

Now, to God the Father, who first loved us, and made us accepted in the Beloved; to God the Son, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to God the Holy Ghost, who sheddeth the love of God abroad in our hearts, be all love and all glory in time and to all eternity. Amen.

A COLLECTION OF PRAYERS FOR FAMILIES.

SUNDAY MORNING.

ALMIGHTY and eternal God, we desire to praise thy holy name for so graciously raising us up, in soundness of body and mind, to see the light of this day.

We bless thee in behalf of all thy creatures; for "the eyes of all look unto thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season." But above all we acknowledge thy inestimable benefits bestowed upon mankind in Christ Jesus. We thank thee for his miraculous birth, for his most holy life, his bitter agony and bloody death, for his glorious resurrection on this day, his ascension into heaven, his triumph over all the powers of darkness, and his sitting at thy right hand for evermore.

O God, how great was thy love to the sinful sons of men, to give "thy only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life!" How great was that love which hath committed our souls to One so "mighty to save;" which hath chosen us to be thy sons and heirs, together with Christ Jesus, and set such an High Priest over thy house and family, to make intercession for us, to pour thy blessings upon us, and to send forth his angels to "minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation!" O the riches of thy grace, in sending the Holy Ghost to make us "abound in hope" that we shall one day rise from the dead, and, after our short labours here, rest with thee in thy eternal glory.

O that we could begin this day in devout meditations, in

joy unspeakable, and in blessing and praising thee, who hast given us such good hope and everlasting consolation. Lift up our minds above all these little things below, which are apt to distract our thoughts; and keep them above, till our hearts are fully bent to seek thee every day, in the way wherein Jesus hath gone before us, though it should be with the loss of all we here possess.

We are ashamed, O Lord, to think that ever we have disobeyed thee, who hast redeemed us by the precious blood of thine own Son. O that we may agree with thy will in all things for the time to come; and that all the powers of our souls and bodies may be wholly dedicated to thy service. We desire unfeignedly that all the thoughts and designs of our minds, all the affections and tempers of our hearts, and all the actions of our life, may be pure, holy, and unreprouable in thy sight.

“Search us, O Lord, and prove us; try out our reins and our heart. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in us, and lead us in the way everlasting.” Let thy favour be better to us than life itself; that so in all things we may approve our hearts before thee, and feel the sense of thy acceptance of us, giving us a joy which the world cannot give.

Make it our delight to praise thee, to call to mind thy loving-kindness, and to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Help us to “take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting or drunkenness, or the cares of this life;” to have our conversation without covetousness, and to be content with such things as we have; to possess our bodies in sanctification and honour; to love our neighbour as ourselves; and as we would that others should do to us, do even so to them; to live peaceably, as much as lieth in us, with all men; to put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; and to take those who have spoken in the name of our Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience; and when we suffer as Christians, not to be ashamed, but to glorify thee our God on this behalf.

And accept, good Lord, of all the praises of all thy people met together this day. O that “thy ways were known upon all the earth, thy saving health among all nations;” and that all Christian Kings, especially, may be filled with thy Holy Spirit, and be faithful subjects of the Lord Jesus, “the King of kings and Lord of lords.” O that thy “Priests may be

clothed with righteousness, and thy saints rejoice and sing ;” that all who are in distress may trust in thee, the “health of their countenance and their God.” O Lord, hear us, and make thy face to shine upon thy servants, that we may “enter into thy gates with thanksgiving, and into thy courts with praise ; that we may be thankful unto thee and bless thy name.” Amen, for Jesus Christ’s sake ; in whose words we conclude our imperfect prayers, saying, “Our Father,” &c.

SUNDAY EVENING.

O THOU “high and holy One that inhabitest eternity,” thou art to be feared and loved by all thy servants. “All thy works praise thee, O God ;” and we especially give thanks unto thee for thy marvellous love in Christ Jesus, by whom thou hast “reconciled the world to thyself.” Thou hast “given us exceeding great and precious promises.” Thou hast sealed them with his blood, thou hast confirmed them by his resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. We thank thee that thou hast given us so many happy opportunities of knowing the “truth as it is in Jesus,” even “the mystery which was hid from ages and generations,” but is now revealed to them that believe.

Blessed be thy goodness for that great consolation, and for the assistance of thy Holy Spirit. Blessed be thy goodness, that we have felt it so often in our hearts, inspiring us with holy thoughts, filling us with love and joy, and comfortable expectations of “the glory that shall be revealed.” We thank thee, that thou hast suffered us this day to attend on thee in thy public service ; and that we have begun, in any measure, to pursue after that eternal “rest which remaineth for the people of God.”

We offer up again our souls and bodies to thee to be governed, not by our will, but thine. O let it be ever the ease and joy of our hearts, to be under the conduct of thy unerring wisdom, to follow thy counsels, and to be ruled in all things by thy holy will. And let us never distrust thy abundant kindness and tender care over us ; whatsoever it is thou wouldest have us to do or to suffer in this world.

O God, purify our hearts, that we may entirely love thee, and rejoice in being beloved of thee ; that we may confide in

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thee, and absolutely resign ourselves to thee, and be filled with constant devotion toward thee. O that we may never sink into a base love of anything here below, nor be oppressed with the cares of this life; but assist us to "abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good." Let us "use this world as not abusing it." Give us true humility of spirit, that we may "not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think." Keep us from being "wise in our own conceits." "Let our moderation be known to all men." Make us "kindly affectioned one to another;" to delight in doing good; to "show all meekness to all men;" to "render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour;" and to "owe no man anything, but to love one another." Make us so happy, that we may be able to "love our enemies, to bless those that curse us, to do good to them that hate us; to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Compose our spirits to a quiet and steady dependence on thy good Providence, that we may "take no thought for our life," nor "be careful for anything, but by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, still make known our requests to thee our God." And help us to "pray always and not faint; in every thing to give thanks, and offer up the sacrifice of praise continually; to rejoice in hope of thy glory;" to "possess our souls in patience;" and to "learn in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content." Make us "know both how to be abased, and how to abound; everywhere, and in all things," instruct us "both to abound and to suffer want," being enabled to "do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us."

O that the light of all Christians did so "shine before men," that others might "glorify thee, our Father which art in heaven!" "Send forth thy light and thy truth" into all the dark corners of the earth, that "all Kings may fall down before thee, and all nations do thee service!" Bless these kingdoms, and give us grace at length to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." O Lord, save the King, and "establish his throne in righteousness." Prosper the endeavours of all those who faithfully feed thy people, and increase the number of them. O that the seed which hath been sown this day, may take deep root in all our hearts; that being "not forgetful hearers, but doers of the word, we may be blessed in our deeds." Help us, in all the

week following to "set a watch before our mouth, and keep the door of our lips;" and "let not our heart incline to any evil thing," or "to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity." But "as we have received how we ought to walk and to please thee, so may we abound more and more."

Protect us, we beseech thee, and all our friends everywhere this night; and awaken in the morning those good thoughts in our hearts, that the words of our Saviour may abide in us, and we in Him, who hath taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father," &c.

MONDAY MORNING.

WE humble ourselves, O Lord of heaven and earth, before thy glorious Majesty. We acknowledge thy eternal power, wisdom, goodness, and truth; and desire to render thee most unfeigned thanks, for all the benefits which thou pourest upon us; but above all, for thine inestimable love, in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.

We implore thy tender mercies in the forgiveness of all our sins, whereby we have offended either in thought, word, or deed. We desire to be truly sorry for all our misdoings, and utterly to renounce whatsoever is contrary to thy will. We desire to devote our whole man, body, soul, and spirit, to thee. And as thou dost inspire us with these desires, so accompany them always with thy grace, that we may every day, with our whole hearts, give ourselves up to thy service.

We desire to be so holy and undefiled as our blessed Master was. And we trust thou wilt fulfil all the gracious promises which he hath made to us. Let them be dearer to us than thousands of gold and silver; let them be the comfort and joy of our hearts. We ask nothing, but that it may be unto thy servants according to his word.

Thou hast mercifully kept us the last night; blessed be thy continued goodness. Receive us likewise into thy protection this day. Guide and assist us in all our thoughts, words, and actions. Make us willing to do and suffer what thou pleasest; waiting for the mercy of our Lord, Christ Jesus, unto eternal life.

Blessed be thy goodness, which hath not suffered us to wander without instruction after the foolish desires of our

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own hearts ; but hath clearly shown us where our happiness lies. O may we receive, with all thankfulness, those holy words which teach us the blessedness of poverty of spirit, of mourning after thee, of meekness and gentleness, of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, of mercifulness and purity of heart, of doing good unto all, and patiently suffering for doing the will of our Lord Christ.

O may we always be in the number of those blessed souls. May we ever feel ourselves happy in having the kingdom of God within us, in the comforts of the Holy One, in being filled with all the fruits of righteousness, in being made the children of the Highest, and, above all, in seeing thee, our God. Let us abound in thy love more and more ; and in continual prayers and praises to thee, the Father of mercies and God of all consolation, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And we desire, thou knowest, the good of all mankind, especially of all Christian people ; that they may all walk worthy of the gospel, and live together in unity and Christian love. For which end, we pray that all Christian Kings, Princes, and Governors, may be wise, pious, just, and merciful, endeavouring that all their subjects may lead peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty ; and more particularly, that our Sovereign, King George, may be blessed with a religious, quiet, long, and prosperous reign, and that all in authority under him may seek, in their several stations, to right the oppressed, to comfort the afflicted, to provide for the poor and needy, and to relieve all those that are in any misery. Bless all those that watch over our souls ; succeed their labours, and give us grace to follow their godly admonitions, and to " esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." The same blessings we crave for our friends, relations, and acquaintance, that we may all live in perfect love and peace together, and rejoice together at the great day of the Lord Jesus ; in whose holy words we sum up all our wants : " Our Father," &c.

MONDAY EVENING.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, in whom we live, move, and have our being ; to whose tender compassions we owe our safety the day past, together with all the comforts of

this life, and the hopes of that which is to come; we praise thee, O Lord, we bow ourselves before thee, acknowledging we have nothing but what we receive from thee. "Unto thee do we give thanks," O God, who daily pourest thy benefits upon us.

Blessed be thy goodness for our health, for our food and raiment, for our peace and safety, for the love of our friends, for all our blessings in this life, and our desire to attain that life which is immortal. Blessed be thy love, for that we feel in our hearts any motion toward thee. Behold, O Lord, we present ourselves before thee, to be inspired with such a vigorous sense of thy love, as may put us forward with a greater earnestness, zeal, and diligence in all our duty. Renew in us, we beseech, a lively image of thee, in all righteousness, purity, mercy, faithfulness, and truth. O that Jesus, the hope of glory, may be formed in us, in all humility, meekness, patience, and an absolute surrender of our souls and bodies to thy holy will; that we may not live, but Christ may live in us; that every one of us may say, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Let the remembrance of his love, who made himself an offering for our sins, be ever dear and precious to us. Let it continually move us to offer up ourselves to thee, to do thy will, as our blessed Master did. May we place an entire confidence in thee, and still trust ourselves with thee, who hast not "spared thine own Son, but freely given him up for us all." May we humbly accept of whatsoever thou sendest us, and "in everything give thanks." Surely thou "wilt never leave us nor forsake us." O guide us safe through all the changes of this life, in an unchangeable love to thee, and a lively sense of thy love to us, till we come to live with thee and enjoy thee for ever.

And now that we are going to lay ourselves down to sleep, take us into thy gracious protection, and settle our spirits in such quiet and delightful thoughts of the glory where our Lord Jesus lives, that we may desire to be dissolved and to go to him who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with him.

To thy blessing we recommend all mankind, high and low, rich and poor, that they may all faithfully serve thee, and contentedly enjoy whatsoever is needful for them. And especially we beseech thee, that the course of this world may

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be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness. We leave all we have with thee, especially our friends, and those who are dear unto us; desiring that when we are dead and gone, they may lift up their souls in this manner unto thee; and teach those that come after, to praise, love, and obey thee. And if we awake again in the morning, may we praise thee again with joyful lips, and still offer ourselves a more acceptable sacrifice to thee, through Jesus Christ; in whose words we beseech thee to hear us, according to the full sense and meaning thereof: "Our Father," &c.

TUESDAY MORNING.

O most great and mighty Lord, the possessor of heaven and earth, all the angels rejoice in blessing and praising thee, the Father of spirits; for "thou hast created all things, and in wisdom hast thou made them all," and spread thy tender mercies over all thy works. We desire thankfully to acknowledge thy bounty to us, among the rest of thy creatures, and thy particular grace and favour to us in Jesus Christ, our merciful Redeemer. O give us a deep sense of that love which gave Him to die for us, that he might be "the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him."

And hast thou not said, that thou wilt "give thy Holy Spirit to them that ask it?" O Father of mercies, let it be unto us according to thy word. Cherish whatever thou hast already given us, which is acceptable in thy sight. And since at the best we are unprofitable servants, and can do no more than it is our duty to do, enable us to do everything which thou hast commanded us heartily, with good-will, and true love to thy service.

O that we might ever approach thee with delight, and feel it the joy of our hearts to think of thee, to praise thee, to give thee thanks, and to offer ourselves with absolute resignation to thee. O that mercy may always please us, as it pleaseth thee; that we may be strictly just and righteous; may cheerfully pass by injuries, freely deny ourselves whatever is not for thy glory; willingly submit to thy fatherly corrections, and perform the duties of our several relations with singleness

of heart. Render us so mindful of the great love of our Lord, that we may be zealously concerned for his glory, and use our utmost diligence to promote his religion in the world; delighting to commemorate his death and passion, making a joyful sacrifice of our souls and bodies to him, and earnestly desiring that his kingdom may come over all the earth.

Fulfil, most merciful Lord, all our petitions; and as thou hast graciously protected us this night, so accompany us all this day with thy blessing, that we may please thee in body and soul, and be safe under thy defence, who art ever nigh unto all those that call upon thee.

And O that all men may be awakened into a lively and thankful sense of all thy benefits. Stir up especially the minds of all Christian people to follow "the truth as it is in Jesus," and exercise themselves "to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." Bless these kingdoms, and endue our Sovereign with such excellent wisdom and holy zeal, that we may see many good days under his government. O that true religion, justice, mercy, brotherly kindness, and all things else that are praiseworthy, may so flourish among us, that we may enjoy the blessings of peace and plenty, and there may be no complaining in our streets.

We recommend to thee all our friends and neighbours, all the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, desiring those mercies for them which we should ask for ourselves, were we in their condition. "O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, keep them and us, we beseech thee, from all hurtful things, and give us those things which are profitable for us, according to thine abundant mercy in our Lord Jesus;" in whose words we conclude our supplication unto thee, saying, "Our Father," &c.

TUESDAY EVENING.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, the sovereign Lord of all creatures in heaven and earth, we acknowledge that our beings, and all the comforts of them, depend on thee, the Fountain of all good. We have nothing but what is owing entirely to thy free and bounteous love, O most blessed Creator, and to the riches of thy grace, O most blessed Redeemer.

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To thee, therefore, be given, by us and by all creatures whom thou hast made to know how great and good thou art, all honour and praise, all love and obedience, as long as we have any being. "It is but meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should, at all times and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord," and devoutly resign both soul and body to thee, to be absolutely governed and ruled according to thy holy will.

Further, we pray thee, increase every good desire which we feel already in our hearts; let us always live as becomes thy creatures, as becomes the disciples of Jesus Christ. Incline us to be more and more in love with thy laws, till they are written upon our hearts. Stir up our wills to "love them exceedingly," and to cleave unto them as our very life.

O that we might heartily surrender our wills to thine; that we may unchangeably cleave unto it, with the greatest and most entire affection to all thy commands. O that there may abide for ever in us such a strong and powerful sense of thy mighty love towards us in Christ Jesus, as may constrain us freely and willingly to please thee, in the constant exercise of righteousness and mercy, temperance and charity, meekness and patience, truth and fidelity; together with such an humble, contented, and peaceable spirit, as may adorn the religion of our Lord and Master. Yea, let it ever be the joy of our hearts to be righteous, as thou art righteous; to be merciful, as thou, our heavenly Father, art merciful; to be "holy, as thou who hast called us art holy, in all manner of conversation;" to be endued with thy divine wisdom, and to resemble thee in faithfulness and truth. O that the example of our blessed Saviour may be always dear unto us, that we may cheerfully follow him in every holy temper, and delight to do thy will, O God. Let these desires, which thou hast given us, never die or languish in our hearts, but be kept always alive, always in their vigour and force, by the perpetual inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

Accept, likewise, of our thanks, for thy merciful preservation of us all this day. We are bold again to commit ourselves unto thee this night. Defend us from all the powers of darkness; and raise up our spirits, together with our bodies, in the morning, to such a vigorous sense of thy continued goodness, as may provoke us all the day long to an unwearied diligence in well-doing.

And the same mercies that we beg for ourselves, we desire

for the rest of mankind ; especially for those who are called by the name of Christ. O that every one of these may do his duty with all fidelity ; that Kings may be tender-hearted, as the fathers of their countries ; and all their subjects may be dutiful and obedient to them, as their children ; that the Pastors of thy Church may feed their flocks with true wisdom and understanding, and the people all may submit unto them, and follow their godly counsels ; that the rich and mighty may have compassion on the poor and miserable ; and all such distressed people may bless the rich, and rejoice in the prosperity of those that are above them ! Give to husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, the grace to behave themselves so in their several relations, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and may receive of him a crown of glory ; in whose holy name and words we continue to beseech thy grace and mercy towards us and all thy people everywhere, saying, " Our Father," &c.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

O God, blessed for ever, we thank and praise thee for all thy benefits, for the comforts of this life, and our hope of everlasting salvation in the life to come. We desire to have a lively sense of thy love always possessing our hearts, that may still constrain us to love thee, to obey thee, to trust in thee, to be content with the portion thy love allots unto us, and to rejoice even in the midst of all the troubles of this life.

Thou hast delivered thine own Son for us all. How shalt thou not with him also freely give us all things ? We depend upon thee especially for the grace of thy Holy Spirit. O that we may feel it perpetually bearing us up, by the strength of our most holy faith, above all the temptations that may at any time assault us ; that we may keep ourselves unspotted from the world, and may still cleave to thee in righteousness, in lowliness, purity of heart, yea, the whole mind that was in Christ.

Let thy mighty power enable us to do our duty towards thee, and towards all men, with care, and diligence, and zeal, and perseverance, unto the end. Help us to be meek and gentle in our conversation, prudent and discreet in ordering our affairs,

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observant of thy fatherly providence in everything that befalls us, thankful for thy benefits, patient under thy chastisements, and readily disposed for every good word and work. Preserve in us a constant remembrance of thy all-seeing eye; of thy inestimable love in Jesus Christ, whereof thou hast given us so many pledges, and of the great account we must give to him at the day of his appearing; that so we may continue steadfast and unmovable, and be abundant in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Deliver us, we beseech thee, from worldly cares and foolish desires; from vain hopes and causeless fears; and so dispose our hearts, that death itself may not be dreadful to us, but we may welcome it with a cheerful countenance, when and howsoever it shall approach.

O that our hearts may be so firmly established in grace, that nothing may affright us, or shake our constancy, but we may rather choose to die than to dishonour Him who died for us! We resign ourselves to thy wisdom and goodness, who knowest what is best for us; believing thou "wilt never suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, and wilt with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."

We commend unto thee all mankind; especially thy Church, and more particularly these kingdoms, that we may all believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and be zealous of good works. Bless our Sovereign, his Counsellors, his Ministers, and all employed in public business, whether spiritual or civil, that whatsoever they do may be for thy glory, and the public good. Be gracious to all that are near and dear to us, and keep us all in thy fear and love. Guide us, good Lord, and govern us by the same Spirit, that we may be so united to thee here, as not to be divided when thou art pleased to call us hence, but together enter into thy glory, to dwell with thee in love and joy that shall never die, through Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour; who hath taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father," &c.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

"O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all. The day is thine, the night also is thine;

thou hast prepared the light and the sun." We render thee thanks for all the benefits which thou hast bestowed on the whole world; especially on us, whom thou hast called to the knowledge of thy grace in Christ Jesus. It is a marvellous love wherewith thou hast loved us. Thou hast not dealt so with all people; and as for thy great and precious promises, they have not known them.

Accept, O merciful Father, the good resolutions which thou hast inspired us with by thy Spirit. Strengthen them, we beseech thee, with thy continued grace, that no sudden desires, vehement inclinations, ineffectual purposes, no, nor partial performances, may lead us into a false opinion of ourselves; but that we may bring forth actually, and with a constant spirit, all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus.

Deny not, O Lord, the desires of those souls who would offer up themselves entirely to thy service. But preserve us always in seriousness of spirit. Let the sense of our weakness make us watchful and diligent, the sense of our former negligence excite us to be fervent in spirit, and the goodness of thy commands render us fruitful and abundant in the work of the Lord. O that all our pious affections may be turned into actions of piety and holiness; and may all our actions be spirited with zeal, and all our zeal regulated with prudence, and our prudence void of all guile, and joined with perfect integrity of heart; that, adorning our most holy faith here, by an upright, charitable, and discreet conversation, we may receive praise in the day of the Lord, and be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting.

O lift up our affections to things above, that we may have perfect contentment in well-doing and patient suffering, and the good hope we have of being eternally beloved of thee may make us rejoice evermore. Free us from the cares of the world, from all distrust of thy good providence, from repining at anything that befalls us, and enable us in everything to give thanks, believing that all things are ordered wisely, and shall work together for good.

Into thy hands we commend both our souls and bodies, which thou hast mercifully preserved this day. We trust in thy watchful providence, who "givest thy angels charge over us," who "art about our beds, and about our paths, and spiest out all our" thoughts. O continue these holy thoughts and desires in us till we fall asleep, that we may receive the

light of the morning, if thou prolongest our lives, with a new joy in thee, and thankful affection to thee.

We desire likewise, O God, the good of the whole world. Pity the follies of mankind ; deliver them from their miseries, and forgive thou all their sins. Hear the groans of every part of the creation, that is yet "subject to bondage," and bring them all "into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." Hear the daily prayers of the catholic Church. Free her from all foul and dividing errors ; let the truth as it is in Jesus prevail, and "peace be in all her borders." O that all Christian Governors may "seek peace and ensue it." Make thy Ministers the messengers of peace, and dispose all who are called Christians to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Enlighten the minds of all Jews, Turks, and Infidels. Strengthen all thy faithful servants. Bring back them that wander out of the way ; raise up those that are fallen ; confirm those that stand, and grant them steadily to persevere in faith, love, and obedience. Relieve and comfort all that are in distress. Let the earth bring forth her fruit in due season ; and let all honest and industrious people be blessed in their labours.

Remember all those who have done good unto us, and reward them sevenfold into their bosom. Grant forgiveness and charity to all our enemies ; and continue good-will among all our neighbours. Support the sick with faith and patience ; assist those who are leaving this world. Receive the souls which thou hast redeemed with thy Son's precious blood, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost : And give us all a glorious resurrection and eternal life. "Our Father," &c.

THURSDAY MORNING.

O LORD, the God of our salvation, "thou art the hope of all the ends of the earth." Upon thee the eyes of all do wait ; for thou givest unto all life and breath and all things. Thou still watchest over us for good ; thou daily renewest to us our lives and thy mercies ; and thou hast given us the assurance of thy word, that if we commit our affairs to thee, if we acknowledge thee in all our ways, thou wilt direct our paths.

We desire, O Lord, to be still under thy gracious conduct and fatherly protection. We beg the guidance and help of thy good Spirit, to choose our inheritance for us, and to dispose of us, and all that concerns us, to the glory of thy name.

O Lord, withdraw not thy tender mercies from us, nor the comforts of thy presence. Never punish our past sins, by giving us over to the power of our sins; but pardon all our sins, and save us from all our iniquities. And grant us, O good God, the continual sense of thy gracious acceptance of us, in the Son of thy love, that our souls may bless thee, and "all that is within us may praise thy holy name."

And O that we may find the joy of the Lord to be our strength; to defend us from all our sins, and to make us more zealous of every good work; that herein we may "exercise ourselves, to have a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men." O help us "to walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise," carefully "redeeming the time," improving all those seasons and means of grace which thou art pleased to put into our hands. Sanctify to us all our employments in the world; our crosses, also, and our comforts; all the estates we go through, and all the events that befall us; till, through the merits of thy Son, and the multitude of thy mercies, we are conducted safe to "be ever with the Lord."

Thou "hast laid help for us upon One that is mighty;" that is "able to save unto the uttermost all those who come unto God through him." Through him thou hast encouraged us to come boldly, that we "may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Help us, we beseech thee, to demean ourselves as becomes the children of God, the redeemed of the Lord, the members of Christ. Put thy Spirit within us, causing us to walk in thy statutes, and to keep thy judgments, and do them. Yea, let it be our meat and drink to do thy will, and to run the way of thy commandments.

O gracious Father, keep us, we pray thee, this day in thy fear and favour, and teach us, in all our thoughts, words, and works, to live to thy glory. If thou guide us not, we go astray; if thou uphold us not, we fall. O let thy good providence be our defence, and thy good Spirit our guide, and counsellor, and supporter in all our ways. And grant that we may do always what is acceptable in thy sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord; in whose holy name and words we close these our imperfect prayers: "Our Father," &c.

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Let thy grace, O Lord Jesus, thy love, O heavenly Father, and thy comfortable fellowship, O blessed Spirit, be with us, and with all that desire our prayers, this day and for evermore.

THURSDAY EVENING.

O LORD our God, thy glory is above all our thoughts, and thy mercy is over all thy works. We are still living monuments of thy mercy: For thou hast not cut us off in our sins, but still givest us a good hope and strong consolation through grace. Thou hast sent thy only Son into the world, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish" in his sins, "but have everlasting life." O Lord, we believe; help our unbelief; and give us the true "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," that we may be in the number of those who do indeed repent and "believe to the saving of the soul. Being justified by faith," let us "have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" let us "rejoice in him through whom we have now redemption in his blood;" and let "the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

As we pray that thou wilt be to us a Father of mercies and a God of consolation, so that thou wilt make us "followers of God as dear children," ever jealous over our hearts, and watchful over our ways; continually fearing to offend, and endeavouring to please thee. Thou knowest, O Lord, all our temptations, and the sin that doth so easily beset us. Thou knowest the devices of the enemy, and the deceitfulness of our own hearts. We pray thee, good Lord, that thou wilt arm us with the whole armour of God. Uphold us with thy free Spirit, and watch over us for good evermore.

Let our supplications also ascend before thee for the whole race of mankind. Send thy word unto all the ends of the earth, and let it be the savour of life unto all that hear it. Be gracious to this our native land. O do thou rule all our rulers, counsel all our counsellors, teach all our Teachers, and order all the public affairs to thy glory. Turn from us the judgments which we feel or fear; continue thy blessings to our souls and bodies; and, notwithstanding all our provocations,

be thou still our God, and let us be thy people. Have compassion on all the children of affliction, and sanctify thy fatherly corrections to them. Be gracious to all our friends and neighbours. Reward our benefactors. Bless our relations with the best of thy blessings, with thy fear and love. Preserve us from our enemies, and reconcile them both to us and to thyself. O that all the habitations of Christians may be houses of prayer! And be thou especially kind to the several families where thy blessed name is called upon. Let thy blessing rest upon us of this family. Bless all our present estates to us; and fit us all for whatsoever thou shalt be pleased to call us to. O teach us how "to want and how to abound." In every condition secure our hearts to thyself; and make us ever to approve ourselves sincere and faithful in thy service.

And now, O Father of mercies, be pleased to accept our evening sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. O that thou wouldest imprint and preserve upon our hearts a lively sense of all thy kindness to us; that our souls may bless thee, and all that is within us may praise thy holy name. Yea, let us give thee thanks from the ground of the heart, and praise our God while we have our being: For all thy patience with us, thy care over us, and thy continual mercy to us, blessed be thy name, O Lord God, our heavenly Father; and unto thee, with the Son of thy love, and Spirit of grace, be all thanks and praise, now and for evermore.

