of modern scientists, and inveighing against every new hypothesis as a direct attack on revelation, he would have counselled moderation and candour; he would have advised the combatants to find out points wherein they agree before discussing points wherein they differ, and, if possible, to determine what are and what are not subjects of hopeful, or even possible, investigation, and what rules should govern their procedure. The reader will see whereto we are tending. Dr. Birchenall knew that all the deeper problems of science become ultimately problems of metaphysics, and that none should meddle with the secrets of nature who have not first ascertained the powers and limits of that invisible instrument, the human reason, without due regulation of which the retort and the microscope can but lead astray. His own philosophical discipline gave him a vantage ground which he was not slow to make use of; and while scanty leisure did not permit him to follow all the intricacies of modern thought, or at least to record his opinions on them at any length, yet there is enough to indicate the side he took, the ease with which he could detect sophistical argument, even when veiled in a cloud of technical terms, and the confidence with which he anticipated the final harmony of natural and revealed truth. The aphorisms will exemplify most of the above observations, and it would be easy to add further testimony from the mass of choice extracts before me, culled from writers in every department of human research. But the above will be enough for our purpose. Those who desire further illustrations may find them in the following communications con-

tributed by Dr. Birchenall to well-known journals:—*British Medical Journal*, Notes from practice, 1865, vol. ii. pp. 417, 470, 550, 655; ditto 1866, Nov. 10, p. 523; Dec. 8, p. 687; 1869, Aug. 24, p. 183; 1869, Aug. 28, p. 241. *Medical Press and Circular*, Observations on the “stamping out” of smallpox, 1868, vol. i. p. 236; Sequelæ of Otitis, 1869, vol. ii. p. 182; Observations on Professor Owen’s idea of the soul, 1869, July 14, p. 44.

We conclude with the letters on Millenarianism, alluded to above:—

“*Jan.* 30, 1866.—My dear Miss Verity,—There is a danger in questions like that to which you refer, lest a dreamy religious sentimentalism should take the place of the Divine testimony; and if you ask what saith the Scripture on the theory entertained by your friends, I think you will find that this is utterly fallacious and untenable. I read of no second coming of Christ but the one contained in Rev. i. 7 and xxii. 12, His coming to judgment; in both of which passages you will find the word *every*, as inclusive of the whole human family. ’Tis true I read of a Millennial reign, but I do not find it on earth, but in heaven—the *souls* of the martyrs (not their bodies as yet), when their number shall be completed, and the judgments of God shall have been executed upon mystic Babylon, Rev. xviii., raised to a higher state of glory, ch. xx. 4, than their previous one, ch. vi. 9, 10, 11; the place of their reign being expressly declared to be *with Christ*, not *Christ with them*, thus inheriting the promise (in the anticipation and earnest of the resurrection of the *body*): ‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with Me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on His throne.’

“Now, that the reign of Christ is to be perpetuated

without any change of place, even to the end, I gather from Ps. xlv. 6, 7; Luke i. 32, 33; Heb. i. 8; 1 Pet. iii. 22; and Acts iii. 21, this latter passage evidently referring to Rev. xxi. 1. Besides, the reign of Christ is made concurrent in the Divine mind with His intercession, Heb. x. 12, 13; but in what sense can the two be supposed to harmonize on the theory of the pre-millennial advent, which of necessity involves a surrender of the mediatorial office and government, and by consequence of the way of approach unto God?

“The coming of the Bridegroom, in the parable of the Virgins, plainly refers to the end of the world, as you will perceive if you compare what precedes in ch. xxiv. with that which follows; and as the Great Teacher gives no intimation that there will ever be any separation of the two classes of mankind but that which is judicial and final, Matt. xxv. 31, etc., we have no warrant to frame a theory of our own at variance with His teaching. Moreover, the coming and adoption of the Bride are to *follow* the final judgment, not to *precede* it; and this is to take place not in the present world, but in ‘the new heavens and the new earth,’ Rev. xxi. 1, 2, etc.: then, and not till then, will the tabernacle of God be with men, ver. 3; Christ having delivered up the kingdom to the Father, and God, in the manifested glory of His eternal presence, being ‘all in all,’ 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

“That these stupendous events are hastening apace we fully believe; but as the Father hath the times and the seasons exclusively in His own keeping, it is not wise to speculate as to the period of their incidence. About two hundred years ago, or nearly so, a clergyman of the Church of England, a man of great learning and ability, of unaffected piety, and considered to be a man of sober judgment, got bewildered by the mysteries of the Calvinistic theory, and gave out that Christ had revealed Himself to him, to assure him that he would appear publicly at Pentecost, for the purpose of gather-

ing together all the saints, Jews and Gentiles, to lead them to Jerusalem; and, after destroying and judging the wicked, that He would deliver the government of the world unto the saints. This is substantially an epitome of everything embraced by the theory in question, and many of its advocates have hazarded similar conjectures. Our safety, as well as our discretion, will be best consulted by a devout and practical regard to the exhortations and admonitions with which the oracles of God everywhere invest the second coming of our Lord.

“Having given you, in brief, my views on these questions, I remain, etc.”

“*Feb.* 9, 1866.—My dear Miss Verity,—Piety is no security against speculative error. Some of the most deeply pious have been the most visionary; and because the influence of a pious example is apt to carry us away, we are cautioned by St. John not to believe every spirit, but to ‘try the spirits,’ by the infallible rule, ‘whether,’ in their teaching, ‘they are of God.’ There are many errors in the Churches of Christ, owing to mistaken or to partial views of Divine truth, which yet do not vitiate the Christian character of those by whom they are entertained; and you may very safely cultivate the friendship of those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, without compromising your own convictions on certain religious questions. Christ is the centre of unity; and those who have the closest union with Him will, as a rule (if opportunity offers), have the most intimate fellowship with one another; provided all matters of doubtful disputation are kept out of sight, because perfect similarity of views is necessary, as well as spiritual congeniality, to make the fellowship complete and permanent. There is good reason for the conviction expressed by your friend, that to be in constant expectation of the coming of the Lord would tend to quicken your spirituality of mind; but this expectation

should be based upon something certain, otherwise it will deceive us as it did many of the early Christians. The admonitions of the Saviour on the subject were all practical, in order that they might be sanctifying and saving: 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.' 'Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.'"

CHAPTER XIV.

AUTHOR'S REMINISCENCES—THE HONOURS OF AGE.

1860-1864.

MY own acquaintance with the subject of this biography commenced in 1860, shortly after my appointment to the Macclesfield circuit. I had been previously apprised of the many excellences of mind and heart that met in Dr. Birchenall, and was prepared to accord to him the affection and respect due to one who united the learning of a scholar and the devotion of a saint. The first impression that he made upon me was that of genuine humility, an impression that a more intimate knowledge only tended to deepen. The length and breadth of his mental and moral nature could not, of course, be gauged in a moment, and the native modesty of which I have spoken served rather to veil them than otherwise. I will here endeavour to give a brief description of his physical characteristics, as then for the first time presented to my view.

A small round head, in which the anterior considerably preponderated over the posterior regions, indicated a predominance of the moral sentiments and intellectual faculties over those feelings and impulses which take their rise in the animal nature; while the equal

development of the frontal portion of the cranium suggested a harmonious balance of the mental powers. A pair of quick, restless eyes, deeply set underneath dark eyebrows, betokened active habits, quite in keeping with the general configuration of the frame, which, though slight, was well-knit, and denoted by its every movement agility and promptitude. That the nervous energies were not only ready to respond to the slightest appeal, but also capable of being strung up to sustained and serious effort, was manifest from the prominence of the delicately moulded chin and the firm compression of the mouth and lips; and this conviction was not lessened by the aquiline conformation of a truly Roman nose. The person, especially the face, was thin almost to emaciation, and gave an impression of abstemiousness, if not of austerity, which was not at all relieved by the elevation of the high cheek-bones. Altogether the contour suggested a primitive simplicity, that was in perfect keeping with the scrupulously neat but plain attire. And the countenance, which seemed now to brighten up with the lustre of benevolence, and then again to subside into the repose of meditation, bore at all times the stamp of an earnest purpose and a high moral aim. Meanwhile, there was something in the manner that indicated a certain reserve of power, as if there were other processes going forward than those which found immediate utterance; and by and by you discovered that observation had not been confined to one side, that the keen glances were not void of meaning, but were the glances of a trained anatomist, and had laid bare probably something more than your physical condition before his mental eye. When he spoke, the general animation reached its

climax: every feature became significant: and while a certain nervousness might have intimated some internal hindrance in the search for words, you soon found that of these there was no lack, and that any apparent hesitation was of manner only, and must arise either from purely physical causes, or else from the desire to give due emphasis to what was of importance. At any rate, the shrill, clear voice continued to enunciate its tones with vigour and precision; and when the sentence was complete, you seemed to see before you a beautiful flower in all its parts, worked in silk by the skill of the hand-loom weaver. The delicacy of the style was an index to the structure of the mind, comprehensive but finely wrought. And in harmony with all this was the Christian politeness which taught him to anticipate the wants of others, and to comport himself as "the servant of all." Nevertheless, there was something which told you that he expected courtesy in return; that if it were withheld he would feel, though he might not resent, the wrong; and, moreover, that there were certain departments in which, if he were called to exercise authority, inattention to his mandates was not likely to pass unnoticed or unreprieved. A little quiet humour peeped out from the corners of his eyes. Though now past the meridian of life, there was nothing to indicate any decline of the physical powers. The short, quick step, and the general sprightliness of manner, bespoke an elastic frame, the meet embodiment of a spirit whose energies were continually wound up to their utmost tension, and braced rather than broken by the exercise.

My subsequent acquaintance with Dr. Birchenall only confirmed the impressions which this first inter-

view left upon my mind; and as the outlines of his mental and moral nature, previously given, were filled up by actual observation, I learned to reverence more and more a man who had consecrated gifts so noble to such high, unselfish ends. During my three years' sojourn in Macclesfield I was brought into contact with many Christian friends, whose practical devotion to the cause of Christ was in every way admirable; but in the rivalry of sacred zeal they would themselves with one voice have yielded the palm to the Doctor. Others might plan new enterprises of chapel extension, and give largely of their substance to promote them: he, while contributing his share to such undertakings, rather sought to build up the living church in faith and love and purity. Others might give their Sabbaths to Sunday-school teaching, and occasionally their week-nights to committees: he every day and all the day long was intent on the highest forms of usefulness. Meantime, his unaffected modesty rendered jealousy impossible. He never sought to press his own opinions, however tenaciously he might hold them. In the general management of the affairs of the circuit he seldom or never, during my stay in it, took part. But in spiritual things his pastors rejoiced to have so staunch and vigorous an ally, and always acknowledged him, apart from purely ministerial functions, as the very head and heart of the society. The testimonies of some of the Macclesfield ministers have been already given. To these may be added the words of the Rev. W. T. Radcliffe, who travelled there during the troublous times referred to: "If we had a thousand such men in Methodism, there would be no decrease."

The times on which it was my hap to light were also troublous, though not in the same sense. They were times of great commercial depression. Lancashire and Cheshire were then passing through the crisis known as "the cotton famine." True, Macclesfield was not so much affected by this as some other districts, since cotton had long ceased to be the staple trade of the town. But the interests of the silk manufacture, which had taken its place, were also at this time seriously threatened. Cobden's French treaty, based on the principles of free trade, while it doubtless wrought for the good of the community in general, flooded the markets with foreign fabrics, which, for fineness and cheapness, our home-born industries found it hard to rival. Business has long since adjusted itself to the new arrangements; but upon their first introduction, the consequences to the manufacturers of Macclesfield and Coventry, and to the multitudes dependent upon them, were disastrous. Every grade of society felt the pressure of the times, and all that the wealthy and benevolent could do was little enough to mitigate the distress of the working-classes. With what patience and fortitude the cotton famine was borne by the Lancashire operatives is a fact of history: I have only to add, what is not so well known, that the silk famine brought out the same qualities of stern endurance among the corresponding classes in East Cheshire.

In common with many others, Dr. Birchenall in these circumstances recognised the claims of Christian sympathy. He had always been distinguished for kindness to the poor, and his self-imposed mission of mercy now made him more than ever familiar with

scenes of want and sights of sorrow. He opened his hand wide to his suffering brethren, and, without sectarian narrowness, sought, as far as his means enabled him, to supplement public charity by private benevolence. All this was, however, as we have said, only an example, on a more extended scale, of what had always been the habit of his life. The amount he distributed in alms would, if put out to interest, of itself have become a little fortune. But he preferred the safer though more distant revenue of the heavenly inheritance. He regarded himself as God's almoner for God's children; and the fees which the wealthy poured into his lap as a fund from which, after providing for his own house, he might deal bread to the hungry and cover the naked with a garment. To none within the circle of my acquaintance did his own sententious proverb more conspicuously apply than to himself, and it is a lesson that all should lay to heart: "Those have the loftiest and most diffusive charity whose moral sympathies descend the lowest in the social scale."

It might have been supposed that such a weight of cares and troubles would cause his spirit to droop. It was not so. Sometimes, indeed, I remember to have seen his brow clouded. But multiplied duties cut off all occasion of brooding. And when the Sabbath came, the change of occupation was too welcome to permit its gracious exercises to be disturbed. I myself am a witness of his Sunday peace. No seasons of waiting upon God are more dear to memory than those quiet Sunday afternoons when, after some engagement in the neighbourhood, I used to call and take tea at his house. Few words were spoken on either side. But the serenity that lit his face seemed to spread

through all the household. It became contagious, and soothed any sensibilities that the prospect of the evening service might unduly excite within the mind. And when the service came, the same beaming countenance was there, and the sight of it helped the preacher.

His studious habits were still kept up, and also the early rising which so greatly ministered to them. I remember the glee with which he showed me over his well-kept library, and the delight he took in descanting on the merits of his favourite authors. Some of the books he mostly prized are now, through the kindness of a few friends, reposing on the shelves of the Didsbury College library.

So also with his habits of fasting and prayer. The resolutions recorded on pages 85-88 were faithfully kept. I know persons, not related to him, for whom he constantly prayed by name for nearly twenty years, and not without what they themselves deemed to be answers, both in the form of providential interposition and gracious assistance. Friday was always observed as a fast, whatever might be his engagements. In his earlier life the Doctor tasted no food at all on that day; and even at a very late period he only allowed himself a cup of tea and a little dry toast toward evening. His Sunday dinner was bread and butter and coffee. There was no asceticism in this, in the proper sense of the term. Whatever his views when he adopted the regimen, he continued it because he found it conducive to spiritual exercises, not because he regarded either the observance of it as a merit, or the non-observance of it as a sin.

Shakespeare speaks of the natural accompaniments of old age as "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends." We have now to mention some applications of this adage in the present case. The first honour we shall refer to was an acknowledgment of his long course of service as a Methodist class-leader. In February 1864, the members of his three classes—for the two week-night classes were now thrown into one—sembled to express their sense of the manner in which he had for so many years discharged this portion of his duty. They presented him with a valuable timepiece, and took the opportunity of recording their obligations in an illuminated address. As an embodiment of the sentiments entertained toward Dr. Birchenall by the people among whom he dwelt, and as a kind of summary of the principles of his life, we will insert this document at the close of the present chapter.

The next honour we shall notice was that put upon Dr. Birchenall by the members of his own profession. In 1875—we anticipate the course of events in order to complete our references to this subject—the medical men of the eastern division of Cheshire, about four-and-twenty in number, formed themselves into an association, styled "The East Cheshire Medical Society," and at their inaugural meeting unanimously elected Dr. Birchenall as their first president. He afterwards undertook the office of treasurer, and retained it to the end of his life. The address in which, at this first meeting, he acknowledged the honour thus conferred upon him, now lies before me. In it he offers his sincere congratulations on the formation of the society, and expresses his ardent wishes for its prosperity.

The substance of the address is an exposition of the principles which should govern the mutual relations of medical men, considered as "members of a great social confederacy." He maintains that, even as a matter of policy, regard to the dignity of the profession would often in the long-run be found of greater advantage to the individual physician than a selfish adherence to personal interests. No one had a better right than Dr. Birchenall to speak on such a subject, for a higher standard of professional etiquette could not easily be found than that which obtained in his own practice.

Again, in 1876—to anticipate still further the course of events—the Doctor's patients acknowledged in a very handsome manner his lifelong devotion to the duties of his profession. A sum of £470 was subscribed, and was presented to Dr. Birchenall by two gentlemen, who waited on him privately for the purpose, a public demonstration being out of the question owing to the state of his health. The following are the characteristic entries in the diary which refer to this event:—"19th Feb. 1876.—I have been made to feel very affectingly how much the Lord cares for me, by the visit this morning of two gentlemen (patients of mine), who called to tender to me an overwhelming expression of the kind consideration and sympathy of my patients and friends generally."
"20.—A day of much composure at the feet of Jesus. I found, when I awoke to the Sabbath and its hallowed associations, that even those of yesterday tended to heighten my gracious experiences, rather than otherwise; my mind having long undergone a process of dying to all below." The use he made of the money was equally characteristic. He gave £100 to the Sunder-

land St. Chapel trust, £50 to the Thanksgiving Fund, and £100 to the Macclesfield Infirmary; accompanying this last gift by a letter to the trustees of that institution, in which he states that "the amount contributed by his friends has been sacredly kept in reserve." The whole was probably distributed in various ways long before his death. In this connexion it may be mentioned that, on the opening of the above-named institution in 1873, Dr. Birchenall was appointed one of the honorary consulting surgeons, which post he retained to the last. He always took great interest in the working of the Infirmary, and, as long as health permitted, was a regular attendant at the meetings and operations of the medical staff. Some time after the above-named gift, he presented to the governors the painting which now adorns the room appropriated to the meetings of the medical staff. It is by a Flemish artist, Von Wessel, date 1692. The subject is unique and appropriate, "The Anatomist's Studio." To the library he also presented an atlas copy of Albinus' *Anatomical Plates*, a volume "so rare that it is only to be met with in the libraries of some of the older hospitals of the kingdom, or in the collections of a few professional *virtuosi*."

With the address referred to above we conclude the present chapter:—

"To John Birchenall, Esq., M.R.C.S.—Honoured and dear Sir,—We, who have been accustomed weekly to assemble in order to receive those counsels, cautions, and consolations which you are wont to administer to those who seek your spiritual oversight, have invited you here to-day in order that we may collectively express those sentiments toward you of gratitude and

respect which we have all individually felt since the very commencement of our fellowship with each other and with you. As on all former occasions, so especially now, we may say in truth, that we meet 'not in the name of pride.' Those who, like yourself, devote themselves to Christ and His cause neither seek nor need the applause of men; nor, on the other hand, would it be consistent with her professed exclusive ascription of all glory to her living Lord and Head, that the Church should utter any boast concerning those whom He has marked out, both by natural and spiritual gifts, as chief officers in His kingdom and chief members of His body. Bearing in mind, therefore, that unfeigned humility, which in you, as in all the truly great and good, repels every appearance of adulation, and also that holy jealousy which in the Most High forbids all participation in His supreme glory, even by those who are choice instruments of His will and shining monuments of His grace, it shall be our endeavour so to order our speech that with the great apostle, whose conversion was of itself such a source of thanksgiving to the primitive church, you also may be able, contemplating this our public testimony to a whole life consecrated to the highest ends, to testify of the present assembly that 'they glorified God in me.'

