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THE LIFE

OF

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE:

BY HIS SONS,

ROBERT ISAAC WILBERFORCE, M. A.

VICAR OF EAST FARLEIGH, LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE;

AND

SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, M. A.

RECTOR OF BRIGHSTONE.

REVISED FOR THE AMERICAN EDITION

BY CASPAR MORRIS, M. D.

SECOND EDITION, ENLARGED.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:

HENRY PERKINS—134 CHESTNUT STREET.

BOSTON—IVES & DENNET.

1841.

Entered, according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1841, by HENRY PERKINS, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

C. Sherman & Co. Printers,
19 St. James Street.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE demand for a second edition of the Memoir of Wilberforce, has afforded an opportunity for revising a work which, undertaken and completed amid the anxieties and labours of a most responsible profession, necessarily exhibited imperfections, of which none are more sensible than myself. Having received not only pleasure but improvement from the original work, and finding that none of our publishers were disposed to undertake the issuing of an American edition, I endeavoured, by the omission of parts which could possess but little interest for an American reader, to bring it within the reach of this community. The task proved a laborious one, owing to the difficulty of maintaining the connection while striking out some of the links of the chain. It is believed, however, nothing has been omitted which was calculated to display the singleness of motive by which he was influenced, or the admirable perfection of character, to the attainment of which this "single eye" led him. The many perusals of the Memoir which have been necessary, have left on my mind an ever increasing estimate of its value; and if it may but be blessed in the second edition, as it has in the first, to the removal of prejudice and the confirmation of faith, the labour which has been bestowed upon it will be abundantly recompensed.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

IT has been well remarked, that there is no more powerful instrument of useful or pernicious influence on mankind than Biography. Addressing itself to that propensity to imitation which exists to a greater or less degree in every mind, it allures by the force of example, and carries feeling and judgment alike captive in its train. There are those who, during life, pursuing the noiseless tenour of their way, "have shrunk to hear the obstreperous trump of Fame," who have, however, walked so "holy, harmless and undefiled" in the circumscribed sphere in which they have moved, that it becomes a duty to give wider extent to their usefulness by diffusing the knowledge that such an one has lived, and how. Others, "the observed of all observers," placed by the providence of God in exalted stations, have occupied the many talents committed to their care with equal diligence and devotion to their Master's service. The wide spread influence of such cannot be increased—eulogy is wasted upon them, and the duty of the biographer is to catch as it were the light from their splendid public actions, and reflect it upon the minor virtues of life, that so they may shine, not with a borrowed but a filial splendour, and attract the attention of the multitude, who, while they may not emulate the greater display, may be led to imitate the smaller but not less important actions which constitute the great sum of duty. God in the exercise of His sovereign power exalteth whom he will, and then "sitting on his throne and judging right," he does not exact from those to whom the single talent is committed the extent of return which is made by him to whom more is given: but from each is demanded the same entire dedication of all the powers He has given, to the fulfilment of the object for which he was created, the promotion of His glory and honour. The spirit by which every rank in the great army of the Lord Jesus is to be actuated is the same; and the humblest soldier may catch the enthusiastic feeling of his leader, and in his smaller sphere emulate his self-devotion. The highest rank was occupied by William Wilberforce. Not one nation, but

the whole human family participated in the benefit he conferred on his fellow-men. Had he done no more than lead on the battle which resulted in the Abolition of the Slave Trade, his would have been unrivalled honour. Other men have given freedom to their own country—he was the successful champion of humanity; and it may be questioned whether the benefit he conferred on bleeding Africa or oppressing Europe was the greater. He stanchd the wounds of the one, while he stayed the progress of the other in a career of oppression and cruelty which could not but have called down the just vengeance of a righteous God. To Africa, that God has ordained a recompense for her wrongs, in the reflection back upon her darkened shores of the benefits of Christianity which will result from the temporary sojourn of her sons in a cruel bondage on ours. While to them that did the wrong no result will follow but evil, unless the wrong be repented of and forsaken, and so far as possible reparation made.

But it was not the wrong of Africa alone which excited his sympathy, and drew forth his active exertions for its redress. Wherever a door of usefulness was opened, however wide and large or narrow and confined, he was ready to enter and labour; and whether it was for the extension of the blessings of the knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus to the benighted millions of Hindoostan, or the handfuls of Cheddar, the relief of the temporal sufferings of the victims of war on the Continent, or the poor inmates of the London jail, his alacrity and diligence in doing good were alike worthy to be commended and imitated. There was a holy energy of character and singleness of purpose about him, which will always enable its possessor to accomplish great things. Regarding habitually every faculty he possessed as a talent bestowed upon him for the proper use of which he was responsible, his labours were unceasing that he might be enabled to render an account with joy. He fulfilled closely the directions of one whose friendship was a source of delight to him, *believing* as one who knew that his salvation depended on faith, and *labouring* to adorn that faith as though it were to be found in return for the merit of his works.

To be admitted to the freedom of unreserved intercourse with such a man—to hear him pour forth from the treasure of his heart the secret thoughts which gushed from its hidden fountains—to enter with him to the inner chambers of reflection, and join with him in the consultations from which his mighty acts resulted, would have been esteemed an inestimable privilege; and to this his sons have admitted us. From the period at which he was *converted*, a change which he himself describes as entire as that which transformed the persecutor of the primitive church into the apostle of the Gentiles, he kept regular records of the daily events of his life and the changing feelings of his heart. What proportion of these have been published by his sons none but themselves know. It has been enough, however, to place his character on the most exalted platform of human excellence. Having adopted for his standard the

highest possible model, the example of the incarnate Son of God, and continually comparing himself, not with himself and other equally fallible men, but with this supreme pattern of excellence, his Diary will be found to abound with those humble confessions of unworthiness and guilt which properly result from such self-examination, whilst the testimony of those who, without witnessing, or being privy to the struggles by which the inbred corruption of the heart was kept in subjection, saw only the precious fruit which resulted from his self-denying labours, exhibits the impression made by his example on all by whom he was surrounded. It is not, however, to be supposed that his lot was exempt from those "cruel mockings," and that "shame," and that "malignant blackening calumny," the influence of which he has himself so feelingly depicted. These are declared by the unerring wisdom of Him who "needed not that any should tell him, for he knew what was in man," to be the unavoidable portion of his followers. In the memoir we find traces of them enough to indicate that he partook of a large portion of that "evil speaking which will follow good works." But for all he possessed a sovereign balm, of which he continually availed himself in that spirit of prayer which formed the most marked trait of his character. Whether oppressed by the care of empires or the trifling anxieties of life, he still sought that wisdom which God hath promised to bestow liberally on all who seek it; and that he realized the fulfilment of the promise, his whole career, which was most truly like that of the "light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day," affords manifest demonstration. His votes in the House of Commons, his intercourse with society and with his family, were all sanctified by prayer; and at no stage of his career did he appear to be ashamed to confess his dependence on the grace of God thus sought. How rare an example does he exhibit when we behold him, the familiar friend not only of princes, nobles, and prime-ministers, but sought after as the companion of kings, withdrawing from the glare of earthly greatness and favour to pray with the sick servants of his acquaintance or the penitent convict in his cell! When we thus see the hidden source of his strength and power, we cannot wonder at the success which crowned his efforts, nor at the boldness with which he separated himself, when convinced of the necessity of doing so, from those friends with whom he commonly acted in concert of principle and feeling. Such legislators, like the righteous men sought in vain in Sodom, to adopt the idea of Mr. W.'s favourite poet, save a country. Such was the source of that courage which led him to face the threatened violence of the excited populace on the one hand, and on the other to incur the hazard of sacrificing the friendship even of Pitt, when the conflict arose between duty to his friend and his God. There was, however, another feature in his character which, springing from the same source, pervaded equally all his actions. This was his entire independence. Whether in politics or religion, he examined for himself with minuteness of scrutiny and quickness of perception, and when he saw the right he pursued

it steadfastly, no matter who saw differently. Yet that this resulted from no hasty determination followed up by obstinate persistence in his own opinions without regard to consequences, the memoir contains abundant proof. In religion the same character of mind which led him at the outset of his career to forfeit a positive advantage rather than subscribe to articles of faith which he did not hold, caused him in after life, when the most dispassionate examination had resulted in the full adoption of those very Articles, to adhere to them with all the fondness of the most intense devotion, and his Diary abounds with entries which indicate his attachment to the Church of England. Thus, when on one occasion, he accompanied a friend whom he dearly loved, and whose Christian character he held in the highest estimation, to a dissenting place of worship, he comments on the manner in which it was conducted on his return, specifying the absence of "Scripture reading and Common Prayer" as reasons for the thankfulness he expresses that he did not belong to their communion; and frequently he remarks in his Diary on the self-denial he exercised in abstaining from frequenting other places of worship, lest his example might weaken the attachment of any to that portion of the church of Jesus which he esteemed most nearly conformed to the model of primitive Christianity in doctrine, discipline, and form of prayer. And yet with all this attachment to her formularies, how far was he from that narrow-minded bigotry which would confine the favour of God within any limits! While he wished to see the church foremost in every good word and work, how ready was he to seek the co-operation of those who thought differently. Methodists and even Baptists were proud of his friendship, and looked to him as their advocate, and he did not hesitate to admit "Friends" to the favour of intimacy, expressing his admiration of their devotedness to every good work: nor did he fear to stand almost alone among his religious friends, in supporting the admission of Romanists to seats in Parliament, much as he deprecated the errors into which he believed them to be fallen. The same entire independence was shown too in his views on the great question which so engrossed his thoughts during the twenty years of his prime; and if all the advocates of Negro emancipation had manifested the same temper, and prosecuted the enterprise in the same spirit of charity, neither thinking evil nor answering railing by railing, (to say nothing of those who appear to think that loud and angry denunciation is the strongest weapon in their armoury,) the true supporters of the cause would have had less reason to wish to be "delivered from their friends."

There is no intention of entering here into the merits of this *questio vexata*. The abridgment and republication of this memoir was not undertaken with the view of its exercising any influence upon it. The circumstances of Great Britain and the United States are so dissimilar, that no reasoning can be brought from the one to bear upon the other. The expression of thankfulness that England could be just while she was generous, which

flowed from the dying lips of the great Champion of British Emancipation, separates the actors there from the agitators here, not less widely than the ocean which rolls between the countries. Most fervently is the coming of that time to be desired, when, through the prevalence of Christian faith and love, wrong and violence and oppression shall be banished from the earth; when the servant shall be found "doing service with good will as to the Lord and not to man," and the "master rendering to the servant that which is just and equal." But every unhallowed weapon employed in the cause recoils on the head of him that uses it, and every unbidden hand stretched forth in the service but calls destruction on its mover, while the poor objects of sympathy are made to groan in still deeper bondage, from the misdirected efforts of their ill-judging friends.

The publication of his work on "Practical Christianity" was another of those efforts which required the exercise of great firmness of principle, not only from the reproach to which it subjected him among worldly men, but still more from its own peculiar character; stigmatized by the bigoted of one side as "Calvinistic," and by those of the other as "Legal," it came forth unsupported by any party in the church, depending for its success only on its truth and conformity to the Word of God, and its adaptedness to the wants of man. Yet where is there a book which has more approved itself to the judgment and the heart? Where is there one (a few only excepted, such as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and the works of Baxter and Doddridge,) whose influence has been more extensive? Not to mention those who have owed their conversion to its instrumentality, what multitudes have found in its perusal the confirmation and renewal of their faith. But had every copy been destroyed except that which, blown by the winds of chance, as the world would say—carried, doubtless, by the angels of God, each humble Christian will believe—found its way to the lowly parsonage of an insignificant village in the Isle of Wight, still from so small a seed has started up so noble a growth as has caused, and will cause throughout eternity "joy in the presence of the angels of God" more abundant than can now be known or conceived. What countless numbers in every quarter of the world owe their salvation to the agency of Legh Richmond's writings—and but for Wilberforce's "Practical View," Legh Richmond had passed through life unconverted himself and unblessed to others.

But while public duties necessarily occupied so much of his time and talents, it is exceedingly interesting to observe the faithfulness with which he met the no less important responsibilities of the husband, father, and friend. No desire for human applause or false estimate of duty in a more extended sphere, ever led him to neglect the cultivation of the "Olive plants" which the Lord "had set about his table," and in nothing is the result of that singleness of heart with which he did all his service, more beautifully exhibited than in the blessing which rested on his parental efforts, and caused the gratification of his most earnest wish, that he might see all his children

employed in the service of the same Master, to whom he had devoted his own energies, and the heart of every Christian parent will find a chord within vibrating in sweet concord with those rich effusions of parental tenderness, anxiety, and affection, which were poured forth upon his children in the midst of labours for the benefit of empires.

There was nothing more remarkable in his whole history, than the triumph it exhibits of Divine Grace over natural imperfection. Most truly could he say, "by the grace of God I am what I am." Naturally versatile, nay by more than one of his warmest admirers his mind is spoken of as volatile, nothing short of the powerful control of the all-absorbing feeling of love in return for the love bestowed on him, could have enabled him to persevere as he did, abounding in the work of the Lord. Mr. Gurney, in his delightful "Familiar Sketch," which no one can read without the regret that it is so exceedingly cursory, and the greater part of which has been embodied in this work with his own consent, speaking of this trait says, "I have mentioned the quickness with which he used to turn from one object of thought and conversation to another. In fact, there was nothing more remarkable in him than his versatility. His mind was of a highly discursive character; and it was often extremely amusing to observe how, while pursuing any particular subject, he was caught by some bright idea which flashed across his path and carried him off (for a time at least) in a wholly different direction. This peculiarity belonged to his genius, and was even a means of multiplying the instruction which his conversation afforded. * * * * But the volubility of his intellect was balanced by the stability and faithfulness of his moral qualities. Where the happiness of man and the glory of God were in his view, he was for ever *recurring* to his point."—That he had other failings cannot be doubted: that they "had not dominion over him," but were kept in subjection, is manifest by the following memoir, which displays the secret workings of his heart, and brings the reader acquainted, not only with the results but with the struggles by which the victory was attained. This constitutes its merit. The very nature of its composition renders it irregular, and it was at one time designed to remodel it entirely. But a more attentive examination resulted in the conviction, that whatever it might gain in regularity would be more than counterbalanced by the loss of that fresh, personal, autobiographic character which now constitutes its charm. Wilberforce is made to tell the story of his own life, in his own words, and nothing is introduced except where it was necessary by way of explanation, or to preserve the connexion. Many of the papers which afford the material of the work he had directed should be destroyed, but was induced to permit his nearest relations to make from them such selections as they should think it advisable to publish. It is intended to issue an additional volume of correspondence, for which all who admire him, and this includes all the admirers of virtue and excellence, will wait with anxious impatience.

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THE
LIFE OF WILBERFORCE.

CHAPTER I.

Early Years.

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, only son of Robert Wilberforce and his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Bird, Esq. of Barton, Oxon, was born at Hull, August 24, A. D. 1759. He was the third of four children, but of his three sisters the second only arrived at maturity.

The family of Wilberforce, or, as it was originally written, Wilberfoss, had long been settled in the county of York. In the reign of Henry the Second, Ilgerus de Wilberfoss served in the Scotch wars, deriving his title from the township of Wilberfoss, about eight miles from the city of York, in which he had a landed estate and a mansion. The principal stock gradually declined in wealth and numbers until it disappeared about a century since. A younger branch, which had settled in Hull, rose to wealth in the Baltic trade, in addition to which the grandfather of William Wilberforce became possessed of a large landed estate in the right of his wife. Robert, who was the younger of two children, was a partner in the house at Hull, and here the early childhood of the subject of this memoir was passed.

Of these early years little is recorded. His frame from infancy was feeble, his stature small, his eyes weak, — a failing which with many rich mental endowments he inherited from his mother. It was one amongst the

many expressions of his gratitude in after life "that I was not born in less civilized times, when it would have been thought impossible to rear so delicate a child." But with these bodily infirmities were united a vigorous mind, and a temper eminently affectionate. An unusual thoughtfulness for others marked his youngest childhood: "I shall never forget," says a frequent guest at his mother's, "how he would steal into my sick room, taking off his shoes lest he should disturb me, and with an anxious face look through my curtains to learn if I was better." At seven years old he was sent to the grammar school of Hull, of which Joseph Milner was soon afterwards master. "Even then his elocution was so remarkable," says the younger Milner, at that time his brother's assistant, "that we used to set him upon a table, and make him read aloud as an example to the other boys." The death of his father in the summer of 1768 transferred him at nine years of age to the care of his uncle William Wilberforce; and he was sent to live with him at Wimbledon and in St. James' Place. Such was then the standard measure of private education, that the school at which he was soon afterwards placed was of the meanest character.

At this school he remained two years, spending his holidays at his uncle's house. He is described at this time as "a fine sharp lad," whose activity and spirit made up in boyish sports for some deficiency of strength. One incident of these years deserves special notice from its assisting, as he thought, to form what was undoubtedly a striking feature in his later character. He received from the late John Thornton, the brother of his aunt, with whom he was travelling, a present much exceeding the usual amount of a boy's possessions, intended to enforce the precept with which it was accompanied, that some should be given to the poor.

When he quitted Hull no great pains had been taken to form his religious principles. His mother indeed was a woman of real excellence, as well as of great and highly cultivated talents, but not possessed at this time of those views of the spiritual nature of religion, which

she adopted in later life: "She was what I should call an Archbishop Tillotson Christian."* But in his uncle's house he was subjected to a new and powerful influence. His aunt was a great admirer of Whitefield's preaching, and kept up a friendly connexion with the early methodists. The lively affections of his heart, warmed by the kindness of his friends, readily assumed their tone, and J. Russel, Esq. to whom he at this time sat for a portrait, has recorded in his private journal a notice of the rare and pleasing character of piety which marked his twelfth year.

He has himself recorded his deliberate judgment of this early promise. "Under these influences my mind was interested by religious subjects. How far these impressions were genuine I can hardly determine, but at least I may venture to say that I was sincere. There are letters of mine, written at that period, still in existence, which accord much with my present sentiments."† In 1831 he makes the following entry in his Diary. "A packet from Hull, enclosing letters of mine from Pocklington school rather too much in the style of the religious letters of that day, and (astonishing!) asking my leave to publish them. As I cannot doubt my having expressed the sentiments and feelings of my heart, I am sensibly impressed with a sense of the dreadful effects of the efforts afterwards used but too successfully to wean me from all religion, and to cherish the love of pleasure and the love of glory in the opening bud of youth."

The symptoms of his changing character were perceived with great alarm at Hull, and it was at once determined that his mother should repair to London, and remove him from the dangerous influence. He returned with her to Yorkshire, quitting his uncle's family with deep regret. His presence had kindled their parental feelings, and he had soon returned them the affection of a son. "I deeply felt the parting, for I loved them as

* Conversational Memoranda. † MS. Memoranda.

parents: indeed, I was almost heart-broken at the separation." "I can never forget you," he wrote to his uncle, "as long as I live."

At twelve years old he returned to his mother's house, where it became the object of his friends by the seductions of gaiety and self-indulgence to charm away that serious spirit which had taken possession of his youthful bosom—

"Et sanctos restinguere fontibus ignes."

The habits of society in Hull assisted their design. In a manuscript memorandum he mentions, "It was then as gay a place as could be found out of London. The theatre, balls, great suppers, and card-parties, were the delight of the principal families in the town. The usual dinner hour was two o'clock, and at six they met at sumptuous suppers. This mode of life was at first distressing to me, but by degrees I acquired a relish for it, and became as thoughtless as the rest. As grandson to one of the principal inhabitants, I was every where invited and caressed: my voice and love of music made me still more acceptable. The religious impressions which I had gained at Wimbledon continued for a considerable time after my return to Hull, but my friends spared no pains to stifle them. I might almost say, that no pious parent ever laboured more to impress a beloved child with sentiments of piety, than they did to give me a taste for the world and its diversions." The strength of principle they had to overcome was indeed remarkable. "When first taken to a play, it was almost," he says, "by force." At length, however, they succeeded; and the allurements of worldly pleasure led his youth away from all serious thought. At home there was nothing but gaiety and amusement; at school there was little diligence or restraint. His talents for general society with his rare skill in singing rendered him everywhere an acceptable guest, and his time was wasted in a round of visits to the neighbouring gentry. In his journal for 1797, in his thirty-eighth year, he makes the

following reference to this period: "How eventful a life has mine been, and how visibly I can trace the hand of God leading me by ways which I knew not! I think I have never before remarked that my mother's taking me from my uncle's when about twelve or thirteen, and then completely a methodist, has probably been the means of my being connected with political men, and becoming useful in life. If I had stayed with my uncle, I should probably have been a bigoted despised methodist: yet to come to what I am through so many years of folly as those which elapsed between my last year at school and 1785, is wonderful. Oh the depths of the counsel of God! what cause have I for gratitude and humiliation." Already, however, he gave proofs of an active mind, and one remarkable anticipation of his future course is yet remembered. "His abomination of the slave trade," writes a surviving school-fellow, "he evinced when he was not more than fourteen years of age. He boarded in the master's house, where the boys were kept within bounds. I lived in the village. One day he gave me a letter to put in the post-office, addressed to the editor of the York paper, which he told me was in condemnation of the odious traffic in human flesh." He cultivated also a taste for literature. "He greatly excelled all the other boys in his compositions, though he seldom began them till the eleventh hour." For his own amusement he committed English poetry to memory, and he went up to the University "a very fair scholar."

With the self-indulgent habits formed by such a life he entered St. John's College, Cambridge, Oct. 1776, at the age of seventeen years. And here he was at once exposed to new temptations. Left, by the death of his grandfather and uncle, the master of an independent fortune under his mother's sole guardianship, "I was introduced," says he, "on the very first night of my arrival, to as licentious a set of men as can well be conceived. They drank hard, and their conversation was even worse than their lives. I lived amongst them for some time, though I never relished their society, . . . often,

indeed, I was horror-struck at their conduct, . . . and after the first year I shook off in great measure my connexion with them." For the last two years he spent at Cambridge he was the centre of a higher circle. Amiable, animated, and hospitable, he was a universal favourite. "There was no one," says the Rev. T. Gisborne, "at all like him for powers of entertainment. Always fond of repartee and discussion, he seemed entirely free from conceit and vanity." He had already commenced the system of frank and simple hospitality, which marked his London life. "There was always a great Yorkshire pie in his rooms, and all were welcome to partake of it. My rooms and his were back to back, and often when I was raking out my fire at ten o'clock, I heard his melodious voice calling aloud to me to come and sit with him before I went to bed. It was a dangerous thing to do, for his amusing conversation was sure to keep me up so late, that I was behind-hand the next morning." He lived much at this time amongst the Fellows of the college. "But those," he says, "with whom I was intimate, did not act towards me the part of Christians, or even of honest men. Their object seemed to be to make and keep me idle. If ever I appeared studious, they would say to me, 'Why in the world should a man of your fortune trouble himself with fagging?' I was a good classic, and acquitted myself well in the college examinations; but mathematics, which my mind greatly needed, I almost entirely neglected, and was told that I was too clever to require them. Whilst my companions were reading hard and attending lectures, card parties and idle amusements consumed my time. The tutors would often say within my hearing, that '*they* were mere saps, but that I did all by talent.' This was poison to a mind constituted like mine." This life of idleness at college was only exchanged in vacation time for the ordinary gaieties of Hull, now increased by the presence of the militia, or for journeys in search of pleasure with his mother and sister. It was surely of God's especial goodness that in such a course he was preserved from profligate excess. For though he could say in after life,

that upon the habits thus formed by evil influence and unbounded license "he could not look back without unfeigned remorse," yet he had rather to deplore neglected opportunities of moral and intellectual profit, than vicious practice or abandoned principles.*

"I certainly did not then think and act as I do now," he declared long afterwards; "but I was so far from what the world calls licentious, that I was rather complimented on being better than young men in general."

Diligently did he strive in after years to supply the omissions of his youth; but to the end of life he ceased not to deplore a certain want of mental regularity, which he traced to the neglect of early discipline, and he subsequently remonstrated with the tutor to whose charge he had been confided, on the guilt of suffering those, of whom he was in some sort the guardian, to inflict upon themselves so irreparable an injury. That there was even in this time of thoughtlessness a hidden vein of deeper feeling, was shown by his refusing, when unexpectedly required, to declare his assent to the Articles of the church, though the refusal cost him for a time the convenience of an academical degree. Further inquiry removed his hesitation, but he would not at mature age, when his education was completed, declare his concurrence in religious dogmas which he had not examined.

* Lord Clarendon, his friend at college and through life, thus describes his conduct: "He had never in the smallest degree a dissolute character, however short his early habits might be of that constant piety and strictness, which was soon perfected in his happy disposition."

CHAPTER II.

Elected to Parliament from his native town—Visit to France—Elected member for the county of York.

BEFORE he quitted college, Mr. Wilberforce had resolved to enter upon public life. His ample fortune, and a taste for more liberal pursuits, led him to decline business, and as a speedy dissolution of Parliament was expected, he commenced a canvass for the representation of his native town.

After a successful canvass on the spot, he repaired to London, where about three hundred Hull freemen resided in the vicinity of the river; these he entertained at suppers in the different public houses of Wapping, and by his addresses to them, first gained confidence in public speaking. During this year he resided in lodgings in the Adelphi, and constantly frequented the gallery of the House of Commons. Here he often fell in with Mr. Pitt, then serving the same apprenticeship to public business. They had formed at Cambridge a slight acquaintance, which now ripened into intimacy. As the summer advanced, he returned to Hull, with the most flattering prospects of success at the ensuing election. His hopes were almost disappointed by a hasty dissolution of the sitting parliament, which would have fixed the day of election before the expiration of his year of nonage, that "*piger annus pupillis.*" The session however survived his birth-day, the feast of St. Bartholomew, which was welcomed by his friends with suitable rejoicings; and the townsmen were regaled with an ox roasted whole in one of his fields. The election opportunely followed; and on the 11th of September he was engaged in all the bustle of a sharp contest. Against him were arrayed the interest of Lord Rockingham, the most powerful nobleman in the county; that of Sir George Savile, its wealthy and respected representative, himself a frequent resident at Hull; and

that of government, always strong at a sea-port. To these he could oppose nothing but the personal influence and independent character of a young man of twenty. Yet such was the command he had established over the affections of his townsmen, that, at the close of the poll, he numbered singly as many votes as his opponents had received together.

This election cost him between £8000 and £9000. By long-established custom, the single vote of a resident elector was rewarded with a donation of two guineas; four were paid for a plumper; and the expenses of a freeman's journey from London averaged £10 a piece. The letter of the law was not broken, because the money was not paid until the last day on which election petitions could be presented. But the more matured judgment of Mr. Wilberforce condemned the custom to which he now conformed; and rather than so enter parliament, with his later principles, he has declared that he would have remained always a private man. His great success threw no small lustre on his entry into public life; and he was welcomed upon his return to London into every circle. He was at once elected a member of all the leading clubs. "When I went up to Cambridge," he has said, speaking of the risks to which he was then exposed, "I was scarcely acquainted with a single person above the rank of a country gentleman; and even when I left the University, so little did I know of general society, that I came up to London stored with arguments to prove the authenticity of Rowley's Poems; and now I was at once immersed in politics and fashion. The very first time I went to Boodle's I won twenty-five guineas of the Duke of Norfolk. I belonged at this time to five clubs,—Miles and Evans's, Brookes's, Boodle's, White's, Goostree's. The first time I was at Brookes's, scarcely knowing any one, I joined from mere shyness in play at the faro table, where George Selwyn kept bank. A friend who knew my inexperience, and regarded me as a victim decked out for sacrifice, called to me, 'What, Wilberforce, is that you?' Selwyn quite resented the interference, and turning to him, said in his

most expressive tone, 'O sir, don't interrupt Mr. Wilberforce, he could not be better employed.' Nothing could be more luxurious than the style of these clubs. Fox, Sheridan, Fitzpatrick, and all your leading men, frequented them, and associated upon the easiest terms; you chatted, played at cards, or gambled as you pleased." Though he visited occasionally these various clubs, his usual resort was with a choicer and more intimate society, who assembled first in the house since occupied by Scrope and Morland's bank, in Pall Mall, and afterwards on the premises of a man named Goostree, now the Shakspeare Gallery.

They were about twenty-five in number, and for the most part were young men who had passed together through the University, and whom the general election of 1780 had brought at the same time into public life. Pitt was an habitual frequenter of the club at Goostree's, supping there every night during the winter of 1780-81. Here their intimacy increased every day. "He was the wittiest man I ever knew, and what was quite peculiar to himself, had at all times his wit under entire control. Others appeared struck by the unwonted association of brilliant images; but every possible combination of ideas seemed always present to his mind, and he could at once produce whatever he desired. I was one of those who met to spend an evening in memory of Shakspeare, at the Boar's Head, East Cheap. Many professed wits were present, but Pitt was the most amusing of the party, and the readiest and most apt in the required allusions. He entered with the same energy into all our different amusements; we played a good deal at Goostree's, and I well remember the intense earnestness which he displayed when joining in those games of chance. He perceived their increasing fascination, and soon after suddenly abandoned them for ever."*

It was by this vice that he was himself most nearly ensnared. A brief diary of this period records more

* Conversat. Memor.

than once the loss of £100 at the faro table. He was weaned from it in a most characteristic manner. "We can have no play to-night," complained some of the party at the club, "for St. Andrew is not here to keep bank." "Wilberforce," said Mr. Bankes, (who never joined himself,) "if you will keep it I will give you a guinea." The playful challenge was accepted, but as the game grew deep, he rose the winner of £600. Much of this was lost by those who were only heirs to future fortunes, and could not therefore meet such a call without inconvenience. The pain he felt at their annoyance cured him of a taste which seemed but too likely to become predominant.

In spite of his life of gaiety, Mr. Wilberforce attended closely to the House of Commons. He was esteemed a more active member of parliament than any of his predecessors. From the first he was an independent man: he had entered parliament as the opponent of the war with America, and of Lord North's administration; yet to this ministry he gave his first vote.

In January, 1781, he was joined by Mr. Pitt, who having contested Cambridge University without success at the general election, now took his seat for the borough of Appleby. Community of objects naturally increased their friendship; yet not even to friendship with Pitt would he sacrifice his independence. "I well remember," he said long afterwards, "the pain I felt in being obliged to vote against Pitt, the second time he spoke in parliament." Yet, though attentive to public business, he did not take an early part in the debates. "Attend to business," he said in later life to a friend entering the House of Commons, "and do not seek occasions of display; if you have a turn for speaking, the proper time will come. Let speaking take care of itself. I never go out of the way to speak, but make myself acquainted with the business, and then if the debate passes my door, I step out and join it."

His first speech was upon the 17th of May, 1781, in a debate upon the laws of revenue, when, having present-

ed a petition from the town of Hull, he forcibly attacked them as oppressive and unjust.

His landed property in Yorkshire was much scattered, and contained no country mansion. He was therefore left at liberty, when released from parliamentary attendance, to choose his place of residence. His passion for the beauties of scenery and the retirement of the country, was unusually strong. "When," he has said, "I was much confined in later life to London, I could scarcely leave the country for a town campaign without being affected even to tears."

A visit to a college friend had made him well acquainted with Westmoreland, then little visited by strangers; and for seven years he rented a house at Rayrigg on the banks of Windermere. Hither he retired with a goodly assortment of books, "classics, statutes at large, and history," as soon as the recess commenced, both in this and the succeeding summer. His studious intentions were however frustrated by the attractions of society. "St. Andrew St. John was with me here for months together during this summer; occasionally too my mother and my sister, and different college friends, joined our party. Boating, riding, and continual parties at my own house and Sir Michael le Fleming's, fully occupied my time until I returned to London in the following autumn."*

He took more part the next session in general business; and by a speech on the 22d of February, 1782, against Lord North's administration, obtained the loud commendations of Thomas Townshend, and other members of the Fox party.

So prevalent at this time was the idea that he was to be included in the new official arrangements, and raised to the Upper House, that he received various applications for the supply of his robes upon that occasion. The death of the Lord Rockingham, in July, 1782, was followed by Mr. Pitt's accession to the Shelburne ministry; and though Mr. Wilberforce, as he at this

* MS. Mem.

time assured a friend by letter, would do nothing which obliged him to pledge himself to government, yet he was led to assume a more forward position amongst the general supporters of his friend. They were now united in the closest intimacy. In the course of this spring, they set off for Brighton, to spend the Easter holidays together; and being driven thence on the very night of their arrival by the inclemency of the weather, proceeded to Bath for the rest of the vacation. The early possession of his fortune increased their intimacy, as he was the only member of their set who owned a villa within reach of London. The house of his late uncle at Wimbledon, with some trifling alteration, gave him the command of eight or nine bed-rooms; and here Pitt, to whom it was a luxury even to sleep in country air, took up not unfrequently his residence: their easy familiarity permitting him to ride down late at night and occupy his room, even though the master of the house was kept in town. In one spring Pitt resided there four months, and repaired thither when, in April, 1783, he resigned his official residence to the Coalition ministry.

“Eliot, Arden, and I,” writes Pitt one afternoon, “will be with you before curfew, and expect an early meal of peas and strawberries. Bankes, I suppose, will not sleep out of Duke Street, but he has not yet appeared in the

House of Commons,
Half-past four.”

This was the most critical period of his course. He had entered in his earliest manhood upon the dissipated scenes of fashionable life, with a large fortune and most acceptable manners. His ready wit, his conversation continually sparkling with polished raillery and courteous repartee, his chastened liveliness, his generous and kindly feelings; all secured him that hazardous applause with which society rewards its ornaments and victims. His rare accomplishment in singing tended to increase his danger. “Wilberforce, we must have you again; the prince says he will come at any time to

hear you sing," was the flattery which he received after his first meeting with the Prince of Wales in 1782, at the luxurious soirées of Devonshire House.

He was also an admirable mimic, and until reclaimed by the kind severity of the old Lord Camden, would often set the table in a roar by his perfect imitation of Lord North. His affection for Lord Camden was an intimation at this very time of the higher texture of his mind. Often would he steal away from the merriment and light amusements of the gayer circle, to gather wisdom from the weighty words and chosen anecdotes in which the veteran chancellor abounded. His affection was warmly returned by Lord Camden, who loved the cheerful earnestness with which he sought for knowledge. "Lord Camden noticed me particularly," he said, "and treated me with great kindness. Amongst other things, he cured me of the dangerous art of mimicry. When invited by my friends to witness my powers of imitation, he at once refused, saying slightly for me to hear it, 'It is but a vulgar accomplishment.' 'Yes, but it is not imitating the mere manner; Wilberforce says the very thing Lord North would say.' 'Oh,' was his reply, 'every one does that.'" This friendly intercourse was long continued. "How many subjects of politics and religion," writes the old lord, with a pressing invitation to Camden Place, in 1787, "might we not have settled by this time, in the long evenings."

But if he escaped the seductions of frivolity and fashion, he was in equal danger from the severer temptations of ambition. With talents of the highest order, and eloquence surpassed by few, he entered upon public life possessed of the best personal connexions, in his intimate friendship with Mr. Pitt. Disinterested, generous, lively, fond of society, by which he was equally beloved, and overflowing with affection towards his numerous friends, he was indeed in little danger from the low and mercenary spirit of worldly policy. But ambition has inducements for men of every temper; and how far he was then safe from its fascinations, may be learned from the conduct of his brother "Independents." They were a

club of about forty members of the House of Commons, most of them opponents of the Coalition Ministry, whose principle of union was a resolution to take neither place, pension, nor peerage. Yet in a few years so far had the fierceness of their independence yielded to various temptations, that he and Mr. Bankes alone of all the party retained their early simplicity of station. He himself was the only county member who was not raised to the peerage. He too would no doubt have been entangled in the toils of party, and have failed of those great triumphs he afterwards achieved, but for the entrance into his soul of higher principles. His later journals abound in expressions of thankfulness that he did not at this time enter on official life, and waste his days in the trappings of greatness. Though he was practically thoughtless, ambition had not hardened his heart or destroyed the simplicity of his tastes.

The following letter, written at this period to his sister, is an interesting exhibition of the state of his mind.

“Wimbledon, June 5, 1783.

“My dear Sister,

“From my retirement at Wimbledon, I write to you in your retirement at Drinkston, and I wish you may find as much comfort in the one as I do in the other. The existence I enjoy here is of a sort quite different from what it is in London. I feel a load off my mind; nor is it in the mighty powers of Mrs. Siddons, nor in the yet superior and more exalted gratifications of the House of Commons, which you seem to think my summum bonum, to compensate to me for the loss of good air, pleasant walks, and what Milton calls ‘each rural sight, each rural sound.’ This you will say is a bigoted attachment, and so perhaps it may be; yet it is an attachment which I strive rather to strengthen than diminish, for, not to observe that it is a natural one, I am sure that I derive from it the most solid and substantial advantages. If my moral and religious principles be such as in these days are not very generally prevalent, perhaps I owe the continuance of them in a

great measure to solitude in the country. This is not merely the difference between theory and practice, it is not merely (though that be something) that one finds oneself very well able to resist temptations to vice, when one is out of the way of being exposed to them; but in towns there is no leisure for thought or serious reflection, and we are apt to do that with regard to moral conduct, which we are in vain advised to do in the case of misfortunes—to look only on those who are worse than ourselves, till we flatter ourselves into a favourable opinion of our modes of life, and exalted ideas of our own virtue. But in the country a little reading or reflection presents us with a more complete and finished model, and we become sensible of our own imperfections; need I add that trite maxim, which however I will, for it is a true one, that humility is the surest guide both to virtue and wisdom. Besides, custom and habit operate almost as powerfully on our opinions and judgments as on our carriage and deportment; and lest we become thoroughly tainted with the fashionable ways of thinking and acting, we should retire to converse and keep company a little with our faithful mentor, who will give us good advice, if we will but have the prudence and the spirit to attend to it. For my own part, I never leave this poor villa without feeling my virtuous affections confirmed and strengthened: and I am afraid it would be in some degree true if I were to add, that I never remain long in London without their being somewhat injured and diminished. After this eulogium on the country, and solitude, you will tell me it is an odd reason I am about to give for having almost laid aside my intention of going abroad, that I cannot find any friend to travel with me; but really the idea is so uncomfortable, of spending three or four weeks alone in a post-chaise, and of not being able to join in the conversation, when one does at last see the human face divine, that it staggers the resolution to which I had come of *taking a tower*; and my inclination is seconded by my reason, which suggests to me that I can pass my summer to much better advantage in England. Should the

latter be my lot, and this word I take to be the properest that can be used on the occasion, for it is a good deal a matter of chance, I shall be on the ramble, and endeavour in some of my excursions to show myself not wholly without bowels, and to stumble on you. But of all this I shall be better able to speak in about three weeks, when I expect parliament will rise, and you must not then be surprised to receive a letter from me dated from any place in or out of his majesty's dominions."

The close of the session, July 16th, set him at liberty. After visiting the St. Johns at Tunbridge Wells he spent the month of August in Yorkshire, and repaired early in September to the seat of Mr. Bankes in Dorsetshire, to meet Mr. Pitt and Mr. Eliot, with whom he had engaged to pay a visit to the continent. A few days spent at Kingston Hall in shooting, were signalized by the narrow escape of Mr. Pitt from Mr. Wilberforce's gun; "So at least," said he, "my companions affirmed, with a roguish wish, perhaps, to make the most of my shortsightedness and inexperience in field sports."

On the 11th of September the three friends met at Canterbury, and on the following day embarking at Dover in spite of a heavy sea crossed to Calais. Thence they proceeded straight to Rheims, to gain some knowledge of the language before they went to Paris. Each had trusted to the other to obtain the needful introductions; and when at last the omission was discovered, they had only time to write to Mr. Robert Smith for letters. He had no better resource than to obtain from Peter Thellusson an introduction to the correspondent of his house. With these credentials they arrived at Rheims, then under that episcopal government which had lasted from the time of Clovis, and to which may be traced, according to Guizot, the origin of European civilization. At the time of their arrival the archbishop (Perigord) was absent, and the ordinary routine of government devolved upon Mons. De Lageard, as secretary to the conseil d'état. Their first adventures are thus related in a letter to Mr. Bankes. "From Calais

we made directly for Rheims, and the day after our arrival dressed ourselves unusually well, and proceeded to the house of a Mons. Coustier to present, with not a little awe, our only letters of recommendation. It was with some surprise that we found Mons. Coustier behind a counter distributing figs and raisins. I had heard that it was very usual for gentlemen on the continent to practise some handicraft trade or other for their amusement, and therefore for my own part I concluded that his taste was in the fig way, and that he was only playing at grocer for his diversion; and viewing the matter in this light, I could not help admiring the excellence of his imitation; but we soon found that Mons. Coustier was a 'véritable epicier,' and that not a very eminent one. He was very fair and candid, however, and acknowledged to us that he was not acquainted with any of the gentry of the place, and therefore could not introduce us to them. We returned to our inn, and after spending nine or ten days without making any great progress in the French language, which could not indeed be expected from us, as we spoke to no human being but each other and our Irish courier, when we began to entertain serious thoughts of leaving the place in despair, by way of a parting effort we waited on our epicier, and prevailed on him to put on a bag and sword and carry us to the intendant of the police, whom he supplied with groceries. This scheme succeeded admirably. The intendant was extremely civil to us, and introduced us to the Archbishop, who gave us two very good and pleasant dinners and would have had us stay a week with him. (N. B. Archbishops in England are not like Archevêques in France; these last are jolly fellows of about forty years of age, who play at billiards, &c. like other people.)

“ We soon got acquainted with as many of the inhabitants as we could wish, especially an Abbé de Laguard, a fellow of infinite humour, and of such extraordinary humanity, that to prevent our time hanging heavy on our hands he would sometimes make us visits of five or six hours at a stretch. Our last week passed very

pleasantly, and for myself I was really very sorry when the day arrived for our setting off for Paris."

The Abbé de Lageard (now Mons. de Cherval) has furnished some recollections of this visit. "One morning when the intendant of police brought me his daily report, he informed me, there are three Englishmen here of very suspicious character. They are in a wretched lodging, they have no attendance, yet their courier says, that they are 'grands seigneurs,' and that one of them is son of the great Chatham; but it is impossible, they must be 'des intrigants.' I had been in England, and knew that the younger sons of your noble families are not always wealthy, and I said to Mons. du Chatel, who wished to visit them officially and investigate their character, 'Let us be in no hurry, it may be perhaps as they represent, I will inquire about them myself. I went to their lodgings the same evening and got their names from the courier, and true enough they were said to be Mr. W. Pitt, Mr. Wilberforce, and Mr. Eliot, all three members of the British parliament, and one of them lately a leading member of the government. The next morning I visited them, and as I was at once satisfied by their appearance, I asked whether I could be of any use to them, and offered whatever the town of Rheims could afford for their amusement. Amongst other things Mr. Pitt complained, 'Here we are in the middle of Champagne, and we cannot get any tolerable wine.' 'Dine with me tomorrow,' I replied, 'and you shall have the best wine the country can afford.' They came and dined with me, and instead of moving directly after dinner, as we do in France, we sat talking for five or six hours."