FRIDAY MORNING.

"O LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth; thou keepest mercy for thousands; thou pardonest iniquity and transgression and sin. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! The children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." And therefore do we still look up to that bountiful hand, from whence we have received all our good things. O Lord our God, be favourable unto us, as thou usest to be unto those that love thy holy name! O look not upon the sin of our nature, nor the sins of our hearts and lives, which are more than we can remember, and greater than we can express. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed,

because thy compassions fail not. But thou lookest upon the face of thine Anointed, who was manifested to take away our sins; by whom it is that we have the access unto the Majesty on high.

O God, be merciful to us miserable sinners, for his sake whom "thou hast exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance" unto thy people, "and forgiveness of sins." Be merciful, O God, be merciful unto our souls, which have greatly sinned against thee. O heal our backslidings; renew us to repentance; establish our hearts in thy fear and love; and establish our goings in thy way, that our footsteps slip not. Let us waver no more; let us never more be weary or faint in our minds; let us not revolt from thee, or turn to folly again, after thou hast spoken peace to our souls; but may we go on conquering and to conquer all the enemies of our souls, and all the hinderances of our salvation, till thou hast bruised Satan under our feet.

Seeing there is in Christ Jesus an infinite fulness of all that we can want or wish, O that we may all receive of his fulness, grace upon grace; grace to pardon our sins, and subdue our iniquities; to justify our persons and to sanctify our souls; and to complete that holy change, that renewal of our hearts, whereby we may be transformed into that blessed image wherein thou didst create us. O make us all meet to be partakers of the inheritance of thy saints in light.

And teach us, O God, to use this world without abusing it; and to receive the things needful for the body, without losing our part in thy love, which is better than life itself. Whatever we have of this world, O may we have the same with thy leave and love; sanctified to us by the word of God and by prayer; and by the right improvement thereof to thy glory. And whatever we want of worldly things, leave us not destitute of the "things that accompany salvation;" but adorn our souls with all such graces of thy Holy Spirit, that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

And now that thou hast renewed our lives and thy mercies to us this morning, help us to renew our desires and resolutions, and endeavours to live in obedience to thy holy will. O restrain us from the sins into which we are most prone to fall, and quicken us to the duties we are most averse to perform; and grant that we may think and speak, and will and do, the things becoming the children of our heavenly

Father; and so find the strong consolation of thy gracious acceptance in Jesus Christ our Saviour, who, when we pray, hath taught us to say, "Our Father," &c.

FRIDAY EVENING.

O LORD, thou wast before all, thou art above all, and thy years shall not fail. Thou art the searcher of our hearts; thou knowest the dulness and hardness, the vanity and deceitfulness, of them: We were born sinners, and so have we lived. We have added sin to sin; we have abused thy great and manifold mercies, tempted thy patience, and despised thy goodness; and justly mightest thou have cast us into outer darkness, where is wailing and gnashing of teeth.

But of thy loving-kindnesses there is no number. Thou still callest us to return to thee; and "whosoever cometh to thee, thou wilt in nowise cast out." O meet us with thy heavenly grace, that we may be able to come to thee. Be thou graciously pleased to stretch forth thy hand, and loose the chains wherewith our souls are entangled. O free us from every weight of sin, from every yoke of bondage. O help us to feel, and bewail, and forsake all our sins; and let us never want the comfortable assurance of thy forgiveness of them, thy acceptance of us, and thy love to us, in the blessed Son of thy eternal love.

Thou art never weary, O Lord, of doing us good: Let us never be weary of doing thee service. But, as thou hast pleasure in the prosperity of thy servants, so let us take pleasure in the service of our Lord, and abound in thy work, and in thy love and praise evermore. O fill up all that is wanting, reform whatever is amiss, in us, and perfect the thing that concerneth us. Let the witness of thy pardoning love ever abide in all our hearts. O speak into every one of our souls the peace which passeth all understanding; and let us always look upon thee as our Father, reconciled to us in Jesus Christ.

In his great name we cry unto thee in the behalf of the whole race of mankind. O that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God. Continue thy mercies to this sinful land; teach us at length to know thy will concerning us; and O turn thou all our hearts unto thee, as the heart of one man. Bless the King; O Lord, prolong his days and

prosper his government; make him always a "terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well:" And grant unto all Magistrates and Ministers of thy word, a continual supply of all the needful gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Be thou a Father to the fatherless, a Husband to the widow, a Refuge to the oppressed, a Physician to the sick, a Helper of the friendless, a God of consolation to the sorrowful and distressed. Bless to us whatsoever thou art pleased to allot us, and everything that befalls us. Make all work for our good, to build us up in thy grace, and to help us on to thy glory.

Continue thy fatherly care over us this night. O preserve and defend, and bless and keep us, that no evil may befall us, "nor any plague come nigh our dwelling." Give us comfortable sleep to strengthen us for thy service; and whenever thou callest us to the sleep of death, let us cheerfully resign our spirits into thy hands, through the riches of thy grace, and the worthiness of thy Son, in whose merits and mediation alone we put our trust. And for all that he hath done and suffered for us, to thy name, O blessed God of our salvation, be the praise, and honour, and glory, given by us and all thy people, now and for evermore. "Our Father," &c.

SATURDAY MORNING.

WE present ourselves before thee, O Lord our God, to pay our tribute of prayer and thanksgiving; desiring thee mercifully to accept us and our services at the hands of Jesus Christ. In his great name we come to beg thy pardon and peace, the increase of thy grace, and the tokens of thy love; for we are not worthy of the least of thy mercies: But worthy is the Lamb that was slain to take away the sin of the world; for whose sake thou wilt give us all things; for he hath fulfilled those holy laws which we had broken, and perfectly satisfied for our offences; and in him thou art a God gracious and merciful to those who deserve nothing but punishment.

O merciful Father, regard not what we have done against thee; but what our blessed Saviour hath done for us. Regard not what we have made ourselves, but what He is made unto us of thee our God. O that Christ may be to every one of our souls,

“wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption ;” that his precious blood may cleanse us from all our sins ; and that thy Holy Spirit may renew and sanctify our souls. May He crucify our flesh with its affections and lusts, and mortify all our members which are upon earth. O let not “sin reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof ;” but, “being made free from sin, let us be the servants of righteousness.” Let us approve our hearts to thee, and let all our ways be pleasing in thy sight.

O teach us to know thee our God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent ; and enable us to do thy will on earth, as it is done in heaven. Give us to fear thee and to love thee, to trust and delight in thee, and to cleave to thee with full purpose of heart, that no temptations may draw us or drive us from thee ; but that all thy dispensations to us, and thy dealings with us, may be the messengers of thy love to our souls. Quicken us, O Lord, in our dulness, that we may not serve thee in a lifeless and listless manner ; but may abound in thy work, and be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. And make us faithful in all our intercourse with our neighbour, that we may be ready to do good and bear evil, that we may be just and kind, merciful and meek, peaceable and patient, sober and temperate, humble and self-denying, inoffensive and useful in the world ; that so glorifying thee here, we may be glorified with thee in thy heavenly kingdom.

Day by day we magnify thee, O Lord, who makest every day an addition to thy mercies. We bless thee for preserving us the night past, and for the rest thou gavest us therein. O cause us to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning ; for in thee do we trust. Cause us to know the way wherein we shall go, for we lift up our souls unto thee. O take not thy Holy Spirit from us ; but direct all our ways to please thee our God. Help us to see thy power, to own thy presence, to admire thy wisdom, and to love thy goodness in all thy creatures ; and by all, draw our hearts still nearer to thee. Such thy mercy and grace we beg for ourselves, and all ours and thine everywhere in our great Mediator’s blessed words :—

“Our Father,” &c.

Northwest University Library

SATURDAY EVENING.

O LORD our God, thou art infinitely good, and thou hast showed us what is good. Thou sendest out thy light and thy truth, that they may guide us, and makest plain thy way before our face. Thou givest us many opportunities and advantages, to quicken and further us in thy service. We have "line upon line," and "precept upon precept;" thy messengers early and late to open and apply thy word, to call and warn, to direct and exhort us, with all long-suffering. But how little have we improved all the precious talents which thou hast put into our hands! O Lord, thou mightest justly take away the gospel of thy kingdom from us, and give it unto another people, who would bring forth the fruits thereof. Because thou hast called, and we refused; thou hast stretched forth thy hands, and we have not regarded; thou mightest leave us to our own perverseness and impenitence, till our iniquities become our ruin.

But, O Lord God, enter not thus into judgment with thy servants. Pardon all our contempt of thy word, and our not profiting thereby. And help us for the time to come better to improve the blessed opportunities set before us. "As the rain descends from heaven and returns not thither, but waters the earth and maketh it fruitful; so let not thy word return unto thee void, but prosper in the work whereunto thou sendest it." O make it effectual to build us all up, in the true fear and love of God, and in the right knowledge and faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

O gracious God, may thy Spirit cause thy word to work thoroughly and successfully in all our hearts. And as we daily receive how we ought to walk and to please thee our God; so help us to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing;" increasing in the knowledge and love of thee, and abounding more and more in every good work which is pleasing in thy sight through Jesus Christ.

At his hands, O Lord our God, we beg thy gracious acceptance of our humble praise and thanksgiving for all thy blessings, spiritual and temporal, so freely conferred upon us. We praise thee for all the comforts and conveniences of this life, and for all the means and hopes of a better; particularly for what we have received this day; the food of our souls set

before us, the word of salvation sounding in our ears, and the Spirit of God striving with our hearts. O withdraw not thy tender mercies from us, but still continue thy accustomed goodness, and increase thy grace and heavenly blessings upon us, and rejoice over us to do us good.

In mercy pass by all which thy most pure and holy eyes have seen amiss in us this day. Forgive the iniquities of our holy things; overlook all our sins and failings through our great Mediator and Redeemer, who ever lives at thy right hand to make intercession for us. And for Jesus Christ, and all which thou art pleased to give us together with him, "not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name" be all the praise, and honour, and glory, humbly ascribed by us, and all thy Church, now and for evermore!

"Our Father," &c.

PRAYERS FOR CHILDREN.

PREFACE.

MY DEAR CHILD,

A LOVER of your soul has here drawn up a few Prayers, in order to assist you in that great duty. Be sure that you do not omit, at least morning and evening, to present yourself upon your knees before God. You have mercies to pray for, and blessings to praise God for. But take care that you do not mock God, drawing near with your lips, while your heart is far from him. God sees you, and knows your thoughts; therefore, see that you not only speak with your lips, but pray with your heart. And that you may not ask in vain, see that you forsake sin, and make it your endeavour to do what God has shown you ought; because God says, "The prayers of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord." Ask then of God for the blessings you want, in the name, and for the sake, of Jesus Christ; and God will hear and answer you, and do more for you than you can either ask or think.

JOHN WESLEY.

LORD'S DAY MORNING.

O ALMIGHTY God, Maker of all mankind, in whom we live and move, and have our being, who makest the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice, suffer me now to approach thy divine Majesty with all reverence and godly fear. I desire to adore thy sacred name, who hast in thy goodness brought me in safety to behold the beginning of a new day and another Sabbath. I bless thee, who hast in love to my soul, and for the glory of thy name, set apart this day for holy uses, to engage me in thy service, wherein consists my honour and happiness. This is thy day: O Lord, enable me to rejoice and be glad in it. May I ever remember to keep it holy, not doing my own works, nor finding my own pleasure, nor speaking my own words; but so delight in thee, that thou mayest give me my heart's desire. Bless to me thy word, O my heavenly Father, and all the means of grace, that I may not use them in vain or to my own hurt, but for the instructing my mind, reforming my life, and the saving my soul. Save me from all hardness of heart and contempt of thy word; increase my love to it, and enable me to hear it meekly, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth fruit unto good living. Open my understanding to receive thy truth in the love thereof. Set it so powerfully upon my heart, and root it so deep in my soul, that the fruits thereof may be seen in my life, to thy glory and praise. May I always so hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest thy word, that it may be a savour of life to my soul. O let me not offer vain oblations unto the Lord, drawing nigh with my lips, while my heart is far from thee. But do thou enable me to worship thee with holy worship, with joy and delight, with profit and pleasure. Fill me with a comfortable sense of thy presence, that I may serve thee with reverence and godly fear, to the comfort of my soul and the glory of thy name. O Lord God, do thou clothe thy Priests with righteousness, and let thy saints rejoice and sing. Break the bread of life to all our souls, that we may eat and live for ever. O Lord, hear my prayers, and let my cry come unto thee. Do more and better for me than I can either desire or deserve, for the sake of my blessed Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ; to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all praise and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

“Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

LORD'S DAY EVENING.

MERCIFUL God, permit me to pay thee, now, my evening sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, for all the blessings and favours to my body and soul, so freely bestowed, and so long continued unto me. Thou hast dealt graciously with me, O Lord God, and hast been exceedingly good and kind to me, beyond all that I had reason to expect, or am able to express. I bless thee, O Lord, for every help which I enjoy to the promoting my present and eternal good. I desire to ascribe all praise and glory to thee, to whom alone it is due. O Lord, I bless thee that thy house is open to me, the bread of life offered me, the word of salvation preached, and thy Spirit striving with me. O suffer me not to receive thy grace in vain, nor let thy word be lost upon me. Do thou apply it to my heart, and fix it in my memory, that it may prove a blessing to my soul. In mercy, O Lord, pass by all things which in thy pure and holy eyes have been amiss this day past; pardon my neglects, and the guilt of my misdoings. And as I have heard how to walk and to please thee, O my God, help me to walk more worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, that I may be built up in thy true fear and love, and in the right knowledge and faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be thou pleased to second every word of instruction that I have received with the power of thy grace and Holy Spirit; and above all, O blessed God, do thou give me a heart filled with thy love, and lifted up in thy praise, and devoted to thy honour and glory all the days of my life. Take me, O Lord God, my Saviour, into thy gracious care and protection. Preserve me from all dangers in the night season. Let me lay down and sleep in thy arms, and when the trumpet shall sound, and at last call me from the sleep of death, let me be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so for ever be with the Lord. All these mercies, O my God, I most humbly ask, for the alone sake of Jesus Christ, my Redeemer. Amen. "Our Father," &c.

MONDAY MORNING.

O LORD God Almighty, Father of angels and men, I praise and bless thy holy name for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to me and all mankind. I bless thee for my creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for thy great love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. I bless thee for preserving me in the night past, and bringing me safe to the beginning of a new day. Defend me in the same with thy mighty power, and grant that this day I fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger; but let all my doings be so ordered by thy governance, that I may do always that which is righteous in thy sight, through Jesus Christ my Redeemer. Grant me such grace, that I may be able to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with a pure heart and mind to follow the steps of my gracious Redeemer. Keep me, I beseech thee, O Lord, from all things hurtful to my soul or body, and grant me thy pardon and peace, that, being cleansed from all my sins, I may serve thee with a quiet mind, bring forth plenteously the fruit of good works, and continue in the same unto my life's end, through Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

“Our Father,” &c.

MONDAY EVENING.

ALMIGHTY God, who art the gracious Preserver of all mankind, I desire now to offer unto thee my praise and thanksgivings, for all the blessings thou hast this day bestowed upon me. I confess, O my God, that I am unworthy of the least of all thy mercies; for I have gone astray like a lost sheep. I have followed too much the devices and desires of my own heart. I have offended against thy holy laws. I have left undone those things which I ought to have done, and have done those things which I ought not to have done; and there is no health in me. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon me, a miserable offender. Spare me, O Lord, who now confess my faults unto thee. Enable me to bewail my manifold sins and offences, which I have from time to time most grievously committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine

Majesty. Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, most merciful Father; for my Saviour Jesus Christ's sake, forgive me all that is past, and grant me thy grace, that I may ever hereafter serve and please thee, in newness of life, to the honour and glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour. Take me under thy gracious care and keeping this night; save and defend me from all dangers. Grant unto my body rest in my bed, and unto my soul rest in thyself; and be thou my God and my guide, my hope and my help, my joy and my comfort, now and for evermore, through Jesus Christ my Redeemer. Amen.

"Our Father," &c.

TUESDAY MORNING.

O THOU Father of all mercies, and God of all goodness, I praise and bless thy name for thy mercies and favours unto me in the night past, and for bringing me safe to behold the light of a new day. Send down thy heavenly grace into my soul, that I may be enabled to worship thee and serve thee as I ought to do. Enable me to believe in thee, to fear thee, and to love thee with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; that I may honour thy holy name and word, and serve thee truly, this, and all the days of my life. Give me thy grace, that I may love all mankind as myself, and do unto all, as I would they should do unto me. Enable me to love and honour my parents, obey my superiors, and submit to all my teachers. Suffer me not to hurt any body by word or deed. Make me just and honest in all my dealings. Let me not bear any malice or hatred in my heart. Keep my hands from picking and stealing, my tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering; keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity; that I may not covet any person's goods, but learn and labour to get my own living, and to do my duty in the state of life wherein it shall please thee to place me. Direct me so to pass through things temporal, that I may not finally lose the things which are eternal, but at last be received into thy presence, where is fulness of joy, and be seated at thy right hand, where are pleasures for evermore, through Jesus Christ my Saviour. Amen.

"Our Father," &c.

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TUESDAY EVENING.

O LORD God, the gracious Giver of all good things, I praise and adore thee for thy goodness, which has been so plentiful towards me an unworthy child of man. Thou hast in thy mercy, not only preserved me this day from all dangers, but bestowed upon me all things needful, for which I desire entirely to praise thy fatherly goodness, and with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, to laud and magnify thy holy name. Bless, then, the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy name; for the Lord is gracious, and his mercy is everlasting towards them that fear him. And now, Lord, I most humbly implore thy fatherly goodness to forgive me whatever has this day, in my heart or life, offended the eyes of thy glory. O Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, receive my prayer. Prevent me, O Lord, in all my doings for the time to come, and further me with thy continual help, that, in all my thoughts, words, and works, I may continually glorify thy holy name. Grant me thy grace, that I may follow thy blessed saints in all righteousness and holy living, that I may at last come to be a partaker with them of glory everlasting. Do thou enable me, gracious Lord, to adorn thy gospel in all holy conversation, and to do whatever I do to the glory of thy name. Cleanse the thoughts of my heart, by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that I may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name. Let thy fatherly hand be ever over me, and thy Holy Spirit be ever with me; and do thou so lead me in the knowledge and obedience of thy word, that, in the end, I may obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ my Lord. And now, O Lord, as the night is come upon me, and as I am ready to betake myself to rest, I desire to commit myself to thy protection, who neither slumberest nor sleepest, but hast still a watchful eye over me: O watch over me for good, that none of the evils I deserve may fall upon me. Preserve me from all terrors and dangers in the night. Remove my sin out of thy sight, and show me the light of thy countenance, and refresh me with the sense of thy favour, through Jesus Christ my Redeemer; to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

“Our Father,” &c.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

O LORD God Almighty, Fountain of all goodness, and Father of all mercies, I desire again to bow my knee before thy holy Majesty, humbly beseeching thee to accept my praise and thanksgivings for thy mercies to me in the night season. I laid me down and slept, and rose up again in safety; for it was thou only, O Lord, that sustainedst me. And now, O my soul, return unto thy rest. Look upon me, O Lord, in thy rich mercy, and, for thy dear Son's sake, be gracious unto my soul. Lighten my darkness, I beseech thee, O Lord, and let the dayspring from on high visit me. Enable me to cast away all the works of darkness, and to put upon me the armour of light, that I may be able to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; to keep thy holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of my life. Give me, O Lord, wisdom to know the things that belong to my peace, before I go hence, and am no more seen. Graft in my heart the love of thy name, increase in me true religion, and nourish me with all goodness. Give me the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful. Teach me to ask and seek only such things as shall please thee and profit my soul. Give me such a measure of thy grace, that I may run the way of thy commandments, obtain thy gracious promises, and be made a partaker of thy heavenly treasures. Pour down upon me the abundance of thy mercy. Give me more than I can either desire or deserve. O give me the increase of faith, hope, and love; and keep me ever by thy help from all things hurtful, and lead me to all things useful. Let thy grace always prevent and follow me, that I may be continually given to all good works, and may always glorify my Father which is in heaven. These, and every other blessing, for me, and for thy whole Church, I humbly beg in the name, and for the sake of the merits, of Jesus Christ my Redeemer; to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, &c.

“Our Father,” &c.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

O God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, I most humbly beseech thee now to accept my sincere praise and thanksgiving for all the blessings and mercies that I have enjoyed this day. It is thou, O Lord, alone, who hast preserved me from dangers; and from thy gracious bounty have I received all things needful to promote my present and eternal happiness. Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name, be the praise. O Lord, I am unworthy, through my manifold sins, to offer thee any sacrifice; yet, as thy property is to have mercy and to forgive, I beseech thee to accept this my bounden duty; not dealing with me according to my deserving, but after thy mercy, and the merits of thy dear Son Jesus Christ. I confess unto thee, O my God, that I am tied and bound with the chain of my sins; yet, let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose me. I have no power of myself to help myself; O do thou keep me by thy grace, both outwardly in my body, and inwardly in my soul, that I may be enabled to present both body and soul a holy and pleasing sacrifice unto thee, through my Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Grant me, O my God, grace, that I may love what thou hast commanded, and earnestly desire what thou hast promised. Enable me, amidst the many changes of this world, to fix my heart constantly upon things above. May I, both in heart and mind, constantly thither ascend, whither my Saviour, Jesus Christ, is gone before, to prepare a place for me. Bring me up, O Lord, in thy fear and love. Keep me under the protection of thy good providence. Hide me under the shadow of thy wings; keep me from the evils of this world, and land me safe at last on that blissful shore, where all is quietness and assurance for ever.

Into thy hands, O my God, I this night commend my soul and body. Give thy angels charge over me, and grant me such rest and sleep as may fit me for the duties of the following day. And, O my God, do thou prepare me for my last sleep in death, my departure out of this mortal state; that, before I go hence, I may finish the work thou hast given me to do, and at last finish my course with joy through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

“Our Father,” &c.

THURSDAY MORNING.

O THOU eternal Fountain of all wisdom, whom I cannot see or know but by the means of thy own light, vouchsafe to manifest thyself to my soul, and teach me to know aright thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. O blessed Sun of Righteousness, arise upon me with healing in thy wings, to scatter all the clouds of folly and ignorance that overspread my soul. Open my eyes to see the wondrous things thy love has wrought. Suffer me not to remain in darkness concerning anything that is needful for me to know in order to my present peace and my eternal glory. O Lord, incline mine ears to wisdom, and my heart to understanding, that I may follow on to know the Lord, and increase in the knowledge and love of God. Give me, O Lord, that highest learning, to know thee; and that best wisdom, to know myself. Command a blessing on my studies and endeavours; and bless me, and help me, Lord, in my learning all such things as shall stand me in stead, and do me good. Let my soul and body, and all their powers, be under thy conduct, and employed to thy glory. Show me thy ways, O Lord, and lead me into truth; and whatever I am ignorant of, unto me let it be given to know the mysteries of thy kingdom; and let me count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep me this day from all sin. Bless my going out and coming in, now and for evermore. Amen.

“Our Father,” &c.

 THURSDAY EVENING.

O MY heavenly Father, who tookest me out of my mother's womb, who wast my hope when I hanged yet upon my mother's breast, I have been preserved by thee ever since I was born; O go not from me in this my youth, but send out thy light and thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me to thy holy hill, and to thy dwelling-place. Teach me thy way, O Lord, and enable me to walk in thy truth. O knit my heart unto

thee, that I may fear thy name; and give me understanding in the way of godliness. Lord, I am young, and cannot discern between good and evil: O let me not go out of the way of thy commandments. Learn me true understanding and knowledge. Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee; for thou art my God. Let thy loving Spirit lead me forth into all the paths of righteousness. Let my study day and night be in thy word, that I may become wise unto salvation. Make thy word a light unto my feet, and a lamp to my path: Guide me here with thy counsel, and after that receive me into glory. Withdraw not thou thy mercy from me, O my God; but let thy loving-kindness and thy truth always preserve me. Give thy blessing to me, and with thy favourable kindness defend me, as with a shield. Show me the path of life, and enable me to walk therein, till I come into thy presence, where is fulness of joy, and to thy right hand, where are pleasures for evermore. As thou hast been pleased to preserve me this day, and hast bestowed upon me all things needful, I desire to bless thy name for the same. Take care of me this night, O Lord, and visit me with thy mercies. Preserve me, O Lord, from everything hurtful, and let thy merciful arms for ever surround me, through Jesus Christ my Saviour. Amen.

“Our Father,” &c.

FRIDAY MORNING.

O LORD my God, I am taught by thy word, that I am by nature born in sin and a child of wrath, and that except I am born again I cannot see the kingdom of God. O Lord, do thou teach me the meaning of the new birth, that I, a child of wrath, may become a child of grace. Lord, take away the veil from my heart, that I may know my sinful nature. Make the remembrance of my sins grievous unto me, and the burden of them intolerable. Lead me then to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, that I may there wash and be cleansed. Suffer me not to rest till I find redemption in thy blood, even the forgiveness of all my sins. It has pleased thee, O Lord, to hide these things from the wise and prudent, and to reveal them unto babes. Reveal then, O Lord, thy love in my soul. Let me taste and see how good and gracious thou art. Suffer a child to come unto thee, and forbid me

not. I am unworthy; but receive me as thou didst the little children of old into thy gracious arms, and adopt me thine for ever. Shed abroad in my heart thy love, and fill me with all peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Let every thought, word, and deed, be henceforth to the glory of thy great name through Jesus Christ, and at last grant me an abundant entrance into thy everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Be thou with me, O Lord, this day, to bless and keep, guide and govern me, and let me be thine, and only thine, for ever. Amen.

“Our Father,” &c.

FRIDAY EVENING.

O THOU ever blessed God, the Author and Giver of life, I desire with all humility to draw near unto thy gracious majesty, to offer up unto thee my evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. Thou alone, O God, art worthy to be praised, and to be had in everlasting remembrance. Glory be to thee O most adorable Lord God. Glory be to thy name for all thy mercies and goodness bestowed on me thy most unworthy servant, in the day that is now past. Give me a due sense of all thy mercies, that my heart may be unfeignedly thankful, and grant me thy grace, that I may show forth thy praise not only with my lips but in my life. Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness. According to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine offences. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from all my sins. Turn thy face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds. Create in me a clean heart, O my God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, neither withdraw thy loving-kindness from me. “Spare me, O Lord, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with me for ever.” For the glory of thy name, turn from me those evils that I have most righteously deserved, and enable me to walk before thee henceforth in holiness and righteousness to thy praise and glory. Let thy mercy and goodness follow me all the days of my life, and be thou my guide unto death, and my portion for ever. Give me thy grace, that I may duly consider my latter end and the fewness of my days, that I may seriously apply my heart unto wisdom, and work

out my salvation with fear and trembling, before the night of death cometh upon me, wherein no man can work. Enable me so to live, that I may not only be looking but also longing for my Saviour's appearing; that when he shall come, I may also appear with him in glory. And now, O Lord my God, I beseech thee, take me under thy protection this night, and preserve me from all evil. I will lay me down in peace and take my rest; for it is thou, Lord, only that makest me dwell in safety. In thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded. These and all other mercies I humbly beg in the name of my Mediator Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Our Father,” &c.