"Favoured with a pious parentage, and an early initiation into the 'doctrines according to godliness,' it is our joy and yours that, in the spring-tide of life, you were led to embrace the world's Redeemer as your own, and openly to espouse His cause. Qualified by a liberal education for the duties of that most arduous profession of which you had made choice, you strenuously devoted to it the powers and energies with which you had been providentially endowed. Throughout your whole course, that profession has been made subservient to the best interests of those upon whose sicknesses you have been called to attend. While many would have courted such patronage as might render their position largely lucra-

tive, your professional visits, ever increasingly appreciated among the rich, have, with an unflagging diligence and an unexampled generosity, been lavished upon the poor, among whom you have been everywhere welcomed as at once the physician to apply the medicinal virtues of nature, the almoner to dispense the bounties of Providence, and the teacher to communicate the lessons of grace.

“Collaterally with the multiplied claims of an avocation like this, and in such a manner as would be conducive to their more efficient discharge, you have pursued the paths of literature and science, acquainting yourself by deep research with the wisdom of the ancients, and by a discursive spirit of inquiry, keeping pace with the intellectual progress of the age. At the same time, by making the sure word of testimony stand central to all your studies, you have exemplified to the world that great desideratum of the present day, a reverent, pure, enlightened faith, equally remote from the deadly torpor of superstition, the wild excesses of enthusiasm, and the hopeless bewilderment of unbelief. Thus, though anxious mainly to secure the answer of a good conscience toward God, you have likewise earned the respect, not of one class alone, but of all classes of the citizens of that town to which you belong, of whom thousands would be ready to testify their lasting obligations.

“It is, however, more particularly to your higher relations to the religious community with which you are happily identified that we are bound to-night to refer. We might make mention of the acceptance and usefulness of your occasional labours as a preacher of truth, in which the fruits of extensive scholarship are offered at the shrine of devotion; of your steadfast attachment to the constitution of the Church of your choice, through many years’ trial of its integrity; of your regular attendance upon its ordinances, from the sublimest to the simplest of them, to which, with a con-

stancy worthy of imitation by men of larger leisure, all secular concerns have been at all times, when possible, sacrificed; of your readiness, by an unsparing liberality, not only to respond to the more direct and urgent calls of a voluntary ecclesiastical system, but also to support every institution and every undertaking that could appeal to the motives of philanthropy. But we forbear.

“It is rather as the members of your classes that we now address you. For the office of leader, the maturity of your character, the steadiness of your zeal, the breadth of your sympathies, the depth of your discernment, the abundance of your knowledge, the spirituality of your mind, the consistency of your walk, were both the recommendations that induced your appointment and the qualifications which ensured your success. For the last thirty-six years you have not ceased to instruct, to comfort, to admonish, and in every way to care for those who have been committed to your charge. It has been yours, with varied emotions, to witness the first essays of inexperienced minds after an acquaintance with God’s will and a conformity to His law; to point them to the Propitiatory, sprinkled with the blood of the everlasting covenant; to join in their rejoicings when newly born into the kingdom of God; to direct their energies into channels of holy enterprise; to forewarn them of the dangers to which they should be exposed; in some cases, perhaps, to mourn a gradual declension from the first love, but even then to ‘reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all authority and long-suffering;’ in more, however, to watch the growing development of the Divine life; and, finally, to receive the latest testimony of the sovereign power of Jesus’s grace as a cure for the inbred malady of sin, and a preparative for everlasting happiness. A whole generation of Methodists has thus enjoyed the benefits of your spiritual guidance, and we feel that, numerous as is this gathering, we form but a small portion of those who must be present to your own mind’s eye, many of

whom are filling important spheres in distant places, but 'some have fallen asleep.'

"In conclusion: for ourselves, we pray that we may indeed be 'baptized in the room of the dead,' to imitate their example, and to carry a little nearer to its final consummation the work in which they with you have been engaged; and that to this end we may the more diligently attend to the lessons which we hope yet for many years to learn from your lips.

"For the Church, we pray that many more may be led to emulate your devotedness to God, so that the walls of Zion may never want a man to stand in the gap in the day of battle.

"And for yourself, honoured and dear Sir, while begging your acceptance of the accompanying token of our affection, though totally inadequate to express its fervency and strength, be assured we shall never forget to pray that you may long be spared to the town of Macclesfield, to the Church of God, to your beloved partner in life, and to us the members of your three classes; and that when at length your earthly career shall close, you may be admitted into the higher communion of those eminent saints whom you have made your model, yea, even of the Lamb Himself, whose example you have set before your eyes, while this unanswerable challenge shall proclaim your title to such companionship: 'Walked he not in the same spirit? Walked he not in the same steps?'

"Signed on behalf of the members of the three classes,

"JAMES TYASS. RICHARD COLLIER. JOHN B. SMALLWOOD.
ADAM MORTON. ROBERT TOWNEND. JOHN CRUMP.

"MACCLESFIELD, *February 15, 1864.*'

CHAPTER XV.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF EVENTIDE.

1865-1875,

TOWARD the close of his seventh decade it began to be evident that Dr. Birchenall's energies were failing. None was more sensible than himself of the meaning of the changes which, with the practised eye of the professional observer, he could detect within his own frame. But diminished vigour was not made a plea for exemption from life's duties. His appearances in the pulpit were less frequent, and his classes were reduced in number. His country practice had for some time been given up. But with these exceptions he continued to go through a round of laborious duties, which would have seriously tasked a man less inured to habitual toil.

Indeed, his elasticity was wonderful. Again and again he was brought to the margin of the grave, and again and again he was brought up from it, resuming his work with facility, as if each new illness had given him a fresh lease of life. Much of this was due, no doubt, to original constitution, and much to the temperate habits which preserved its native vigour. But among the causes cannot be reckoned even an ordinary amount of prudence. No weather was too bleak

for his susceptible frame to be exposed to; no ailment which did not actually confine him to bed, severe enough to keep him in-doors. Canons enounced for the wellbeing of patients were not supposed to apply to the Doctor himself. Such records as the following will show the spirit in which he encountered physical weakness:—

“*Dec. 1, 1868.*—I was taken early on Friday morning, about an hour after midnight, with a form of choleraic diarrhœa, accompanied with agonizing cramps, deathly faintness, and cold sweats, which continued more or less through the night, when the Lord graciously interposed, and I dressed in extreme weakness for the duties of the day.

“*Nov. 1869.*—Woke up in the night with acute cramp. I had scarcely got upon the floor when I fainted and fell down. Mrs. B. was in painful suspense, as I had for some time all the appearances of a dying person—occasional faint efforts at respiration, with gurgling in the throat, and perfect unconsciousness of everything around, accompanied with an indefinable abstract perception that I was passing into a separate state of existence. When I had recovered and lain down again, the restlessness of the ebbing of life continued for some time. After an hour’s sleep I rose and entered upon the duties of the day.”

In the quotation of the last chapter, “troops of friends” are mentioned by the great dramatist as one of the glories of old age. And that they were not wanting in this instance is obvious from what has been already said. But, after all, the adage does not by any means tell the whole truth, and is not meant to do so. Old age has its losses as well as its gains, and he must be blest with a fortunate disposition and a very fortunate

lot, who can by any fair process of arithmetic show a balance on the favourable side. Over against the new friendships age brings with it, must be placed the old ones which it severs. The former are the saplings of the young plantation; the latter the veteran oaks that are felled to make them room. Some of Dr. Birchenall's most valued friends were cut down in their prime. But now the blows began to fall thick and fast upon the members of his own family. In 1860 his mother died, at the advanced age of eighty-six. In 1870, under date June 28, the record runs: "This day my youngest brother died in the Lord, and the rest are in the covenant of peace. All glory to God and the Lamb!" In November of the same year, Mr. James Birchenall, who had for many years acted as his assistant, was taken to his rest. His end was hastened by exposure willingly submitted to in order to spare his brother, whom he kept in ignorance of the serious nature of his symptoms. After this date the entries are numerous which refer to domestic bereavement, and before his own removal all those who had the strongest claims on his sympathy and affection were gathered home to God, except Mr. Thomas Birchenall, of Withington, who survived him but a few months. Mr. Thomas, like Mr. James and Mr. Joseph (who died in January 1878), was a man who commended himself to all that knew him for the genuineness and simplicity of his Christian character, and who possessed the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. The "sure and certain hope" was a great alleviation of the sorrow of these partings, and, solemn reminders as they were of approaching dissolution, viewed in the light of faith, they became pledges of a final re-union.

Deeper waters, however, had to be forded, and some stages of the pilgrimage were yet to be travelled through.

The place of Mr. James Birchenall was supplied after a time by Mr. Somerville, who became the Doctor's partner. His assiduous attentions were bestowed both on the patients generally, and, when needed, on the Doctor himself, and were a great relief to the mind of the latter. Dr. Birchenall was now a little more at liberty to prosecute his favourite pursuits. Some of his best thoughts are the product of his later years. Another addition to his leisure was also most unwillingly accepted:—

“1872. *Aug.* 30.—I have been obliged to discontinue my attendance upon the Sunday classes for many weeks, and, by their exhausting demands upon my physical powers, at length to relinquish them altogether. It has been a sore laceration to my sensibilities to be compelled to bereave myself of my children, but I found relief in placing them in the hands of the Lord.”

Elsewhere he adds: “They passed, however, to my unspeakable comfort, into the hands of spiritually-minded men. I retain the Wednesday class.” Soon this engagement also had to be relinquished.

There were throughout this period various sources of consolation both from without and from within. One was to be found in cheering signs of revived religious life and prosperity. Macclesfield had now recovered from the effects of commercial depression, and with the temporal came spiritual blessing and increase. The first note after Dr. Scott's appointment in September 1866 is that of “a quickening in the

society, and an earnest desire in some hearts for the full salvation;" and this is followed in successive years by many grateful acknowledgments of similar mercy. In 1874, the Methodists of Macclesfield saw their way to the erection of a new and beautiful sanctuary on the north side of the town, where a considerable extension of the population had taken place without any corresponding provision for public worship. Dr. Birchenall lived to see Trinity Chapel a decided success, in the gathering to it of a numerous and respectable congregation, and in the relief thus afforded to the other somewhat overcrowded chapels.

There were other lights that served to relieve the dimness of eventide. I have already adverted to the partial compensation to old age for the removal of old friends afforded by the upspringing of new ones, and by the delight with which the freshness of life's opening scenes is thus, as it were, re-tasted. This rejuvenescence can only, however, accompany the "gay remembrance of a life well spent." Those only can encourage the hopefulness of youth whose own hopes and resolves have not issued in failure and disappointment, and whose patient endurance of life's tasks has converted the early dreams into realities. So it was with Dr. Birchenall. He had long since learned the lesson that he must first strive who would win, and that he alone strives lawfully who does not strive in his own strength. He was skilled in that wondrous alchemy which turns losses into gains, afflictions into emoluments, and reproach itself into the promise of more abundant honour. The present might be dreary, but both the past and the future were bright. How could he, then, but cheer both by example and precept those

who, with less obstacles before them, might look for the same guidance and anticipate the same reward? True, the Doctor had no children to gladden his own home, but there were families in which he was regarded as the arbiter in every great emergency, and whose youngest members looked up to him with filial respect and affection.

With some of these, after their removal from Macclesfield, he maintained a regular correspondence, some portions of which are now under the eye of the writer. Dr. Birchenall had numerous correspondents, but as the greater part of them passed away before him we are not favoured with many memorials of this kind. The following extracts are from a series of letters addressed to Mrs. R. Collier and Mrs. T. Lowthian, daughters of the late Rev. John Rigg, for whom, as for their parents and the whole of the family, he entertained a high regard. The way in which every incident of life seemed naturally to minister spiritual profit will be easily seen. After a visit paid by his friends to South Wales, he writes: "I was sure you would be delighted with Swansea and its vicinity, although I was never on that part of the coast, and I do not now expect to become familiar with this or any other beautiful place of resort, maritime or inland. Nevertheless, it gives me no little pleasure to find my younger friends deriving gratification from this and similar modes of recreation. In 'seeking the glorious things above,' however, it is our felicity to know that beyond the swellings of Jordan there is a better country, in which 'there remaineth a rest for the people of God.'" After a visitation of sickness among Mrs. Collier's children, he writes: "It is in this way that we clear

the ground from one trouble on to another, through a wilderness of cares, until we gain our first fair glimpse of 'that goodly land and Lebanon.' Interposed there are occasional amenities, beauteous verdant plains, or at least patches of verdure in the desert, as emblematical of that which is beyond." There were also deeper sorrows with which he sympathized, but into these we must not enter.

The love of nature was still strong. On the return of spring the Doctor notes the rooks beginning to build, the first song of the lark, and the first sight of the martin. The following passage from a letter to Mrs. Lowthian betrays the same feeling: in it also we catch the last glimpse of the "sylvan oratory," whither he had so often retired to pour out his soul in prayer:—"*March* 19, 1870.—I have just returned (7 P.M.) from a walk to the head of the pool along the upper edge of which we wended our way home on Thursday evening. The fences have been made impassable, so that I could not get down to the spot I pointed out, unless I had gone a long way round; but I turned aside, on my return, into another sequestered dell, with which I am familiar, and there breathed forth my desires unto the Lord. The voice of prayer was no sooner hushed, than my ear was greeted with the softly varied modulations of praise uttered by the robin, the latest songster (as well as among the earliest) at this season of the year. The evening was cold, but very clear and moonlight."

With one of the members of Dr. Scott's family, Miss Elizabeth Scott, who had belonged to one of his classes, he also corresponded after the family had left the town. The following, addressed to her on occasion of a serious

illness, is very touching, and reflects its light upon the writer's own state:—"You may be ready to suppose that, being now laid aside as a broken vessel, you can no longer be a vessel unto honour. This may be true as it regards active service in the Christian Church, but the busier occupations and scenes of our religious life are not necessarily the most impressive or suggestive, and our most hallowed associations, as well as our profoundest forms of instruction, are those which obtain in the quietude of a devout heart, and those which are furnished by the teachings of Jesus when He takes us by the hand to withdraw us from the multitude, and, it may be, 'in a desert place' to open to us 'the mysteries of the kingdom.'" In a letter of condolence on the death of Dr. Scott, early in 1874, Dr. Birchenall expressed his sentiments of respect and affection toward his late friend and pastor. The tribute he pays to his high qualities does too much honour to both to be withheld:—

"So many honourable associations crowded round the memory of your late lamented father, as a faithful ambassador of Christ, and an able minister of the New Covenant; so many occasions in which it had been my privilege to sit under his ministry, and to be quickened and animated thereby; and especially the privilege accorded to me of his confidence and friendship; the clearness of his intellect, the soundness of his judgment, the manliness, energy, and perfect integrity of his character, rendered all the more estimable and influential by a transparently genial and benign disposition: these, with lineaments that I cannot so readily portray, stood out before the eye of my mind as the *tout ensemble* of a man whom to know was to love and admire. I write under mingled emotions of sorrow and sympathy,—

sorrow for the church of which he was both a pillar and an ornament, and unaffected sympathy with yourselves."

That the Doctor's mind could still be attuned to joyous as well as to more pensive strains, will be manifest from the following address to the Methodist Sunday schools and their conductors, at a festive gathering held about the time at which this chapter closes. It affords another proof of the tenacious memory which could preserve in all their freshness the scenes and incidents of half a century ago, and of the artistic skill that could depict them after such an interval:—

"The gathering of this evening carries me back to the period when our first denominational school was commenced, nearly sixty years ago. It was held in a long room of the twist shed at the bottom of Pickford Street, until the Mill Street School was erected. Of the persons who took a deep interest in its establishment, and who were actively engaged in its operations, I have a vivid and cherished recollection. Amongst others I may mention Mr. Thomas Smallwood, the father of our esteemed friend of that name; and D. Birtles, the leader of two classes, and a sweet singer in our Israel. The latter had a voice of extraordinary melody and compass, well adapted by its softness and sweetness for leading a choir, but especially effective in all the inflections of the bass scale of psalmody. There was also my own leader, Ralph Birchenough, the father of the gentleman who resides at 'The Elms;' himself a man of very plain education, but gifted with more than ordinary powers of natural elocution; and this, combined with a softly-flowing ardour of soul, made him, in speaking and in prayer especially, impressively pathetic and suasive. There were other honoured names not a few, both of men and women, who were similarly engaged,

and whose memory is to me as the fragrance of a precious ointment. At an early period in the history of the institution I had assigned to me the post at present so well and honourably occupied by Mr. Wood; and in the first annual reports we published, I had to record the happy deaths of one and another of the scholars, whose minds had been early impressed by the instructions and prayers of the teachers.

“Prior to this, I had taken no part in Sabbath school occupations. I was on terms of intimate friendship, however, with the junior preacher, a native of Sheffield. He had not been favoured with the advantages of modern education, but he possessed an earnest Christian spirit; and he had a class of young people from the Sunday school, whom he met every Saturday afternoon for catechetical instruction. One day he said to me, ‘Birchenall, I want you to meet my class tomorrow, as I shall be from home.’ ‘I cannot,’ I replied, urging as my reason for non-compliance that I had no aptitude for exercises of that kind. He turned upon me with some warmth, and said very emphatically, ‘Then you ought to acquire it.’ He was right. No man is fully competent to occupy a more prominent position as a teacher of others, who cannot, for the benefit of the rising generation, accommodate his mind to the elementary forms of religious instruction, and by a course of familiar practice therein be at a little pains to acquire that facility.

“Let me give you another little chapter from my personal history in illustration of the same principle. When I was attending the hospitals in London, Sir Astley Cooper, who had a world-wide reputation as the leading surgeon of the day, in the concluding lecture of the session gave a series of advices to the class, composed of some three or four hundred young men of every variety of talent and character, as to the regulation of their conduct in the duties of their professional life, and in winding up his observations, he addressed us

somewhat to the following effect:—‘And now, gentlemen, before I take my leave of you, let me impress upon your minds the importance of cultivating a practice among the poor. I advise it on the ground of our common humanity; they cannot remunerate you, but in many of them you will meet with that which will richly repay you for any sacrifices you may have made—a grateful remembrance of your attentions and services. I do it also on the score of benevolence; because if you keep this emotion alive, you will have the satisfaction which results from knowing that you have been doing something to lessen the amount of human suffering. Moreover, I urge this upon you as a matter of policy. Some of the most interesting and instructive cases of disease are to be found among the lower orders of society; and facilities for treating the diseases of the upper classes depend so much on familiarity with those of the lower, that I am free to confess, if I were not still to keep up this familiarity, I should soon become as awkward as possible.’ This was spoken at a time when Sir Astley was surgeon extraordinary to the king, and in attendance upon the nobility and gentry of London and its vicinity. Had you seen his tall, fine-proportioned, and imposing figure, his intelligently genial and handsome countenance, and his easy and dignified carriage, you would have singled him out at once as the very personification of aristocracy. He was between fifty and sixty years old at the time, but he was still regular and punctual in his visits at the hospital, and minutely and kindly attentive to the most abject of its inmates. My brethren, there is nobility in condescension; and he is the best friend of humankind who, after the example of the Redeemer, goes about doing good, and who seeks to redeem and to elevate the outcasts of men.

“Incidentally I have referred to adaptation, and this may serve by way of further illustration to connect a story I heard many years ago, of the authenticity of

which I was well assured at the time. A young German was desirous to enter the Wesleyan ministry, and the late venerable Richard Reece was deputed to settle the preliminaries as to his ministerial qualification. Among other matters which the young man himself deemed recommendatory, and which he presumed would guarantee his reception, he stated, that he had been educated in a certain German university, that he had gone through a course of classical training, and, to crown the whole, had studied theology under the tuition of a certain eminent professor. Mr. Reece heard him quietly out; but at the end of each statement he simply observed, 'This is all very well, but piety is the principal thing.' My brethren, it would be well if this sentiment were engraven upon all our hearts. You are doing a great work; and nothing will make you equal to it, and give you success in it, but personal piety. Get as many extraneous aids as you can fairly command, but lay them all at the feet of Jesus. See to it that your piety is in advance of your other qualifications. Sanctify the service you have undertaken by prayer and a godly example; you will then have the happiness of hearing it announced in the great day, 'this or that man,' and 'this or that woman,' from your schools, 'were born there,' and you will be prepared to give the glory to our common Lord through one eternal day."