The Abbé de Lageard, a man of family and fortune, was one of those whom the revolution stripped of every thing but their faith and loyalty; and when residing as an emigrant in England, he received from Mr. Wilberforce a willing and ample return of his present hospitality. Nothing could exceed his kindness to them: for a fortnight he was their constant attendant; he made them acquainted with the noblesse who resided in the neighbourhood of Rheims; he gave them permission to sport

over the domain of the archbishop; and upon his return, introduced them to a familiar footing at the palace. In their many conversations with the Abbé, Mr. Pitt was the chief speaker. Although no master of the French vocabulary, his ear, quick for every sound but music, caught readily the intonations of the language; and he soon spoke it with considerable accuracy. He inquired carefully into the political institutions of the French; and the Abbé has stored up his concluding sentence—"Monsieur, vous n'avez point de liberté politique, mais pour la liberté civile, vous en avez plus que vous ne croyez."

The position Mr. Pitt had occupied at home, attracted the observation of the French. An aged Marechale at Rheims sought in him a purchaser for her most costly wines, and disclaimed earnestly his assurances of poverty. "Le ministre doit avoir, sans doute, cinque ou six mille livres sterling de rente." And at Paris, whither they removed upon the 9th of September, it was hinted to him through the intervention of Horace Walpole, that he would be an acceptable suitor for the daughter of the celebrated Neckar. Neckar is said to have offered to endow her with a fortune of £14,000 per annum: but Mr. Pitt replied, "I am already married to my country." The story of their embarrassments at Rheims preceded them to Fontainebleau, where, by special invitation, they soon joined the gala festivities of the court, and Mr. Pitt was often rallied by the queen, who asked whether he had lately heard from his friend the epicier.

The diary of this period gives a brief notice of each day's proceedings. As for instance:—

"October 20th. Saw sights. Bought books. Dined Marquis de la Fayette's, pleasing enthusiastical man: his wife a sweet woman. Dr. Franklin, Mr. Page, Crillon's aid du camp, young Franklin, Noailles, Madame Boufflers there. Free the Spanish colonies. At home at night preparing for departure."

Mr. Wilberforce received with interest the hearty greetings which Dr. Franklin tendered to a rising member of the English parliament, who had opposed the war with America. But it was the singular position occupied

by La Fayette which most of all attracted his attention: he seemed to be the representative of the democracy in the very presence of the monarch, the tribune intruding with his veto within the chamber of the patrician order. His own establishment was framed upon the English model; and amidst the gaiety and ease of Fontainbleau, he assumed an air of republican austerity. When the fine ladies of the court would attempt to drag him to the card-table, he shrugged his shoulders, with an affected contempt for the customs and amusements of the old regime. Meanwhile the deference which this champion of a new state of things received, above all from the ladies of the court, intimated clearly the disturbance of the social atmosphere, and presaged the coming tempest. A special messenger, recalling Mr. Pitt to London, cut short their further observations; and after a six weeks' absence Mr. Wilberforce returned to England on the 24th October, "better pleased with his own country than before he left it."

The month of November, 1783, when Mr. Wilberforce returned to London, was a time of great political excitement. In his MS. Mem. he says "returned to England in November and secret plottings. The king groaning under the ministry which had been imposed on him. Difference about provision for Prince of Wales, when ministry gave up the measure rather than their places. Afterwards Fox's India Bill; Lord Temple's fracas, and long interregnum. At length Pitt prime minister." Then came that memorable season, when one man swayed the destinies of a people; when Pitt, undismayed by threats and unincensed by provocations, upheld with a strong hand and a bold heart the prerogatives of the crown and the liberties of the subject. Throughout this period Mr. Wilberforce shared constantly in the private counsels and parliamentary labours of his friend. The part he took in these debates attracted more notice than any of his previous speeches; and the opposition papers of the day defy Mr. Pitt "in spite of the assistance he receives from the eloquence of Mr. Wilberforce."

"I can well remember," he has said of this important

crisis, "how anxiously we watched the events of each succeeding day, counting every vote, in the earnest hope that Pitt might make a successful stand against the coalition." But the time was now come, when he could render more essential service to his friend, than by beating up the quarters of doubtful members, or even by supporting him with his eloquence in the House of Commons.

The rising feeling of the country in support of Mr. Pitt, had been already shown in the many urgent addresses presented to the king. But Yorkshire had not as yet declared itself; and the supporters of the coalition, calculating upon the influence of their vast possessions there, looked eagerly for its declaration in their favour. There was, however, a strong spirit of opposition in the county. The West Riding clothiers were all Tories, and ready to rise in support of the throne.

Mr. Wilberforce determined upon making the attempt "to get up an opposition," and though the poet Mason, then a canon residentiary at York, was well nigh his sole acquaintance beyond his own corner of the county, he hastened into Yorkshire to head the party. On the 21st of March he went as far as Cambridge, and reached York the following afternoon at four o'clock. The next day a meeting was held in the castle-yard, which, though the weather was "cold and hail falling," continued "from ten till half-past four." "An immense body of the freeholders was present." An address to the king condemning the coalition ministry was proposed and supported by the friends of Mr. Pitt. On the other side appeared the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Carlisle, Lord Cavendish, Lord Fitzwilliam, and many other men of rank and influence. When the proposers of the address had spoken, and the Whig lords had been heard in answer, the day was far advanced, and the listeners were growing weary of the contest. At this time Mr. Wilberforce mounted the table, from which, under a great wooden canopy before the high sheriff's chair, the various speakers had addressed the meeting. The weather was so bad "that it seemed," says an eye-witness, "as if his

slight frame would be unable to make head against its violence." The castle-yard, too, was so crowded, that men of the greatest physical powers had been scarcely audible. Yet such was the magic of his voice and the grace of his expression, that by his very first sentence he arrested, and for above an hour he continued to enchain, the attention of the surrounding multitude. "Danby tells me," writes Pepper Arden, "that you spoke like an angel. That, indeed, I hear from many others." The disadvantage under which his figure had at first appeared, from the scale and construction of the hustings, was soon forgotten in the force and animation of his manner.—"I saw," said Boswell, describing the meeting to Dundas, "what seemed a mere shrimp mount upon the table; but, as I listened, he grew, and grew, until the shrimp became a whale." "It is impossible," says one who heard him, "though at the distance of so many years, to forget his speech, or the effect which it produced. He arraigned with the utmost vigour the coalition ministry, and the India Bill which they had proposed . . . a measure which he described as 'the offspring of that unnatural conjunction, marked with the features of both its parents, bearing token to the violence of the one, and the corruption of the other.'"—"His argumentative and eloquent speech," says a York paper of the day, "was listened to with the most eager attention, and received with the loudest acclamations of applause. It was a reply to all that had been urged against the address; but there was such an excellent choice of expressions, so rapidly pronounced, that we are unable to do it justice in any account we can give of it." He was distinctly heard to the utmost limits of the crowd, and interrupted only by an express from Mr. Pitt, which without disconcerting him, enabled him with the greatest possible effect to announce to the assembled county, that by dissolving parliament, the king had at that very moment appealed to the decision of the nation.

The great ability which he had thus displayed before the county, produced the most unexpected consequences. The immense expense of contesting its repre-

sentation had reduced Yorkshire to the condition of a nomination borough in the hands of the Whig nobility. "To get up an opposition" at the approaching election had been one end of Mr. Wilberforce's presence. And he himself, warned doubtless by that internal consciousness of power, by which great men are prepared for high attempts, had already secretly presaged the actual issue.

"I had formed within my own heart the project of standing for the county. To any one beside myself I was aware that it must appear so mad a scheme, that I never mentioned it to Mr. Pitt, or any of my political connexions. It was undoubtedly a bold idea, but I was then very ambitious. However, entertaining it, I carefully prepared myself for the public debate, which was soon to follow in the face of the whole county; and both at the public meeting, and in the subsequent discussions, it was this idea which regulated the line, as well as animated the spirit of my exertions. All circumstances indeed considered . . . my mercantile origin, my want of connexion or acquaintance with any of the nobility or gentry of Yorkshire . . . my being elected for that great county appears to me, upon the retrospect, so utterly improbable, that I cannot but ascribe it to a providential intimation, that the idea of my obtaining that high honour suggested itself to my imagination, and in fact fixed itself within my mind."*

Whilst he was yet speaking in the castle-yard, the admiration of the freeholders burst forth in the shout, "We'll have this man for our county member;" and his conduct in the succeeding meetings suggested the same idea to independent men of greater influence.

"Mr. Wilberforce," wrote one of the company to Lord Hawke, "has gained the hearts and admiration of all that heard him speak; and when we broke up at the York Tavern, at twelve o'clock on Thursday night, there was a sudden and spontaneous cry of 'Wilberforce and liberty,' which was his first nomination for the county."

* MS. Mem.

Strong as was now the feeling in his favour, it seemed a thing so incredible, that a young man, utterly unconnected with the aristocracy of the county, should actually displace their nominee, that it was not deemed safe for him to resign his present seat. On the evening therefore of the 26th, he "set off to secure his election at Hull where" he "arrived at two o'clock in the morning."

Having been elected he enters in his Diary—"Snowballs, &c. thrown at me in the chair." This slight expression of resentment was aimed at his intended resignation of his seat, if elected for the county. "But when," says an eye-witness, "the procession reached his mother's house, he sprung from the chair, and presenting himself with surprising quickness at a projecting window . . . it was that of the nursery in which his childhood had been passed . . . he addressed the populace with such complete effect, that he was able afterwards to decide the election of his successor."

The same evening he was on his road to York, where he met a welcome greeting, and was immediately proposed with Mr. Duncombe, in opposition to Mr. Weddell and Mr. Foljambe, both men of large fortune and great connexions, and one the former member, and heir to the influence of his uncle Sir George Savile.

The brunt of opposition was of course directed against the new candidate; whom Lord Mulgrave recommended to the freeholders as "approved already by a large part of the county, the bosom friend of the present minister, and second only to him in eloquence, unexampled at their years." To meet the anticipated charge of such a contest, a subscription was immediately commenced, to which the candidates in vain requested leave to add £2000 a piece. Of the sum thus contributed, (£18,670,) about one-fourth proved sufficient to defray the whole expense of the election.

The result he enters thus in his Diary: "7th. Up early—breakfasted tavern—rode frisky horse to castle—elected—chaired—dined York Tavern."

Thus was accomplished this triumph of independent principles. Its effect upon the great struggle then at issue was not less important. "Numbers of members have confessed to me," writes Mr. Duncombe, "that they owed their success in their own counties to the example set by ours." By it, and nearly two hundred other victories over the adherents of the coalition party, Mr. Pitt became as strong in the House of Commons, as he had been hitherto in the affections of the people. "He was then able," says Mr. Wilberforce, "if he had duly estimated his position, to have cast off the corrupt machinery of influence, and formed his government upon the basis of independent principle." The issue of the Yorkshire contest might have suggested the possibility of such an effort. Its result was altogether new and unexpected. The return of a candidate who came forward upon ground which none had taken heretofore, was an intimation of that power, with which intelligence and property had now armed the middle ranks of society. As the man of the middle classes, he took his place in public life; as their representative, he was opposed alike to party influence and democratic license; as their representative, he demanded and obtained the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

After a hasty tour in Devonshire, Mr. Wilberforce reached London upon the 14th of May, and took his seat in parliament, as member for the county of York. He possessed already enough to intoxicate his mind, whilst prospects of gratified ambition seemed to open without limit before him. He attended constantly through the first session of the new parliament, and swelled the triumphant majorities, which secured the supremacy of his friend. Upon the prorogation of parliament, he went down into the north, and presenting himself at York as "the joy" of the races, spent his twenty-fifth birth-day at the top wave and highest flow of those frivolous amusements, which had swallowed up so large a portion of his youth. Yet at this very time the providence of God was guiding him into that path which issued in his altered character.

CHAPTER III.

Continental tour—Conversion—Early progress of Christian character.

WHILST at York, he proposed to his friend, W. Burgh, to become his companion in a continental tour. To his great surprise the offer was declined; and being thrown soon afterwards at Scarborough into the company of Isaac Milner, the invitation was transferred to him. His strong sense and well furnished mind recommended him as an agreeable companion; but little could either party then imagine the gracious purpose for which this choice was ordered.

After a hasty visit to Westmoreland, and “looking again on all the old scenes and vast pleasures,” he started for the continent upon the 20th of October. One carriage was occupied by Isaac Milner and himself, whilst in another followed his mother, sister, and two female relatives. Crossing France to Lyons they embarked upon the Rhone; and whilst dropping down its stream to Avignon, “a voyage of four days under a cloudless sky,” he writes from “just in sight of Valence,—

“TO LORD MUNCASTER, MUNCASTER CASTLE, CUMBERLAND.

“My dear Muncaster,

“With much labour and difficulty, by trying every possible half hour when my eyes would bear writing, I have at last completely got through the answers to all my letters of business, which were accumulating into an immense heap on my table in Bruton Street, whilst I was muttering my wayward fancies on the banks of Windermere; and which, to my sore annoyance and discomfort, I have brought in my chaise into the heart of France. At last they are gone, and the devil go with them. For the first time since I have been out, I now take up my pen without reluctance, to give you a little

account of my proceedings since we parted at the foot of Hardknot.

“I stayed at Rayrigg a very few days, exploring every quarter, in order to select some spot for my future residence, blest with a more than common share of beauty: but though I saw several where I could be content to fix myself, if the eye alone were to be consulted in the choice, yet as long as one lives in this gross world one must have regard to matters of a more ignoble kind, and a less refined nature. Some situations were rejected because I should be too far from Kendal market, others because of their distance from the great boat; and at last, after a most accurate examination of the whole lake, I left the country without deciding any thing, but sorely sinning against that commandment which forbids our coveting our neighbour’s house; for near Brathay Bridge there is a field which is in all respects supereminent, but which, as it is very near the house of the gentleman who lately bought the Brathay estate, I have no hopes of being able to purchase, except upon one ground, that, I mean, of the owner’s being insensible to its value; a conclusion to which one is naturally led, when one recollects how *pure white* he has made the bridge; and though in all cases I now agree with Lady Muncaster, that gray is better, yet I don’t know if to gain Mr. Law’s consent to sell me his field, I should not be induced to promise him to make my house, stables, and every foot of building about me, as white as white can be. Well, after leaving Westmoreland I repaired to London, and spent about ten days in that neighbourhood, chiefly vibrating between Wimbledon and Brighthelmstone, and preparing for my journey into foreign parts, where I have been proceeding by slow marches ever since, with my mother, a couple of sick cousins, very good girls, whose health we hope to re-establish by the change of air, and a most intelligent and excellent friend of mine, a tutor of a college in Cambridge, whose wig I see excites no small astonishment in the Gallic perruquiers: he has equipped himself, however, with one of a smaller size, which he is to put on

when we fix. At present we are sitting in our carriage in a boat, and driving down the Rhone to Avignon. The scenes are more romantic and wonderful than any one can conceive, except an inhabitant of Cumberland; and in truth, they are so like your north country, that my thoughts would naturally recur to Eskdale, from the similarity of the surrounding objects, if they had nought else to lead them thither; but this, my dear Muncaster, you will do me the justice to believe, is not the case; and I assure you I have often been looking out of your window, when you have not seen me, and been endeavouring thus to live over again the pleasant days I passed with you in Cumberland. I frequently ramble in the wood, and I assure you I approve of your alteration in front, even more than I expected; for it does still better in theory than in practice. You, I suppose, are about this time encountering a more formidable antagonist, and if you are not a better sailor than myself, who was desperately sick between Dover and Calais though in the finest morning I ever beheld, you are sincerely to be pitied in your passage across the Irish Channel. When you get across, I hope your troubles will be over; and it will give me pleasure to learn this from you on two grounds, both because I shall conclude your private concerns are brought to a desirable issue, and I shall hope that public matters are in a better train than when they were last the subject of our conversation. The *cœlum non animam mutant* is strictly true with respect to me; for though I am five hundred miles from the white cliffs of Albion, yet I do not feel my anxiety diminished either for 'the General'* or the other friends I have left behind me: I beg you will bear this in mind, and satisfy me of the existence and well-being of one of them. You have no excuse, whose eyes are as stout as the rest of your carcass; and a book on one's knee is as good a writing-table as a plank put through the fore window of the post chaise. I shall direct to you at Muncaster, where if you are, I beg my best remembrances to Lady M. and my

* Mr. Pitt.

little friends, Gamel and Penny. Believe me, dear Muncaster,

Yours very sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Nov. 12, 1784.

His daily journal proves him to have been an acute observer of men and manners, as well as of the various objects of interest, which presented themselves on his tour. His record of Sunday travelling, and attendance on balls, and other places of public amusement, corroborates the impression made by the casual profanity of the letter to Lord Muncaster, that, though upon the verge of the important event which gave its colour and importance to his subsequent career, he was as yet wholly free from the influence of those principles, which through a long life "he adorned in all things." The party made some stay at Nice, during which one entry in his Diary is as follows:—

"Out at assemblies and balls frequently. Gave dinners often."

In these scenes he was constantly accompanied by Milner, whose vivacity and sense, joined with rustic and unpolished manners, continually amused his friends.— "Pretty boy, pretty boy," uttered in the broadest Yorkshire dialect, whilst he stroked familiarly his head, was the mode in which he first addressed the young Prince William of Gloucester. "Though Milner's religious principles were even now, in theory, much the same as in later life, yet they had at this time little practical effect upon his conduct. He was free from every taint of vice but not more attentive than others to religion;" (though a clergyman, he never thought of reading prayers during their whole stay at Nice;) "he appeared in all respects like an ordinary man of the world, mixing like myself in all companies, and joining as readily as others in the prevalent Sunday parties. Indeed, when I engaged him as a companion in my tour, I knew not that he had any deeper principles. The first time I discovered it, was at the public table at Scarborough. The conversation turned on Mr. Stillingfleet; and I spoke of

him as a good man, but one who carried things too far. 'Not a bit too far,' said Milner; and to this opinion he adhered, when we renewed the conversation in the evening on the sands. This declaration greatly surprised me; and it was agreed that at some future time we would talk the matter over. Had I known at first what his opinions were, it would have decided me against making him the offer: so true is it that a gracious hand leads us in ways that we know not, and blesses us not only without, but even against, our plans and inclinations."* The imperfect recollection which he now retained of what he had seen and felt, when beneath his uncle's roof at Wimbledon, made him the more ready to condemn, as extravagance and methodism, all serious attention to religion; and this tendency had doubtless been increased by his attendance at Mr. Lindsey's meeting, which he frequented, "not from any preference for his peculiar doctrines, for in this, except on some great festivals, his preaching differed little from that which was then common amongst the London clergy, but because he seemed more earnest and practical than others." Milner, on the contrary, though deficient in practical religion, knew enough to regard it with reverence in others, and whenever his lively companion treated it with raillery, would seriously combat his objections, adding, "I am no match for you, Wilberforce, in this running fire, but if you really wish to discuss these subjects seriously, I will gladly enter on them with you." No great impression could be expected on another from reasonings which so little influenced himself; and their discussions appear to have been merely speculative up to the period of their quitting Nice in the winter of 1784-5. Just before this journey, Mr. Wilberforce took up casually a little volume, (Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion*,) which Mr. Unwin, Cowper's correspondent, had given to the mother of one amongst his fellow-travellers, and casting his eye over it hastily, asked Milner what was its character.—"It is one of the best books ever written," was his answer; "let us take it with us and read it on our journey." He easily con-

* Memorand. by Mr. W.

sented, and they read it carefully together, with thus much effect, that he determined at some future season to examine the Scriptures for himself, and see if things were stated there in the same manner. In this journey he was alone with Milner.*

Leaving his family at Nice, he returned to support the cause of parliamentary reform. The journey across France at that season of the year was not then accomplished without some risks. Leaving summer behind them at Nice, they travelled from Antibes, through eighteen days of snow. Once upon the hills of Burgundy, as they climbed a frozen road, the weight of their carriage overpowered the horses, and it was just running over a frightful precipice, when Milner, who was walking behind, perceived the danger, and by a sudden effort of his great strength of muscle arrested its descent. Feb. 22d, he reached London. "Took up my quarters at Pitt's."

During the remainder of the session he attended constantly in his place, and took part occasionally in the debates. He still lived in a constant round of company and amusement, dining twice or three times a week with Mr. Pitt—joining in the festivities in which Dundas delighted at Wimbledon and Richmond; whilst "sitting up all night singing—shirked Duchess of Gordon at Almack's—danced till five in the morning;" are fair samples of the common descriptions of his days. Yet already, amongst these lighter memorials, there appears from time to time a new tone of deeper feeling.—"Dined Hamilton's—christening—very indecent—all laughing round. Opera—shocking dance of *Festin de Pierre*, and unmoved audience. S. and I talked—strange that the most generous men and religious, do not see that their duties increase with their fortune, and that they will be punished for spending it in eating, &c. Sir G. Beaumont and Lady, Phipps, &c. to dine with me at Wimbledon—Phipps's chat from Locke to New Testament." But these thoughts were as yet entirely specu-

* See Appendix.

lative; exercising no apparent influence upon his conduct. The session which had been expected to terminate in May, was not concluded at the end of June, and before he could leave town on his return to Provence the increasing heat of summer had emptied Nice. Genoa was fixed on for their rendezvous; and thither the ladies were adventurous enough to sail in a felucca under the sole escort of their courier. Here they were joined by Mr. Wilberforce and I. Milner, upon the 7th of July, and on the 11th set out together on their road to Switzerland. They travelled as in their former journey, and the conversation between Mr. Wilberforce and Milner became more important than before. They began, as Milner had proposed, to read the Greek Testament, and to examine carefully the doctrines which it taught. From Genoa they went by Turin to Geneva, and fell in there with several of their English friends. From Geneva the party passed on to Berne, whence he wrote playfully to his friend in Cumberland.

TO LORD MUNCASTER.

" Berne, 14th Aug. 1785.

" Dear Muncaster,

That a man who has been for the last week environed by eternal snows, and hemmed in by the Shreckhorn, and the Wetterhorn, and the Jungfrau, should stoop to take notice of a grovelling being, who crawls along the level surface of the county of Cumberland, is an instance of genuine steadiness and equal serenity of temper, which will not pass unobserved and unadmired before so accurate an observer as yourself. Yet I dare say you think yourself most magnificent, with your Hard-knot and Wrynose, and discover in your Lilliput, risings and fallings invisible to the grosser organs of the inhabitant of Brobdignag.—If you read on thus far, I am sure your patience will hold out no longer, and my letter goes into the fire, which in your cold part of the world you will certainly be sitting over when my packet arrives, about the end of the month. You then go to Lady

Muncaster, and with a glance on your sevenfold shield, on which the setting sun is gleaming with a brilliancy which would throw a stoic into raptures, you lament over me as a poor, infatuated, perverted renegade, 'false to my gods, my country, and my father.' The greatest punishment your old regard will suffer you to inflict on me, will be a perpetual condemnation to breathe the air of the House of Commons, and to have no other ideas of a country prospect, or a country life, than can be collected from a stare from Richmond Hill, or a dinner at the Star and Garter. No, Muncaster, I am no renegade. True to my first love, a long and intimate acquaintance has made me find out so many excellences and perfections that my affections are not to be changed, though in the course of my travels I see a fairer face, or a more exquisite symmetry,

'Tis the dear, the blest effect of Celia altogether.'

If therefore you should hear of my taking a country house in one of the Swiss cantons, don't take it for granted that I have forgot the land of promise. Allow now and then a transient infidelity; my constancy shall be unshaken to my true Dulcinea. 'These are my visits, but she is my home.'

But to drop all metaphor, I have never been in any other part of the world, for which I could quit a residence in England with so little regret: God grant that the public and private state of our own country may never reduce it to such a situation as to give this the preference in my esteem. At present I have the same unalterable affection for Old England, founded as I think in reason, or as foreigners would tell me, in prejudice; but I feel sometimes infected with a little of your own anxiety; I fancy I see storms arising, which already 'no bigger than a man's hand,' will by and by overspread and blacken the whole face of heaven. It is not the confusion of parties, and their quarrelling and battling in the House of Commons, which makes me despair of the republic, (if I knew a word half way between 'appre-

hend for' and 'despair,' that would best express my meaning,) but it is the universal corruption and 'profligacy of the times, which taking its rise amongst the rich and luxurious has now extended its baneful influence and spread its destructive poison through the whole body of the people. When the mass of blood is corrupt, there is no remedy but amputation.

I beg my best remembrances to Lady Muncaster, and my little friends, Penny and Gam. Tell the latter if he will meet me at Spa, I will turn him into a pancake as often as he will.

Believe me to be

ever yours most affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

His discussions with Isaac Milner were continued throughout this journey, until "by degrees I imbibed his sentiments, though I must confess with shame, that they long remained merely as opinions assented to by my understanding, but not influencing my heart. My interest in them certainly increased, and at length I began to be impressed with a sense of their importance. Milner, though full of levity on all other subjects, never spoke on this but with the utmost seriousness, and all he said, tended to increase my attention to the subject of religion." So interesting were these conversations now become to him, that his fellow-travellers complained of the infrequency of his visits to their carriage. In this state of feeling he arrived at Spa, and spent almost six weeks in that "curious assemblage from all parts of Europe." Amongst the rest were many of his English friends; and though on some few points he now controverted their opinions, yet in general he joined freely in their ordinary pleasures. "Mrs. Crewe," he says, "cannot believe that I can think it wrong to go to the play. Surprised at hearing that halting on the Sunday was my wish, and not my mother's." Yet though his outward appearance gave little evidence of their existence, deeper feelings were at work beneath. "Often while in the full enjoyment of all that this world could bestow, my con-

science told me that in the true sense of the word, I was not a Christian. I laughed, I sang, I was apparently gay and happy, but the thought would steal across me, 'What madness is all this; to continue easy in a state in which a sudden call out of the world would consign me to everlasting misery, and that, when eternal happiness is within my grasp!' For I had received into my understanding the great truths of the gospel, and believed that its offers were free and universal; and that God had promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that asked for it. At length such thoughts as these completely occupied my mind, and I began to pray earnestly." "Began three or four days ago," he says, Oct. 25th, "to get up very early. In the solitude and self-conversation of the morning had thoughts, which I trust will come to something."—"As soon as I reflected seriously upon these subjects, the deep guilt and black ingratitude of my past life forced itself upon me in the strongest colours, and I condemned myself for having wasted my precious time, and opportunities, and talents." Thus he returned home; another man in his inner being, yet manifesting outwardly so little of the hidden struggle, "that it was not," says one of his companions, "until many months after our return, that I learned what had been passing in his mind."

Upon the 10th of November he reached Wimbledon, and as parliament did not meet until the following February, he was much alone and had leisure to commune with himself. The more he reflected, the deeper became his new impressions. "It was not so much," he has said, "the fear of punishment by which I was affected, as a sense of my great sinfulness in having so long neglected the unspeakable mercies of my God and Saviour; and such was the effect which this thought produced, that for months I was in a state of the deepest depression, from strong convictions of my guilt. Indeed nothing which I have ever read in the accounts of others, exceeded what I then felt." These were now his habitual feelings; carefully concealed from others, and in some measure no doubt dispelled by company, but re-

viving in their full force as soon as he retired into himself.

Whilst this struggle was at its height, he commenced a private Journal, with the view of making himself "humble and watchful." The entries of this private record mark the difficulties and variations of his mind, while they show strikingly the spirit of practical improvement by which he was directed.

"Nov. 24th. Heard the Bible read two hours—Pascal one hour and a quarter—meditation one hour and a quarter—business the same. If ever I take myself from the immediate consideration of serious things, I entirely lose sight of them; this must be a lesson to me to keep them constantly in view. Pitt called, and commended Butler's Analogy—resolved to write to him, and discover to him what I am occupied about: this will save me much embarrassment, and I hope give me more command both of my time and conduct.

"25th. Up at six—private devotions half an hour—Pascal three quarters—to town on business. I feel quite giddy and distracted by the tumult, except when in situations of which I am rather ashamed, as in the stage-coach: the shame, pride; but a useful lesson.—St. Antholyn's—Mr. Foster's—felt much devotion, and wondered at a man who fell asleep during the Psalms: during the sermon I fell asleep myself.—Walked, and stage-coach, to save the expense of a chaise.

"26th. Went out early—wrote to S. and got his answer, very affectionate and kind, God bless him—refused to go to Camden Place, and to Pitt's; but all religious thoughts go off in London—I hope by explaining my situation and feelings, to relieve myself from my embarrassment.

"Sunday, 27th. Up at six—devotions half an hour—Pascal three quarters—Butler three quarters—church—read the Bible, too ramblingly, for an hour—heard Butler, but not attentively, two hours—meditated twenty minutes—hope I was more attentive at church than usual, but serious thoughts vanished the moment I went out of it, and very insensible and cold in the evening

service—some very strong feelings when I went to bed; God turn them to account and in any way bring me to himself. I have been thinking I have been doing well by living alone, and reading generally on religious subjects; I must awake to my dangerous state, and never be at rest till I have made my peace with God. My heart is so hard, my blindness so great, that I cannot get a due hatred of sin, though I see I am all corrupt, and blinded to the perception of spiritual things.

“28th. I hope as long as I live to be the better for the meditation of this evening; it was on the sinfulness of my own heart, and its blindness and weakness. True, Lord, I am wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. What infinite love, that Christ should die to save such a sinner, and how necessary is it He should save us altogether, that we may appear before God with nothing of our own! God grant I may not deceive myself, in thinking I feel the beginnings of gospel comfort. Began this night constant family prayer, and resolved to have it every morning and evening, and to read a chapter when time.

“Tuesday, 29th. I bless God I enjoyed comfort in prayer this evening. I must keep my own unworthiness ever in view. Pride is my greatest stumbling-block; and there is danger in it in two ways—lest it should make me desist from a Christian life, through fear of the world, my friends, &c.; or if I persevere, lest it should make me vain of so doing. In all disputes on religion, I must be particularly on my guard to distinguish it from a zeal for God and his cause. I must consider and set down the marks whereby they may be known from each other. I will form a plan of my particular duty, praying God to enable me to do it properly, and set it before me as a chart of the country, and a map of the road I must travel. Every morning some subject of thought for the hours of walking, lounging, &c. if alone.

“Nov. 30th. Was very fervent in prayer this morning, and thought these warm impressions would never go off. Yet in vain endeavoured in the evening to rouse myself. God grant it may not all prove vain; oh if it does, how

will my punishment be deservedly increased! The only way I find of moving myself, is by thinking of my great transgressions, weakness, blindness, and of God's having promised to supply these defects. But though I firmly believe them, yet I read of future judgment, and think of God's wrath against sinners, with no great emotions. What can so strongly show the stony heart? O God, give me a heart of flesh! Nothing so convinces me of the dreadful state of my own mind, as the possibility, which, if I did not know it from experience, I should believe impossible, of my being ashamed of Christ. Ashamed of the Creator of all things! One who has received infinite pardon and mercy, ashamed of the Dispenser of it, and that in a country where his name is professed! Oh, what should I have done in persecuting times? (Forgot to set down that when my servants came in the first time to family prayer, I felt ashamed.)

"I thought seriously this evening of going to converse with Mr. Newton—waked in the night—obliged to compel myself to think of God."

"Dec. 2d. Resolved again about Mr. Newton. It may do good; he will pray for me; his experience may enable him to direct me to new grounds of humiliation, and it is that only which I can perceive God's Spirit employ to any effect. It can do no harm, for that is a scandalous objection which keeps occurring to me, that if ever my sentiments change, I shall be ashamed of having done it: it can only humble me, and, whatever is the right way, if truth be right I ought to be humbled—but, sentiments change! Kept debating in that unsettled way to which I have used myself, whether to go to London or not, and then how—wishing to save expense, I hope with a good motive, went at last in the stage to town—inquired for old Newton; but found he lived too far off for me to see him—lingered till time to go to Mr. Forster's—much struck with the text, 2 Chron. xv. 2—afterwards walked home."

He now began to open to his friends the change which had passed upon him. His own way he hoped would be clearer when his principles were understood; and the

frank avowal of his altered views was due to those with whom he had lived hitherto in levity and thoughtlessness. Some treated this announcement as the effect of a temporary depression, which social intercourse would soon relieve; one threw angrily his letter in the fire; others knowing that his past life had not been vicious, imagined that he could but turn ascetic, and regretted their expected loss of his social accomplishments and political assistance. He wrote to Mr. Pitt amongst the rest; opening fully the grounds on which he acted, and the bearing of his new principles upon his public conduct—"I told him that though I should ever feel a strong affection for him, and had every reason to believe that I should be in general able to support him, yet that I could no more be so much a party man as I had been before." On the 2d of December "I got," he says, "Pitt's answer—much affected by it—to see him in the morning." "It was full of kindness—nothing I had told him, he said, could affect our friendship; that he wished me always to act as I thought right. I had said that I thought when we met we had better not discuss the topics of my letter. 'Why not discuss them?' was his answer; 'let me come to Wimbledon to-morrow, to talk them over with you.' He thought that I was out of spirits, and that company and conversation would be the best way of dissipating my impressions." Mr. Pitt came the next morning as he had proposed, and found Mr. Wilberforce not unprepared for the discussion. "I had prayed," he says, "to God, I hope with some sincerity, not to lead me into disputing for my own exaltation, but for his glory. Conversed with Pitt near two hours, and opened myself completely to him. I admitted that as far as I could conform to the world, with a perfect regard to my duty to God, myself and my fellow-creatures, I was bound to do it; that no inward feelings ought to be taken as demonstrations of the Spirit being in any man, (was not this too general? 'witnesseth with one Spirit,' &c.) but only the change of disposition and conduct." "He tried to reason me out of my convictions, but soon found himself unable to combat their correctness, if Christianity

were true. The fact is, he was so absorbed in politics, that he had never given himself time for due reflection on religion. But amongst other things he declared to me, that Bishop Butler's work raised in his mind more doubts than it had answered."

Though he now felt more than ever the need of some like-minded associates in the narrow path which lay before him, he could scarcely bring himself to form these new connexions. "Had a good deal of debate with myself," he says, Dec. 3d, "about seeing Newton; but the rather right if I talk upon the subject with those who differ from me, as I am so new to it myself." This self-debate issued in his writing to Mr. Newton,

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

"Dec. 2d., 1785.

"Sir,

There is no need of apology for intruding on you, when the errand is religion. I wish to have some serious conversation with you, and will take the liberty of calling on you for that purpose, in half an hour; when, if you cannot receive me, you will have the goodness to let me have a letter put into my hands at the door, naming a time and place for our meeting, the earlier the more agreeable to me. I have had ten thousand doubts within myself, whether or not I should discover myself to you; but every argument against doing it has its foundation in pride. I am sure you will hold yourself bound to let no one living know of this application, or of my visit, till I release you from the obligation." (What follows, as well as the signature, is torn off.)

"P. S. Remember that I must be secret, and that the gallery of the House is now so universally attended, that the face of a member of parliament is pretty well known."

This letter he took with him, upon Sunday, Dec. 4th, into the city, and delivered it himself "to old Newton at his church." The following Wednesday was named for an interview; and then, says he, "after walking about the Square once or twice before I could persuade

myself, I called upon old Newton—was much affected in conversing with him—something very pleasing and unaffected in him. He told me he always had entertained hopes and confidence that God would some time bring me to Him—that he had heard from J. Thornton we had declined Sunday visits abroad—on the whole he encouraged me—though got nothing new from him, as how could I, except a good hint, that he never found it answer to dispute, and that it was as well not to make visits that one disliked over agreeable. When I came away I found my mind in a calm tranquil state, more humbled, and looking more devoutly up to God.” It was a part of Mr. Newton’s counsel, that he should not hastily form new connexions, nor widely separate from his former friends. This very day, accordingly, he says, “as I promised, I went to Pitt’s—sad work—I went there in fear, and for some time kept an awe on my mind—my feelings lessened in the evening, and I could scarce lift up myself in prayer to God at night.”

“7th. At Holwood—up early and prayed, but not with much warmth—then to the St. John’s at Beckenham. In chaise opened myself to —, who had felt much four years ago when very ill. He says that H. took off his then religious feelings—but query, what did he give him in the room of them! Rather tried to show off at the St. John’s, and completely forgot God—came away in a sad state to town, and was reduced almost to wish myself like others when I saw the carriages and people going to court, &c. With what different sensations of confidence and comfort did I come away from Newton and Beckenham! the one was confidence in myself; the other in God. Got out of town: but instead of mending when alone, as I dismissed all caution, I grew worse, and my mind in a sad state this evening,—could scarcely pray, but will hope and wait on God.—Thursday, 8th. Very cold all day, and dead to religious things, could not warm myself in prayer or meditation; even doubted if I was in the right way: and all generals: no particular objection. O God, deliver me from myself; when I trust to myself I am darkness and weakness.”

He had not yet attained that self-command, which afterwards enabled him to mingle in these gay scenes with an untainted spirit. Yet even now he saw through the gaudy show. "At the levee," he says some weeks before this time, "and then dined at Pitt's—sort of cabinet dinner—was often thinking that pompous Thurlow, and elegant Carmarthen, would soon appear in the same row with the poor fellow who waited behind their chairs." Solitude and self-reflection restored him to himself. "Dec. 9th. God I hope has had mercy on me, and given me again some spark of grace.—Dined at Mrs. Wilberforce's (his aunt)—Mr. Thornton there. How unaffectedly happy he is—oh that I were like him. I grow hardened and more callous than ever—a little moved in prayer, but when I leave my study I cannot keep religious thoughts and impressions on my mind."

"Dec. 11th, Sunday.—Heard Newton on the '*addiction*' of the soul to God. 'They that observe lying vanities shall forsake their own mercy.'—Excellent. He shows his whole heart is engaged. I felt sometimes moved at church, but am still callous.

"12th. More fervent, I hope, in prayer—resolved more in God's strength; therefore, I hope, likely to keep my resolutions—rather shocked at Lady L.'s: these people have no thought of their souls.

"13th. I hope I feel more than I did of divine assistance. May I be enabled to submit to it in distrust of myself. I do not know what to make of myself; but I resolve, under God, to go on. Much struck in Mr. Newton's Narrative, where he says he once persevered two years, and went back again. Oh may I be preserved from relapse! and yet if I cannot stand now, how shall I be able to do it when the struggle comes on in earnest?—I am too intent upon shining in company, and must curb myself here."

"Behold me," he writes to his sister, "by my own fireside, in all the state of an arm-chair, and the peaceable possession of my own time, which I am endeavouring to improve to some more rational purposes than those to which I have in general made it subser-

vient. My studies chiefly point one way, but then it is that way in which it is of infinite importance that our views should be clear and settled. I hope my dear sister will in some degree be the better for them; at least, if nothing else, she will have a proof of my affection, when, as I design, I send her from time to time a sheet full of my lucubrations. Letter-writing, like conversation, should be a transcript of the thoughts for the hour in which one has the pen in hand; and as my thoughts run generally in one current, it would be a violence to attempt to turn the stream into another channel: not that I mean to give up the propriety of 'from grave to gay;' but the one should be the business, the other the relaxation of life; and there is no such firm ground on which to fix the foundation of a perpetual gaiety, (though gaiety but ill expresses my idea,) as to have been grave to good purpose. I will give it a more worthy epithet than gay. Let me call it serenity, tranquillity, composure which is not to be destroyed; though, in the limited degree in which we yet possess it, it may, alas! be ruffled by all the tumult and noise, and even all the accidents and misfortunes, of the world. May you, my dear sister, be possessed of that temper which we can only get one way, but in that may be sure of it."

To this serenity of mind he had not yet attained. "I go off sadly," he says now of himself on different days—"I am colder and more insensible than I was—I ramble—O God, protect me from myself—I never yet think of religion but by constraint—I am in a most doubtful state. To Newton's, but when he prayed I was cold and dead; and the moment we were out of his house, seriousness decayed." "Very wretched—all sense gone." "Colder than ever—very unhappy—called at Newton's, and bitterly moved; he comforted me." Yet some gleams of the coming sunshine even now gladdened him at favoured intervals.

"Tuesday, Dec. 20th. More enlarged and sincere in prayer—went to hear Romaine—dined at the Adelphi: both before and afterwards much affected by serious-

ness. Went to hear Forster, who very good : enabled to join in the prayers with my whole heart, and never so happy in my life, as this whole evening—enlarged in private prayer, and have a good hope towards God.” “Got up Wednesday morning in the same frame of mind, and filled with peace, and hope, and humility ; yet some doubts if all this real, or will be lasting—Newton’s church—he has my leave to mention my case to my aunt and Mr. Thornton—not quite so warm, but still a good hope—I trust God is with me : but he must ever keep beside me ; for I fall the moment I am left to myself. I stayed in town to attend the ordinances, and have been gloriously blest in them.

“23d. I do not find the use of keeping a diary in this way ; I will therefore try how I go on without. I think it rather makes me satisfied with myself, by leading me to compare the number of hours I spend seriously with those others do ; when all depends on doing it to good purpose. Was strengthened in prayer, and trust I shall be able to live more to God, which determined to do—much affected by Doddridge’s directions for spending time, and hope to conform to them in some degree : it must be by force at first, for I find I perpetually wander from serious thoughts when I am off my guard.

“24th. Up very early, and passed some hours tolerably, according to my resolutions ; but indolence comes upon me. Resolved to practise Doddridge’s rules, and prayed to God to enable me. I wish to take the sacrament to-morrow, that it may fix this variable, and affect this senseless heart, which of itself is dead alike to all emotions of terror and gratitude in spiritual things.”

He did not venture to communicate according to his wish : he had learned to view the eucharist rather as an act of self-dedication than as a means of grace ; or the spirit which induced him to record, “there is nothing so blessed to me as the gospel ordinances,” would have led him at this season to the table of the Lord. His diligence in using all the means of grace was a striking feature of his new character. “What my heart most impels me now to say to you,” he writes to his sister,

“is ‘Search the Scriptures,’ and with all that earnestness and constancy which that book claims in which ‘are the words of eternal life.’ Never read it without praying to God that he will open your eyes to understand it; for the power of comprehending it comes from him, and him only. ‘Seek and ye shall find,’ says our Saviour; ‘Take heed how ye hear;’ which implies, that unless we seek, and diligently too, we shall not find; and, unless we take heed, we shall be deceived in hearing. There is no opinion so fatal as that which is commonly received in *these liberal* days, that a person is in a safe state with respect to a future world, if he acts tolerably up to his knowledge and convictions, though he may not have taken much pains about acquiring this knowledge or fixing these convictions.” What he pressed on her he diligently practised. He now spent several hours daily in earnest study of the Scripture; he took lodgings in the Adelphi, that he might be within reach of pastoral instructions which simply inculcated its truths; and he began to seek the friendship of those who feared God. He withdrew his name from all the clubs of which he was a member—a precaution, which he thought essential to his safety in the critical circumstances in which he was placed. “Living in town,” he says, “disagrees with me, I must endeavour to find Christian converse in the country.” To this he was seasonably invited two days afterward, by his near connexion Mr. Thornton.

TO WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

“Clapham, Dec. 24.