SATURDAY MORNING.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, I bless thee, that of thy infinite goodness thou hast preserved me this night past, and brought me in safety to this morning. Withdraw not, I humbly beseech thee, thy protection from me, but take me under the care of thy providence this day. Watch over me with the eyes of thy mercy, direct my soul and body according to the rule of thy will, that I may pass this and all my days to thy glory. O Lord, I am but a child, and know not how to go out or come in; and I am in the midst of a sinful world. Give therefore unto thy servant an understanding heart, that I may know and choose the good, and abhor and shun that which is evil. According to thy mercy, think upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness. Make me to remember thee in the days of my youth. O learn me true wisdom, and let the law of thy mouth be dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver, and let my whole delight be therein. O let me be devoted to thee from my childhood. Keep out of my heart all love of the world, of riches, or any other created thing, and fill it with the love of God. Thou knowest how many and powerful are the enemies of my soul, that seek to destroy it, the flesh and the devil. O Lord, help; O Lord, save; O Lord, deliver me from them. Give me grace to renounce them all, and to keep thy holy will and commandments all the days of my life. Show me and make me what I must be before I can inherit thy kingdom. Teach me the truth as it is in Jesus. Save me from my own will, and let thine be

done in me and by me. O make me thy child by adoption and grace. Renew me daily with thy Holy Spirit, and guide me in all my ways, till thou hast perfected me for thy heavenly kingdom. Make me dutiful to my parents, affectionate to my relations, obedient to my superiors, and loving towards all mankind. And grant that as I grow in stature, I may grow in wisdom and in thy favour, till thou shalt take me to thine everlasting kingdom, there to dwell with thee for ever and ever, through Jesus Christ my Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

“Our Father,” &c.

SATURDAY EVENING.

I DESIRE to offer unto thee, O Lord, my evening sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for all thy mercies bestowed upon me. I bless thee for my creation, preservation, and, above all, for my redemption by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I bless thee for bringing me safely to the conclusion of this day, and humbly implore the pardon of all the sins I have been guilty of, whether in thought, word, or deed. Have mercy upon me, O God, and do thou free me from all the sins I have committed, and deliver me from the punishment I have deserved. O thou blessed Guide of my youth, give me thy grace to seek after thee in my early years, that thou mayest not be unmindful of me in the time of age. Keep me from the evil of the world, and carry me safe through it to thy kingdom. Take care of me, and provide for me, and dispose of me in the world, as shall be most for thy glory and my good. Leave me not to myself, in the hands of my own counsel, but let me be taught of God. Take thou, O Lord, the gracious charge, and guidance, and government of me, and fix in my heart thy fear and love, and direct all my ways to please not myself but thee. O redeem me from the power of my sins by thy grace, and from the punishment of them by thy blood, and by both bring me to thy glory. I desire, O my God, to give up myself wholly to thee. I would be thine, and only thine, for ever. O my God, my Saviour, turn not away thy face from a poor child that seeks thee. Give me to know that I am nothing, and can do nothing, of myself; and that if ever I am thine, I must be wholly

indebted to thee for it. Let me be entirely devoted unto thee, and do thou make me obedient and faithful unto the end. Make me to remember thee in my bed, and think upon thee when I am waking; thou hast preserved me from the dangers of the day past, thou hast been my support ever since I was born. Under the shadow of thy wings let me pass this night in comfort and peace. Keep me both in body and soul, and give me such rest as my body has need of. And grant, O Lord, that when I lay down my body in the grave, my soul may rise to life immortal, through the merits and intercession of thy dear Son, my Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen. "Our Father," &c.

A Prayer for Relations, Friends, &c., to be used after Morning and Evening Prayer.

VOUCHSAFE, O Lord, to bless my father and mother, and all my relations, with the fear of thy name. Bless them in their souls and bodies; perfect them in every good word and work, and be thou their guide unto death. Bless my friends, forgive my enemies; and grant unto all mankind the knowledge and love of thee. Have mercy upon all who are afflicted in mind, body, or estate. Give them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions; and receive them and me at last into thy blessed kingdom, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Grace before Meat.

O LORD, I beseech thee, give thy blessing with what thy mercy has here provided me with, that whether I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, I may do all to thy glory and praise, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

After Meals.

O LORD my God, I bless thy holy name for this mercy, which I have now received from thy bounty and goodness. Feed now my soul with thy grace, that I may make it my meat and drink to do thy gracious will, through Jesus Christ my Saviour. Amen.

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SHORT ACCOUNT

OF

THE LIFE AND DEATH

OF

THE REVEREND JOHN FLETCHER.

*Sequor, non passibus æquis! **

* I follow him, but at a great distance.—EDIT.

TO THE READER.

No man in England has had so long an acquaintance with Mr. Fletcher as myself. Our acquaintance began almost as soon as his arrival in London, about the year 1752, before he entered into Holy Orders, or, I believe, had any such intention; and it continued uninterrupted between thirty and forty years, even till it pleased God to take him to himself. Nor was ours a slight or ordinary acquaintance; but we were of one heart and of one soul. We had no secrets between us for many years; we did not purposely hide anything from each other. From time to time he consulted me, and I him, on the most important occasions; and he constantly professed, not only much esteem, but, what I valued far more, much affection. He told me in one of his letters,—I doubt not from his heart,

Tecum vivere amem; tecum obeam lubens.

“With thee I gladly would both live and die.”

I therefore think myself obliged by the strongest ties to pay this small tribute to his memory. But you may easily observe, that, in doing this, I am little

more than a compiler; for I owe a great, if not the greatest, part of the ensuing Tract to a few friends, who have been at no small pains in furnishing me with materials; and, above all, to my dear friend, (such she has been almost from her childhood,) Mrs. Fletcher. I could easily have altered both hers and their language, while I retained their sentiments; but I was conscious I could not alter it for the better; and I would not alter for altering' sake; but judged it fairest to give you most of their accounts, very nearly in their own words.

Amsterdam,

September 12, 1786.

See also Sermon No. CXXXIII

THE

LIFE AND DEATH OF MR. FLETCHER.

CHAPTER I.

OF HIS PARENTAGE AND YOUTH.

1. JOHN WILLIAM DE LA FLECHERE (this was properly his name) was born at Nyon, in Switzerland, a town about fifteen miles north of Geneva, on September the twelfth, in the year 1729. His father was an Officer in the French service, till he left the army in order to marry; but after a time he returned to the army, and was a Colonel in the Militia of his own country.

2. In his early childhood he had much of the fear of God, and great tenderness of conscience. One day, having offended his father, who threatened to correct him, he did not dare to come into his presence, but retired into the garden; and when he saw him coming toward him, he ran away with all speed. But he was presently struck with deep remorse, and said to himself, "What! do I run away from my father? Perhaps I shall live to have a son that will run away from me." And it was several years before the impression which he then received was worn off.

3. Another instance of his tenderness of conscience occurred when he was about seven years of age: He was one day reproved by the nursery-maid, saying, "You are a naughty boy. Do you not know, that the devil is to take away all naughty children?" He was no sooner in bed, than he began to reflect very deeply upon her words: He thought, "I am a naughty boy; and how do I know but God may let the devil take me away this night?" He then got up and wrestled with God in prayer for a considerable time; and he would not go to bed again till he believed God had forgiven him.

4. The following accounts Mr. Fletcher himself gave to Mr. Samuel Webb, of London, then residing at Madeley:—

“When I was a lad, I had a design to get some fruit out of my father’s garden: The door being locked, I could not get in, but by climbing over the wall. This was very high; but with some difficulty I got to the top of it. As I was walking upon it, my foot slipped, and I fell down to the bottom. But just where I fell a large quantity of fresh-made mortar was laid. I fell exactly upon it. This broke my fall, or it might have cost me my life.

5. “Once, as I was swimming by myself in a deep water, one end of a strong riband which bound my hair, getting loose I know not how, and twisting about my leg, tied me as it were neck and heels. I strove with all my strength to disengage myself; but it was to no purpose. No person being within call, I gave myself up for lost. But when I had given over struggling, the riband loosed of itself.

6. “Another instance of the tender care which God had over me was as follows:—One evening I and four young gentlemen, in high spirits, made a solemn agreement with each other to swim the next day to a rocky island, five miles distant from the shore. But this foolish adventure was within a very little of costing us all our lives. I and another indeed did with great difficulty and hazard swim to the island; but when we came thither, the rock was so steep and smooth, that we could not possibly climb up. After swimming round several times, and making many ineffectual efforts, we thought we must perish there; but at length one of us found a place, where he made a shift to crawl up. He then helped his companion after him. The others swam about half-way. A boat then took them up, when they were just sinking. Another boat, which we had ordered to follow us, afterwards came and took us home.”

7. A still more remarkable deliverance it is of which he gave an account in the year 1760: “Some years since, I lived at a place very near the river Rhine. In that part, it is broader than the Thames at London Bridge, and extremely rapid. But, having been long practised in swimming, I made no scruple of going into it at any time; only I was always careful to keep near the shore, that the stream might not carry me away. Once, however, being less careful than usual, I was unawares drawn into the mid channel. The water

there was extremely rough, and poured along like a galloping horse. I endeavoured to swim against it, but in vain, till I was hurried far from home. When I was almost spent, I rested upon my back, and then looked about for a landing place, finding I must either land or sink. With much difficulty I got near the shore; but the rocks were so ragged and sharp, that I saw, if I attempted to land there, I should be torn in pieces; so I was constrained to turn again to the mid stream. At last, despairing of life, I was cheered by the sight of a fine smooth creek, into which I was swiftly carried by a violent stream. A building stood directly across it, which I did not then know to be a powder-mill. The last thing I can remember was, the striking of my breast against one of the piles whereon it stood. I then lost my senses, and knew nothing more, till I rose on the other side of the mill. When I came to myself, I was in a calm, safe place, perfectly well, without any soreness or weariness at all. Nothing was amiss but the distance of my clothes, the stream having driven me five miles from the place where I left them. Many persons gladly welcomed me on shore; one gentleman in particular, who said, 'I looked when you went under the mill, and again when you rose on the other side; and the time of your being immersed among the piles, was exactly twenty minutes.'

But some will say, "Why, this was a miracle!" Undoubtedly it was. It was not a natural event; but a work wrought above the power of nature, probably by the ministry of angels.

8. When he was yet very young, his father sent him to the University of Geneva. After he had gone through the usual course of study, it was the desire of his parents that he should be a Clergyman. But it was his own desire and resolution to be an Officer in the army. Not being able to gain their consent to this, he, without their consent, went away to Lisbon. Here he gathered a company of his own countrymen, accepted of a Captain's commission, and engaged to serve the King of Portugal, on board a man-of-war, which was just then getting ready with all speed in order to sail to Brazil. He then wrote to his parents, begging them to send him a considerable sum of money. Of this he expected to make a vast advantage. But they refused him roughly: Unmoved by this, he determined to go without it, as soon as the ship sailed. But in the morning, the maid, waiting on him at breakfast, let the tea-kettle fall, and so scalded his leg

that he kept his bed for a considerable time after. During that time, the ship sailed for Brazil. But it was observed, that the ship was heard of no more.

9. But how is this reconcilable with the account which has been given of his piety when he was a child? Very easily: It only shows, that his piety declined while he was at the University. (And this is too often the case of other youths in our own Universities.) But it pleased God at or before his journey to England to lift up his head again.

10. His desire of being an Officer in the army continued after he returned from Lisbon. And when he was informed, that his uncle, then a Colonel in the Dutch service, had procured a commission for him, he joyfully set out for Flanders. But just at that time the peace was concluded; and his uncle dying quickly after, his hopes were blasted, and he gave up all thoughts of going into the army; and, being disengaged from all business, he thought it would not be amiss to spend a little time in England.

11. Coming to the Custom-House in London, with some other young gentlemen, none of whom could speak any English, they were treated with the utmost surliness and ill-manners by some brutish Custom-House Officers. These not only took out and jumbled together all the things that were in their portmanteaus, but took away their letters of recommendation; telling them, "All letters must be sent by the post." They are such saucy and ill-mannered wretches as these that bring up an evil report on our nation. Britons might well be styled, *hospitibus feri*,* if they were all like these vermin.

12. From hence they went to an inn; but here they were under another difficulty. As they spoke no English, they could not tell how to exchange their foreign into English money; till Mr. Fletcher, going to the door, heard a well-dressed Jew talking French. He told him the difficulty they were under, with regard to the exchange of money. The Jew replied, "Give me your money, and I will get it changed in five minutes." Mr. Fletcher without delay gave him his purse, in which were ninety pounds. As soon as he came back to his company, he told them what he had done. They all cried out with one voice, "Then your money is gone. You need never expect to see a crown or a doit of it any more. Men are constantly waiting about the doors of these inns, on

* Rude and inhospitable to foreigners.—EDIT.

purpose to take in young strangers." Seeing no remedy, no way to help himself, he could only commend his cause to God. And that was enough ;—before they had done breakfast, in came the Jew, and brought him the whole money.

13. Inquiring for a person who was proper to perfect him in the English tongue, (the rudiments of which he had begun to learn before he left Geneva,) he was recommended to Mr. Burchell, who then kept a boarding-school at South Nimms in Hertfordshire. And when Mr. Burchell removed to Hatfield, he chose to remove with him. All the time he was both at South Nimms and at Hatfield, he was of a serious and reserved behaviour ; very different from that of the other young gentlemen who were his fellow-students. Here he diligently studied both the English language, and all the branches of polite literature. Meantime his easy and genteel behaviour, together with his eminent sweetness of temper, gained him the esteem as well as the affection of all that conversed with him. He frequently visited some of the first families in Hatfield, who were all fond of his conversation ; so lively and ingenious at the same time, evidencing both the gentleman and the scholar. All this time he had the fear of God deeply rooted in his heart. But he had none to take him by the hand, and lead him forward in the ways of God. He stayed with Mr. Burchell about eighteen months, who loved him as his own son.

14. Afterwards, one Mr. Dechamps, a French Minister, to whom he had been recommended, procured him the place of tutor to the two sons of Thomas Hill, Esq., at Tern-Hall, in Shropshire. In the year 1752, he removed into Mr. Hill's family, and entered upon the important province of instructing the young gentlemen. He still feared God, but had not yet an experimental sense of his love. Nor was he convinced of his own fallen state, till one Sunday evening, a servant came in to make up his fire while he was writing some music, who, looking at him with serious concern, said, "Sir, I am sorry to see you so employed on the Lord's day." At first his pride was alarmed, and his resentment moved, at being reproved by a servant. But upon reflection, he felt the reproof was just. He immediately put away his music, and from that very hour became a strict observer of the Lord's day.

15. I have heard two very different accounts of the manner wherein he had the first notice of the people called Methodists.

But I think it reasonable to prefer to any other, that which I received from his own mouth. This was as follows:—

When Mr. Hill went up to London to attend the Parliament, he took his family and Mr. Fletcher with him. While they stopped at St. Alban's, he walked out into the town, and did not return till they were set out for London. A horse being left for him, he rode after, and overtook them in the evening. Mr. Hill asking him why he stayed behind, he said, "As I was walking, I met with a poor old woman who talked so sweetly of Jesus Christ, that I knew not how the time passed away." "I shall wonder," said Mrs. H., "if our tutor does not turn Methodist by and by." "Methodist, Madam," said he, "pray what is that?" She replied, "Why, the Methodists are a people that do nothing but pray; they are praying all day and all night." "Are they?" said he; "then, by the help of God, I will find them out, if they be above ground." He did find them out not long after, and was admitted into the Society. And from this time, whenever he was in town, he met in Mr. Richard Edwards's class. This he found so profitable to his soul, that he lost no opportunity of meeting. And he retained a peculiar regard for Mr. Edwards till the day of his death.

CHAPTER II.

OF HIS CONVERSION TO GOD.

1. It will be most satisfactory to the serious reader, to give an account of this in his own words. They run thus: "The 12th of January, in the year 1755, I received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, though my heart was as hard as a stone. The following day, I felt the tyranny of sin more than ever, and an uncommon coldness in all religious duties. I felt the burden of my corruptions heavier than ever; there was no rest in my flesh. I called upon the Lord, but with such heaviness as made me fear it was lost labour. Many a time did I take up the Bible to seek comfort; but not being able to read, I shut it again. The thoughts which engrossed my mind were these: 'I am undone. I have wandered from God more than ever. I have trampled under foot the frequent convictions which God has wrought in my heart. Instead of

going straight to Christ, I have wasted my time in fighting against sin by the sole use of the means of grace; as if the means would do me good without the blessing of God. I never had faith; and without faith it is impossible to please God: Therefore all my thoughts, words, and works, however specious before men, are utterly sinful before God. And if I am not changed before I go hence, I am lost to all eternity.'

2. "When I saw that all my endeavours availed nothing against my conquering sin, I almost gave up all hope, and resolved to sin on and go to hell. Yet I had a strange thought, 'If I do go to hell, I will praise God there. And since I cannot be a monument of his mercy in heaven, I will be a monument of his justice in hell.' But I soon recovered my ground. I thought, 'Christ died for all; therefore he died for me. He died to pluck such sinners as I am out of the devil's teeth. And as I sincerely desire to be his, he will surely take me to himself. He will surely let me know before I die, that he has died for me. If He leaves me for awhile in this dreadful state, it is only to show me the depth he draws me out of.' But then I thought, 'Perhaps he will do it only at my dying hour. And must I sin on till then? How can I endure this?' But I thought again, 'My Saviour was above three-and-thirty years on earth. Let me wait for him as many years, and then I may have some excuse for my impatience. Does God owe me anything? Is he bound to time or place? Do I deserve anything at his hands but damnation?' Yet anger was always one of the sins which I could not overcome. I went on sinning and repenting, and sinning again; but still calling on God's mercy through Christ.

3. "I was now beat out of all my strong holds. I felt my helplessness, and lay at the feet of Christ. I cried, 'Save me, Lord, as a brand plucked out of the fire! Give me justifying faith; for the devil will surely reign over me, till thou takest me into thy hand. I shall only be an instrument in his hand to work wickedness, till thou stretch out thy almighty hand, and save thy lost creature by free, unmerited grace.' I seldom went to private prayer, but this thought came into my mind, 'This may be the happy hour, when thou wilt prevail with God!' But still I was disappointed. I cried to God; but my heart did not go with my lips. I prayed, but often could hardly keep awake. When overcome with heaviness, I went to bed, beseeching God to spare me

till the next day, that I might renew my wrestling with him, till I should prevail.

4. "On Sunday, the 19th, in the evening, I heard an excellent sermon on these words, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' I heard it attentively, but my heart was not moved. I was only still more convinced, that I was an unbeliever, and that till I had faith, I should never have peace. The hymn after sermon suited the subject; but I could not join in singing it. So I sat mourning, while others rejoiced. I went home, still resolving to wrestle with the Lord, like Jacob, till I should become a prevailing Israel.

5. "I begged of God, the following day, to show me the wickedness of my heart. I besought him to increase my convictions; for I was afraid I did not mourn enough for my sins. But I found relief in Mr. Wesley's Journal, where I learned, that we should not build on what we feel, but go to Christ with all our sins, and all our hardness of heart. On the 21st, I wrote down part of what filled my heart; namely, a confession of my sins, misery, and helplessness, together with a resolution to seek Christ even unto death. In the evening, I read the Scriptures, and found a sort of pleasure in seeing a picture of my own wickedness exactly drawn in the third of the Romans, and that of my present condition in the seventh. I often wished to be acquainted with somebody who had been in my condition; and resolved to seek for one to whom I might unbosom my whole soul. On Thursday, Satan beset me hard: I sinned, and grievously too. And now I almost gave up all hope; I was on the brink of despair; and nevertheless continued to fall into sin, as often as I had temptation. But I must observe, that though I frequently thought hell would be my portion, yet I never was much afraid of it: Whether this was owing to a secret hope, or to hardness of heart, I know not. But I was continually crying out, 'What stupidity! I see myself hanging over hell, as it were by a single thread! And yet I am not afraid, but sin on! O what is man without the grace of God! A very devil in wickedness, though inferior to him in power!' In the evening I went to a sincere friend, and told him something of my state. He endeavoured to administer comfort; but it was not suited to my state. When we parted, he gave me some advice which was better suited to my condition. 'God,' said

he, 'is merciful; God loves you; and if he denies you anything, it is for your good. You deserve nothing at his hands; but wait patiently for him, and never give up your hope.' I went home, resolved to follow his advice, though I should stay till death.

6. "I proposed to receive the Lord's Supper on the following Sunday. I therefore returned to my room, and looked out a sacramental hymn. I learned it by heart, and prayed it over many times, intending to repeat it at the table. Then I went to bed with rather more hope and peace than I had felt for some time. But Satan waked, though I slept. I dreamed I had committed a grievous and abominable sin. I awaked amazed and confounded, but fell upon my knees and prayed with more faith than usual; and afterwards went about my business with an uncommon cheerfulness. It was not long before I was tempted by my besetting sin; but I found it had no power. My soul was not even ruffled. I took no notice of this at first. But having withstood the temptation again and again, I perceived it was the Lord's doing. Afterwards it was suggested, 'It is presumption for such a sinner to hope for so great a mercy.' I prayed, that I might not be in a delusion; and the more I prayed, the more clearly I saw it was real. For though sin stirred all the day long, I always overcame it in the name of the Lord.

7. "In the evening I read the experiences of some of God's children, and found mine agreed with theirs. Hereby my faith was strengthened, and my hope considerably increased: I intreated the Lord to deal with his servant according to his mercy, and take all the glory to himself. I prayed earnestly, and was persuaded I should have peace with God and dominion over sin; not doubting but the full assurance also would be given in God's good time. I continued calling on him for an increase of faith; (for still I had some fear of being in a delusion;) and having continued my supplication till near one in the morning, I opened my Bible on those words: 'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. He will not suffer the righteous to be moved.' Filled with joy, I fell upon my knees, to beg of God that I might always cast my burden upon him. My hope was now greatly increased; and I thought I saw myself conqueror over sin, hell, and all manner of affliction.

8. "With this comfortable promise I shut up my Bible,

being now perfectly satisfied. As I shut it, I cast my eyes on that word, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it.' So, having asked grace of God to serve him till death, I went cheerfully to bed."

9. So far we have Mr. Fletcher's own account, under his own hand. From this time he "had the witness in himself;" he knew that he had "redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins." But he still continued pleading with the Lord, to take a fuller possession of his heart; till, one day, as he was in earnest prayer, lying prostrate on his face before God, he saw, as it were, our blessed Lord, hanging and bleeding on the cross: And, at the same time, those words were spoken with power to his heart:—

Seized by the rage of sinful men,
I see him bound, and bruised, and slain.
'Tis done! The Martyr dies!
His life to ransom ours is given;
And, lo! the fiercest fire of heaven
Consumes the sacrifice!
He suffers both from men and God!
He bears the universal load
Of guilt and misery!
He suffers to reverse our doom;
And, lo! my Lord is here become
The bread of life to me!

10. I believe this was in January, 1754, in the second year after he removed to Tern. Now all his bonds were broken; he breathed a purer air, and was able to say with confidence, "The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." By means of this faith, sin was under his feet. Knowing in whom he had believed, he could continually triumph in the Lord, and praise the God of his salvation.

11. From this time he walked cheerfully, as well as valiantly, in the ways of God. He closely followed his Master, denying himself, and taking up his cross daily. And, thinking he had not leisure in the day for the great work which he had in hand, he made it an invariable rule to sit up two whole nights in a week. These he dedicated to reading, meditation, and prayer, in order to enter more deeply into that communion with the Father and the Son which was the delight of his soul. Meantime, he lived entirely on vegetable food, and for some time on bread, with milk and water. None can doubt, if these austerities were well intended: But it seems

they were not well judged. It is probable, they gave the first wound to an excellent constitution, and laid the foundation of many infirmities, which nothing but death could cure.

CHAPTER III.

FROM HIS CONVERSION TO HIS SETTLING AT MADELEY.

1. It was not long after he had himself "tasted the powers of the world to come," that he was pressed in spirit to exhort others to seek after the same blessing. And he was the more strongly excited to this, by seeing the world all around him "lying in wickedness." Being deeply sensible of the goodness of God on the one hand, and the misery of mankind on the other, he found an earnest longing

To pluck poor brands out of the fire,
To snatch them from the verge of hell.

This he began to do a considerable time before he was admitted into Holy Orders. And even his first labours of love were far from being in vain. For though he was by no means perfect in the English tongue, particularly with regard to the pronunciation of it; yet the earnestness with which he spoke, (seldom to be found in English Preachers,) and the unspeakably tender affection to poor, undone sinners, which breathed in every word and gesture, drew multitudes of people to hear him; and, by the blessing of God, his word made so deep an impression on their hearts, that very few went empty away.

2. From this time, till he undertook the direct care of souls, he used to be in London during the sitting of the Parliament, and the rest of the year at Tern-Hall, (as it was then called,) instructing the young gentlemen. Every Sunday he attended the parish church at Atcham. But when the service was ended, instead of going home in the coach, which was always ready, he usually took a solitary walk by the Severn side, and spent some time in meditation and prayer. A pious domestic of Mr. Hill's, having frequently observed him, one Sunday desired leave to walk with him, which he constantly did from that time. The account which he (Mr. Vaughan, still living in London) gives of Mr. Fletcher is as follows:—

“It was our ordinary custom, when the Church Service was over, to retire into the most lonely fields or meadows, where we frequently either kneeled down, or prostrated ourselves upon the ground. At those happy seasons I was a witness of such pleadings and wrestlings with God, such exercises of faith and love, as I have not known in any one ever since. The consolations which we then received from God induced us to appoint two or three nights in a week, when we duly met after his pupils were asleep. We met also constantly on Sunday between four and five in the morning. Sometimes I stepped into his study on other days. I rarely saw any book before him besides the Bible and the ‘Christian’s Pattern.’ And he was seldom in any other company, unless when necessary business required, besides that of the unworthy writer of this paper.”

3. When he was in the country, he used to visit an Officer of Excise at Atcham, to be instructed in singing. On my desiring him to give me some account of what he recollected concerning Mr. Fletcher, he answered thus: “As to that man of God, Mr. Fletcher, it is but little that I remember of him; it being above nine-and-twenty years since the last time I saw him. But this I well remember, his conversation with me was always sweet and savoury. He was too wise to suffer any of his precious moments to be trifled away. When there was company to dine at Mr. Hill’s, he frequently retired into the garden, and contentedly dined on a piece of bread, and a few bunches of currants. Indeed, in his whole manner of living, he was a pattern of abstemiousness. Meantime, how great was his sweetness of temper and heavenly-mindedness! I never saw it equalled in any one. How often, when I parted with him at Tern-Hall, have his eyes and hands been lifted up to heaven to implore a blessing upon me, with fervour and devoutness unequalled by any I ever saw! I firmly believe, he has not left in this land, or perhaps in any other, one luminary like himself. I conclude, wishing this light may be so held up, that many may see the glory thereof, and be transformed into its likeness. May you and I, and all that love the Lord Jesus Christ, be partakers of that holiness which was so conspicuous in him!”

4. “Our interviews for singing and conversation,” continues Mr. Vaughan, who was often present on these occasions, “were seldom concluded without prayer; in which we were frequently joined by her that is now my wife; (then a servant in the

family;) as likewise by a poor widow in the village, who had also known the power of God unto salvation, and who died some years since, praising God with her latest breath. These were the only persons in the country whom he chose for his familiar friends. But he sometimes walked over to Shrewsbury, to see Mrs. Glynne, or Mr. Appleton (who likewise now rests from his labours, after having many years adorned the gospel); he also visited any of the poor in the neighbourhood, that were upon a sick bed; and, when no other person could be procured, performed even the meanest offices for them."

5. It was in the year 1757 that he was ordained both Deacon and Priest. He was ordained at Whitehall; and the same day, being informed that I had no one to assist me at West-Street chapel, he came away as soon as ever the ordination was over, and assisted me in the administration of the Lord's supper. He was now doubly diligent in preaching, not only in the chapels at West-Street and Spital-fields, but wherever the providence of God opened a door to proclaim the everlasting gospel. This he frequently did, not only in English, but likewise in French, his native language; of which he was allowed, by all competent judges, to be a complete master.