How the spiritual life was in the meantime thriving may be gathered from the following letter to Mr. T. Birchenall:—

"Macclesfield, Nov. 5th, 1873.—My dear Brother,—Your kind and sympathizing letter found me just making a turn again for the *better*, speaking after the manner of men, for to the believer 'whatever is, is best.' Spared a little longer to recover strength, spiritually as well as physically, I trust the gracious design of my covenant God will be answered. Yesterday, which was

the day of my first espousals, was a very gracious day ; and if my voice would have admitted of it, I could have raised a song of praise and adoring love that would have echoed through the house. And then, to bear a part in the song of the redeemed. To this we are tending, and the cares and anxieties and disappointments and afflictions of life are fitting us, as so many means of sanctified discipline, for the society and employments of 'all the saints to glory gone.' Ellen is again better, as well as myself, and unites with me in love to Patty and yourself and Ellen.—I remain, my dear brother, your affectionate brother,

JOHN BIRCHENALL."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LONG WAITING IN THE ANTECHAMBER—THE
MESSENGER—LESSONS.

1875—1880.

WE now approach the final stage of Dr. Birchenall's pilgrimage. We will briefly sketch its principal scenes, and describe the manner in which he greeted the messenger.

The close of the year 1874 brought with it affliction in a more aggravated form than any he had yet experienced. The old bronchial affection began to be complicated with others of a still more painful nature. For many months he was confined to his room, and for the time all expectation of recovery was taken away. Mrs. Birchenall also was in a state of extreme feebleness. Early in 1873 she had had a stroke of paralysis, and from that time gradually grew weaker, until, at the period we have now reached, she was "not able to point a foot, even when supported on either side." Miss Sarah Birchenall also, after the decease of her sisters, became an inmate of the house, being in a very delicate state of health. So that, from this time onward for several years, the house from which so much of help and comfort had gone forth to the sick

and suffering of every class, was itself an hospital. In these circumstances a heavy burden was imposed on the two faithful domestics, Harriet Broadhurst and Ann Barlow, who, the former for forty-three years, and the latter for twenty-two, devotedly ministered to the welfare of Dr. and Mrs. Birchenall. Cheerfully, nay nobly, was their service rendered throughout this long fight of afflictions, thus affording one more proof of the sanctifying influence of genuine piety on all the relationships of life.

To the surprise of everybody, himself and his medical friends included, in the course of the following summer the Doctor rallied. And how does he regard the change? The following, from a letter to Mrs. Lowthian, will tell us:—"June 16, 1875.—I was a little disappointed when I found the tide turning, and the head of the vessel seaward; but the Lord graciously prompted and disposed me to come down from my place of observation on the quarter-deck, to await His further pleasure." Of the months of weariness and exhaustion he says: "All this was more than tolerable. It was welcome; because I thought weariness and exhaustion are the two folding-doors which open the way into the paradise of God."

On the return of winter the malady set in again, and physical depression brought with it sore conflicts. The Doctor speaks of vivid perceptions of his own vileness in the presence of a God of infinitely perfect holiness. In a letter to Mrs. Collier, dated April 17, 1876, he writes:—"I have often been struck with the propriety of some of Bunyan's emblems in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, and with the amount of spiritual discernment they discover. The wicked one could

not have been portrayed so suitably by the designation 'Apollyon,' the destroyer, during any part of the pilgrimage as in the 'Valley of Humiliation'; and in the exercises referred to I have felt as if I were within a hair's-breadth of the grasp of him who was 'a murderer from the beginning.'" But these conflicts were only occasional. Within a week of the last letter we find him writing in his diary:—"Nothing in the Divine economy is so profound an abyss as the mercy and forbearance of the Lord to me-ward. I contemplate, I muse, I adore, 'I into nothing fall.'" And then, after describing the conflict just referred to, he adds: "The Lord interposed, however, in the hour of my greatest emergency, and 'turned the battle to the gate;' and I have since been sensibly held in the hollow of His hand."

Again, during the year 1876, the Doctor recovered, and this time to a still greater degree of health. Early in December he writes to the same friend:—"To see me once more abroad the people are amazed, as at one risen from the dead. I am a wonder to myself: I went out daily during the prevalence of the dry north-easterly winds, a few weeks ago, visiting eight or ten patients in succession on most occasions." With the self-forgetting zeal which so distinguished him, he risked his own life for the sake of others. Early in January 1877, a valued patient appeared to be at the point of death. Dr. Birchenall had then been for weeks confined to his room. On receiving the summons, he rose from his sick-bed, and was driven to the house on the most tempestuous day of the season, when a violent north-east wind was blowing up a snowstorm. It was with no little difficulty

that he could be got up-stairs to see his patient. He returned to bed, there to remain for eight or ten weeks with a bronchitic attack, complicated by acute lumbago.

His wife and sister continued in a state of great weakness, the latter having had some time before to undergo an amputation. It was natural for the Doctor to say, "I know not which of us may be called first. Looking at the two, I could wish to see them safely lodged in Abraham's bosom before I go myself to the house appointed for all living. Otherwise, I have a strong desire 'to depart and be with Christ.'" The event fell out in accordance with the wish so naturally expressed. July saw Mrs. Birchenall taken to her rest. Miss Birchenall lingered till the following February. Both were supported to the last by the consolations of Divine grace. For some time before her departure, Miss Birchenall lost the power of speech: the only words she could utter, for months, being those by which she was accustomed to respond in public or social prayer. She was a devoted Christian. Her memory, like that of her sister-in-law, will long be cherished in Macclesfield, and especially by the large class she had for many years under her care.

Meanwhile, Dr. Birchenall's health continued steadily to decline. True, he rallied a little in the course of 1877. But sufferings still more severe than those of 1875 were yet to be endured, and if anxieties for his loved ones were removed, they were replaced by the blank of comparative solitude. His faithful attendants did their best to relieve it; but many hours had to be spent every day in which he could but commune, in silence and in great weakness, with God through the

medium of His word, or with the spirits of just men made perfect through the medium of their writings. He was visited regularly by his own ministers, and at intervals by some from a distance.

The following account is from the pen of my colleague, the Rev. J. D. Geden :—

“On a single occasion it was my privilege to visit ‘the antechamber.’ Though Dr. Birchenall was my friend by correspondence, I had never seen him before, and I did not see him afterwards. But the one interview was memorable. I found him in bed supported by pillows,—a small-built, delicately-fashioned man, with fine intellectual features (features which years and suffering had moulded into almost ethereal beauty); the dark deep eye, despite the mists born of wearisome languors, sparkling with vivacity, humour, and thoughtfulness; a grave quiet resolution, equal to every demand, seated visibly on the thin pressed lips; the entire countenance lighted up at once with the natural illumination of a tender and generous spirit, and with the supernatural sweetness and radiance seen only on the faces of men who have long walked with God: this was the object which met my gaze when I entered his sick-room. He greeted me with a dignified modesty, and a warmth of Christian regard, such as would have been affecting under any circumstances; and I soon perceived that I was in the presence of a man whose gifts, attainments, and qualities, both of mind and heart, I had rather underrated than otherwise in my previous conception of them. Notwithstanding his physical weakness, we talked for an hour or two. Biblical literature, science, theology, the pulpit, the Church of Christ, with other topics, if I remember rightly, entered one after another into the conversation, Dr. Birchenall exhibiting throughout a knowledge, insight, and enthusiasm which were truly wonderful. He spoke likewise of his early religious history; of his favourite studies in the field of

sacred language and criticism; of the blessings and sorrows of his life (these last very cursorily); of the severe and protracted affliction by which God, as he felt, was then disciplining him for the services of eternity; and, above all, of the unvarying goodness of God to him; of the blessed sense which he had, amidst the lassitude and dejection to which his circumstances rendered him liable, of the presence of his Saviour; and of his unfaltering confidence that, when the spiritual purposes of his trial were answered, he should for ever and ever see the face of the Great King. It is little to say that in all this there was not a trace of affectation or self-glorifying on the part of the sufferer. His language and tone were those of a child, 'a weaned child,' speaking out before God, in all humility, reverence, and holy gladness, the thoughts of a heart which had learned the lessons of life from God's own Spirit, and which that same Spirit had cleansed by His mighty inspiration. Before I left him, Dr. Birchenall would have me go into his library, next door to his bedroom, and look round his books. I did this, and there saw the cherished tools and materials of his professional and literary labours as a reader and thinker. Grammars and lexicons, polyglott Bibles, and Greek and Latin classics, Oriental and Western Fathers, mediæval philosophy, the best modern writings on history and science, poetry and art, Italian, French, German, English; these and numerous works of other descriptions, ranking side by side with a large Methodist literature, and with standard books on medicine and surgery (all evidencing by their condition that they were brought together for use, and not for parade or ornament), formed a striking index to the character of their noble, learned, and truly godly owner. When I returned to his room, we had some further conversation suggested by his library. Then we spoke again of the nearing and everlasting future. After this I prayed with him, and heard his joyful responses, while I thanked God on his behalf,

and commended him to the succour and love of his Divine Redeemer. He parted from me with much affection; and I retired, feeling that I had rarely met with so beautiful an instance of gifted mind controlled and exalted by religion, or so edifying an example of Christian faith and patience, triumphing year after year (for such was the fact with Dr. Birchenall) over the torture of disease, and over the weariness of solitary age and decay. Among the treasures of my own study, not the least valued, both in themselves and as mementoes of my departed friend, are a seal which he gave me, bearing the inscription, *I commend thee to God*, taken from the Persian New Testament; one of his best loved Hebrew Bibles, the delightful edition of Leusden, printed at Amsterdam by Joseph Athias in 1667; and a well-thumbed copy of Ludolf's *Ethiopic Psalter*, with a loose ms. of Dr. Birchenall's between the leaves, containing an English transliteration of the forty-first, the eightieth, and other of the Psalms. Nothing was more evident, on the slightest acquaintance with Dr. Birchenall, than that the quotation from the hundred and nineteenth Psalm which he wrote on his deathbed, in elegant Hebrew characters, in the Amsterdam Bible, at the time he presented me with it, *The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver*, were literally true as the expression of his personal feeling and habit of life. He understands the worth of the Bible still better now; and, world without end, above the sphere of our poor human knowledge, he will listen with ever heightening rapture to the gracious words which there proceed out of the mouth of its all-glorious Author."

It would be easy to draw a harrowing picture of the physical sufferings through which Dr. Birchenall was called to pass during the last few years of his life. But most persons are at one time or another sufficiently familiarized with pain and weakness in themselves or

others, and need not to have their sensibilities aroused by such recitals. Suffice it to say that, from the nature and complication of his disorders, Dr. Birchenall endured far more than usually falls to the lot of those who live to an advanced age, and for a more protracted period.

It is a more grateful task to turn to the moral and spiritual aspects of the long struggle, which we shall find to present a pleasing contrast to the physical. First, be it observed that the mental faculties remained unimpaired to the end, as also the bodily senses. The vitality which so long warded off the inroads of disease from the most important organs of the frame, seemed to extend to those delicate instruments on the use of which so much of the enjoyment of life depends. The seasons in their rotation were still watched with interest, even when their changes were only defined by the varying lights of a patch of blue sky. The memory was still retentive, not only of scenes long gone by, but of the most recent and trivial incidents. And on the occasion of any visit there were the same careful forethought and minute attention as in days of yore. Advice and counsel were still freely sought and given, whether in the interest of patients or of personal friends. Even imagination was lively. Playfully throwing off any supposed application to himself of the adage, "Out of sight out of mind," as it regarded his distant friends, he thus remarks to one of them:—
"The mind is itself a visualizing faculty, exercising itself evermore objectively upon scenes and associations in the chambers of its imagery. It is in this way, as in a living phantasmagoria, you are vividly present to me, more or less, on each succeeding day." A

description of Melrose Abbey, written in the last year of his life, shows that the power of word-painting was never lost.¹ So with his favourite languages, and his philosophical pursuits. He could still express his thoughts in clear and chaste diction, even when every epistolary effort was irksome. The writing, too, retained its peculiar characteristics, at a time when his right hand was "the only physical organ of which he had the free and uniform command." On the occasion of a visit from a friend, there were the same calm self-possession and mental alertness, even when the words could be but slowly enunciated; and the same eager inquiry for those he loved and was accustomed to remember at the throne of grace. But the faintness and collapse which followed such interviews were more than can be told.

All this, however, is of secondary importance compared with the moral and spiritual aspects of the long-drawn strife. These will be best presented in

¹ "My brother Tom, who, by his business engagements during many years, has visited the cities and principal towns of England and the southern counties of Scotland, was describing the other evening the impression made on his mind by the first sight of Melrose Abbey, many years ago. He was travelling by coach at the time, in mid-winter, soon after midnight. The country was covered with snow, and icicles, varying from 18 inches to 3 feet, were suspended from the walls of the ruin, and from the window shafts and mullions. The air was sharp and serene, the sky cloudless, the moon in full orb, and its beams, glistening in silvery brightness on crisp patches of snow below, illumined the massive glacial pendants above with a halo of softly radiant brilliancy, at once profoundly impressive and enchanting. The entire spectacle, with the surroundings of the Abbey (he added), was so peculiarly novel and striking, that it would be impossible to convey any adequate idea of it. I recited Sir W. Scott's poem on the subject, which he had not seen :

'If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moonlight,'

which struck him as beautifully graphic of the solemn witchery of the ruin."

the Doctor's own words, written to various correspondents:—

“1878. *July 3.*—Of myself I may observe that the tabernacle is now fast giving way. I still sit up for two or three hours in the middle of the day; but am sensible that this will not continue long. I have been a wonder to myself physically, except when I have regarded my powers of endurance in the light of the Divine long-suffering; then the mystery has been solved. Nevertheless, I trust His gracious purposes are being accomplished. I find the Lord intimately near, especially so when I unhesitatingly embrace more and more the great salvation.

“*August 7.*—I am most concerned that the motions of my heart heavenward should often be so languid, and am amazed that there should be so much long-suffering shown to my slowness of heart; but then I see that it is all resolvable into the unfathomable abyss of redeeming mercy and love.”

The reference to the Divine long-suffering in the latter extract will explain that of the former. How could he complain, he means to say, at having to bear so much from the hand of the Lord, when the Lord had had to bear so much from him?

“1879. *Jan. 1.*—My course is getting sensibly shortened. Hitherto it has been by insensible and hair's-breadth changes; and the persistence of acute pain at intervals, both by night and by day, with the possibility that, with a constitution of more than ordinary vigour and elasticity, life might be prolonged to an indefinite period. There has been, in consequence, a demand for the exercise of faith and patience; and whilst jealous over myself, lest there should be any misgiving, I have had to guard the motions, as well as the issues, of my heart, with a vigilance which has often

been a painful exercise, in my uniform loneliness. Well, some day the shadows will all pass away, and the day of eternity dawn.

“*May 12.*—I lie at the feet of Jesus, my chief concern being that He may be glorified, whether it be by life or by death. His precious atonement, His all-sufficiency, the immutability of His counsels, and His precious promises, are my refuge in seasons of weakness and of sore spiritual conflict. But no one can conceive what a demand there is for the exercise of faith and patience.

“*Oct. 2.*—It has often been remarked by good men, as the tabernacle has been giving way under the force of disease, that ‘dying work is hard work:’ and to realize this, in the disquietude and faintness and discomfort of physical prostration, makes an unwonted demand upon the fortitude and patience of the inner man. Otherwise, to the Christian believer, in no other sense does this remark hold good.”

These extracts speak for themselves. But they only give us glimpses of the protracted and fiery ordeal through which Dr. Birchenall was called to pass. The spirit in which he endured it will never be fully known but by those who witnessed it. Patience in him had her perfect work. Under his heaviest afflictions, the main desire was, not that they should be speedily terminated, but that they should be sanctified. If there was one desire more than another which he cherished, with submission to the Divine will, it was to depart and be with Christ. The ordinary instinct of humanity seemed to be eradicated. His tenacity of life was wholly physical and involuntary. The signs of its continuance brought him no joy. “My appetite is still good,” he said, nearly a twelvemonth before his decease, “which is somewhat of a disappointment to me.” But

toward the end of the summer of 1879 the desired haven gradually emerged into view, though hope was still occasionally damped by symptoms of improvement. The following are the last entries in the diary, the commencement of which, as our readers will remember, dates so far back as 1822 :—

“1879. *Oct.* 7.—There has been much failure in my vital energies at times during the last week or two, insomuch that I felt persuaded that I was getting near the promised land ; indeed, it seemed as if I could desery the open port in the distant shore. Oh, how exhilarating to my spirits the prospect that I should soon be with the Lord ! Then the extreme prostration was succeeded by a little rallying power, and I found myself again in the open sea. Musing on my disappointment, I thought of our beloved Mr. Meek, who is seriously ill of a recently developed malignant disease. Our chief lay pillar unexpectedly struck down, and a ‘helper,’ 1 Cor. xii. 28, a mere ἀντιλήψις, lingering on from year to year, in utter helplessness. Well, our times are in His hands who rightly ordereth all that is.

“*Nov.* 15.—Mr. Meek died yesterday morning at Southport. The announcement caused me deep sorrow of heart, and I have wept as I have thought of the breach thereby occasioned in the circuit and in the Connexion. Verily, a prince in our Israel has passed away.

“19.—Mr. Meek was interred this morning at the cemetery, amidst the lamentations and tears of not a few who knew and appreciated his moral worth.”

His own departure was not much longer delayed. In December the symptoms began to be more aggravated. “I now see land from the masthead unmistakably,” he writes, “and confidently hope before long to touch the shore.”

From this time onward every letter and every interview gave tokens of the peace and joy and hope in which he awaited "nature's final hour." On the 12th of March 1880, I received through his faithful pastor, Mr. Hooton, his last written message, probably some of the last words he ever wrote: "The soul centred in Jesus, and from its peaceful surroundings (from centre to circumference) arising evermore aspirations of praise, gratitude, and love."

In this frame he continued till the summons came. It cannot be said that he triumphed over death, because he did not regard death's approach as that of an enemy. The victory over death had been achieved thirty years before, and the ground then gained was never lost. There is therefore no need to describe the final scene: it was a meet close to a life which, with all its warfare, had been for the most part spent in the secret of the Lord's pavilion and on the very borders of the goodly land. On the 22nd of March the messenger came. Some of the last words he heard on earth were words of cheer from a distant friend. And at a quarter to three on the afternoon of that day the sainted spirit of John Birchenall was caught up to the paradise of God.

Little remains to be told. Minute directions had been left respecting the funeral, which he desired should be strictly private. Though Macclesfield would willingly have done him honour, Dr. Birchenall's wish was scrupulously observed. Still, many friends followed his remains to the grave. Seven weeks later they assembled in large numbers to hear his funeral sermon in that Sunderland Street Chapel which he had

loved so well. Mr. Hooton was to have conducted a similar service in Brunswick Chapel, but on the previous Friday he had himself been suddenly summoned away. His place was supplied by the Rev. J. S. Jones, Chairman of the District.

The first reflection that will suggest itself to the reader of these last pages will probably be, how natural the connexion between the life and the death of this good man! And that may perhaps suggest another. If life had not been one long preparation for eternity, could it have had such a tranquil close? Would the same result have been attained if there had been the same busy performance of duty, but not the same "respect to the recompense of the reward"? Would duty itself have been so faithfully discharged if the reckoning time had been left out of view? We think not. And we have placed these remarks first, because we think one of the chief lessons of the Doctor's life is to be found in its unworldliness. He has summed it all up himself in the terse statement: "The secret of success in working out the problem, 'How to make the best of both worlds,' is contained in the words of the Saviour, 'in the world,' but not 'of the world.'"