“My dear Sir,

You may easier conceive than I can express the satisfaction I had from a few minutes’ converse with Mr. Newton yesterday afternoon. As in nature, so in grace, what comes very quickly forward, rarely abides long: I am aware of your difficulties, which call for great prudence and caution. Those that believe, must not make haste, but be content to go God’s pace, and

watch the leadings of his providence, as of the pillar and the cloud formerly. There is a danger in running from church to church to hear: more profit is obtained under one or two ministers. You cannot be too wary in forming connexions. The fewer new friends, perhaps, the better. I shall at any time be glad to see you here, and can quarter you, and let you be as retired as possible, and hope we shall never be on a footing of ceremony.

I am, my dear Sir,

Your most devoted kinsman,

JOHN THORNTON."

"Jan. 11th. To town and Woolnooth—after church, brought Mr. Newton down in chaise—dined and slept at Wimbledon—composure and happiness of a true Christian: he read the account of his poor niece's death, and shed tears of joy. 12th. Newton stayed—Thornton Astell surprised us together on the common in the evening. Expect to hear myself now universally given out to be a methodist: may God grant it may be said with truth."

To his mother, who had been alarmed by some such rumour, he explained soon afterwards his real sentiments. "It is not, believe me, to my own imagination, or to any system formed in my closet, that I look for my principles; it is to the very source to which you refer me, the Scriptures. . . . All that I contend for is, that we should really make this book the criterion of our opinions and actions, and not read it and then think that we do so of course; but if we do this, we must reckon on not finding ourselves able to comply with all those customs of the world, in which many who call themselves Christians are too apt to indulge without reflection . . . we must of course [therefore] be subject to the charge of excess and singularity. But in what will this singularity consist? Not merely in indifferent things: no, in these our Saviour always conformed, and took occasion to check an unnecessary strictness into

which he saw men were led by overstraining a good principle. In what then will these peculiarities appear? Take our great Master's own words: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself.' It would be easy to dilate on this text; and I am afraid that we should find at the close of the discourse that the picture was very unlike the men of this world. But 'who is my neighbour?' Here, too, our Saviour has instructed us by the parable which follows. It is evident we are to consider our peculiar situations, and in these to do all the good we can. Some men are thrown into public, some have their lot in private life. These different states have their corresponding duties; and he whose destination is of the former sort, will do as ill to immure himself in solitude, as he who is only a village Hampden would, were he to head an army or address a senate. What I have said will, I hope, be sufficient to remove any apprehensions that I mean to shut myself up either in my closet in town, or in my hermitage in the country. No, my dear mother, in my circumstances this would merit no better name than desertion; and if I were thus to fly from the post where Providence has placed me, I know not how I could look for the blessing of God upon my retirement: and without this heavenly assistance, either in the world or in solitude our own endeavours will be equally ineffectual. When I consider the particulars of my duty, I blush at the review; but my shame is not occasioned by my thinking that I am too studiously diligent in the business of life; on the contrary, I then feel that I am serving God best when from proper motives I am most actively engaged in it. What humbles me is, the sense that I forego so many opportunities of doing good; and it is my constant prayer, that God will enable me to serve him more steadily, and my fellow-creatures more assiduously: and I trust that my prayers will be granted through the intercession of that Saviour 'by whom' only 'we have access with confidence into his grace wherein we stand;'

and who has promised that he will lead on his people from strength to strength, and gradually form them to a more complete resemblance of their divine original."

"Watch and pray," he wrote earnestly to his sister; "read the word of God, imploring that true wisdom which may enable you to comprehend and fix it in your heart, that it may gradually produce its effect under the operation of the Holy Spirit, in renewing the mind and purifying the conduct. This it will do more and more the longer we live under its influence; and it is to the honour of religion, that those who when they first began to run the Christian course, were in extremes . . . enthusiastical, perhaps, or rigidly severe . . . will often by degrees lose their several imperfections, which though by the world laid unfairly to the account of their religion, were yet undoubtedly so many disparagements to it: . . . like some of our Westmoreland evenings, when though in the course of the day the skies have been obscured by clouds and vapours, yet towards its close the sun beams forth with unsullied lustre, and descends below the horizon in the full display of all his glories: shall I pursue the metaphor, just to suggest, that this is the earnest of a joyful rising, which will not be disappointed? The great thing we have to do is to be perpetually reminding ourselves that we are but strangers and pilgrims, having no abiding city, but looking for a city which hath foundations; and by the power of habit which God has been graciously pleased to bestow upon us, our work will every day become easier, if we accustom ourselves to cast our care on him, and labour in a persuasion of his co-operation. The true Christian will desire to have constant communion with his Saviour. The eastern nations had their talismans, which were to advertise them of every danger, and guard them from every mischief. Be the love of Christ our talisman."

Upon Good Friday, April 14th, he communicated; and upon the following Easter Sunday enters in his Journal: "At Stock with the Unwins—day delightful, out almost all of it—communicated—very happy."

TO MISS WILBERFORCE.

“Stock, April 16, 1786.

“About five o'clock yesterday I put myself into a post-chaise, and in four hours found myself safely lodged with the vicar of Stock.* It is more than a month since I slept out of town, and I feel all that Milton attributes to the man who has been

‘long in populous cities pent,
Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air.’

I scarce recollect to have spent so pleasant a day as that which is now nearly over. My heart opens involuntarily to Unwin and his wife; I fancy I have been with them every day since we first became acquainted at Nottingham, and expand to them with all the confidence of a twelve years' intimacy. Can my dear sister wonder that I call on her to participate in the pleasure I am tasting. I know how you sympathize in the happiness of those you love, and I could not therefore forgive myself if I were to keep my raptures to myself, and not invite you to partake of my enjoyment. The day has been delightful. I was out before six, and made the fields my oratory, the sun shining as bright and as warm as at midsummer. I think my own devotions become more fervent when offered in this way amidst the general chorus, with which all nature seems on such a morning to be swelling the song of praise and thanksgiving; and except the time that has been spent at church and at dinner, . . . and neither in the sanctuary nor at table I trust, had I a heart unwarmed with gratitude to the Giver of all good things . . . I have been all day basking in the sun. On any other day I should not have been so happy: a sense that I was neglecting the duties of my situation might have interrupted the course of my enjoyments, and have taken from their *totality*; for in such a situation as mine every moment may be made useful to the happiness of my fellow-creatures. But the sabbath

* Rev. J. Unwin.

is a season of rest, in which we may be allowed to unbend the mind, and give a complete loose to those emotions of gratitude and admiration, which a contemplation of the works, and a consideration of the goodness, of God cannot fail to excite in a mind of the smallest sensibility. And surely this sabbath, of all others, is that which calls forth these feelings in a supreme degree; a frame of united love and triumph well becomes it, and holy confidence and unrestrained affection. May every sabbath be to me, and to those I love, a renewal of these feelings, of which the small tastes we have in this life should make us look forward to that eternal rest, which awaits the people of God; when the whole will be a never-ending enjoyment of those feelings of love and joy and admiration and gratitude, which are, even in the limited degree we here experience them, the truest sources of comfort; when these, I say, will dictate perpetual songs of thanksgiving without fear and without satiety. My eyes are bad, but I could not resist the impulse I felt to call on you and tell you how happy I have been."

CHAPTER IV.

Progress of Religious Character.

IN the spring of 1786, Mr. Wilberforce returned an altered man to his business in the House of Commons. There were indeed no external symptoms to announce the change which had passed over him. "Though I had told Pitt," he says, "that I could not promise him unqualified support, I was surprised to find how generally we agreed." Yet many silent intimations now bespoke the presence of higher motives than a mere desire of personal distinction, by which he confesses himself to have

been too much influenced previous to this period. Besides his attention to the general business of the House, he was especially interested in two important measures, both of which failed in the House of Lords. In the latter part of the session, delighting to escape even for a single night from London, he "began to sleep constantly at Wimbledon," yet thinking it an unfavourable "situation for his servants," a needless increase of his personal expenses, and a cause of some loss of time, he determined to forego in future the luxury of such a villa. The influence of his new principles was rapidly pervading all his conduct. After a public breakfast given at this time he subjected himself to the severest scrutiny. "In how sad a state," he says, "is my soul to-day! Yesterday, when I had company at Wimbledon, I gave the reins to [myself]; sometimes forgetting, at others acting in defiance of God. If Christ's promise, that he will hear those who call upon him, were less direct and general, I durst not plead for mercy, but should fall into despair; and from what I perceive of the actual workings of my soul, the next step would be an abandoning of myself to all impiety. But Christ has graciously promised that he will be made unto us not redemption only but sanctification. O! give me a new heart, and put a right spirit within me, that I may keep thy statutes and do them. This week has been sadly spent; I will keep a more strict watch over myself by God's grace."

To maintain this watch over himself was the great effort of his life; and his Diary abounds with evidences of the care he exercised to use his time with a constant reference to his accountability to God. About this time he establishes rules for his conduct, and resolves to try "to animate himself to a strict observance of them, by thinking of what Christ did and suffered for us, and that this life will soon be over, when a sabbath will remain for the people of God." After participating in the Lord's Supper, he expresses his doubt whether he had not done so hastily, though he thought it not right to suffer himself to be determined by momentary feelings. "I do not think," he says on this occasion, "that I have a suffi-

ciently strong conviction of sin, yet I see plainly that I am an ungrateful, stupid, guilty creature. I believe that Christ died that all such who would throw themselves on him, renouncing every claim of their own, and relying on his assurance of free pardon, might be reconciled to God, and receive the free gift of his Holy Spirit, to renew them after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness; and I hope in time to find such a change wrought by degrees in myself, as may evidence to me that he has called me from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

After the close of the session, he joined his mother and sister in a visit to Wilford, the seat of his cousin, Mr. Samuel Smith. His first care was to recommend his new opinions by greater kindness in domestic life. Strange rumours of his altered habits had preceded his arrival, and his mother was prepared to mourn over eccentric manners and enthusiastic principles. All that she observed was greater kindness and evenness of temper. "It may tend," he had written down before he joined her as a rule for his observance, "to remove prejudices of . . . if I am more kind and affectionate than ever,—consult her more—show respect for her judgment, and manifest rather humility in myself than dissatisfaction concerning others." His habitual cheerfulness, and the patient forbearance of a temper naturally quick, could not escape her notice; and a friend who had shared in her suspicions, remarked shrewdly, when they parted company, "If this is madness, I hope that he will bite us all."

A sense of his deficiency in the power of steady application, led him to set about educating himself. Various and accurate were now his studies, but the book which he studied most carefully, and by which perhaps above all others, his mental faculties were perfected, was the Holy Scripture. This he read and weighed and pondered over, studying its connexion and details, and mastering especially, in their own tongue, the apostolical epistles. This was his chief occupation at Wilford. It was now his daily care to instruct his understanding and

discipline his heart. Nor was it an easy path upon which he had set out. Though its later stages were gladdened by a settled peace, at this period almost every entry of his Journal records a struggle and a conflict. "At church, I wander more than ever," he says, July 30th, "and can scarce keep awake—my thoughts are always straying. Do thou, O God, set my affections on purer pleasures. Christ should be a Christian's delight and glory. I will endeavour by God's help to excite in myself an anxiety and longing for the joys of heaven, and for deliverance from this scene of ingratitude and sin; yet, mistake not impatience under the fatigues of the combat for a lawful and indeed an enjoined earnestness for, and anticipation of the crown of victory. I say solemnly in the presence of God this day, that were I to die, I know not what would be my eternal portion. If I live in some degree under the habitual impression of God's presence, yet I cannot, or rather I will not, keep true to him; and every night I have to look back on a day misemployed, or not improved with fervency and diligence. O God! do thou enable me to live more to thee, to look to Jesus with a single eye, and by degrees to have the renewed nature implanted in me, and the heart of stone removed." And again, a fortnight later, he says, "I see plainly the sad way in which I am going on. Of myself I have not power to change it. Do thou, O thou Saviour of sinners, have mercy on me, and let me not be an instance of one who having month after month despised thy goodness and long-suffering, has treasured up to himself wrath against the day of wrath. The sense of God's presence seldom stays on my mind when I am in company; and at times I even have doubts and difficulties about the truth of the great doctrines of Christianity." Yet in spite of difficulties he was resolved to persevere.—"With God," he reasons with himself, "nothing is impossible. Work out then thy own salvation. Purify thy heart, thou double-minded—labour to enter into that rest. The way is narrow; the enemies are many, to thee particularly; . . . rich, great, &c. . . but then we have God and Christ on our

side : we have heavenly armour ; the crown is everlasting life, and the struggle how short, compared with the eternity which follows it ! Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." While he thus encouraged himself, hoping against hope, there were at times already on his path gleams of brighter light. "On this day," he says, August 24th, "I complete my twenty-seventh year. What reason have I for humiliation and gratitude ! May God, for Christ's sake, increase my desire to acquire the Christian temper and live the Christian life, and enable me to carry this desire into execution." A few days later he adds, "I am just returned from receiving the sacrament. I was enabled to be earnest in prayer, and to be contrite and humble under a sense of my unworthiness, and of the infinite mercy of God in Christ. I hope that I desire from my heart to lead henceforth a life more worthy of the Christian profession. May it be my meat and drink to do the will of God, my Father. May he daily renew me by his Holy Spirit, and may I walk before him in a frame made up of fear, and gratitude, and humble trust, and assurance of his fatherly kindness and constant concern for me."

This progress was the fruit of unremitting toil and watchfulness. "My chief temptations," he says, "against which to guard this week particularly, are, first,—My thoughts wandering when reading or doing any thing. Secondly,—Losing sight of God in company and at meals. This often begins by an affected vivacity. Thirdly,—I am apt to favour my wandering temper by too short and broken periods of study. To form my plan as carefully as I can to prevent these. Think how to serve those you are in the house with—in the village—your constituents. Look to God through Christ . . . How does my experience convince me that true religion is to maintain communion with God, and that it all goes together.—Let this be a warning . . . Contempt of this world in itself, and views constantly set upon the next. Frequent aspirations. To call in at some houses in the

village. To endeavour to keep my mind in a calm; humble frame—not too much vivacity. To put my prayers into words to prevent wandering. Consider always before you take up any book what is your peculiar object in reading it, and keep that in view. Recollect all you read is then only useful when applied to purify the heart and life, or to fit you for the better discharge of its duties. To recapitulate verbally, *discutiendi causâ*. Let me try by prayer and contemplation to excite strong desires for future heavenly joys—to trust less to my own resolutions and more to Christ.”

These extended extracts from his Diary exhibit not only a constant growth in the knowledge of his own sinfulness and weakness, but a more continual looking to Christ and trusting in Him, both as the ground of his hope towards God, and the source of his supplies of strength to resist temptation. On his return toward London he wrote to Lord Muncaster, concluding as follows:—

“O my dear Muncaster, how can we go on as if present things were to last for ever, when so often reminded ‘that the fashion of this world passes away!’ Every day I live I see greater reason in considering this life but as a passage to another. And when summoned to the tribunal of God, to give an account of all things we have done in the body, how shall we be confounded by the recollection of those many instances, in which we have relinquished a certain eternal for an uncertain transitory good! You are not insensible to these things, but you think of them rather like a follower of Socrates than a disciple of Jesus. You see how frankly I deal with you, in truth I can no otherwise so well show the interest I take in your happiness: these thoughts are uppermost in my heart, and they will come forth when I do not repress my natural emotions. Oh that they had a more prevailing influence over my disposition and conduct; then might I hope to afford men occasion ‘to glorify our Father which is in heaven;’ and I should manifest the superiority of the principle which actuated

me, by the more than ordinary spirit and activity by which my parliamentary, my domestic, and all my other duties were marked and characterized."

He was soon after fixed at Bath, by the advice of his friend and physician, Mr. Hey; schooling his own heart as carefully amongst its crowded scenes, as he had done in the domestic privacy of Wilford. "I am too apt," he says, Nov. 18th, "to be considering how far I may advance towards sin, in animal indulgences particularly; not remembering that a Christian's life is hid with Christ in God, that he ought to have more satisfaction in offering the little sacrifices God requires, as the willing tribute of a grateful heart, than in gratifying fleshly appetites; and that he should look for his happiness in fellowship with God, and view with jealousy whatever tends to break in on this communion. I am apt to be thinking it enough to spend so many hours in reading, religious service, study, &c. What a sad sign is this! how different from that delight in the law and service of God in the inner man, which St. Paul speaks of, and which was so eminent in David! O my God, for the sake of thy beloved Son, our propitiation, through whom we may have access to the throne of grace, give me a new heart—give me a real desire and earnest longing for one. I have got a trick of congratulating myself when I look at my watch, or the clock strikes, 'Well, one hour more of this day is gone.' What ingratitude is this to God, who spares this cumberer of the ground from day to day, to give him time for repentance!" "Walk charitably," he writes down as his law; "wherever you are be on your guard, remembering that your conduct and conversation may have some effect on the minds of those with whom you are, in rendering them more or less inclined to the reception of Christian principles, and the practice of a Christian life. Be ready with subjects for conversation,—for private thought, as Watts and Doddridge recommend.—This week to find opportunities for M. B. and to endeavour to impress her deeply with a sense of the importance of the one thing needful, and to convince

her that the loose religion and practice of common professors is not the religion and practice of the Bible."

CHAPTER V.

Establishes Society for Reformation of Morals.—Commences Efforts for Abolition of Slave Trade.

EARLY in the following year he was again in London, attending in his place in parliament. But his thoughts were principally occupied through this spring in concerting measures for a public effort at reforming manners. He had been roused out of a deadly lethargy, and when he looked around him on the aspect of society, he saw how universal was the evil from which he had himself escaped. He could not wonder that the gay and busy world were almost ignorant of Christianity, amidst the lukewarmness and apathy which possessed the very watchmen of the faith. There was needed some Reformer of the nation's morals, who should raise his voice in the high places of the land: and do within the church and near the throne, what Wesley, who had recently arisen with a giant's strength, had accomplished in the meeting, and with the multitude. To this high and self-denying office he aspired: "God," he says, "has set before me as my object the reformation of [my country's] manners." Having once accepted this commission, he devoted all his powers to its fulfilment, and for years kept it steadily in view in all his undertakings. His first great effort was suggested by Dr. Woodward's "History of the Society for the Reformation of Manners in the year 1692." He proposed to form a similar association, to resist the spread of open immorality. This had been the second object of the earlier society, its first aim being the edification of its members. "I am conscious," he

tells Mr. Hey, "that ours is an infinitely inferior aim, yet surely it is of the utmost consequence, and worthy of the labours of a whole life." In this zealous spirit he undertook the work. He endeavoured to infuse amongst his numerous friends a determination to resist the growing vices of the times.

The plan which he adopted was to obtain a Royal Proclamation against vice and immorality, and then suggest the formation of an association for carrying it into effect.

His first object was to prevail upon the bishops to become members of the new association; and to effect this, he resolved upon applying personally to as many as he could, when they had retired to their respective sees. He wished to communicate with them individually, lest the scruples of a few might prevent the acquiescence of the rest; and he could not issue circulars without putting himself forward as the avowed author of the plan. "In your several disclosures," he tells his friend Lord Muncaster, "the less you introduce my name the better. When the several parties come to compare notes hereafter, it may appear as if I had been unseasonably, I had almost said, impertinently active, and I should grievously regret any personal jealousy which might operate to the prejudice of the great object which we have in view."

He determined therefore to travel round the country to the residence of those whose countenance he hoped to gain; and upon the 21st of June, in spite of the fatigues of the last session, and a strong desire "to put off this whole business for a time, and allow myself a course of the Bath waters . . . since it might be dangerous to suffer the impression which the Proclamation may have produced to wear away, before I am so firm as not to fear my gentlemen drawing back," he set off from London without communicating to any one the purpose of his journey. He spared no labour to obtain his object, visiting in succession the episcopal residences of the prelates of Worcester, Hereford, Norwich, Lincoln, York, and Lichfield, and gaining many of the bishops

as the first promoters of his scheme. He called too upon many influential laymen.

In his various applications he was no stranger to refusals of co-operation.—“So you wish, young man,” said a nobleman whose house he visited, “you wish to be a reformer of men’s morals. Look then, and see there what is the end of such reformers,” pointing as he spoke to a picture of the crucifixion—no likely argument to disarm a Christian warrior. Yet though sometimes opposed, upon the whole his plan succeeded.

The society was soon in active and useful operation. The Duke of Montagu opened his house for its reception, and presided over its meetings,—a post which was filled after his death by the late Lord (Chancellor) Bathurst, who was followed by Bishop Porteus: and before its dissolution it had obtained many valuable acts of parliament, and greatly checked the spread of blasphemous and indecent publications. It afforded also a centre from which many other useful schemes proceeded, and was the first example of those various associations, which soon succeeded to the apathy of former years.

By the autumn of this year it was so well established as no longer to require the personal attention of its founder. He therefore left London, and after a short tour in Devonshire fixed himself at Bath. “I find here,” writes Hannah More, “a great many friends; but those with whom I have chiefly passed my time are Mr. Wilberforce’s family. That young gentleman’s character is one of the most extraordinary I ever knew for talents, virtue, and piety. It is difficult not to grow wiser and better every time one converses with him.”

At Bath Mr. Wilberforce was for a while removed from the full press of business; and had leisure for more serious contemplation, than was possible in the seasons of active exertion.—“By God’s help,” he writes, “I will set vigorously about reform. I believe one cause of my having so fallen short is my having aimed no higher. Lord Bacon says, great changes are easier than small ones. Remember, thy situation abounding in comforts

requires thee to be peculiarly on thy guard, lest when thou hast eaten and art full thou forget God."

About the same period he remarks, "It is now a year and three quarters since I began to have a serious concern for my soul; little did I then think that this time would have passed to no better purpose. Two sessions of parliament gone over, and nothing done for the interests of religion," and then enters, with the humility which was so strikingly characteristic of his mind, expressions of deep compunction for what he styles his negligence.

Yet though so little satisfied with his parliamentary exertions, this year had been in one respect the very crisis of his usefulness. In it he had been led publicly to devote himself to his great work, the Abolition of the Slave Trade. This was the fruit of his religious change; and it is the more necessary distinctly to establish this, because there has gone forth an opinion most injurious to the real spring of all his labours, that he was led by accident to undertake this cause. Thus the late venerable C. Ignatius Latrobe attributed to Lady Middleton the honourable work of having called the appointed champion to the lists: and others, besides Mr. Latrobe, have imagined that the like merit was claimed by Mr. Clarkson, in his "History of Abolition."

Some extracts from a letter which Mr. L. wrote in 1815 to his daughter, will furnish an interesting statement of his view of this matter.

"As I happen to know more about that business than many others, I have sometimes been called upon to give my opinion, and, on a certain occasion, did it with such effect, that I was desired to commit it to writing for the information of the public.—What I have heard and seen of those movements which ended in the abolition of the slave trade, if admitted to be correct, will be my warrant for asserting, that this great and momentous event was brought about by the instrumentality of a *woman*.

"When Sir Charles Middleton (afterwards Lord Barham) commanded a man-of-war, he had a surgeon on

board whose name was Ramsay. Sir Charles went to the West Indies, where Mr. Ramsay married a lady of St. Kitt's. It was thought most convenient that Mr. Ramsay should settle in that island, and as he had an inclination to enter into the church, and a living offered, he came home, took orders, and became a clergyman. In St. Kitt's he saw a great deal of the manner of treating the negroes, and felt the greatest pity for them. But having become acquainted with the horrors of the trade, by which they were obtained, he was still more shocked with the indignities and cruelties suffered by those poor creatures on their passage from Africa to the islands, and with the brutal manner of their being bought and sold like cattle. How long he stayed in St. Kitt's I have not the means of ascertaining; but after some years he received a vocation to the living of Teston, near Maidstone in Kent. Here his diligence, usefulness, and urbanity of manners soon brought him into great favour with the family, especially as his mild and charitable disposition well accorded with that of his patroness Mrs. Bouverie and her friend Lady Middleton.—In the course of his frequent conversations, the state of the slaves in the West Indies, and the abominable traffic in human flesh and blood, came into discussion. The ladies were shocked with the details given them by Mr. Ramsay. Lady Middleton's active mind and indefatigable ardour would not suffer the matter to rest, and she was continually urging Mr. Ramsay to call the attention of the whole nation to such crying sins. To this purpose she wrote him an energetic letter, which you will find in his 'Essay on the Treatment of, and Traffic in, Slaves.' This book caused a great sensation, and raised against Mr. Ramsay a host of enemies. Yet all this which was said and written on the subject might have passed away, and produced as little effect as the declamations and writings of many good men in England and America, and the mental torments experienced and recorded by Mr. Clarkson, but that God put it into the heart of Lady Middleton to venture one step further, and to urge the necessity of bringing the proposed Abo-

lition of the Slave Trade before parliament, as a measure in which the whole nation was concerned.

“This was done in the most natural and simple manner possible, at the conclusion of some very animated expressions of her feelings on considering the national guilt attached to the continuation of such a traffic. Sorry I am, that I did not mark the day when I was witness to that remarkable conversation, which took place at breakfast, Mr. Ramsay, if I mistake not, being present. Lady Middleton, addressing her husband, who was member for Rochester, said, ‘Indeed, Sir Charles, I think you ought to bring the subject before the House, and demand parliamentary inquiry into the nature of a traffic so disgraceful to the British character.’ Sir Charles granted the propriety of such an inquiry; but observed, that the cause would be in bad hands if it was committed to him, who had never yet made one speech in the House; but he added, that he should strenuously support any able member who would undertake it.

“This led to an interchange of opinions, respecting the willingness and fitness of several members who were named to brave the storm, and defend the cause of humanity; when some one mentioned Mr. Wilberforce, who had lately come out, and not only displayed very superior talents and great eloquence, but was a decided and powerful advocate of the cause of truth and virtue, and a friend of the minister. He was then at Hull, and Lady Middleton prevailed on Sir Charles immediately to write to him, and propose the subject. He did so, and communicated the letter he had written to the family, as well as Mr. Wilberforce’s answer which he received a few days after, both of which I heard with these mine ears. Mr. Wilberforce wrote to the following effect; ‘That he felt the great importance of the subject, and thought himself unequal to the task allotted to him, but yet would not positively decline it; adding, that on his return to town he would pay a visit to the family at Teston, and consult with Sir Charles and Lady Middleton, &c. on the subject.’

“After Mr. Wilberforce’s return from Yorkshire he visited the family at Teston, as proposed; and as he endeavoured to make himself master of the subject, and from every accessible quarter to obtain information, Sir Charles sent him to me, to learn what had been effected by our missionaries among the slaves, in the different West India islands; and I furnished him with every species of intelligence in my power.

“My purpose was to show that the abolition of the slave trade was, under God, and when the time was come, the work of a *woman*, even Lady Middleton, who was the honoured instrument of bringing the monster within the range of the artillery of the executive justice of the kingdom, and selecting and rousing that noble champion, who so firmly stood his ground, and persevering from year to year, at last saw his labours crowned with success. Many preparatory steps had been taken by that excellent man, Granville Sharpe, and others: and I believe Mr. Clarkson, when he says that there arose in many places a spirit of general inquiry, without any previous communications, as to the nature of that horrible traffic.”

Of Lady Middleton’s application Mr. Wilberforce has said, “It was just one of those many impulses which were all giving to my mind the same direction.” Nor was it an unnatural mistake by which those who had not known his previous training attributed his after-conduct, according to their own bias, either to Lady Middleton in 1786, or to Mr. Clarkson in 1787. But the real cause of his engaging in the work lay far deeper than any such suggestions. It was the immediate consequence of his altered character. The miseries of Africa had long ago attracted his attention. Even in his boyhood he had written on the subject for the daily journals—“It is,” he has said in conversation, “somewhat worthy of attention as indicative of the providential impulses by which we are led into particular lines of conduct, that as early as the year 1780 I had been strongly interested for the West Indian slaves, and in a letter asking my friend Gordon, then going to Antigua,

to collect information for me, I expressed my determination, or at least my hope, that some time or other I should redress the wrongs of those wretched and degraded beings."

Nor was Mr. Wilberforce at that time (1780) wanting in many high qualifications for the conduct of the cause. His glowing and persuasive eloquence, his high political influence rarely combined with independence, marked him out as fitted to achieve that deliverance for the oppressed for which his generous mind would naturally long. Yet he wanted that one requisite without which all the rest would have proved insufficient. The statue, indeed, was framed with exquisite symmetry, but the ethereal fire was wanting. Personal ambition and generous impulses would have shrunk from the greatness of the undertaking, or grown wearied in the protracted struggle, and these hitherto had been the main springs of his conduct. "The first years that I was in parliament," he has said, "I did nothing—nothing I mean to any good purpose; my own distinction was my darling object." But now he acted upon a new set of principles; his powers of mind, his eloquence in speech, his influence with Mr. Pitt, his general popularity, were all as talents lent to him by God, and for their due improvement he must render an account. Now, therefore, all his previous interest in the condition of the West Indian slaves led to practical exertion. "God," he says, in undertaking what became at once a sacred charge—"God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners." In this spirit he approached the strife, and let it never be forgotten, that it was the fear of God which armed him as the champion of the liberty of man. That it was by this general acquaintance with West Indian matters, and not from any accidental summons, that he was led to turn his attention to the slave trade, he has himself recorded. "It was the condition of the West Indian slaves which first drew my attention, and it was in the course of my inquiry that I was led to Africa and the Abolition." These inquiries he was

busily pursuing amongst the African merchants throughout the year 1786. "I found them," he says, "at this time ready to give me information freely, the trade not having yet become the subject of alarming discussion, but their accounts were full of prejudice and error. I got also together at my house from time to time persons who knew any thing about the matter."

Yet it was not with inconsiderate haste that he undertook the cause. "When I had acquired," he says, "so much information, I began to talk the matter over with Pitt and Grenville. Pitt recommended me to undertake its conduct, as a subject suited to my character and talents. At length, I well remember, after a conversation in the open air at the root of an old tree at Holwood just above the steep descent into the vale of Keston, I resolved to give notice on a fit occasion in the House of Commons of my intention to bring the subject forward." In the spring of 1787, Mr. Clarkson, who had published a Prize Essay upon the subject in the preceding year, was in London, and was introduced to Mr. Wilberforce; but though they frequently conversed upon the subject, Mr. Wilberforce never divulged his own determination, until at Mr. Bennet Langton's table in answer to a question from his host he avowed it publicly.

Several humane men had been for months communicating privately upon the subject, and they now at once determined upon immediate action, and formed themselves into a committee to raise the funds and collect the information necessary for procuring the abolition of the trade. Their first meeting was held upon the 22d of May, 1787, when Granville Sharpe was elected chairman of the twelve who met together, most of whom were London merchants, and all but two Quakers. This body soon increased and grew into a valuable ally of Mr. Wilberforce. By their means many useful publications were circulated, and a general knowledge of the horrors of the trade extensively diffused; as their agent, Mr. Clarkson sought patiently for evidence in Liverpool and Bristol; they raised contributions to defray the general expenses of the cause, and became a

central body, from which emanated many similar societies in the chief provincial towns. "At this place," writes a correspondent from Manchester, "large subscriptions have been raised for the slave business, and 'te duce Teucro' we are warm and strenuous." Their great work, and that in which this year they actively engaged, was to rouse the slumbering indignation of the country against the cruelty and bloodshed of the traffic. And here was seen at once the exceeding importance of their leader's character. In the year 1780, the slave trade had attracted Mr. Burke's attention, and he had even proceeded to sketch out a code of regulations which provided for its immediate mitigation and ultimate suppression. But after mature consideration he had abandoned the attempt, from the conviction that the strength of the West Indian body would defeat the utmost efforts of his powerful party, and cover them with ruinous unpopularity. Nor could any mere political alliance have been ever more likely to succeed. The great interests with which the battle must be fought could be resisted only by the general moral feeling of the nation. There was then no example upon record of any such achievement, and in entering upon the struggle it was of the utmost moment that its leader should be one who could combine, and so render irresistible, the scattered sympathies of the religious classes. Granville Sharpe, the chairman of the London committee, did not fail to point out this advantage. "Mr. W." he writes, "is to introduce the business to the House. The respectability of his position as a member for the largest county, the great influence of his personal connexions, added to an amiable and unblemished character, secure every advantage to the cause." Its first supporters accordingly were not found amongst the partisans of political commotion, but amongst the educated and religious. "Many of the clergy," writes Granville Sharpe, "are firm and cordial friends to the undertaking:" and soon after he rejoices "in their continual support." If any thing were wanted to complete this proof, it would be found in the grievous injury the cause sustained in

later years from the character of its chief political supporters.

The day of the promised motion was now approaching; but though his zealous partisans throughout the country, who had formed themselves into local associations in almost all the great provincial towns, and had sent already above thirty petitions to the House of Commons, were anxious for immediate action, it became evident to the leader in the contest, that he could succeed only by more cautious tactics.

Symptoms of determined opposition were beginning to appear. The trade had struck its roots too deeply amongst the commercial interests of the country to fall before a single blow. In spite too of Mr. Pitt's support, the administration, as a body, were not in favour of the cause.

To meet such an opposition as was threatened, it was absolutely necessary to possess a great body of distinct facts, upon which to ground the first attack upon the trade. To procure this evidence Mr. Pitt consented to issue a summons to the Privy Council, to examine as a board of trade the state of our commercial intercourse with Africa. "I have been blamed," says Mr. Wilberforce, "for this decision; as if I had suffered the first favourable feelings to our cause, which existed in the country, to die away, and given time for self-interest to exert its powers. But it must be borne in mind, that though I might have carried a general resolution which *condemned* the slave trade, abolition could be obtained only by an act of parliament. Now the slow and cautious policy of our legislative system gives the opponent of every measure nine or ten, and, in the case of a warm and dexterous partisan, many more stations for drawing up his troops and resisting its advance. Of these opportunities our opponents would have availed themselves; and the inquiry into this complicated subject would have been just as long, however we had met the petitions of the West India body."

The first witnesses who were heard by the Privy Council were those whom the African merchants had

deputed. They undertook to establish not only the necessity, but the absolute humanity of the trade. Meanwhile, at Mr. Wilberforce's suggestion, the friends of Abolition prepared their evidence and marshalled their witnesses.

At this important moment, it seemed but too probable that Mr. Wilberforce would be withdrawn for ever from the conduct of the cause. It was in spite of the hindrances of a delicate constitution that all his labours were performed; but in the course of this spring his health appeared entirely to fail, from an absolute decay of the digestive organs. On the last day of January he says in his Diary, after many previous records of indifferent health—"Very unwell, so did not dine at Pitt's, but met Ramsay there in the evening and discussed—did not go to House. Feb. 1st. Still indifferent—did not go to the House." This attack passed off after a few days, and he renewed his attendance in the House, and discharged his ordinary amount of labour. But within three weeks his illness returned, assuming the character of an entire decay of all the vital functions. "There is Wilberforce," said one college friend directing the attention of another to his wasted frame, "he cannot last for three weeks." A consultation of the chief physicians of the day, ended in the declaration to his family, "That he had not stamina to last a fortnight." Judging the case to be beyond the skill of the masters of human art, they decently dismissed their patient on a journey to the Bath waters. He complied with their desire, but soberly forecasting the doubtful issue of his sickness, he first summoned Mr. Pitt, and obtained from him a promise that he would charge himself with the interests of the Abolition cause. Satisfied with this pledge he set out for Bath, which he reached upon the 5th of April in a state of extreme weakness and exhaustion. "Behold me," he wrote from Bath to Mr. Wyvill, "a banished man from London and business. It is no more than I can expect if my constituents vote my seat abdicated, and proceed to the election of another representative: however I trust I shall yet be enabled by God's blessing to do the public

and them some service. As to the slave question, I do not like to touch on it, it is so big a one it frightens me in my present weak state. Suffice it to say, and I know the pleasure it will afford you to hear it, that I trust matters are in a very good train. *To you in strict confidence* I will intrust, that Pitt, with a warmth of principle and friendship that have made me love him better than I ever did before, has taken on himself the management of the business, and promises to do *all* for me if I desire it, that, if I were an efficient man, it would be proper for me to do myself. This is all I can now say; I might add more were we side by side on my sofa."

Upon this promise, Mr. Pitt at once acted so far as to superintend, with the help of Bishop Porteus, the Privy Council inquiries which were now in progress. Meanwhile the session of parliament was advancing, and the country adherents of the Abolition, who had sent no less than one hundred petitions to the House of Commons, began to grow impatient of delay. Some of them even wrote to suggest the propriety of immediate action under another leader. The London committee endeavoured to restrain their eagerness by suggesting to them the loss which the cause must sustain from any alteration in its conduct; and distinctly declared that "if Mr. Wilberforce was at last unable to resume his post they should leave to him the selection of his substitute." At the same time (April 11th) they wrote to him for directions as to their conduct "in this emergency." This communication followed him to Bath, and reached him when reduced to such a state that he could not read any letter upon business. His friends therefore judging for him that the proper time was come, wrote in his name to Mr. Pitt, and committed the cause into his hands. Upon this summons Mr. Pitt immediately acted. Upon the 22d of April, Mr. Granville Sharpe reported to the committee that he had been sent for by the minister, and officially informed of the pledge which he had given to his friend. Upon the 9th of May accordingly Mr. Pitt moved a resolution binding the House to consider the circumstances of the slave trade early in the following session. In spite

of his endeavours to prevent an unseasonable discussion, Mr. Pitt's resolution gave rise to a very warm debate; and the expressed opinion of the House seemed strongly in support of Abolition. Mr. Burke was its declared advocate; Mr. Fox had "almost made up his mind to immediate abolition." Twelve members avowed themselves its earnest supporters; and the representatives of slave-trading Liverpool were alone found bold enough to intimate dissent; yet even then were heard whispers of that commercial ruin which was soon afterwards predicted in so confident a tone. The danger of such discussions was prophetically announced, and "Mr. Wilberforce for negro" affirmed to be already in the island of Grenada the secret watch-word of servile insurrection. All the friends of Abolition were warm in their expressions of sympathy in Mr. Wilberforce's illness, and in lamentation for his absence. "It is better," said Mr. Fox, "that the cause should be in his hands than in mine; from him I honestly believe that it will come with more weight, more authority, and more probability of success." But though the general question was postponed, yet an important measure of practical relief was carried during the session. "Some of our principal supporters," says Mr. Wilberforce, "one of whom was the venerable Sir W. Dolben, were led by curiosity to inspect with their own eyes the actual state of a slave ship then fitting out in the river Thames. This was when the spring was so far advanced that the inquiry and discussion had been put off by mutual consent until the following year. But Sir W. Dolben and his friends came back to the House of Commons with a description which produced one universal feeling of pity, shame, and indignation. In particular, they found, in spite of the confidence with which it had been maintained, that self-interest alone would suffice for securing kind treatment to these wretched victims of avarice, that they were crowded into a space so miserably small, as exceedingly to aggravate their sufferings, and cause, from the spread of infectious sickness, a prodigious mortality.

At once it was resolved, that such enormities should not exist unchecked even for another session, and a bill, limiting the number of slaves and providing some precautions against their sufferings, was proposed and carried by a large majority."

Sir William Dolben's Bill was introduced upon the 1st of May. The slave merchants opposed it fiercely. The delegates of Liverpool were heard against its regulations by counsel at the bar of the House. Though within a few years they were compelled to grant that this sacrifice to humanity had actually increased their profits, they now produced witnesses to prove that the limitations of the Bill (one slave to each ton of the vessel's burden) would totally suppress the trade. After practising every manœuvre known in House of Commons' tactics, and endeavouring vainly for their present purpose to raise the cry of vested interests and commercial injury, they were defeated by a large majority, and on the 10th of June the Bill was carried to the House of Lords. There it met with more threatening opposition. The Lord Chancellor Thurlow exhausted in assailing it all that fertility in objections which marked his rugged character, and the honoured name of Rodney may be found amongst its most vehement opposers. It passed the Upper House by a decided though reduced majority, and received the royal assent upon the 11th of July.

The whole course of this contest Mr. Wilberforce watched patiently at a distance. Beyond all calculation he was visibly gaining strength at Bath. His returning health was in great measure the effect of a proper use of opium, a remedy to which even Dr. Pitcairne's judgment could scarcely make him have recourse; yet it was to this medicine that he now owed his life, as well as the comparative vigour of his later years. So sparing was he always in its use, that as a stimulant he never knew its power, and as a remedy for his specific weakness he had not to increase its quantity during the last twenty years he lived. "If I take," he would often say, "but a single glass of wine, I can feel its effect, but I never

know when I have taken my dose of opium by my feelings." Its intermission was too soon perceived by the recurrence of disorder.

On the 5th of May he left Bath for Cambridge, performing the journey leisurely, sometimes upon horseback and sometimes in his carriage with his own horses.

During a month's return to academic life, he experienced much gratification from the company of Milner, and some few others amongst his ordinary companions, yet his judgment of the general tone of the society he met with in his college, marks the improved standard of intellect and morals which was now before his mind. "They were not what I had expected, they had neither the solidity of judgment possessed by ordinary men of business, nor the refined feelings and elevated principles which become a studious and sequestered life." Of himself he complains, "I am too easily contented with a general impression of religion, and do not labour to perfect faith by habituating myself to act upon a principle of love. I scarcely dare resolve, after so many defeats; but I trust I shall do better, relying entirely for success upon the assistance of that Holy Spirit which we are promised." Having spent a month at Cambridge, he set out for Westmoreland, calling upon the road for his mother and sister, and carrying them with him to his house at Rayrigg. One of his objects in his visit to the lakes, was to make Mr. Pitt acquainted with his favourite scenes. "Pitt," he says, "promises to steal down to me for a few days." But though disappointed of this visit, his house was thronged, the whole summer through, with a succession of distinguished guests. A constant stream of company continued until his leaving Westmoreland, about the middle of September. Though diverted by its interruptions from severer studies, he turned the intercourse of social life into occasions of intellectual profit. Yet upon the whole, his plans of study and retirement were materially disturbed.

His new principles gave him a keener relish for the natural beauties by which he was surrounded. "I never

enjoyed the country more than during this visit," he says, "when in the early morning I used to row out alone, and find an oratory under one of the woody islands in the middle of the lake." Nor did he neglect active exertions for the benefit of the neighbourhood.

"The life I am now leading," he enters in his private Journal at the end of July, "is unfavourable in all respects, both to mind and body, as little suitable to me considered as an invalid, under all the peculiar circumstances of my situation, as it is becoming my character and profession as a Christian. Indolence and intemperance are its capital features. It is true, the incessant intrusion of fresh visiters, and the constant temptation to which I am liable, from being always in company, render it extremely difficult to adhere to any plan of study, or any resolutions of abstemiousness, which last two it is the harder for me to observe, because my health requires throughout an indulgent regimen. Nothing however can excuse or palliate such conduct, and with the sincerest conviction of its guilt, I pray to that gracious God whose ways are not as our ways, to have mercy upon me, to turn the current of my affections, to impress my mind with an awful and abiding sense of that eternity which awaits me, and finally to guide my feet into the way of peace. And though I have so often resolved and broken my resolutions, that I am almost ready to acquiesce in the headlong course which I am following; yet as thus to acquiesce would be to consign myself to irreversible misery, I must still strive to loose myself from this bondage of sin and Satan, calling on the name of the Lord, who alone can make my endeavours effectual."