6. "The first time," says Mr. Vaughan, "he preached in the country, was at Atcham church, on June 19, 1757. His text was, (a very bold beginning!) 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity with God?' (James iv. 4.) The congregation stood amazed, and gazed upon him as if he had been a monster; but to me he appeared as a messenger sent from heaven."

7. It was not soon that he was invited again to preach in Atcham church. But he was invited to preach in several other churches in the neighbourhood. He was first invited to preach at Wroxeter, and afterwards at the Abbey church in Shrewsbury; but not being yet perfect in the English tongue, he wrote down all the sermons he preached in churches. But I doubt whether he preached above six times in the six months while he stayed in the country. On my telling him I wished he had more opportunities of preaching in this unenlightened part of the land, he answered, "The will of God be done: I am in his hands; and if he does not call me to so much public duty, I have the more time for study, prayer, and praise."

8. In the year 1758, there were many French prisoners on their parole at Tunbridge. Being desired to preach to them in their own language, he readily complied. Many of them appeared to be deeply affected, and earnestly requested that he would preach to them every Lord's day. But some advised them, first, to present a petition to the Bishop of London for leave. They did so; and (who would believe it?) the good Bishop peremptorily rejected their petition! If I had known this at the time, King George should have known it; and I believe he would have given the Bishop little thanks. An odd incident followed: A few months after, the Bishop died of a cancer in his mouth. Perhaps some may think this was a just retribution for silencing such a Prophet, on such an occasion! I am not ashamed to acknowledge this is my own sentiment; and I do not think it any breach of charity to suppose that an action, so unworthy a Christian Bishop, had its punishment in this world.

9. When he returned from London in the same year, he was more frequently invited to preach in several of the neighbouring churches. And before his quitting the country he gave me a few printed papers, entitled, "A Christmas-box for Journey-men and Apprentices." I mention it the rather because I suppose this was the first thing which he ever published.

10. It was in the beginning of June, 1759, that he returned the last time from London to Tern-Hall; and being now less frequently called to public duty, he enjoyed his beloved retirement, giving himself up to study, meditation, and prayer, and walking closely with God. Indeed his whole life was now a life of prayer; and so intensely was his mind fixed upon God, that I have heard him say, "I would not move from my seat, without lifting up my heart to God." Wherever we met, if we were alone, his first salute was, "Do I meet you praying?" And if we were talking on any point of divinity, when we were in the depth of our discourse, he would often break off abruptly, and ask, "Where are our hearts now?" If ever the misconduct of an absent person was mentioned, his usual reply was, "Let us pray for him."

11. It was, as I remember, about the close of this summer, that he was frequently desired, sometimes to assist, at other times to perform the whole service for, Mr. Chambers, then Vicar of Madeley. On these occasions it was, that he contracted such an affection for the people of Madeley, as nothing

could hinder from increasing more and more to the day of his death. While he officiated at Madeley, as he still lived at the Hall, ten miles distant from it, a groom was ordered to get a horse ready for him every Sunday morning. But so great was his aversion for giving trouble to any one, that if the groom did not wake at the time, he seldom would suffer him to be called, but prepared the horse for himself.

12. In answer to some queries concerning him, a gentleman who was intimately acquainted with him for many years wrote to me as follows:—

“DEAR SIR,

“MY aversion to writing letters increases with my declining years. And yet I most willingly pay this debt to the precious memory of an old friend. I dwelt near him only two or three years; but our intimacy was great. And perhaps I may be able to present you with some particulars which you have not seen before.

13. “About the year 1760, he showed me, at his lodgings, a rope with pulleys, which he used for exercise; and added, with a smile, that the devil often tempted him to hang himself therewith. I said, ‘The desire of women is a temptation far more dangerous than this.’ He answered with surprise, (or rather, as it seemed to me, with a degree of contempt,) ‘In all my life I never felt that temptation; no, not in any degree.’ But it is dangerous for a Christian, how great or good soever he may be, to despise another for being tempted. When we met again, he acknowledged he had been plagued, like other men, with that formerly unknown temptation.”

14. In the same year, the living of Madeley fell vacant, and Mr. Fletcher was presented to it; which he accepted in preference to another, that was of double the value. He embraced it as his peculiar charge, the object of his most tender affection. And he was now at leisure to attend it, being fully discharged from his former employment; for his pupils were removed to Cambridge. The elder of them died about the time of his coming of age; the younger first represented the town of Salop, as his father had done, and afterwards the county; till he took his seat in the House of Peers, as Baron Berwick, of Atcham-House: This is now the name that is given to what was formerly called Tern-Hall.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM HIS SETTLING AT MADELEY, TO HIS LEAVING
TREVECKA.

1. He settled at Madeley, according to his desire, in the year 1760. And from the beginning he was a laborious workman in his Lord's vineyard. At his first settling there, the hearts of several were unaccountably set against him; insomuch that he was constrained to warn some of these, that if they did not repent, God would speedily cut them off. And the truth of those predictions was shown over and over, by the signal accomplishment of them. But no opposition could hinder him from going on in his Master's work, and suppressing vice in every possible manner. Those sinners who endeavoured to hide themselves from him, he pursued to every corner of his parish; by all sorts of means, public and private, early and late, in season and out of season, entreating and warning them to flee from the wrath to come. Some made it an excuse, for not attending the Church Service on a Sunday morning, that they could not awake early enough, to get their families ready. He provided for this also: Taking a bell in his hand, he set out every Sunday at five in the morning, and went round the most distant parts of the parish, inviting all the inhabitants to the house of God.

2. Yet notwithstanding all the pains he took, he saw for some time little fruit of his labour; insomuch that he was more than once in doubt, whether he had not mistaken his place; whether God had indeed called him to confine himself to one town, or to labour more at large in his vineyard. He was not free from this doubt, when a multitude of people flocked together at a funeral. He seldom let these awful opportunities slip without giving a solemn exhortation. At the close of the exhortation which was then given, one man was so grievously offended, that he could not refrain from breaking out into scurrilous, yea, menacing language. But, notwithstanding all his struggling against it, the word fastened upon his heart. At first, indeed, he roared like a lion; but he soon wept like a child. Not long after, he came to Mr. Fletcher in the most humble manner, asking pardon for his outrageous behaviour, and begging an interest in his prayers. This was such a refreshment as he stood in need of; and it was but a

short time before this poor broken-hearted sinner was filled with joy unspeakable. He then spared no pains in exhorting his fellow-sinners "to flee from the wrath to come."

3. It was not long after, when, one Sunday evening, Mr. Fletcher, after performing the usual duty at Madeley, was about to set out for Madeley-Wood, to preach and catechise as usual. But just then notice was brought (which should have been given before) that a child was to be buried. His waiting till the child was brought, prevented his going to the Wood. And herein the providence of God appeared. For at this very time many of the colliers, who neither feared God nor regarded men, were baiting a bull, just by the preaching-house; and having had plenty of drink, they had all agreed, as soon as he came, to bait the Parson. Part of them were appointed to pull him off his horse, and the rest to set the dogs upon him. One of these very men afterwards confessed that he was with them when this agreement was made; and that afterwards, while they were in the most horrid manner cursing and swearing at their disappointment, a large china punch-bowl, which held above a gallon, without any apparent cause (for it was not touched by any person or thing) fell all to shivers. This so alarmed him, that he forsook all his companions, and determined to save his own soul.

4. From the beginning he did not confine his labours to his own parish. For many years he regularly preached at places, eight, ten, or sixteen miles off; returning the same night, though he seldom got home before one or two in the morning. At a little society which he had gathered about six miles from Madeley, he preached two or three times a week, beginning at five in the morning. As for visiting the sick, this was a work for which he was always ready: If he heard the knocker in the coldest winter night, his window was thrown open in a moment. And when he understood either that some one was hurt in the pit, or that a neighbour was likely to die, no consideration was ever had of the darkness of the night, or the severity of the weather; but this answer was always given: "I will attend you immediately."

5. But in one respect Mr. Fletcher has frequently been blamed; namely, for deserting a place where God had eminently owned him; I mean Trevecka, in Wales. I believe it is therefore my bounden duty to clear up the whole affair. And I cannot do this better than by transcribing the substance

of an account which I have received from Mr. Benson, in answer to my inquiries:—

6. "My acquaintance with him," says he, "commenced when I was at Kingswood,—I think, in the year 1768. As he now and then made a short excursion from Madeley to Bath or Bristol, in one of those excursions we invited him to give us a sermon at Kingswood. He was peculiarly assisted while he was applying those encouraging words: 'Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out.' The people were exceedingly affected; indeed, quite melted down. The tears streamed so fast from the eyes of the poor colliers, that their grisly, black faces were washed by them, and almost universally streaked with white. And as to himself, his zealous soul had been carried out so far beyond his strength, that, when he concluded, he put off a shirt which was as wet as if it had been dipped in water. But this was nothing strange; whenever he preached, it was generally the case. From this time I conceived a particular esteem for him, chiefly on account of his piety; and wished much for a greater intimacy with him; a blessing which I soon after obtained.

7. "For, about this time, the Countess of Huntingdon erected a seminary at Trevecka, in Wales, in order to educate pious young men, of whatever denomination, for the ministry. She proposed to admit only such as were converted to God, and resolved to dedicate themselves to His service. They were at liberty to stay there three years; during which they were to have their education gratis, with every necessary of life, and a suit of clothes once a year: Afterwards those who desired it might enter into the ministry, either in the Established Church of England, or among Protestants of any other denomination. From the high opinion which the Countess had of Mr. Fletcher's piety, learning, and abilities for such an office, she invited him to undertake the direction of that seminary. Not that he could promise to be chiefly resident there; much less constantly. His duty to his own flock at Madeley would by no means admit of this. But he was to attend as often as he conveniently could; to give advice, with regard to the appointment of Masters, the admission or exclusion of students; to oversee their studies and conduct; to assist their piety, and judge of their qualifications for the work of the ministry.

8. "As Mr. Fletcher greatly approved of the design, especially considering, First, that none were to be admitted but

such as feared God; and, Secondly, that when they were prepared for it, they might enter into the ministry wherever Providence opened a door; he readily complied with the invitation, and undertook the charge. This he did without fee or reward, from the sole motive of being useful in the most important work of training up persons for the glorious office of preaching the gospel. And some months after, with the same view, through his means, and in consequence of your recommendation to her Ladyship, I was made Head Master of the school, or, as it was commonly called, the College; though I could very ill be spared from Kingswood, where I had acted in that capacity about four years.

9. "As yet I was greatly wanted at Kingswood. I had likewise a term to keep at Oxford; so that I could only pay them a short visit in January, 1770. But in spring I went to reside there; and for some time things went on excellently well. The young men were serious, and made a considerable progress in learning. And many of them seemed to have a talent for preaching. Mr. Fletcher visited them frequently, and was received as an angel of God. It is not possible for me to describe the veneration in which we all held him. Like Elijah in the schools of the Prophets he was revered; he was loved; he was almost adored; and that, not only by every student, but by every member of the family. And indeed he was worthy.

"Forgive me, my dear Sir, if you think I exceed. My heart kindles while I write. Here it was that I saw,—shall I say, an angel in human flesh? I should not far exceed the truth if I said so. But here I saw a descendant of fallen Adam, so fully raised above the ruins of the fall, that though by the body he was tied down to earth, yet was his whole 'conversation in heaven;' yet was his life, from day to day, 'hid with Christ in God.' Prayer, praise, love, and zeal, all ardent, elevated above what one would think attainable in this state of frailty, were the element in which he himself continually lived. And as to others, his one employment was, to call, entreat, and urge them to ascend with him to the glorious Source of being and blessedness. He had leisure comparatively for nothing else. Languages, arts, sciences, grammar, rhetoric, logic, even divinity itself, as it is called, were all laid aside, when he appeared in the school-room among the students. His full heart would not suffer him to be silent.

He must speak ; and they were readier to hearken to this servant and Minister of Jesus Christ, than to attend to Sallust, Virgil, Cicero, or any Latin or Greek historian, poet, or philosopher they were reading. And they seldom hearkened long, before they were all in tears, and every heart caught fire from the flame that burned in his soul.

10. "These seasons generally terminated in this: Being convinced that to be 'filled with the Holy Ghost' was a better qualification for the ministry of the gospel than any classical learning, (though that too may be useful in its place,) after speaking awhile in the school-room, he used frequently to say, 'As many of you as are athirst for this fulness of the Spirit, follow me into my room.' On this, many of us have instantly followed him, and there continued till noon, wrestling like Jacob for the blessing, praying one after another, till we could bear to kneel no longer. This was not done once or twice, but many times. And I have sometimes seen him on these occasions, once in particular, so filled with the love of God, that he could contain no more ; but cried out, 'O my God, withhold thy hand, or the vessel will burst.' But he afterwards told me, he was afraid he had grieved the Spirit of God ; and that he ought rather to have prayed that the Lord would have enlarged the vessel, or have suffered it to break ; that the soul might have no farther bar or interruption to its enjoyment of the supreme good."

This is certainly a just remark. The proper prayer on such an occasion would have been,—

Give me the enlarged desire,
And open, Lord, my soul,
Thy own fulness to require,
And comprehend the whole !
Stretch my faith's capacity
Wider, and yet wider still ;
Then with all that is in thee
My ravish'd spirit fill !

11. "Such was the ordinary employment of this man of God while he remained at Trevecka. He preached the word of life to the students and family, and as many of the neighbours as desired to be present. He was 'instant in season, out of season ;' he 'reproved, rebuked, exhorted, with all long-suffering.' He was always employed, either in discovering some important truth, or exhorting to some neglected duty, or administering some needful comfort, or relating some useful

anecdote, or making some profitable remark or observation upon anything that occurred. And his devout soul, always burning with love and zeal, led him to intermingle prayer with all he said. Meanwhile his manner was so solemn, and at the same time so mild and insinuating, that it was hardly possible for any who had the happiness of being in his company not to be struck with awe and charmed with love, as if in the presence of an angel or departed spirit. Indeed I frequently thought, while attending to his heavenly discourse and divine spirit, that he was so different from, and superior to, the generality of mankind, as to look more like Moses or Elijah, or some Prophet or Apostle come again from the dead, than a mortal man dwelling in a house of clay. It is true, his weak and long-afflicted body proclaimed him to be human. But the graces which so eminently filled and adorned his soul, manifested him to be divine. And long before his happy spirit returned to God that gave it, that which was human seemed in a great measure to be 'swallowed up of life.' O what a loss did Trevecka sustain, what an irreparable loss, when he left it!

12. "But why then did he leave it? Why did he give up an office, for which he was so perfectly well qualified? which he executed so entirely to the satisfaction of all the parties wherewith he was concerned, and in which it had pleased God to give so manifest a blessing to his labours? Perhaps it would be better, in tenderness to some persons, eminent for piety and usefulness, to let that matter remain still under the veil which forgiving love has cast over it. But if it be thought that justice to his character, and to the cause which from that time he so warmly espoused and so ably defended, requires some light to be cast upon it, it may be the most inoffensive way to do it in his own words."

It will be proper to observe here, for the better understanding of the following letter, that some time before Mr. Fletcher quitted Trevecka, Mr. Benson had been discharged from his office there; not for any defect of learning or piety, or any fault found with his behaviour; but wholly and solely because he did not believe the doctrine of absolute predestination.

13. "The following is an exact copy of all that is material in a letter he wrote to me, in consequence of my dismissal from the office I had been in:—

"DEAR SIR,

June 7, 1771.

"THE same post brought me yours, and two from my

Lady, and one from Mr. Williams, the new Master. Those contained no charges but general ones, which with me go for nothing. If the procedure you mention is fact, and your letter is a fair account of the transaction and words relative to your discharge, a false step has been taken. I write this post to her Ladyship on the affair, with all possible plainness. If the plan of the College is overthrown, I have nothing more to say to it. I will keep to my text, for one. I trust I shall ever be a servant of all: The confined tool of any one party I never was, and never will be. If the blow that should have been struck at the dead spirit, is struck (contrary to the granted liberty of sentiment) at dead Arminius, or absent Mr. Wesley; if a Master is turned away without any fault; it is time for me to stand up with firmness, or to withdraw.'

14. "The following paragraphs are transcribed from Mr. Fletcher's letter to my Lady:—

"'Mr. Benson made a very just defence when he said, he did hold with me the possibility of salvation for all men. If this is what you call Mr. Wesley's opinion and Arminianism, and if *every Arminian must quit the College*, I am actually discharged. For in my present view of things, I must hold that sentiment, if I believe that the Bible is true, and that God is love.

"'For my part, I am no party-man. In the Lord I am your servant, and that of your every student. But I cannot give up the honour of being connected with my old friends, who, notwithstanding their failings, are entitled to my respect, gratitude, and affection. Mr. Wesley shall always be welcome to my pulpit, and I shall gladly bear my testimony in his as well as Mr. Whitefield's. If you forbid your students to preach for the one, and offer them to preach for the other; and if a Master is discarded for believing that Christ died for all; then prejudice reigns, charity is cruelly wounded, and party-spirit shouts, prevails, triumphs.'

15. "Two days after," continues Mr. Benson, "he writes, 'I am determined to stand or fall with the liberty of the College. As I entered it a free place, I must quit it the moment it is an harbour for party-spirit.'

"This he was soon constrained to do, as appears from the following letter, wrote about two months after:—

"'MY DEAR FRIEND,

"'ON my arrival at the College, I found all very quiet, I

fear through the enemy's keeping his goods in peace. While I preached the next day I found myself as much shackled as ever I was in my life. And after private prayer, I concluded I was not in my place. The same day, I resigned my office to my Lady, and on Wednesday, to the students and the Lord.

“ ‘ Mr. Shirley has sent my Lady a copy of part of the Minutes of the last Conference, viz., of the year 1770. They were called *horrible* and *abominable*. My Lady told me, *she must burn against them; and that whoever did not fully disavow them must quit the College*. She accordingly ordered the Master and all the students to write their sentiments upon them without reserve. I did so; explained them according to Mr. Wesley's sentiments; and approved the doctrine, though not cautiously worded. I concluded by observing, that as, after such a step on my part, and such a declaration on my Lady's, I could no longer, as an honest man, stay in the College, I took my leave of it; wishing my Lady might find a Minister to preside over it less insufficient than

“ ‘ JOHN FLETCHER.’

16. “ These were his reasons for resigning his charge at Trevecka. As the Circular Letter now went abroad, under the name of Mr. Shirley, inviting the Clergy of all denominations to assemble in a body at Bristol to oppose you and the Preachers met in Conference, and oblige you to revoke the dreadful heresies contained in those Minutes; and as Mr. Fletcher thought the Churches throughout Christendom to be verging very fast toward Antinomianism; he thought the propositions contained in those Minutes ought rather to be confirmed than revoked. And as he was now retired to his parish, he had more leisure for such a work than before. So, after much prayer and consideration, he determined to write in defence of them. In how able a manner he did this, I need not tell any that have read those incomparable writings. I know not how to give the character of them better, than in the words of Dr. D——, to whom I sent Mr. Fletcher's Checks, with a recommendatory letter. He answered me,—

“ ‘ DEAR SIR,

“ ‘ WHEN I first read yours, I must own, I suspected your friendship for Mr. Fletcher had made you too lavish in your commendation of his writings; and that when I came to read them, I should find some abatements necessary to be made. But now I have read them, I am far from thinking

you have spoken extravagantly ; or indeed, that too much can be said in commendation of them. I had not read his first Letter, before I was so charmed with the spirit as well as abilities of the writer, that the gushing tear could not be hindered from giving full testimony of my heart-felt satisfaction. Perhaps some part of this pleasure might arise from finding my own sentiments so fully embraced by the author. But sure I am the greatest share of it arose from finding those benevolent doctrines so firmly established, and that with such judgment, clearness, and precision, as are seldom, very seldom to be met with. What crowns the whole is, the amiable and Christian temper, which those who will not be convinced must however approve, and wish that their own doctrines may be constantly attended with the same spirit.' ”

17. How much good has been occasioned by the publication of that Circular Letter ! This was the happy occasion of Mr. Fletcher's writing those “Checks to Antinomianism ;” in which one knows not which to admire most, the purity of the language, (such as scarce any foreigner wrote before,) the strength and clearness of the argument, or the mildness and sweetness of the spirit that breathes throughout the whole ; insomuch that I nothing wonder at a serious Clergyman, who, being resolved to live and die in his own opinion, when he was pressed to read them, replied, “No ; I will never read Mr. Fletcher's Checks ; for if I did, I should be of his mind.”

18. A short extract from another of his letters will show what was his state of mind at this crisis. “How much water,” says he, “may at last rush out from a little opening ! What are our dear L—'s jealousies come to ? Ah, poor College ! Their conduct, among other reasons, has stirred me up to write in defence of the Minutes. Methinks I dream, when I reflect I have wrote controversy ! the last subject I thought I should meddle with. I expect to be roughly handled on the account. Lord, prepare me for everything thou callest me to !

“J. F.”

CHAPTER V.

FROM HIS LEAVING TREVECKA TO HIS GOING TO BRISTOL.

1. THE frequent journeys he took to and from Trevecka while he presided over the College, in all weathers, and at

all seasons of the year, farther impaired the firmness of his constitution ; and in some of those journeys, he had not only difficulties, but dangers likewise, to encounter. One day, as he was riding over a wooden bridge, just as he got to the middle thereof, it broke in. The mare's forelegs sunk into the river, but her breast and hinder parts were kept up by the bridge. In that position she lay, as still as if she had been dead, till he got over her neck, and took off his bags, in which were several manuscripts, the spoiling of which would have occasioned him much trouble. He then endeavoured to raise her up ; but she would not stir, till he went over the other part of the bridge. But no sooner did he set his foot upon the ground, than she began to plunge. Immediately the remaining part of the bridge broke down, and sunk with her into the river. But presently she rose up again, swam out, and came to him.

2. About this time, Mr. Pilmoor being desirous to see the inside of a coal-pit, Mr. Fletcher went with him to the bottom of a sloping pit, which was supposed to be near a mile under the ground. They returned out of it without any inconvenience. But the next day, while several colliers were there, a damp took fire, which went off with a vast explosion, and killed all the men that were in it.

3. In February, 1773, I received from him the following letter :—

“REV. AND DEAR SIR,

“I HOPE the Lord, who has so wonderfully stood by you hitherto, will preserve you to see many of your sheep, and me among them, enter into rest. Should Providence call you first, I shall do my best, by the Lord's assistance, to help your brother to gather the wreck, and keep together those who are not absolutely bent to throw away the Methodist doctrines and discipline, as soon as he that now letteth is removed out of the way. Every help will then be necessary, and I shall not be backward to throw in my mite. In the meantime, you sometimes need an assistant to serve tables, and occasionally to fill up a gap. Providence visibly appointed me to that office many years ago. And though it no less evidently called me hither, yet I have not been without doubt, especially for some years past, whether it would not be expedient that I should resume my office as your Deacon ; not with any view of pre- siding over the Methodists after you, but to ease you a little

in your old age, and to be in the way of recovering, perhaps doing, more good. I have sometimes thought, how shameful it was, that no Clergyman should join you, to keep in the Church the work God has enabled you to carry on therein. And as the little estate I have in my own country is sufficient for my maintenance, I have thought I would one day or other offer you and the Methodists my free service. While my love of retirement made me linger, I was providentially led to do something in Lady Huntingdon's plan. But being shut out there, it appears to me, I am again called to my first work. Nevertheless, I would not leave this place without a fuller persuasion that the time is quite come. Not that God uses me much here, but I have not yet sufficiently cleared my conscience from the blood of all men. Meantime, I beg the Lord to guide me by his counsel, and make me willing to go anywhere or nowhere, to be anything or nothing.

"Help, by your prayers, till you can bless by word of mouth,

"Reverend and dear Sir,

"Your willing, though unprofitable, servant in the gospel,

"J. F.

"MADELEY, *February 6, 1773.*"

4. "Providence," says he, "visibly appointed me to that office many years ago." Is it any wonder, then, that he should now be in doubt, whether he did right in confining himself to one spot? The more I reflect upon it, the more I am convinced, he had great reason to doubt of this. I can never believe it was the will of God, that such a burning and shining light should be "hid under a bushel." No; instead of being confined to a country village, it ought to have shone in every corner of our land. He was full as much called to sound an alarm through all the nation, as Mr. Whitefield himself: Nay, abundantly more so; seeing he was far better qualified for that important work. He had a more striking person, equal good breeding, an equally winning address; together with a richer flow of fancy, a stronger understanding; a far greater treasure of learning, both in languages, philosophy, philology, and divinity; and, above all, (which I can speak with fuller assurance, because I had a thorough knowledge both of one and the other,) a more deep and constant communion with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ.

5. And yet, let not any one imagine that I depreciate Mr. Whitefield, or undervalue the grace of God, and the

extraordinary gifts, which his great Master vouchsafed unto him. I believe he was highly favoured of God; yea, that he was one of the most eminent Ministers that has appeared in England, or perhaps in the world, during the present century. Yet I must own, I have known many fully equal to Mr. Whitefield, both in holy tempers and holiness of conversation; but one equal herein to Mr. Fletcher I have not known, no, not in a life of fourscore years.

6. However, having chosen, at least for the present, this narrow field of action, he was more and more abundant in his ministerial labours, both in public and private; not contenting himself with preaching, but visiting his flock in every corner of his parish. And this work he attended to, early and late, whether the weather was fair or foul; regarding neither heat nor cold, rain nor snow, whether he was on horseback or on foot. But this farther weakened his constitution; which was still more effectually done by his intense and uninterrupted studies; in which he frequently continued without scarce any intermission, fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen hours a day. But still he did not allow himself such food as was necessary to sustain nature. He seldom took any regular meals, except he had company; otherwise, twice or thrice in four-and-twenty hours, he ate some bread and cheese, or fruit. Instead of this, he sometimes took a draught of milk, and then wrote on again. When one reproved him for not affording himself a sufficiency of necessary food, he replied, "Not allow myself food! Why, our food seldom costs my housekeeper and me together less than two shillings a week."

7. "On the tenth of May, 1774," says Mr. Vaughan, to whom we are indebted for several of the preceding anecdotes, "he wrote to me thus: 'My brother has sent me the rent of a little place I have abroad, eighty pounds, which I was to receive, from Mr. Chauvet and Company, in London. But instead of sending the draught for the money, I have sent it back to Switzerland, with orders to distribute it among the poor. As money is rather higher there than here, that mite will go farther abroad than it would in my parish.'"

8. To show in how great a degree he was disengaged from

Wealth, honour, pleasure, or what else
This short-enduring world could give,

Mr. Vaughan gives us another little memoir, which fell within his own knowledge: "After he had published two or

three small political pieces, in reference to our contest with the Americans, 'I carried one of them,' says he, in a letter to me, 'to the Earl of D. His Lordship carried it to the Lord Chancellor, and the Lord Chancellor handed it to the King.' One was immediately commissioned to ask Mr. Fletcher, whether any preferment in the Church would be acceptable; or whether he (the Chancellor) could do him any service. He answered, 'I want nothing, but more grace.'

9. "In 1776, he deposited with me a bill of one hundred and five pounds, being (as I understood) the yearly produce of his estate in Switzerland. This was his fund for charitable uses; but it lasted only a few months before he drew upon me for the balance, which was twenty-four pounds, to complete the preaching-house in Madeley-Wood."