Another train of reflections naturally arises from the mysterious providence that barred the entrance of such a man on the office of the Christian ministry. Many were the trials and afflictions of his life, but this was the greatest. Not that he coveted honour, except the honour that cometh from God only. Had his way been opened into the home ministry, there is no dignity his brethren could have conferred upon him of which he would not have proved himself worthy. This is saying little. It is a much greater thing—so

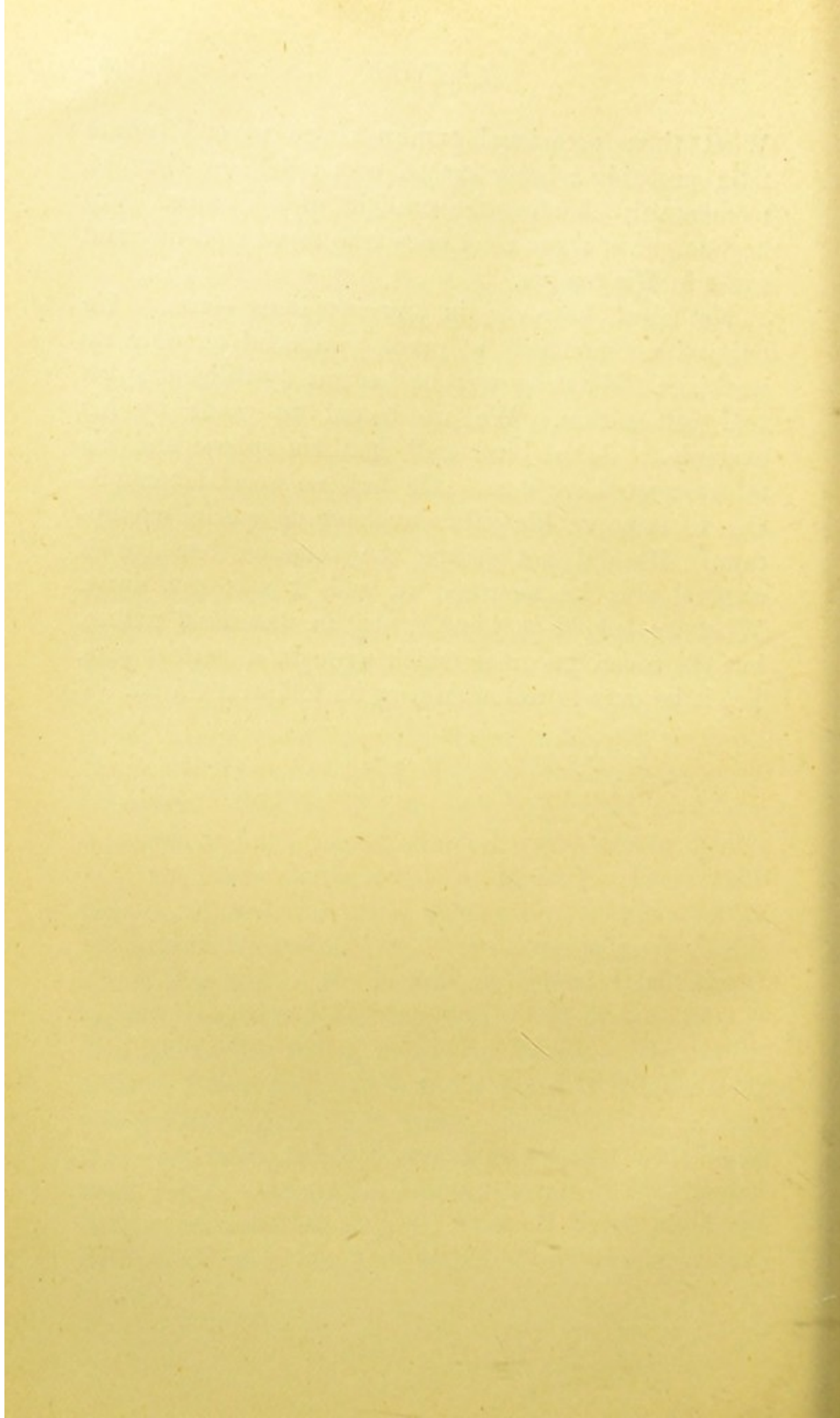
he would have esteemed it—to say that he would have been in the front rank of those evangelists whose names are enshrined among the Church's tenderest memories. If sent abroad—whether to stand on the very spot where our Lord was crucified, and there to proclaim his ascended Lord, or to barbarous tribes in the ends of the earth, where much of his learning would have been thrown away—in either case he would have counted it his highest joy to declare the unsearchable riches of Christ. But the Spirit suffered him not. We must bow before the mystery we cannot explain. His light was not put under a bushel. For two generations it shone in every corner of his native town. The connexional loss was a local gain. Never for a moment did he suffer the disappointment of his first and holiest ambition to disturb the current of his ecclesiastical sympathies. He saw men of humbler abilities pass into the ranks which he was not permitted to enter; he sat at their feet, enjoyed their ministrations, and emulated their devotedness to God. He was tender of their reputation, and mindful of their wants. And if his judgments were not infallible, they were at all times the judgments of charity. Any error was owing to the inevitable limits of the human understanding, not to the irregular impulses of an ill-kept heart.

And how complete the character he presents to us! The root of all was profound reverence toward God. From his youth up, the fear of God was before his eyes. When the love of God was shed abroad in his heart, the fear of God was deepened, not displaced. It pervaded his entire being. The genial playfulness which sometimes rippled the surface never troubled

the depths beneath. Levity in conversation with men, and unhallowed familiarity in intercourse with God, were both conspicuous by their absence. But this fear was not the abject dread of superstitious ignorance. It did not dull the edge of his desire to enter into the holiest, but rather sharpened it. He longed with a passionate longing to dwell in the secret place. "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," was the constant cry of his heart. Hence the frequency and fervour of his devotions, and his unweariable attendance upon all the means of grace. It was not that he abounded in leisure, and did not know what to do with his time. Nor yet that he needed relaxation simply from the severer toils of life. Means of recreation were open to him from which many are debarred. The inviting fields of classical learning, of Christian divinity, of philosophical speculation, lay before him, where he could range at will. He loved seclusion, he loved literature, he loved hard, knotty problems, he loved his books. But all this, uncorrected, would have been a selfish passion, an intellectual covetousness, which, like all other covetousness, is idolatry. From such snares his soul was free. Above all other knowledge he desired the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He desired to behold God's glory: he saw it, and it never departed. Out of this love to God sprang his warm, expansive charity. The multitude of minor graces were not wanting to complete his equipment. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, charity—all these were there. Occasional transgressions of the perfect law he mourned in secret. But his heart was right with God, and his feet steadfast in the covenant.

What these occasional transgressions were I cannot tell; probably a hasty speech, or a rebellious thought, momentarily clouding the sunlight of his peace. But he was one of those elect ones who serve God day and night in His temple.

Not elect, however, in any invidious sense. He enjoyed no monopoly of grace, wonderful as were its workings. What he was he became by diligent spiritual self-culture. We are bound to profit by his example. John Birchenall had his sphere and his talents: we have ours. He had no special commission to improve his gifts: we have no special exemption. He did not escape the common heritage of original sin: he mourned it, and it was put away. What we behold in him is, not an untainted nature, but the sovereign grace which wrought a perfect cure. Let it be ours to follow him as he followed Christ.



APPENDIX.



I. APHORISMS AND REFLECTIONS.

A.—*Spiritual.*

1. "Draw nigh to God;" for whatever darkness there may be in the world, there is none at the mercy-seat.

2. Never so pray in the presence of others as to make others weary of prayer.

3. They wander into a far country who forsake their Father's home; and they meet with coarse and scanty fare who turn their backs upon their Father's board.

4. It was a sure evidence that the Jewish people had become deaf to the Divine command, when they required *a sign* as the ground of their belief.

5. If you would withdraw yourself from the ways of men, and from the observation of men; if you would be preserved from the influence of the world, and be safe amid the mutations and convulsions of the world; if you would cease from your own doings as to creature dependence and self-dependence, and learn the blessedness of trusting only in the Lord; if you would have the smile of Heaven in your way to heaven, and hide yourself in Christ until the day when He shall come to be admired in His saints,—you must be much in the solemn exercises of devotion in the closet.

6. The chilling influence of a cold atmosphere is scarcely felt if we be well fed and well clothed. So it is also in things spiritual.

7. If you would not forget the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge, you must walk in the way of His precepts. Ps. cxix. 27.

8. What you lack in length and breadth, you may have in depth.

9. Your eye is dim, not it may be by disease, but by reason of disuse.

10. A familiarity with earthly things, however lawful, if it be too close or long-continued, will obscure your perceptions of things spiritual.

11. An empty vessel cannot live in a tempest; but if a ship be well and duly freighted, it may ride upon the billow and outlive the storm.

12. Those who were the first to enter the Promised Land had not the largest inheritance there.

13. You must have light in your dwelling if you would keep your house in order; and the light that is given for the purpose will be withdrawn if you *do not* keep it in order.

14. Look to that which is *left*, as well as to that which is *lost*: "Thou hast a little strength," etc.

15. Interest in a partnership depends on the amount of deposit: "Joint-heirs with Christ;" "for whom I have suffered the loss of all things."

16. Shallows, and narrow streams, and stagnant pools, are easily frozen.

17. Poverty makes a man a hard bed.

18. The shadow is least when the sun is on the meridian.

19. The Spirit's power and prevalence in intercession is often in broken accents.

20. That your works may be perfect before God, they must be animated by perfect love, sustained and guided by perfect faith, and sanctified by perfect patience.

21. To die to all below, and to live to all above, is within the compass of none but the genuine followers of Jesus.

22. The greater your elevation spiritually, the wider your influence.

23. If you would put to silence the gainsayings of the grand adversary, echoed again and again by a troubled conscience, you must come to the blood of sprinkling.

24. It is our mercy, under circumstances of undutifulness, that we are allowed to remain in the family.

25. If Mount Zion is on the other side Jordan, Pisgah is on this side.

26. The swifter your course, the less likely you are to be checked and thrown aside by every obstacle that may be in your way.

27. Have evermore on your standard this motto, "Here we have no continuing city;" and hold it high enough,—as there will always be a sufficient breeze to unfurl it and make it legible,—and you will not be likely to be incommoded by worldly overtures.

28. A stone, if it serve as a landmark, is not to be despised.

29. If you would not be mingled with the heathen, you must not tarry in the plain.

30. That which in the revealed will of God to ordi-

nary minds may appear to have a vague and indefinable application, to the truly spiritual will have the force of a positive precept.

31. When God is displeased, the cloud departs from off the tabernacle. Numbers xii.

32. Spiritual sight hath its seat in the heart: "Even to this day the veil is on their heart."

33. How melancholy when the habitations of Jacob are no longer quiet habitations, but habitations of dragons!

34. Keep your heart fixed on Divine things, and you will keep it in tune: "I will sing and give praise."

35. A dead stock is the highway to bankruptcy.

36. Some of the children of the household shut themselves up in the closet, when they ought to be employed in the family.

37. "The breath of life" will not preserve you from the breath of calumny.

38. As long as a ship rides upon the billows, they are the means of her progress.

39. If you are stranded, you will have to wait for the return of the tide—"the moving of the waters."

40. All corrupt forms of religion require artificial elements for their support—numbers, affluence, ceremonial observances, splendid edifices, gorgeous vestments, etc.

41. Christian men who are full of business should be filled with the Spirit, if they must keep an even balance.

42. It is a sore evil to make the wicked one your conscience-keeper.

43. The lightest bodies will fall to the earth if there be not a breath of air to keep them up.

44. Some professors of religion can only hear when the Divine Being speaks in the whirlwind or the tempest; but those who have the finest spiritual perception can hear the still small voice.

45. The locality of the ancient Eden is barren, owing not so much to intrinsic causes, as to the indolence of its inhabitants.

46. If you would not have the Lord turn away His ear from your cry in the day of trouble, you must not turn away your ear from His counsel in the day of peace.

47. The answer of a good conscience will stand you in stead in all emergencies.

48. I find the pride of my heart to lie deeper than its vanity; because many a compliment to the latter has been forgotten, but a wound to my self-esteem has, on more occasions than one, left an ineffaceable memorial.

49. The secret of our moral strength is in our self-renunciation; the secret of our spiritual strength in our union with Jesus.

50. There is a wide difference between self-renunciation and self-annihilation. The former is perfectly compatible with all the relations and duties of social life; the latter is suited only to the life of the cloister. The one is practicable only in the complicated relations of society; the other can only be accomplished in a state of absolute seclusion, and the *service* of the believer is to be "*a living sacrifice.*"

51. The voice of the believer should be heard in the closet, that He who seeth in secret may be no stranger

to it; and before the world, that they who look on the outward appearance may take knowledge of him that he hath been with Jesus.

52. In the confessions of professing Christians, "unworthiness" is a term which is often employed, like many others, to cover practical unfaithfulness to grace already received. It resembles the wrappings of an Egyptian mummy, which serve the purpose of preserving a bodily form, but under which there is only deformity and decay.

53. If you are a wise master-builder, you will put no dead stones into the living temple.

54. Nothing is more common, among professors of religion, than the substitution of articles of faith for faith in its vital exercise.

55. A life of faith is not a life of fond religious conceits, but of a Divine principle which unites the soul to Jesus, and draws from Him spiritual health and vigour: it is not a life of religious self-complacency and easy indolence, but of hard labour in the vineyard of the Lord: it is not a life of quiet seclusion, but one of aggression and of conflict: it is not a life of dreamy sentimental sympathy with the afflictions of the saints of former ages, but a life of self-renunciation, in short, of actual conformity to the Divine mind.

56. The brightest manifestations of the Divine presence may be made in the most unlikely places. The burning bush was seen in the desert, and the glory of the Lord in the land of Ezekiel's captivity.

57. Our resemblance to the Divine image is that which constitutes our happiness. In the absence of holiness, though there may be the answer of a good conscience, there will be still in the soul an aching void.

58. The grand defect in the preaching of the present day is that it deals more with the intellect than with the conscience. The great want of the churches is the spirit of prayer; and to have power with men, we must first have power with God.

59. No trial of faith is ever more fiery than that which the believer sometimes experiences when he is groaning for full redemption. A piercing sense of his native corruption, and of the purity of the Divine law; the risings of unbelief, and the buffetings of Satan; a dreary wilderness of experiences, from which there appears to be no way of escape; the absence of light and the want of companionship; with a crippling of his moral and spiritual energies, insomuch that duties and exercises which were easy and delightful become irksome and burdensome: these, and similar experiences, test the strength of that Divine principle, and of the man's convictions as to the promises which bear on the "great salvation."

60. If we would assure our hearts before God, we must not only avoid evil of every kind, but use things lawful lawfully. The word of God must prescribe both the measure and mode of our enjoyments. If this line be passed, disquietude must and ought to follow, because this is a virtual spiritual acknowledgment of the transgression. If the line be not passed, disquietude of spirit becomes itself a sin, because it is virtually a taking exception at that which the wisdom and goodness of the Highest allows.

61. If you would not feel the burden of the cross, you must bear it daily.

62. To have the work of God in our hands, and our own designs in our hearts, is a grievous sin against the majesty of Heaven.

63. There are many biographical portraiture of

which it may be truly observed, *Non pictoris opus fuit hoc, sed pectoris.*

64. Mark how quickly the וַיִּבְרַח which prefaced the complaint of Abram (Gen. xv. 3) was followed by the וַיִּבְרַח , announcing a gracious answer on the part of the Lord (ver. 4).

65. It was well and pertinently observed by Kempis, that there are many who ask "who among the saints will be accounted greatest in the kingdom of heaven," that have no well-grounded assurance that they themselves will be reckoned even among the least.

66. Many tread the courts of the Lord whose feet are in the "broad way;" and many "take delight in approaching unto God," who have pleasure in unrighteousness.

67. That afflictions may be sanctified, they must be viewed in the light of eternity.

68. Self-confidence and self-delusion are intimately associated in the sphere of moral and spiritual life.

69. We learn to die to all below, and then we die to be "for ever with the Lord."

70. The follies of early childhood are mere foibles; those of second childhood are the quintessence of folly, and of depravity withal, not unfrequently.

71. Many a brave fellow has been cut down on the battle-field, whose comrade (perhaps morally a mere poltroon) has, by a mysterious providence, escaped the general carnage, and had his breast decorated with a medal.

72. Uniform piety is the highway to perfection. It supposes no "great things" in the exercises of the believer; it involves no enterprise; but it comprises the sum total of Christian obedience, as indicated in the command, "Walk before me."

73. When there is a downward tendency in your spirit under the pressure of outward circumstances, place yourself in the balances of the sanctuary, and put into the opposite scale this command, "In all your patience possess ye your souls." If you keep your eye steadily fixed upon this, you will find that the equilibrium will be gradually restored.

74. Be a witness for Jesus. The reproach of Christ will help to keep you in your proper place.

75. There are two moral habits which must be maintained, if we would be fortified under the wrongs, and ills, and inconveniences of life, that is to say, "lowliness of mind" and "long-suffering."

76. Despair makes us blind to mercies and deliverances which may be just at hand. When God opens our eyes, we can see things which were previously invisible (*vide* Gen. xxi. 19).

77. When tossed with a tempest, the soul of a believer is morally incapable of comfort. Faith, however, comes to its aid, and with it more or less composure of spirit; but it can only be brought into exercise by submissiveness to the Divine will.

78. Moral sympathy lies deeper in the soul than that which is purely mental. There are some persons of my acquaintance whose cultivated taste and scholarship would draw me within the range of their social influence, were it not for something repulsive in their moral character, or in their lofty exclusive ecclesiasticism.

79. Untrodden paths are safe paths if the Lord lead the way.

80. It is a dangerous thing to set ourselves against the monitions of conscience as our counsellor; it is a greater evil to have conscience arrayed against us as a witness.

81. If you would sing with the lark, you must soar with him.

82. Health is life in equable and vigorous motion.

83. The budding rod of pride (Ezek. vii. 10) and the budding rod of Aaron are never found on the same stem.

84. About twenty years ago (1840) I paid a visit to a Christian friend in the neighbourhood of Uttoxeter; and on one of the two days I spent at her house, I retired into the fields for purposes of meditation and prayer. My oratory was under a thickly-set hedgerow of holly; and on its branches were blossoms, and berries both green and scarlet. A beautiful emblem. The life of the Christian should be at once a life of promise and a life of productiveness.

85. If our gracious desires be sacredly guarded and cherished, and set in motion, they will soon bring us within the sphere of the Divine attraction: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

86. The graces of the Spirit are not nurtured in the lap of ease, of indolence, and self-indulgence.

87. Self-reproach is the devil's net, in which he delights to take and to torment the unwary followers of the Saviour.

88. The testimony of the believer respects the past: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us;" the Divine testimony the future: "Fear not, for I will help thee."

89. It is a sore evil to set light by the mercies of the covenant. Esau did this, and he forfeited the blessing attaching to primogeniture.

90. To give up our interest in Christ, through anguish of spirit, "when joys are withered all and dead," is to rend the fine linen of our covenant relation.

91. Captiousness and censoriousness are habits of mind which are acquired in the devil's fencing school.

92. Some of the most dangerous weapons which are turned against us, in seasons of spiritual conflict, are those which have been forged in the workshop of our own minds.