"I am this week entering on a scene of great temptations—a perpetual round of dissipation and my house overflowing with guests; it is the more necessary for me to live by the faith of the Son of God. Do thou then, thou blessed Saviour and Friend of sinners, hear and have mercy on me. Let thy strength be magnified in my weakness. But whatever be the issue of this

residence at Rayrigg, may it be a useful lesson to teach me to form my plans hereafter with greater caution and circumspection, and not to run myself into temptations, from the evil of which he who voluntarily exposes himself to them cannot reasonably expect to be delivered.

“I will now form and note in my pocket-book such resolutions for this week’s regulation, as are best adapted to my present circumstances; and do thou, O God, enable me to keep them. My general object, during my stay at this place, should be to guard against habits of idleness, luxury, selfishness, and forgetfulness of God, by interlacing as much as I can of reading, and meditation, and religious retirement, and self-examination. Let me constantly view myself in all my various relations

as one who professes to be a Christian,

as a member of parliament,

as gifted by nature and fortune, as a son, brother, pater-familias, friend, with influence and powerful connexions.

“1. To be for the ensuing week moderate at table.

“2. Hours as early as can contrive. Redeeming the time.”

As he was not now contented with empty resolutions of amendment, he determined upon having more command over the disposal of his time, by giving up this favourite residence. “Milner and I had much talk about this being a most improper place for me, and resolved upon not continuing the house.”

“This place,” he wrote to Mr. Newton, just before he quitted Westmoreland, “wherein I looked this summer for much solitude and quiet, has proved very different from retirement. The tour to the lakes has become so fashionable that the banks of the Thames are scarcely more public than those of Windermere. You little knew what you were doing when you wished yourself with me in Westmoreland. My experience will not, I hope, be wasted on me, and I shall lay my plans in future with more foresight and circumspection. At this moment my cottage overflows with guests.” He gave up the house, when his lease determined, in the following spring.

After paying Hull a short visit, and spending a day at Buckden, he set off for Bath. "Arrived late at Burford, where I spent the Sunday, Oct. 5; a sermon on the nature of angels, a most unprofitable discourse. A Sunday spent in solitude spreads and extends its fragrance; may I long find the good effects of this." There had been a time when to be thrown thus upon his own resources had been a severe trial to his spirits. "I scarce ever felt," he has said, "such wretchedness as during four days which I spent by myself before my reader joined me at Rayrigg, in 1784. My eyes were so bad that I could not read; the rain would not let me leave the house, and I had not a creature with whom to converse; I stood resting my forehead on the chimney-piece in a state of weariness not to be described." But now he had learned to "commune with his own heart and to be still;" he had drunk into that "free spirit" by which alone such self-converse can be happily maintained.

He was not able to continue long at Bath. "I have for some time deferred," writes Mr. Wyvill, "mentioning to you the intended jubilee at York upon the 5th of November. But it is now so near, that I can no longer delay to communicate my opinion that your appearance at so great a meeting of your friends as will then be held at York is absolutely necessary, so that nothing short of inability to move without endangering your health ought to prevent it. Your absence from this meeting would be peculiarly prejudicial, because many would be apt to consider it a proof of excessive scrupulosity. On this topic your antagonists have not been wanting in their endeavours to hurt you; but if you embrace this opportunity of meeting your constituents, and show them you are exactly the same person whose cause they lately espoused with so much zeal, these hostile attempts will be unsuccessful. It is surely possible to mix in such assemblies with innocence and decency."

"Were I to attempt," he answers, "to show my constituents this, it would be an attempt to impose upon them, which nothing should induce me to practise, and

which I am sure you would be the last man in the world to recommend. Except in the personal regard and gratitude to my friends, which were then so strong that I dare not say they are increased, I cannot, (I speak to you what addressed to another would be arrogant, but what in speaking to you it would be worse than affectation to withhold,) I cannot say that I am by any means the same person. I can assert with truth that I have a higher sense of the duties of my station, and a firmer resolution to discharge them with fidelity and zeal; but it is also true that I am under many restraints as to my conduct to which I was not then subject, and that my religious opinions are very different. Not that I would shut myself up from mankind and immure myself in a cloister. My walk I am sensible is a public one; my business is in the world; and I must mix in assemblies of men, or quit the post which Providence seems to have assigned me. I entirely agree with you, 'one may mix in these assemblies with decency and innocence.' But the point is, whether by confining myself within these limits I should be likely to advance my interests with my constituents. They certainly, I trust, will not believe that I am so over-rigid as to condemn the cheerfulness of the social board, when kept within the bounds of sobriety and decency, however diligently my enemies may circulate reports to my disadvantage; but this would not be enough to remove the impression in question, if it were acting honestly to endeavour to remove it. No! for this purpose would it not be requisite for me to drink, and sing, &c. as I used to do? You being a clergyman cannot draw any inferences from your own case to mine; nothing of the sort I object to is expected from you."

He deemed it however right to obey the summons. "27th of October. Left Bath for London on my way to York to attend the jubilee—Whilst at Bath grew much better."

To one whose past habits and present occupation were of a desultory character, few things would be more useful, or more difficult, than to note down accu-

rately the mode in which his time was spent. Such an account he now commenced, and continued resolutely until his studious habits were matured; and if in after life he perceived any relaxation in his diligence he immediately resumed the practice.

To "live by rule," was his object; nor was it only over the employment of his time that he diligently watched. To those who knew the clear serenity of his later life, it may be matter of surprise to hear that his sky was ever overcast by storms. It is a most encouraging reflection that this peace was the result of previous contests. For though at this time most strictly temperate, and inclined in the judgment of his fellows to abstemiousness rather than excess, he was himself sensible of many struggles before his body was brought under that "sober government" which renders it the meetest instrument of the renewed spirit. He was not labouring to reduce intemperate habits within the limits of that self-indulgent propriety which contents the generality of men. From this point he started, but aiming at a higher standard, he sought to live a life of mortification in the midst of luxury. It was his object to gain such control over his lower nature, that it should never impede his usefulness in social intercourse, or clog the freedom of his communings with God. His Diary affords many instances of these contentions with himself, upon which he entered not without some indignation at discovering their necessity.—"Surely these are not little things, health depends upon them, and duty on health."—"They are not little things if my health and power of serving God be a great one." Perceiving that his difficulties arose from carelessness as much as self-indulgence, he sought to counteract it by laying down a set of rules too minutely practical to bear insertion here, while not content with recording against himself every infraction of these severe regulations, he had recourse to another expedient to keep his vigilance awake.—"M. and I made an agreement to pay a guinea forfeit when we broke our rules, and not to tell particulars to each other. I hope this will be an instrument

under divine grace to keep me from excess. When once a settled habit is formed less rigid rules will be necessary."—"Exceeded, and determined to pay forfeit.—Went on rather better, yet by no means up to the strictness of my plan."—"Nothing is to be resisted more than the disposition which we feel when we have been long striving unsuccessfully for any particular grace or against any habitual infirmity, to acquiesce in our low measure of that grace, or in the presence of that infirmity, so as not to feel shame, humiliation, and compunction. We are not to cast off the hope of getting better of the one and attaining to the other. This is the very state in which we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. The promise is sure in the end. Therefore though it tarry wait for it; it will surely come, it will not tarry." With these resolutions and in this frame of mind he entered upon the year 1789.

Many entries in his Diary at this period indicate his love for the Sabbath, and he has said in conversation:—"Often in my visits at Mr. Pitt's when I heard one or another speak of this man's place, or that man's peerage, I felt a rising inclination to pursue the same objects: but a Sunday in solitude never failed to restore me to myself."

Mr. Wilberforce's time was now continually occupied. "Feb. 3d, Tuesday. Morning Dr. Glasse and sub-committee (of Reformation of Manners Society) to breakfast—then all went to Montagu House, where a full meeting—did business—calls. Wednesday. Indifferent. Ramsay came to breakfast, and with me all morning. Dined Bishop of Lincoln's. Pitt's business. Thursday. Wood breakfasted with me—on business. Then Magdalen admission day. Dined at Mrs. Montagu's. How humiliating it is to attend the Magdalen! Sunday. Eliot and Henry Thornton. Lock—Scott excellent on St. James v. 7, 8. Much affected with the discourse. Oh, blessed be God who hath appointed the Sabbath, and interposes these seasons of serious recollection. May they be effectual to their purpose; may my errors be corrected, my desires sanctified, and my whole soul

quicken and animate in the Christian course. The last week has been spent little, if at all, better than the preceding; but I trust God will enable me to turn to Him in righteousness. Write, I beseech thee, thy law in my heart, that I may not sin against thee. I often waste my precious hours for want of having settled beforehand to what studies to betake myself, what books to read. Let me attend to this for the time to come, and may my slave business, and my society business, be duly attended to."

"March 1st. Sunday. Eliot breakfasted and Lock—Scott. Called Lord Chatham's about politics (a work of real necessity). Strongly and deeply affected by an examination of myself, I would hope to good purpose, and resolved to change my habits of life. This perpetual hurry of business and company ruins me in soul if not in body. I must make a thorough reform. More solitude and earlier hours—diligence—proper distribution and husbandry of time—associating with religious friends; this will strengthen my weakness by the blessing of God." "On an impartial examination of my state, I see that the world is my snare; business and company distract my mind, and dissipate those serious reflections which alone can preserve us from infection in such a situation of life as mine, where these antidotes are ever wanted to prevent our falling victims to this moral contagion. My error hitherto has been, I think, endeavouring to amend this and the other failing, instead of striking at the root of the evil. Let me therefore make a spirited effort, not trusting in myself, but in the strength of the Lord God. Let me labour to live a life of faith, and prayer, and humility, and self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness, and sobriety, and diligence. Let me labour this week in particular, and lay down for myself a course of conduct. Yet let not this be mainly on my mind, but the fear and love of my Maker and Redeemer. Oh that the blessed day may come, when in the words of St. Paul, I may assert of myself that my conversation is in heaven; that the life I now lead in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave

himself for me!" "I trust I can say in the presence of God that I do right in going into company, keeping up my connexions, &c. Yet as it is clear from a thorough examination of myself that I require more solitude than I have had of late, let me henceforth enter upon a new system throughout. Rules—As much solitude and sequestration as are compatible with duty. Early hours night and morning. Abstinence as far as health will permit. Regulation of employments for particular times. Prayer three times a day at least, and begin with serious reading or contemplation. Self-denial in little things. Slave trade my main business now."

Preparation for the approaching debate upon the slave trade now occupied his thoughts. And he not only retired for this season to seek in the country the leisure which he could not find in town, but introduced also into the details of social life a system of rigorous self-government, that no temptations to indulgence might relax his diligence or tarnish the brightness of his spirit. "For the next fortnight," he enters on the 6th of April, "to prepare for Slave discussion. Moderation in all things."

At length on the 12th of May the question came before the House. "Monday, May 11th," says his Diary, "went to Montagu's with Burgh; where also Ramsay and John Clarkson. Tuesday very indifferent. Came to town, sadly unfit for work, but by Divine grace was enabled to make my motion so as to give satisfaction—three hours and a half—I had not prepared my language, or even gone over all my matter, but being well acquainted with the whole subject I got on. My breast sore, but de ceteris pretty well. How ought I to labour, if it pleases God to make me able to impress people with a persuasion that I am serious, and to incline them to agree with me!"

The speech with which he opened the debate argued forcibly the whole question. After attempting to disarm the peculiar hostility of West Indian opposition by describing the trade as a *national* iniquity, he surveyed the various evidence of conflicting testimony, and traced

the destructive effects of the trade on Africa, its victims, and the colonies. These arguments were invested throughout with the glow of genuine humanity, and enforced by the power of a singular eloquence. Although the principal record of its excellence must be found in its effect upon that audience of orators to whom it was addressed; yet there are portions which even in the barrenness of extracts from "a most inaccurate Report" retain much of their original beauty. Knowing "that mankind are governed by their sympathies," he addressed himself to the feelings as well as the reason of the House; and we can even yet perceive the vigour of description which records the sufferings of the middle passage, "so much misery crowded into so little room, where the aggregate of suffering must be multiplied by every individual tale of wo;" and the force of that appeal which, after disproving the alleged comforts of the miserable victims, summoned Death as his "last witness, whose infallible testimony to their unutterable wrongs can neither be purchased nor repelled."

The effect of this speech both upon his friends and their opponents, also warrants the declaration of Mr. Burke, when warmed by its present influence, "that the House, the nation, and Europe, were under great and serious obligations to the honourable gentleman for having brought forward the subject in a manner the most masterly, impressive, and eloquent. The principles," he said, "were so well laid down, and supported with so much force and order, that it equalled any thing he had heard in modern times, and was not perhaps to be surpassed in the remains of Grecian eloquence."

Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox were no less loud in their eulogies; and the following character of the speech from a witness of a different order, is an interesting testimony to its effect. Bishop Porteus writes on the 13th of May to the Rev. W. Mason,—“It is with heartfelt satisfaction I acquaint you that Mr. Wilberforce yesterday opened the important subject of the Slave Trade in the House of Commons, in one of the ablest and most eloquent speeches that was ever heard in that or any other place. It continued upwards of three hours, and made

a sensible and powerful impression upon the House. He was supported in the noblest manner by Mr. Pitt, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Fox, who all agreed in declaring that the Slave Trade was the disgrace and opprobrium of this country, and that nothing but entire abolition could cure so monstrous an evil. It was a glorious night for this country. I was in the House from five to eleven." During the remainder of the session his attendance in parliament was unceasing, and all the intervals devoted to the acquiring a fresh store of facts and arguments with which to conduct his cause.

In the recess he made a visit to Bath, for the benefit of the waters, and while there he had much intercourse with Mrs. Hannah More. This was a friendship which his increasing desire of intercourse with those who feared God led him especially at this time to cultivate. There was no part of Mrs. H. More's character which he regarded with greater admiration than her active usefulness in the retirement of the country. "I was once," he said, "applied to by a Yorkshire clergyman, who desired me to assist him in obtaining a dispensation for non-residence upon his cure. He had been used, he said, to live in London with the first literary circles, and now he was banished into the country, far from all intellectual society. I told him that I really could not in conscience use any influence I possessed to help him; and then I mentioned to him the case of Mrs. H. More, who in like manner had lived with Johnson, Garrick, Burke, Sir J. Reynolds, &c. and was so courted by them all, and who had a great taste for such society; and yet had broken away from its attractions, and shut up herself in the country, to devote her talents to the instruction of a set of wretched people sunk in heathen darkness, amongst whom she was spending her time and fortune in schools and institutions for their benefit, going in all weathers a considerable distance to watch over them, until at last she had many villages and some thousands of children under her care. This is truly magnificent, the really sublime in character. I delight to think of it, and of the estimation in which the sacrifice

she made will be held in another world." "There is no class of persons," he would add, "whose condition has been more improved within my recollection than that of unmarried women. Formerly there seemed to be nothing useful in which they could be naturally busy, but now they may always find an object in attending to the poor."

"Thursday, Aug. 20th. At Cowslip Green all day. 21st. After breakfast to see Cheddar. Intended to read, dine, &c. amongst the rocks, but could not get rid of the people; so determined to go back again. The rocks very fine. Had some talk with the people, and gave them something—grateful beyond measure—wretchedly poor and deficient in spiritual help. I hope to amend their state." It was this visit to Cheddar, thus simply related in Mr. Wilberforce's Diary, which gave rise to Mrs. More's great exertions for her neglected neighbours. The vicar of Cheddar at that time was non-resident, and his curate, who lived nine miles off at Wells, visited the parish on Sundays only. The spiritual destitution of such a parish, seen with his own eyes, greatly affected Mr. Wilberforce. The effects which followed from his visit are thus recorded in an unpublished Journal of Mrs. Martha More.

"In the month of Aug. 1789, Providence directed Mr. Wilberforce and his sister to spend a few days at Cowslip Green. The cliffs of Cheddar are esteemed the greatest curiosity in those parts. We recommended Mr. W. not to quit the country till he had spent a day in surveying these tremendous works of nature. We easily prevailed upon him, and the day was fixed; but after a little reflection he changed his mind, appeared deeply engaged in some particular study, fancied time would scarcely permit, and the whole was given up. The subject of the cliffs was renewed at breakfast; we again extolled their beauties, and urged the pleasure he would receive by going. He was prevailed on and went. I was in the parlour when he returned; and with the eagerness of vanity (having recommended the pleasure) I inquired, how he liked the cliffs? He replied,

they were very fine, but the poverty and distress of the people were dreadful. This was all that passed. He retired to his apartment and dismissed even his reader. I said to his sister and mine, I feared Mr. W. was not well. The cold chicken and wine put into the carriage for his dinner were returned untouched. Mr. W. appeared at supper, seemingly refreshed with a higher feast than we had sent with him. The servant at his desire was dismissed, when immediately he began, 'Miss Hannah More, something must be done for Cheddar.' He then proceeded to a particular account of his day, of the inquiries he had made respecting the poor; there was no resident minister, no manufactory, nor did there appear any dawn of comfort, either temporal or spiritual. The method or possibility of assisting them was discussed till a late hour; it was at length decided in a few words, by Mr. W.'s exclaiming, 'If you will be at the trouble, I will be at the expense.' Something, commonly called an impulse, crossed my heart, that told me it was God's work, and it would do; and though I never have, nor probably shall recover the same emotion, yet it is my business to water it with watchfulness, and to act up to its then dictates. Mr. Wilberforce and his sister left us in a day or two afterwards. We turned many schemes in our head, every possible way; at length those measures were adopted which led to the foundation of the different schools."

"Resolved," he says, upon the 23d of August, "to think seriously to-day for to-morrow, my birth-day, on which I shall be much more disturbed." His more private Journal thus records the thoughts to which he turned his mind. "Cowslip Green, birth-day eve. To-morrow I complete my thirtieth year. What shame ought to cover me when I review my past life in all its circumstances! With full knowledge of my Master's will, how little have I practised it! How little have I executed the purposes I formed last summer at Rayrigg! Wherein am I improved even in my intellectual powers? My business I pursue but as an amusement, and poor Ramsay (now no more) shames me in the comparison.

Yet is there hope in God's mercy through Christ. May He give constancy and vigour to my resolutions. May I look ever forward to that day of account to which I am hastening; may I act as in His sight, and preserving the deepest self-abasement, may my light so shine before men, that they may see my good works, and glorify my Father which is in heaven." Though his own estimate of his exertions was thus humble, it was the surprise of others that he did so much. All his labours were performed in spite of the enfeebling presence of bodily debility. In the course of this month he wrote to Mr. Hey a full account of his present state of health. "Though by dint of medicine I have kept the enemy under, he still remains on the watch, ready to come forward in force on any favourable juncture. I am still so weak that the least irregularity disorders me; and I cannot, I dare say, possess you with an adequate sense of the lassitude and internal bearing down which then oppresses me. I have still the same inability to walk any distance, much more to ride, without suffering from the exertion. During the winter I used but little exercise, positively so called, though a London day always bringing its toils along with it is never a season of idleness and sloth; I went out chiefly in my carriage, and kept tolerable hours."

Mr. Hey, in replying to this letter, pressed upon him strongly the advantage he might probably derive from a course of Buxton water; and after a short time he most reluctantly followed his advice. "What have you to say," he writes in answer, "why judgment should not be pronounced against you? Thus are criminals addressed before they are consigned to their fate; and as I deem a sentence to Buxton to be in a high degree penal, the same allowance to speak in my own defence, ought to be granted me in this instance. If on reconsideration the court adheres to its original opinion, I shall acquiesce, and suffer myself to be peaceably conveyed to the place of execution. Seriously speaking, after being in town for near eight months, I pant for retirement and the country, and feel most unwilling to plunge into the hurry

of a very crowded watering-place. Yet if you believe there is a reasonable probability of my receiving benefit, I shall not hesitate to comply. I feel it to be an indispensable duty to do all I can for the perfect restoration of my health, leaving the matter with cheerful resignation in His hands, who best knows what is good for us. If I do recover strength, may He enable me to use it for his glory."

From Buxton, to which he soon after repaired, he wrote to Mrs. Hannah More—

TO MRS. H. MORE.

"My dear Madam,

A letter from Cowslip Green brings with it in some sort the portraiture of its own scenery, and greatly mends the prospect to one shut up amidst bleak, rugged hills, and barren, unprotected valleys. But it is not on this account only that yours is acceptable, but as it excites various other pleasing and refreshing images, which having once found a place in my mind, will continue there, I trust, during the remainder of my life. May they be of still longer duration, and the benefits and the comforts of our friendship be experienced by both of us when time shall be no more. For my dear sister I must claim the same privilege, and from what I have seen of yours, (though as this is not a case wherein one ought either to pronounce hastily, or to pay compliments, I would not absolutely decide,) I wish her also to be admitted into the confederacy. Thus much for the discussion; now to business.

Your plan is a very good one, and I think you will find no difficulty so great as that of discovering a proper couple to carry it into execution. If you can meet with any such, by all means secure them. I will desire a friend of mine to make inquiry after a double-headed shot fitted for doing execution in the same way, and, if successful, I shall be at no loss for an object elsewhere, against which to direct my battery. As for the expense, the best proof you can give me that you believe me

hearty in the cause, or sincere in the wishes expressed in the former part of this letter, is to call on me for money without reserve. Every one should contribute out of his own proper fund. I have more money than time, and if you, or rather your sister, on whom I foresee must be devolved the superintendance of our infant establishment, will condescend to be my almoner, you will enable me to employ some of the superfluity it has pleased God to give me to good purpose. Sure I am, that they who subscribe attention and industry, &c. furnish articles of more sterling and intrinsic value. Besides, I have a rich banker in London, Mr. H. Thornton, whom I cannot oblige so much as by drawing on him for purposes like these. I shall take the liberty of enclosing a draft for £40; but this is only meant for beginning with.

Now for the mission . . . indeed, I fear with you nothing can be done in the regular way. But these poor people must not, therefore, be suffered to continue in their present lamentable state of darkness. You know you told me they never saw the sun but one day in the year, and even the moon appeared but once a week for an hour or two. The gravitation to Wells was too strong to be resisted. My advice then is, send for a comet—Whiston had them at command, and John Wesley is not unprovided. Take care, however, that eccentricity is not his only recommendation, and, if possible, see and converse with the man before he is determined on.

Very much yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

With the Wesley family Mr. Wilberforce had formed a personal acquaintance through Mrs. More—"I went I think in 1786 to see her, and when I came into the room Charles Wesley rose from the table, around which a numerous party sat at tea, and coming forwards to me, gave me solemnly his blessing. I was scarcely ever more affected. Such was the effect of his manner and appearance, that it altogether overset me, and I burst

into tears, unable to restrain myself.”* In recommending one of “Wesley’s comets,” Mr. Wilberforce had no thoughts of encouraging dissent; for John Wesley was no dissenter from the church of England, nor were any of his preachers suffered during his lifetime to attempt to administer the sacraments of the church. Had he not considered them as churchmen Mr. Wilberforce would not have suggested their employment, for in the same year he dissuaded a relation, who complained that in her place of residence she could find no religious instruction in the church, from attending at the meeting-house. “Its individual benefits,” he wrote in answer to her letter of inquiry, “are no compensation for the general evils of dissent. The increase of dissenters, which always follows from the institution of unsteeped places of worship, is highly injurious to the interests of religion in the long run.”

The moral desolation which he found in Cheddar was a striking illustration of his common maxim, that “the dissenters could do nothing if it were not for the established church;” for the absence of a resident clergyman had brought the village into a state of universal ignorance. “I have taken measures,” he wrote again to Mrs. More upon the 2d of October, “to send a complete supply of the books which you desired. Your labours can only be equalled by Spencer’s lady knights, and they seem to be much of the same kind too, I mean you have all sorts of monsters to cope withal.” The monsters were, however, all subdued by this intrepid lady knight, supported by her generous champion, (the “Red Cross knight” was his familiar name with Mrs. Montagu,) without the eccentric succour of a “comet.” “Your accounts,” he writes somewhat later, “have afforded me the utmost pleasure, and I would persuade myself that they will be as comfortable next year. I trust you will speak freely when the money is exhausted . . . indeed I con-

* His respect for Charles Wesley was shown in a yearly pension which he allowed to his widow until her death in 1822.

ceive it must be all spent already . . . not to do so would be to give way either to pride, or to false delicacy."

Upon the 26th of October he left Buxton, and "set off for Yorkshire. Got to Sheffield where found River Dee Company going to dinner, so dined with them."

"27th. Off after breakfast for R. where a large party at dinner—B. the philosopher, &c. Played at cards evening and supped. S. how little of St. Paul. F. an old man. Alas! sat up too late, and strong compunctions." After retiring to his room he wrote upon a sheet of paper, "I have been acting a part this whole evening; and whilst I have appeared easy and cheerful, my heart has been deeply troubled. That, if it should please God to call me away before to-morrow morning's light, I may not have contributed to encourage this fatal carelessness concerning the interests of futurity in never-dying souls, let me here record my sense of it, and warn all who shall read these lines, to remember that awful declaration, 'For all these things God shall call thee into judgment.'"

"Sunday, Dec. 6th. Had some very serious thoughts and strong compunctions, from which I hope good will result. Remember, O my soul, that if thou availest not thyself of these warnings, the greater will be thy condemnation. May I be enabled to place my happiness in communion with God, and may I be found in the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, covering my iniquities from the pure eyes of a holy God. When B. dined here I was too vain and talkative (humility should be joined to cheerfulness). At night a long and earnest conversation with my host upon religion. May God bless it to both of us."

Though his character had evidently risen in the last twelve months, yet the new year opened with strong expressions of dissatisfaction with himself—a sure consequence of aiming at an elevated standard.

"Jan. 1st. Lock—Scott—with Henry Thornton—'These forty years in the wilderness'—received the sacrament. Most deeply impressed with serious things, shame from past life, and desire of future amendment."

“I have been receiving the sacrament after an excellent sermon of Scott’s, and with the deepest humiliation I look up for mercy, through Christ, to that God whose past mercies I have so often abused. I resolve by God’s help to mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts, so far as my very infirm health will permit me, and to labour more and more to live the life I now live in the flesh, in the faith of the Son of God. How should I be humbled by seeing the little progress I have made since 1786 !”

His intercourse with general society, “from which I dare not more withdraw,” and into which he endeavoured to carry his high principles of action, occupied much time. His great cause alone furnished matter for unremitting toil. But besides this, he applied himself with diligence to all the important questions which were brought forward in parliament: and was most assiduous in his attention to the private business of the great county which he represented. “When you appear on this stage,” writes Mr. James Grenville, “you must always expect to be scrambled for. The land-owner, the manufacturer, the canal man, the turnpike man, and the iron man will each have a pull in his turn.”

His house was continually open to an influx of men of all conditions. Pitt and his other parliamentary friends might be found there at “dinner before the House.” So constant was their resort, that it was asserted, not a little to his disadvantage in Yorkshire, that he received a pension for entertaining the partisans of the minister. Once every week the “Slave Committee” dined with him. Messrs. Clarkson, Dickson, &c. jocosely named by Mr. Pitt, his “white negroes,” were his constant inmates; and were employed in classing, revising, and abridging evidence under his own eye. “I cannot invite you here,” he writes to a friend who was about to visit London for advice, “for, during the sitting of parliament, my house is a mere hotel.” His breakfast-table was thronged by those who came to him on business; or with whom, for any of his many plans of usefulness, he wished to become personally acquainted. He took a lively interest in the

Elland Society; and besides subscribing to its funds £100 per annum, (under four anonymous entries, to avoid notice,) he invited to his house the young men under education, that he might be able to distribute them in proper situations. No one ever entered more readily into sterling merit, though concealed under a rough exterior. "We have different forms," he has said, "assigned to us in the school of life—different gifts imparted. All is not attractive that is good. Iron is useful, though it does not sparkle like the diamond. Gold has not the fragrance of a flower. So different persons have various modes of excellence, and we must have an eye to all." Yet no one had a keener or more humorous perception of the shades of character. "Mention, when you write next," says the postscript of a letter to Mr. Hey, on the announcement of a new candidate for education, "the length of his mane and tail;" and he would repeat, with a full appreciation of its humour, the answer of his Lincolnshire footman, to an inquiry as to the appearance of a recruit who presented himself in Palace Yard,— "What sort of a person is he?" "Oh, sir, he is a rough one." The circumstances of his life brought him into contact with the greatest varieties of character. His ante-room was thronged from an early hour; its first occupants being generally invited to his breakfast-table; and its later tenants only quitting it when he himself went out on business. Like every other room in his house it was well stored with books; and the experience of its necessity had led to the exchange of the smaller volumes, with which it was originally furnished, for cumbrous folios, "which could not be carried off by accident in the pocket of a coat." Its group was often most amusing; and provoked the wit of Mrs. H. More to liken it to "Noah's ark, full of beasts clean and unclean." On one chair sat a Yorkshire constituent, manufacturing or agricultural; on another a petitioner for charity, or a House of Commons client; on another a Wesleyan preacher: while side by side with an African, a foreign missionary, or a Haytian professor, sat perhaps some man of rank who sought a private interview,

and whose name had accidentally escaped announcement. To these mornings succeeded commonly an afternoon of business, and an evening in the House of Commons. Yet in this constant bustle he endeavoured still to live by rule. "Alas," he writes upon the 31st of January, "with how little profit has my time passed away since I came to town! I have been almost always in company, and they think me like them rather than become like me. I have lived too little like one of God's peculiar people." "Hence come waste of time, forgetfulness of God, neglect of opportunities of usefulness, mistaken impressions of my character. Oh may I be more restrained by my rules for the future; and in the trying week upon which I am now entering, when I shall be so much in company, and give so many entertainments, may I labour doubly by a greater cultivation of a religious frame, by prayer, and by all due temperance, to get it well over."

He was much occupied in the early part of this session by the fresh application made by the dissenters for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Though he disliked the peculiar form of a sacramental test, yet he thought some such restriction so needful that he had voted against his friend Mr. Beaufoy when in 1787 the repeal of these enactments was demanded. In the spring of 1789, he would not leave Holwood to vote upon the question, his "mind not being made up." Since that time he had maturely weighed the subject, and to secure its full consideration he had engaged three of his friends, who took different sides upon the question, (Mr. Gisborne being for and Mr. Hey and Mr. Mason adverse to the repeal,) to state to him in writing the grounds of their opinions. By them the case was well argued; Mr. Hey showing most forcibly the necessity of an established church for the welfare of the nation, and the need of such enactments for the safety of the church, while Mr. Gisborne's letter embodied all that could be said upon the opposite side. "He suffers, I suspect," says Mr. Mason, "his liberality of spirit to carry him beyond what prudence would suggest at the present

time, when Socinianism is so very prevalent. I should say, smilingly, that after having argued so well against expediency, he thinks himself now bound to set his face against every thing that may seem to be expedient." "Were you a man possessed merely of an every-day kind of conscience," writes Dr. Burgh, "I should answer your letter on the Paleian principle, and advise you by all means to vote with the dissenters, for it is surely very expedient that this county should be saved from all the evils of a contest at the next election; especially as it does not signify a rush on which side you vote as an individual; for let the question be determined in your House for the repeal of the Test Act, which I think highly improbable, the Bill will undoubtedly be flung out by the House of Lords." - The debate upon the question came on in the House of Commons upon the 3d of March, when the repeal of the restrictive acts was moved by Mr. Fox in a speech in which he directly alluded to the opposition of the member for Yorkshire. In a correspondence with an active committee of dissenters among his constituents in the town of Leeds, "some garbled quotations from which," says Dr. Milner, "they have shamefully published," Mr. Wilberforce had declared that his great reluctance "to oppose the repeal of these laws had been overcome by his conviction of their present necessity." To this conviction he was brought by the persuasion, that to give such an increase of influence to the dissenting party would endanger the Liturgy and Articles of the church. The prevalence of those loose principles of faith amongst the body of the clergy, which had spread under the ascendancy of a latitudinarian party, had been alarmingly displayed; and the time was inauspicious for concessions which might promote the activity of dissent, or relax the strictness of orthodoxy.

"Rejoicing," as he did, at the rejection of the petition for repeal, by a vote of 294 to 105, he admits that the satisfaction was not without alloy; but the main business of this spring was the conduct of the Abolition cause. He had opened the campaign by a motion made

upon the 14th, and carried, after much opposition, upon the 27th of January, for referring to a special committee the further examination of witnesses. This became now his daily work, and with the help of the late William Smith, he conducted personally all the examinations. Here he reaped the fruit of his deep acquaintance with the whole subject, as well as of those habits of self-government which he had been at such pains to form. Nothing but his accurate knowledge of details could have prevented his being duped by the misrepresentation of too many of the witnesses; whilst the angry discussions in which he was continually involved rendered a practised temper no less needful than a sagacious judgment.

This was a period of no ordinary labour to the leader in the struggle. In a letter written forty-two years later, he reminds Mr. Smith of these early labours: "You cannot, any more than myself, have forgotten the weeks after weeks, or rather months after months, in which our chief, though not most cherished companions, were that keen, sour S——, that ponderous, coarse, Jack Fuller-like F——; a very graphical epithet if you remember the man." His house too throughout this time was continually full. The evening hours were devoted to consultations on the common cause; and to keep so many different agents in harmonious exertion required no little management. A few extracts from his Diary will illustrate these employments.

"March 18th. Dined at home—William Smith tête-à-tête (partly religious); then Clarkson came, and Muncester, and looked over evidence. 20th. Clarkson and Eliot dined, (Slave business,) then Hunter and Sansom came from the city; a different set of ideas in their minds, and in those in our friends. 22d. Dined at home—Smith, Clarkson, and Dickson—Slave business till 11 at night. 25th. Committee as usual. 27th. Town from Clapham to committee as usual. Dined Bishop of Salisbury's—Miss More, Sir J. Bankes, Mrs. Garrick, &c. We talked of Captain Bligh's affair, and Sir Joshua (like myself) was not surprised at it—Otaheite Calypso's island. 29th. Committee—House—Captain Williams's

business till $12\frac{1}{4}$ at night. Not attentive enough—admired Fox and Pitt, and the lawyers. Habit will do much, I will practise. 31st. Slave committee—wrangling—got hold of Norris—then House till $\frac{1}{2}$ past 10. April 1st. Committee—some wrangling—final Report. 2d. My plan of time this winter has been that of dining laté, and I have seldom done any business after dinner. I doubt about this going into company so much, yet I dare not decide against it, I am too complicated in my plans. 3d. Looked over the witnesses, &c. Clarkson and Dickson dined with me. 4th. Easter Sunday. Sent to Christian to go to Lock, hoping in his present state of mind, having lately heard of his brother's conduct, an impression might, by God's blessing, be made upon him. 5th. Up to $6\frac{3}{4}$ —bed 12. Hard at work on Slave Trade Evidence all day with 'white negroes,' two Clarksons and Dickson. 6th. Hard at work again with Clarksons and Dickson on evidence. C. dined with us; he seems to have got over his grief too much."

On the afternoon of this day he set off, after "much doubting," to spend a single day at Holwood. "7th. Walked about after breakfast with Pitt and Grenville—wood with bills." "We sallied forth armed with bill-hooks, cutting new walks from one large tree to another, through the thickets of the Holwood copses." Yet even in these seasons of recreation, he kept a watch over himself, and rigidly noted down every instance in which he had at all neglected his task of social reformation. "Forgot my resolutions, and too little attended to opportunities of impressing seriously. Surely Pitt must deem of me as of any other man." "15th. Dined at home—Clarkson and Dickson—evidence—Beaufoy and a shoal of people came in. 16th. Breakfasted Pitt's—Sunday Bill, &c. 17th. Met Samuel Hoare at the Shakspeare Gallery—picture of Dying Cardinal, and poor Tom Grosvenor's remark—Hoare, Sansom, Wedgwood, Granville Sharpe, Clarkson, Henry Thornton, and Whitbread dined with me. These city people better than at our end of the town. 19th. Evidence, &c.—Saw multitudes of people on business."

These employments were soon afterwards exchanged for a hasty three weeks' canvass, preparatory to the general election of June, 1790. In his private Diary, he reviews the time which had been spent in this canvass, and records his narrow escape from a serious accident, when his carriage was overturned in the village of Bessingby, near Bridlington. "The confusion of a canvass, and the change of place, have led me lately to neglect my resolution. But self-indulgence is the root of the evil: with idleness it is my besetting sin. I pray God to enable me to resist both of them, and serve him in newness of life. How little have I thought of my deliverance the other day, when the carriage was dashed to pieces! How many have been killed by such accidents, and I unhurt! Oh let me endeavour to turn to thee." He adds, a few days later, "I have been thinking too much of one particular failing, that of self-indulgence, whilst I have too little aimed at general reformation. It is when we desire to love God with all our hearts, and in all things to devote ourselves to his service, that we find our continual need of his help, and such incessant proofs of our own weakness, that we are kept watchful and sober, and may hope by degrees to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. Oh may I be thus changed from darkness to light! Whatever reason there may be for my keeping open house in Palace Yard, certain it is, that solitude and quiet are favourable to reflection and to sober-mindedness; let me therefore endeavour to secure to myself frequent seasons of uninterrupted converse with God."

CHAPTER VI.

Continued efforts for Abolition of Slave Trade—Commences work on Practical Religion.

THE summer of 1790 was spent in excursions to Buxton and visits to his friends, during all which time, however, the letters of his friends, as well as his diary, give evidence of the constancy of his devotion to the great subject which occupied his attention.

He spent some time at Yoxall Lodge, the seat of the Rev. T. Gisborne. Their college acquaintance had been interrupted when they left the University; but was afterwards renewed by a letter of inquiry from Mr. Gisborne, when he first saw the name of Wilberforce connected with the cause of Abolition. At Mr. Gisborne's house he had become well acquainted with his near connexion Mr. Babington. Intercourse between them soon grew into friendship; and for many years he made Yoxall Lodge, or Rothley Temple, his ordinary summer residence. Here he enjoyed uninterrupted privacy, combined with the domestic comforts of his friend's family. In these visits he fulfilled those intentions which constant company had defeated in his own residence at Rayrigg; and devoted ten or twelve hours every day to study. "I could bear testimony," writes Mr. Gisborne, "were such attestation needful, to his laborious, unabated diligence, day after day, in pursuing his investigations on the Slave Trade, and in composing his invaluable work upon Practical Christianity." "Never," he has said, "was I in better spirits than when I thus passed my time in quiet study." He sallied forth always for a walk a short time before dinner, amongst the holly groves of the then unenclosed Needwood forest, where—

"His grateful voice
Sang its own joy, and made the woods rejoice."

“Often have I heard its melodious tones,” says his host, “at such times, amongst the trees from the distance of full half a mile.”

His object in his present visit to Yoxall Lodge, was to make himself completely master of the vast mass of evidence which had now been collected upon the subject of the Slave Trade. Throughout the summer his attention had never been withdrawn from this subject. “I shall make no apology,” he wrote to Mr. Wyvill from Buxton, upon the 13th of August, “for putting into your hands the enclosed letter which I received this morning and beg you will return, and for desiring you to obtain and send me such information as you are able respecting the writer of it, to whom I am an utter stranger. It is necessary to be thus circumspect with regard to witnesses to be brought before our committee, because it would be injurious to our cause to bring forward men of bad characters; at the same time we should always recollect that, from the nature of the case, it is not to be expected that many persons, who have been or who are in the higher walks of life, will be either well affected to us, or at least will venture to step forth to assist us with their testimony; and therefore we must content ourselves with persons, whose general conduct and estimation give us a right to contend for the veracity of their accounts.”

It was absolutely necessary for the effectual conduct of the cause that he should be well acquainted with all the allegations of its advocates. To this work therefore he now applied himself not even intermitting his labour during a tour which he made through Wales. Upon his return to Mr. Gisborne's, he devoted himself to the examination of the testimony which had been given on behalf of the advocates of the trade, with the most exemplary self-devotion. It was about this time also that he commenced his celebrated work on Practical Christianity. The following extract from a letter to Mr. Hey has reference to it. “I have not advanced a single step since we parted at Buxton, in composing the little tract of which I then spoke to you. This is not owing how-

ever either to indolence, procrastination, or any alteration in my opinion of the utility of the work; but after mature consideration, I thought it right to make the slave business my first object, and ever since I have been at all stationary I have been labouring at it with great assiduity. Nor are my labours nearly finished; at which you will not wonder when I tell you, that besides a great folio volume from the Privy Council, I have also to scrutinize with much care near 1400 folio pages of Evidence delivered before the House of Commons. My eyes are very indifferent, otherwise pretty well—I working like a negro.”

“Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Babington,” writes a friend from Yoxall Lodge, “have never appeared down-stairs since we came, except to take a hasty dinner, and for half an hour after we have supped; the Slave Trade now occupies them nine hours daily. Mr. Babington told me last night, that he had 1400 folio pages to read, to detect the contradictions, and to collect the answers which corroborate Mr. W.’s assertions in his speeches: these, with more than 2000 papers to be abridged, must be done within a fortnight. They talk of sitting up one night in each week to accomplish it. The two friends begin to look very ill, but they are in excellent spirits, and at this moment I hear them laughing at some absurd questions in the examination, proposed by a friend of Mr. Wilberforce’s. You would think Mr. W. much altered since we were at Rayrigg. He is now never riotous or noisy, but very cheerful, sometimes lively, but talks a good deal more on serious subjects than he used to do. Food, beyond what is absolutely necessary for his existence, seems quite given up. He has a very slight breakfast, a plain and sparing dinner, and no more that day except some bread about ten o’clock. I have given you this history, as you say every thing about him must be interesting to you, and this is all I at present see of him.”

Such were his occupations until his return to London in November. Throughout this time, with the exception of two days, each of which yielded him eight hours of

labour, he devoted daily nine hours and a half to his main employment. This was not the easy service of popular declamation on premises supplied by others, but the real conduct of affairs with all the toil and drudgery of careful preparation.

Upon the 9th he enters in his Journal, "Heard this evening that on Sunday morning, at Bath, died what was mortal of John Thornton." "He was allied to me by relationship and family connexion. His character is so well known that it is scarcely necessary to attempt its delineation. It may be useful however to state, that it was living with great simplicity of intention and conduct in the practice of a Christian life, more than by any superiority of understanding or of knowledge, that he rendered his name illustrious in the view of all the more respectable part of his cotemporaries. He had a counting-house in London, and a handsome villa at Clapham. He anticipated the disposition and pursuits of the succeeding generation. He devoted large sums annually to charitable purposes, especially to the promotion of the cause of religion both in his own and other countries. He assisted many clergymen, enabling them to live in comfort, and to practise a useful hospitality. His personal habits were remarkably simple. His dinner hour was two o'clock. He generally attended public worship at some church or episcopalian chapel several evenings in the week, and would often sit up to a late hour, in his own study at the top of the house, engaged in religious exercises." "He died without a groan or a struggle, and in the full view of glory. Oh may my last end be like his!"