10. In the same year, his health being more than ever impaired by a violent cough, accompanied with spitting of blood, of which I had had large experience myself; having frequently seen the surprising effects of constant exercise, together with change of air; I told him, nothing was so likely to restore his health as a long journey. I therefore proposed his taking a journey of some months with me, through various parts of England and Scotland; telling him, "When you are tired, or like it best, you may come into my carriage; but remember, that riding on horseback is the best of all exercises for you, so far as your strength will permit." He looked upon this as a call from Providence, and very willingly accepted of the proposal. We set out (as I am accustomed to do) early in the spring, and travelled, by moderate journeys, suited to his strength, which gradually increased, eleven or twelve hundred miles. When we returned to London, in the latter end of the year, he was considerably better. And I verily believe, if he had travelled with me, partly in the chaise and partly on horseback, only a few months longer, he would have quite recovered his health. But this those about him would not permit; so, being detained in London, by his kind but injudicious friends, while I pursued my journeys, his spitting of blood, with all the other symptoms, returned, and rapidly increased, till the Physicians pronounced him to be far advanced in a true, pulmonary consumption.

11. It being judged quite improper for him to remain in London, on December 16, 1776, he retired to the house of a

friend, Mr. Charles Greenwood, (now with God,) to Stoke-Newington. Here he had the advice of the most eminent Physicians that London could afford. He was also in a good air, and had every convenience and every help which art could bestow. One of the family, of whom I inquired concerning this part of his life, gave me the following information :—

12. “ Agreeably to your desire, I endeavour to recollect some particulars of Mr. Fletcher, during his abode at Newington.

“ When he first came, he was, by Dr. Fothergill’s advice, under the strictest observance of two things,—rest and silence. These, together with a milk diet, were supposed to be the only probable means of his recovery. In consequence of these directions, he spoke exceeding little. If ever he spoke more than usual, it did not fail to increase his spitting of blood; of which, indeed, he was seldom quite clear, although it was not violent: Therefore, a great part of his time was spent in being read to. But it was not possible to restrain him altogether from speaking. The fire which continually burned in his heart many waters could not quench. It often burst out unawares. And then how did we wonder (like those who formerly heard his Lord) ‘at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth!’ He could not have sustained life without sometimes giving vent to his heart. No penance could have appeared so severe a cross to him, as to be debarred from speaking of or to God. His natural vivacity, with his intense love of Jesus, continually impelled him to speak. But, on being reminded of his rule, with a cheerful smile, he was all submission; consenting by signs only to stir up those about him to pray and praise!

13. “ Whoever has read Mr. Fletcher’s Last Check to Antinomianism, and has had the privilege of observing his spirit and conduct, will not scruple to say that he was a living comment on his own account of Christian perfection. It is an alarming word which our Lord speaks ‘to the Angel of the Church of Sardis:’ ‘I have not found thy works perfect before God.’ But, as far as man is able to judge, from the whole tenor of his behaviour, he did possess perfect humility, perfect resignation, and perfect love. Suitable to this was the testimony concerning him which was given in Lady Huntingdon’s chapel at Bristol, even by Mr. V., a gentleman strongly attached to those opinions which Mr. Fletcher thought it his duty to oppose: ‘I have enjoyed the privilege

of being several weeks under the same roof with dear Mr. Fletcher: And during that time, I have been greatly edified by his perfect resignation to the will of God; and by being a witness to his exemplary conduct and uncommon grace.'

14. "When he was able to converse, his favourite subject was, 'the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Ghost,' including that rich, peculiar blessing of union with the Father and the Son, mentioned in that prayer of our Lord which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. John. Many were the sparks of living fire which occasionally darted forth on this beloved theme. 'We must not be content,' said he, 'to be only cleansed from sin; we must be filled with the Spirit.' One asking him, what was to be experienced in the full accomplishment of the promise; 'O,' said he, 'what shall I say? All the sweetness of the drawings of the Father, all the love of the Son, all the rich effusions of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost;—more than ever can be expressed, are comprehended here! To attain it, the Spirit maketh intercession in the soul, like a God wrestling with a God!'

15. "It was in these favoured moments of converse that we found, in a particular manner, the reward which is annexed to the 'receiving a Prophet in the name of a Prophet.' And in some of these he occasionally mentioned several circumstances, which (as none knew them but himself) would otherwise have been buried in everlasting oblivion.

"One of those remarkable passages was, 'In the beginning,' said he, 'of my spiritual course, I heard the voice of God, in an articulate but inexpressibly awful sound, go through my soul in those words: *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself.*' He mentioned another peculiar manifestation of a later date, 'in which,' said he, 'I was favoured, like Moses, with a supernatural discovery of the glory of God, in an ineffable converse with him, face to face; so that, whether I was then in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell.'

16. "At another time he said, 'About the time of my entering into the ministry, I one evening wandered into a wood, musing on the importance of the office I was going to undertake. I then began to pour out my soul in prayer; when such a feeling sense of the justice of God fell upon me, and such a sense of his displeasure at sin, as absorbed all my powers, and filled my soul with the agony of prayer for poor, lost sinners. I continued therein till the dawn of day; and

I considered this as designed of God to impress upon me more deeply the meaning of those solemn words: *Therefore knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.*

17. "The blessed state of his soul continually manifested itself, by its overflowing good-will to all that came in his way. And yet his spirit was so deeply impressed with those words, 'Not as though I had already attained,' that the vehemence of his desire for a fuller manifestation of God seemed sometimes to border upon unhappiness. But his ardent soul only felt the full impression of those words of the Apostle: 'Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

18. "One end of his retiring to Newington was, that he might hide himself from company. But this design was in nowise answered; for company came from every side. He was continually visited by high and low, and by persons of various denominations; one of whom being asked, when he went away, what he thought of Mr. Fletcher, said, 'I went to see a man that had one foot in the grave, but I found a man that had one foot in heaven.' Among them that now visited him were several of his beloved and honoured opponents; to whom he confirmed his love (however roughly they had treated him) by the most respectful and affectionate behaviour. But he did not give up any part of the truth for which he had publicly contended; although some (from whom one would have expected better things) did not scruple to affirm the contrary. Those of his particular friends who visited him here will not easily forget how he exhausted his whole soul in effusions of thankfulness: Mrs. Cartwright and Cavendish in particular, with his faithful and affectionate friend Mr. Ireland, will remember their interviews with him. And those of the family were almost oppressed by the outpourings of his love and gratitude, whenever they showed their love and care in the most inconsiderable instance; yea, so thankful, in proportion, would he be to even the meanest servant.

19. "It was not without some difficulty that Mr. Ireland at length prevailed upon him to sit for his picture. While the limner was drawing the outlines of it, he was exhorting both him and all that were in the room, not only to get the outlines drawn, but the colourings also, of the image of Jesus on their hearts. He had a very remarkable facility in making allu-

sions of this kind; in raising spiritual observations from every accidental circumstance; in turning men's employments, pleasures, and pains, into means of edification: This he did, in order to engage the attention of the thoughtless, the more deeply to fix the attention of the thoughtful, and to prevent the trifling away of time in unprofitable conversation. And such little incidents as used to pass away unnoticed by almost any other person, acquired from Mr. Fletcher's fine imagination a kind of grace and dignity. To give an instance: Being ordered to be let blood, while his blood was running into the cup, he took occasion to expatiate on the precious blood-shedding of the Lamb of God. And even when he did not speak at all, the seraphic spirit which beamed from his languid face, during those months of pain and weakness, was

A lecture silent, yet of sovereign use."

20. But it is necessary to be observed, that this facility of raising useful observations from the most trifling incidents was one of those peculiarities in him which cannot be proposed to our imitation. In him it partly resulted from nature, and was partly a supernatural gift. But what was becoming and graceful in Mr. Fletcher, would be disgusting and unbecoming in any other.

21. "One of those who visited him at Newington was Mr. William Perronet; a pious, sensible, and amiable young man, who was snatched hence in the bloom of youth. He often said, the first sight of Mr. Fletcher fixed an impression upon his mind which never wore off till it issued in a real conversion to God; ever accompanied with a most affectionate regard for the instrument of that happy change."

Soon after he left Newington, he wrote the following letter:—

"May 28, 1777.

"TO MY VERY DEAR FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS, CHARLES AND MARY GREENWOOD.

"My prayer shall always be, that the merciful may find mercy, and that the great kindness I have found under your quiet roof, may be showed you everywhere under the canopy of heaven. I think with grateful joy on the days of calm retreat I have been blessed with at Newington, and lament my not having improved better the precious opportunity of sitting, Mary-like, at the feet of my Great Physician. May He requite your kind care of a dying worm, by abundantly caring for

you and yours, and making all your bed in your sickness ! May you enjoy full health ! May you hunger and thirst after righteousness, and be abundantly filled therewith ! May you sweetly rest in Christ ! May His protection be as a wall of fire round about you and yours ! May His rod and staff comfort you under all the troubles of life, the decays of the body, the assaults of the enemy, and the pangs of death ! May you stand in the clefts of the Rock of Ages, and be safely sheltered there, when all the storms of justice blow around ! And may you always have such spiritual and temporal helps, friends and comforts, as I have found in your pleasing retreat ! You have received a poor Lazarus ; (though his sores were not visible ;) you have had compassion, like the good Samaritan ; you have admitted me to the enjoyment of your best things ; and now what can I say ? what but, 'Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift ;' and thanks to my dear friends for all their favours ? They will, I trust, be found faithfully recorded in my breast, when the great Rewarder of them that diligently seek him will render to every man according to his works ; and a raised Lazarus shall then appear in the gate, to testify of the love of Charles and Mary Greenwood, and their godly sister !

"I was a little better, but I now spit blood, more than I had done for weeks before. Glory be to God for every providence ! His will be done in me, by health or sickness, life or death. All from Him is, and, I trust, will be, welcome to

"Your obliged pensioner,

"JOHN FLETCHER."

CHAPTER VI.

FROM HIS LEAVING NEWINGTON, TILL HIS RETURN FROM SWITZERLAND TO MADELEY.

1. He continued with Mr. Greenwood at Newington upwards of fifteen months. The Physicians then advised him to make a trial of the Hot-Well water, near Bristol. "I was desired by Mr. and Mrs. Ireland," (who took him down in April, 1777,) says Miss Thornton, "to bear them company thither ; which I willingly did. Indeed I looked upon it as a call from God ; nor could I desire a greater honour, than to

share in the employment of angels, in ministering to a distinguished heir of salvation. At Brislington, near Bristol, he continued in the same holy, earnest course as at Newington. Every day he drank the Hot-Well water, and it agreed with him well. So that he appeared to gather a little strength; though not so swiftly as was expected. And all the strength which he received, he laid out in labours of love, for the benefit of all those, rich or poor, whom Providence cast in his way.

2. "Whenever he was in company, it was his general method, so far as his strength would admit, to pray particularly for every person present. And from his habitual prayer resulted that life and energy in his words, which every one that was blessed with his society felt more or less. Now and then likewise he adventured to pray in the family. But he was not wary enough in this. He more than once so much exerted himself, that he was brought very low. As soon as he was well enough to write, he was intent upon finishing two treatises for the press. The Plan of Reconciliation, in particular, lay very near his heart. He longed to conclude it before he died, which he wished to do, breathing peace to Jerusalem, and pointing out to the children of God the most probable means of effecting it; of uniting together, in the bonds of peace and love, all the true Ministers and followers of Jesus."

3. From Bristol he wrote to a friend thus: "I thank God I am not afraid of any evil tidings: My heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord, and desiring Him to do with me just what pleases Him. With respect to my body, my Physician hopes I shall do well. And so I hope and believe too. For health or sickness, life or death, is best when the Lord sends it.

"I am in hopes of seeing you soon; though my friends talk of detaining me, to make a farther trial of the waters. I am forbid preaching; but, blessed be God, I am not forbid by my Heavenly Physician to pray, believe, and love. This is a sweet work, which heals, strengthens, and delights: Let us do it, till we have recovered our spiritual strength. And then, whether we shall be seen on earth or not, it will be all alike.

"O be hearty in the cause of religion! Be either hot or cold. It is a fearful thing to be lukewarm, and thereby fall into the hands of the living God. Be humbly zealous for your own salvation and for God's glory. And forget not to care for each other's salvation. The case of wicked Cain is

very common ; the practice of many says, with that wretch, ' Am I my brother's keeper ? ' O pray God to keep you by his mighty power through faith unto salvation ! Keep yourselves in the love of God, and keep one another by example, reproof, exhortation, encouragement, social prayer, and a faithful use of all the means of grace. Use yourselves to bow at Christ's feet as your Prophet. Go to him continually for the holy anointing of his Spirit, who will be a Teacher always near, always with you and in you. If you have that inward Instructor, you will suffer no material loss, though your outward Teachers should be removed.

" While you have the light of God's word, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light, fitted for the kingdom of eternal light ; where, I charge you, prepare to meet with joy

" Your affectionate, though unworthy,

" Brother and Minister,

" JOHN FLETCHER."

4. I subjoin part of a letter wrote some time before, in the same spirit, to his parishioners at Madeley :—

" December 28, 1776.

" MY DEAR PARISHIONERS,

" THE weakness of my body confining me from you, I humbly submit to the divine dispensation. And I ease the trouble of my absence from you, by being present with you in spirit, and by reflecting on the pleasure I have felt in years past, in singing with you, ' Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.' This truth let us receive with all readiness, and we shall meet in Christ, the centre of lasting union. And our hearts shall be full of the song of angels, ' Glory be unto God in the highest ! On earth peace, good-will toward men ! ' In order to this, may the eyes of your understanding be more and more opened to see the need of a Redeemer, and to behold the suitableness, freeness, and fulness of the redemption wrought out by the Son of God ! This wish glows in my soul so ardently, that it brings me down upon my knees while I write. And in that posture I entreat you all to consider and improve the day of your visitation ; and to prepare in good earnest to meet with joy your God and your unworthy Pastor in another world ! Weak as I was when I left you, I hear that many, who were then healthy and strong, have got the start of me ; and that some have been hurried into eternity without a moment's warning. May this awful event strike a deeper

consideration into all our souls ! May the sound of their bodies, dashed in pieces at the bottom of the pit, rouse us to a speedy conversion, that we may never, through carelessness or delay, fall into the bottomless pit ! Tottering as I stand on the brink of the grave, some of you also may drop into it before me. Let us all, then, prepare for our approaching change, and never rest till we are assured it will be a happy one. Let the longsuffering of God toward us, who survive the hundreds that I have buried, lead us all to repentance. Embrace Jesus Christ, who wept for you in the manger, agonized for you in the garden, bled for you on the cross, and now pleads for you on his mediatorial throne. Meet me not at the great day in your sins and in your blood. Meet me in the robe of Christ's merits, and in 'the white linen' (the purity of heart and life) 'which is the righteousness of the saints.' Let all wickedness be gone for ever with the old year ; and with the new year begin a new life ; a life of renewed devotion to God, and increasing love to our neighbour.

"Though I hope to see much more of the goodness of God in the land of the living than I do see, yet, blessed be the divine mercy, I see enough to keep my mind at all times unruffled, and to make me calmly willing to resign my soul into the hands of my faithful Creator. I desire your public thanks for all the favours which he continually showeth me. May our thankfulness crown the new year, as the Lord's patience and goodness have renewed our life. Permit me to beseech an interest in your prayers also. Ask that I may be willing to receive all that God is willing to bestow. Ask that I may meekly suffer and zealously do all the will of God in my present circumstances ; and that, living or dying, I may say, 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' If God calls me soon, I beg he may, in his good providence, appoint a more faithful shepherd over you. You need not fear but he will. For these many months you have had no famine of the word. And what God hath done for months, he can do for years ; yea, all the years of your life. Only pray. Ask, and you shall have. Meet me at the throne of grace, and you shall meet at the throne of glory

"Your affectionate, obliged, unworthy Minister,

"J. F."

5. To a friend, meantime, he wrote thus : "With respect to my soul, I calmly wait, in unshaken resignation, for the full

salvation of God ; ready to trust him, to venture on his faithful love, and on the sure mercies of David, either at midnight, noon-day, or cock-crowing. For my time is in his hand ; and his time is best, and shall be my time. Death hath lost his sting ; and I thank God I know not what hurry of spirits is, or unbelieving fears, under the most trying circumstances. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift !”

6. He now spent part of his time at Bristol, but the greatest part at Brislington. In one place or the other, as well as at Newington, he was visited by many respectable persons. Many of these were Calvinists ; several of whom bore witness to his deep piety and exalted spirit. But a Dissenting Minister, after pressing him hard, with regard to some of his opinions, told him, with great warmth, “ Mr. Fletcher, you had better have been gasping for life with an asthma, or have had all your limbs unstrung by a palsy, than to have wrote those Checks.” Mr. Fletcher replied, “ Sir, I then wanted more love, and I do so still :” And in his highest fervours of divine love, he always acknowledged his want of more.

7. Here, also, he missed no opportunity of instructing servants and children, suiting his discourse, in a manner peculiar to himself, to their capacity or their business. And what would have appeared low in another, did not appear so when spoken by him. Thus, he advised the cook to stir up the fire of divine love in his heart, that it might burn up all the rubbish therein, and raise a flame of holy affection ; to which, with the greatest cordiality, he would subjoin a short prayer. Thus, to the housemaid he said, “ I entreat you to sweep every corner of your heart, that it may be fit to receive your heavenly Guest.” To a poor man, who came there in a deep consumption, but little concerned for his soul, he said, in a very solemn manner, (laying one hand on his own breast, and the other on the poor man’s,) “ God has fixed a loud knocker at your breast and mine. Because we did not regard, as we ought to have done, the gentle knocks and calls of his Holy Spirit, his word, and his providences, he has taken fast hold here, and we cannot get out of his hand. O let this knocker awaken you, who are just dropping into eternal sleep !”

8. When one or another occasionally mentioned any unkind thing which had been said of him or his writings, if the person who had said it was named, he would stop the speaker immediately, and offer up the most fervent prayer for the person

of whom he spoke. He did not willingly suffer any one to say anything against his opponents; and he made all the allowances for them, which, on a change of circumstances, he would have wished them to make for him.

9. He continued at Brislington till the 1st of December, 1777. All other means having now been fairly tried, with very little effect, most of the symptoms being nearly the same as they were several months ago, it was determined, by the most skilful Physicians, that nothing could save his life but a sea-voyage. When this was fixed, Mr. Ireland (a friend in need) carried him back to Newington. While he was here, preparing for his voyage, he wrote as follows to one of his flock at Madeley:—

“I HEARTILY thank you for your kind letter. May the God of all grace and love, our common Father and our All, bless you all with all spiritual blessings, and with such temporal favours, as will best serve the end of your growing in grace.

“My desire is, if I should be spared to minister to you again, to do it with more humility, diligence, love, and zeal. But as matters are, you must take the will for the deed. And let us all praise God for all that is past, and trust him for all that is to come. The Lord enable you all to cleave to Christ, and in him to abide in one mind, ‘striving together for the hope of the gospel,’ the fulness of the Spirit! Of this we have often discoursed together; but we have not pressed into it with sufficient ardour and violence. God give us the humble and violent faith which inherits the promises, that we may always triumph in Christ, in life and in death! I beg you would help me to thank the Author of all good for every blessing of this life; but above all, for the lively hope of the next, and for Christ, our common hope, peace, joy, wisdom, righteousness, and salvation. In him I meet and embrace you all. God bless you, and crown you with loving-kindness and tender mercies! I live, if you stand. Do not let me want the reviving cordial of hearing that you stand together firm in the faith, deep in humility, and rejoicing in loving hope of the glory to come. Bless God much for the gift of his only-begotten Son. Be much in private prayer. Do not forget the assembling yourselves together, in little companies, as well as in public. Walk humbly, as in the sight of death and eternity; and pray still for

“Your unworthy servant,

“J. F.

“Let none of your little companies want. If any do, you are welcome to my house. Take any part of the furniture there, and make use of it for their relief. And this shall be your full title for so doing.

“Witness my hand,

“JOHN FLETCHER.”

10. In the beginning of December, he set out with Mr. Ireland and his family, beside some other company. A little account of the former part of his journey is given by Mr. Ireland, in a letter to a friend :—

“WE left Calais, December 12. The north wind was very high, and penetrated us even in the chaise. We put up at Bretzul, and the next day got to Abbeville ; whence we were forced, by the miserable accommodations we met with, to set out, though it was Sunday. Mr. Fletcher and I used to lead the way ; but now the other chaises got before us. Nine miles from Abbeville our axletree gave way through the hard frost, and we were both left to the piercing cold, on the side of a hill, without any shelter. After waiting an hour and half, we sent the axletree and wheels back to be repaired ; and, leaving the body of the chaise under a guard, procured another to carry us to the next town. On the 15th our chaise arrived in good repair. Travelling steadily forward, (though the country was all covered with snow,) on the 27th we reached Dijon. During the whole journey, Mr. Fletcher showed visible marks of a recovery. He bore both the fatigue and piercing cold as well as the best of us. On the 31st we put up at Lyons, and solemnly closed the year ; bowing our knees before the Throne, which indeed we did not fail to do, all together, every day. January 4, 1778, we left Lyons, and came on the 9th to Aix. Here we rest ; the weather being exceeding fine and warm. Mr. Fletcher walks out daily. He is now able to read, and to pray with us, every morning and evening. He has no remains of his cough, or of the weakness in his breast. His natural colour is restored, and the sallowness quite gone. His appetite is good, and he takes a little wine.”

11. In another letter Mr. Ireland writes thus: “Soon after our arrival here, I rode out most days with my dear and valuable friend. He now and then complained of the uneasiness of the horse, and there were some remains of soreness in his breast. But this soon went off. The beginning of

February was warm, which, when he walked in the fields, relaxed him too much. But when the wind got north or east, he was braced again. His appetite is good; his complexion as healthy as it was eleven years ago. As his strength increases, he increases the length of his rides. Last Tuesday he set out on a journey of a hundred and twelve miles. The first day he travelled forty miles without feeling any fatigue. The third day he travelled fifty-five. He bore his journey as well as I did; and was as well and as active at the end of it as at the beginning. During the day he cried out, 'Help me to praise the Lord for his goodness: I never expected to see this day.' He now accepted a pressing invitation to preach to the Protestants here. He did so on Sunday morning, on these words: 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.' For some days before, he was afraid he had done wrong in accepting the invitation. But O how shall I be able to express the power and liberty which the Lord gave him! Both the French and English were greatly affected; the word went to the heart both of saints and sinners. If the Lord continues his strength and voice, (which is now as good as ever it was,) he has an earnest invitation to preach where we are going, near Montpelier. You would be astonished at the entreaties of Pastors as well as people. He has received a letter from a Minister in the Levine mountains, who intends to come to Montpelier, sixty miles, to press him to go and preach to his flock. Soon after this, his brother came to fetch him to Switzerland. He purposes to spend the next summer in his own country, and the following winter in these parts, or in some part of the south of France.

12. "His brother conducted him from Montpelier to Nyon, the place of his nativity. Here he lived in that which was his father's house, in the midst of his affectionate relations, who took care that he should neither want the best advice, perhaps equal to any in Europe, nor anything that could possibly contribute to the full recovery of his health."

13. About this time a letter was wrote to that venerable old man, Mr. Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham, informing him, that there was a valuable estate at his native place, which properly belonged to him, and which might easily be recovered, if he sent one of his sons to claim it. All his friends whom he consulted on the occasion judged this information was not to be slighted; and his youngest son, Mr. William Perronet,

was willing to undertake the journey. But before he set out, he wrote to Mr. Fletcher, desiring his advice. Part of his answer was as follows:—

“*NYON, June 2, 1778.*”

“WHILE I write to you to make your title clear to a precarious estate on earth, permit me to remind you of the heavenly inheritance entailed upon believers. The Will (the New Testament) by which we can recover it is proved; the Court is equitable, the Judge loving and gracious. To enter on the possession of part of the estate here, and of the whole hereafter, we need only to believe, and prove evangelically that we are believers. Let us set about it now with earnestness, with perseverance, and with full assurance that through grace we shall carry our point. Alas, what are estates or crowns, to grace and glory? The Lord grant we may all choose the better part!

“Since I wrote last, in order to shorten my journey, I ventured to cross the mountains, which separate France from this country. But on the third day, I found an unexpected trial; a hill, which we were to ascend by a winding road, but so steep, that the horses were hardly able to draw the empty chaise. This obliged me to walk, in the steepest places, for several hours together. The sun was hot. I perspired violently, and the next day I spat blood again. But having kept to asses' milk ever since, I am (blessed be God) much better.

“This country is delightful. I invite you to come and see it, and share a delightful apartment. I design to try this fine air some months longer. We have a fine shady wood near the lake, where I can ride in the cool all the day, and enjoy the singing of a multitude of birds. But this, though sweet, does not come up to the singing of my dear friends in England. There I meet them in spirit several hours in the day. God bless my dear friends!”

14. About the same time he wrote to Dr. Turner as follows:—

“SHOULD I gather strength, I should, under God, acknowledge you, dear Sir, as the instrument of that blessing, as you were above twenty years ago. Ten thousand thanks I render to you, Sir, and to Mr. Perronet, for your kind and generous care and attendance. May God reward you both, by bestowing upon you all the blessings which can make life happy, death comfortable, and eternity delightful and glorious! May the richest cordials of divine love, and the balm of

Gilead, a Saviour's precious blood, revive your souls and comfort your hearts! And in your every want and extremity, may you both find such tender helpers and comforters, as have been found in you by, dear Sir,

"Your most obliged, though most unworthy,
"servant and patient,

"JOHN FLETCHER."

15. In the latter end of the year, Mr. William Perronet set out for Switzerland. In a letter he wrote from thence to Mr. Greenwood, he gives a little farther account of Mr. Fletcher. And this letter I the rather insert, as I believe it is all that remains of that amiable young man, who never more saw his native land, being called hence while he was on his journey to England.

There is something in the beginning of his letter which is a little humorous; but this the candid reader will easily excuse. It runs thus:—

"NYON, *January 18, 1779.*

"DEAR SIR,

"As you desire of me to send you some account of my journey, now I am a little settled, I will do it in the best manner I am able.

"I set out from London on Tuesday, November 17th. We arrived at Dover about three on Wednesday morning; embarked on Thursday, and arrived at Calais in about three hours.

"Though it was in war time, yet we did not meet with the least incivility, either here or in any part of France. But the badness of the inns makes the travelling through this country disagreeable. The rooms in general are so dirty, as to be fitter for swine than men. Each room, both above and below stairs, is provided with two, three, or four beds; and they are so high as to require steps to get up to them. For there is on each bed, first, a monstrous canvass bag, stuffed with a huge quantity of straw; over this a feather bed, and on this as many mattresses as the host can furnish. But the worst is, the sheets are not damp, but rather downright wet. Yet the good woman would constantly scold us, if we attempted to dry them even at our own fire; insisting upon it, that it was impossible they should be damp at all.

"At table, every one is furnished with a spoon and a fork, but with no knives. And in general they are not needful; for both flesh and vegetables are so stewed down, as to be

properly termed spoon-meat. However, at the meanest inn every one is provided with a clean napkin; and both after dinner and after supper there is a fine dessert of fruit.

“We travelled early and late; yet, having but one set of horses, we were a whole week in getting to Paris. In Paris all is gaiety and finery; but without the least idea of neatness. The scarcity of water is one excuse for the general want of cleanliness, both in their persons and houses.

“On Tuesday, December 8, we dined at Portallier; the prettiest town in all France: The reason of which is, being burnt down some years ago, it was rebuilt by the late King. The next morning we entered Switzerland, stepping over a brook, which divides Switzerland from France. On the French side of the brook is a cross; on the other, a pillar with the arms of Switzerland. In the evening we arrived at Lausanne, a famous old town. Here I remained the next day, and on Friday, the 11th, went on to Nyon, where I had the pleasure of finding our dear friend in pretty good health and spirits. Mr. Fletcher's house is a fine large building, agreeably situated. It is in the form of a castle, and is supposed to have been built five hundred years ago.

“In passing through France, how bitterly did I regret the want of the Sunday Service! And it was not much better with me when I came into Switzerland. For I understood so little of their language, that I could not profit much by the public Service. Indeed this loss is in some measure made up by the company and conversation of Mr. Fletcher; who, however engaged he is the greater part of the day, is generally so kind as to spend a little time with me in the evening, in prayer and conversation.