93. Straited circumstances are the humiliations by which the providence of God hedges up the narrow way, unto those of His people who would otherwise be in danger of turning aside into bye-paths.

94. In the holy mount no voice is heard but that of God.

95. The breadth of the commandment is only seen in a strong light.

96. Our judgments, when they are not determined by the principles of the oracles of God, take the complexion of our prepossessions.

97. When curiosity is in the ascendant, sobriety is in a state of declination.

98. Keep under the shadow of the Almighty, and you will keep under the shield of the Almighty.

99. The water of life in the "wells of salvation" lies below the surface, that men may be at the pains to *draw* therefrom.

100. The stream widens and deepens as we "hasten to be swallowed up of everlasting life."

B.—*Theological and Critical.*

101. *Old Testament and New Testament miracles.*—The miracles recorded in the N. T. are evidences of Divine power quite as convincing as those recorded in the Old. To give animation to a dead body, even when

the processes of dissolution, in both solids and fluids, had already obtained,—to restore vital energy in the one, and soundness and susceptibility in the other, so that all the phenomena in the current of life shall be made to reappear and harmonize, as if the laws of biology had suffered no suspension,—was an indication of omnific, uncontrollable power. And He who could do this with a word, could as easily arrest the earth and the moon in their diurnal revolutions without the slightest disturbance in the arrangements of the solar system.

102. *Miracles not to be perpetuated.*—It could not be the design of the Moral Governor of the world that miracles should be perpetually interposed in attestation of that which is of Divine and universal obligation; because there is no necessary connexion between miraculous evidence and moral conviction. The Israelites saw the wonders of the Divine hand; “then believed they His word, they sang His praise;” but “they soon forgot His works,” because “they waited not for His counsel;” and although their journeyings in the wilderness were a series of miracles, they entered not into the land of promise by reason of unbelief.

103. *Prophecy and History.*—The sceptical innuendo that history is sometimes interpreted by prophecy, is merely the subterfuge of a disingenuous intellect. Predictions, distinctly and formally enunciated, as to the future and irreparable decadence and desolation of states and empires, of which there was not the shadow of an indication at the time,—when, after the lapse of numerous intervening years, they have received their accomplishment to the very letter,—can only be explained by reference to the relation in which the human family is placed under the omniscient eye of the Moral Governor of the world.

104. *Absolute moral perfection of God.*—The Divine will can be under no law but the law of absolute moral

perfection. In the economy of Providence, the law of righteousness is indicated by exhibitions of goodness on the one hand, and of severity on the other: but they must be regarded as harmonious, rather than distinct, exhibitions of the Divine character; because in the Divine attributes there can be neither distinctness nor opposition: and in the economy of grace, where the moral purpose of God is to be the most fully and illustriously displayed, to introduce an absolute rule, which supposes such opposition, is practically to acknowledge two antagonist principles, absolute and independent; or, which is an equal absurdity, to place the creature under unconditional law, is to transfer that which is conditional into that which is absolute, and so to confound our ideas of essential and dependent existences, and to deprive the Divine procedure, in relation to man, of that which is the basis of law, its correspondence with reason and equity.

105. *Deity and Divinity.*—The *Divinity* of the Supreme Being is something logically distinct from His *Deity* (Θειότης as distinguished from Θεότης, Bengel): the former is the formal expression, by manifestations of wisdom, and power, and goodness, of His natural perfections; the latter regards the Divine essence, and can be apprehended only by direct *spiritual* manifestation: creation displays the one, redemption the other. These two views of the Divine character are well and beautifully expressed by Addison and Watts respectively, “The Hand that made us is Divine,” and “Here the whole Deity is known.” Jesus “was in the bosom of the Father;” there we have His deity: “all things were made by Him;” “He was in the world;” there we have His divinity: and His incarnate redeeming purpose was, “the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father,” its expression, by fulness of grace and truth, of the love of God to a fallen world.

106. *Providence continual.*—Our everyday life is a

series of providential interpositions; "O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast;" and yet it is only in circumstances of deliverance from imminent danger that we distinctly recognise that it is the hand of God which "holdeth our souls in life."

107. *Retribution in Jewish history.*—Nothing indicates more clearly the moral government of God than the retributive arrangements which obtain in the world in the course of Jewish history. The valley of Hinnom became, in the lapse of ages, the valley of slaughter; and the place where the bodies of the innocents were offered in sacrifice to Moloch, a vast charnel-house to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

108. *Creation not more inconceivable than infinite space and duration.*—To my own mind, there is as great a difficulty in framing any conception of immensity and eternity, abstractedly considered, as in conceiving how the universe first came into being; or even of a mode of existence which presupposes an eternally self-sufficient independent Being, by whom the worlds were framed.

109. *Ephrem Syrus on the Eternal Sonship.*—The mystery involved in the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship is clearly and summarily expressed in these words of Ephrem Syrus (of which the Latin version is): "Generatio Filii Dei supra omnem mentis humanæ vim et aciem assurgit." And he argues, with great propriety, that it is not to be supposed that the mind of man can apprehend it, inasmuch as on subjects with which he is familiar there have been so many discordant opinions, on the nature and origin of the human soul, for example.

110. *The death of Christ voluntary.*—The humanity of Jesus was not under penal law, because it was not under sin. He became "obedient unto death" voluntarily, not by constraint. Had His death been the result of any of the ordinary processes of mortality,

“the devil, who had the power of death,” might have had occasion for triumph. The end was accomplished by the mysterious union of the Divine with the human, that, by entering the domain of death, Jesus might “spoil principalities and powers,” and so deliver the redeemed from the galling yoke of apprehension naturally investing the surroundings of a dying hour.

111. *Sufferings of Christ and of Christians.*—It is painfully revolting to my own mind to hear of pious people instituting a comparison between their afflictions and the sufferings of Jesus on their account. The fact is, there can be no comparison, because there is no analogy. Christ feels the tenderest sympathy with the members of “His body the Church,” in their various and complicated modes of suffering and of sorrow; but they can never approximate, by a similar sympathy, to the anguish and sorrow He endured when He made His soul an offering for sin; and it can only be apprehended by its saving results, as expressed in the song of the redeemed, “Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,” etc.

112. *Christ did not “die of a broken heart.”*—Dr. Stroud, in his treatise on *The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, suggested—in explanation of the blood and water which issued from the Saviour’s side when pierced by the spear—that the proximate cause of death might have been rupture of the heart, in other words, that the Redeemer “died of a broken heart;” and this opinion was endorsed by the late Sir James Simpson of Edinburgh, and by other distinguished medical men, as well as by some theologians. This hypothesis, however, ignores the *Divine* in the person of the great Atoning Sacrifice; and, by resolving the phenomena of His death into purely natural causes, divests it of the sacred mystery it involves. Moreover, the collapse and faintness which are invariable concomitants in rupture of the heart, preclude “crying out with a loud voice,” and

the perfect command of the organs of speech, as noted by the evangelists: Matt. xxvii. 50, Mark xv. 37, Luke xxiii. 46. Compare the case recorded in *Braithwaite's Retrospect*, vol. xii. part 2, p. 61, with the one in the *British Medical Journal* for April 1873, p. 403.

113. *Agency of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.*—In the kingdom of providence, the agency of Christ, the Eternal Son, is supreme; in the kingdom of grace, the agency of the Eternal Spirit. The atonement, as the accomplishment of a mysterious purpose, in “the power of God and the wisdom of God,” gave to Jesus “a name which is above every name.” Hence, when “there was war in heaven,” even the militant host, referred to in Rev. xii. 11, “overcame through the blood of the Lamb;” and in the kingdom of His grace, the invitation of “the Bride” is only the expression of the invitation of “the Spirit,” as “the Lord and giver of life.”

114. *The Church's influence, moral and spiritual.*—The Church is a centre of moral influence. Its vital relation to its Founder and Head excludes from its economy all maxims of worldly and state policy. It operates upon society by a force peculiar to itself. Its influence is in its spirituality; and when this is in the ascendant, it effectuates, by its regenerating character, a moral revolution. It thus becomes itself a supreme agency and authority, of which the Holy Spirit is the animating principle. It is His Spirit in the Church which subjugates the spirits of men to the yoke of Jesus. He thus makes them “a holy nation,” a “kingdom of priests,” to indicate that He who is the Head of the body the Church is also “the head of all principality and power.”

115. *Mental and moral harmony only in the Holy Ghost.*—There is no real harmony between that which is mental and that which is moral in the soul of man, but that which results from the operation of the Holy

Spirit. He alone is the supreme balancing power. He alone can restore the equilibrium when it has become disturbed; and as His gracious presence and influence are necessary for the keeping of the heart and mind (Phil. iv. 7), it is equally essential to a growth in holiness, and the perfecting of the fruit of the Spirit, that His gracious equilibrium should be guarded and maintained (Gal. v. 22, and Col. iii. 15).

116. *Free agency and the influence of the Holy Spirit.*—Free agency in matters of salvation is not a discretionary power to be exercised at pleasure: like every other moral faculty, it is under law, and therefore under limitations. It is the practical independence of the will which constitutes its rebellion; and this is perpetuated and confirmed evermore by the illusion into which the human mind so naturally falls, that it has an inherent disposition to the chief good, and an inherent power which can be brought to bear upon it at any conceivable period of human probation. In the economy of grace the notion of self-sufficiency is entirely excluded, and the presumptions founded upon it denounced as perilous in the extreme. Nevertheless, a class of motives is substituted, by which the judgment may be influenced, and the will inclined to that which is saving and Divine; and it is the co-determining influence and agency of the Holy Spirit at the time which indicates this as “the day of salvation.”

117. *Regeneration the work of the Holy Spirit.*—Regeneration is a change in the soul immediately and exclusively Divine. We are “born of God;” we are “born from above.” The change, in its very essence, is in direct antithesis to our natural birth; it is “not of blood;” it is a personal change; but as it is something spiritual, it is something more than outward reformation or the garb of righteous sanctity, and cannot be effected by our own efforts; it is “not of the will of the flesh,” it is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man,

independently of all human agency, and supposed sacerdotal or sacramental efficacy; it is "not of the will of man," but the result of a personal and appropriate act of faith on the Son of God, as the world's atonement; and the *power* so to appropriate the benefits of His atonement as to realize the privileges and capabilities of the new state and relation is specifically Divine; and it is communicated to all who are morally disposed to "take the blessing from above:" "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God," etc. (John i. 12, 13).

118. *Faith and faithfulness.*—The faith which unites to Jesus ennobles the soul. "Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." "Joint-heirs with Christ." "By faith the elders obtained a good report." "And he (Abraham) was called the friend of God." Faith is the heraldic distinction of an illustrious ancestry. "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac!" "The faith which is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice." And fidelity, as the practical manifestation of saving faith, is its outward emblazonry, and will be a distinctive feature in its perpetual glory. "Thee (Noah) have I found faithful in this generation." "Moses was faithful in all his house." "Antipas, my faithful martyr." "I will give to him that overcometh a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." "And I will give him the morning star."

119. *Free-agency and the fall.*—All created moral intelligences, as they are endowed with free-agency, must be under moral law. Its due and undeviating observance, as it is the dictate of the highest reason, is also the condition upon which the primitive relation of a moral agent is suspended. But free-agency supposes, in its very nature, the possibility of a bias in the wrong direction. Now, moral evil, as it must have originated

with a created moral intelligence, must have been primarily the result of such a possibility; and any conceivable deviation from the principles of moral law would give rise to it, by introducing into the moral faculty an element of insubordination. The main difficulty in a question of this nature is to conceive of a determining motive which does not involve the previous existence, or at least quasi-existence, of moral evil. Let us imagine that the angels which sinned had bounds prescribed for the exercise of their intelligence: there are the instincts of intelligence as well as those which are purely moral; and upon the harmonious exercise of the two would depend the rectitude and purity of creatures with such endowments. Now, desire to enlarge the sphere of intellectual vision is perfectly natural; but if this desire were in the ascendant, by the force of curiosity, it might, in order to its gratification, carry its subjects beyond the limits prescribed, and entail upon them all the consequences of violated law. This view of the subject seems to be in harmony with the statement of St. Jude, that the angels who fell "left their own habitation." "The serpent beguiled Eve" by addressing himself to the instinctive faculty of intelligence: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The theory of Milton on the subject cannot reasonably be maintained, because it presupposes an irregular *moral* bias in actual operation, in direct opposition too, at the period indicated, to the manifested majesty and glory of the Divine Being.

120. *The twofold witness.*—The witness of the Spirit, in the experience of the believer, and the witness of his own spirit are concurrent, but not co-ordinate. There cannot be the answer of a good conscience, in an evangelical sense, until the conscience is purged by the blood of the covenant; and of this the Holy Comforter must be the witness in our hearts: but with His testimony there is the impress of a new law, and new dispositions in

accordance with it; so that evangelical obedience has to be conjoined with sprinkling of the blood of Christ, if we would hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.

121. *Election antemundane but not unconditional.*— Election has regard to character. This is the case in the processes of human judgment: it is so in a far higher sense as the result of the Divine volition. Predestination is made dependent upon foreknowledge (Rom. viii. 29), not because there is any natural sequence between the two in the Divine mind, but because of their necessarily logical connexion in our own conceptions. The election of God is the election of grace (Rom. xi. 5). It was in “His eternal (antemundane) purpose” (Eph. iii. 11, and i. 11); for Christ as our propitiation was “pre-ordained,” and His saints were “chosen in Him,” “before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. i. 20, and Eph. i. 4). Redemption, therefore, ideally and formally (in its Author and in its object), was supralapsarian; the fall was necessary, however, to its manifestation (Rom. xvi. 26). In the atonement “the mystery” was revealed, and its object made known; and if believers are chosen in Him before the commencement of time, the riches of the glory of this mystery is Christ dwelling in the heart (Col. i. 26, 27): *Θέλημα, βουλή, πρόθεσις, πρόγνωσις, προορισμός*, all harmonizing in the person of Christ as the archetype of sanctified humanity; the foreknowledge of God passing through the conditions of time, and selecting, as the heirs of glory, the “sanctified in Christ Jesus.”

122. *Sufficient and efficacious grace.*— There was a frivolous and absurd distinction as to *sufficient* grace and *efficacious* grace framed by the schoolmen for the purpose of solving the problem of the first transgression, and of giving countenance to the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation. It is the very nature of grace to be sanctifying and saving, and its efficacy is

involved in its sufficiency (2 Cor. ix. 8), the very terms being equivalent. It may be rendered inefficacious by the absence of moral liberty on the part of its recipient, and so the grace of God may be frustrated, both in its original design, and in the redeeming purpose.

123. *St. Paul's appeal to the Jews grounded on the moral law.*—The oracles of God are placed first among the advantages of the former covenant (Rom. iii. 1), and they were to be of perpetual authority, as the rule of faith and conduct among the children of the covenant: everything symbolical was subordinate and evanescent. Hence the reasoning of the apostle with his own kindred was based upon immutable moral principles. No offence against the ceremonial institute is preferred; but righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come are urged and vindicated by a simple appeal to the great principles contained in the tables of the moral law.

124. *The great gulf impassable.*—The great gulf which separates the children of perdition from the redeemed in heaven is utterly impassable, because of the essential difference between holiness and sin, and the positive antagonism of the one to the other. There is a moral impossibility that there should ever be any approximation. The laws of the natural world may be suspended, or reversed; the heavens may pass away, and the earth be removed; and there may be new heavens and a new earth; but moral laws are in their very nature irreversible, and a moral impossibility is an absolute impossibility.

125. "*Dying thou shalt die.*"—Lionel Beale affirms that a morbid germ will retain its vitality, that is to say, its potential energy, under circumstances which would be destructive of a healthy living germ. There are many facts in the science of pathology which seem to favour this conclusion. If this be so, it is a striking confirmation of the Scripture doctrine, "In Adam all

die," the *living* germ, in every member of the human family, embodying a dominant countervailing element; and it is an illustration as to the nature of the physical malediction annexed to transgression, "Dying thou shalt die." "Nascentes morimur, finisque ab origine pendet."

126. *The prayer of the rich man.*—"Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water," etc. (Luke xvi. 24). It was not so much the *immediate* as the *ultimate* object of the request which dictated the prayer of the rich man in this solemn narrative. A great problem had to be solved. Were the torments he endured to be perpetuated interminably? or was there any conceivable communication between the abode of the blessed and the place of perdition, to lead to the hope that this form of misery might find some approximation on the part of mercy? Now, the smallest concession would have bridged the gulf; the slightest alleviation, however momentary, would have relieved the anguish of despondency; but the answer to the request determined that, whilst opposed conditions may run in parallel lines, the separation was to be final and absolute.

127. *The premillennial theory.*—The theory of the premillennial advent and personal reign of Christ upon earth, unsustained as it appears to be by the obvious meaning of any text of New Testament scripture adduced in support of it, and virtually subversive of some of the sublimest and most important arrangements in the economy of grace, is one of those unaccountable illusions which could only have obtained in a dreamy state of the Christian Church.

128. "*Grandeur and gallantry*" of the Church under Constantine.—Cave, in his *Primitive Christianity* (Part i. chap. vi.), speaks of the *grandeur and gallantry* which obtained, in matters ecclesiastical, under the auspices

of Constantine. This is the course which the visible Church, unfortunately, takes when there is a departure from the inward to the outward glory. Symbolism and ritualism take the place of spirituality and lowliness of mind; and there is a meretricious alliance between the Church and the world.

129. *The office of a bishop.*—That was an evil day in the history of the Christian Church when “the office of a bishop” was no longer regarded as one of spiritual oversight, but as one of ecclesiastical dignity; and when, as the natural result, the persons holding it were no longer “ensamples to the flock,” but “lords over God’s heritage.”

130. *Babylon and Rome.*—The first temple (that of Solomon) was destroyed by the first of the four great monarchies, the second by the last of the four. Babylon and Rome, therefore, were very naturally associated in the mind of a Jew, and it is in perfect accordance with sound interpretation to designate Rome the mystic Babylon of the New Testament.

131. *Civil and religious despotism.*—Religious despotism and civil despotism are twin-sisters, the offspring of him who was a murderer from the beginning. The evil genius of each is perpetually at work, in the world and in the Church, to countervail, by the pride of the human heart, the benign and gracious purposes of Him who “is kind to all, and whose tender mercies are over all His works.”

132. *Circumcision not the condition of salvation among the Jews.*—Circumcision was a seal of the covenant made by God with Abraham and his posterity, and it was designed to indicate their separation from the Gentile world in the election of grace. The ritualism of the Levitical institute was intended to perpetuate this distinction, and to sanctify it, by bringing the Jewish people evermore into the Divine presence.

Neither the one nor the other possessed any inherent virtue or significance. As shadows and symbols, they had no life or spiritual energy; and in themselves they furnished no special immunity. The children of the circumcision died by myriads in the wilderness, by reason of unbelief; and the sons of Aaron, with censers in their hands, were consumed by the breath of the Almighty, within the precincts of the holy tabernacle itself.

133. *Responsibility of officers in the Church.*—Moral influence, in the scale of the social economy, is made to descend from the higher to the lower classes. An elevated position is a commanding position for good, if it be sacredly regarded by those who occupy it; otherwise it becomes the fruitful source of social disorder and demoralization. This is the reason why the Divine Being has attached so weighty a responsibility to the higher functionaries especially, both in Church and state. The official relation was intermediate, and expository of the Divine mind. If under the Old Testament dispensation the priest and the prophet were the ministers of the Lord in the one case, the judges and the kings and the princes of the people were not less so in the other. The same responsibility attaches under the new covenant; but it is greatly augmented, as it regards the office-bearers of the Church of Christ, because this is designed to be, in its spirituality and power, "a kingdom of priests;" and nothing is more patent in its history than that the spiritual tone and complexion of its members depends upon that of the persons who are set over them in the Lord. All this is clearly indicated in the solemn accountability in which the Redeemer held the ministers of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor, as expressed in their several epistles. The charge, in every case, is to "the angel" in his individual personality; and the state of the heart toward God is exposed first, as the motive power by

which the "manner of life" in a faithful minister gives expression and influence to the "doctrine" taught by him in his official capacity (Rev. ii., iii., and 2 Tim. iii. 10).