On Thursday, the 18th of November, he left Yoxall Lodge, his two friends Mr. Gisborne and Mr. Babington bearing him company as far as Tamworth. The next day he reached London, and "plunging" (he writes) "at once into a dinner circle of cabinet ministers, how did I regret the innocent and edifying hilarity of the Lodge!"

From this time he was employed in examining and arranging the evidence on behalf of abolition. In the preceding summer he had compiled a table of questions

with which Mr. Clarkson had set forth to collect all the evidence which could be procured in the northern counties. Several witnesses had been discovered in this journey. Mr. Wilberforce had himself obtained some others. One part of his present task was to select from them such as could give the most important information. To this was soon added a daily attendance upon the examinations till their close, and then a careful study and abridgment of the whole mass of evidence.

Having fixed on the 2d of April to bring forward his motion on the subject of the Slave Trade, he retired from the press of other occupations which crowded upon him in town, for a fortnight, that he might give himself uninterruptedly to preparation, "going to town as seldom as possible, and only upon very particular business to the House or elsewhere," he set hard to work writing and digesting the evidence. So incessant was this occupation, that on the eve of the ensuing debate, as upon one previous occasion, he judged it right to devote to his work of mercy that holy day upon which it is the ordinary privilege of the busiest Christian to rest from worldly cares. "Spent" (are his entries upon these occasions) "Sunday as a working day—did not go to church—Slave trade. Gave up Sunday to slave business—did business and so ended this sabbath. I hope it was a grief to me the whole time to turn it from its true purposes."

And now that the day approached, upon the event of which was suspended the welfare of his many unknown clients on the shores of Africa, and the success of his own toil and privations for four years of incessant labour, the prospect before him was by no means encouraging. In the year 1787, when he had undertaken the cause, its advocates looked confidently forward to the speedy suppression of the trade. Wherever the facts connected with its existence had been made known, a voice of indignation was raised against its guilt. In the beginning of 1788, "more difficulties" met the instructed eyes of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Wilberforce, yet they still deemed the cause prospering. "When these articles

are properly authenticated before the House," writes Sir C. Middleton, (no sanguine calculator of national virtue,) in Jan. 1788, "I have little doubt of carrying absolute Abolition in the House of Commons, and such restrictions in the House of Lords as will amount to the same thing. Lord H. himself under such evidence will be ashamed to countenance the trade." Even when first assailed in the House of Commons, its only public advocates were the two members who directly represented the African merchants. In the course however of that very session a more wide opposition made itself apparent. Its increasing strength was seen in the successive debates in both Houses of Parliament on the bill for regulating the middle passage; and when, in the spring of 1789, Mr. Wilberforce had given notice of his first motion for the entire suppression of the trade, it burst at once into a flame. It arose amongst the Guinea merchants; reinforced however before long by the great body of West Indian planters. Some few amongst them were from the first favourable to the suppression of the Slave Trade; but the great majority, though they declared it to be an English and not a West Indian trade, asserted that it was absolutely essential to the existence of their property. It is the nature of such a defence of established enormities to yield at first to the generous assault, until gathering strength from the slow but certain succour of selfish apprehension, it retracts all its concessions and gains its former ground. The first burst of generous indignation promised nothing less than the instant abolition of the trade; but mercantile jealousy had taken the alarm, and the defenders of the West Indian system soon found themselves strengthened by the independent alliance of commercial men.

The long protracted examinations of 1788, 1789, 1790, and 1791, though essential to final success, multiplied for a while the cold and cautious defenders of the trade. The temper, moreover, of events was most favourable to their endeavours. In the repose of peaceful times it is difficult to estimate aright the extreme agitation produced in our political atmosphere by that hurricane of

terror which desolated France. Revolution, which had made that people a fair promise of reasonable liberty, had before this time thrown off the comely mask which concealed her hated features, and openly revelled in infidelity and blood. A small, though soon afterwards a noisy, party watched eagerly the convulsions of the neighbouring kingdom, and dreamed of renovating by French principles the English constitution; but the great bulk of the nation, exhausted by the war with America, and wearied by the strife of parties, viewed with horror the excesses of France, and recoiled with disgust from the abused names of humanity and freedom. Even the ordinary excitement of a general election could not rouse the nation from the political repose of 1790. Nor was it merely this general tendency to quiet which repressed the efforts of the Abolition party. The seed of French principles, which had been widely scattered throughout her foreign settlements, was already ripened into a harvest of colonial insurrection. The strife of Paris, renewed amongst the free inhabitants of St. Domingo, was soon transmitted thence to Dominica; and to the efforts of the true friends of peace were instantly attributed the intestine discords of an English colony.

Amidst various elements of opposition Mr. Wilberforce approached the contest of April, 1791. Though none could be sanguine of immediate success, yet he was not without many cheering assurances of sympathy. "You sir," writes Dr. Peckard, "will stand in the British parliament as did Episcopius in the infamous synod of Dort, with the whole force of truth, with every rational argument, and with all the powers of moving eloquence upon your side, and all to no purpose." Still nearer to the actual conflict, he received an animating charge traced upon the bed of death by the faltering hand of the venerable Wesley.

"Feb. 24, 1791.

"My dear Sir,

Unless the Divine power has raised you up to be as Anthanasius contra mundum, I see not how you can go

through your glorious enterprise, in opposing that execrable villany which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils; but if God be for you who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh be not weary of well doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of his might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it. That he who has guided you from your youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate servant,

JOHN WESLEY.*

Such sympathy no doubt often cheered his spirit in the weary hours of thoughtful preparation. But it was by a greater might that he was strengthened. He approached the combat strong in "truth" itself, and in "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." "May God," he writes in his private memoranda a few days before the contest, "enable me henceforth to live more to his glory, and bless me in this great work I have now in hand. May I look to him for wisdom and strength and the power of persuasion, and may I surrender myself to him as to the event with perfect submission, and ascribe to him all the praise if I succeed, and if I fail say from the heart thy will be done." "Motion put off," he adds a few days later, "from Tuesday, April 12th, to Monday 18th, when most sadly unprepared, yet after trials to put it off came to House quite unmade up as to speech. By God's blessing got through pretty well to others' satisfaction, but very little to my own—I knowing how much omitted. Tuesday, 19th. Resumed debate and sadly beat."

* It seems probable that this was amongst the very last efforts of his pen. On the 25th of February he sank into that lethargy in which he lay until his death, upon the 2d of March. It is docketed by Mr. Wilberforce, "Wesley's last words."

In the course of the debate he was earnestly supported by Mr. Smith and Mr. Fox; and Mr. Pitt, in establishing the needless injustice of the traffic, equalled any of those great efforts by which he confounded opposition. Two members had the courage to avow openly their altered or established sentiments. The opposition, headed by Lord John Russel and Colonel Tarleton, and well described in a speech of one of their own body as the war of the pigmies against the giants of the House, consisted of little else than trite imputations of misrepresentation or unsupported assertions of injury. Their cause was more effectually maintained by a multitude of silent votes, and the character, talents and humanity of the House were left in a minority of 88 to 163. With this adverse decision all attempts to carry the question further, ended for this session, and an appeal was made to the justice and humanity of the nation, by disseminating widely an "Abstract of the Evidence" given before the committee of the House, and the substance of the debate.

The conclusion of the session released him from a further stay in London, "I am afraid," he wrote to Mr. Babington, 11th June, "that even the mildness of your nature has been sharpened to exacerbation (as Dr. Johnson would term it) by my obstinate silence. But if so, it is rather a proof of your unreasonableness than of my criminality. . . This is the true mode of defence, to shift the war, like Tippoo, into the quarters of the enemy. . . However—behold me now upon my road to Bath, with Henry Thornton for my agreeable companion. We are snug and comfortable, but we would willingly increase our duet to a trio to admit your Honour. Now do not suppose that after being half choked, and smoked, and roasted in town, I am about to finish the work in Bath. To have grass up to my door after so long a parching of my heels on the pavement of London is not a luxury, but necessary for me. I have therefore leased a country house within reach of the Pump-room, and so shall enjoy the comforts of a beautiful country residence, whilst, with the salubrious waters of King Bladud, I am washing away the 'sordes' contracted in the course of a long

session." It was not merely from his delight in country scenes that he avoided Bath. The leisure hours which he thus secured, were devoted to reading and reflection.

Here he spent about a month, and refusing all invitations to dine out, enjoyed at home the society of a few chosen friends, the chief amongst whom were Mr. Henry Thornton, Mr. Grant, and Mr. Eliot. To the house of Mr. Eliot at Burton Pynsent, he made an excursion upon the 30th of June. "Set off early for Eliot's. Dined with G. his friend. I must beware of this sort of old bachelor's life. G. sadly taking God's name in vain." To any of his friends who had contracted this irreverent habit, he made a practice of addressing by letter his most serious admonitions; and he has often said that by this custom he never lost, and but once endangered the continuance of a friendship. "I wrote to the late Sir —, and mentioned to him this bad habit. He sent me in reply an angry letter, returning me a book that I had given him; and asking for one he had given me. Instead of it I sent him a letter of friendly expostulation, which so won him over, that he wrote to me in the kindest tone, and begged me to send him back again the book he had so hastily returned."

Immediately after the unfavourable decision of this spring, a trading company was formed by the advocates of Abolition, with no expectation of commercial advantage, but with a view to substitute a lawful trade for the abominations of that in slaves, and by the introduction of civilization to confute the assertions of the inferiority of the African to the European race. With this view, Mr. W. took an active part in its formation, and became one of its first directors. His diary at this time contains frequent references to its concerns.

It has been stated that he had no residence on his landed property, and therefore was not summoned into Yorkshire by the ordinary duties of a country gentleman; and though upon all great occasions, when he thought his presence might be useful, he repaired to York, he never visited the county to maintain an interest. "I must mention," he has said, "the uncom-

mon kindness and liberality which I experienced from my constituents. In former times the county members displayed their equipages annually at the races, and constituted a part of the grand jury at the summer assizes; the latter, indeed, I should have been glad to attend, but for the unseemly festivities which commonly take place at that period. I was not, however, wanted; the number of gentlemen of larger fortune in the county were far more than sufficient to constitute a most respectable grand jury both at the spring and summer assizes. I could not consistently with my principles frequent the theatre and ball-room, and I knew that I should give offence by staying away were I actually at York; but no discontent was ever expressed at my not presenting myself to the county on these occasions. My friends appeared tacitly to admit my claim to the command of my own time during the recess." The requirements of his singular position demanded this immunity from ordinary cares. And he considered himself as best fulfilling his duty towards his constituents, when he was most diligently qualifying himself to watch over their interests with effect. To give himself more entirely to these great objects, he devolved upon one or other of his friends the management of his property, which was kindly undertaken at different times by Mr. R. Smith and Mr. Henry Duncombe.

The whole of this autumn which was spent in visiting different friends, he devoted to diligent study. "Aug. 24th. I mean to apply to public speaking preparation. Busy in reading English history with Babington." So earnest was he now in application, that in their daily walks the two friends continued their study, one of them reading aloud whilst his steps were guided by the other. "Delightful weather," he says at this time,—"reading Ropin out of doors." The nature of his occupations may be gathered from his list of subjects on his first establishment at Rothley Temple. "Bible, English History, Fenelon's Characters: Horace, by heart." . . . The notes and references in his own hand, with which the copy he now used abound, especially

throughout the Satires and Epistles, testify the care and diligence with which he studied. . . “Cicero de Oratore, Addison’s Cato, Hume, Hudibras, Pilgrim’s Progress, Doddridge’s Sermons, Jonathan Edwards, Owen, *Letters*.” This last head occupied a large portion of his time. “My letters,” was in later life his declaration, “are as much *my* bane as conversation was that of Mackintosh; yet how can I prevent it?” Without giving up a peculiar mode of usefulness he could not, for he had become early a marked man, whose advice and assistance, both in charity and business, were eagerly sought for by the doubting and the distressed. Add to this, that it was essential to his usefulness that he should keep up intimate communications with those who in various districts could influence society, or report to him the facts which marked its temper; so that though his large correspondence diminished the apparent fruit of his exertions, it was itself one of his most effective modes of usefulness.

His resolutions, as entered from time to time in his Diary, are of the most strictly practical complexion, and are evidently the results of habitual watchfulness. “Nov. 13th. May God, for Christ’s sake, enable me to serve Him from a genuine principle of evangelical obedience. I will labour after a sense of God’s presence, and a remembrance that I have been redeemed, and so am not my own. More fixedness in devotion, reading Scripture, and self-examination—greater self-restraint in lawful things, both in thought and act. Little secret self-denials, without much thought. More real gratitude to God at meals, and when enjoying other comforts—kind friends, and all external conveniences. In company—rational conversation and innocent mirth. Topics prepared—what good can I do or get—draw out others when I can without feeding their vanity—above all aim at their spiritual good—think for each of them. Truth to be observed strictly. General kindness and mildness, especially towards inferiors—beware of vanity and evil speaking. Frequent aspirations in solitary relaxation—recapitulate or revolve topics, or at least avoid rambling,

wandering thoughts. In every thing, according to its measure, you may please or displease God. 20th. I have been reading Sir M. Hale's life. What a man was he! and why may not I love God as well, and render to Christ as gratefully? Monday, 21st. Resumed work; but a bad day with me, and heavy in spirit; though a little roused by Witherspoon. 27th. Sunday. Cold at rising, afterwards earnest—serious thoughts and fervent prayer; and now I most seriously resolve to turn to God with my whole heart. I have been reading Doddridge's life. What a wonderful man! Yet I may apply to the same Saviour. I propose henceforth to try at eleven hours of all sorts of business one day with another whilst in the country; nine hours of which to be exclusive of 'serious.' 28th. Got up after too short a night, and stupid in consequence through the day. I was too forgetful to-day of my regulations, yet rather warm in devotions at night. 29th. Not so inattentive as I often am; yet, alas, how little what I ought to be!"

CHAPTER VII.

Death of Miss Bird—Progress of Abolition—Danger from Kimber.

A GREAT part of the autumn of this year was spent by Mr. Wilberforce at Yoxall Lodge, entering with much enjoyment into the pleasures of rural and social life, and yet "keeping his heart with all diligence," and devoting much time to study and preparation for the active duties of the winter. His Diary abounds with interesting entries of his feelings and occupations. Upon occasion of his return from a visit made in company with Mr. Gisborne, he contrasts his own homeless state with the welcome which awaited his host, and says, "Felt sadly the want of wife and children to hail my return, yet looked up to heaven as the real object of desire." This tranquil

life was interrupted by a most unwelcome summons to London to attend to the affairs of the Sierra Leone Company, in which he was deeply interested.

The hurry and interruptions of his London life were now again begun. "Jan. 7th. Out in the morning—employed all day. W. Smith called in the afternoon. I talked to him on religion, but too much as a matter of criticism. 10th. City—Sierra Leone; and afternoon slave business. Then Henry Thornton's, where discussed, and home late; Grant our associate. I find that I can hardly keep an account of time. 18th. Queen's birthday—at St. James's. Dined at Pitt's—sadly idle. What stuff such a day as this is! 21st. Went tête-à-tête with Pitt to Wimbledon—finance lecture on the way. A long discussion with Dundas after dinner—a most excellent man of business. Oh what a pity that he is not alive to what is best! his diligence shames me."

In entering upon this distracting scene he did not forget the resolutions of greater watchfulness with which he had closed his last London season. "I will watch and pray," he says, "or God may punish my carelessness by suffering me to fall a prey to sin. Christ says, through his apostle, 'Be not conformed to this world.' Do thou teach me, Lord, the true limits of conformity. I have been hearing a most excellent sermon from Mr. Scott, on procrastination. I was very cold and sluggish in spiritual affections both yesterday and this morning, but I hope this discourse has roused me; may I be enabled to put in practice these most important admonitions. I have much cause for humiliation in the past week; yet I think I go on better in my own house than in Henry Thornton's, from having more quiet; and I humbly resolve to press forward, and apply diligently to the throne of grace, that Christ may be made to me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." To Mr. Mason, whom Dr. Burgh describes "as entertaining paternal feelings towards you, which have received an accession from your late kind attention to him," he writes soon after his return to London—"To you, who know

Yoxall Lodge, and can by the utmost stretch of your imagination form to yourself some idea of *my* London, I need hardly say how I feel the change; yet I trust I am on my post, and in that persuasion I determine not to abandon it. I endeavour as much as I can to preserve my Needwood Forest mind in my Palace Yard habitation, and whilst I am in the busy and the social circle, (and I will confess to you the latter is to me the more laborious and dangerous service of the two,) I labour, looking to a better strength than my own, to discharge the duties of this life, from a regard to the happiness of the other, and from a sentiment of gratitude towards Him to whose undeserved mercy alone I can look for its attainment. I will not be so affected as to offer any apology for exhibiting this picture of my mind; on the contrary, I am persuaded you will rather thank me for it, accepting it as a proof of the cordiality and affection with which I am,

Very sincerely yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

But although he watched over himself thus diligently, and withdrew from all superfluous intercourse with society, "dining from home less than in former years, and giving fewer dinners, either ordinary or formal, upon Milner's persuasion;" yet his wakeful eye detected some injury to his spirit from his continual engagements. "Both my body and mind suffer from over-occupation. My heart is now in a cold and senseless state, and I have reason to adore the goodness of God in not hardening me. I have been short and cold, and wandering in private devotions. Habit and the grace of God preventing me have kept me in a decent observance of external duties, but all within is overgrown with weeds, and every truly Christian grace well nigh choked. Yet, O thou all-merciful Father, and thou Saviour of sinners, receive me yet again, and supply me with strength. Oh let me now quicken the things that are ready to die! My worldly connexions certainly draw me into temptations great and innumerable, yet I dare not withdraw from a

station in which God has placed me. Still let me deal honestly with myself in this matter, and if, on further trial, I find reason to believe I ought to lead a more sequestered life, may I not dread the imputation of singularity. If from my extreme weakness this public company-keeping life cannot be made consistent with a heavenly frame of mind, I think I ought to retire more. Herein and in all things may God direct me; but let me strive more against my corruptions, and particularly not straiten prayer. I find myself confiding in my resolutions; let me universally distrust myself, but let me throw myself at the feet of Christ as an undone creature, distrusting, yea, despairing of myself, but firmly relying upon Him. 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' 'They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.' "

These serious thoughts with which he mingled in the unthinking crowd of ordinary companions, were quickened by the affecting accounts which he received of the last hours of a near relation. "22d January. Saw the astonishing letter from Miss More, containing an account, written inter moriendum, of Harriet Bird's death at six o'clock on Wednesday morning. Oh may my latter end be like hers! Strongly affected; may it be deeply." "I have been extremely affected by Miss More's account of Harriet's death-bed scene.—How can I but be so—particularly her illumination, and the following agony just before she was taken to glory. I have felt these things, I humbly hope, not in vain. She prayed for me on her death-bed. How does her progress shame me! I am behind, far behind, all of them. But my eyes will not allow me to write; many tears to-day from mental struggles have injured them. May God, for Christ's sake, cause them not to flow in vain. I fly to Him for pardon, pleading the blood of Jesus. Though I almost despair, yet Christ is mighty to save. I have been looking over letters written to me by Milner, Pitt, &c., when I first entered upon a religious profession. How little have I corresponded to the outset! Yet it is not too late. But I am apt to take comfort

after writing thus, as though the business was done. Let me dismiss all vain confidence, and build upon the sure foundation."

A letter detailing the events which had occurred at Bath, called forth the following reply:

TO WILLIAM MANNING, ESQ.

"Palace Yard, 20th January, 1792.

"My dear Manning,

My eyes are but indifferent to-day, and I have much work for them; yet I cannot forbear taking up my pen for a few moments, not from form you will believe, but feeling, on the perusal of your kind letter. Such a crowd of ideas rush into my mind, that I scarce know how to discriminate or select them. I cannot help almost envying you the scene you have been witnessing. O my dear friend, never forget it; let it still be present to your mind, and let it force all those concerns which are so apt to engross our imaginations, and interest our hearts, to retire to their proper distance, or rather to shrink to their true point of insignificance. Never let me forget it. When I seem to you at any time to be intoxicated as it were by the hurry, the business, or the dissipation of life, spare not the best offices of friendship; recall me to that sobriety and seriousness of mind, which become those who know not when they may be called away: place before me the solemn triumphs of which you have been a spectator, and animate me to press forward in emulation of so glorious an example. To die the death, we must indeed live the life, of Christians. We must fix our affections on things above, not on things on the earth. We must endeavour habitually to preserve that frame of mind, and that course of conduct, with which we may be justly said to be waiting for the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know not any description of a Christian which impresses itself so forcibly as this on my mind. Alas! when with this which I ought to be I compare myself as I am, I am lost in unutterable shame and self-abasement. But I throw myself on the

mercies of God in Christ; I resolve to venture all on this foundation; and relying on that help which is promised to them that ask it, I determine to struggle with all my corruptions, and to employ what is left to me of life, and talents, and influence, in the way which shall appear to me most pleasing to my heavenly Father. Oh with what humiliation have I to look back on the years wherein all these were so grossly wasted; and what reason have I to rejoice that I was not then snatched away!

“I will not apologize for giving you this picture of my mind; you will accept it, I trust, (such indeed it is,) as a proof of affection and confidence. In truth, I often regret that we are so separated, as not to afford us the opportunity of exhibiting proofs of this last to each other more frequently in personal communications. May the time at length come, when, through the goodness of God, we may indulge (with those friends we have before lost for this life) uninterrupted and ever-growing effusions of affection. I must lay aside my pen. Adieu. Remember me most kindly to Mary. I rejoice to hear she is so supported. Assure her of my constant prayers. Remember me also kindly to the Mores and Dr. Fraser, whose tender assiduities I have heard of with sincere pleasure, and reflect on with real gratitude. Believe me, my dear Manning, in great haste,

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.”

To his other occupations, was soon added constant attendance on the parliamentary business of an important session.

But though the many questions which then came before parliament received a full share of his attention, the Abolition struggle mainly occupied his thoughts. About a month before he came to London he opened to Lord Muncaster the plan of action upon which he had at first decided. “I mean,” he says, “to bring on the slave business within a month after parliament meets, that we may then, being defeated, sound the alarm throughout

the land, (*provoco ad populum*,) get petitions, &c. and carry something important before the session is over. I mention this, lest Clarkson, to whom I threw it out, should have failed to tell you, and because you will regulate your motions accordingly." But before the session commenced there was so fair a promise of reviving interest in the cause, that he deemed it wiser to postpone his motion until he could propose it with the expected sanction of a great body of petitions. "I have considered, and talked over with several friends, our future plan of operations, and we are all at length pretty well agreed, that the best course will be to endeavour to excite the flame as much as possible in a secret way, but not to allow it more than to smother until after I shall have given notice of my intention of bringing the subject forward. This must be the signal for the fire's bursting forth. We hope ere that time to have laid all our trains, and that by proper efforts the blaze will then be universal."

The conduct of this "appeal to the people" now occupied his time, and he was daily rousing and directing the efforts of his adherents throughout the country. This was no appeal to the political impulses of the multitude. Rendered necessary "by that vote of the House of Commons on the Slave Trade question, which proved above all things the extremely low ebb of real principle there," it was addressed to the moral sympathies of the educated and religious classes. "I wish you and all other country labourers," he writes to Mr. Hey, "to consider yourselves not as having concluded, but as only beginning your work: it is on the general impression and feeling of the nation we must rely, rather than on the political conscience of the House of Commons. So let the flame be fanned continually, and may it please God, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, to bless our endeavours." County meetings to petition parliament were what he chiefly wished to obtain. He could not but hope that the cause was gaining ground fast in the country, as it became better acquainted with the real nature of this horrid traffic.

To such a pitch was the zeal of the friends of Abolition at this time raised, that many had determined to abstain from the consumption of West Indian produce, until the measure should be carried. "We use East Indian sugar entirely," writes Mr. Babington, "and so do full two-thirds of the friends of Abolition in Leicester." "Please to take notice," says Mr. W. Smith, "that I have left off sugar completely and entirely for some time past, and shall certainly persevere in my resolution, though I am not yet at all reconciled to the deprivation of the most favourite gratification of my palate." Upon this point the opinion of Mr. Wilberforce was called for in many quarters, both for the direction of individual conduct, and to determine the line which should be held at county meetings. "When you have leisure to favour me with a line," wrote the venerable Newton, "I shall be glad of your judgment respecting the associations now rapidly forming to stop the consumption of West Indian produce. If you were to recommend such a measure I should readily adopt it; at present I think it premature." "What," asks Mr. Gisborne, "are we to say at our meeting as to the use of West Indian sugar?" Mr. Wilberforce was at first disposed to recommend this measure, but upon a mature consideration of all its probable consequences he decided "that it should be suspended until, if necessary, it might be adopted with effect by general concurrence."

Whilst he was rallying his country forces, accounts arrived of the recent outrages in St. Domingo. They afforded the enemies of Abolition a pretext for warmer opposition, and shook the faith of some of its adherents. Many too of those who continued zealous supporters of the cause, were for deferring a fresh appeal to parliament till a more convenient season.

Nor was it only the natural timidity of irresolute minds which suggested this temporizing policy; pressing arguments to the same effect from a very different quarter tried but could not shake his resolution. "Called away after dinner to Slave Committee. Pitt threw out against Slave motion on St. Domingo account. I must

repose myself on God. The insincerity of my heart has been shamefully evinced to me to-day, when I could hardly bring myself to resolve to do my duty and please God at the expense (as I suspect it will turn out) of my cordiality with Pitt, or rather his with me." "Do not be afraid," he tells Mr. Babington, "lest I should give ground: I hope, through God's blessing, to be enabled to press forward, and never to abandon my pursuit or relax in it till . . . a supposition hardly conceivable . . . it shall become right so to do. This is a matter wherein all personal, much more all ministerial, attachments must be as dust in the balance. Meanwhile exert yourselves in the country with renewed vigour. I should be glad to have some petitions, if possible, even before my notice, that it may be evident the country is alarmed, and no receding of mine could prevent the measure coming forward. Poor fellow! I can feel for you: we people that live in this bustling place, are called off to other things from what would otherwise haunt and harass us."

Nor was this the only difficulty peculiar to that troubled season. It was at this time that the fraternizing spirit of revolutionary France established affiliated societies in foreign nations, and threatened our own population with the infection of her leprous touch. From the contagion of her principles the sounder part of the nation shrunk back with horror, and viewed with the utmost suspicion whatever bore the least resemblance to them. The supporters of the Slave Trade were not slow in turning to their own advantage this excited state of public feeling. The name of Jacobin, and the charge of holding revolutionary tenets, might be easily affixed to any advocate of liberty; whilst, however wantonly imputed, they could not in those times of wakeful suspicion be readily removed. It was moreover inevitable, that amongst the friends of Abolition should be ranged some actual abettors of these extreme opinions. "It is certainly true, and perfectly natural, that these Jacobins are all friendly to the Abolition; and it is no less true and natural that this operates to the injury of our cause. However, I am not discouraged. You seem yourself to

be deep in Abolition lore ; I am glad of it, as I am sure you will be proportionably earnest. It is a superficial view alone, which makes a man of sense honestly against us.”* This evil had been for some time spreading amongst a certain class of supporters ; and had scarcely been suppressed by his skill and patience. “ You will see Clarkson,” writes Mr. Wilberforce to Lord Muncaster ; “ caution him against talking of the French Revolution ; it will be ruin to our cause.” “ Clarkson,” writes Dr. Milner, “ would tell you that he had a long conversation with me. I wish him better health, and better notions in politics ; no government can stand on such principles as he appeals to, and maintains. I am very sorry for it, because I see plainly advantage is taken of such cases as his, in order to represent the friends of Abolition as levellers. This is not the only instance where the converse of a proposition does not hold : levellers certainly are friends of Abolition.” Great mischief had already risen to the cause. “ What business had your friend Clarkson,” asked Dundas, “ to attend the Crown and Anchor last Thursday ? He could not have done a more mischievous thing to the cause you have taken in hand.” “ On Wednesday last,” says Mr. Wilberforce’s Diary shortly after he received this letter, “ to Pitt’s at Holwood. Stayed till Saturday—with Pitt to town in his phaeton, and interesting talk about Abolition. Some vote against it not to encourage Paine’s disciples.”

This impression affected his success elsewhere ; it had reached the highest quarter with peculiar force ; and created henceforth an inseparable obstacle to the exercise of any ministerial influence in behalf of Abolition. There had been a time, when George III. had whispered at the levee, “ How go on your black clients, Mr. Wilberforce ?” but henceforth he was a determined opposer of the cause. Yet in spite of these unfavourable circumstances, it was evidently right to bring the question forward. The sympathy of the country was too much

* To W. Hey, Esq.

aroused to be patient of delay. Public meetings, and petitions numerously signed, multiplied both in England and in Scotland.

Even from Liverpool, where the corporation had spent, first and last, upwards of £10,000 in their parliamentary opposition to his motions, he hears from Dr. Currie—"You will, perhaps, be surprised that Liverpool does not petition for the trade. Liverpool will never again, I think, petition on this subject; conviction of the truth has spread amongst us widely."

Upon the 2d of April Mr. Wilberforce proposed his motion in a debate, which he describes the following morning to Mr. Hey. "I know how much you are interested in what regards our poor African fellow-creatures, and therefore I take up my pen for a single moment to inform you that, after a very long debate, (we did not separate till near seven this morning,) my motion for immediate Abolition was put by; though supported strenuously by Mr. Fox, and by Mr. Pitt with more energy and ability than were almost ever exerted in the House of Commons." "Windham, who had no love for Pitt, tells me, that Fox and Grey, with whom he walked home after the debate, agreed with him in thinking Pitt's speech one of the most extraordinary displays of eloquence they had ever heard. For the last twenty minutes he really seemed to be inspired." "He was dilating upon the future prospects of civilizing Africa, a topic which I had suggested to him in the morning." "We carried a motion however afterwards for gradual Abolition, against the united forces of Africans and West Indians, by a majority of 238 to 85. I am congratulated on all hands, yet I cannot feel but hurt and humiliated. We must endeavour to force the gradual Abolitionists in *their* Bill (for I will never myself bring forward a parliamentary license to rob and murder) to allow as short a term as possible, and under as many limitations." "I am glad to hear you say," replies Mr. Hey, "that you will not bring in a Bill to license robbery and murder. I think this resolution becoming your conduct on the ground you have taken.

But if no scruple of this kind weighed with you, you will undoubtedly have the advantage in being the corrector, rather than the proposer, of the Bill. What you propose would probably be curtailed in some degree. Whatever others propose you will probably be able to modify."

In this hurry of business he enters: "Perhaps I have been a little more attentive to my devotions in this last week; yet too little thinking of God's presence and favour. But though with a cold heart, I will proceed, praying for more grace; and though this next fortnight will be a sadly hurrying time, I will hope, by God's help, to amend at least in some things. Look to Jesus: all other modes are vain."

On the 23d Mr. Dundas brought forward his Resolutions for a gradual Abolition. "After a hard struggle," writes Mr. Wilberforce, "we were last night defeated in our attempt to fix the period of Abolition for the 1st of January, 1795; the numbers being 161 to 121. But we carried the first of January, 1796, (Mr. Dundas had proposed 1800,) by a majority of 151 against 132. On the whole this is more than I expected two months ago, and I have much cause for thankfulness. We are to contend for the number of slaves to be imported; and *then for the House of Lords.*"

Upon the first of May, when the question came again before the House, Mr. Dundas declared himself unable to propose his Resolutions as amended by the late division. They were therefore moved by Mr. Pitt, and upon the following day communicated to the Lords in a free conference. Here the opponents of the measure rallied their broken forces; and in spite of Lord Grenville's able arguments, prevailed upon the House to proceed by calling evidence to their own bar; a resolution in itself equivalent to a direct vote, which followed on the 5th of June, when the business was formally postponed to the ensuing session.

The bustle of this busy session had not dispelled those serious purposes with which he had commenced its labours. "The beginning of a long recess draws near,

and I will endeavour to consecrate it to God by a day of solemn prayer and fasting. I will labour to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset me, and to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour; to follow peace with all men, and above all to love the Lord my God with all my heart. O strengthen me, Lord, by thy grace, for I am very weakness; cleanse me, for I am all corruption; and since ease begets carelessness, may I be clothed with humility, and may I fear alway."

The contest in behalf of Abolition was throughout conducted by Mr. Wilberforce in a spirit of conciliation towards the supporters of the trade. Some amongst the West Indian body were his personal friends, and of all "we should not forget," he writes to Dr. Currie, "that Christian candour is due to the characters of those who carry it on. There may be, I doubt not, amongst them many men of enlarged and humane minds. I trust that you have done me the justice to acquit me of having adopted any such indiscriminate and false judgment as that you oppose." But it was not to be expected, that in a strife which called into violent action the whole energies of many lower natures, he should always meet with opponents of a spirit like his own. He had throughout the struggle to bear the imputation of unworthy motives, and the various assaults of personal slander. No one could unite with him in this cause, without in some measure sharing in this treatment.

To engage in correspondence with Mr. Wilberforce, was esteemed sufficient ground for such annoyance. In the island of Tortola, the papers of an English gentleman known to be guilty of this crime were seized by order of the president of the council, on the charge of their containing proofs of a treasonable correspondence with the French. This jealousy extended even to Great Britain. "The box in which our petition is enclosed," says a Glasgow correspondent, "has been directed to another, that its contents may be unsuspected." And other residents in Liverpool of the same rank of life asked with the late Dr. Currie, "If you write, be pleased to direct without your franking it." Their correspond-

ence was conducted in unsigned letters, sent under the covers of unsuspected persons. In a letter which does not allude to West Indian matters, and was therefore openly transmitted, Dr. Currie adds this postscript, "Trusting this letter to our post-office with your address, I shall be anxious to hear of its safe arrival." The attacks which were aimed against himself were not always of this comparatively harmless character. At an early period of the contest he had been in danger of personal violence, from "one, who from my having been compelled in quality of examiner in the committee to bring forward his inconsistencies, conceived so violent a hatred of me, as even to threaten my life." The summer of 1792 had exposed him to two more such assailants. He had just returned to London from Bath when the challenge of a West Indian captain, which had been delivered at his lodgings, followed him by post to town. He marks in his Journal his sense of God's goodness in so ordering this business, that he was thus allowed leisure to reflect upon the line of conduct which it became him to adopt. "Talked," says his Diary at this time, "with S. about duelling. He says he should fight, though disapproving. I deprecated. My plans uncertain. I rather think of returning to Bath, perhaps partly from a desire of not appearing to be deterred thence; and partly from thinking, that a proper and easy explanation of my determination and views in respect to duelling, might be in all respects eligible. At all events, I will enter now upon a more diligent course, which may suit any plan. I often waste my time in waiting for suitable seasons; whereas I ought, as a single man, to be at home every where; or at least, to be always at work." This affair was carried no further; but he was, at the very same time, brought into collision with another assailant, to whose threatened violence he was exposed for more than two years. Kimber, another West Indian captain, was thus described by Sir James Stonehouse, to whom Mr. Wilberforce had applied for the particulars of his character. "He is a very bad man, a great spendthrift; one who would swear to any falsehood, and who is

linked with a set of rascals like himself." This man had been charged by Mr. Wilberforce, in the debate of April, 1792, with great cruelty in his conduct of the trade. Several trials in the courts of law followed; in one of which the captain was himself capitally indicted for the murder of a negro girl. Of this charge he was not found guilty; escaping, in the judgment of Mr. Wilberforce, "through the shameful remissness of the Crown lawyers, and the indecent behaviour of a high personage who from the bench identified himself with the prisoner's cause." These reasons were aided by the apparent contradictions of a principal witness, in his evidence upon a collateral point, for which he was tried and convicted in the penalties of perjury; a sentence afterwards commuted by the Crown.

As soon as he was discharged from prison he applied to Mr. Wilberforce for what he termed remuneration for his wrongs. "July 11th. Morning received Kimber's letter. Friday, by Pitt's advice, wrote answer to Kimber." The satisfaction he demanded was "A public apology, £5000 in money, and such a place under government as would make me comfortable." Upon receiving a brief refusal of his propositions, Kimber had recourse to violence. "Kimber lying in wait for me—first civil, then abusive." "Kimber called between seven and eight, and again about ten." "'Very savage-looking,' Amos said, 'he went away muttering and shaking his head.'" The interference of Lord Sheffield (an honourable opponent) at last terminated this annoyance, but not before one of his friends (the late Lord Rokeby) had thought it needful to become his armed companion in a journey into Yorkshire, to defend him from anticipated violence. "I know," wrote Mr. Wilberforce at this time to Lord Muncaster in Cumberland, "how little the proverb, 'Out of sight out of mind,' holds good in the case of any of your friendships, and therefore I was not surprised at the warmth with which you expressed yourself on the subject of Kimber. How came you to hear any thing of the matter? Was it from me? I am sure I intended not to mention it lest I should awaken your kind

solicitude, which at three hundred miles from its object is not the most comfortable companion. Perhaps at some unguarded moment the matter slipped from my pen. I don't yet know whether he has any further measures in store: meanwhile be assured I will do all for my own security, which you would think proper if you were my adviser. I can't say I apprehend much, and I really believe, that if he were to commit any act of violence it would be beneficial rather than injurious to *the cause.*"

Being still detained in the neighbourhood of London by Sierra Leone business, he applied himself at once to his intended course of study. "Taken in," he says, "to dine at W. Smith's with a vast company—Dr. Aikin, Gillies, Mr. and Mrs. Barbauld, Helen Maria Williams, Mackintosh, Mr. Belsham, Mr. Sabbatiere, Mr. and Mrs. Towgood. I was not sufficiently guarded in talking about religion after dinner. Mackintosh talked away—he spoke most highly of Pitt's Slave Trade speech. Came home as if hunted to Thornton's quiet family party, and much struck with the difference. I threw out some things which may perhaps be of use. 25th. Had a long conversation with Pearson,* on the proper measure of a Christian's living in society, whether religious or worldly. He was very strong for solitude, and speaks of the benefit he personally has received from it. I talked with him very openly, and was much struck with what he said. Sunday, 29th. I have to-day been for several hours engaged in religious reading, but too languidly. I have had this week some very serious talk with Mr. Pearson. He strongly pressed solitude, from reason, Scripture, and his own personal experience. I believe he is right, and mean to seek more quiet and solitude than I have done; to consider the point, and draw up my thoughts upon it. 30th. Read Howe 'On Delighting in God,' and much affected by it. Heard from Osborne that there would be no county meeting, and therefore set free; and on thinking the matter over, resolved for Bath. Wrote to

* The distinguished surgeon.

Mr. Cecil to ask him to be my companion. Amongst my reasons for Bath, one, though not the leading one, is the desire of solitude; may God render it useful to me."

"My dear Muncaster," he writes, in answer to a friendly remonstrance upon the postponement of a long-promised visit, "notwithstanding your admonition behold me entering upon a course of Bath waters, prudently however and moderately like Muncaster the citizen; not rashly and violently like Pennington the soldier. My dear fellow, I the more readily yield myself to the impulse of duty which brings me hither, because it is altogether contrary to my inclination, and I am therefore sure I am not under any unfair bias. It would be a high gratification to me to be cooling my feet upon the mossy brow of Muncaster Park, instead of burning and parching them on the rest-refusing pavement of Bath. But do not think I am dissatisfied, and not rather grateful to God for His overflowing mercies to me of every kind; indeed I know no man who has so many. I have often thought, that the loss of nineteen-twentieths of my fortune would scarcely be a loss to me, since I have so many friends whose attachment I know so well that I should not fear to visit them though reduced to poverty; and you know human nature well enough to acknowledge that this implies confidence. I assure you that in such a case I should not be slow to direct my steps to Muncaster. You will, I know, be shocked to hear that poor Philips has been suddenly carried out of this world. O my dear friend, may events like this impress on us the survivors by how frail a tenure we hold our present life, and excite us to strive for that state wherein we may be always ready to attend the awful call. In a moment like that, how contemptible will appear all those objects of pleasure or ambition which have at times engaged our warmest affections! 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.' What emphatic words!

I am always affectionately yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

He was soon joined by such a companion as he had desired, in the person of Mr. Grant, who with his wife and eldest daughter arrived at Bath upon the 10th of August. "Since the Grants are with me," he says, "I study less. I have been reading Sir B. Boothby's pamphlets, Mackintosh's, G. Rose's; Goldsmith's Animated Nature, Lowth's Isaiah, Owen, Thomson's Seasons, and Horace by heart."

"17th. This is the day on which Pitt, Dundas, P. Arden, and Steele are at Hamels. I am disposed to wish myself with them. I find that even here in religious society I can have an earthly mind; yet to depart (when not necessary to be with them) from those who fear not God, and to associate with those who do, is one part of waiting on God to which the promise is made. 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'"

Though he at this time diminished in some measure his intercourse with those of whom he could not hope that they were living with a constant reference to unseen things, yet he did not retire rudely from their friendship. Not that his intimacies had ever been among the enemies of religion; he had never been so blind as to expect a national reformation from men of abandoned character; and neither Mr. Pitt nor his other friends had ever been tainted with unbelief, or allied to that infidel party which has at all times found its rallying point in opposition to God and His church. Hence his constant care to employ his private influence for the advancement of religion was not impeded by their opposition of principles: the maxims for which he contended might not be duly appreciated, but they formed part of their admitted creed.

"At night alone with Pitt, but talked politics only—did not find myself equal to better talk. I came here hoping that I might really find an opportunity of talking seriously with Pitt. What am I, to do so with any one? O Christ, help me. Morning had some serious talk with Pitt—interrupted or should have had more. Walked with him. I see much reason to admire his integrity,

public spirit, and magnanimity in despising unpopularity."

"The convention" had bestowed upon Mr. Wilberforce in the course of this summer the doubtful honours of French citizenship. "I was provoked lately," writes Mr. Mason, "to see your name registered among the list of citizens by the French savages. And for what? Merely for taking up the cause of humanity previous to their taking up the love of freedom; the love of which, even during their first and best exertions, was not strong enough to induce them to follow your humane steps." "I am considering," he himself writes to Mr. Babington, "how to prevent the ill effect which this vote might have upon our Abolition cause." Such an opportunity was afforded him by a public meeting held in London at this time to raise subscriptions for the emigrant clergy.

"Consented to be on the committee at Burke's request, partly to do away French citizenship."

In the autumn he went to Yoxall Lodge, where, with the exception of a short visit to Rothley Temple, he remained until he was called to London by the business of the session. Here he resumed the diligent employments of the preceding summer, giving however more time than formerly to studies of a directly religious character. "I have been employing," he says, "most of this morning in reading St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians." It was by this careful study, which no press of business ever interrupted, and which continued daily through his life, that he obtained an acquaintance with holy Scripture unusual even in professed theologians. A marked advance in his character during the course of this year may be traced in the altered tone of his most private entries. Still indeed they abounded in that deep humiliation with which they who have looked closely into the perfect law of liberty must ever contemplate their own fulfilment of its demands; yet they bear already more of that calm and peaceful character which cast so warm a light upon his later days. "Though utterly *unworthy*," he says, "I thank God for having ena-

bled me to pray with earnestness. Oh that this may not be as the morning cloud and as the early dew! By his grace I will persevere with more earnestness than ever, labouring to work out my own salvation in an entire and habitual dependence upon Him." "If you have truly learned to feel the insufficiency of your own powers," says the Dean of Carlisle, to whom he had poured forth his earnest desires after a more rapid growth in holiness, "you have made more progress than you think of; and if you can support that feeling and act upon it for any time together, your advance is very considerable." He judged himself indeed to be "in a more pleasing state." "I have been praying," he says, "earnestly to God for his Spirit through Christ to renew my corrupt nature and make me spiritually-minded; what folly is all else! Let me take courage, relying on the sure promises of God in Christ and the powerful operations of the Spirit of grace. Though I am weak He is strong.' I must more cherish this heavenly inhabitant."