“His chief delight seems to be in the meeting of his little society of children. And as he is exceeding fond of them, they appear to be altogether as fond of him. He seldom either walks abroad or rides out, but some of them follow him; singing the hymns they have learned, and conversing with him, by the way. But you must not suppose that he is permitted to enjoy this happiness unmolested. Not only the drunkards make songs upon him and his little companions, but many of the Clergy loudly complain of such irregular proceedings. However, he is upon good terms with the three Ministers of the place; all of whom are not only serious men, but desirous of promoting true religion.

“He is certainly stronger, and in better health, than he was when he left England. But as soon as ever he ventures to preach, his spitting of blood returns. Whenever this happens, his strength and spirits decay surprisingly, which he cannot in anywise recover but by lying by for some days.

“Whether I succeed in my temporal business or not, I shall ever remember with pleasure and thankfulness the opportunities I have been blessed with of spending so much time in company with our inestimable friend; who, wherever he goes, preaches the gospel, both by his words and example, nay, by his very looks, not only to his friends, but to all he meets with. So that on the top of the frozen Alps, and in the dreary vale of Chateau d’Oex, some good seed has been sown.

“When my business constrained me to go to Chateau d’Oex, Mr. Fletcher bore me company. And here also he was visited by some of the principal inhabitants of the town; who stood round him in deep attention for almost an hour, while he both exhorted and prayed. I am, dear Sir,

“Your very sincere friend and servant,

“WILLIAM PERRONET.”

Mr. Fletcher adds upon the same paper: “Thanks to our kind Preserver, I am yet in the land of faith and hope, and want to find and make it a land of happiness and love. The Lord Jesus is alone sufficient for this. And till the great outpouring of his love is come, we ought faithfully to stir up the gift of God which is in ourselves and others, and to supply by the depth of our humility, and the ardour of our expectation, what is yet wanting to our experience. Well; God is good; Jesus is faithful; the Spirit is truth and love. Come, Lord! and we shall experience the power of that God who turns death to life, darkness to light, weakness to strength; and ‘calleth the things that are not as though they were.’”

16. Mr. Perronet in another letter to Mr. Greenwood, dated May 22, writes thus:—

“My dear friend is much better in health now than he was in the winter. He preached last Sunday se’nnight in the church. He spoke with a strong, clear voice, for above three quarters of an hour; and did not find himself hurt by it. But when he rode out in the afternoon, his horse dropped down, as if he had been shot, and cut both his knees, as well as his head. Yet Mr. Fletcher was noway hurt.

“On Good-Friday, there being no Service here, Mr. Fletcher and I crossed the Lake into Savoy, in order to hear a celebrated Capuchin, who was to preach that day. He made a very good discourse; and afterwards he and his brethren invited us to dine with them. This we declined; but after dinner paid our respects to them; and we spent two or three agreeable hours in serious and friendly conversation.”

17. About this time Mr. Fletcher wrote to a friend thus:—

“LET us bear with patience the decays of nature: Let us see without fear the approach of death. We must put off this sickly, corruptible body, in order to put on the immortal and glorious garment.

“I have some hopes that my poor sister will yet be my sister in Christ. Her self-righteousness, I trust, breaks as fast as her body. I am come hither to see death make havoc among my friends. I wear mourning for my father’s brother, and for my brother’s son. The same mourning will serve me for my dying sister, if I do not go before her. She lies on the same bed where my father and mother died, and where she and I were born. How near is life to death! But, blessed be God, Christ the resurrection is nearer to the weak, dying believer. Death works through the body, and the resurrection through the soul. And our soul is our real self.”

18. I believe it was about the same time that a remarkable passage occurred, which was related to me some years ago. I may possibly have forgot some circumstances; but the substance of it was this: Mr. Fletcher having heard of a Minister in the country, as an eminently pious man, had a great desire to see him; and for that purpose one morning set out very early. When he had walked several miles, he saw a great crowd gathered together at the door of a house. He asked what was the matter; and was answered, “A poor woman and her child lie a dying.” He went in, and found a woman, who had not long been delivered, in appearance very near death. Little better was the case of the infant, which was convulsed from head to foot. The room was filled with people. He took occasion to show them, from that melancholy spectacle, the dreadful effects of sin; and afterwards spoke largely of the miserable state we are all in, through the sin of our first parent. He then expatiated on the Second Adam, and the blessings we may receive through him; adding, “He is able

to raise the dead. He is able to save you all from sin, as well as save these two poor objects from death. Come, let us ask Him to save both us and them." He found remarkable liberty in prayer. Presently the child's convulsions ceased; and the mother was easy, lively, and strong. The people were utterly amazed, and stood speechless and almost senseless. While they were in this state, he silently withdrew. When they came to themselves, he was gone. Many of them asked who it could be; and some said, "Certainly it was an angel."

19. When he had a little recovered his strength, he made a tour through Italy, and paid a visit to Rome. While he was here, as Mr. Ireland and he were one day going through one of the streets in a coach, they were informed, the Pope was coming forward; and it would be required of them to come out of the coach, and kneel while he went by, as all the people did: If they did not, in all probability the zealous mob would fall upon them and knock them on the head. But this, whatever might be the consequence, they flatly refused to do; judging the paying such honour to a man was neither better nor worse than idolatry. The coachman was exceedingly terrified, not knowing what to do. However, at length he made shift to turn aside into a narrow way. The Pope was in an open landau. He waved his hands as if he had been swimming; and frequently repeated these words, "God bless you all!" Mr. Fletcher's spirit was greatly stirred, and he longed to bear a public testimony against Antichrist; and he would undoubtedly have done it, had he been able to speak Italian. He could hardly refrain from doing it in Latin, till he considered that only the Priests could have understood him. One to whom he related this, saying, if he had done this the multitude would have torn him in pieces; he answered, "I believe the Pope himself would have prevented; for he was a man of sense and humanity."

20. While he was at Paris, he was desired to visit and pray with a sick woman. Information of this was quickly given to a Magistrate, with abundance of aggravation. In consequence of this an order was procured from the King himself for the apprehending him. This might not improbably have cost him his life, or, at least, a long and expensive imprisonment. When the Officer came to the door of the house where he lodged, Mr. Ireland stepped out, and said, "Sir, have you a warrant for me?" He (supposing him to be Mr.

Fletcher) answered, "I have; you must come with me." Mr. Ireland went very quietly with him. But when they came before the Magistrate, the accuser said, "This is not the man; I know nothing of this gentleman." Another messenger was then sent; but before he came to the house, Mr. Fletcher was too far off to be overtaken.

21. While he was at Nyon, he wrote (among many other letters) to good old Mr. Perronet as follows:—

"February 8, 1779.

"HONOURED AND DEAR FATHER IN CHRIST,

"I HAVE had the pleasure of accompanying your son to your father's birth-place. It is a charming country for those who have a taste for highland prospects. But what is it to our heavenly Father's hill of Sion? Thither may we all travel, summer and winter, and there may we all have a happy meeting, and an eternal inheritance!"

22. September 7. Mr. William Perronet wrote a little farther account of him: "Mr. Fletcher," says he, "has preached here" (at Nyon) "in the church, and might have preached much oftener, if his health would have permitted; for his friendly and prudent behaviour has won upon all the three Ministers, so that they are now on the best terms with him. But a new difficulty has lately arisen. He has been summoned before the Seigneur Bailiff, who sharply reprehended him (noble Bailiff indeed; worthy of his office!) for preaching against Sabbath-breaking, which, he said, implied a censure of the Magistrates, as if they neglected their duty. He reprimanded him also for preaching against stage-plays, which he considered as a reflection on himself, as he had just then sent for a company of French comedians to Nyon. In consequence of this, he forbid his exercising the function of a Minister in this country. A blessed instance of Republican liberty! Who would not wish for the same in England? However, one of the Ministers has ventured to give him a room in his own house. Here he preaches two or three times a week, to a few serious persons and abundance of children. His Lordship has not yet thought proper to interfere, although the thing is no secret. And not only the seriousness, but also the number, of the congregation increases daily."

23. In the next year, 1780, Mr. Fletcher fully intended to return to England. But not long after he wrote as follows, to one of his parishioners at Madeley:—

"I HAVE the more readily complied with the request of my friends to stay here" (at Nyon) "a little longer, as it was so earnestly backed by the little society which is gathered in this place. About three weeks ago they got about me, and besought me on their knees, with many tears, to stay till they were a little stronger, and able to stand alone. Nor would they be persuaded to rise, till they had got me to comply. Happy would it be for us all, if we prayed so earnestly to Him who can give substantial blessings!

"Two days ago I went to Geneva, and spoke to a carrier, to take me back to London; but his coach was full. Yesterday another came, and said he would take us at a fortnight's notice. The Lord is always ready to give us a lift to the kingdom of grace, through which we must pass to the kingdom of glory. The comfort of this journey is, that we may travel all together, though our bodies are far asunder. For Christ the way is everywhere, and faith is (like his word) one and the same in every age and place. So is holiness; for in all places we may love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. I hope you and all your brethren travel thus; and that you journey like St. Paul, who travelled so hard, that he was running a race for a prize, a crown of life."

24. In spring, 1781, he set out for England. But Mr. Perronet was then exceeding ill, having all the symptoms of an approaching consumption. He could not therefore keep pace with Mr. Fletcher; who, being on his journey, wrote to him as follows:—

"LYONS, *April 6, 1781.*

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"WE are both weak and both afflicted; but Jesus careth for us. He is everywhere. He has all power to deliver us; and perhaps by ways we little think of. It was of the Lord that you did not come with me; you would have been sick, as I am. I am overdone with riding and preaching; indeed twice I preached in the fields. I carry home with me much weakness: The Lord's will be done. I know I am called to suffer and die. Let us believe and rejoice in the Lord Jesus."

He returned to England in summer in tolerable health, being quite recovered from his consumption. Calling at London, he preached at the New chapel, slept at Newington, and the next day set out for Bristol. He stayed there only a short time, and then retired to Mr. Ireland's, at Brislington,

who, as soon as he was capable, willingly accompanied him to his beloved Madeley.

25. But he did not find such cause of rejoicing here as he had fondly expected. This may be easily gathered from the letter he then wrote to his friend at Newington. It runs thus:—

“MADELEY, *June 12, 1781.*

“MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

“I STAYED longer at Brislington than I designed. Mr. Ireland was ill, and would nevertheless come hither with me; so that I was obliged to stay till he was better. And indeed it was well that I did not come without him; for he has helped me to regulate my outward affairs, which were in great confusion. Mr. Greaves leaves me; and I will either leave Madeley, or have an Assistant able to stir among the people; for I had much rather be gone than stay here to see the dead bury their dead. Well, we shall soon remove out of all, and rest from our little cares and labours. You do not forget, I hope, that you have need of patience, as well as I, to inherit the promises; the best and greatest of which are not sealed, but to such as keep the word of Christ's patience, and such as persevere with him in his temptations. Hold on, then, patient faith and joyful hope! If I were by you, I would preach to your heart and my own a lecture on this text, ‘We are saved by hope,’ and by a faith which is never stronger than when it is contrary to all the feelings of flesh and blood.

“Pray what news of the glory? Does the glory of the Lord fill the temple, your house, your heart? A cloud is over my poor parish; but, alas! it is not the luminous cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night. Even the few remaining professors stared at me the other day, when I preached to them on these words: ‘Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you.’ Well, the promise is unto us: If others despise it, still let us believe and hope. Nothing enlarges the heart and awakens the soul more than that believing, loving expectation. Let us wait together, until we are all endued with power from on high.”

CHAPTER VII.

OF HIS MARRIAGE

1. **ALTHOUGH** the great Apostle has ranked the "forbidding to marry" among the "doctrines of devils," and has expressly declared, "Marriage is honourable in all men, and the bed undefiled;" yet a kind of prejudice hangs on the minds of many even of those that love God, inclining them to disapprove of the marriage of persons eminent in religion. Yea, many are of opinion that it is not consistent with high degrees of holiness; and that when any who have deep experience in the things of God marry, they are in some measure fallen from grace. Hence many were surprised that so eminent a Christian as Mr. Fletcher should take this step. And they could hardly help thinking that he had lost some degree of his excellent piety, and that he was not so unreservedly devoted to God as he had been some time before.

2. In order to satisfy every reasonable person that he had not sustained any loss at all, that his entire self-devotion was in nowise impaired, either before or at the time of his marriage, I believe the most convincing way will be to give as particular an account as possible of what occurred at that time. The account is given by one that was an eye and ear witness of what she relates; and whoever seriously considers this account will easily perceive that his soul was at that time all alive, and wholly devoted to God. And I cannot but recommend this whole transaction to the imitation of all Christians who enter the holy state of matrimony.

3. As I think it highly expedient to premise some account of the person whom Mr. Fletcher chose as his companion for life, I am glad to find this done to my hand in the letter which I shall now subjoin:—

"REVEREND SIR,

"I THINK it my privilege, and have often found it a blessing, to comply with the request of my honoured father, which I now do also in great love to my valuable and much-esteemed friends, Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher. I will therefore endeavour, with the assistance of my gracious Lord, to recollect and acquaint you with some particulars of the life and character of these truly devoted servants of God, with whose

intimate acquaintance I have been favoured for near thirty years. But, indeed, I feel my great insufficiency to relate what might be said with the strictest truth of these worthies.

“My acquaintance with Mrs. Fletcher began when she was about seventeen years of age. She had from her early childhood been strongly drawn to seek the Crucified, and was now athirst for a clean heart, and longed to have a right spirit renewed within her. Nor did her desire to love God with all her heart lessen, but increase, her love to her neighbour; as I, the most unworthy, am well able to testify, to whom she has been a tried friend, even to the present hour.

“To give you a clear view of this, I need only transcribe part of a letter, which she wrote to me, May 23, 1757:—

“MY DEAREST FRIEND,

“THE Lord has been indeed merciful, above all we can ask or think. I found a greater blessing the last time I was with you than ever. I am more enabled to prayer, and to an earnest seeking after holiness. But what most stirs me up is, I seem to hear the Lord calling upon me, *Depart ye, depart ye; go ye out thence; touch not the unclean thing; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.* For some time, these words have been much in my mind, with both pleasure and profit. But within this day or two, the Lord has more clearly shown me the way wherein I ought to walk. He seems to call me out to more activeness; so that I am ready to cry out, *What wouldest thou have me to do?* Then I consider, Can I do any more for the souls or bodies of the poor about me? But this does not seem to be the thing. What I am now led to wish for is, with both soul and body to serve those who are in Christ. And as soon as the Lord has prepared me for his work, and set me at liberty, my firm resolution is, by the grace of God, to be wholly given up to the Church. I plainly see, I have no more to do with the world, than to allow myself the necessaries of life. And though it has pleased God that I have no need to work for my living, yet surely that is no reason my hand should be idle. I would be like those described 1 Timothy v. 10, to bring up children, to lodge strangers, to be ready to do the meanest offices for the saints, to relieve the afflicted, to visit the fatherless and widow, and diligently to follow every good work. O pray for me, that the Lord may shorten his work in me, and quickly make an end of sin! O that he would say to my soul, *Thou*

art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee! O when shall I be wholly given up, both body and soul, to Him who gave himself for me?’

“ I admired the spirit of this letter ; but little expected to see these good desires brought so fully into practice, as they were in a few years after. And this may suffice as a clear proof that God fulfils the desire of them that fear him ; yea, and shows unto them the path wherein he would have them to walk. That her light given before was not delusive, is plain ; as it is well known, how many years she has ‘ brought up children, lodged strangers,’ relieved the afflicted, and ‘ diligently followed every good work.’

“ With regard to the dear saint that is now swallowed up in his beloved employment, praise and adoration, it is eight or nine and twenty years since I was first favoured with his heavenly conversation, in company with Mr. Walsh and a few other friends, most of whom are now in the world of spirits. At these seasons, how frequently did we feel

The’ o’erwhelming power of saving grace !

How frequently were we silenced thereby, while tears of love our eyes o’erflowed ! It sweetly affects my soul while I recollect the humility, fervour of spirit, and strength of faith, with which dear Mr. Fletcher so often poured out his soul before the great Three-One, at whose feet we have lain in holy shame and divine silence, till it seemed earth was turned to heaven ! With what delight does my soul recal those precious moments ! Yet a little while, and we shall all magnify His name together.

“ This heavenly-minded servant of the Lord resembled him likewise in his love to precious souls. I heard him preach his first sermon at West-Street chapel. I think his text was, ‘ Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ His spirit appeared in his whole attitude and action, though he could not well find words in the English language to express himself : But he supplied that defect by offering up prayers, tears, and sighs abundantly. Nearly about this time he saw Miss Bosanquet, and began his acquaintance with her. But although they had a particular esteem for each other, yet they had no correspondence for above twenty years. It was not till the yearly Conference drew near, in July, 1781, that he paid her a visit at her own house near Leeds. They had

much conversation together, and contracted an intimate acquaintance. After a few days, Miss Bosanquet asked Mr. Wesley's advice concerning Mr. Fletcher's proposal, who approved it entirely; being persuaded, it would be much to the glory of God. He spent much of his time at Cross-Hall, till the following January. His general conversation was praising God, and speaking of the love of our dear Redeemer. He took opportunities likewise of speaking to every one in the family concerning the state of their souls, and giving them from time to time such directions as were suitable thereto. At other times he met us all together, and gave us proper exhortations and directions. Our daily meals were as a sacrament. When he drank to any one, it was, 'Heavenly health,' or, 'The cup of salvation.' At or after the meal, he generally begun, or called us to begin, that verse,—

'Still, O my soul, prolong
The never-ceasing song!
Christ my theme, my hope, my joy,
His be all my happy days!
Praise my every hour employ;
Every breath be spent in praise!'

After dinner he often sung several verses of 'Primitive Christianity;' particularly that,—

O that my Lord would count me meet
To wash his dear disciples' feet!

Sometimes he read many of those verses with tears streaming down his face. Thus did he walk with God, filled with the Spirit of his beloved Lord; confirming his love to all the family, and caring both for their spiritual and temporal concerns.

"My soul was much affected, when he asked each of us, in a sweet, humble manner, 'Can you give me your friend?' To think of parting, was indeed grievous to us all. Yet we did not dare to withhold her from him; as we all believed the union was of God, and would be to their present and eternal benefit. The first sermon which he preached in Leeds, on the Sunday morning before the Conference, will never be forgotten by any that heard it, who desire to be perfected in love. He preached in many places while in Yorkshire, and to numerous congregations. I have heard of many who were greatly blessed thereby; some convinced, others set at liberty. And whenever he either preached or conversed, the comforts of the Holy Ghost were multiplied.

“Monday, November 12, was the day appointed for the outward uniting of those whose hearts were before united by the Holy Spirit. On the morning of this day, several friends met together on this solemn occasion; who can all, as well as me, truly say, ‘I have been at one Christian wedding.’ Jesus was invited, and truly he was at our Cana. We reached Cross-Hall before family-prayers. Mr. Fletcher was dressed in his canonicals; and after giving out one of Mr. Wesley’s marriage-hymns, he read the seventh, eighth, and ninth verses of the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation; and spoke from them in such a manner as greatly tended to spiritualize the solemnities of the day. He said, ‘We invite you to our wedding; but the Holy Ghost here invites you to the marriage of the Lamb. The Bride, the Lamb’s wife, has made herself ready. This Bride consists of the whole Church triumphant and militant united together. Ye may all be the Bride, and Jesus will condescend to be the Bridegroom. Make yourself ready by being filled with the Spirit.’ He was very solemn in prayer, and said, ‘Lord, thou knowest, we would not take this step, if we had not eternity in view, and if we were not as willing to be carried into the church-yard as to go into the church.’ At breakfast he reminded us, ‘The postilions are now ready to carry us to the church, in order to see our nuptials solemnized; but death will soon be here, to transport us to the marriage of the Lamb.’

“On the way to the church, (Batley church, which was near two miles off,) he spoke much of the mystery which is couched under marriage, namely, the union between Christ and his Church. ‘The first Adam,’ said he, ‘received his wife from his side; our heavenly Adam purchased his bride by a fountain opened in his pierced side.’ They were married in the face of the congregation; the doors were opened, and every one came in that would. We then returned home, and spent a considerable time in singing and prayer. We were near twenty of us. I then presented Mrs. Fletcher with some wedding-hymns. She looked them over, and gave them to Mr. Fletcher. He read the scripture at the top, namely, ‘Husbands, love your wives;’ and added, ‘As Christ loved the Church.’ Then turning to us, he said, ‘My God, what a task! Help me, my friends, by your prayers to fulfil it. *As Christ loved the Church!* He laid aside his glory for her! He submitted to be born into our world; to be clothed

with a human body, subject to all our sinless infirmities. He endured shame, contempt, pain, yea, death itself, for his Church! O my God, none is able to fulfil this task without thine almighty aid. Help me, O my God! Pray for me, O my friends!

“He next read, ‘Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands.’ Mrs. Fletcher added, ‘As unto the Lord.’ ‘Well, my dear,’ returned Mr. Fletcher, ‘only in the Lord; and if ever I wish you to do anything otherwise, resist me with all your might.’ From dinner, which was a spiritual meal, as well as a natural one, until tea-time, our time was spent chiefly in fervent prayer or singing. After singing the covenant-hymn, Mr. Fletcher went to Mrs. Fletcher, and said to her, ‘Well, my dearest friend, will you join with me in joining ourselves in a perpetual covenant to the Lord? Will you with me serve Him in his members? Will you help me to bring souls to the blessed Redeemer; and, in every possible way this day, lay yourself under the strongest ties you can, to help me to glorify my gracious Lord?’ She answered, like one that well knew where her strength lay, ‘May my God help me so to do!’

“In the evening Mr. Valton preached in the hall, from those most suitable words: ‘What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.’ His words did not fall to the ground: Many were greatly refreshed. After preaching, there was a sweet contest among us; every one thought, ‘I in particular owe the greatest debt of praise;’ till we jointly agreed to sing,

‘I’ll praise my Maker, while I’ve breath;
And when my voice is lost in death.

Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne’er be past,
While life, or thought, or being last,
Or immortality endures.’

“On the Wednesday following the select society met; and it was a precious season. Among other things, Mr. Fletcher said, ‘Some of you perhaps may be a little surprised at the step my dearest friend and I have taken. But I assure you, it was the result of much prayer and mature deliberation. Five-and-twenty years ago, when I first saw my dear wife, I thought, if I ever married, she should be the person. But she was too rich for me to think of; so I banished every thought of the kind. For many years after, I had a distaste to

a married life, thinking it impossible to be as much devoted to God in a married as in a single life. But this objection was removed, by reading, *Enoch begat sons and daughters. And Enoch walked with God, and was not; for God took him.* I then saw, if Enoch at the head of a family might walk with God, and be fit for translation; our souls under the gospel dispensation might attain the highest degree of holiness in a similar state, if too great an attachment, leading the soul from God rather than to him, did not take place; instead of that which should be a means of increasing its union with Jesus. Yet still many obstacles stood in my way; but at length they were all removed. Every mountain became a plain; and we are both well assured, that the step we took had the full approbation of God.'

"On January 2, 1782, we had a very solemn parting. But in the midst of all the sorrow which we felt, was a sweet assurance that we should meet again, not only in this world, but

Where death shall all be done away,
And bodies part no more.

This brings to my mind a sentence which he wrote to us, a little before his death: 'Time is short. It remains, that we die daily. Stand fast in Christ, the resurrection and the life. That we may have a happy meeting is the wish and prayer of

'Your affectionate friends,

'JOHN and MARY FLETCHER.'

"To repeat all the precious sayings of this servant of God would require many volumes; for his mouth was always opened with wisdom, tending to minister grace to the hearers. My earnest prayer is, that the spirit of faith, and love, and heavenly wisdom, may rest upon you also, and guide you in all your extensive labours, till they are swallowed up in eternal rest. I remain, Reverend Sir,

"Your unworthy child and servant,

"S. C."

4. I cannot help subjoining a reflection here, which at this time affected me much. Although I could in nowise condemn this marriage, yet on one account it gave me pain. When I was young, I was exceedingly affected with a relation in Mr. Herbert's Life,—an account of Mr. Ferrar's family, at Little Gidding, in Huntingdonshire; a very particular description of which is given in the "Arminian Magazine."

I longed to see such another family, in any part of the three kingdoms. At length I had my desire; I did see exactly such another family: I saw a family full as much devoted to God, full as regular in all their exercises of devotion, and at least as exemplary in every branch of Christian holiness. This I saw, by the peculiar providence of God, settled at Leytonstone. O that it had continued there! The removal of it into Yorkshire I did not advise nor approve of. However, I rejoiced to see it settled somewhere; namely, at Cross-Hall, near Leeds. Again I did all that was in my power to perpetuate this glorious institution. It was now totally dissolved; and yet by a means which I did not dare to oppose. "O God, how unsearchable are thy judgments; and thy ways past finding out!"

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM HIS MARRIAGE TO THE BEGINNING OF HIS LAST ILLNESS.

1. FROM the time of his settling at Madeley with Mrs. Fletcher, he had no return of his consumptive disorder. On the contrary, by the blessing of God on her peculiar care and tenderness, not only his health was confirmed, but his strength restored as in the days of his youth. In the mean time he took care to employ all his returning strength in the work of faith and the labour of love: More particularly in that which he had always found to be one of the most difficult parts of his duty. We have in this parish, through the lenity of the Magistrates, no less than eight public-houses. These are well known to have been continual nurseries for sin, particularly on Sunday evenings. It had been for many years his unwearied endeavour to put an end to these abuses. Yet as he very seldom had a Churchwarden who was heartily willing to second him therein, his endeavours were almost ineffectual, producing very little fruit. But for two years God was now pleased to favour him with a Churchwarden who was resolved to act according to his oath: He then cheerfully renewed his endeavours, visiting several of these houses every Sunday; all of them in their turn. In every one he bore a faithful testimony; and in some it has been

attended with much good. O that no one of those who have been at any time within the reach of his voice, may finally inherit that curse, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!"

2. For many years he had felt with the deepest sensibility the disconsolate condition of poor uninstructed children; and some years ago he began a school, wherein he taught them himself every day. After pursuing this method for some time, he erected a school in Madeley-Wood; but afterward his thoughts were much employed concerning the Sunday-schools; especially since they were recommended to him in a letter from Mrs. Derby, a person whom he always found ready to promote every good work. He then earnestly set about promoting them in his own parish. Three hundred children were soon gathered together, whom he took every opportunity of instructing, by regular meetings, for some time before the schools were opened. These meetings he attended, with the utmost diligence, to the very Thursday before his illness. In order to encourage the children, his method was to give them little Hymn-Books, pointing them to some friend or neighbour, who would teach them the hymns, and instruct them to sing. The little creatures were greatly taken with this new employment; insomuch that many of them would scarce allow themselves time to eat or sleep, for the desire they had of learning their lessons. At every meeting, after inquiring who had made the greatest proficiency, he distinguished them by some little reward.

3. In the instructing of children, one great difficulty is, to draw and fix their attention. He had a singular gift for doing this, by making advantage of any incident that offered. One day, while he had a considerable number of children before him in the preaching-house, as he was persuading them to mind what they were about, and to remember the text which he was going to mention, just then a robin flew into the house, and their eyes were presently turned after him. "Now," said he, "I see you can attend to that robin. Well, I will take that robin for my text." He then gave them an useful lecture on the harmlessness of that little creature, and the tender care of its Creator.

4. When he observed that the number of children, instead of falling off, as was expected, increased continually, he wrote some proposals to the parish, which were received with

the greatest unanimity. Many of the rich, as well as the trading people, lent their helping hand, not only to defray the expense of teachers, but also to raise a convenient house in Coalbrook-Dale for the instruction of the numerous children that were on that side of the parish.