134. *Arrogance of sacerdotal pretensions.*— In the visible Church there are "the depths of Satan," as well as "the deep things of God;" "the mystery of iniquity," as well as "the mystery of goodness;" and in nothing has the wisdom which is from beneath discovered its astuteness so much as in its insidious perversion of the principles and truths of the glorious gospel of Christ by an order of men who, professing to be the conservators of the truth under the garb of sacerdotalism, arrogate to themselves the sacrificial character of Him who is the world's Atonement, and the one Mediator between God and man; as well as His plenary and absolute authority, as the Head of the Church and the Moral Governor of the world. The Gnostic heresy of the first century of the Christian era, with its negation of the incarnate purpose of the manifestation of the Son of God, was innocent in comparison of the world-wide pernicious influence of Romanism for so many successive ages: and that two hundred millions of our fellow-men should at this moment be bending their necks and consciences to this awful and soul-destroying delusion, is the most astounding and appalling mystery in the religious history of the human family. And yet the dogma of the personal infallibility of the Pope is now (1870) accepted.

135. *Ecclesiastical development and spiritual life.*— The history of the Churches indicates that spiritual power is almost uniformly in the inverse ratio of *ecclesiastical* development. And that when the elements of affinity in this latter process have arrived at the point of crystallization, spiritual coldness and spiritual torpor very generally obtain. There may be in association therewith an orthodox standard of evangelical truth; there may be a thoroughly devotional liturgic formality;

but if there be not the manifestation of the Spirit in the ordinances and services, neither the one nor the other will subserve the purposes of spiritual life : prayer will cease to be anything but the utterance of the lip ; and the doctrines which are according to godliness will, sooner or later, lose their distinctive character.

136. *Guizot on Christianity and caste.*—M. Guizot, in his lectures on Modern History, has observed that the Christian Church is a corporation ; that, as it has nothing *hereditary* in its constitution, the element of caste is necessarily excluded ; and that it has always recognised the principle of the equal admissibility of any of its members, however humble their origin, to all its responsibilities and dignities. All this is very plausible, but very partial withal. Unhappily, the principle of caste insinuated itself into the clerical order at a very early period, by assumptions of exclusive authority and privilege, and by claims to *transmissible* power and prerogative altogether Divine.

137. *Doctrinal test of the ministerial commission.*—The *apostolic* test of a divinely authorized ministerial commission was a *doctrinal* test, the doctrine of the redeeming purpose of the Incarnate Word ; the atonement, and its saving, sanctifying provisions (see 1 John iv. 1, 2, 3). *Episcopal ordination* is the ministerial warrant of *sacerdotalism*, and it is based upon a fictitious assumption that there has been an unbroken lineal succession in the Episcopacy ; and that, by the imposition of its hands, a Divine qualification for the ministerial office is conferred by the episcopate as its peculiar prerogative. This error obtained in the early period of the third century, the validity of ordination being made the ground of appeal against the heresy of the Marcionites ; and it was one of those divergences from the word of the truth of the Holy Gospel which have tended thenceforward to the development of papal and priestly arrogance and superciliousness, in a supposed

exclusively privileged class of ecclesiastical functionaries. Moreover, a pious and consistent life, in a preacher of righteousness, is not to be accepted in the place of "the doctrine of God our Saviour," the sentiment of Pope on this subject being (evangelically) baseless and false, that "his (faith) can't be wrong, whose life is in the right." "If there come any unto you, and bring not this *doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2 John 10). "Est autem norma iudicii de dogmatibus seu *κριτήριον*, verbum Dei" (Chytræus, *Expl. Apocalyp.*, c. 2, v. 2).

138. *Artifices of the Romish Church.*—The emissaries employed by the Romish Church for the purpose of beguiling the unwary practise the same artifices at the present day, in England especially, as those which obtained in the church at Rome in apostolic times. There were those, even at that period, who, "by gentle and plausible modes of address, deceived the hearts of the simple" (Rom. xvi. 18).

139. *Papal and Mahometan powers.*—It is worthy of note that the two Antichristian powers which should arise in the East and in the West, the Papal and the Mahometan (Dan. vii. 8, 14, etc., viii. 9, 23, etc.), were to combine in themselves opposition to the Lord and His Anointed; the one by arrogating the prerogatives of the Supreme Being, showing himself that *he* is God (2 Thess. ii. 3, 4), speaking great words against the Most High (Dan. vii. 25); and the other by standing up against the Prince of the Host (Dan. viii. 11, 25), and claiming a higher and more divine mission than the Redeemer Himself. "It cast down the truth to the ground."

140. *The moral and the ceremonial law.*—The moral law was preceptive and of perpetual obligation, the ceremonial prescriptive and mutable. Hence the former was embodied in the "new commandment," when that

which was symbolical was superseded by that which is spiritual.

141. *Doctrinal error and moral corruption.*—Nothing shows more clearly the degeneracy of the human mind and heart than the perversions of doctrine (στρέψεις) and corruptions (φθορά) of manners which have obtained in the Christian Church from the beginning: the former not unfrequently associated with a high degree of moral excellency; whilst, on the other hand, the grossest and most scandalous forms of practical inconsistency have been established by many who had received the truth, but held it in unrighteousness.

142. *Sacerdotalism and transubstantiation.*—Sacerdotalism has in its essence the germ of Popery. If there be in the Christian Church a priestly order, as distinguished from the body of the faithful, there must of necessity be a sacerdotal offering distinct from the “spiritual sacrifice” presented by the latter. Now, as the entire body of believers is designated by the apostle “a royal priesthood,” the supposed privileged order must occupy a higher position than they; and as there is no earthly function loftier than the regal, sacerdotalism, in order to its validity, must have embodied in its constitution something of the Divine, and the offering which it presents must be truly sacrificial and propitiatory. This is the legitimate conclusion to which the assumption conducts us, and upon this alone does the doctrine of transubstantiation and priestly efficacy depend.

143. *Arius the precursor of Mahomet.*—Arius appears to have been the “star” referred to in Rev. ix. Prior to the Meletian controversy he had occupied a respectable position among the presbyters of the Alexandrian Church; and the sequel of his partisanship in this controversy furnishes an affecting admonition as to the perilous consequences of religious animosity, with

reference to the spiritual interests of the Christian Church. The heresy which he embraced and propagated prepared the way for the Mahometan delusion, by repudiating the Trinity of Persons in the essential Unity of the Godhead. The intervening period of three centuries does not affect this interpretation, inasmuch as the incidence of the vision, as denoted by the participle *πεπτωκότα* (not, as in our own version, in the act of falling, but fallen), indicates that a certain indefinite portion of time had already elapsed. The wide diffusion of the Arian heresy during this interval is an affecting illustration, among many others, of the power which may be wielded in the cause of error by a single individual, when the keys of the kingdom are exchanged for the key of pernicious doctrine under the semblance of the key of knowledge. "The corrupt state of Christianity, after the third century, gave great advantage to the propagation of Mahometanism; to which may be added the weakness of the Persian and Roman monarchies." It is worthy of note that the very portions of the Roman empire in which Arianism prevailed, are in our own day under Mahometan rule and superstition; and its Eastern metropolis (Constantinople), after it was captured by the Turks, became, politically and religiously, the seat of the imperial Mahometan jurisdiction.

144. *Dogmatism and Symbolism.*—In the visible Church there are two predominant antagonist forces, Dogmatism and Symbolism. The tendency of both logically, and as countervailing principles, is injurious to her spiritual interests. In the former, the spirit is lost in the letter; in the latter, the substance is eclipsed by the shadow.

145. *Sale of pews by auction.*—When I read of a church the sittings of which are annually disposed of by public auction to the highest bidder, I have before me the picture of a species of simony which supposes

that the utterances of the pulpit may be purchased with money ; and of a congregation the princes of which hasten to the place of negotiation with the rewards of divination in their hands.

146. *Ἐξουσία and δύναμις.* — Mark the difference between the two powers (*ἐξουσία* and *δύναμις*) noted in Acts i. 7, 8, respectively, the dispensation of providence and the dispensation of grace ; the former concealed in the bosom of the Father, the latter conceded to the churches of Christ, as His witnesses, in order to the subversion of the empire of darkness.

147. *Bengel's "Gnomon."* — Bengel's *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* is a treasury of profound critical and theological disquisition, as well as a luminous exposition of evangelical and spiritual truth. His "Erklärte Offenbarung" on those portions of the Apocalypse which have received an historic development, is characterized by many striking illustrative allusions : although his presumptions as to unfulfilled prophecy, based on the science of numbers, are utterly untenable. 'Tis true, he anticipates the difficulty in the opening of the seals.

148. *Bengel on the immaculate conception.* — Bengel, in his annotations on Rom. v. 15, has well observed, on the question of the immaculate conception, "Nulla hic Deiparæ mentio, quæ si sine macula fuit concipienda, non patrem, sed tantummodo matrem habere debuit, uti is quem peperit."

149. *A. S. version of Matt. xxvi. 28.* — "This is my blood of the New Testament," which the Anglo-Saxon version renders, "of my blood the cup of a new law" (Matt. xxvi. 28), and with beautiful significancy ; "the cup of blessing" pledging the disciples of Jesus, by love to Him, to keep His commandments ; and by love to each other, to show to the world, in the fulfilling of

the "new commandment," that they are the "friends" of the Redeemer. John xiv. 15, 21, and xv. 12, 14.

150. *Bengel on the cherubim.*—The eye of the believer should have a twofold exercise: directly, upon God and Divine things; indirectly, upon the world and its associations. In this respect his eyes should be as the eyes of the cherubim, looking forwards and backwards; and yet in such wise that attention to things sublunary should not interfere with or obscure his perception of things spiritual. Bengel beautifully observes, on Rev. iv. 6, that while from behind the cherubim regarded what was being done upon earth, their eyes were never turned away from the Divine Being.

151. *Living epistles.*—The Christian should be a "living epistle." No greater compliment could be paid to the "manifestation of the truth," than that which was accorded by one Puritan divine to another, when the former said of the latter, "Give me John Ward for a text;" and the man whose manner of life is so fair a transcript of the truth as it is in Jesus as to merit such a compliment, is emphatically ἐπιστολή Χριστοῦ φανερούμενη.

152. *Foolish talking and jesting.*—"Nor foolish talking nor jesting," εὐτραπελία (Eph. v. 4); "wittiness, facetiousness," Wesley *in loco*. Andronicus Rhodius, *Ethic. Nicom.* lib. 4, c. 10, thus speaks of this habit of mind: Ἡ δὲ μεσότης (id est inter τὴν ὑπερβολὴν—βαυμολοχίαν et τὴν ἔλλειψιν—σκληρότητα, ἀγριότητα), εὐτραπελία, καὶ οἱ ἔχοντες, εὐτράπελοι, οἷον εὐτροποι· καὶ γὰρ τοῦ ἤθους εἶναι δοκοῦσιν τοιαῦται κινήσεις. Οὗτοι δὲ εἰσιν οἱ παίζοντες ἐμμελῶς, καὶ ὡς δεῖ; καὶ ὅτε, κ.τ.λ.

153. "High time."—"It is high time to awake out of sleep," Rom. xiii. 11. The peculiar force of this

expression has been lost to us by the lapse of ages. Our Saxon ancestors, those at least who resided near the coast, were accustomed to compute their *time* by the ebbing and flowing of the *tide*. Hence the two terms were interchangeable as it regards the meaning we attach to them respectively; so that a high tide (the turning-point in the tidal flux) was to them a high time, the exact period most favourable for nautical purposes. The force of the original *ώρα ἤδη*, as expressed by the particle, is beautifully preserved in our version; to indicate that there is no room for delay if the voyage of life must be a prosperous one, and its great business well and safely accomplished. So our great dramatist, "There is a tide in the affairs of men," etc.

154. *Conformed and transformed*.—There is a beautiful antithesis in the terms "conformed" (συσχηματίζεσθε) and "transformed" (μεταμορφοῦσθε) in Rom. xii. 2, as distinctive of two habits of mind, as they are found in the men of the world and the children of the kingdom respectively. The former (σχῆμα) is the expression of that which is physical in our humanity, and regards the outward senses and the appetites, by the undue exercise and indulgence of which we are brought under the power of the carnal mind. The latter (μορφή), on the other hand, is psychical, and indicates susceptibilities and a capacity for a new spiritual life, which is to culminate in the mind which was in Christ. If there be in the life of the believer entire nonconformity (ἀσυσχηματισμός) to the world, in its habits and usages, the spiritual transformation (μεταμόρφωσις) will be so promoted as that Christ will be *formed* in the heart the hope of glory (Gal. iv. 19; Col. i. 27); and on the morning of the resurrection the transformation (transfiguration, μετασχηματισμός) of that which is physical, will be of such a nature as to make it a glorified "spiritual body," conformed (σύμμορφον) to that of the Redeemer as its glorious archetype (Phil. iii. 21).

155. *Ritualism judged by the Epistles to the Seven Churches.*—What is Ritualism in the sight of Him whose “eyes are as a flame of fire”? Let the epistles He dictated to the seven churches give the answer. The Redeemer deals throughout with matters of fact, not with matters of fancy or of mystery. The state of the churches is made manifest; the inward life, the life of faith; faith working by love, perfected by entire devotedness to the interests of His kingdom, and sanctified by a patient continuance in well-doing. “The work of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love,”—these are the things which engage the attention, absorb the interest, and determine the judgment of Him who will render to every man according to his works; and every defec- tion in these is here singled out and reproved. More- over, false doctrine, false apostles under a sanctimonious guise, are solemnly denounced; and meretricious practices, and meretricious ornaments (both of which are closely allied), adjudged to the severest penalty of “the second death.” On the other hand, everything symbolical in these epistles—the “white raiment,” the “temple” service, the “hidden manna,” the “white stone,” and the “morning star”—is under reservation; the whole pointing to the glory and felicity of the heavenly world.

156. *Caryll on Job.*—Few men have combined in them- selves, in so high a degree, and in so finely balanced proportions, the distinctive qualities of the logical faculty, the analytic, the antithetic, and the synthetic, as Mr. Caryll. His commentary on the Book of Job is a treasury of practical wisdom, as well as a luminous exposition of the great principles of the oracles of God. Moreover, it embodies the modes of thinking and feel- ing entertained by men in their various social and moral relations; and if a preacher would get at once into the secret chambers of the human heart, he should familiarize himself with Caryll’s exposition. I marvel

that Dr. A. Clarke should have spoken so disparagingly of the style of the writer. To my own mind there is in it a perpetual freshness and vigour; and this (as well as its other recommendations) has contributed to its popularity and value.

157. *Meetness and readiness.*—There are two terms in the New Testament which are highly suggestive as the state in which believers should be found at the close of life: meetness (*ἰσάνωσις*), Col. i. 12, and readiness (*ἑτοιμασία*), Matt. xxiv. 44 and xxv. 10. The one is the fitness which is given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, the fitness of grace; the other is a state of moral fitness, as the result of sobriety of mind, of holy vigilance, and a patient continuance in well-doing; in other words, a gracious state, guarded and sustained by a gracious habit—a full supply of the oil of the sanctuary, and the lamp trimmed and burning.

158. *Crystallization and vitality.*—Conformity to the world is a crystallizing process, transformation is a process of development, a vital process. The two are placed in antithesis (Rom. xii. 2), because they are utterly incompatible; and no man will ever become “a living sacrifice” who is not crucified to the world.

159. *Sacerdotalism condemned in the O. T.*—No language more significant and forcible could possibly be employed to stultify the arrogant assumptions of sacerdotalism than that contained in chap. ii. vers. 11 and 13 of the prophecy of Haggai, and in the judgment of Him who hath declared, “I, the Lord, change not.” It points to two conclusions: that the priestly function may become the medium of moral defilement, but not the vehicle of sanctity, to another.

160. *The limit of Moses' intercession.*—The intercessions of Moses for Israel were at an end when,

repeating the terms of exclusion from the Promised Land, the Lord added, "And thou also shalt not go in thither."

161. *Moses and Aaron and their respective functions.*—It is observable in the record with which the judgment upon Nadab and Abihu is associated, that, whilst Moses evinced the promptest and most vivid perception of the moral aspect of the Divine government in this manifestation of the Divine displeasure (Lev. x. 3) Aaron had a nicer discernment of the proprieties of the Jewish ritual on the occasion: and the deference which was paid by each to the judgment of the other (vers. 3, 20) is a beautiful exemplification of the maxim, that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. xiv. 32).

162. *Balaam and the disobedient prophet.*—It was perfectly reasonable that a prophet, who turned away his ear from an explicit prohibition, should be reproved by the tongue of an ass. Balaam's was a *peculiar* offence (*ιδίας παρανομίας*, 2 Pet. ii. 16), and it demanded a new and preternatural mode of reproof. There is another instance on record in which the Lord manifested His jealous regard for His immutable veracity, equally admonitory, and more affecting, in the commission of the prophet to Jeroboam (1 Kings xiii. 1, etc.); and it may serve to teach us that no pretended revelation to a man professedly under Divine inspiration should be held to be of any account in the light of a Divine command.

163. *Age and experience.*—The wisdom and stability of a man's earlier life often fail him in more advanced years; and that which, at the one period, indicated discretion and sound policy, at the other becomes the foolishness of folly. Joab turned after Adonijah, although he did not join in the conspiracy of Absalom.

164. *Looking and continuing.*—To realize the blessedness supposed in “the perfect law of liberty,” regard must be paid evermore to the connexion which subsists between the *παραύψας* and the *παραμείνας* (Jas. i. 25).

165. *Twofold sympathy.*—There is a twofold sympathy to be entertained and cherished by all who desire the enlargement of the Redeemer’s kingdom: a sympathy with the Divine Being in His abhorrence of sin, and with His redeeming purpose in His love to the souls of men. The Divine glory must be vindicated, in its absolute holiness, by charging home upon the conscience the guilt and enormity of sin, and, when the soul is troubled on account of it, by earnest and affecting displays of the Divine mercy and compassion.

C.—*Philosophical and Scientific.*

166. *Plato.*—In the introduction of Plato’s *Apology for Socrates*, the *vis eloquentiæ* is placed in antithesis to the *vis veri*, 1 Cor. ii. 5. Plato’s *Phædo* embodies the idea of a purgatory, as well as of heaven and hell.

167. *Conception and comprehension.*—Conception is in the idea simply, comprehension in the reason. We may conceive of a thing without comprehending it, nay, without being able to comprehend it; but we cannot comprehend anything of which we had no previous conception.

168. *The will and the judgment.*—There never was a greater fallacy than the one involved in the theory lately propounded, “that the will is determined by the last exercises of the judgment.” Our instinctive faculties, our affections and desires, very generally control our volitions; not unfrequently in direct opposition to the decisions of the judgment. Hence the Scriptures, with great propriety, refer to the heart as the seat of moral power.

169. *Man and the brute creatures.*—In the animal economy, the physiological and psychical are distinct principles, though interdependent. The one is organic and vital, the other immaterial and percipient; and it is this latter combination, objectively considered, which constitutes self-consciousness: this, there is every reason to believe, is possessed by the lowest types of animated existence; because even in these there are volitional phenomena as the result of instinctive impulses. There is no necessary connexion, however, between immateriality and indestructibility, and in man something has been superadded to the immaterial to constitute his immortality.