This tranquil state of feeling was henceforth fostered by a system of greater domestic intercourse with the friends whose principles he valued, and by mingling consequently less frequently than of old in the turbulent currents of life. Some such alteration in his plan was rendered necessary by the loss of the opportunity of retirement which had been afforded him, since he ceased to own a house at Wimbledon, by the enlightened hospitality of his relative John Thornton. "Young men and old have different habits," said his kinsman when he offered him a room in his house and the command of his spacious garden, "and I shall leave you therefore to keep your own hours, and take care that you are not interrupted."

Of this offer he availed himself until the death of Mr. Thornton in 1790, and in the course of 1792 he agreed to share a house on Clapham Common with Mr. Henry Thornton, the youngest son of his deceased relative. Whilst his general influence was silently extending, there grew up around him here a chosen circle of peculiar

friends. Amongst these must especially be noticed the Hon. E. J. Eliot, Mr. Grant, and Mr. Henry Thornton. Mr. Eliot, his early friend and fellow-traveller, was now settled, for the sake of his society, in the immediate neighbourhood of Battersea Rise. The loss of a wife, to whom he was ardently attached, (the favourite sister of Mr. Pitt,) had given a tone of earnest piety to the whole character of Mr. Eliot, and taught him to co-operate in every useful scheme suggested by his friend; whilst at the same time there had been inflicted on his spirit a wound from which he never rallied. His death, in 1797, was attributed by those who knew his inmost feelings, to the lingering sorrow of a broken heart. Of Mr. Grant and Mr. Henry Thornton it is needless here to speak. "Few men," says the latter, referring to this period, "have been blest with worthier or better friends than have fallen to my lot. Mr. Wilberforce stands at the head of these, for he was the friend of my youth. I owed much to him in every sense soon after I came out in life; for his enlarged mind, his affectionate and condescending manners, and his very superior piety, were exactly calculated to supply what was wanting to my improvement and my establishment in a right course. It is chiefly through him that I have been introduced to a variety of other most valuable associates." "When I entered life, I saw a great deal of dishonourable conduct among people who made great profession of religion. In my father's house I met with persons of this sort. This so disgusted me that, had it not been for the admirable pattern of consistency and disinterestedness which I saw in Mr. Wilberforce, I should have been in danger of a sort of infidelity."

Such was at this time his position; high in public estimation, and rich in private friends; engaged in the conduct of a most important cause; with his mind now disciplined by culture, and enriched by study; whilst the unseen life of his spirit, escaping from its early struggles, was strengthening into tranquil vigour, as religion took a firmer hold upon his character, and leavened more thoroughly the whole man. By this early self-discipline

he had purchased the calm and peaceful obedience of the remainder of his course. He was now about to be tried in his political life with far more searching difficulties than any which he had yet encountered. Like that holy man of old to whom a severe observer has beautifully compared him, he was prepared by humility and self-denial for the arduous trials of a public life; and like him he supported them with uncorrupted faith. "From a careful scrutiny," says Mr. Matthias,* "into the public and private life of Mr. Wilberforce, I am inclined to think that his enemies would be forced into an acknowledgment that they can find no occasion against this man, except they find it against him concerning the law of his God."

CHAPTER VIII.

Popular disturbances—Opposes Pitt—East India affairs—Commences work on Practical Christianity—Difficulties of Abolition.

THE autumn of 1792 set in with heavy clouds darkening the political horizon. "Heard of the militia being called out, and parliament summoned—talked politics, and of the state of the country, which seems very critical." Upon the 5th Dec. "left Rothley Temple, and after talking with Mr. Robinson (of Leicester) upon the state of the times, I travelled on to Newport Pagnell. Thursday, 6th. Arrived in town and alighted at Pitt's."

None but those who were altogether blinded by the violence of party spirit could contemplate without alarm the troubled aspect of the times. The democratical excitement which the revolutionary fever of our continental neighbours had imparted to a portion of our own population, had been eagerly fostered by artful and disaffected

* Pursuits of Literature.

men, and was ready in many places to break out into absolute rebellion.

“I cannot omit,” writes Mr. Wyvill, “to communicate to you by the earliest opportunity what I have heard since I came here concerning the disposition of the lower people in the county of Durham. Considerable numbers in Bernard Castle have manifested disaffection to the constitution, and the words ‘No King,’ ‘Liberty,’ and ‘Equality,’ have been written there upon the Market Cross. During the late disturbances amongst the keelmen at Shields and Sunderland, General Lambton was thus addressed: ‘Have you read this little work of Tom Paine’s?’ ‘No.’ ‘Then read it—we like it much. You have a great estate, General; we shall soon divide it amongst us.’ ‘You will presently spend it in liquor, and what will you do then?’ ‘Why then, General, we will divide again.’” “At Carlisle,” writes Dr. Milner, “we had many reports concerning tumults and sedition, and the affair seemed to be of considerable magnitude. Some few gentlemen I understand are disposed to favour French principles, and I am exceedingly sorry to find that Mr. Paley is as loose in his politics as he is in his religion. He has considerable influence in promoting this sort of work by his conversation, which has a strong tendency to destroy all subordination, and bring rulers of every description into contempt.”

The same apprehensions were excited amongst sober-minded men in all parts of the country. “Immense pains,” he heard from Leeds, “are now taken to make the lower class of people discontented, and to excite rebellion. Paine’s mischievous work on ‘the Rights of Man,’ is compressed into a sixpenny pamphlet, and is sold and given away in profusion. One merchant in this town ordered two hundred of them to be given at his expense: you may see them in the houses of our journeymen cloth-dressers. The soldiers are every where tampered with; no pains are spared to render this island a scene of confusion.”

All this was sufficiently alarming; while the danger was increased by the probability of a French war, which

must necessarily add to the burdens of the people, and so further the designs of the revolutionary faction. With his eyes fully open to these evils, he took a calm and sober view of the amount of danger.

“To you,” he tells Mr. Hey, “I will frankly own, that I entertain rather gloomy apprehensions concerning the state of this country. Not that I fear any speedy commotion; of this I own I see no danger. Almost every man of property in the kingdom is of course the friend of civil order, and if a few mad-headed professors of liberty and equality were to attempt to bring their theories into practice, they would be crushed in an instant. But yet I do foresee a gathering storm, and I cannot help fearing that a country which, like this, has so long been blessed beyond all example with every spiritual and temporal good, will incur those judgments of an incensed God, which in the prophets are so often denounced against those who forget the Author of all their mercies.” “Your letter,” he writes again in answer to a detail of facts, “and accounts I have received of the state of other places have convinced me that there is more cause for alarm than I had apprehended. From my situation I feel loaded with responsibility. I am considering, and shall consider diligently, what is best to be done; and I pray God to give me wisdom to discern, and courage and perseverance to walk in the path of duty. I own to you that what throws the deepest gloom over my prospects is the prevailing profligacy of the times, and above all, that self-sufficiency, and proud and ungrateful forgetfulness of God, which is so general in the higher ranks of life. I think of proposing to the Archbishop of Canterbury to suggest the appointment of a day of fasting and humiliation.”

The same sober estimate of present appearances, led him to check the exultation with which Mr. Hey regarded a temporary burst of loyalty in the town of Leeds. “‘God save the King’ was sung, with a chorus of three cheers after each verse, by the whole meeting, the most numerous I ever saw upon any such public oc-

casian; about 3000 in number. The populace paraded the streets until night came on, carrying an image of Tom Paine upon a pole, with a rope round his neck which was held by a man behind, who continually lashed the effigy with a carter's whip. The effigy was at last burned in the market-place, the market-bell tolling slowly. I never saw so quiet a mob; a smile sat on every face; the people went peaceably home; no outrage, no opprobrious language, but 'God save the King' resounded in the streets. A happy change in this town." "I rejoice to hear that so much unanimity prevailed at Leeds," was Mr. Wilberforce's answer, "but I do not build much on such hasty effusions: this one word in reply to yours."

Parliament met upon the 13th December, when the Address upon the King's speech which Mr. Fox opposed and Mr. Windham defended, expressed a strong desire of maintaining peace. "I had thought much upon it, yet found myself indisposed for speaking." On the debate upon Mr. Fox's amendment to the Address, he declared his opinions. "War," he said, "he considered at all times the greatest of human evils, and never more pregnant with injury than at the present moment; but he supported the Address, as the most likely means of preserving peace."

This was now his great object. He was himself convinced that Mr. Pitt was honestly pursuing the same policy, and he therefore sustained his measures, being constantly at his post throughout the warm debates with which the session commenced. Yet though anxious to prevent the occurrence of war, no one could hold in more deliberate abhorrence the principles of the Revolutionary party; and having heard from his brother-in-law, Dr. Clarke, of a meeting to be held in the East Riding of Yorkshire, for the counteraction of French principles, he set out at once in order to attend it. "Occupied all the way in preparing to make a long speech, which proved all labour thrown away. The meeting went off quietly. Gentlemen numerous—they and the people pleased with my appearing. I spoke for about

five minutes; and hardly could more without appearing to *show off*, at least I thought so then, though now I believe I had better have held forth for half an hour."

But his hostility to French principles did not lead him to abandon the opinions he had always held upon the necessity of reform in parliament. After this very meeting, he joined Mr. Wyvill, the professed champion of parliamentary reform, at the house of his colleague Henry Duncombe.

The war which broke out almost immediately, led to the first decided political separation between himself and Mr. Pitt. It was not without great reluctance that he brought himself to oppose a minister, of whose integrity and talents he had so high a value, and with whom he had so long lived upon terms of the most intimate private friendship. The difference between them arose gradually, and did not ripen into open separation until the end of the following year; yet even from the beginning of the war he was not fully satisfied with the conduct of administration. Though Mr. Pitt's was not a "war system," yet he was in Mr. Wilberforce's judgment too much guided in its commencement by his own sanguine disposition, hitherto untempered by any disappointment. "It will be a very short war," said Mr. Pitt and his friends, "and certainly ended in one or two campaigns." "No, sir," said Mr. Burke when this language was addressed to him, "it will be a long war, and a dangerous war, but it must be undertaken." Mr. Wilberforce was alive to its perils, but not convinced of its necessity. "Not that," he thought, "peace could be a state of as much security as the term 'peace' had commonly implied, but as far the less of two evils. Though at the commencement of the war I could deliberately declare that we were not the assailants, and therefore that it was just and necessary; yet I had but too much reason to know that the ministry had not taken due pains to prevent its breaking out." In the debate therefore upon the King's message, which intimated the necessity of some military preparations in consequence of the murder of the King of France, he had resolved to declare his persuasion

that it was the true policy of the country to continue strictly upon the defensive; that the delirium which now distracted France would probably pass over by degrees, and that she would then see the folly of provoking a war with Great Britain, in addition to the continental storm which was already gathered round her. "I was actually upon my legs to open my mind fully upon the subject, when Pitt sent Bankes to me, earnestly desiring me not to do so that day, assuring me that my speaking then might do irreparable mischief, and pledging himself that I should have another opportunity before war should be declared."

The week passed away, and in spite of Mr. Pitt's assurance there had been no opportunity upon which he could state his sentiments. By an incident to which his whole parliamentary experience could furnish no parallel, the House was compelled to adjourn every successive day without entering upon any other business, because there were not a sufficient number of members present to make a ballot for an election committee. Meanwhile war was declared by the French against England and the United Provinces, and when hostilities had actually begun, "I deemed it," he says, "the part of a good subject not to use language which might tend to prevent the unanimity which was so desirable at the outset of such a war." Yet even now he was not satisfied with the tone held by the administration. "Feb. 12th. Message on the war—vexed at Pitt and Dundas for not being explicit enough." "Our government," he wrote long after to Mr. Hey, "had been for some months before the breaking out of the war negotiating with the principal European powers, for the purpose of obtaining a joint representation to France, assuring her that if she would formally engage to keep within her limits, and not molest her neighbours, she should be suffered to settle her own internal government and constitution without interference. I never was so earnest with Mr. Pitt on any other occasion, as I was in my entreaties before the war broke out, that he would declare openly in the House of Commons, that he had been, and then was,

negotiating this treaty. I urged on him that the declaration might possibly produce an immediate effect in France, where it was manifest there prevailed an opinion that we were meditating some interference with their internal affairs, and the restoration of Louis to his throne. At all events, I hoped that in the first lucid interval France would see how little reason there was for continuing the war with Great Britain; and, at least, the declaration must silence all but the most determined oppositionists in this country. How far this expectation would have been realized you may estimate by Mr. Fox's language, when Mr. Pitt, at my instance, did make the declaration last winter (1799). 'If,' he said, 'the right hon. gentleman had made the declaration now delivered, to France, as well as to Russia, Austria, and Prussia, I should have nothing more to say or to desire.' "

Now that the war had actually commenced, and circumstances had thus prevented his openly opposing Mr. Pitt, according to his general rule he supported the King's government whenever he was able. His mode of life was much what has been described in the preceding year. Retiring often to Clapham for solitude; "the very prospect of which," he says, "even for a single afternoon, evidently amends me, fixing and solemnizing my mind;" and cultivating more and more the company of those who lived habitually in the fear of God, he maintained his usual intercourse with general society. "Venn preached an excellent introductory sermon—I received the sacrament and had much serious reflection. Oh may it be for good! I renewed all my solemn resolves, and purpose to lay afresh my foundations." "Mr. Cecil came to dinner, and tête-à-tête with him; having sent away Burgh for that purpose, according to our social contract. Much pleased with Cecil—he is living like a Christian. Oh that I were like him!" "I have much the same confessions to make as heretofore, yet I hope, on the whole, I have of late read the Scriptures with more attention, and preserved on my mind rather a more constant sense of God's presence. My chief faults to-day, amongst innumerable others, have

been, a want of self-denial, too little real respect for the excellent of the earth, too few aspirations, impatience under provocation, and not sufficient kindness to my servants." "Expecting Muncaster, meaning serious discussion; when sent for by Henry Thornton to town, on the state of public credit, &c.—then to Pitt's with and for him. A sadly interrupted day." "To Battersea with the two Venns—they with me all day—profitable conversation—Venn talked of M. the backslider. Oh may I beware!" Such are the indications of his state of mind, afforded by his Diary, at this time.

Early in this year he was again occupied with the conduct of the Negro cause. The session of 1792 had closed the period which he has described as the first assault upon the Slave Trade. The effects of the new tactics so skilfully introduced by Mr. Dundas, were not slow in making themselves felt. No practical mitigation of the evil had yet been obtained, but in his resolutions the indignation of the country had found a vent and was rapidly subsiding into comparative indifference.

The decent delay afforded by the forms of the House of Lords was fatal to the progress of the question. The enthusiastic march of its ordinary supporters grew slow and heavy; the interest of the country manifestly flagged; the excitement of the revolutionary war distracted the attention of the volatile; the progress of French principles terrified the timid; the seed which had been so freely scattered by the revolutionary politics of some leading Abolitionists had sprung up into a plentiful harvest of suspicion. "I do not imagine," writes Mr. Clarke during this period, "that we could meet with twenty persons in Hull at present who would sign a petition, that are not republicans. People connect democratical principles with the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and will not hear it mentioned."

Yet during this darkest period his courage never yielded, nor was his patient diligence relaxed. He was early at his post in the first session of 1793; and in order to hasten the proceedings of the Lords by a new vote of the lower House, moved, upon the 26th of February, the

further consideration of the Abolition of the Trade. The principal opponent of the measure was Sir W. Young, whose appeal to recent observation was not lost upon the House; since in defiance of the claims of consistency and justice enforced by the eloquence of the mover, seconded by the seldom united arguments of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, it refused by a majority of eight votes to renew its own decision of the preceding year.

This defeat in the Commons was succeeded by a postponement of the business in the Lords; where the advocates for the trade in slaves were reinforced by the zealous and avowed support of a member of the royal family.

It had always been one part of the tactics of his opponents to assert that Mr. Wilberforce grew weary of the cause. As early as 1790, he wrote to Dr. Currie in answer to this charge: "I cannot help expressing my surprise at its having been reported that I had given up the business. I attended for the greater part of the last session the whole of every morning in the committee of the House of Commons, receiving evidence; and we have printed, I believe, at least 1100 folio pages. In truth, the principles upon which I act in this business being those of religion, not of sensibility and personal feeling, can know no remission, and yield to no delay. I am confident of success, though I dare not say any thing positive as to the period of it."

"Though I cannot," he replies to Dr. Currie, "enter upon the topics contained in your letter, I must notice one of them; that, I mean, of my being supposed to be, as you delicately express it, fainting in my course. Nothing, I assure you, is further from the truth: it is one of those calumnies, for such I account it, to which every public man is exposed, and of which, though I have had a tolerable proportion, I cannot complain of having had more than my share. In the case of every question of political expediency, there appears to me room for the consideration of times and seasons. At one period, under one set of circumstances, it may be proper to push, at another, and in other circumstances, to withhold our

efforts; but in the present instance, where the actual commission of guilt is in question, a man who *fears God* is not at liberty. Be persuaded then that I shall never make this grand cause the sport of caprice, or sacrifice it to motives of political convenience or personal feeling."

Upon the 14th of May he moved unsuccessfully for leave to bring in a bill which for a certain time should limit and regulate the importations into our own colonies. On the same evening he proposed the prohibition of the trade in slaves through which foreign colonies were supplied by British merchants. This motion was carried by a feeble majority of 41 to 34, but the bill which he brought in and long maintained against the vexatious opposition of incessant postponements, was lost at last upon its third reading.

These measures were planned and carried on in the midst of many interruptions. "Alas," he says, "what a hurrying life I lead, with little time for serious reflection!" "Some serious thought this morning, and found the benefit of early rising, but it sadly wears my frame." The canal and other local business of his great county consumed much time. Sierra Leone was a constant source of trouble; the causes of unnumbered private clients pressed upon his scanty leisure, while the general business of the House called his attention to the conduct of the war, the trial of Warren Hastings, and the question of reform in parliament.

He was engaged at this time in another most important effort. The renewal of the East India Company's charter afforded him an opening for attempting to improve the moral state of our Asiatic fellow-subjects. Since the reign of Anne a deep indifference to such attempts had settled upon the mind of the nation: he now attempted to arouse it from this long lethargy. After having "studied the subject with strenuous and persevering diligence," and consulted long and earnestly with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Speaker, and his friend Charles Grant, he brought the question forward in the House of Commons upon the 14th of May, in the form of certain Resolutions, which were agreed to in

committee, and entered on the Journals. These Resolutions pledged the House in general terms, to the "peculiar and bounden duty of promoting by all just and prudent means, the religious improvement" of the native Indians. Two days afterwards he proposed specific resolutions for sending schoolmasters and chaplains throughout India. To these Mr. Dundas had promised his support. "May 15th. East Indian Resolutions in hand, and Slave business, Lord Carhampton abusing me as a madman. 17th. Through God's help got the East Indian Resolutions in quietly. Sunday, 19th. Scott morning. Cecil afternoon. Called at Grant's—Miss More there. The hand of Providence was never more visible than in this East Indian affair. What cause have I for gratitude, and trust, and humiliation!" "My time is contracted and my eyes bad, yet I must record the grace and goodness of God in enabling me to be the instrument of carrying through the East Indian clauses. Never was his overruling providence more conspicuous than in the whole of this business. Oh let me remember that Judas was used as an instrument with the rest of the twelve disciples, and that many will say, 'Have we not prophesied in thy name,' to whom He will answer, 'Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.' This affair gives me fresh occasion to discover the pride of my own heart. How properly is Grant affected! yet let me take courage. It is of God's unmerited goodness that I am selected as the agent of usefulness. I see his overruling power. I go to adore His wisdom and goodness, to humble myself before Him, and to implore his forgiveness for Christ's sake. Amen."

In this, as in his efforts for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, his Diary proves him to have been influenced by the conviction of having been placed by God in the station he occupied for the purpose of promoting his glory on earth.

The Directors of the East India Company opposed his efforts, and in consequence he lost the promised support of Mr. Dundas. The following extracts will show the feelings with which he prosecuted the work:—

Upon "the 24th, House on the East India Bill: I argued as strongly as I could, but too much in my own strength." "It is not meant," he said, "to break up by violence existing institutions, and force our faith upon the natives of India; but gravely, silently, and systematically to prepare the way for the gradual diffusion of religious truth. Fraud and violence are directly repugnant to the genius and spirit of our holy faith, and would frustrate all attempts for its diffusion. . . To reject this measure would be to declare to the world that we are friends to Christianity, not because it is a revelation from heaven, nor even because it is conducive to the happiness of man, but only because it is the established religion of this country. In India we take equal care of Hindooism; our enlarged minds disdain the narrow prejudices of the contracted vulgar; like the ancient philosophers, we are led by considerations of expediency to profess the popular faith, but we are happy in an opportunity of showing that we disbelieve it in our hearts and despise it in our judgments. Beware how this opinion goes abroad. Think not that the people of this land will long maintain a great church establishment from motives of mere political expediency. For myself, I value our established church as the means of preserving for us and for our children the blessings of the true religion; and I well know that to spread such a notion would inflict on it a fatal stroke."

In spite of this appeal he lost all the practical part of the Resolutions he proposed. "My clauses thrown out—Dundas most false and double; but, poor fellow! much to be pitied." "The East India directors and proprietors," he tells Mr. Gisborne, "have triumphed—all my clauses were last night struck out on the third reading of the Bill, (with Dundas's consent!! this is *honour*,) and our territories in Hindostan, twenty millions of people included, are left in the undisturbed and peaceable possession, and committed to the providential protection of—Brama." "How mysterious, how humbling, are the dispensations of God's providence!" was his own private meditation. "I see that I closed with speaking

of the East India clauses being carried, of which I have now to record the defeat; thrown out on the third reading by a little tumult in the court of proprietors. Oh may not this have been because one so unworthy as I undertook this hallowed cause, (Uzzah and the ark,) and carried it on with so little true humility, faith, self-abasement, and confidence in God through Christ? Yet where can I go but to the blessed Jesus? Thou hast the words of eternal life—I am no more worthy to be called thy son; yet receive me, and deliver me from all my hinderances, and by the power of thy renewing grace, render me meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Yet in all his continual employment he maintained a careful watch over his mind and spirit. “I have this day,” is one of his Sunday’s entries, “been commemorating the redeeming love of Christ. May this be to me the beginning of a new era.”—“How hard do I find it to trust Christ for all! Yet this is that simple faith, that humble, child-like principle, which produces love, and peace, and joy. Oh let me seek it diligently whilst it is called to-day!”—“How much do I yet want of the enlarged philanthropy and purified affection (this consists in the love of holiness as such, and the hatred of sin as such, in ourselves and others) of the real Christian! I have been mixing a little with worldly people: and their pursuits and cares and joys do indeed seem most contemptible; but it is not enough to see this, I should be filled also with the love of God in Christ, and of all mankind for his sake, with a fixed desire to please him and do all for his glory.”

At length upon the 9th of July he got free from London engagements, and set off for Bath. Soon after he was established at Perry Mead, in the immediate neighbourhood, where he and the Rev. Mr. Venn remained for about three weeks. Such society, and comparative retirement, he valued highly, and sought diligently to employ to his own improvement. “I have had,” says his Diary, “Venn with me near a fortnight; he is heavenly-minded, and bent on his Master’s work,

affectionate to all around him, and above all to Christ's people, as such. How low are my attainments! Oh let me labour with redoubled diligence, to enter in at the strait gate. An indolent, soothing religion will never support the soul in the hour of death; then nothing will buoy us up but the testimony of our conscience that we have fought the good fight. Help me, O Jesus, and by thy Spirit cleanse me from my pollutions; give me a deeper abhorrence of sin; let me press forward. A thousand gracious assurances stand forth in Christ's gospel. I humbly pray to be enabled to attend more to my secret devotions; to pray over Scripture, to interlace thoughts of God and Christ, to be less volatile, more humble, and more bold for Christ.

During this stay at Bath, he began the execution of his long-cherished plan of addressing his countrymen on their estimate and practice of religious duty. "Saturday, Aug. 3rd," he says, "I laid the first timbers of my tract." The Diary of this autumn contains frequent notices of its continuance; and though it was almost four years more before its publication, it was from this beginning that his "Practical Christianity" arose.

His rare conversational talents, once so great a snare, were now regarded as a means of fulfilling those high functions for which Providence had marked him out. With this view he entered into society, and in it he possessed a talisman, which even when he failed in his purpose of doing good to others, kept his own spirit from the benumbing influence of the enchanted scenes which he visited. "I fear I made no hand of it at R," whither he had gone for the purpose of endeavouring to recommend the cause of Christ, he tells Mrs. H. More; "nor do I think (to speak unaffectedly) that this was altogether my own fault, although I am fully sensible that I might have managed better. But though with Lord Y. I had some little serious conversation, (God grant that the seed may remain and spring up hereafter,) I had no opportunity of any such intercourse with the others; and I fear I seemed to them a gay thoughtless being. My judgment prescribed cheerfulness, but perhaps my temper

seduced me into volatility. How difficult is it to be merry and wise! yet I would hope that even by this gaiety, though somewhat excessive, a favourable entrance may have been provided for religious conversation, if any future opportunities of explanation should occur, as I think they will. You see how honestly I open myself to you. But this is the result neither of vanity nor emptiness, but because I really wish you would perform that best office of friendship, advising me upon the subject in question, and telling me whether I ought or ought not to endeavour to adopt a more staid and serious demeanour. It is very useful for the regulation of our practice, to know how our conduct has been understood; and if it should come in your way to learn the impression produced by mine in the present instance, I should be glad to be made acquainted with it. I was at R. but two days, yet I declare to you I found the luxurious, dissipated way of going on so relaxing to my mind, that I felt it would have been dangerous to stay longer without a special call."

"Doubtful," he says at this time, "whether or not I ought to go to Windsor to-morrow to take the chance of getting into conversation with some of the royal family. Lady E. may afford me the opportunity. Also I may do good to N. and H. Yet I distrust myself; I fear my eye is not single, nor supremely set on God's glory in this scheme. Perhaps I should do better to attend to my proper business, and this is Satan's artifice to draw me off. Yet on the other hand, if any good is done it is great. I will pray to God to direct me.—Thought over the Windsor scheme and resolved against it."

"How little, alas! in the six weeks that have elapsed since I left this place," says his Journal on his return to Battersea, "have I preserved a cordial love of heavenly things, a true relish of their enjoyment, or a practical sense of their value. This last week I hope upon the whole has gone on rather better; that I have been more conversant with spiritual subjects and more earnest in prayer. Yet what proofs do I receive of my readiness to enter into the pleasures of dissipation when at such a

house as Lord T.'s, where it does not shock me by the broad stamp of vice! Oh may I by God's grace learn to be spiritually-minded, relishing the things of the Spirit, living a diligent and self-denying life so far as regard to my weakly frame and social duties will allow."

Blaming himself for having been of late less diligent, he resumed his plan of noting down the exact expenditure of his time during the two months which he now spent at Battersea Rise. Here he describes himself as "reading Butler, Barrow, Soame Jenyns, and the Scriptures, and going on with tract, which I discussed with Cecil, who is now staying with me; he strongly recommends it. Let me not lose these opportunities of converse with such men as Venn and Cecil." "How many, how great, how almost unequalled," he says, on the recurrence of his birth-day, "have been my mercies! how many and how great my sins! The good things I enjoy, of God's providing; the evils I labour under, of my own. Let me press forward with all diligence, and may God for Christ's sake quicken me by His Spirit. I hope I have been more under the habitual fear of God, and yet how little do I live worthy of my high calling! My time has been wasted; let me labour to improve the talents God has given me, and to use them for his glory."

Lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt had "confidently anticipated" that the House of Lords would enter diligently upon the examination of the evidence which they had demanded on the Slave Trade. For this examination it was of the greatest moment that the friends of Abolition should be well provided, and whilst there remained any prospect of it, he was diligent in making preparations.

The conduct of the Abolition question involved him at this time in an unpleasant correspondence. It was no unusual thing for those who had rendered assistance to the cause he had so much at heart, to claim in return his good offices with the King's government. These he was always ready to exert when he could do so with propriety. But there were times when he was compelled by what was due to his own character to disappoint their expectations; and in these cases the conclusion of

the matter sometimes wore no very amicable complexion. A single instance which occurred this year illustrates his command of temper in such circumstances. Mr. —, whose devotion to the great cause of Abolition had been indefatigable, was desirous of procuring the promotion of his brother to the rank of captain in the navy through the influence of Mr. Wilberforce. That influence had been exerted as far as it could be used by an independent man, but had been ineffectual. Under these circumstances Mr. — addressed to him a letter of complaint, from which the following sentences are extracts:—

“My opinion is that my Lord Chatham has behaved to my brother in a very scandalous manner, and that your own timidity has been the occasion of his miscarrying in his promotion.”

“I think Lord C. may be said to have acted scandalously, &c. . . Yet, after all, my opinion is that my brother's miscarriage is to be attributed to your own want of firmness. I can have no doubt but you have frequently written to my Lord Chatham, and this with singular zeal and warmth, on the subject, but you have not, I apprehend, waited on him often, or insisted on his promotion in strong language. He has told you of difficulties, and you have been satisfied; though other persons with infinitely less interest than yourself have got promotions the next day. Will you tell me that if you went to my Lord Chatham and insisted upon it, it would not be done? Will you say that if Lord C. said to the Lords of the Admiralty, ‘There are many members of parliament who have the young man's promotion at heart,’ that he could have been resisted? And yet you cannot command your point. I never will believe but that your own want of firmness is the true reason why my brother has not succeeded before. You will observe that I give you credit for having a great desire of serving him, and perhaps for having expressed yourself by letter in his behalf in a stronger way than for any other man; but letters will not do, and unless personal applications be made you will not serve him.”

To these solicitations Mr. Wilberforce replied :

TO ———.

“ Dear Sir,

Your letter reached me when in the very act of leaving Bath; where, after paying a visit to a friend by the way, I arrived on Saturday evening. I find as usual an accumulation of packets, but yours claims the precedence; and I sit down to reply to it without delay. To say I have read it without emotion would be to go beyond the truth; but certain it is, that the perusal of it has moved me less than might perhaps have been expected. The fact is, I am used to such remonstrances. It is the mode wherein I am accustomed to be addressed by people who, having for themselves or their friends expected the favours of government in consequence of my solicitations, have had their too sanguine hopes disappointed or deferred: they always, like you, seem rather to approve of one's delicacy in the general, but claim a dispensation from it in their own particular instance. This is language against which a man must arm himself who is resolved to maintain his independence. I am always prepared to expect it, and though habit has not rendered me insensible to its selfishness, it makes me hear it without surprise; and yet to speak more correctly, I had thought you in a good degree exempt from this common infirmity, and from the esteem and affection I feel for you, it is not without regret that I discover my error. I am willing however to persuade myself that your tender solicitude for a beloved brother has beguiled you into the adoption of sentiments which in your cooler judgment you would be the first to condemn. I cannot argue the point with you at length, I have not leisure for this, and still less have I eyesight, for I need not say this is a letter wherein I cannot employ my amanuensis: but I will suggest those principles on which I rest the propriety of my conduct; principles which seem for once to have escaped your recollection.

You acknowledge, ‘you have no doubt of my having frequently written to my Lord Chatham, and this with singular zeal and warmth, on the subject.’ Again, you

'give me credit for having a great desire for serving your brother, and perhaps for having even expressed myself by letter in his behalf in a stronger way than I have done for any other man:' but, 'I have not, you apprehend, waited upon him often on the subject, or insisted on his promotion in strong language.' 'It is my want of firmness which is the true reason why your brother has not succeeded before;' and, 'Will I tell you that if I had gone to Lord Chatham and insisted on it, it would not be done,' &c.

Now need I enter into a regular argument to prove the vicious nature of the principles on which all this proceeds? Principles which, however too much acted upon and even sometimes avowed in the world, I must fairly tell you I abhor, have ever disclaimed, and will resolutely and systematically oppose and discountenance. I think it really will be enough for you to read such sentences in the hand-writing of another person to become conscious of their real nature and character. If indeed you saw me proceeding in this way in other instances, if you saw me making favourite exceptions to my stricter rule, you might have reason to complain; but you must, or at least you may, know that the reverse is the fact, and that I have adhered, as I will continue to adhere, to my own system in the case of those with whom I am the most nearly connected, or who most warmly support me in my election struggles; . . . a species of obligation this, which according to the plan of making one's political situation subservient to one's personal convenience, is held to convey a claim to a particular return. To your own mind let me appeal; I am warranted in so doing, not only by what I know of your general sentiments, but by what you say in this very letter, of your having been and your still being prevented from asking any favour of this sort, lest it should seem, if granted, to have the appearance of a reward for your own labours. Why are things thus to change their natures and their names accordingly as you or I are in question? Why is that, which is in you proper delicacy, timidity and want of firmness in me? Why are you to

have the monopoly of independence? Is it less valuable to me than to you, and less deserving of regard, less suitable to my circumstances, less ornamental to my character, less essential to my usefulness? Considering all the peculiarities of my condition and fortunes, is not this general duty of a public man more urgent in mine than almost in any possible instance? And how criminal should I be, if I were to truck and barter away any personal influence I may possess with some of the members of administration, which ought to be preserved entire for opportunities of public service!

“But I will enlarge no further on this topic. Let me assure you, however, that strongly as I have condemned some parts of your letter, I am obliged to you for the freedom with which you have spoken of my own conduct; and though you say, ‘I shall not consider it as at all serving my brother’s promotion,’ I believe you do me the justice to think that it will not obstruct it; in truth I may make myself easy on this head, because had you not thought thus you would not have sent it, for it was not certainly to injure your brother’s cause with me that you took up the pen, nor yet solely for the purpose of sowing dissensions between friends, or of wounding my feelings by a useless attack on the conduct of those with whom I was living in habits of intimacy. Be this as it may, my line is clear; I have, as you confess, your brother’s promotion sincerely at heart, and I will exert myself for him as much as I think I ought, but I must neither be seduced nor piqued into doing more. I will say no more, I hope I have not said too much: perhaps indeed I should have been less warm, if the attack had not been made on me in a quarter, where expecting only what was kind and affectionate, I had been the less armed against any thing of a hostile nature: but I was prompted to write thus freely not only because I thought it due to my own character, but because I wished rather to discharge what was in my mind than to let it smother in silence, as being less likely to interrupt the cordiality of our connexion; for unfeignedly do I return your assurance of sincere esteem and regard. We have long acted together in the greatest cause which ever engaged

the efforts of public men, and so I trust we shall continue to act with one heart and one hand, relieving our labours as hitherto with the comforts of social intercourse. And notwithstanding what you say of your irreconcilable hostility to the present administration, and of my bigoted attachment to them, I trust if our lives are spared, that after the favourite wish of our hearts has been gratified by the Abolition of the Slave Trade, there may still be many occasions on which we may cooperate for the glory of our Maker, and the improvement and happiness of our fellow-creatures.

I remain, my dear Sir, very sincerely yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

“Battersea Rise, Aug. 19, 1793.”

Even in his own severe judgment of himself, he deemed the greater opportunities of reflection now afforded him not wholly lost. “I hope I have gone on rather better, that my humiliation is now deeper, my seriousness more abiding, and that through God’s grace my purposes of amendment will be more permanent. May God strengthen me for Christ’s sake. Oh that by any means I might learn to maintain a humble, watchful, self-denying, loving frame of mind; living above this world, looking forward to a better, and having here fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

Upon the 22d of October he left Battersea Rise to pay his annual visits at Yoxall Lodge and Rothley Temple; and during the two months which he spent between them, was principally occupied in preparing the materials for his work on “Practical Christianity.” Fuller entries in his Journal mark this season of comparative leisure, and their altered tone shows in striking colours the increasing power of religion over his character.

“I feel,” he says, “a deep conviction (mixed sometimes with vague doubts of Christianity altogether, not solidly formed objections! and I fly from them) that one thing is needful, and I humbly resolve to aim high. His strength is perfected in weakness. Oh tarry thou the Lord’s leisure, &c. Labour and strive earnestly. How unreasonable would it be for me to expect, after having

lived so long a lukewarm life, to experience at once the power and energy of religion! This scarcely ever happens. But God's promises in Christ are yea and amen. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." "I have been praying with seriousness, and considering that the promises of grace, and repentance, and a new heart, and strength, and peace, and joy in believing, are made to all that wait on God through Christ, and will be performed in spite of Satan's hindrances. Oh may I be the temple of the Holy Ghost. With what shame do I discover my worldly heart desirous of gaining credit by my tract! I have been more diligent and self-denying lately: I have found this morning the advantages of a little religious solitude; (I have prayed three quarters of an hour, for myself, my country, and friends, &c. ;) let me seize proper occasions for it, and not make my Sundays days of hurry: solitude seems to give me over as it were from worldly to spiritual things."

By the end of December he was again established in the neighbourhood of town, and was soon obliged to lay aside his tract for the ordinary business of his London seasons. Finding many hinderances to that "perfection," after which he longed, from the "troublous stage upon which I am now entering, I proceed," he says, "to frame a kind of plan for a journal of my interior and exterior conduct, on which I propose almost daily to examine myself with a view to progress in holiness, tenderness of conscience, and that watchfulness which my situation in life, so abundant in snares, particularly requires. This scheme is to be drawn up with a view to my most besetting sins and temptations." The results of these times of self-examination are regularly recorded in a plan which extends through this and the five succeeding years; with such persevering diligence did he watch over his heart, and so strictly pains-taking and practical was his personal religion.

He was soon engaged in parliamentary attendance; and keeping aloof from party strife, regrets often "the violent work," and "acrimony of debate," which characterized that stormy period. Though he still supported administration, he was watching eagerly every opening

for peace; and "witnessing with deep solicitude, and not without some gloomy anticipations, the progress of the war." He was ever ready in his place to maintain the cause of morality and religion; and took commonly a leading part in all discussions bearing upon these points. In this year, he supported a bill brought in by Mr. Mainwaring for promoting a stricter observance of the Lord's day; and his Diary notices, upon this occasion, "Much sparring with Courtenay."

Early too in the session he was engaged in the Abolition contest; moving upon the 7th of February for leave to bring in a bill to suppress the Foreign Trade. Although this measure left unrestricted the supply of our own islands, and could not therefore impede their cultivation; yet against it was arrayed almost the whole force of the West Indian interest.

With great personal labour Mr. Wilberforce succeeded in carrying the Bill through the House of Commons, after four divisions upon its three readings and recommitment. In the House of Lords on the second reading it was abandoned by the ordinary friends of Abolition (Lord Stanhope alone remaining firm) to the assaults of Lord Abingdon and the Duke of Clarence, and the second reading was postponed till that day three months. Lord Grenville consented to defer this first instalment to humanity until the general measure should be adjusted. "As for my Foreign Slave Bill," writes Mr. Wilberforce to Lord Muncaster, "I have, I confess, no hopes of its getting through the Lords, yet I do not relish its being suffered to lie upon the shelf, and therefore I am half vexed at Grenville. However, in all the disappointments of life of every kind, we must learn to say, 'Thy will be done.' Every day's experience serves more fully to convince me how little we can foresee what is best for the success, even of our own measures."

The session meanwhile advanced, and he was in "the midst of hurry and turmoil;" "never recollecting to have had so much business on his hands. Thank God I keep pretty well, though pulled down by my labours, and the unavoidable irregularity of my hours."* The

* Letter to W. Hey. Esq.

effect of this necessary irregularity, in the interruption of his times of devotion, is frequently lamented in his Diary.

“What a world,” he writes to Mr. Hey, “is this; and how different is the Christian life, how justly a hidden one! Pray for me, my dear sir, that amidst all my bustle, my heart may be filled with the love of Christ, and a desire to live to the glory of God.” Yet though thus jealous of himself, he could not but perceive that his habits of self-government were strengthened, and that his prayers were more lively; whilst in every interval of pressing engagement his Journal records, “seasons of fasting;” “days of peculiar devotion, and receiving the sacrament:” and “hours of prayer at large; for God’s mercy through Christ; for all Christian graces; for all my schemes; for the poor slaves; Sierra Leone; Indian missions; home reform; intercession for friends; for help to be useful to them; for my country at this critical time; and for grace to discharge all my duties aright.”

His intercourse too with general society was marked by more constant watchfulness to do good to others, by his “preserving in it a more lively sense of God’s presence, and labouring to conciliate to religion, not to relinquish it, and assume a worldly character.” “Spent the evening at Mrs. A.’s—declined playing at cards, (I had played there before,) but not austere.” “On Wednesday with S. tried at a little talk. Oh that my desires were really more active!” “I have stayed here to try to do good to I.; but how little am I fit to preach to others!” “Dined at Mrs. N.’s, to try to do her good, but I fear it did not answer. Better to call.” “Dined with Cecil—he is a true Christian, the nearer he is approached the better he appears.” “Dined at T.’s with Robinson of Leicester, Venn, and others; yet nothing truly serious: a crowd is a crowd be it of whatever sort.” “Dined at Hampstead to meet Jay, (the American envoy,) his son, &c,—quite Americans—sensible. I fear there is little spirit of religion in America; something of French, tinged with more than English simplicity of manners; very pleasing, well-informed men.”

CHAPTER IX.

Opposes Ministry on Question of Peace—Progress of Abolition—Reconciliation—Powers of Conversation.

PARLIAMENT having been prorogued, he spent the recess in his usual visits to Yoxall Lodge, Rothley Temple and the residences of other friends in the country, devoting his time during this interval of leisure to the prosecution of his work on practical Christianity, respecting which his Diary records many conferences with such friends as would be likely to aid him by suggestions. But as the period for reassembling Parliament approached he laid it aside, giving his whole attention to the state of public affairs, and the continuance of the French war. Most soberly and gravely did he enter upon this important question, seeking first earnestly for direction from on high, and then endeavouring to form his own opinions upon the fullest information and most careful reflection. "I mean to set aside a day this week for fasting and religious exercises; for seeking God and praying for political direction, for a blessing on my parliamentary labours, on my country, and on those who have specially desired my prayers. May God for Christ's sake enable me to seek in all things to please Him, and submit to His will—to repress vanity, cultivate humility, constant self-examination—think of death—of saints in past times." "I find that I must as little as is really right ask people to Battersea Rise to stay all night, as it robs and impoverishes the next morning. I had meant this for a fast day, but it has been broken in upon in this way. I refused to go to the Wilderness, where Pitt and the rest are, to keep quiet; yet in this way I lose my time, and find indeed that less is done at Battersea Rise than elsewhere, though more rational conversation on matters of business actually depending." "To town, and dined at Palace Yard tete-a-tete with Jay—heard openly his opinion in politics—a friend to peace—many American war anecdotes. Then at nine,

Pitt's for political discussion till near one, and not bed till near two. Head and mind full, and could sleep but very disturbedly." "I am making up my mind cautiously and maturely, and therefore slowly, as to the best conduct to be observed by Great Britain in the present critical emergency. Oh that there were in our rulers more of a disposition to recognize the hand of Him who inflicts these chastisements! 'This people turneth not to Him that smiteth them, neither do they fear Me, saith the Lord,' is but too applicable, I fear, to the bulk; yet, I trust and believe, that we shall not be given over into the hands of our enemies. I beg your earnest prayers, my dear sir, for my direction and support."*

The more settled aspect of affairs in France since the fall of Robespierre gave him some hopes of the possibility of an accommodation, and peace he deemed so inestimable a blessing that no possible opening for restoring it should be neglected. He therefore, though with great reluctance, determined to take an active part in the opposition to the continental war.