5. The proposal was as follows :—“ Our national depravity turns greatly on these two hinges, the profanation of the Lord’s day, and the neglect of the education of children. Till some way is found of stopping up these two great inlets of wickedness, we must expect to see our workhouses filled with aged parents forsaken by their prodigal children, with wives forsaken by their faithless husbands, and with the wretched offspring of lewd women and drunken men. Nay, we may expect to see the gaols, and even the gallows, largely stocked, to the perpetual reproach of our nation, with unhappy wretches ready to fall a sacrifice to the laws of their country. ‘ It is a common observation,’ says Dr. Gibson, late Bishop of London, ‘ that public criminals, when they come to their unhappy end, and make their dying declarations to the world, generally charge the sinful courses in which they have lived, to the neglect and abuse of the Lord’s day, as the first occasion of leading them into all other wickedness. And, considering how frequently these declarations are repeated, and how many other instances of the same kind, though less public, are notorious enough to those who will observe them, they may well be a warning to us, to consider a religious observation of the Lord’s day as the best preservative of virtue and religion, and the neglect and profanation of it as the greatest inlet to vice and wickedness.’

6. “ A pious Clergyman farther observes : ‘ The want of education in children is one of the principal causes of the misery of families, cities, and nations ; ignorance, vice, and misery being constant companions. The hardest heart must melt at the melancholy sight of such a number of children, both male and female, who live in gross ignorance, and habitual profanation of the Lord’s day. What crowds fill the streets and fields, tempting each other to idleness, lewdness, and every other species of wickedness ! Is it any wonder we should have so many undutiful children, unfaithful apprentices, disobedient servants, untrusty workmen, disloyal subjects, and bad members of society ? Whence so much rapine, fornication, and blasphemy ? Do not all these evils

centre in ignorance and contempt of the Lord's day? And shall we do nothing to check these growing evils?"

7. "Persons concerned for the welfare of the next generation, and well-wishers to Church and State, have already set us a fair example in Stroud, Gloucester, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Bristol, and many country parishes. They have attempted to remedy these evils by setting up Sunday-schools, which, by keeping children from corrupting one another, by promoting their attendance on divine worship, and by planting the first principles of useful knowledge in their minds and of piety in their hearts, bid fair for a public reformation of manners, and for nipping in the bud the ignorance and impiety which is everywhere so common among the lower and more numerous classes of people."

8. The proposals concerning Sunday-schools in the parish of Madeley, were as follows:—

"I. It is proposed, that Sunday-schools be set up in this parish, for such children as are employed all the week, and for those whose education has been hitherto totally neglected.

"II. That the children admitted into these be taught reading, writing, and the principles of religion.

"III. That there be a school for boys and another for girls, in Madeley, Madeley-Wood, and Coalbrook-Dale, six in all.

"IV. That a subscription be opened, to pay each Teacher one shilling per Sunday, and to buy tables, forms, books, pens, and ink.

"V. That two Treasurers be appointed to ask and receive the contributions of the subscribers.

"VI. That whoever subscribes one guinea a year shall be a Governor.

"VII. That three or four Inspectors be appointed, who are to visit the schools once a week, to see that the children attend regularly, and the Masters do their duty.

"VIII. That a book be provided, for setting down all receipts and expenses; and another for the names of the Teachers and the scholars.

"IX. That the schools be solemnly visited once or twice a year; and a premium given to the children that have made the greatest improvement."

9. As to the success of his unwearied labours, although he was much discouraged when he first returned from abroad, find-

ing so many of those who had once run well, grown weary and faint in their mind; yet it was not long before he found fresh cause to rejoice, and to know that God was with him of a truth. It was not long before he observed that a general reformation had taken place in the parish. And it was not only an outward reformation, even of many that had been notorious for all manner of wickedness; but an inward also; many both young and old having learned to worship God "in spirit and in truth." A considerable number of these still mourn, as sheep bereaved of their shepherd. And yet one cannot doubt, but a still larger company of his own children have hailed him on the celestial shore. But the season is coming when all secrets shall be laid open; and all the jewels of his crown shall be made manifest in that day.

10. One instance of the success of his ministry he mentioned some years since at Bristol: "One Sunday," said he, "when I had done reading prayers at Madeley, I went up into the pulpit, intending to preach a sermon which I had prepared for that purpose. But my mind was so confused, that I could not recollect either my text or any part of my sermon. I was afraid I should be obliged to come down, without saying anything. But having recollected myself a little, I thought I would say something on the First Lesson, which was the third chapter of Daniel, containing the account of the three children cast into the fiery furnace: I found in doing it such an extraordinary assistance from God, and such a peculiar enlargement of heart, that I supposed there must be some peculiar cause for it. I therefore desired, if any of the congregation found anything particular, they would acquaint me with it in the ensuing week.

"In consequence of this, the Wednesday after, a woman came, and gave me the following account:—'I have been for some time much concerned about my soul. I have attended the church at all opportunities, and have spent much time in private prayer. At this my husband (who is a butcher) has been exceedingly enraged, and threatened me severely what he would do, if I did not leave off going to John Fletcher's church; yea, if I dared to go any more to any religious meetings whatsoever. When I told him I could not in conscience refrain from going at least to our parish church, he grew quite outrageous, and swore dreadfully, if I went

any more, he would cut my throat as soon as I came home. This made me cry mightily to God, that he would support me in the trying hour. And though I did not feel any great degree of comfort, yet having a sure confidence in God, I determined to go on in my duty, and leave the event to Him. Last Sunday, after many struggles with the devil and my own heart, I came down stairs ready for church. My husband asked me, whether I was resolved to go thither. I told him, I was. Well then, said he, I shall not (as I intended) cut your throat; but I will heat the oven, and throw you into it the moment you come home. Notwithstanding this threatening, which he enforced with many bitter oaths, I went to church, praying all the way that God would strengthen me to suffer whatever might befall me. While you was speaking of the three children whom Nebuchadnezzar cast into the burning fiery furnace, I found it all belonged to me, and God applied every word to my heart. And when the sermon was ended, I thought, if I had a thousand lives, I could lay them all down for God. I felt my whole soul so filled with his love, that I hastened home, fully determined to give myself to whatsoever God pleased; nothing doubting, but that either he would take me to heaven, if he suffered me to be burned to death, or that he would some way deliver me, even as he did his three servants that trusted in Him. When I got almost to our own door, I saw the flames issuing out of the mouth of the oven. And I expected nothing else, but that I should be thrown into it immediately. I felt my heart rejoice, that if it were so, the will of the Lord would be done. I opened the door, and, to my utter astonishment, saw my husband upon his knees, wrestling with God in prayer for the forgiveness of his sins. He caught me in his arms, earnestly begged my pardon, and has continued diligently seeking God ever since. I now know why my sermon was taken from me; namely, that God might thus magnify his mercy."

11. Many were the dangers he went through in the course of his ministry; but the Lord delivered him out of all. One of these Mrs. Fletcher relates in the following words:—

"My husband having appointed to preach one Sunday at a church, about fourteen miles off, I felt some concern for his riding so far, and doing the whole Sunday's duty twice; especially as it was necessary for him to return home the

same night. The evening being exceeding dark and wet, I was strongly led to commend him to God in prayer. While I was doing this, it was suggested to me, that his horse was fallen, and had thrown him over his head; and the whole scene appeared to be clearly represented before my eyes. 'My God,' said I, 'he is thine. His life, his limbs, his health, are all thine. I commit him to thee by faith.' Immediately that word was impressed on my heart, 'The righteous is in the hand of the Lord; and there shall no evil touch him.' And it empowered my soul with such a sweetness, that I could feel no fear. The night was uncommonly bad, which occasioned many friends to continue with me. And while they expressed their great uneasiness at his staying two hours longer than we could well account for, I was obliged to hide the calmness I felt by silence, lest some should have supposed it insensibility.* At last he came well, and praising God; but asked for water to wash himself, because his horse had fallen, and thrown him with great force over his head. Yet, glory be to God, he was no way hurt, except having a little skin grazed from one of his fingers. As he set the Lord always before him, so he found his help in every time of need."

12. The laying the foundation of the Sunday-schools at Madeley was the last public work in which he was employed. But as the liberal man is ever devising liberal things, he had several plans in his mind for preserving a great number of desolate children, brought up only to beg and steal. Such this populous parish (and indeed most others) affords in great abundance. He had likewise proposed writing various little tracts,† for the use of the schools. But He who cannot err saw good to call his servant hence to enjoy, rather than leave him here to do and suffer.

* Nay, I would have proclaimed it aloud, giving the glory to God, for the comfort of all that were present.

† I do not regret his not living to write those tracts; because I despair of seeing any in the English tongue superior to those extracts from Abbé Fleury and Mr. Poiret, published under the title of "Instructions for Children." I have never yet seen anything comparable to them, either for depth of sense, or plainness of language.

CHAPTER IX.

HIS CHARACTER.

1. I AM sensible, it is the method of almost all writers, to place the character of a man at the conclusion of his life. But there seems to be a particular reason for varying from the usual practice in this place. The death of Mr. Fletcher (hardly to be paralleled in the present century) was so uncommon a display of the power and goodness of God in behalf of his highly-favoured servant, that it is not proper for anything to come after it. It must needs therefore close the whole account.

2. From even the imperfect account which has been given of this great and good man, any discerning person may with very little difficulty extract his character. In general, it is easy to perceive, that a more excellent man has not appeared in the Church for some ages. It is true, in several ages, and in several countries, many men have excelled in particular virtues and graces. But who can point out, in any age or nation, one that so highly excelled in all? one that was enabled in so large a measure to "put on the whole armour of God?" yea, so to "put on Christ," as to "perfect holiness in the fear of God?"

3. Yet there is a peculiar difficulty in giving a full account of either his life or character, because we have scarce any light from himself. He was upon all occasions very uncommonly reserved in speaking of himself, whether in writing or conversation. He hardly ever said anything concerning himself, unless it slipped from him unawares. And among the great number of papers which he has left, there is scarce a page (except that single account of his conversion to God) relative either to his own inward experience, or the transactions of his life. So that the most of the information we have is gathered up, either from short hints scattered up and down in his letters, from what he had occasionally dropped among his friends, or from what one and another remembered concerning him. In writing the lives and characters of eminent men, the Roman Catholics have a great advantage over us. The pious members of the Church of Rome make a conscience of concealing anything from their Directors, but disclose to them all the circumstances of their lives, and all the secrets of their hearts:

Whereas very few of the Protestants disclose to others, even their most intimate friends, what passes between God and their own souls; at least not of set purpose. Herein they forget, or at least disregard, that wise remark of the ancient writers (exactly agreeable to various passages that occur in the canonical Scriptures): "It is good to conceal the secrets of a King, but to declare the loving-kindness of the Lord."

4. This defect was indeed in some measure supplied by the entire intimacy which subsisted between him and Mrs. Fletcher. He did not willingly, much less designedly, conceal anything from her. They had no secrets with regard to each other, but had indeed one house, one purse, and one heart. Before her it was his invariable rule, to think aloud; always to open the window in his breast. And to this we are indebted for the knowledge of many particulars which must otherwise have been buried in oblivion.

5. But, whatever the materials were, however complete our informations, yet I am thoroughly sensible of my own inability to draw such a portrait as Mr. Fletcher deserves. I have no turn at all for panegyric: I have never accustomed myself to it. It gives me therefore no small satisfaction to find, that this is in a great measure done to my hands. The picture is already drawn; and that by no mean pencil. All then which I shall attempt is, to retouch Mrs. Fletcher's observations, and now and then to add a few articles, either from my own knowledge, or from the information of others.

6. The following are mostly her own words,—for where they are clear and expressive, as they generally are, I do not think it right to alter them for altering' sake:—

"Whatever he might be with regard to charity," said she, "he was no less eminent for his spirit of faith. Indeed he was not so much led by sights or impressions (which many mistake for faith) as abundance of people have been; but by a steady, firm reliance upon the love and truth and faithfulness of God. His ardent desire was, so to believe, as to be a partaker of all the great and precious promises; to be a witness of all that mind which was in Christ Jesus. And being conscious that he must be crucified with his Master, or never reign with Him, he gave himself up to Him, whom he continually set before him, to lie in his hand as the passive clay. He would often say, 'It is my business in all events, to hang upon the Lord, with a sure trust and confidence, that he will order all things

in the best time and manner. Indeed it would be nothing to be a believer, nay, in truth, there would be no room for faith, if everything were seen here. But against hope to believe in hope, to have a full confidence in that unseen power which so mightily supports us in all our dangers and difficulties,—this is the believing which is acceptable to God.’ Sometimes when I have expressed some apprehension of an approaching trial, he would answer, ‘I do not doubt but the Lord orders all; therefore I leave everything to him.’ In outward dangers, if they were ever so great, he seemed to know no shadow of fear. When I was speaking once, concerning a danger to which we were then particularly exposed, he answered, ‘I know God always gives his angels charge concerning us: Therefore we are equally safe everywhere.’

“Not less eminent than his faith was his humility. Amidst all his laying himself out for God, and for the good of souls, he ever preserved that special grace, the making no account of his own labours. He held himself and his own abilities in very low esteem; and seemed to have that word continually before his eyes, ‘I am an unprofitable servant.’ And this humility was so rooted in him, as to be moved by no affront. I have seen many, even of the most provoking kind, offered him; but he received them as his proper portion; being so far from desiring the honour which cometh of men, that he took pleasure in being little and unknown. Perhaps it might appear from some passages of his life, that in this he even leaned to an extreme; for genuine humility does not require, that any man should desire to be despised. Nay, we are to avoid it, so far as we possibly can, consistently with a good conscience; for that direction, ‘Let no man despise thee,’ concerns every man as well as Timothy.

“It is rare to meet with an eminent person that can bear an equal. But it was his choice and his delight to prefer every one to himself. And this he did in so free and easy a manner, that in him it appeared perfectly natural. He never willingly suffered any unkindness shown to him to be mentioned again; and if it was, he generally answered, ‘O let it drop; we will offer it in silence to the Lord.’ And indeed the best way of bearing crosses is, to consecrate all in silence to God.

“From this root of humility sprung such a patience as I wish I could either describe or imitate. It produced in him a most ready mind, which embraced every cross with alacrity

and pleasure. For the good of his neighbour, nothing seemed hard, nothing wearisome. Sometimes I have been grieved to call him out of his study two or three times in an hour; especially when he was engaged in composing some of his deepest works; but he would answer, with his usual sweetness, 'O, my dear, never think of that. It matters not, if we are but always ready to meet the will of God. It is conformity to the will of God that alone makes an employment excellent.' He never thought anything too mean, but sin; he looked on nothing else as beneath his character. If he overtook a poor man or woman on the road, with a burden too heavy for them, he did not fail to offer his assistance to bear part of it; and he would not easily take a denial. This therefore he has frequently done.

"In bearing pain he was most exemplary, and continued more and more so to the last. Nor was it least remarkable in the most humbling part of the ministry, the coming down to the capacities of the ignorant. Nevertheless he had a most resolute courage in the reproof of sin. To daring sinners he was a son of thunder; and no worldly considerations were regarded, whenever he believed God had given him a message to deliver to any of them.

"One considerable part of humility is, to know our own place, and stand therein. Every member has its peculiar appointment in the human body, where the wise Master-builder has placed it; and it is well while each continues in its place. But, as every dislocated bone gives pain, and must continue so to do till it is replaced in its proper socket, so every dislocated affection must give pain to the soul till it is restored to its own place, till it is totally fixed in God, till we resign our whole selves to the disposal of infinite wisdom. This is the proper place of every rational creature; and in this place he invariably stood. Whatever he believed to be the will of God, he resolutely performed, though it were to pluck out a right eye, to lay his Isaac on the altar. When it appeared that God called him to any journey, he immediately prepared for it, without the least hesitation; although, for the last years of his life, he hardly ever travelled to any considerable distance, without feeling some tendency to a relapse into his former distemper; and it was usually some weeks after his return, before he recovered his usual strength."

Humility continually produces meekness, and the latter

bears an exact proportion to the former. I received a letter on this head but a few days since, which it may not be improper to subjoin :—

“REV. SIR,

“I WAS yesterday in company with several Clergymen, who, among other things, mentioned Mr. Fletcher, and seemed particularly anxious that in the account of his life a proper degree of caution should be observed in the panegyric that may be applied to his character. They say he was extremely passionate; and that there was in many instances an austere severity and rigour in his conduct to the young people under his care, particularly at Trevecka. As this information comes from a gentleman eminent for his knowledge of mankind, and universally esteemed as one of the greatest geniuses of the age, and one whose veracity has never been questioned, it will have no small weight in the learned world.”

7. I am glad this information came to my hands in time, as it may now receive so sufficient an answer as will probably satisfy every candid and impartial reader.

Two things are here asserted concerning Mr. Fletcher: The First, that he was extremely passionate: The Second, that there was an austere severity and rigour in his conduct toward the young persons under his care, particularly at Trevecka. The former assertion is unquestionably true; such he was by nature. The latter I question much, with regard to his conduct at Tern, as well as at Trevecka. None can be a more competent witness of his conduct at Tern, than Mr. Vaughan, who lived so long in the same house; and whose testimony concerning him has been so largely given in the preceding pages. But, waving this, can it possibly be supposed, that either Mr. Hill, or his sons, then verging toward manhood, would have borne the austere rigour and severity of a young man that received his bread from them? yea, and that year after year? Surely the supposition shocks all credibility.

8. Equally incredible is the assertion of his “austere severity and rigour” toward the young men at Trevecka. This is inconsistent with the whole account given by Mr. Benson, an eye and ear witness of all his conduct. Had it been true in any degree, would it have been possible that he should have been so esteemed and beloved by those very young men? I cannot form the least conjecture whence such an assertion could arise unless it was invented by some

young man after Mr. Fletcher was dismissed, in order to ingratiate himself with his patroness.

9. The farther account which Mr. Benson gives of him from personal knowledge is this: "Mr. Fletcher," says he, "was naturally a man of strong passions, and prone to anger in particular; insomuch that he has frequently thrown himself on the floor, and laid there most of the night bathed in tears, imploring victory over his own spirit. And he did not strive in vain; he did obtain the victory, in a very eminent degree. For twenty years and upwards before his death, no one ever saw him out of temper, or heard him utter a rash expression, on any provocation whatever. I have often thought the testimony that Bishop Burnet, in the History of his own Times, bears of Archbishop Leighton, might be borne of him with equal propriety: 'After an intimate acquaintance with the Archbishop for many years, and after being with him by night and by day, at home and abroad, in public and in private, on sundry occasions and in various affairs, I must say, I never heard an idle word drop from his lips, nor any conversation which was not to the use of edifying. I never saw him in any temper in which I myself would not have wished to be found at death.' Any that has been intimately acquainted with Mr. Fletcher will say the same of him. But they that knew him best, will say it with the most assurance.

10. His "disengagements from the world, and love of the poor," Mrs. Fletcher joins together. "Never," says she, "did I behold any one more dead to the things of the world. His treasure was above; and so was his heart also. He always remembered that admonition of the Apostle, 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the things of this life.' It was his constant endeavour to preserve a mind free and disencumbered; and he was exceeding wary of undertaking any business that might distract and hurry it. Yet, in his worldly concerns, knowing himself to be a steward for God, he would not through carelessness waste one penny. He likewise judged it to be his bounden duty to demand what he knew to be his right. And yet he could well reconcile this with that word, 'He that will have thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.' Indeed, whether he had less or more, it was the same thing upon his own account, as he had no other use for it, but to spread the gospel, and to assist the poor. And he frequently said, he never was happier than when he had given away the

last penny he had in his house. If at any time I had gold in my drawers, it seemed to afford him no comfort. But if he could find a handful of small silver, when he was going out to see the sick, he would express as much pleasure over it as a miser would in discovering a bag of hid treasure. He was never better pleased with my employment, than when he had set me to prepare food or physic for the poor. He was hardly able to relish his dinner, if some sick neighbour had not a part of it; and sometimes, if any one of them was in want, I could not keep the linen in his drawers. On Sundays he provided for numbers of people who came from a distance to hear the word; and his house, as well as his heart, was devoted to their convenience: To relieve them that were afflicted in body or mind was the delight of his heart. Once a poor man, who feared God, being brought into great difficulties, he took down all the pewter from the kitchen shelves, saying, 'This will help you; and I can do without it. A wooden trencher will serve me just as well.' In epidemic and contagious distempers, when the neighbours were afraid to nurse the sick, he has gone from house to house, seeking some that were willing to undertake it. And when none could be found, he has offered his service, to sit up with them himself. But this was at his first setting out here. At present, there appears in many (and has done so for many years) a most ready mind to visit and relieve the distressed.

11. "He thoroughly complied with that advice,—

'Give to all something; to a good poor man,
Till thou change hands, and be where he began.'

I have heard him say, that when he lived alone in his house, the tears have come into his eyes, when one had brought him five or six insignificant letters, at three or four pence a piece; and perhaps he had only a single shilling in the house, to distribute among the poor to whom he was going. He frequently said to me, 'O Polly, can we not do without beer? Let us drink water, and eat less meat. Let our necessities give way to the extremities of the poor.'

12. "But with all his generosity and charity he was strictly careful to follow the advice of the Apostle, 'Owe no man any thing.' He contracted no debt. While he gave all he had, he made it a rule to pay ready money for everything; believing this was the best way to keep the mind

unencumbered and free from care. Meanwhile his substance, his time, his strength, his life, were devoted to the service of the poor. And, last of all, he gave me to them. For when we were married, he asked me solemnly, whether I was willing to marry his parish. And the first time he led me among his people in this place, he said, 'I have not married this wife only for myself, but for you. I asked her of the Lord, for your comfort, as well as my own.'"

13. All his life, as well as during his illness, particularly at Newington and Brislington, (as has been largely related,) he was grateful in a very high degree, to those who conferred the least benefit upon him; yea, or even endeavoured so to do. One of these was Mr. Richard Edwards, of London, to whose care he was committed as a Leader, when he was first admitted into the London Society. A lively sense of the kindness which Mr. Edwards then showed him, he retained to the end of his life. This he testified by repeated letters; one or two of which it may be well to transcribe.

"TERN, Oct. 19, 1756.

"DEAREST BROTHER,

"THIS is to let you know, that (praise be to the Lord!) I am very well in body, and pretty well in soul. But I have very few Christian friends here. And God has been pleased to take away the chief of those few by a most comfortable death. And lately I heard that my aged father is gone the way of all flesh. But the glorious circumstances of his death make me ample amends for the sorrow which I felt. For some years, I have wrote to him with as much freedom as I could have done to a son, though not with so much effect as I wished. But last spring, God visited him with a severe illness, which brought him to a sense of himself. And, after a deep repentance, he died about a month ago, in the full assurance of faith. This has put several of my friends on thinking seriously, which affords me great cause of thankfulness. I am

"Your unworthy brother and servant in the Lord,

"JOHN FLETCHER."

14. Two years after he wrote to him as follows:—

"I THANK you for your encouraging observations. I want them, and use them by the grace of God. When I received yours, I had not had one opportunity of preaching; so incensed were all the Clergy against me. One, however, let me have the use of his church, the Abbey church, at Shrewsbury. I

preached in the forenoon with some degree of the demonstration of the Spirit. The congregation was very numerous; and I believe one half at least desired to hear me again. But the Minister would not let me have the pulpit any more. The next Sunday, the Minister of a neighbouring parish lying a dying, I was sent for to officiate for him. He died a few days after, and the chief man in the parish offered to make interest that I might succeed him. But I could not consent. The next Sunday, I preached at Shrewsbury again; but in another church. The next day I set out for Bristol, and was much refreshed among the brethren. As I returned I called at New-Kingswood, about sixteen miles from Bristol. The Minister offering me his church, I preached to a numerous congregation, gathered on half an hour's notice. I think the seed then sown will not be lost."

15. "Another uncommon talent which God had given him," says Mrs. Fletcher, "was a peculiar sensibility of spirit. He had a temper the most feeling of any I ever knew. Hardly a night passed over, but some part of it was spent in groans for the souls and bodies committed to his care. I dreaded his hearing either of the sins or sufferings of any of his people before the time of his going to bed, knowing how strong the impressions would be on his mind, chasing the sleep from his eyes.

"And yet I have heard him speak of a time, twelve or fourteen years ago, when he was greatly tempted to think, that he was not sensible enough of the afflictions of his fellow-creatures. He thought Christ bore our infirmities, and carried our sorrows; but, said he, 'I have not that Christ-like temper: I do not bear the sorrows of others.' After being for some time buffeted with this temptation, he prayed, that a measure of this spirit might be given him. Not long after, as he was visiting a poor sick family, so lively a sense of their affliction on a sudden fell upon his mind, that he could scarce get home. As soon as he sat down in his house, his soul was penetrated with such a sense of the woes of mankind as utterly depressed and overcame him, and drank up his spirits; insomuch that he could not help himself, nor move from one chair to another. And he was no more able to walk or help himself, than a new-born child. At the same time he seemed to lose the use of his memory, and of all his faculties. He thought, 'What is this? Is it a disease? Is it a stroke of the palsy? Rather, is

it not an answer to my own ill-judged, though well-intended, prayer? Did I not ask a burden unsuitable to a finite, and capable of being borne only by an infinite, being?' He remained some hours in this situation. Then it came into his mind, 'If this is a purely natural event, the will of the Lord be done! But if it be the answer to an improper prayer, God will answer again by removing it.' He cried to the Lord, and was immediately restored to strength both of body and mind.

"When we were at Leeds, in the year 1784, I had another proof of the tender sensibility of his heart. O how deeply was he affected concerning the welfare of his brethren! When any little disputes arose between them, his inmost soul groaned under the burden; and, by two or three o'clock in the morning, I was sure to hear him breathing out prayer for the peace and prosperity of Sion. When I observed to him, I was afraid it would hurt his health, and wished him to sleep more, he would answer, 'O Polly, the cause of God lies near my heart!'

"Toward me his tenderness was exerted in its utmost extent. My soul, my body, my health, my ease and comfort, were his daily study. We had no thought, either past or present, which we purposely concealed from each other. My spiritual advancement was his constant endeavour; and to this he was continually stirring me up, inviting me to walk more closely with God; urging that thought, 'O my dear, let us pray for dying grace; for we shall not be long here.' His temporal affairs he committed solely to me, though he was always ready to assist me in the smallest matters.

"One article more remains to be spoken of, namely, his communion with God. Although he enjoyed this, more or less, at all times and in all places, yet I have frequently heard him observe, that the seasons of his closest communion were always in his own house, or in the church; usually in the latter. It is much to be lamented that we have no account of it from his own pen. It was his constant endeavour to maintain an uninterrupted sense of the presence of God. In order to this, he was slow of speech, and had the greatest government of his words. Indeed he both acted, and spoke, and thought, as under the eye of God. And thus setting God always before him, he remained unmoved in all occurrences; at all times and on every occasion possessing inward recollection. Nor did I ever see him diverted therefrom on any occasion whatever, either going out or coming in, whether by ourselves or

in company. Sometimes he took his journeys alone; but above a thousand miles I have travelled with him; during which neither change of company, place, nor the variety of circumstances which naturally occur in travelling, ever seemed to make the least difference in his firm attention to the presence of God. To preserve this uniform habit of soul, he was so watchful and recollected, that, to such as were unexperienced in these things, it might appear like insensibility. Although no one could converse in a more lively and sensible manner, even on natural things, when he saw it was to the glory of God; he was always striving to raise his own and every other spirit to a close and immediate intercourse with God. And I can say with truth, all his union with me was so intermingled with prayer and praise, that every employment and every meal was, as it were, perfumed therewith."

16. I had concluded what I purposed to say concerning the character of Mr. Fletcher, when I received a long letter from Mr. Benson; an extract of which I cannot withhold from the reader. For although most of the particulars hereof are contained in the preceding pages, yet as they are here placed in quite another order, and have also several new circumstances intermixed, I could not doubt of their being both agreeable and profitable to every person of piety.