170. *Danger of philosophizing in religion.*—It is almost as dangerous to our spiritual interests to philosophize on the mysteries of our holy religion, as it is to take up with a theory that repudiates them altogether.

171. *Two kinds of inspiration.*—When a man tells the world how sublime was the inspiration he felt when he first read Gen. i. 1, *in the original*, I accept the announcement as one of extraordinary interest, in a psychological point of view; inasmuch as it indicates that the human mind can be influenced by more than one class of inspirations.

172. *Human statesmanship and Divine grace.*—“Great is the mystery of godliness;” and faith, the faith of appropriation as well as of credence, is the key to open the mystery. The wisdom of God, both in depth and sublimity, transcends all human thought; and it can only be apprehended by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. All human science, all merely human learning, is beside the question. The moral relations of man are only to be gathered from the revealed word. Here we have the naked disclosure and enormity of sin, and appended thereto, the remedy, the only remedy, for all the evils that afflict our humanity. Statesmen and philosophers, social and moral, are seeking, with a commendable

earnestness, nay, often labouring, as it were, in the very fire, to compass the same ends by human policy and appliances; but they are perpetually at fault. The surging billow, with its accumulated and still accumulating pollutions, sweeps over their defences, and carries them away, leaving nothing behind but a painfully humiliating reflection as to the resistless force and rapidity of the tide.

173. *Man a social being.*—The laws of intelligence, of truth, of moral obligation, all depend for their exercise on social arrangements, and can have but a limited application in a state of voluntary sequestration.

174. *The religious instinct.*—No element in human nature is so widely and permanently influential as the religious sentiment; and as this has to do more with the instinctive and emotional in our humanity than with that which is purely mental, we find it most generally operative in the softer and more impressible of the sexes. Of this difference in the feminine physiologico-psychical constitution, the Church of Rome (true to her policy as a political power, and to her instincts as the mother of harlots) has largely availed herself, for the purpose of alluring and captivating the other sex into a *passive* conformity at least with her idolatrous worship and usages.

175. *Secret societies.*—All secret societies, political, ecclesiastical, social, are at issue with the spirit of the gospel, and with the example of Him who is the Light of the world. “In secret have I said nothing.” “He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest.” There are no *tacita sacra*, like the Eleusinian mysteries, in the religion of the Lord Jesus.

176. *Sensible objects and immutable truths.*—Familiarity with sensible objects, however beauteous or sublime, tends

to lessen their interest. Immutable truths, mathematical and moral, have a perpetual charm.

177. *Danger of undue speculation.*—Reason has its bounds, and they who push inquiry beyond the bounds of reason are sometimes punished by the loss of reason. Nothing is more dangerous to the spiritual interests of men than a habit of dealing with the principles and verities of Holy Scripture in the light of a speculative philosophy, under the presumption that, by the force of intellect, its mysteries can receive a rational solution. Metaphysical disquisitions on the subject of the hypostatic union, and other equally incomprehensible subjects, if they do not engender an irreverent habit of mind, indispose it for the devout acceptance of the truth as it is in Jesus.

178. *Literature and morals.*—The literature of an age takes its complexion from the morals of the people, because these are the determining force in the current and modes of popular thought and popular taste.

179. *The moral element in social and political economy.*—It is an axiom in political economy, that legislation thereon should be based on principles of equity. The same rule will apply to the science of social economy, with this preponderating difference in the scale of adjustment, that considerations and interests which are altogether personal are far more sacred than those which are simply material, and should be dealt with accordingly; and, inasmuch as nothing that is morally wrong can become a safe element in legislative policy, if legislation be necessary as it regards the moral aspects of society, it ought to recognise these aspects in their true character. Regarded in this point of view, the so-called “Contagious Diseases Act” is utterly indefensible; and, to say nothing of its flagrant indelicacy as a public measure, it is rendered all the more inequitable and obnoxious because its pressure is upon the weaker sex exclusively. Moreover, as it is a law in our animal

economy, that a course of vicious indulgence should entail physical enervation and physical degeneracy, in parent and offspring respectively, to tamper with a gross moral evil by partial legislation, in the hope of reversing this law, or abating its operation, is the extreme of delusion, because it is an ignoring of the principles of physiological science, as well as a presumptuous abnegation of the moral government of God.

180. *Religious sentiment, modern and ancient forms.*—Religious sentiment, as distinguished from the grace which sanctifies and saves, is a powerfully delusive agency in a refined state of society; and, like every other device of the wisdom which is from beneath, it exercises, by means of ideal conceptions, a widely diffused influence upon two classes of persons of opposite modes of thinking. There is the religion of symbolism, that which is purely ritual, which associates all that is devout in the human soul with the artistic and sensuous; and there is the so-called religion of nature, which regards everything in the universe of the beautiful and sublime, and everything in humanity that is generous and noble, as an object of reverent admiration and homage. There is a difference between image-worship and hero-worship, and the worship of the nymphs and of the muses; but their extremes converge, for the purpose of forming a modern embodiment of the religious life of ancient Greece and Rome, in its full and entire proportions.

181. *Sentimentalism—what?*—Sentimentalism is the colouring which is given by the imaginative faculty to anything, objective or subjective, by which the human mind may be prepossessed and enamoured. Any object in nature or in art which, in its proportions and symmetry, displays the beautiful or the sublime, marvellous achievements, deeds of chivalry, of heroism, and of disinterested self-sacrifice, nay, even a religious ceremonial, and sentiments which are awakened by any

of the accessories of religious worship, may each become a centre of attraction which the fancy may invest with a powerful dreamy fascination.

182. *The religious instinct in woman.*—If the frailty of Eve made her the first victim to transgression, He who was to be “the Seed of the woman” hath implanted in her daughters deeper and more vivid religious instincts than those of the other sex. Hence, whilst many of the latter, by the force of an ambitiously insatiate intellectual aspiration, still cling to “the tree of knowledge,” and are unweariedly labouring to bring within the sphere of their mental vision even “the secret things” which belong unto Omniscience alone, the softer sex, by their truer instinct, are brought nearer to “the tree of life,” which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

183. *Seat of the moral instincts.*—The emotional in our humanity is usually awakened by mental associations. There are instinctive emotions, such as those of maternal tenderness and affection; but it would not be easy to prove that these are altogether independent of mental affinities. 'Tis true, our moral sentiments have a profounder basis than our processes of thought; and it is questionable if an individual, previously familiar with nothing but the beautiful and the virtuous in our humanity, were suddenly confronted by a monstrously hideous form of depravity, whether his first emotion would not be that of horror rather than of surprise.

184. *Modesty and ostentation.*—Gibbon, by two strokes of the pencil, has very accurately portrayed two distinctive characteristics of our humanity: weakness concealed by the garb of ostentation, and strength under the veil of modesty.

185. *Varieties of moral force.*—There are three kinds of moral force in the world: the force of moral law, the force of example, and that of companionship; and they stand in this ratio as to the influence they exercise

respectively upon human conduct, the last in the series being the most powerful of all.

186. *Æsthetics and philanthropy.*—How comes it to pass that models of art in sculpture and carving, that highly finished productions in etching and drawing, should be gazed upon by myriads with silent awe, or unutterable admiration, when the living prototypes, of which they are but a faint and lifeless expression, awaken so little comparative interest? The only answer that can be supplied to this inquiry may be comprehended in a few words,—that *genius* is the god of the multitude.

187. *Danger of men of science.*—There are many who carefully observe the motions of the planetary system, explore, by the aid of the telescope, the interminable fields of the sidereal heavens, and labour to investigate the physical cause of solar light and solar heat, together with the inconceivably fractional variations in their intensity which may have obtained in successive periods of time; there are others, not a few, who make it their study to determine, by the relation of rock and cliff, and coal and chalk, and marl and boulder drift, and alluvial deposit and fossil remains, the primary condition and subsequent mutations of the globe they inhabit, and the precise period and primitive type of human existence; but there are few of these who direct their eye evermore to Him who is “the light of the world,” and who seek to familiarize themselves with “the new heavens and the new earth,” by which “the heavens and the earth which now are” are to be superseded.

188. *Unsearchableness of God's workings in nature.*—Who can explain the mysterious laws by which the balance of power is maintained in the physical universe, securing to the planets their path in the heavens with undeviating uniformity and mathematical precision in the period of their revolutions? Or, to transfer the inquiry to the microcosm of our humanity, who can

unravel the secret of the nervous influence, by which antagonist muscles are maintained in co-ordinate relation, during the years of a long life, and this, too, by simultaneous though diversified operation in every part of the body? The one is an unfathomable abyss to the profoundest astronomer; the other is an interminable *experimentum crucis* to the most accomplished histologist, as well as to the most acute physiologist.

189. *Science in transition*.—Modern science is in a state of transition. Its researches have upheaved and exploded many of the views of former times on questions within its province. In the conflict of opinions inseparable from a transitional state, there is, at the present day, in candid minds, a convergence toward ultimate truths as to a common centre. To use the language of Holy Scripture, “earth” and “heaven” are being shaken, “that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”

190. *Caution and credulity*.—There are singular polarities, negative and positive, in the psychological manifestations of certain minds. On the one hand, a cautious and rigorous mode of dealing with physical phenomena, and, it may be, associated therewith an utter indifference, if not absolute scepticism, on the subject of moral and revealed truth; whilst, on the other, we find an unhesitating and wholesale credulity accorded to systems of error and imposture.

191. *What is disease?*—What is disease?—not simply as the question applies to those morbid changes in organic life which are the result of imperfect development, of physical decay, or of external causes to the influences of which we are perpetually subjected, but disease in its more specific forms. Epidemic disease, falling suddenly and simultaneously upon entire districts, although propagated afterwards by contagion, disappearing after a time, or migrating to other localities, and subsequently dying out, as it would seem, spontane-

ously, to be reproduced, after the lapse of many months or years, in the same epidemic form. Does the history of this class of diseases admit of any other inference than this, that they are *visitations*, governed by mysterious laws, which human foresight and human skill cannot contravene? And to speak of "stamping out" such diseases, under the supposition that, if certain vigorous measures be adopted in the emergency, their recurrence will be surely and entirely superseded, is a presumptuously profane mode of dealing with the inflictions of the Moral Governor of the world.

192. *What is life?*—No subject is of deeper interest to the physiologist than that which is contained in the question, "What is life?" If the laws which govern organic development were dependent upon certain physical and chemical agencies merely, it is but reasonable to suppose that there would be something like uniformity in their operation. How comes it to pass that there should be so many modifications of texture in the living body, under the influence of the same vital forces? What explanation can be given, on the principle of physical dynamics, of the simultaneous formation of bone, and muscle, and nerve, of the wonderful arrangements of the organs of nutrition and assimilation, of the brain, and the organs of special sense, and the uniform interdependency which subsist in the entire vital economy? There must be other mysterious laws in agency which elude our observation; laws originally impressed upon the living germ, and intimately associated in the mind of the Creator with final causes, as illustrative of the loftiest wisdom and beneficence.

193. *The Darwinian theory.*—If the Darwinian theory of progressive development in the animal kingdom were correct, it would follow that there must have been an inherent tendency in the first living organism, a specific law in continuous operation, for effecting the entire series of transformations, or a new law evolved in each

successive instance, in conformity with the specific type of subsequent organic development; and no permanent line of distinction could have obtained between the higher and the lower scale in the animal creation. The theory is not only contrary to matter of fact, but it is opposed to the laws of specific propagation, reproduction and metamorphosis being directly antagonistic; and it is at variance with the uniform operation of physical law. It is far more philosophical to accept the Mosaic statement, that "God created cattle, and creeping things, and fowls of the air, *after their kind.*"

194. *Mesmerism and electricity.*—I know of no other solution of the phenomena of mesmerism, but that which is furnished by supposing that the nervous conditions of agent and subject are, at the time, in opposite nervous polarities: the negative polarity of the latter indicating a more than ordinary susceptibility for the positive nervous influence evolved by the volitional force of the former.

195. *The atomic theory.*—The human mind is apt to limit its conceptions as to physical law within the sphere of its own intelligence, and to frame a theory which identifies such laws with purely material or organic existences. Hence there has always been a school of philosophers who have entertained the atomic theory.

196. *Spontaneous generation.*—There is no argument which can be adduced in favour of a spontaneous generation, as the primary law of organic development, which will not apply with equal, if not with greater force, to the theory of an uncreated or a self-created universe.

197. *Personal identity and the living organism.*—The emotional and the intelligential in the living organism depend upon two distinct but interdependent nervous centres respectively, the ganglionic and the cerebral; but they concur in the testimony they furnish, by self-

consciousness, as to the individuality and personal identity of their subject.

198. *Camden and modern geologists.*—Some of our modern geologists would have better commended themselves and their labours to others, if they had submitted their conclusions with the cautious self-distrust expressed by Camden in the introduction to his *Britannia*. Referring to the supposition that Britain had at some remote period been separated from the European continent by powerful physical disruption, and that the surface of the earth had, in successive ages, suffered material changes by diluvial and other agencies, he modestly observes, “It is not my purpose to argue, neither take I pleasure, without good advisement, of God’s works to give my doom.”

199. *Relative value of science and religion.*—The cosmogony of the earth upon which we tread, the fossil remains of organic life through a series of ages of which they are the sole material record, the correlation of physical forces, and the laws which balance the universe, are subjects of profound and absorbing interest; but they lose their significancy when they are brought into the broad light of our relation to the Divine Being, of the momentous moral forces we reciprocate among our fellow-men, and the laws which will determine our position when “all these things shall be dissolved.”

200. *The waves of the sea.*—The waves of the sea and the tumult of the people, are emblematically associated in the mind of the psalmist (Ps. lxxv. 7). Dense and slowly advancing masses of the populace exhibit an undulatory motion. This was strikingly indicated in the great Chartist movement of 1848. Many thousands of the operatives of Lancashire, who were banded together for a demonstration against their employers, passed through Macclesfield in a compact body at the time; and as I gazed upon this formidable band of men,

from the elevation of my own house, shaping their course towards the Potteries, the entire surface of the moving mass, as far as the eye could reach, impressed me with its resemblance to the advancing and receding waves of the sea.

201. *The Maelstrom*.—There are numerous eddies upon the surface of the social current, by which myriads of our fellow-men become engulfed. The whirl of politics, the whirl of religious animosity, the whirl of ambition, the whirl of fashion and dissipation, and the whirl of licentiousness, they all tend to, and terminate in, the maelstrom of irretrievable perdition.

II.

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-EXAMINATION.

WHAT are the causes, general or particular, of a decay of piety in individuals ?

Resp. (1) Sin, open or concealed. (2) Neglect of the ordinances, of the word of God, of prayer, private and social. Resting in the means of grace, and in what has been received ; sinking into lukewarmness, and so, by little and little, losing all of a life of piety but the form. The neglect of relative and social duties, and of self-examination. (3) Grieving the Spirit, by not attending to His intimations and admonitions, or by not cultivating fellowship with Him, and not seeking to maintain inviolate His testimony. (4) Not seeking to grow in grace ; withdrawing our affections from Divine things to the objects of sense ; lapsing into the spirit of the world, in modes, and habits, and dress, and earthly and ambitious pursuits ; forming unchristian companionships and alliances ; by unwatchfulness, by trifling or unprofitable conversation, by frivolity and levity, listening to the trifles and the gossips and dissipation of the world ; by evil surmising, and uncharitableness, and censoriousness ; by not mortifying the deeds of the body, but yielding to its corrupt inclinations ; by indulging in anger, impatience, fretfulness, and in unbelief in its various forms of anxious and distracting care.

What are the means by which Christians lose their first love ?

First of all, and especially, by the numerous forms of

omission specified above. Indirectly, and in general, by the abounding of iniquity, and the merging of distinctions between the Church and the world.

What is the reason that so few retain the perfect love of God after they have received it?

The main reason is this, that they do not continue to show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. The graces of the Spirit are not kept in exercise. They turn their eye from Jesus, their aspirations and hopes from things heavenly, their affections from God. They fall into evil reasoning, into stillness and reservedness, and that very subtle practical antinomianism which consists in separating the life of faith from the walk of faith. Not using the grace received as a sacred talent, and seeking to form their character thereby. Do not take up the cross stately and of set purpose; are not content with their providential lot. Do not submit to the order of God, in poverty, in reproach, in affliction. Do not seek a fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. As the elect of God, do not put on meekness, gentleness, humbleness of mind, and over all, charity as the bond of perfectness. As the soldiers of Christ, do not put on the whole armour of God. Do not pray with all prayer, and watch thereunto with all perseverance.

What are the means by which the blessing of full sanctification is obscured as to its distinctness, or lost altogether?

They may be generally expressed thus: by supineness and inactivity on the one hand, by distrust and despondency on the other: by a failure as to simplicity of purpose and singleness of eye, by faintness of desire and languid affections, by the lack of fervour and constancy in our spiritual exercises.

More particularly they may thus be specified. Restraining prayer, as to frequency, fervour, importunity. Unscriptural reasoning as to the nature of the blessing

itself, and its fruits; a hasty and questionable conclusion on the subject. Withholding our testimony as to the enjoyment of the blessing, or limiting this testimony by not declaring to the full the salvation realized, and its blessed results. Not keeping the eye of faith fixed upon Jesus as our sanctification and redemption, but reversing the privilege involved in our vocation, by simply regarding Him as "the Lord our righteousness." Grieving the Spirit by not attending to His counsel, not cultivating His fellowship, and not sanctifying His testimony. Not keeping sacred the testimony of our own spirit, in the neglect of some known duty, or in the indulgence of some appetite or affection, the gratification of which is incompatible with purity of conscience and spirituality of mind; including therein, not the grosser forms of self-indulgence only, but the more refined, such as delight the eye or charm the ear, painting, music, eloquence, etc. Having the mind preoccupied by unnecessary or worldly occupations, to the partial or total exclusion of things sacred. Allowing the imagination to wander on forbidden or unsanctified or unprofitable objects. Having the memory unfraught, the judgment unemployed on the principles of the oracles of God. Neglecting the talent or talents committed to us. As members of civil society, identifying ourselves with matters which, as they do not come within the sphere of "our citizenship in heaven," indispose us, in a greater or less degree, for seeking a city out of sight. In matters of business, regarding our worldly interests rather than the order of Providence and the glory of God. Neglecting, too, the weightier matters of the law, such as truth, integrity, mercy; entailing upon ourselves unnecessary encumbrances and expenses, by want of prudence in our secular and domestic affairs. In our communication with Christian friends, forgetting in honour to prefer one another; yielding to self-complacency, or to the good opinion of others, instead of shaking off the congratulations of others;

not bearing one another's burdens, not forbearing one another in love, as to infirmities, mistakes, etc.; not labouring for the wellbeing of all with whom we have any intercourse; suffering sin upon our neighbour by omitting reproof, admonition, and exhortation; not cultivating a feeling of pity and love for a perishing world, but preferring our own ease and gratification to the spiritual interests of our fellow-men. Finally, impatience of the cross, owing frequently to the mind being occupied with the trouble it occasions, rather than regarding it as a means of glorifying God. In reproach and rebuke, shrinking from the one, and in the other case labouring to justify ourselves, when the honour of Christ and the good of others is not concerned; and not being willing, when called to it, even to be accounted fools for Christ's sake. In sorrow, seeking comfort in the creature; in affliction, seeking to have it removed rather than sanctified. In embarrassment, seeking deliverance by means that are not legitimate and Christian, or by engaging and leaning upon an arm of flesh; in the one case, going out of the way of God's method, in the other, out of His mode and time; and when the trial of faith in the mysterious providences of God is continued, not being willing to have our contrivances and judgment and skill defeated by the purposes and wisdom of the Most High, so that Christ may be to us all in all.