It was not merely his unwillingness to join in an open opposition to his early friend, which made him slow and cautious in arriving at this conclusion. There were other considerations which weighed even more strongly with him than the personal suffering with which his course must be attended. He could not take this ground without giving some countenance to a violent and unprincipled opposition, who had throughout condemned the war with all the asperity of party feeling. He feared too that he might increase the popular ferment which, wherever revolutionary principles had been actually disseminated, was ready to burst forth into open violence. He knew, moreover, that he could not hope to carry with him the mass of sober and well-affected people. They still thought the war necessary, and regarded all opposition to it as the effects of some Jacobinical tendency, or party motive. All these objections to his course he had well considered; but having made up his

* Letter to W. Hey, Esq.

mind to the line of duty, he had courage to face them boldly. "Parliament," he says, "meets on Tuesday. I am going to London to-morrow, and I am too little fortified for that scene of distraction and dissipation, into which I am about to enter; perhaps my differing from Pitt, by lessening my popularity and showing me my comparative insignificance, may not be bad for me in spiritual things. I would now humbly resolve to begin a stricter course, as becomes me on entering a scene of increased temptations—self-denial, attention, love to all, and good for evil; in particular to bear with kindness the slights and sarcasms I must expect from political causes. Oh may God enable me to walk more by faith, and less by sight; to see the things that are unseen. Oh may He fill my heart with true contrition, abiding humility, firm resolution in holiness, and love to Him and to my fellow-creatures. I go to pray to Him, as I have often done, to direct me right in politics, and above all to renew my heart. It is a proof to me of my secret ambition, that though I foresee how much I shall suffer in my feelings throughout from differing from Pitt, and how indifferent a figure I shall most likely make; yet that motives of ambition will insinuate themselves. Give me, O Lord, a true sense of the comparative value of earthly and of heavenly things; this will render me sober-minded, and fix my affections on things above.

"Tuesday the 30th of December. A disturbed night—full of ambition. How small things confound human pride! why not such small things God's agents as much as locusts!—worse this morning. Prepared amendment at Banks's. Moved it in a very incoherent speech; good arguments, but all in heaps for want of preparation; had no plan whatever when I rose." The Amendment was seconded by his colleague Mr. Duncombe, who was followed by Mr. Banks; and though supported by many who had hitherto voted with the minister, it was negatived by a large majority. He moved it indeed under peculiar disadvantages; fearful on the one hand of exciting popular discontent, he was guarded and measured in his own statements; whilst on the other, he was

“forced to adopt an Amendment stronger than he himself liked, by the violent language of the government.”

The painful consequences which he had foreseen, attended his conscientious determination. It was with no ordinary feelings of annoyance that the minister had seen him propose an Amendment to the Address. There were indeed but two events in the public life of Mr. Pitt, which were able to disturb his sleep—the mutiny at the Nore, and the first open opposition of Mr. Wilberforce; and he himself shared largely in these painful feelings. He had lived hitherto in habits of such unrestrained intimacy with that great man, he entertained towards him so hearty an affection, and the spring of his life had been so cheered by his friendship, that it was with bitter regret he saw the clouds begin to gather which were to cast a comparative gloom and chillness over their future intercourse. “No one,” he wrote many years afterwards,* with a warmth derived from his keen remembrance of his feelings at the time, “no one who has not seen a good deal of public life, and felt how difficult and painful it is to differ widely from those with whom you wish to agree, can judge at what an expense of feeling such duties are performed.”

“Wednesday, Feb. 4th. Dined,” he says, “at Lord Camden’s—Pepper and Lady Arden, Steele, &c. I felt queer, and all day out of spirits—wrong, but hurt by the idea of Pitt’s alienation. 12th. Party of *the old firm* at the Speaker’s; I not there.”

Nor was this the only painful circumstance attendant on his present course. He promoted overtures for peace, amongst other reasons, because he foresaw that the war must ultimately become unpopular, and then that Mr. Pitt’s administration “would be succeeded by a faction, who knew that they had forced themselves into the cabinet; and feeling that they had no footing at St. James’s, would seek it in St. Giles’s.” It was not therefore without pain that he found himself repeatedly dividing with this very party, and heard Mr. Fox, in a friendly visit

* To Archdeacon Wrangham, December 20, 1820.

which he paid him at this time, express a confident expectation of his speedy enrolment in their ranks—"You will soon see that you must join us altogether." For though he loved the frank and kindly temper of this great man, and though he duly honoured his steady support of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, he regarded his public principles with a settled disapprobation, which was never stronger than at this very moment. The same reasons also which led the opposition party to claim him as their own, rendered him suspected by the bulk of sober-minded men. "Your friend Mr. Wilberforce," said Mr. Windham to Lady Spencer, "will be very happy any morning to hand your ladyship to the guillotine." Others less violent than Mr. Windham partook in a great measure of the same suspicions. "When I first went to the levee after moving my Amendment, the king cut me." And though their strong personal regard for him kept his constituents silent, he well knew that they disliked the course his conscience led him to pursue.

In this respect indeed he was exposed to difficulties which no party man can properly appreciate; for a party man is always immediately surrounded by those who agree with him, and in their good opinion he can intrench himself. But the politician who truly thinks for himself, and takes his own stand, must be assailed with unwelcome judgments on every side. Thus whilst at this very time he generally offended the partisans of administration by his Amendment upon the King's Speech; by supporting the supply of due resources to carry on the war vigorously, if it must continue, and by defending the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, he equally irritated opposition."

These trials were increased in his case by the expressed disagreement of all those personal friends with whom he most freely communicated upon political questions, and by the concurrent accounts they forwarded him from different parts of the country of the disapprobation of his conduct generally felt by sober-minded men.

Yet none of these things moved him. The trial was

indeed severe, but it did not shake his constancy; he calmly and steadily adhered to what he saw to be the line of duty, neither deterred by opposition, nor piqued by unmerited reproach into irritation or excess. Upon the 6th of February, whilst he declared his disapprobation of its more violent expressions, he again supported so much of Mr. Grey's motion as tended to promote immediate pacification; and throughout the session he favoured every similar attempt. During this anxious time he frequently laments the injurious effects upon his spirit, of a life of such constant occupation, and shows the watchful care with which he strove to mitigate the evils he detected.

“Though I have been interrupted,” he writes at Battersea Rise, “by Eliot's coming, having designed to devote this evening chiefly to religious exercises, (my own fault still that I have not,) yet this is solitude compared with London; and how serious a thing it is to look into one's own heart, to think of heaven and hell and eternity! How cold am I, to be able to think of these subjects with little emotion! Excite in me, O God, more lively sensations, and enable me to awake to righteousness. The seriousness of spirit I now feel seems favoured by this solitude, and I will try the effect of often retiring from the world to commune here with my own heart.” “I have since” (a few days later) “lived in a crowd, and too much as usual. This last has been a very hurrying week, seeing many people at home, &c. This morning I have been much affected—I fasted, and received the sacrament. Oh may I be renewed in the spirit of my mind. May this little recess from the hurry of life enable me seriously to look into my heart, plan of life, and general conduct, and to turn unto the Lord with my whole soul—what can be too much for Him, who bought us so dearly? I go to prayer.”

“Easter Sunday. What a blessing it is to be permitted to retire from the bustle of the world, and to be furnished with so many helps for realizing unseen things! I seem to myself to-day to be in some degree under the

power of real Christianity; conscious, deeply conscious of corruption and unprofitableness; yet to such a one, repenting and confessing his sins, and looking to the cross of Christ, pardon and reconciliation are held forth, and the promise of the Holy Spirit, to renew the mind, and enable him to conquer his spiritual enemies, and get the better of his corruption. Be not then cast down, O my soul, but ask for grace from the fulness which is in Jesus. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners; He was the friend of sinners. Look therefore unto Him, and plead His promises, and firmly resolve through the strength derived from Him, to struggle with thy sins; with all of them, allowing none of them in any degree; and to endeavour to devote all thy faculties to His glory. My frame of mind at this time seems to me compounded of humiliation and hope; a kind of sober determination to throw myself upon the promises of the gospel, as my only confidence, and a composure of mind, resulting from a reliance on the mercy and truth of God. I have also this comfort, that I feel love towards my fellow-creatures. Still I perceive vanity and other evils working; but Christ is made unto us sanctification, and our heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Wait therefore on the Lord. Wait, watch and pray, and wait."

His own immediate cause was not neglected in the important general questions with which this session commenced. It had formed one subject of discussion between himself and Mr. Pitt, upon his arrival in the neighbourhood of London at the close of 1794.

He writes at about the same date, to one of the most zealous and consistent friends of Abolition, the venerable Archdeacon Corbett:—"I cannot conclude without a word on our great cause. Suffice it then to say, that I am in no degree discouraged. Great efforts will probably be necessary, and at the proper time they will be made. It is my intention to move, next year, for Abolition in January, 1796; and though I dare not hope to carry a bill for that purpose through both Houses, yet, if I do not deceive myself, this infamous and wicked

traffic will not last out this century. Let us all be active, persevering, unwearied, and trust to the good providence of God, disposed at the same time to acquiesce in His dispensations whatever they may be."

Conformably with these resolutions, he gave notice of a motion early in the session for the Abolition of the Trade. On the 18th of March, 1795, he says, "There being no business in the House, and Slave business approximating, I resolved to go down to Clapham to apply to it." The motion was deferred until the 26th, and its result is thus recorded: "Feb. 26th. To town—Sierra Leone general meeting and afterwards Slave business in the House. Said to have spoken well, though less prepared than at any other time. Beat, 78 to 61. Shameful!" In opening the debate he briefly referred to the arguments against the Trade with which the House was now familiar. He called upon parliament "to suppress the greatest, the most complicated, the most extensive evil by which the human race had ever been afflicted. It had been proved to be the occasion of frequent and bloody wars; as well as of innumerable acts of individual outrage. It dissolved all social intercourse; it armed every man against his fellow, and rendered the whole coast of that vast continent a scene of insecurity, of rapine, and of terror." These charges against the Trade he established afresh by the evidence of the governor and council of the new colony of Sierra Leone, and ended by a reference to the fast of the preceding day, which a national support of cruelty and injustice would stamp "as a piece of empty pageantry, and a mere mockery of God."

Mr. Pitt, in rescuing the cause from the imputation of French principles, showed that it was in direct opposition to those abstract propositions by which "the rights of man" were maintained, and declared "that he knew not where to find a more determined enemy of such delusions, than his hon. friend the proposer of the motion."

It was highly to the honour of Mr. Pitt, that his zeal in this cause had suffered no abatement from the political difference which had sprung up between himself and

Mr. Wilberforce. All personal estrangement indeed was soon at an end. "Dined March 21st," says the Diary, at "R. Smith's—[met] Pitt for the first time since our political difference—I think both meaning to be kind to each other—both a little embarrassed. 25th. To Battersea Rise—called Eliot's knowing that Pitt was there, and that Eliot knew I knew it, and thinking therefore that it would seem unkind not to do it. 26th, Sunday. Venn, morning. I had meant to be quiet to-day, and had hoped to be able to employ myself in devotional exercises, when after church Pitt came with Eliot; and considering he did it out of kindness, I could not but walk back with him. He talked openly." "To Royal Academy dinner—sat near Lord Spencer, Windham, &c.—too worldly-minded—catches and glees—they importunate for Rule Britannia—I doubt if I had much business at such a place. What a painted shadow! It is not right for me entirely to abstract myself from the world; yet what a gay dream was this! O God, do Thou for Christ's sake fill my soul with the love of Thee, and all other things will grow insipid."

The tone which he preserved throughout this period when forced into opposition upon the war question, was calculated to soothe the irritation which such a difference must naturally excite. So mild indeed was the spirit in which he acted, whilst his conduct was most decided, that there were not wanting some who asserted, that "there was a complete understanding between himself and Mr. Pitt, and that his opposition was only a pretext." "The Duchess of Gordon told me yesterday," he says on the 13th of May, "that the Duke of Leeds, Duke of Bedford, and Lord Thurlow dining there the other day, the latter said he would bet (or did bet) five guineas that Pitt and I should vote together on my motion on Thursday for peace. This shows he thinks there is a secret understanding between Pitt and me all this time."

But though thus temperate in the manner of his resistance, he was not beguiled by rekindling friendship into any unsuitable compliance with the wishes of adminis-

tration. Truth he knew was to be valued above peace, and integrity of conduct above the harmony obtained by compromise. Upon the 21st of April, he gave notice of a specific motion upon the continuance of the war; and even before this debate came on, he was compelled, upon another subject, to oppose the wishes of the minister. Mr. Pitt at this time proposed to raise the income of the Prince of Wales greatly above all former precedent. Upon the 14th of May he opposed this grant in the House of Commons, in a speech which was warmly commended, and which bears, in the imperfect record of the parliamentary debates, the impress of that high moral tone and that graceful eloquence which rendered it so effective. He dwelt strongly upon the actual distresses and discontented tempers of the times; and showed that though in a rude and barbarous age the crown must be supported by the magnificence of its connexions; in a time of universal luxury "it might win to itself a higher measure of respect and veneration by a certain chaste and dignified simplicity, than by vying with its wealthiest subjects in the number of its retainers and the magnificence of its entertainments." "It is more pleasing to me, sir," he continued, "to express gratitude than censure, and I rejoice thus publicly to declare the deep obligations under which we lie to their majesties upon the throne for their admirable conduct, by which they have arrested the progress of licentiousness in the higher classes of society, and sustained by their example the fainting morals of the age."

This renewed opposition produced no unkindly feelings.

Though he persevered in pressing a peaceful policy upon the House, he was well aware that the country was not with him. He bore patiently the present odium which attended on his measures; and within about six months, had the satisfaction of hearing from Mr. Pitt himself that he too was now convinced of the necessity of peace.

After the close of the session he established himself at Battersea Rise, where, from its vicinity to London, he

could transact county business, and maintain a useful intercourse with many friends whom he had scarcely leisure to see during the sitting of parliament. "Old Newton breakfasted with me. He talked in the highest terms of Whitefield, as by far the greatest preacher he had ever known."

He was anxious to make use of his present leisure for cultivating habits of devotion. "July 15th. Spent the day in more than ordinary devotional exercises and fasting, and found comfort, and hope some benefit." "It seems something providential that, wanting to devote the day mainly to secret religious exercises, fasting, self-examination, humiliation, and supplication for myself and others, I should be left unexpectedly alone. The result of examination shows me that though my deliberate plans are formed in the fear of God, and with reference to his will, yet that when I go into company (on which I resolve as pleasing to God) I am apt to forget him; my seriousness flies away; the temptations of the moment to vanity and volatility get the better of me. If I have any misgivings at the time, they are a sullen, low grumbling of conscience, which is disregarded. Although, therefore, I am not defective in external duties to God, or grossly towards my fellow-creatures, but rather the contrary, (though here no man but myself knows how much blame I deserve,) yet I seem to want a larger measure, 1st, of that true faith which realizes unseen things, and produces seriousness; and, 2d, of that vigour of the religious affections, which by making communion with God and Christ through the Spirit more fervent and habitual, might render me apt and alert to spiritual things. My finding no more distinct pleasure in religious offices (vide David's Psalms everywhere) argues a want of the Holy Spirit. This might not be inferred so positively in every case, because different mental constitutions are differently affected. Mine I take to be such as are capable of a high relish of religion. I ought to be thankful for this; I am responsible for it; it will be a blessing and help well used, and if neglected it will increase my condemnation. Therefore let me cultivate

my religious affections. I think it was better with me in this respect formerly; at least I felt then more religious sensibility. This was in part natural. Yet let me quicken those things which are ready to die."

Yet though he was thus disposed to condemn himself, his private Journal bears the clearest marks of an unusual warmth of spiritual affections. "My eyes," says an entry of this time, "are very indifferent—tears always make them so, and this obliges me to check myself in my religious offices."

But while he watched carefully over the affections of his heart, no man's religion could be more free from that dreaming unreality, which substitutes a set of internal sensations for the practice of holy obedience. "This morning, (Sunday,)" he writes, "I felt the comfort of sober, religious self-conversation. Yet true Christianity lies not in frames and feelings, but in diligently doing the work of God. I am now about to enter upon a trying scene. Oh that God may give me grace, that I may not dishonour but adorn His cause; that I may watch and pray more earnestly and seriously."

The scene of difficulty to which he looked forward, was a series of visits which he was about to pay in Yorkshire. Complaints of the infrequency of his personal intercourse with his constituents had been forwarded to him by Mr. Broadley. "No man who has had occasion for your parliamentary assistance in his private business, or who considers the part which you take in public affairs, can possibly accuse you of neglecting, for a moment, the interests of your constituents. But all of them are not capable of appreciating the real value of their representative, and some of them miss the attentions which were formerly paid to them by Sir George Savile, who attended at the races and such other occasions. I think it would be well, if you would seize any proper occasions which may arise for your seeing as many of your constituents as you can."

After consultation with his friends, he began a set of visits, which carried him through a great part of the county. His private entries abound in striking remarks

upon character and manners, and show in the strongest light the care with which he now watched over himself, and sought for opportunities to do good to others.

There were few who could resist his powers of conversation. It possessed indeed a charm which description can but faintly recall to those who have listened to it. As full of natural gaiety as the mirth of childhood, it abounded in the anecdotes, reflections, and allusions of a thoughtful mind and well-furnished memory: whilst it was continually pointed by humour of a most sparkling quality. In this particular, the kindly, though somewhat grotesque, representation of an author once before referred to unquestionably fails. Though any one admitted to the society of Mr. Wilberforce would have found him "full of kindness towards all," and would have witnessed certainly the workings of a spirit which abounded in benevolence; yet the most transient observer could not have failed to remark also the continual flashes of wit, which lighted up his most ordinary conversation; harmless certainly, yet playing lightly over all he touched upon—the sports of a fervent imagination sweetened by a temper naturally kind, and chastened by the continual self-restraint of a conscience which would not bear the offence of giving pain to any. This was a natural endowment, and had been one great charm of his early years; but it was now carefully cultivated as a talent for his Master's use. It was this high sense of its importance, which led him so often to condemn himself. He was not contented to wait for the chance entrance of profitable subjects of conversation, he was diligent to make it useful.

"I have been dining out," says his Diary, a few weeks after his return, "and was then at an assembly at the Chief Baron's. Alas! how little like a company of Christians!—a sort of hollow cheerfulness on every countenance. I grew out of spirits. I had not been at pains before I went to fit myself for company, by a store of conversation topics, *launchers*, &c." These were certain topics carefully arranged before he entered into company, which might insensibly lead the conversation

to useful subjects. His first great object was to make it a direct instrument of good; and in this he was much assisted by his natural powers, which enabled him to introduce serious subjects with a cheerful gravity, and to pass from them by a natural transition before attention flagged. He was also watchful to draw forth from all he met their own especial information, and for some time kept a book in which was recorded what he had thus acquired. This watchful desire to make society useful saved him from the danger to which his peculiar powers exposed him; and he never engrossed the conversation. No one ever shone more brightly, or was more unconscious of his own brilliancy.

How carefully he watched over himself during these Yorkshire visits, is seen by numerous entries in his Diary.—“Aug. 9th. This rambling life amongst various people abounds with temptations to vanity, forgetfulness of divine things, and want of boldness in Christ’s cause; and I too readily yield to them. My health is not equal to this vagrarious kind of life, and at the same time preserving and redeeming time for serious things. Oh how much ought I to quicken the things which are ready to die! This plan was undertaken from a conviction of its being right, but it sadly disorders and distracts me mentally.” His blaming himself for want of boldness in the cause of Christ, is another instance of the high standard by which he tried himself. For not only did he at the moment steadily discountenance all unbecoming conversation, but he took private opportunities of reasoning afterwards with those who transgressed his principles. In this very visit he addressed at length by letter, with plain and honest boldness, one gentleman of great influence, who (a clergyman) had in his presence taken the name of God in vain.

“Aug. 13th. This hurrying company life does not agree with my soul. How little courage have I in professing the gospel of Christ! How little do I embrace opportunities of serving the spiritual interests of my friends! How much insincerity am I led into; how much acquiescence in unchristian sentiments! I wish I

had written my tract, that my mind might be clear; yet as all this more plainly discovers me to myself, it may be of service. If my heart were in a more universally holy frame, I should not be liable to these temptations. Remember they show your weakness, which when they are away, you are apt to mistake for strength. Entire occasional solitude seems eminently useful to me. Finding myself without support, I become more sensible of my own wretchedness, and of the necessity of flying to God in Christ, for wisdom and righteousness, and all I want here and hereafter." "A quiet Sunday is a blessed thing; how much better than when passed in a large circle! My life is not spent with sufficient diligence, yet I hope I do some good by my conversation; and I thank God I this day enjoy a more heavenly-minded frame than common. Alas! how ignorant are people of Christianity!"

Having met a cordial welcome in all parts of the county, and won back by personal intercourse, some whom political difference had estranged, he retired to Mr. Gisborne's to refresh himself, before entering on the arduous duties of his post in Parliament. In the mean while Mr. Pitt himself was led to adopt more pacific views, and wrote, urging his coming to London a few days before the opening of Parliament, that they might have some consultation, probably before entering into public discussion.

On public grounds he rejoiced sincerely in the altered sentiments which led the minister to seek for peace, and to his personal feeling the gratification was complete. In proportion to the pain with which he had entered at the call of duty on a course of opposition, was the satisfaction of returning to a renewed career of cordial co-operation. All misunderstanding was now gone, and both Mr. Pitt and his adherents recognised the purity of principle from which his former conduct had arisen.

CHAPTER X.

Supports Government in Riot and Sedition Bills—Yorkshire Meeting—
Moves Abolition of the Slave Trade.

WITH the autumn of this year began the darkest period of the revolutionary war. Though the arms of France were everywhere triumphant, yet it was not from them that our greatest danger arose. An evil spirit was spreading through Europe, and the enemies of order were but too successful in their attempt to introduce French principles amongst ourselves.

At such a time it was most important that good men should combine for the preservation of the country; and on public grounds therefore, as well as private, Mr. Wilberforce rejoiced unfeignedly in that change of Mr. Pitt's views concerning peace, which promised to enable them to act cordially together. Parliament met upon the 29th of October, and Mr. Pitt at once avowed his pacific inclination.

The evil humours which abounded in the state were already drawing to a head. The king was violently mobbed on his way to open parliament; tumultuary meetings were held in the metropolis; whilst the most inflammatory publications were actively disseminated.—“Papers are dispersed against property. Prints of guillotining the King and others.” In this crisis he deemed it needful to arm the executive government with extraordinary powers; and when upon the 10th of November Mr. Pitt proposed to bring in a bill for preventing seditious assemblies, he at once expressed his approbation of the step. Being convinced of the necessity of the measures proposed by Government, he laboured to perfect their details. On the 11th, he “went to Pitt's, to look over the Sedition Bill—altered it much for the better by enlarging.” Upon the 12th he again maintained in the House of Commons, in opposition to his colleague Mr. Duncombe, that the Bills did in truth, “raise new bastions to defend the bulwarks of British liberty.” He was

still engaged with the details of the measures. "A meeting at Pitt's about the Sedition Bill, after which supped with him and Mornington—my advice—Pitt's language, 'My head would be off in six months, were I to resign.' I see that he expects a civil broil. Never was a time when so loudly called on to prepare for the worst." "How vain now appears all successful ambition! Poor Pitt! I too am much an object of popular odium. Riot is expected from the Westminster meeting. The people I hear are much exasperated against me. The printers are all angry at the Sedition Bills. How fleeting is public favour! I greatly fear some civil war or embroilment; and with my weak health and bodily infirmities, my heart shrinks from its difficulties and dangers."

Yet thoughts like these could not move him from the path of duty, upon which he had entered in the fear of God. "Let me look before me," he had said, at the commencement of the session, "and solemnly implore the aid of God, to guide, quicken, and preserve me. Let me endeavour to soar above the turmoil of this tempestuous world, and to experience joy and peace in believing. Let me consider what in former years have proved my chief occasions of falling, and provide against them. Let me remember the peculiar character of a Christian; gravity in the House, cheerfulness, kindness, and placability, with a secret guard and hidden seriousness. Let me preserve a sense of the vanity of earthly greatness and honour." This was the secret of his strength, and when the prospect before him was gloomy, "Put," he continues, "thy trust in God, O my soul. If thou prayest earnestly to Him, confessing thy sins, imploring pardon, and labouring for amendment, thou wilt be accepted, and then all things shall work together for thy good. God protected me from Norris, Kimber, and innumerable other dangers. He is still able to protect me, and will, if it be for my good." Popular odium could not shake this confidence, and to the two Bills he gave, in spite of all its threats, his undisguised support, until they were carried; displaying at the same time the independence

of his conduct, by objecting to what he deemed an unnecessary infliction of capital punishment, and speaking strongly in condemnation of a pamphlet on his own side, which he thought a libel on the House.

The sentiments of Yorkshire were supposed to be hostile to these Bills. Already were its freeholders multiplied beyond all precedent by the increased numbers of the domestic clothiers: upon their support the opposition calculated largely; whilst the friends of peace looked with some alarm to the discontent which a partial scarcity could not but excite amongst them. "The Bills," wrote Dr. Burgh, "are obnoxious in this part of the world to an extreme degree." "The partisans of opposition," he adds, "have called upon the high sheriff to convene a public meeting. These things prognosticate a breach of that tranquil acquiescence, which for some time has subsisted in Yorkshire; and if in Yorkshire, so hard to be set in motion, the public mind be once expressed, we well know the sequel through all the rest of the kingdom." "The dissenters," adds another correspondent announcing the intended meeting, "have never forgiven you for opposing the repeal of the Test Act, and I am informed that they are expected to be there in support of opposition." In these expectations the high sheriff, so far coincided that he deemed it inexpedient to convene the meeting. "The assemblage of so large and unwieldy a body," he replied to the requisition, "would only tend to raise riot and discontent." This decision Mr. Wilberforce regretted greatly: and when it was quoted with some triumph in the House of Commons as "a strong argument against the Bills," he declared at once that "he lamented the high sheriff's conduct, because it had prevented a full, fair, and free discussion of the subject."* In spite of the triumphant hopes of his opponents, and the gloomy apprehensions of his friends, he trusted in the good sense of the Yorkshire freeholders.

To Mr. Hey he wrote at this time, expressing the gloominess of his forebodings, and adds "What prevents

* Debate of November 27.

their brightening is my seeing daily proofs of the entire forgetfulness of God and his providence, which prevails in the higher orders. I speak especially of the leading political characters on both sides—in prosperity we were not grateful, in adversity we are not humbled.” Upon the refusal of the high sheriff to call the county together, the opponents of the ministry resorted to measures to convene their political friends privately, together with the announcement of the meeting which was made in such a manner as to prevent, as they supposed, the possibility of its reaching the friends of order, a stirring appeal, bearing the signature of Mr. Wyvill, was circulated amongst the lower classes of freeholders. “Come forth then from your looms,” was his summons, “ye honest and industrious clothiers; quit the labours of your fields for one day, ye stout and independent yeomen; come forth in the spirit of your ancestors, and show you deserve to be free.”

The attempt would doubtless have succeeded, if the friends of order had not roused themselves with a promptitude which those who have reason on their side are not always willing to exert. An intimation of what had passed at York was received at Leeds in the course of Friday evening; and a few active men instantly met together, and resolved that the intelligence should be dispersed throughout the West Riding. On the Saturday accordingly the freeholders of various districts were assembled; and it was at once agreed to postpone all other business, and to respond to Mr. Wyvill’s call, though not in the spirit which he had contemplated.

In London of course the state of things was utterly unknown. “When undressing at twelve o’clock on Saturday,” says Mr. Wilberforce, “I received a note from Sir William Milner, saying that the York meeting was to be held upon Tuesday next; but I had given up all idea of going.” He thought it quite impossible that a general meeting could be gathered on so short a summons; and to attend a party council of his enemies would have been manifestly foolish. Yet his suspicions were perhaps aroused by the communication of a friend,

who came to tell him that "something extraordinary is certainly designed in Yorkshire, since — was seen to set out on the north road this morning in a chaise and four." Enough, however, was not known to show that his presence would be useful, still less that it was so far necessary as to justify his travelling upon the day which it was his chiefest privilege to give up to religious employments, until he was in his carriage on his way to church on Sunday morning. Just as he had got into it, an express arrived from Mr. Hey and Mr. Cookson, informing him of what had been done, and urging him at all costs to be present at the meeting. "I sent immediately to Eliot, and then went there. He and I, on consideration, determined that it would be right for me to go; the country's peace might be much benefited by it."

Sending back therefore his carriage to be fitted for the journey, he went himself to the neighbouring church of St. Margaret's . . . and then called on Mr. Pitt. Whilst they were still together, his servant brought word that his carriage could not be got ready so soon as was required. "Mine," said Mr. Pitt, "is ready, set off in that." "If they find out whose carriage you have got," said one amongst the group, "you will run the risk of being murdered." So fierce had been the spirit of the populace in London, that the fear was not entirely groundless; and an appearance of the same spirit in the great cities of the north had led some amongst his friends to write to him, that "if he ventured down it would be at the hazard of his life." But it was not such apprehensions which had "disquieted" his thoughts; and when once satisfied that duty called him, he cheerfully began the journey. "By half-past two," he says, "I was off in Pitt's carriage, and travelled to Alconbury Hill, four horses all the way," two outriders preceding him; a provision then essential to a speedy journey, even on the great north road. After a few hours' rest, "I was off early on the Monday morning, and got at night to Ferrybridge. Employed myself all the way preparing for the meeting." He had been supplied by Mr. Pitt with samples of the various works by which the fomen-

ters of sedition were poisoning the public mind; and of such importance was his mission deemed, that an express was sent after him to Ferrybridge with further specimens. "Almost the whole of Monday," says his secretary, "was spent in dictating; and between his own manuscripts and the pamphlets which had followed him, we were almost up to the knees in papers." He reached Doncaster by night, and thence sent an express across to Leeds, to announce his arrival to his friend William Hey.

"Doncaster, Monday night, near 9,
Nov. 30, 1795.

"My dear Sir,

You and Mr. Cookson together, loosened my holdings yesterday morning, and forced me out of London in the afternoon. I have made a forced march, which after a hard week is an effort, and, I thank God, have arrived thus far tolerably well. I am going forward, and my present intention is to be at York about an hour before the meeting, unless my motions should be accelerated in consequence of intelligence I may receive as I advance. I trust you will come over, and if you do early in the morning, we may meet at Tadcaster. I am deeply impressed with a sense of the necessity of bold and decided conduct, but wish I had had more time to prepare for so trying a day as to-morrow. *Pray that I may be supported.* I hope and believe I am engaged in a cause pleasing to God. But I must stop. If any of my friends now absenting themselves would go to York, knowing of my intention to be there, send to them betimes.

I will make no apology for desiring you may be knocked up. You who submit to it so often for personal interests, will not, I am sure, complain of it in a single instance, pro bono publico. Kind remembrances.

Yours, affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"On Monday," says a private letter of the day, "there went through Halton turnpike above three thousand

horsemen." Many came from Saddleworth, a distance of near sixty miles, spending a great part of the night upon their journey; and stormy as was the next morning, (Dec. 1st,) they still crowded the road from Tadcaster to York. "It was an alarming moment," says an eye-witness, "when these immense numbers began to pour in, while as yet we knew not what part they would take." But by Monday evening the supporters of the government began to feel their strength.

The want of any leader of acknowledged power was deeply felt by them. The plans of the opposite party had been long matured, and their bands were marshalled under their appointed chiefs; but the friends of order had come suddenly together, and there was none to take the lead in their movements, or engage their general love of order in support of these necessary though obnoxious Bills. Just when this want was most acutely felt, Mr. Wilberforce's carriage turned the corner. His approach was not generally known. "You may conceive our sensations," says a Leeds gentleman, "when he dashed by our party in his chariot and four a little before we reached York. "He arrived," says Mr. Atkinson, "at about a quarter to eleven, amidst the acclamations of thousands. The city resounded with shouts, and hats filled the air." "What a row," he said to his son, when quietly entering the city thirty-two years later by the same road, "what a row did I make when I turned this corner in 1795; it seemed as if the whole place must come down together."

Leaving his carriage he pushed through the tumult, and soon appeared upon the hustings. Here he vainly attempted to prevail on Mr. Wyvill and his friends to concur in an adjournment to the Castle Yard. "He hoped," he said, "to have met his opponents that day face to face, and convinced them of the groundlessness of their prejudices, if they were not prepared to shut up all the avenues to the understanding, and all the passages to the heart." But fair discussion was not their desire, and they refused to quit the Guildhall, of which the opposition had taken possession by stratagem, though in a

minority of one to three. He proceeded therefore without them to the Castle Yard. "It was perhaps the largest assemblage of gentlemen and freeholders which ever met in Yorkshire." "Here," writes Mr. Atkinson, "we had three good speeches from Colonel Creyke, Mr. Spencer Stanhope, and Mr. Wilberforce. The last, I think, and so I believe think all that heard him, was never exceeded. A most incomparable speech indeed."

"I should have said much more," he tells Mr. Hey, "if we had got into debate, for really I had not natural elasticity enough to expand without opponents to such a size as I should have swelled to, if I had been as large as I was prepared to be." Yet his speech, though shorter than he had designed, proved signally effective. Mr. Wyvill did not hesitate to attribute the decision of the county to his personal efforts and influence.

The issue is well worthy of remark. His success had been complete; and it was the manifest reward of an unflinching obedience to the dictates of his conscience. When he left London, he was entirely ignorant of the temper of the great towns in the West Riding: his friends had warned him to expect their opposition; and this would certainly have cost him his seat at the approaching election. But he was determined to discharge his duty; and he returned beyond all expectation at the very highest wave of popular applause, and safe from all possibility of rivalry. "I never saw you but once," wrote a constituent long afterwards, "and that day you won my heart, and every honest heart in the county. It was at the York meeting. I never felt the power of eloquence until that day. You made my blood tingle with delight. The contrast of your address, and the mellow tone of your voice, of which not one single word was lost to the hearers, with the bellowing, screaming attempts at speaking in some others, was most wonderful. You breathed energy and vigour into desponding souls of timid loyalists, and sent us home with joy and delight." Not less worthy of remark is the quiet thankfulness which threw a grace over his triumph. "With him," he told Mr. Hey, "it was matter of thankfulness

to God that the enemies of peace and public order had been so discomfited. For myself, I should be thankful to have been so far honoured as to have been made in any measure the instrument of the goodness of Heaven."

The successful issue of the meeting he had communicated to Mr. Pitt the same evening by express; and on the following morning he set off himself for London.

His use of this success is a good illustration of that singleness of aim which enabled him to effect so much. Instead of seeking to reap from it any personal advantage, he employed it in the cause of his African clients. Recent events in the West Indies had revived the old charge that the friends of the negro race were Jacobins at heart. The government of France, finding it impossible to resist the naval force of England, attempted in despair to raise against it the whole black population. For this purpose she enfranchised her own negroes; and sent the ferocious Victor Hugues to proclaim freedom and enforce rebellion amongst the English colonies. The flame was soon kindled in Grenada, Dominica and St. Vincent's; to them the opponents of the Abolition pointed with no little triumph; and quoted, as the fulfilment of their worst prophecies, the outrages which here walked hand in hand with negro liberation. It was undoubtedly a fearful sight which was presented by these miserable islands; and there were not wanting those amongst the honest friends of Abolition who thought that the question should be let to rest till some more peaceful season. Nothing short of his indisputable attachment to the constitution could at this moment have enabled Mr. Wilberforce to persevere. And there never was a happier moment for renewing his exertions, than in his present hour of civic triumph.

Upon the 15th of December, he gave notice that early in the following session he would propose his motion, reminding the House at the same time that the first day of the approaching year had been the period named in 1792, for the termination of the Trade. "And now," he added, "when we are checking the progress of licentiousness, now is the very time to show our true prin-

ciples, by stopping a practice which violates all the real rights of human nature.”

Meanwhile the Christmas recess brought him a short season of repose. “The last fortnight or three weeks,” he says on the day of the adjournment, “have been severe trials to a man weakly like me; and I have lost ground in health which I must recover. I have kept rather bad hours. In my religious frame, I hope, better than sometimes; more reading the Scripture. Much occupied in writing—oppressed with letters about the petitions.”

Battersea Rise was his head-quarters during this recess; and the entries in his Diary prove the entire occupation of his time and talents for the good of his fellow-men, and the promotion of the glory of God.

During this recess he resolved “to set apart one day chiefly for religious exercises; fasting in my way, i. e. being very moderate in food, which only does with me. I cannot employ it so entirely, because I have some business about the poor which will not bear any delay. My chief reasons for a day of secret prayer are, 1st, That the state of public affairs is very critical, and calls for earnest deprecation of the Divine displeasure. 2dly, My station in life is a very difficult one, wherein I am at a loss to know how to act. Direction therefore should be especially sought from time to time. 3dly, I have been graciously supported in difficult situations of a public nature. I have gone out and returned home in safety; my health has not suffered from fatigue: and favour and a kind reception have attended me. I would humbly hope, too, that what I am now doing is a proof that God has not withdrawn His Holy Spirit from me. I am covered with mercies. Return then unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.” Next morning he writes he felt the fragrant impression of yesterday.

Parliament met upon the 2d of February, and on the 18th he moved for leave to bring in a Bill to abolish the Slave Trade in a time to be limited, fixed afterwards to March 1st, 1797. He “opened the business,” he says,

“coldly and indifferently,” but was roused by the debate which was unusually animated, and in his reply spoke “warmly and well.”

Nothing, he urged, would so much check Victor Hugues, and retard the progress of French principles, as to suspend the importation of fresh slaves, and thereby withhold the raw material of sedition. Yet with indefatigable perseverance Mr. Jenkinson declared, “I anxiously wish that the question were postponed at least till the return of peace.” “There is something,” he replied, “not a little provoking in the dry, calm way in which gentlemen are apt to speak of the sufferings of others. The question suspended! Is the desolation of wretched Africa suspended? Are all the complicated miseries of this atrocious Trade—is the work of death suspended? No, sir, I will not delay this motion, and I call upon the House not to insult the forbearance of Heaven by delaying this tardy act of justice.”

“What!” he said to the West Indians who had boasted in the course of the debate that their slaves were well fed, clothed, and lodged, “what! are these the only claims of a rational being? Are the feelings of the heart nothing? Where are social intercourse and family endearment? Where the consciousness of independence and honour? Where are willing services and grateful returns? Where, above all, the light of religious truth and the hope full of immortality? So far from thanking the hon. gentleman for the feeding, clothing, and lodging of which he boasts, I protest against the way he mentions them, as degrading men to the level of brutes and insulting all the higher qualities of our common nature.”

“On Monday, Feb. 22d,” says the Diary, “crossed from dinner, and finding the House in a good state brought in Slave Bill without opposition, and recrossed.” He did not long continue unopposed. The 3d of March was fixed for the second reading, and after a morning spent upon the Bill at Mr. Pitt’s, he was dining in Palace Yard with a party of his House of Commons friends, when early in the evening a supporter of the Slave Trade moved the second reading of his Bill, hoping by

this manœuvre to prevent its further progress. His watchfulness defeated the attempt. "Hurried from dinner at home over to House, to the second reading of the Slave Bill. Spoke against time till many came. Carried it 63 to 31."

On the 7th the Bill was committed. But at the third reading these fresh hopes were again disappointed. "Dined before House. Slave Bill thrown out by 74 to 70, ten or twelve of those who had supported me absent in the country, or on pleasure. Enough at the Opera to have carried it. Very much vexed and incensed at our opponents."

His heart was sickened at seeing this great cause thus sacrificed to the carelessness of lukewarm friends, and the intrigues of interested enemies. His own attention to the cause was of another character. "The Slave Trade is coming on," he wrote at this time to a friend whom he had engaged to visit, "and every thing must give place to the House of Commons."

Before the close of the session he was confined entirely to the house by a very serious illness. "I have been indisposed," he says, "for ten days, and have had my head a good deal weakened. My mind has, I thank God, been in an easy, tranquil state, reposing on the promises with a consciousness of deep demerit, yet trusting in God's mercy through Christ. I trust He will not spurn such a one from Him. I have lately felt and now feel a sort of terror on re-entering the world."

His friends looked forward with great apprehension to the fatigue of an approaching election; and he had already written word to Yorkshire that "his state of health must be his apology for not canvassing." Yet though "unable to stay through the night," and suffering from even occasional attendance, he could not be persuaded to give up his labours in the House of Commons. "April 13th. In bed under Pitcairne's advice. 15th. Getting better, but still not capable of applying—so do not attempt it. 16th. Got out for the first time in the middle of the day. 18th. Saw Adair about Quaker's business. He (at length) to move and I to second. 25th.

Lay down in the morning—very faint and weak. Pitt and Dundas called, but could not see them. Got Adair to put off his motion. 26th. House—Adair's Bill about Quakers." To this subject his attention had been called by one of his constituents—"When you have abolished the Slave Trade, pray think of the poor Friends in York Castle for the non-payment of their tithes." The relief given by the present Bill consisted of two parts; first providing for the summary recovery of tithes without the vexation of the present law; and secondly allowing their simple affirmation to be received as evidence in criminal as well as civil causes. It passed the House of Commons upon the 10th of May.

But his main business in the House until the close of the session was the Slave-carrying Bill; into which he endeavoured to insert such additional restrictions as should raise the price, and so promote the better treatment, of the trader's miserable cargo.

The success of our West Indian expeditions had disposed Mr. Pitt to adopt Dundas's system of colonial acquisition. This fatal policy Mr. Wilberforce laboured to oppose; and he gladly therefore seized an opportunity of confidential intercourse afforded by the termination of the session, and on the day after the prorogation they went together tête-à-tête to Cambridge.

His colleague in the representation of the county of York having determined to retire, three candidates came forward to contest the seat he had vacated, all men of wealth and influence, and though none of them opposed Mr. Wilberforce, yet their struggle would of course involve him in the trouble and expense of a contested election. He therefore repaired to York and engaged in a hearty canvass.