"As to drawing the character of that great and good man," says Mr. Benson, "it is what I will not attempt: But if I can suggest anything that will assist you therein, I shall think my little labour well bestowed. With this view I have been looking over many of his letters, and observe in them all, what I have a thousand times observed in his conversation and behaviour, the plainest marks of every Christian grace and virtue.

"Perhaps if he followed his Master more closely in one thing than another, it was in humility. It is one branch of poverty of spirit (another word for humility) to think meanly of ourselves. As he certainly thought meanly of himself, both as a Christian, as a Preacher, and as a writer, I need not say how he shone in all those characters; but he knew not that he shone in any of them. How low an opinion he had of himself as a Christian, manifestly appears from his placing himself at the feet of all, and showing a continual desire to learn from every company he was in. He paid all due deference to the judgment of others, readily acknowledged

whatever was good in them, and seemed to think himself the only person in whom there dwelt no excellency worth notice. Hence it was that he often wrote and spoke, as if he had not received that grace which he undoubtedly had received. And indeed he overlooked what he had attained, through the eager desire he had of higher and greater things. Many of his letters show how very meanly he thought of his own attainments as a Christian; through the continually increasing views which he had of the divine purity, and of the high degree of conformity thereto which is attainable even in this world.

“And however little he was in his own eyes as a Christian, he was equally so as a writer and a Preacher. In consequence of the mean opinion he had of his own abilities, he gladly offered what he wrote to be corrected by any friend, however inferior to himself. Thus in a letter, dated November 23, 1771, he says, ‘I have sent a letter of fifty pages upon Antinomianism. I beg, upon my bended knees, you would revise and correct it. I have followed my light, small as it is. Put yours to mine.’ What a mean opinion he had of his own writings appears from a letter written March 20, 1774: ‘I do not repent of my having engaged in this controversy; for though I doubt my little publications cannot reclaim those who are confirmed in believing the lie of the day, yet they may here and there stop one from swallowing it at all, or at least from swallowing it so deeply.’ Two years after, he says, ‘I have almost run my race of scribbling; and I have preached as much as I could, though to little purpose; but I must not complain. If one person has received good by my ten years’ labour, it is an honour for which I cannot be too thankful, if my mind were as low as it should be. Let us bless the Lord in all things.’

“As difficult as it is to think meanly of ourselves, it is still more difficult to be willing that others should think meanly of us. And how eminent he was in this appears from hence, that he was constantly upon his guard, lest any expression should drop either from his lips or pen, which tended to make any one think well of him; either on account of his family, or learning, or parts, or usefulness. Yea, he took as much pains to conceal his excellencies, as others do to show them; having the same desire to be little and unknown, which many have to be known and esteemed.

“It would have remained a secret in this kingdom, even to his most intimate friends, that he was of so great a family,

had not Mr. Ireland gone over with him to Switzerland; where he was surprised to find Mr. Fletcher's relations some of the first people in the country.

“ ‘Blessed are they that mourn,’ said the Lord Jesus. And this blessedness was as certainly his as the former. He was a man of a serious spirit; one that stood at the utmost distance from levity of every kind. Though he was constantly cheerful, as rejoicing in hope of his heavenly inheritance, yet had he too deep a sense of his own wants, and the wants of the Church of God, as also of the sins and miseries of mankind, to be at any time light or trifling. I have a letter before me, dated December, 1771, which at once gives us a picture of his seriousness, watchfulness, and earnestness; and contains advices well deserving the consideration of all that fear God. ‘There is undoubtedly,’ said he, ‘such a thing as the full assurance of faith. Be not discouraged on account of thousands who stop short of it: It is our own fault if we do not attain. God would give us ample satisfaction if we did but deeply feel our wants. Both you and I want a deeper awakening, which will produce a death to outward things and speculative knowledge. Let us shut our eyes to the gilded clouds without us; let us draw inward, and search after God, if haply we may find him. Let us hold our confidence, though we are often constrained against hope to believe in hope. But let us not rest in our confidence, as thousands do; let it help us to struggle and wait till he come. Let us habituate ourselves to live inwardly. This will solemnize us, and prevent our trifling with the things of God. We may be thankful for what we have, without resting in it. We may strive, and yet not trust in our striving; but expect all from divine grace.’

“Four or five years after, he says, ‘I send this to inquire after your welfare, and to let you know, that though I am pretty well in body, yet I break fast. But I want to break faster in my spirit than I do. Yet, blessed be God, I have been in such pinching, grinding circumstances, for near a year, by a series of providential and domestic trials, as have given me some deadly blows. I am not without hope of setting my eyes on you once more. Mr. Wesley kindly invites me to travel with him, and visit some of the societies. I feel an inclination to break one of my chains, parochial retirement, which may be a nest for self-indulgence. I leave the matter entirely to the Lord.’

“Meantime, he mourned, not only for himself and his friends, but also for the Church of God. ‘The few professors,’ says he, ‘which I see in these parts, are so far from what I wish them to be, that I cannot but cry out, Lord, how long wilt thou give thy heritage up to desolation? How long shall the Heathen say, *Where is now their indwelling God?*’ In another letter he writes, (dated May 8, 1776,) ‘I see so little fruit in these parts, that I am almost disheartened. I am closely followed with the thought, that faith in the dispensation of the Spirit is at a very low ebb. But it may be better in other places. I shall be glad to travel a little, to see the goodness of the land. May God make and keep us humble, loving, disinterested, and zealous!’

“These quotations give us not only an example of holy mourning, but likewise of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. In this he was peculiarly worthy our imitation. He never rested in anything he had either experienced or done in spiritual matters. But this one thing he did: ‘Forgetting those things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which were before,’ he ‘pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;’ he was a true Christian racer, always on the stretch for higher and better things. Though his attainments, both in experience and usefulness, were above the common standard, yet the language of his conversation and behaviour always was, ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfected; but I follow after, if by any means I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.’ He had his eye upon a full conformity to the Son of God; or what the Apostle terms, ‘the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.’ Nor could he be satisfied with anything less.

“And he was meek, like his Master, as well as lowly in heart. Not that he was so by nature, but of a fiery, passionate spirit. But so thoroughly had grace subdued nature, so fully was he renewed in the spirit of his mind, that, for many years before his death, I believe he was never observed by any one, friend or foe, to be out of temper. And yet he did not want provocation, and that sometimes in a high degree; especially from those whose religious sentiments he thought it his duty to oppose. One of these, who once loved him so well, as to be ready to pull out his eyes for him, was so exasperated on reading his Second Check, that he wrote to

him in the most bitter terms. But none of these things moved him; no, not in the least degree. The keenest word he used upon the occasion was, 'What a world, what a religious world we live in!'

"Hence arose his readiness to bear with the weaknesses, and forgive the faults, of others; the more remarkable, considering his flaming zeal against sin, and deep concern for the glory of God. Such hatred to sin, and such love to the sinner, I never saw joined together before. This very circumstance convinced me of the height of his grace, bearing so much of his Master's image, whose hatred to sin and love to sinners are equally infinite. He took all possible pains to detect what was evil in any of those that were under his care; pursuing it through all its turnings and windings, and stripping it of all its disguises. Yet none so ready to excuse when it was confessed, and to conceal it even from his most intimate friends.

"He never mentioned the faults of an absent person, unless absolute duty required it: And then he spoke with the utmost tenderness, extenuating, rather than aggravating. None could draw his picture more exactly than St. Paul has done, in the thirteenth of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Every feature in that masterly piece of apostolic painting was found in him. Let all that knew him, especially his intimate friends, recollect the spirit and behaviour of this servant of the God of love; and then let them judge whether I exaggerate, when I say, He 'suffered long and was kind; he envied not; acted not rashly; was not puffed up; did not behave himself unseemly; sought not his own; was not easily provoked. He thought no evil, rejoiced not in iniquity, but rejoiced in the truth. He covered all things, believed all things, hoped all things, and endured all things.' It would be easy to enlarge on all these particulars, and show how they were exemplified in him. But waving this, I would only observe, that, with regard to two of them,—kindness to others, and not seeking his own,—he had few equals. His kindness to others was such, that he bestowed his all upon them; his time, his talents, his substance. His knowledge, his eloquence, his health, his money, were employed, day by day, for the good of mankind. He prayed, he wrote, he preached, he visited the sick and well, he conversed, he gave, he laboured, he suffered, winter and summer, night and day; he endangered, nay, destroyed, his health, and, in the end, gave his life also for

the profit of his neighbours, that they might be saved from everlasting death. He denied himself even such food as was necessary for him, that he might have to give to them that had none. And when he was constrained to change his manner of living, still his diet was plain and simple; and so were his clothing and furniture, that he might save all that was possible for his poor neighbours.

“He sought not his own in any sense; not his own honour, but the honour of God in all he said or did: He sought not his own interest, but the interest of his Lord; spreading knowledge, holiness, and happiness as far as he possibly could. He sought not his own pleasure, but studied to ‘please all men, for their good to edification;’ and to please Him that had called him to his kingdom and glory. And yet it is certain, he found the greatest pleasure in pleasing God and his neighbour. For nothing could give an higher delight than this to his pious and benevolent mind.

“In the mean time, he was a man of peace, and spared no pains to restore it where it was broken. He gave numberless proofs of this amiable disposition. When we were at Trevecka, (to mention but one instance,) two of the students were bitterly prejudiced against each other. He took them into a room by themselves, reasoned with them, wept over them, and at last prevailed. Their hearts were broken; they were melted down; they fell upon each other’s necks and wept aloud.

“The pains which he took to make peace at the Leeds Conference will not easily be forgotten. And although he could not prevail so far as might have been desired, yet his labour was not in vain.

“But I do not attempt his full character: I will only add, what the Apostle recommends to the Philippians was exactly copied by him. He was ‘blameless and harmless, a son of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; shining among them as a light in the world.’”

I think one talent wherewith God had endued Mr. Fletcher has not been sufficiently noted yet: I mean his courtesy; in which there was not the least touch either of art or affectation. It was pure and genuine, and sweetly constrained him to behave to every one (although particularly to inferiors) in a manner not to be described, with so inexpressible a mixture of humility, love, and respect. This directed his words, the tone of his voice, his looks, his whole attitude, his every motion.

This seems to be intended by St. Paul, in those words, *οὐκ ασχημονεῖ*; not so well expressed in our translation by, "behaveth not itself unseemly." Do not the words literally mean, "is not ill bred?"—behaves on all occasions with decency and good breeding? Certainly, so did Mr. Fletcher. Never did any man more perfectly suit his whole behaviour to the persons and the occasion: So that one might apply to him, with great propriety, the words of the ancient poet:—

*Illum quicquid agit, quoquo vestigia tendit
Componit furtim, subsequiturque decor.**

I cannot translate this; but I can give the English reader a parallel, and more than a parallel:—

Grace was in all his steps, heaven in his eye,
In all his gestures sanctity and love.

CHAPTER X.

HIS DEATH.

"SOME time before he was taken ill," says Mrs. Fletcher, "he mentioned to me a peculiar manifestation of love which he received in his own house, with the application of those words, 'Thou shalt walk with me in white.' He added, 'It is not a little thing so to hang upon God by faith, as to feel no departure from him, and no rising in the heart against him. But this does not satisfy me; I often feel something far beyond this; yea, I sometimes find such gleams of light and love, such wafts, as it were, of the heavenly air; so powerful, as if they would just then take my soul with them to glory! But I am not filled: I want to be filled with all the fulness of God.' In conformity to these sentiments, when he was in his last illness, he expressed himself thus: 'I am filled, most sweetly filled.' This conveyed much to my mind, as I understood by it the accomplishment of his large desires.

"Some time before the beginning of his last sickness, he was peculiarly penetrated with the nearness of eternity.

* This quotation from Tibullus is thus rendered by Dr. Grainger:—

"A secret grace his every act improves,
And pleasing follows wheresoe'er he moves."—EDIT.

There was scarce an hour in which he was not calling upon us to drop every thought and every care, that we might attend to nothing but the drinking deeper into God. We spent much time in wrestling with God, and were led, in a peculiar manner, to abandon our whole selves, our souls and bodies, into the hands of God; ready to do, and willing to suffer, whatever was well pleasing to him.

“And now the time drew near, when his faith was to be called to its last grand exercise; that, eying his Lord, he might

True in the fiery trial prove,
And pay him back his dying love.

A little before, being on his knees in prayer for light, whether he should go to London or not; the answer to him seemed to be, ‘Not to London, but to thy grave.’* When he acquainted me with this, he said, with a heavenly smile, ‘Satan would represent it to me as something dreadful, enforcing those words: *The cold grave! The cold grave!*’ On the Sunday following, (I think it was the next day,) that anthem was sung in the church: ‘The Lord is my Shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in green pastures, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil: For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff shall comfort me. Thou shalt prepare a table before me, against them that trouble me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.’

“In his return home, he observed in how uncommon a degree those words had been blessed to his soul. And from that very time I do not remember to have seen in him the least marks of temptation. He showed an unusual cheerfulness and liveliness in every part of his work; and seemed to increase in strength of body, as well as in strength of soul. Truly it was to him according to his faith: He feared no evil; and his cup was filled with ‘righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’

“On Thursday, August 4, he was employed in the work of God from three in the afternoon till nine at night. When he came home, he said, ‘I have taken cold;’ but seemed not

* I verily believe, if he had then gone to London, he would have been alive at this day. But I blame no one for thinking otherwise.

to regard it. He was far from well on Friday and Saturday; but was uncommonly drawn out in prayer. On Saturday night he was abundantly worse, and his fever appeared very strong. I begged that he would by no means think of going to church in the morning. But he told me, it was the will of the Lord; in which case I never dared to persuade. In reading Prayers, he was very near fainting away. I got through the crowd, and entreated him to come out of the desk. But he let me and others know, in his sweet manner, that we were not to interrupt the order of God. I then silently retired to my pew, where all around me were in tears. When the windows were opened, by which he appeared to be a little refreshed, he went on; and then preached with a strength and recollection that surprised us all.

"After sermon he walked up to the communion-table, uttering these words, 'I am going to throw myself under the wings of the cherubim, before the mercy-seat.' The service lasted till near two. Sometimes he was constrained to stop; being hardly able to stand upon his feet. The people were deeply affected, which they were not able to conceal; groans and weeping were on every side. Gracious Lord! how was it my soul was kept so calm in the midst of the most tender feelings? Notwithstanding his extreme weakness, he gave out several verses of hymns, and lively sentences of exhortation. As soon as ever the service was over, we hurried him to bed. When he lay down, nature being quite exhausted, he immediately fainted away. He afterwards dropped into a sleep for some time, and, on waking, cried out with a pleasant smile, 'Now, my dear, thou seest I am no worse for doing the Lord's work. He never fails me when I trust in Him.' Having eaten a little dinner, he dozed most of the evening; now and then waking, with the praises of God in his mouth. At night his fever returned; but it was not violent; and yet his strength decreased amazingly. On Monday and Tuesday we had a little paradise together. He lay on a couch in the study; and, though often changing posture, was sweetly pleasant, and frequently slept a good while together. When he was awake, he delighted in hearing me read hymns, and treatises on faith and love. His words were all animating, and his patience beyond expression. When he had a very nauseous medicine to take, he seemed to enjoy the cross; according to a word which he was used often to repeat, 'We

are to seek a perfect conformity to the will of God ; and leave Him to give us pleasure or pain, as it seemeth him good.'

"I asked him, whether he had any advice to leave me, if he should be taken from me. He replied, 'I have nothing particular to say: The Lord will open all before thee.' I said, 'Have you any conviction that God is about to take you?' He said, 'No; not in particular. Only I always see death so inexpressibly near, that we both seem to stand on the verge of eternity.' While he slept a little, I besought the Lord, if it was his good pleasure, to spare him to me a little longer. But my prayer seemed to have no wings; and I could not help mingling continually therewith, 'Lord, give me perfect resignation!' This uncertainty made me tremble, lest God was going to put into my hands the bitter cup with which he lately threatened my husband. Some weeks before, I myself was ill of a fever, and not without danger. My husband then felt the whole parting scene, and struggled for perfect resignation. He said, 'O Polly, shall I ever see the day when thou must be carried out to bury? How will the little things which thy tender care has prepared for me, in every part of the house, wound and distress me! How is it? I think I feel jealousy! I am jealous of the worms! I seem to shrink at the thought of giving my dear Polly to the worms.'

"Now all these reflections returned upon my heart, with the weight of a millstone. I cried to the Lord, and these words were deeply impressed on my spirit: 'Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory.' This promise was full of comfort to my soul. I saw that in Christ's immediate presence was our home, and that we should have our re-union in being deeply centred in him. I received it as a fresh marriage for eternity: As such, I trust for ever to hold it. All that day, whenever I thought of the expression, 'to behold my glory,' it seemed to wipe away every tear, and was as the ring whereby we were joined anew.

"Awaking some time after, he said, 'Polly, I have been thinking it was Israel's fault that they asked for signs. We will not do so; but, abandoning our whole selves to the will of God, will lie patiently before him; assured that he will do all things well.'

"'My dear love,' said I, 'if ever I have done or said anything to grieve thee, how will the remembrance wound

my heart, if thou shouldst be taken from me!' He entreated me, with inexpressible tenderness, not to allow the thought; declaring his thankfulness for our union, in a variety of words written on my heart, as with the adamantine pen of friendship deeply dipped in blood.

"On Wednesday, after groaning all day long, under the weight of the power of God, he told me, he had received such a manifestation of the full meaning of those words, 'God is love,' as he could never be able to express. 'It fills my heart,' said he, 'every moment. O Polly, my dear Polly *God is love!* Shout! shout aloud! I want a gust of praise to go to the ends of the earth! But it seems as if I could not speak much longer. Let us fix on a sign between ourselves. Now,' said he, (tapping me twice with his finger,) 'I mean, God is love. And we will draw each other into God. Observe! By this we will draw each other into God.'

"Sally coming in, he cried out, 'O Sally, God is love! Shout, both of you! I want to hear you shout his praise!' All this time the medical friend, who attended him diligently, hoped he was in no danger; as he had no headach, but much sleep without the least delirium, and an almost regular pulse. So was the disease, though commissioned to take his life, restrained by the power of God.

"On Thursday his speech began to fail. While he was able, he spoke to all that came in his way. Hearing that a stranger was in the house, he ordered her to be called up. But the uttering only two sentences made him ready to faint away. And while he had any power of speech, he would not be silent to his friendly Doctor: 'O Sir,' said he, 'you take much thought for my body; permit me to take thought for your soul.' When I could scarce understand anything he said, I spoke these words, 'God is love.' Instantly, as if all his powers were awakened, he broke out in a rapture, 'God is love! love! love! O for that gust of praise! I want to sound'—Here his voice again failed. All this time he was in much pain, and suffered many ways; but still with such unutterable patience as none but those that were present can conceive. If I did but name his sufferings, he would smile and make the sign.

"On Friday, observing his body covered with spots, I felt a sword pierce through my soul. As I was kneeling by his side, with my hand in his, intreating the Lord to be with us

in this tremendous hour, he strove to say many things, but could not articulate the words. All he could do was to press my hand, and frequently repeat the sign. At last he breathed out, 'Head of the Church, be head to my wife!'

"When I was forced to leave him for a few moments, Sally said to him, 'My dear master, do you know me?' He replied, 'God will put his right hand under you.' She added, 'O my dear master, should you be taken away, what a disconsolate creature will my poor dear mistress be!' He replied, 'God will be her all in all!'

"He always took a peculiar pleasure in repeating or hearing those words,—

'Jesu's love through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy, cries.'

Whenever I repeated them to him, he would answer, 'Boundless, boundless, boundless!' He now added, though not without much difficulty,

'Mercy's full power I soon shall prove,
Loved with an everlasting love.'

"On Saturday, in the afternoon, his fever seemed quite off, and a few friends standing near his bed, he reached his hand to each; and looking on a Minister, said, 'Are you ready to assist to-morrow?' His recollection surprised us, as the day of the week had not been named in the room. Many were of opinion he would recover; and one of them said to him, 'Do you think the Lord will raise you up?' He strove to answer, and could just pronounce, 'Raise me up in the resurr'—meaning in the resurrection. To another, who asked the same question, he said, 'I leave it all to God.'

"In the evening the fever came again, and with greater violence than ever. The mucus then falling on his throat, almost strangled him. It was supposed the same painful symptom would grow more and more violent to the last. As I felt this exquisitely, I cried to the Lord to remove it; and, glory be to his name, he did. From that time it returned no more.

"As night drew on, I perceived him dying very fast. His fingers could hardly make the sign, which he scarce ever forgot; and his speech seemed quite gone. I said, 'My dear creature, I ask not for myself; I know thy soul; but for the sake of others, if Jesus is very present with thee, lift up thy right hand.' Immediately he did. 'If the prospect of glory sweetly opens before thee, repeat the sign.' He instantly

raised it again, and in half a minute, a second time. He then threw it up, as if he would reach the top of the bed; after this, his hands moved no more. But on my saying, 'Art thou in pain?' he answered, 'No.' From this time he lay in a kind of sleep, though with his eyes open and fixed. For the most part he sat upright, against pillows, with his head a little inclining to one side; and so remarkably composed, yea, triumphant, was his countenance, that the least trace of death was scarce discernible in it. Twenty-four hours he was in this situation, breathing like a person in common sleep. About thirty-five minutes past ten on Sunday night, August 14, his precious soul entered into the joy of his Lord, without one struggle or groan, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

"And here I break off my mournful story; but on my bleeding heart the fair picture of his heavenly excellencies will be for ever drawn. When I call to mind his ardent zeal, his laborious endeavours to seek and save the lost, his diligence in the employment of his time, his Christ-like condescension toward me, and his uninterrupted converse with heaven; I may well be allowed to add, My loss is beyond the power of words to paint. I have often gone through deep waters; but all my afflictions were nothing to this. Well; I want no pleasant prospect but upwards, nor anything whereon to fix my hope but immortality.

"From the time I have had the happiness and honour of being with him, every day more and more convinced me he was the Christian. I saw, I loved, in him the image of my Saviour; and thought myself the happiest of women in the possession of the most sympathizing and heavenly friend. My sorrow bears a due proportion; but it is alleviated by that thought, 'United in God, we cannot be divided.' No; we are of one household still; we are joined in Him as our centre, 'of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.' It is said of New Testament believers, 'They are come to the spirits of just men made perfect;' to the glorious privilege of communion with the Church triumphant. But this is far more apparent to the eyes of celestial spirits, than to ours, which are yet veiled with flesh and blood. Yet as there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, and as the prayers of saints still on earth are represented by incense in the hands of the Elders, I can only consider departed spirits, and ministering angels, as one innumerable company, continually

surrounding us. And are they not as nearly united to their fellow-soldiers now, as when they were in the body? What should hinder? Gratitude and affection are natives of heaven, and live for ever there. Forgetfulness is a property of mortality, and drops off with the body. Therefore they that loved us in the Lord will surely love us for ever. Can anything material interrupt the light or presence of a spirit? Nay,

Walls within walls no more the passage bar
Than unopposing space of liquid air.

“On the 17th, his remains were deposited in Madeley churchyard, amidst the tears and lamentations of thousands. The service was performed by the Rev. Mr. Hatton, Rector of Waters-Upton, whom God enabled to speak in a pathetic manner to the weeping flock. In the conclusion, at my request, he read the following paper:—

“As it was the desire of my beloved husband to be buried in this plain manner, so out of tenderness he begged that I might not be present. And in everything I would obey him.

“Permit me then, by the mouth of a friend, to bear an open testimony to the glory of God, that I, who have known him in the most perfect manner, am constrained to declare, that I never knew any one walk so closely in the ways of God as he did. The Lord gave him a conscience tender as the apple of an eye. And he literally preferred the interest of every one to his own.

“He was rigidly just, and perfectly loose from attachment to the world. He shared his all with the poor, who lay so close to his heart, that, at the approach of death, when he could not speak without difficulty, he cried out, ‘O my poor! What will become of my poor!’ He was blessed with so great a degree of humility, as is scarce to be found. I am witness how often he has rejoiced in being treated with contempt. Indeed it seemed the very food of his soul, to be little and unknown.

“His zeal for souls, I need not tell you. Let the labours of twenty-five years, and a martyr’s death in the conclusion, imprint it on your hearts. His diligent visiting of the sick occasioned the fever which, by God’s commission, tore him from you and me. And his vehement desire to take his last leave of you with dying lips and hands, gave (it is supposed) the finishing stroke, by preparing his blood for putrefaction.

Thus has he lived and died your servant. And will any of you refuse to meet him at God's right hand in that day?

"He walked with death always in sight. About two months ago, he came to me and said, 'My dear love, I know not how it is, but I have a strange impression, death is near us, as if it were to be some sudden stroke upon one of us. And it draws out all my soul in prayer, that we may be ready.' He then broke out, 'Lord, prepare the soul thou wilt call! And O stand by the poor disconsolate one that shall be left behind!'

"A few days before his departure, he was filled with love in an uncommon manner. The same he testified as long as he had a voice, and continued to the end, by a most lamb-like patience, in which he smiled over death, and set his last seal to the glorious truths he had so long preached among you.

"Three years, nine months, and two days, I have possessed my heavenly-minded husband. But now the sun of my earthly joys is set for ever, and my soul filled with an anguish which only finds its consolation in a total resignation to the will of God. When I was asking the Lord, if he pleased, to spare him to me a little longer, the following promise was impressed on my mind: 'Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory.' Lord, hasten the time!"

18. There is little need of adding any farther character of this man of God to the foregoing account, given by one who wrote out of the fulness of her heart. I would only observe, that for many years I despaired of finding any inhabitant of Great Britain, that could stand in any degree of comparison with Gregory Lopez, or Monsieur de Renty. But let any impartial person judge if Mr. Fletcher was at all inferior to them. Did he not experience as deep communion with God, and as high a measure of inward holiness, as was experienced by either one or the other of those burning and shining lights? And it is certain, his outward light shone before men with full as bright a lustre as theirs. But if any would draw a parallel between them, there are two circumstances which should be well observed. One is, we are not assured that the writers of their lives did not extenuate, if not suppress, their faults. And some faults we are assured there were; namely, some touches of superstition, and some of idolatry, as the worship of images, angels, and saints; the Virgin Mary in

particular. But I have not suppressed, or even extenuated, anything in Mr. Fletcher's life. Indeed, I know nothing that needed to be extenuated, much less to be suppressed. A second circumstance is, that the writers of their lives could not have so full a knowledge of them as I, and much more Mrs. Fletcher, had; being eye and ear witnesses of his whole conduct. Consequently, we knew that his life was not sullied with any taint of idolatry or superstition. I was intimately acquainted with him for thirty years. I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles; and in all that time I never heard him speak an improper word, or saw him do an improper action. To conclude: Within fourscore years, I have known many excellent men, holy in heart and life: But one equal to him, I have not known; one so uniformly and deeply devoted to God. So unblamable a man, in every respect, I have not found either in Europe or America. Nor do I expect to find another such on this side eternity.

Yet it is possible we may be such as he was. Let us, then, endeavour to follow him as he followed Christ.

HIS EPITAPH.

Here lies the Body

OF

THE REV. JOHN WILLIAM DE LA FLECHERE,

Vicar of Madeley;

Who was born at Nyon in Switzerland,

September 12, 1729,

And finished his course, August 14, 1785,

In this village,

Where his unexampled labours

Will never be forgotten.

He exercised his ministry for the space of twenty-five years

In this parish,

With uncommon zeal and ability.

But though many believed his report,

Yet he might with justice have adopted

The lamentation of the Prophet:

“All the day long have I stretched out my hands

Unto a disobedient and gainsaying people:

Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord,

And my work with my God.”