What are the evidences of a growth in grace? What in respect to individual consciousness, or those evidences which belong to the life of faith; and what in respect to outward manifestation, or those which belong to the walk of faith?

Resp. Under the first class of evidences may be enumerated, a more direct perception of our filial relationship to Christ as our living Head, and our atoning High Priest; of our relation to the Holy Spirit as our Comforter, our Teacher, our Guide, and our Sanctifier; a more distinct and full apprehension of the promises;

clearer and more engaging apprehensions of Divine things; decreasing attachment to earth and things sensible; a purer and loftier regard for the glory of God, the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the counsels and operations of the gracious Spirit Divine. Among the second class of evidences may be noted, increasing attachment to the sacred Scriptures, to the ordinances and institutions of the gospel, to prayer, to Christian fellowship; increasing love to the brethren, regarding them in the covenant of peace, and as members of the same body, entitled to our kindest sympathy, anticipating their wants, bearing with their weaknesses, and soothing their sorrows, seeking evermore their highest interests, in the face even of misapprehension, and coldness, and ingratitude.

What are the evidences of a growth in holiness (entire sanctification), regarded as above?

An increase of humility, a disposition to self-abasement, an increase of meekness, of patience, of purity, of heavenly-mindedness, of Divine love, of gratitude, of holy reverence. A more uniform and ardent desire for the salvation of the world, the glory of God, the sanctification of the Church, and the honour of Christ. A grateful acquiescence in the order of Providence; an unhesitating compliance with the way of the Spirit, in crosses, disappointments, reproaches, etc. Increasing susceptibility of soul; indicated, as to the conscience, in a nicer perception of the evil of sin, and of the beauty of holiness in all its proportions and adorning; as to the mind, regarding its exercises and employments in the light of eternity, and their relation to it; as to the judgment, regulating its conclusions by the balance of the sanctuary; and as to the affections and will, by their harmonizing with and taking the mould of the Divine will. Moreover, increasing fervour and importunity in prayer, a firm and confiding reliance upon the atonement and advocacy of Jesus as the living way into the holiest; constant breathing after God, in ardour of

soul, in singleness of eye, in faith unfeigned, and in charity that never faileth. To which may be added, a juster sense of our responsibilities as to the value and use of time, and of the talents committed to us, as also of the blessings of Providence, as means by which we may rise to God.

What are the hindrances to full communion with God?

Resp. Not giving ourselves to prayer, to the reading of the word, and devout meditation upon it; to Christian communion, and to the ordinances of the sanctuary. Not avouching ourselves as the peculiar people of God by the perpetual observance of the priestly motto, "Holiness unto the Lord." Not regarding ourselves as a whole burnt-offering, a living sacrifice; not making the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom our own, and merging all our private interests in those of His Church. In fine, not striving after, and pleading for, the whole mind of Christ.

Born of God, but groaning under the carnal mind, have you humbling views of the evil of your nature?

Do you painfully feel the evil of sin?

Is this feeling increased when you are the most earnest and the most watchful, and occasioning much perplexity and heaviness of spirit?

Do you struggle with and fight against every inordinate affection?

Does pride, or passion, or bitterness, or self-will, rise up to trouble you?

Is your mind discomposed by unbelief, your spirit by peevishness, your heart distracted by anxious care?

Have you a trifling, giddy spirit, a senseless, unloving heart?

Have you tormenting doubts and fears of perishing at last ?

Are you oppressed with blasphemous thoughts, with unbelief, and reasonings against God ?

Have you had any painful discoveries of the corruption of your heart since you believed, and sorrow on account of it ?

Have you been unwilling to feel the plague of your heart, seeking rather the comforts of religion than deliverance from all sin ; and in consequence thereof, have you realized but little of the presence of the Divine Comforter ?

Does your sense of inward depravity increase notwithstanding your earnestness in prayer and constant watchfulness, and does this cause perplexity and heaviness of soul ?

Can you see in all this the reflection of your former sins during a whole life of rebellion, and the mystic purpose intended thereby for the time to come ?

Do you suffer more from an evil heart, and from the pain involved in resisting its motions, than you do even from Satan or the world, from pride, passion, self-will, bitterness, carnal affection, etc. ?

When you find anger or other evil rising, do you at once call upon God, regarding less your state of mind than your present danger and necessities ?

Do you seek the advice and companionship of a mature Christian ?

Do the sins of others cause you pain and heaviness ?

Are you especially pained by the roots of bitterness in your own heart ?

Have you contrition of heart and tenderness of conscience ?

If the trial is not removed, is grace given to subdue it ?

In the absence of joy, do you find doubts and fears as to your final salvation, and this, too, when there is nothing within contrary to peace? Do you, in order to rise above these, endeavour to live a day at once and to take no thought for the morrow?

When the Lord visits you with His love, and gives you an increase of confidence in Him, do troubles arise and temptations thicken on every hand?

Do you then begin to set the trial against the Divine goodness and faithfulness, and open the floodgates of unbelief and blasphemy by charging God foolishly?

Are these experiences succeeded by deadness, pride, and love of the world?

When you find a little spiritual life, do you comfort yourself in it, or seek to die to all below and to live to Christ alone?

Is a day of calm repose often followed by one of sore exercise and trial?

Does the Lord then give patience and wisdom?

Do seasons of refreshing often give place to seasons of faintness?

Does bodily indisposition hinder your waiting on God in prayer?

When you have much light, love, peace, and power, do you feel a godly jealousy lest you should be found unfaithful?

Do unbelief and evil reasoning strengthen this feeling?

Is your whole soul disordered at times by anger, and faith almost destroyed?

Do you in prayer simply wait for the Spirit of God, or strive to bring something of your own to Him?

Is the current of your affections ever flowing towards the Lord ?

Have you so lively a sense of the love of God that you are all attention to the work of the Spirit ?

Have you at times a lively hope of deliverance from the bondage of corruption ?

Does your soul sometimes feel benumbed, so that you cannot pray, though you may not be conscious at the time that you have grieved the Holy Spirit ?

Have you any desire for created good ?

Do you sometimes feel the spirit of levity, even in prayer ?

When you have a sense of spiritual weakness, have you also a fear of falling into sin ?

Do you sometimes find so much of evil in your nature that you can scarcely bear either reproof or contradiction ? Are you at times depressed on this account, at other times cheered and comforted by the promises ?

Do you find that you are always shorn of your strength by disobedience ?

Have you a love to all the commandments, though not perfected in love ?

Do you thirst for holiness of heart ?

Have you sensible union with Jesus, and doubts withal whether you shall ever be perfected in love ?

Are you unhappy, though living in the breach of no command, nor desiring any earthly good ?

Do you follow hard after God, in contrition for past sin and for present want of conformity to Him ?

Does inbred sin make you tremble ?

Are you enfeebled by anxious care ?

Do you ever turn from the Lord to the creature ?

Have you painful discoveries of pride, that it swells in all your own nature, and shows itself in every act ?

Does a review of God's former mercies add strength to your faith ?

When you are made to possess your own iniquity and to feel the plague of your own heart, are you fretful and angry with the Lord ?

Are you saved from the guilt and power of sin, and yet conscious that you are a base, vile, ungrateful creature ?

Does the Lord show you that the constant pressure you feel from men, devils, and sin is included in His gracious purpose as your soul's refiner ?

Do you mourn for God even in His presence and with a sense of His favour ?

Is it your daily prayer that Jesus may reign alone and subdue all things to Himself ?

Are you nevertheless tossed to and fro ?

Is your spirit oppressed with evil reasonings ? do they cease when at prayer, and return when you have closed this exercise ?

Do you die to all below, and in order to this do you sit loose to all below ?

Though all that is opposed to the will of God is removed, do you still feel that there is that which inclines to self-seeking and self-pleasing ?

Does your consciousness of the great salvation consist at times rather with a sense of emptiness than of fulness ?

Does a sense of your weakness and wants ever bring you into heaviness ?

Is the immortal soul encumbered and fatigued by the cares and conflicts of life ?

Does the opposition of brethren shake you, or does the inward salvation by its strength and clearness preserve you ?

Have you a constant persuasion that you cannot abide therein but by abiding in Jesus ?

That a growth in holiness is indispensable to the fulness and maturity of the Christian character ?

That the Spirit's plenitude must be received, and by holy obedience retained, in order to this ?

Do you feel inexpressible poverty and ignorance, as if you had everything to receive and everything to learn ?

Are you ever tempted not to speak of the great salvation ?

Is the Spirit's testimony strengthened while you are bearing your testimony ?

Have you increased in faith and love since you were cleansed from sin ?

Do you find constant communion with God, constant peace and power ?

Do you find, nevertheless, defects in your faith and love, and therefore daily need of the atoning blood ?

Are you still in the narrow way ?

Is there still a war between grace and nature ? still the roots of bitterness within ?

Do you groan under the burden ?

Are you getting weary and faint in your mind ?

Do you desire to know the whole truth ?

When the Lord is about to bless you, do you oppose Him by false reasoning ?

Are you in danger of surrendering your shield, or of casting it away ?

Do you nevertheless believe that the will of God is your sanctification ?

Do you mourn when you are dull and stupid ?

When you are the most earnest, does Satan strive to hinder ?

Do you cast yourself on Jesus, just as you are, bringing nothing but wants ?

Do you abide in Jesus ?

Have you sensible union with Him ?

Do you live in momentary dependence on Christ ?

Do you feel more and more the need you have of Him ?

That without Him you can do nothing ?

That when you have done all, you are an unprofitable servant ?

Do you glory in Christ, in His cross, in His reproach ?

Do you pray evermore ?

Is your conversation in heaven ?

Are you obeying the call of God ? seeking His glory ? studying to please Him ? to be a vessel unto honour ?

Is your labour of love accepted of Him ?

Is your every word and thought sprinkled with the blood of Christ ?

Is your soul without spot or blemish ?

Do you go to Christ for all you want ?

Do you love His word and His ordinances, and submit to all His dispensations ?

Are the ways of God ways of pleasantness, or, with love to Him and His commandments, have you little solid comfort ?

Is your heart open to instruction from the Spirit, the word, and the witnesses of Jesus ?

Is the light and love of God kept out by a thick fog of doubts and evil reasonings ?

Do you desire to glorify God inwardly as well as outwardly ?

Is your evidence clear as the noonday ?

Does your faith quench every fiery dart of the wicked one with the blood of Christ ?

Do you possess all things in Jesus, and enjoy all things in Him ?

If you turn your eye within, do you find Him there your portion and your all ?

Is the will of God become yours ?

Separated from men and means, do you find no lack ?

Do you long for the full image of Jesus ?

Have you ever vivid apprehensions of the majesty and glory of God ?

Is the general state of your soul deep poverty, conscious nothingness, sweet penitence, and holy shame ?

Have you no confidence but in the ever-living God ?

Do you testify your love to Him by keeping His commandments ?

Are you concerned for Christ's Church and people by earnest prayer, in sympathy, in sorrow, in joy ?

Do you cultivate a habitual childlike dependence on Jesus ?

Are you receiving evermore out of the Divine fulness ?

Do you pant after more,—to have more humility, more resignation, more faith, patience, and love ?

Under complicated trials, is there no disposition to murmuring, to repining ? Are you then quiet, teachable, humble ?

Does the fiery trial make manifest the Divine presence, the Divine power, the Divine image ?

Do you admire and adore what you cannot comprehend, and say continually, "Good is the will of the Lord" ?

Do you familiarize yourself with death ?

Do you think of it with pleasure ?

Does the invisible world seem nigh ?

Have you any communion with the world of spirits the spirits of the just made perfect ?

Do you taste the powers of the world to come ?

Do you bear on your faithful mind the end, and keep the prize in view ?

Hath Jesus subdued all the powers of your soul unto Himself ?

Does your union with Him increase ?

Is your attention to Him undisturbed ?

Do you wait the motions of His Spirit ?

Do you find in Him abiding peace, and often sacred pleasure ?

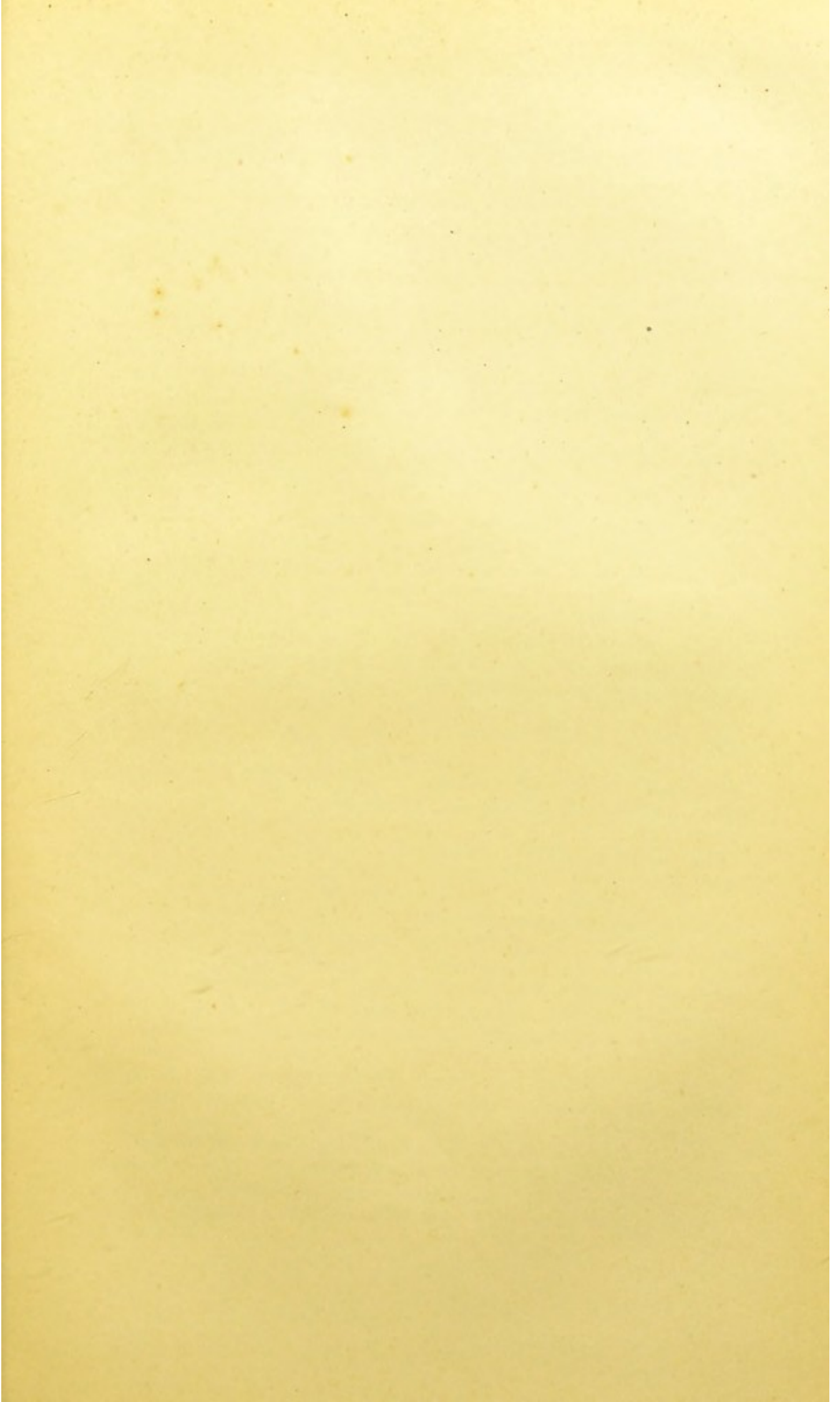
Do you live in the Divine presence, or does your sun go down at night ?

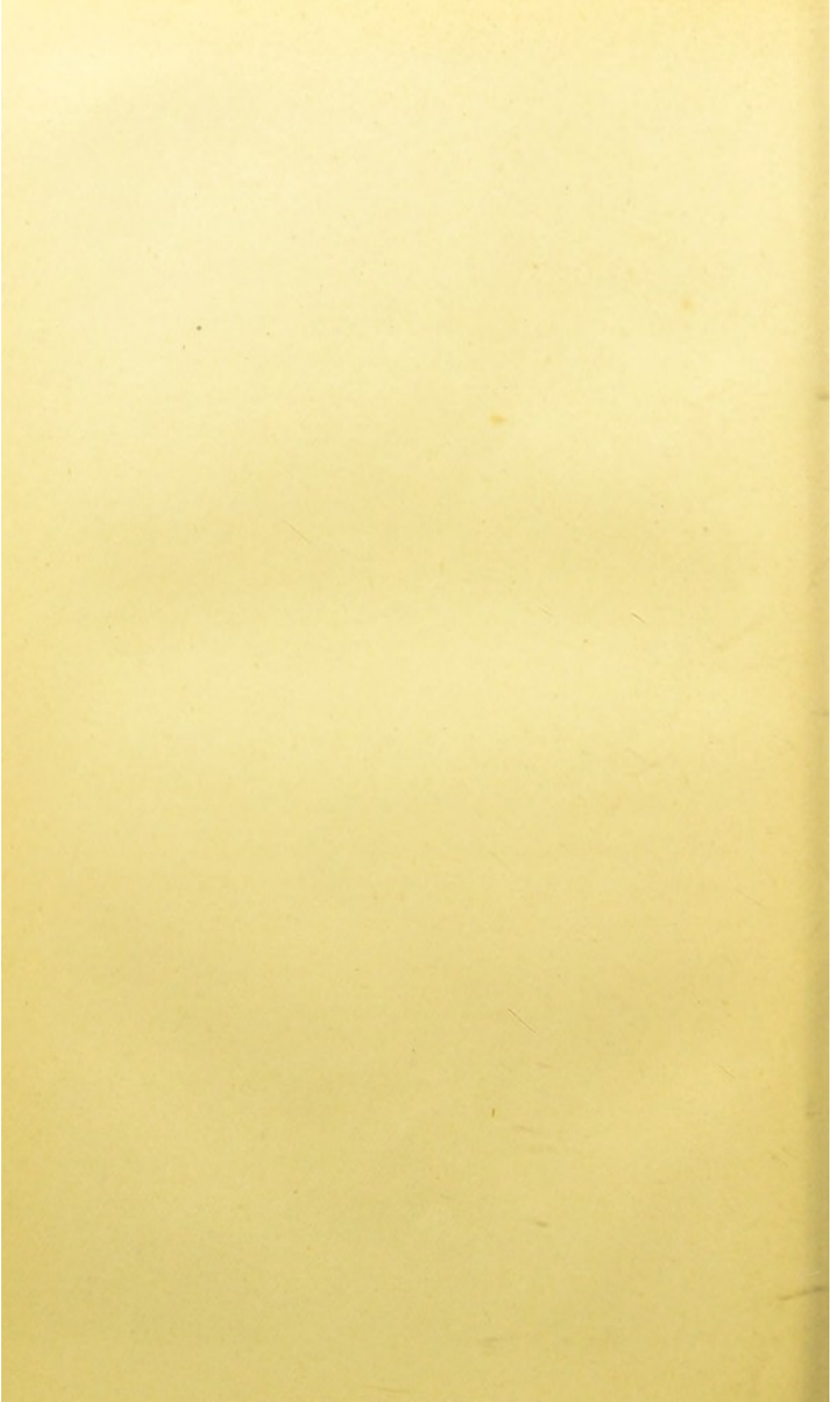
Do you consecrate all your powers unto the Lord ?

Do you ardently long to be filled with all the fulness of God ?

THE END.







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