He was received with the most hearty greeting; and assurances of universal support poured in from every quarter. A friend writes, "'Are you for Wilberforce?' is the first question generally asked at Leeds; and he would have a sorry life of it hereabouts, who would undertake to canvass without making you a *sine quâ non*."

On Sunday the day previous to the meeting for nomination after having attended public worship in the Minster, he withdrew his thoughts from the bustling scene around him, to commune with himself. "This last has been a very hurrying week, little time for devotion and Scripture neglected, for which I ought to have found time. But I thank God that I hope I have desired and wished for a quiet opportunity of communing with Him and my own heart, and to-day I adore with some degree of gratitude that gracious Providence which has led me all my days in ways that I knew not, and has given me so much favour with men. It is His work. His be the glory. I hope I really feel how entirely it is his doing; that I have nothing of which I can boast or be proud; that it is what I could never have effected by my own counsels or might. Oh may I be enabled to be grateful, (duly I cannot be,) and to devote myself first to God's glory, and then diligently to the service of those constituents who are so kind to me."

The election was to follow in a week, and he gladly withdrew himself from York to the quiet of the country. "Travelled to Creyke's, who had been very kind, and pressed me. Felt excessively comfortable, from calm after fortnight's turbulence and bustle. Much pleased with Creyke's family peace and rationality." "I have had hurried devotions lately, and scarce any Scripture reading, yet in general my mind in better frame than sometimes. Much fatigue—little or no anxiety about these things—grateful, I trust, to God."

The address he made to his constituents at the close of the contest was in a very different tone from the ordinary eloquence of a county hustings. "I should," he told them, "but feebly execute my task if I were to attempt to give expression to the various emotions of my heart. I trust that I may say they are virtuous emotions; they are grateful; they are humble. I feel deeply impressed with your kindness; but above all, I recognise with thankfulness the hand of that gracious Providence which has caused my cup to overflow with blessings; which first raised me to an elevation I could never hope to have attained, has enabled

me in some tolerable measure to discharge the duties of that important station, and disposed your minds to reward my services with so disproportionate a share of favour. You will not wonder at my being serious; even gratitude like mine is necessarily serious."

His speech was followed by the chairing, always a tumultuous scene at York. "People whilst half down Coney Street tore off the ribands from my chair, and almost threw me down—safely out. Dined tavern—about sixty-five or seventy. Mr. G.'s coarse, indecent toast—I would not give it. Sheriff well behaved." The secret of his hidden strength is simply recorded in the following line;—"Home about seven and prayed. Much affected, and shed many tears."

After some doubts "where to fix" himself "for the interval until the meeting of parliament, in which time" he "hoped to resume" his "book," he determined upon Buxton, where he resolved "when pretty well, to apply vigorously to business." Before fixing here, he made a hasty progress through various parts of Yorkshire. His first visit was to his mother's house at Hull. "She seems to olden even now, but better than when at Scarborough last summer. At night my mother affected at parting, and whispered 'Remember me in your prayers.'"

From Buxton he writes to Zachary Macaulay, Esq.

"Buxton, July 3d, 1796.

"My dear Sir,

Whilst I was taking a contemplative walk this morning, I rambled in thought to Sierra Leone, and my mind was naturally led to consider the providential dispensations of that Almighty Being, whose infinitely complicated plan embraces all his creatures, and who especially leads, and directs, and supports all those who in their different walks through this multifarious maze of life, are pursuing in His faith and fear the objects which he has respectively assigned them. Here they often know little of each other, but they are all members of the same community, and at length they shall be all collected into

one family; and peace, and love, and joy, and perfect unalloyed friendship, shall reign without intermission or abatement. Perhaps you will then introduce me to some of your sable subjects, whom I never shall see in this world; and I may bring you personally acquainted with others, to whom I have talked of your labours and sufferings in our common cause. 'The holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee.' It always presents to my mind a most august idea—the praises of God arising from every nation, and kindred, and people, where His name is known, and blending, as they rise, into one note and body of harmony. How much ought this to stimulate us to enlarge the bounds of our Redeemer's kingdom!"

His life at Buxton was, as far as possible, that of a student. "Wednesday. Delightful weather. Thorntons went to Bagshawe's. I declined—causâ waste of time. Resumed tract." And again, "On my tract in the morning with some spirit." "Talking over my tract with some friends, but do not find much help from them. I have this week read Scripture (the Acts) constantly and seriously, and have had much new light thrown on them. I have felt at times, when walking, &c. a sense of the presence of God; but in company have been vain and gay, and I fear not duly attentive to the edification of friends. Oh how different am I from what I advise others to be, and how much like the lukewarm Christians I am condemning!" "I have great reason," he wrote at this time to Hannah More, "to be thankful for getting through all the bustle of my election so well. It wore, so far as trouble and expense went, a much more unpromising aspect at one period. As it was, I do not suppose it will turn out to have cost me so much as £100; so you may draw on me the more freely."

"For the last month I have been drinking the waters of this place, and have received benefit. I have here resumed my pen, which had laid quiet near two years, and hope, if it please God to spare my health, that I shall finish my work (I hate the term, but don't know what to style it) this recess. Seriously and honestly, you expect

too much from it. I do not like it so well as I did. However, if God pleases, he can give the increase. I rejoice to hear of your going on prosperously in your reforming operations. You have indeed cause for thankfulness at being so much blessed in your endeavours. What a delightful idea is that, which I trust will be realized, of your meeting from time to time in a better world, those whom you have been the means of enlightening with the knowledge of a Saviour, and the descendants, from generation to generation, of those whose hereditary piety originated under your *ministry*! ‘Ride on prosperously.’ It is the contemplation of a scene like this which refreshes the mind, when wearied by Archduke Charles and General Moreau. Alas! no signs of humiliation. God scourges, but we feel it not.”

Greater retirement than he could find at a watering place crowded with visiters would have been his choice. The advice however of his friend Mr. Hey, fixed him at Buxton until he was summoned to Hull by the indisposition of his mother, which compelled him to lay aside his tract, which he had hoped to finish during the recess. The sight of the open infidelity of France, and dissatisfaction with the state of things at home, made him more earnest to deliver speedily his solemn protest against the prevailing standard of religious principle and practice.

His Sundays were spent in comparative retirement; and before he quitted Buxton, more than one was specially devoted to a thoughtful review of “the notables in my life, for which I should return thanks, or be otherwise suitably affected.” “The singular accident, as it seemed to me, of my asking Milner to go abroad with me in 1784. How much it depended on contingencies!—his coming to Hull with his brother; being known to my grandfather; distinguishing himself, &c. If he had been as ill as he was afterwards, or if I had known his character, we should not have gone together. Doddridge’s ‘Rise and Progress’ having fallen in my way so providentially whilst abroad, given by Unwin to Mrs. Smith, thence coming to Bessy, and by her taken abroad.

My being raised to my present situation just before I became acquainted with the truth, and one year and a half before I in any degree experienced its power. This, humanly speaking, would not have taken place afterwards. What a mercy to have been born an Englishman, in the eighteenth century, of decently religious parents, with a fortune, talents, &c.! Even Gibbon felt thankful for this; and shalt not thou praise the Lord, O my soul! My being providentially engaged in the Slave Trade business. I remember well how it was—what an honourable service! How often protected from evil and danger! kept from Norris's hand, and Kimber's . . . furious West Indians . . . two whole seasons together. Rolleston—and my coming away from Bath so providentially—the challenge never cleared up. My illness in the spring, which might have been fatal, well recovered from. My going into Yorkshire in the winter. My election over with little trouble and expense."

This enumeration is succeeded by a catalogue of various causes for humiliation, collected by a careful scrutiny of his past life. "And now," he ends, "I can only throw myself upon the infinite compassion of Christ, and rely on His effectual grace. I am in myself most weak and vile. But do not I owe all to the goodness of God! It is thou, O Lord, that hast given the very small increase there has been, and that must give all if there be more."

The war was now becoming universally unpopular. "Letter from Pitt about a direct treaty with Paris, Spanish war, &c." cut short his stay at Buxton. "Off early (Sept. 15th) for London, though grieved to pass Yoxall Lodge without a call. Prompted by the possible hope of doing good in pressing Pitt to peace—not to stipulate for islands—perhaps include Slave Trade in treaty."

During the time he entertained hopes of peace, his mind was much occupied with the idea that he should be able to take advantage of the circumstance, that all the slave trading powers would be brought together during the negotiation, and procure a general convention to abolish the trade. He renewed his efforts for pro-

moting the access of missionaries to India. He also mixed much in society, and his memoranda record many heads of interesting conversations.

Parliament met on the 6th of October, and was soon the scene of acrimonious controversy. The new overtures for peace met of course with Mr. Fox's approbation, but the Bills for putting the country into a proper state for resisting an expected French invasion were contested hotly. Against one of their proposed provisions Mr. Wilberforce protested in his private intercourse with Mr. Pitt. "It is intended, I observe," he heard from Mr. Stillingfleet, "that the supplemental corps of militia should be trained on Sunday afternoon; this comes rather to remind than to solicit you to use all your influence to prevent the intended evil. When a like proposal was made by Lord Shelburne many years ago, I wrote to the present Bishop of London to beg him to interfere with the other bishops to prevent it, and received a most proper answer, that the obnoxious clause would be omitted." The Bills themselves he supported strongly, and was more than once called up by the factious temper of the opposition. "I will not charge them," he said, Nov. 2d, "with desiring an invasion, but I cannot help thinking that they would rejoice to see just so much mischief befall their country, as would bring themselves into office." The words were resented fiercely; and he "feared that" he had "gone too far against opposition, but Fox very good-natured." "What you said," writes Dr. Cookson, "is what every body thinks, but what no one else had the courage to speak out." In the midst of these harsh contentions, he writes to Mrs. Hannah More:

"House of Commons, Nov. 9, 1796.

"My dear Madam,

I have heard of the severe illness, with which it has pleased God to visit you, and I have received pleasure from hearing of your recovery. I trust you will still be spared to us, though I scarce know how to wish it, so far as you are yourself concerned, being persuaded that

whenever you are called hence, it will be to the enjoyment of those pleasures, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. My dear madam, I think of you, and feel for you, with lively interest. How I respect your exertions, I would say to any one rather than to you; but to your feeling heart it will afford a cordial, to be assured that a friend looks through the bustling crowd with which he is hemmed in, and fixes his eye on you with complacency and approbation. God knows that I wish to imitate your example, and to learn from you to seize the short intervals of tolerable ease and possible action, for acting for the suppression of vice and the alleviation of misery. May we each tread in our separate paths, and at length, having been graciously guided to our home through the mercy of our great Shepherd, may we meet in a better world, free from pain, and sickness, and sorrow, and live for ever in the exercise of all those kindly affections, which are now the balm of life, though so often alloyed by the irritations to which we are here subject. I scribble amidst much interruption, but my heart is full of kindness to you, and I would not restrain my feelings.

“May God bless, and support, and strengthen you, is the hearty prayer of
 Yours sincerely,
 W. WILBERFORCE.”

It was by “seizing short intervals of possible action,” that with an infirm body he himself accomplished so much. During the hurry of his present London life, he had not wholly laid aside the preparation of his work on Christianity. “I wish it was done. My time has been exceedingly frittered away in general talk, which yet was right. My bad health really renders it requisite for me to have much sleep; but with God’s help I will lessen the time spent in discussion, and thus redeem what I can for solid work. Meant to go out of town for a few days that my tract may go on; but from the time of getting up till near four o’clock never quiet or free from people on business.”

Upon the 17th he set out for Buckden, and spent a

week there, engaged chiefly upon his tract, "hospitably received and spending a rational life." But business soon brought him back to London and its multiplied engagements. But even amidst the bustle and anxiety of his attendance on parliament, he still prosecuted his work, hoping to be able to get it out by the Christmas recess. Great as was his aversion to French revolutionary principles, we find him at this juncture laying it aside for a time, and stepping forward to the rescue of La Fayette from the dungeons of Olmutz. He charged it upon the House as "the duty of a great assembly such as this, to look abroad into the world, and attend to the claims of misery wherever it be found." He thought the case one of peculiar hardship, and was the more ready to interfere from La Fayette's past exertions on the Slave Trade question. But he took this part unwillingly. "Never did I rise to speak with more reluctance, I expected all the ridicule which followed; and when Dundas with a happy peculiarity of expression talked of my Amendment as designed to catch the '*straagling* humanity' of the House, there was a perfect roar of laughter. However, I felt sure that we were bound to use our influence with our Allies to mitigate as far as it was possible the miseries of war." It was some reward for this determined disregard of ridicule to receive long afterwards a special assurance of La Fayette's gratitude. "Tell him," was the message, "that in my life I never can forget the feelings with which I read that speech in the dreary dungeons of Olmutz."

The following was found among his papers, dated

March, 1827.

Among the various reasons for which our Saviour thought fit to forbid our judging each other, it was probably one, that we are most imperfect judges of the merit or demerit of the actions of others; still less can we estimate degrees of virtue or of vice, or the strength or weakness of the moral principle. Much depends on the force of the temptation to which we are subjected; and this force must obviously vary according to the dif-

ferent temperaments, characters, and principles of different individuals. That may be to one man a severe trial of the strength of the moral principle which to another would be none at all. One of the severest trials of the minor order, which I myself ever experienced, was on the occasion of General Fitzpatrick's motion for an address to the Crown, in behalf of M. de La Fayette.

As the incident may have faded away from the memory of the present generation, or be lost in the multitude of the interesting occurrences of the last twenty years, it may be necessary to relate the circumstances which gave occasion for the motion in question. There is no man whose character has been painted in more different colours than that of M. de La Fayette; but it can scarcely be denied, that while many of the aspersions on his reputation owe their origin to rumour, and perhaps to party prejudice, his life exhibits many traits of a generous and patriotic spirit; not merely of an ardent love of glory, but of a mind zealous for liberty. And when we consider his youth, his rank, his connexions, and the universal dissoluteness of morals and manners which then too commonly prevailed among the French nobility, it gave indication of a truly noble spirit, to quit the luxury and frivolity of a Court, and to plunge into the hardships, privations, and dangers of war in the cause, as he conceived, of an injured and oppressed people. Again, whatever may be reported of his behaviour to the royal family of France, whenever that is considered it should be remembered that he well knew they reposed no confidence in him, but that they suspected and hated him; while he knew but too surely that had they escaped out of France, which was their settled and but too natural purpose, it would have been declared by the demagogues to have been effected by his connivance. It is notorious, that when the wretches who excited and directed the popular fury at Paris, manifested unequivocally their purpose of destroying the King and Queen, he exposed himself to great personal obloquy and danger in their defence. Once he quitted the army

and came to the bar of the Convention, endeavouring in vain to stem the torrent of popular fury; and he was endeavouring to prevail on his soldiers to march to Paris, to rescue the royal family from the extremity of danger and degradation, when the Convention, well knowing his purpose, sent commissioners to treat with the army, and to prevail on them to arrest their commander. In vain did M. de La Fayette endeavour to call forth a better feeling. He was just able to effect his own escape, accompanied by a few of his officers, and protected by a small party of cavalry; intending to find a refuge in some neutral territory. Passing through the Prussian territory, he with his companions, was arrested, and shortly afterwards lodged in the dungeons of the fortress of Olmutz. Madame de La Fayette, a member of one of the most ancient and noble families in France, petitioning to be permitted to cheer the desolateness of his imprisonment, her request was granted only on the condition that she herself should become equally a prisoner; a stipulation which, though she willingly submitted to it, does not on that account reflect less dishonour on the government which required such an engagement.

His harsh and cruel imprisonment had now lasted for four years, when, this country being then in close alliance with Austria, it was hoped that the influence of the court of St. James's might be exerted for the humane purpose of prevailing on our confederate to release M. de La Fayette from his prison. Indeed the bitterness with which some of our leading politicians then publicly spoke of the leaders of the Revolutionary party, might not unnaturally cause it to be supposed that our court was implicated in the cruelty and disgrace of his unjust detention. All therefore who were anxious to exonerate their country from the imputation of participating in such unworthy counsels highly approved of General Fitzpatrick's Address; but it was supported by others on deeper and more general principles (broader grounds.) Considering the mitigated spirit and practice of modern warfare as one of the most marked and truly admirable improvements effected by Christianity, even among those

over whose personal character and conduct its principles have little or no influence, and knowing but too well how easily the spirit of hostility, and the pretence of retaliation might lead to the universal prevalence of the ferocious principles (maxims) and practice of ancient warfare, they dreaded the first deviation of a professedly Christian court from the milder regimen of modern times. Many therefore who commonly took no part in politics, nay many who had been among the foremost in condemning the wickedness and cruelty of the Revolutionary party, took a lively concern in M. de La Fayette's fate, and were warmly interested in the success of General Fitzpatrick's motion: but it was opposed with extreme bitterness by Mr. Burke and Mr. Windham, who charged on M. de La Fayette the abundant harvest of crimes and miseries, of which they alleged he had sown the seeds. They argued therefore that his sufferings, however severe, were no more than the just retribution for his early offences. Others again who in no degree shared in these vindictive feelings, and who it is no more than common charity to suppose would have been glad to accede to the motion, were probably afraid of disgusting an ally, and thereby weakening a confederacy, which was not united by any very strong principles of cohesion. Not liking to take Mr. Bankes's ground, they therefore, and more especially Mr. Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville, adopted a tone of ridicule; for even then, though much less I think than now, we had begun to be a very merry set of legislators.

In proportion therefore to the degree in which little was to be said against the motion, it would be cried down by party violence. It was late in the day before I had an opportunity of delivering my sentiments, and when at last an opening did present itself, it was towards the close of the debate, when the patience of the House was exhausted, and when it was obvious that any one who should get up to defend the motion, especially any one not having the cry of a party to support him and the plea of sticking to a party to justify the part he should take, would experience a very sorry reception.

It may be perhaps a confession, but I must frankly acknowledge, that the performance of an act of duty has seldom been set about at a greater cost of present feeling than by myself, when under these circumstances I rose, conscious that I should immediately draw on me the loud derision of a vast majority of a very full House of Commons. I was not deceived in my expectation; and a rather felicitous expression of Dundas's, that the motion was chiefly to owe its support to straggling humanity, (the effect of the words enforced by his peculiar tone and pronunciation,) produced a roar that has seldom been equalled. I am thankful that I was not weak enough to be deterred by foreseeing the consequences that were to ensue: but trifling as the occasion really was in the actual circumstances of the case, it was at the moment a severe trial of principle. . . . Transient as on reflection I must be conscious would be the feelings of the persons present, however strongly expressed, and little as I must have known I should permanently lose in reputation by the part I was about to take, it was nevertheless a great trial, &c. &c.

It is one of the many instances in which an attentive reader of the New Testament will have occasion to remark that it was written by an accurate observer of the nature and feelings of man, that so much stress is always laid upon the feeling of shame; and the strength of its influence on our nature is continually noticed, not only in the epithet, cruel, attached to mockings, and the trial put on a level with the greatest sufferings that could be endured—but on many occasions in which it might have been expected that feelings of another sort would be specified, shame is that which is mentioned. Thus of our blessed Saviour it is said, He endured the cross, despising the shame. (See also other passages.) “I am not ashamed of the gospel.” “House of Onesiphorus, he was not ashamed of my chain.”

Notwithstanding his exertions he was unable to bring out his tract during the recess. An attack of illness of an alarming character compelled him to lay aside all his engagements and retire to Bath, where he makes the

following entry in his Diary:—"It has pleased God of his great mercy to raise me up again from this attack, which threatened much; I then thought death probably near. Oh that I might now better employ the time it has pleased God to allow me! May I be enlightened, and purified, and quickened; and having sadly wasted my precious faculties even since my thinking more seriously, may I now more constantly act as an accountable creature, who may be called away suddenly to his reckoning." This thought appears to have altered his intention of "putting off his tract" for a season of greater leisure, and he begins his stay at Bath with a determination of giving to it all the time which health and society allowed. "May I be enabled to engage in this busy scene with benefit to others, and without harm to myself. Oh that I may feel the power of Divine grace in my heart to fill me with love of God and of my fellow-creatures! Oh how much do I want! what unnumbered blessings do I receive at the hands of God, and how unequal is my return! Yet let me remember He has encouraged us to apply to Him for His Holy Spirit. Let him that is athirst come. Create then in me this sacred thirst, and satisfy it with that peace of God, which Thou only canst supply."

"I find little time here," he complained, "for study, not above two or three hours in a morning hitherto, at tract. Calls, of which I make about sixty, and receive as many—water-drinking—dinings out with people, who expect me to stay—many letters to write;—all this leaves me, though hurrying much, and I hope not idling, very little time." "I should like to be with you," wrote Dr. Milner, whom he had pressed to join him, "but not to dine with a gang of fellows on the queen's birth-day." But towards the end of his stay, though he still speaks of "daily dinings out, and between sixty or seventy people to visit," he "managed to be pretty diligent in the mornings on" his "tract, chiefly revising;" and by the time of his return to London it was ready for the printer.

On the 14th of February he "reached London by five o'clock, and dined at Pitt's; but Grenville being there

could not get out much, though I had given up going to Greathed's for suggesting about Eliot succeeding Lord Cornwallis.* This appointment he earnestly desired, as he knew that Mr. Eliot's official influence in India would have been made subservient to the extension of Christianity; an object for which at this very moment he was devising fresh expedients. "There is considerable probability," he told Mr. Hey, "of our being permitted to send to the East Indies a certain number of persons, I presume we shall want ten or twelve, for the purpose of instructing the natives in the English language, and in the principles of Christianity. But the plan will need much deliberation. I really dare not plunge into such a depth as is required without previous sounding; lest instead of pearls and corals, I should come up with my head covered only with sea-weed, and become a fair laughing-stock to the listless and unenterprising. When I return to town we will hold a cabinet council on the business. Henry Thornton, Grant, and myself, are the junto." When Mr. Eliot's appointment seemed to be secure, both "Mr. Dundas and Lord Cornwallis preferring him to any other person," a dangerous attack of illness forced him to refuse the situation.

Parliament reassembled upon the 14th of February, "amidst a state of things" which appeared "most unpromising." The prospect soon became still more gloomy. "I have been trying," he says on the 26th, "for several days to see Pitt. This evening Eliot came in and told me of the Bank going to stop payment to-morrow. We talked much about it, and it disturbed my sleep at night."

TO LORD MUNCASTER.

"11 o'clock, Sunday night.

"My dear Muncaster,

Eliot has just been with me to inform me that the Bank is to stop payment by command of government

* As Governor-General of India.

to-morrow morning. I have not been party to this counsel, but have of course suggested what has occurred to me to prevent riots, and secure a supply of provisions for the capital. I like to tell you bad as well as good tidings. O my dear friend, how this tumultuous state endears to one that heavenly peace, which, flowing from a source which worldly disturbances cannot reach, may remain entire though all around us be in confusion.

Yours ever affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Two days afterwards he was chosen one of a Parliamentary Committee which took possession of the Bank, and examined into its solvency. "Saturday. Committee as usual. Examined Pitt—wanted to sit the next day, but I repelled." After a morning thus occupied, he spent his evenings in the House, where he was frequently called up by the bitterness of party spirit in defence of Mr. Pitt, upon whom he was still urging privately the necessity of making peace. "Dined at Pitt's quietly—he, R. and I. R. more unmanageable than Pitt. I counsel for peace." "Called at Pitt's—a most earnest conversation about peace, and degree in which I may fairly differ from ministry about it. Pitt exceedingly moved."

To his other business was soon added the renewed agitation of the Abolition question. His partial success in the preceding session had taught the West Indians the value of Mr. Dundas's policy; and they now turned aside his efforts by seeming but unsubstantial concession.

The resolutions with which he had begun this busy season, were, "to redeem time more; to keep God more in view, and Christ, and all He has suffered for us; and the unseen world, where Christ is now sitting at the right hand of God interceding for His people. I would grow in love and tender solicitude for my fellow-creatures' happiness, in preparedness for any events which may befall me in this uncertain state. I may be called to sharp trials, but Christ is able to strengthen me for the event, be it what it may." These resolutions he soon had to act upon in bearing a series of calumnious

charges which were heaped upon him in a Cambridge newspaper. "I am abused for the grossest hypocrisy in Flower's paper, which states as a fact that I always had a prayer-book in the pump-room, and said my prayers there." "There seems," says Dr. Milner, "to be something systematic meant against you. It really appears to amount to downright hatred and persecution, nor have I the least doubt that the person who writes in this manner would do you personal injury if he could with impunity. I have no question that he is some violent democratic Dissenter, and perhaps if you could unkenel him, some private anecdotes between you and him would turn up. The true way however is not to notice such a writer. He can do you no harm in any way. No man who does not hate you and your cause beforehand, will be induced to do so by such an intemperate account; and as to your book, they cannot hurt it, though its contents will provoke them. God preserve you."

"My being moved by this falsehood," he says, "is a proof that I am too much interested about worldly favour. Yet I endeavour I hope to fight against the bad tempers of revenge and pride which it is generating, by thinking of all our Saviour suffered in the way of calumny. St. Stephen also and St. Paul were falsely accused. Let me humbly watch myself, so far as this false charge may suggest matter of amendment; and also I ought to be very thankful that with the many faults of which I am conscious, it has pleased God that I have never been charged justly, or where I could not vindicate myself. How good is God! The business of C. off so well; I left it more to Him than I have often done in such cases. Be this remembered for future practice. The real truth is that at Bath I carried sometimes a New Testament, a Horace, or a Shakspeare in my pocket, and got by heart or recapitulated in walking or staying by myself in the pump-room. I had got a Testament which had not the common dress of one on purpose. I cannot recollect having had any movement of spiritual pride on this ground, but remember I thought it a profitable way. I got two or three of St. Paul's epistles by heart when

otherwise quite idle, and had resolved to learn much Scripture in this way, remembering Venn's comfort from it. Thou, Lord, knowest my integrity, and it will finally appear; meanwhile let my usefulness not be prevented by this report, or that of my book thwarted. What a blessed institution is the Sunday!"

He had been engaged about "his book" ever since his return from Bath. Immediately upon coming to town, he "had seen Cadell and agreed to begin printing;" and throughout the session its revision occupied his spare time. He corrected the press when business flagged in the committee room; and the index and errata were the work of midnight hours, when the debate was over.

Upon the 12th of April his work was published—"My book out to-day." Many were those who anxiously watched the issue. Dr. Milner had strongly dissuaded his attempt. "A person who stands so high for talent," wrote David Scott, "must risk much in point of fame at least, by publishing on a subject on which there have been the greatest exertions of the greatest genius." His publisher was not devoid of apprehensions as to the safety of his own speculation. There was then little demand for religious publications, and "he evidently regarded me an amiable enthusiast." "You mean to put your name to the work? Then I think we may venture upon 500 copies," was Mr. Cadell's conclusion. Within a few days it was out of print, and within half a year five editions (7500 copies) had been called for. His friends were delighted with the execution of the work, as well as with its reception, "I heartily thank you for your book," wrote Lord Muncaster. "As a friend I thank you for it; as a man I doubly thank you; but as a member of the Christian world, I render you all gratitude and acknowledgment. I thought I knew you well, but I know you better now, my dearest excellent Wilber." "I send you herewith," Mr. Henry Thornton writes to Mr. Macaulay, "the book on religion lately published by Mr. Wilberforce; it excites even more attention than you would have supposed, amongst all the graver and better disposed people. The bishops

in general much approve of it, though some more warmly, some more coolly. Many of his gay and political friends admire and approve of it; though some do but dip into it. Several have recognised the likeness of themselves. The better part of the religious world, and more especially the church of England, prize it most highly, and consider it as producing an era in the history of the church. The dissenters, many of them, call it legal,* and point at particular parts. Gilbert Wakefield has already scribbled something against it. I myself am amongst those who contemplate it as a most important work."

This was the universal feeling amongst those who looked seriously around them on the face of things. "I am truly thankful to Providence," wrote Bishop Porteus, "that a work of this nature has made its appearance at this tremendous moment. I shall offer up my fervent prayers to God, that it may have a powerful and extensive influence on the hearts of men, and in the first place on my own, which is already humbled, and will I trust in time be sufficiently awakened by it." "I deem it," Mr. Newton told him, "the most valuable and important publication of the present age, especially as it is yours:" and to Mr. Grant he wrote, "What a phenomenon has Mr. Wilberforce sent abroad! Such a book by such a man, and at such a time! A book which must and will be read by persons in the higher circles, who are quite inaccessible to us little folk, who will neither hear what we can say, nor read what we may write. I am filled with wonder and with hope. I accept it as a token for good; yea, as the brightest token I can discern in this dark and perilous day. Yes, I trust that the Lord, by raising up such an incontestable witness to the truth and power of the gospel, has a gracious purpose to honour him as an instrument of reviving and strengthening the sense of real religion where it already is, and of communicating it where it is not."

* In the year 1818, he was assailed in the "Scotsman" by an exactly opposite insinuation. "Mr. Wilberforce is a man of rigid Calvinistic principles," &c. In the margin of the paper he wrote, "False."

The aspect of the times, in which, says Mr. Hey, "hell seems broke loose in the most pestiferous doctrines and abominable practices, which set the Almighty at defiance, and break the bonds of civil society," led even the less thoughtful to look to its effect with some anxiety. "I sincerely hope," wrote the Lord Chancellor, (Loughborough,) "that your book will be read by many, with that just and proper temper which the awful circumstances in which we stand ought to produce." Its tone was well calculated to create these hopes. There was an air of entire reality pervading its addresses, which brought them closely home to the heart and conscience of the reader. It was not the fine-spun theory of some speculative declaimer, but the plain address of one who had lived amongst and watched those to whom he spoke. "Let me recommend you to open on the last section of the fourth chapter," was his advice to Mr. Pitt; you will see wherein the religion which I espouse differs practically from the common system. Also the sixth chapter has almost a right to a perusal, being the basis of all politics, and particularly addressed to such as you." "I desired my bookseller," he tells Mr. Newton, "to leave at your house a copy of my publication; and though I scarcely suppose that your leisure will be sufficient to enable you to fight through the whole of it, you may perhaps look into it occasionally. If so, let me advise you to dip into the third or fourth chapter, and perhaps the concluding one. I cannot help saying it is a great relief to my mind to have published what I may call my manifesto; to have plainly told my worldly acquaintance what I think of their system and conduct, and where it must end. I own I shall act in my parliamentary situation with more comfort and satisfaction than hitherto. You will perceive that I have laboured to make my book as acceptable to men of the world as it could be made without a dereliction of principle; and I hope I have reason to believe not without effect. I hope also that it may be useful to young persons who with general dispositions to seriousness are very ignorant about religion, and know not where to apply for instruction. It is the

grace of God, however, only that can teach, and I shall at least feel a solid satisfaction from having openly declared myself as it were on the side of Christ, and having avowed on what my hopes for the well-being of the country bottom."

As a literary work it might be judged to need greater condensation; but its style was the best suited to produce effect. "I was purposely," he has said, "more diffuse than strict taste prescribed, because my object was to make an impression upon men in general." "Do not curtail too much," he once said to a friend, "portable soup must be diluted before it can be used." There is in truth throughout the volume a rich and natural eloquence, which wins its way easily with every reader. Its illustrations are happy; its insight into motives clear; and above all, its tone is every where affectionate and earnest. It was seen to be "the produce of his heart as well as of his understanding."

He addressed his fellow-countrymen moreover from an eminence on which he could be heard; as a layman safe from the imputation of professional bias; and as one who lived in the public eye, and was seen to practise what he taught. He raised indeed a strict, but his own example proved that it was a practicable standard. His life had long been a puzzle to observers. Some had even thought him mad, because they could not comprehend the strange exhibition of his altered habits; but his work supplied the rationale of his conduct, whilst his conduct enforced the precepts of his work. Any one might now examine the staff of the wizard, and learn the secrets of his charmed book. "How careful ought I to be," was his own reflection, "that I may not disgust men by an inconsistency between the picture of a Christian which I draw, and which I exhibit! How else can I expect the blessing of God on my book? May his grace quicken me." "That he acted up," is the judgment of a shrewd observer, "to his opinions as nearly as is consistent with the inevitable weakness of our nature, is a praise so high that it seems like exaggeration;

yet in my conscience I believe it, and I knew him well for at least forty years.”*

The effect of this work can scarcely be overrated. Its circulation was at that time altogether without precedent. In 1826 fifteen editions (and some very large impressions) had issued from the press in England. “In India,” says Henry Martyn in 1807, “Wilberforce is eagerly read.” In America the work was immediately reprinted, and within the same period twenty-five editions had been sold. It has been translated into the French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and German languages. Its influence was proportionate to its diffusion. It may be affirmed beyond all question, that it gave the first general impulse to that warmer and more earnest spring of piety which, amongst all its many evils, has happily distinguished the last half century.

As soon as his book was published he set off for Bath, where he was followed by the congratulations of many of his friends.

Not a year passed throughout his after life, in which he did not receive fresh testimonies to the blessed effects which it pleased God to produce through his publication. In acknowledging this goodness of his God, the outpourings of his heart are warm and frequent; though the particular occasions are too sacred to be publicly divulged:

“*Latonæ tacitum pertentant gaudia pectus.*”

Men of the first rank and highest intellect, clergy and laity, traced to it their serious impressions of religion; and tendered their several acknowledgments in various ways; from the anonymous correspondent “who had purchased a small freehold in Yorkshire, that by his vote he might offer him a slight tribute of respect,” down to the grateful message of the expiring Burke. That great man was said by Mr. Windham in the House of Com-

* Entry on a blank page of the “Practical View,” by J. B. S. Morrit, Esq.

mons, when he had arranged his worldly matters, to have amused his dying hours with the writings of Addison. He might have added what serious minds would have gladly heard: "Have you been told," Mr. Henry Thornton asks Mrs. Hannah More, "that Burke spent much of the two last days of his life in reading Wilberforce's book, and said that he derived much comfort from it, and that if he lived he should thank Wilberforce for having sent such a book into the world? So says Mrs. Crewe, who was with Burke at the time." Before his death Mr. Burke summoned Dr. Laurence to his side, and committed specially to him the expression of these thanks.

Amidst these circumstances his sobriety of mind remained unshaken. "I was much struck," says a friend who was with him whilst at Bath, "with his entire simplicity of manners. The place was very full; the sensation which his work produced drew upon him much observation, but he seemed neither flattered nor embarrassed by the interest he excited." The secret of this self-possession may be read in the entries of his private Journal. "Bath, April 14th, three o'clock, Good Friday. I thank God that I *now* do feel in some degree as I ought this day. I trust that I feel true humiliation of soul from a sense of my own extreme unworthiness; a humble hope in the favour of God in Christ; some emotion from the contemplation of Him who at this very moment was hanging on the cross; some shame at the multiplied mercies I enjoy; some desire to devote myself to Him who has so dearly bought me; some degree of that universal love and good-will which the sight of Christ crucified is calculated to inspire. Oh if the contemplation *here* can produce these effects on my hard heart, what will the vision of Christ in glory produce hereafter! I feel something of pity too for a thoughtless world; and oh what gratitude is justly due from me (the vilest of sinners, when compared with the mercies I have received) who have been brought from darkness into light, and I trust from the pursuit of earthly things to the prime love of things above! Oh purify my heart still more by

Thy grace. Quicken my dead soul, and purify me by Thy Spirit, that I may be changed from glory to glory, and be made even here in some degree to resemble my heavenly Father."

He was soon recalled to London by a letter from Mr. Pitt urging his attendance in Parliament. The summons was peculiarly unwelcome. "I doubt," he had written to a friend six months before, "if I shall ever change my situation; the state of public affairs concurs with other causes in making me believe 'I must finish my journey alone.' I much differ from you in thinking that a man such as I am has no reason to apprehend some violent death or other. I do assure you that in my own case I think it highly probable. Then consider how extremely I am occupied. What should I have done had I been a family-man for the last three weeks, worried from morning to night? But I must not think of such matters now, it makes me feel my solitary state too sensibly. Yet this state has some advantages; it makes me *feel* I am not at home, and impresses on me the duty of looking for and hastening to a better country." But his sentiments had now undergone a considerable change. At Bath he had formed the acquaintance of one whom he judged well fitted to be his companion through life, and towards whom he contracted a strong attachment. "Jacta est alea," he says upon receiving her favourable answer, "I believe indeed she is admirably suited to me, and there are many circumstances which seem to advise the step. I trust God will bless me; I go to pray to Him. I believe her to be a real Christian, affectionate, sensible, rational in habits, moderate in desires and pursuits; capable of bearing prosperity without intoxication, and adversity without repining. If I have been precipitate, forgive me, O God. But if as I trust we shall both love and fear and serve Thee, Thou wilt bless us according to Thy sure word of promise."

A sudden call from Bath was, under these circumstances, what he would have gladly escaped. On that very day also he was expecting three of his most valued friends who were coming to him from a distance; but it

was a call of duty, and he at once "resolved to obey it." It had been remarked by those who knew him best, as an instance of his confidence in God, that at such a time of general apprehension he should have resolved to marry. The prospect was now gloomy at home, and hopeless on the continent; and with the strongest trust in that merciful Father who had hitherto protected him, he looked forward to approaching trouble as an altered man. He found already that he had given hostages to fortune. "Muncaster told me of the Emperor's separate peace. Much affected by it for *her* sake. Wrote to her and told her that I would not hold her to engagement against her will." "The intelligence we have received," he wrote, "of the Emperor's having made a separate peace affects me with emotions hitherto unknown; it is doubtful what the effects of the event may be on our internal situation. I seem to have drawn you into a participation of my fortunes at a most unseasonable time, and I am distressed by the idea of involving you in trouble and misfortune by the part it may be my duty to take in so perilous a conjuncture."

Yet this was but a passing cloud which shaded his habitual cheerfulness. "You have heard me say," he writes again a few days later, "that I am no predestinarian, and it is certainly true; yet when I review the incidents of my past life, and observe how God 'has led me by a way which I knew not,' has supported me when weak, has raised me when fallen, has brought me out of darkness into light, has kept me from forming a connexion where it would have proved too surely a clog and a restraint to me, and has at length disposed our hearts mutually to each other; when I see these and ten thousand other such things, (many of them you will like to hear,) I can only lift up my hands and eyes in silent adoration, and recognise the providence of God disposing all things according to the counsel of His own will; and graciously recompensing the very feeblest endeavours to please and serve Him." "On looking back to my past life I see many instances, some greater, some smaller, of God's providential care and kindness.

These infuse into me a humble hope that, though public affairs wear a most gloomy aspect, yet I shall be rescued from future evils, and shall be a specimen of His undeserved grace and kindness to those that humbly look up to Him. It would to some seem superstitious to note how good God has been to me in a variety of little instances (preserving me from evil, from discredit, &c.) as well as in more important cases."

Those troubled times needed such a ground of confidence. He had received whilst at Bath the account of a serious mutiny in the fleet at Portsmouth, and whilst this was yet unappeased, discontents broke out amongst the military in the neighbourhood of London. At this moment it was buzzed about that Mr. Wilberforce had written to the soldiers to express his sympathy, and promise to bring their complaints before the House of Commons. So widespread was the rumour, that on the 13th of May he says, "Pitt sent to me about the soldiers," and "Windham" (Secretary at War) "called" on the same errand "in the course of the day." "I have no intention," was his answer, "of making any motion on the subject, but to do so at this time, and in such a manner, I should deem little short of positive insanity." Still it was asserted that an agent from himself had brought the message to the barracks, read aloud his letter, and actually shown to them his signature. Further inquiry brought out a solution of the imputation, highly characteristic of its object. One Williams, a needy, and as he thought penitent man, had been recommended by Mr. Scott to the charity of Mr. Wilberforce. He was a clergyman of the Church of England, and had reduced himself to abject want by unprincipled excess; on his apparent penitence he found in Mr. Wilberforce a generous supporter, who had continued privately to relieve his necessity, even after he had spit in his benefactor's face and had been kept by a Bow Street warrant from further acts of violence. Finding him at last irreclaimable, Mr. Wilberforce had written to refuse him any further aid; and with this letter "wicked Williams" . . . such was his usual appellation . . . had visited the bar-

racks, pretended to read the feigned message, and then exhibited the signature.

Upon the 15th of May, his motion on the Slave Trade was again before the House; but the West Indians maintained the ground which they had gained at the commencement of the session. They opposed the motion with a bolder front than usual. Mr. Wilberforce was ridiculed by Bryan Edwards for declaring that by the gloomy aspect of affairs he was reminded of the slumbering wrath of Heaven, which the Slave Trade must provoke; he was taunted with the humanity of the Liverpool merchants, and the distresses of the chimney-sweepers. A majority of 82 to 74 against the measure was only what had been anticipated from the existing House of Commons. "I wrote last night," he says the next day playfully in a letter to Bath, "whilst a very slow and heavy speaker was railing at me, to my lawyer about our settlement; so I did not want Christian love to keep me from falling out of temper, and I have been too long used to it to feel much disappointment on losing my motion."

"May 27th. Off after dinner for Bath, calling at Pitt's and strongly urging him to make a liberal offer at first to France; he convinced at length, that requisite to make immediate effort. I travelled on to Salt Hill. 28th. Sunday. Salt Hill. For some time past extremely hurried in London—but very poorly in health—never recovered since the influenza. Not able to sleep. Heat excessive, and I suffered from it more than I ever remember. Daily reports of the soldiery rising, and certainly some progress made. Pitt and others now convinced that things *in extremis*, yet no apparent sense of God. I now feel exceedingly hunted and shattered." On the following day he reached Bath, and upon the 30th, was married to Barbara Ann, eldest daughter of Isaac Spooner, Esq. of Elmdon Hall in the county of Warwick. "You will perhaps judge my way of thinking old-fashioned and queer," was the congratulation of his late colleague Henry Duncombe, "but I am greatly pleased that you have not chosen your partner from among the

titled fair ones of the land. Do not however tell Lady C. so."

His first visit with his bride was to Mrs. Hannah More's. "Received at Cowslip Green with great kindness—delightful day and sweet ride. Sunday morning, as early as able, tour of the schools—Shipham, Axbridge, and Cheddar. Delighted with all he saw, Cheddar in particular—a delightful scene, when old people collected together at afternoon reading. Home at night, after a pleasant drive." Already, at the expiration of the first week from his marriage, he condemns himself "for not having been duly diligent," and on the next day he set out again for London. His head-quarters were now in Palace Yard, and for an occasional retreat he rented of his friend Mr. Eliot his house on Clapham Common.

"Let me now," he says on his return to London, "commence a new era, guarding cautiously against all infirmities to which I am personally, or from circumstances, liable; and endeavouring to cultivate all opportunities. I go to prayer; may the grace of God give me repentance. Fix, O Lord, my natural volatility; let not Satan destroy or impair these impressions. I fall down before the cross of Christ, and would there implore pardon and find grace to help in this time of need. Let me use diligently and prudently to Thy glory all the powers and faculties Thou hast given me. Let me exhibit a bright specimen of the Christian character, and adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things. Let me go forth remembering the vows of God which are upon me; remembering that all eyes will be surveying me from my book, my marriage, &c.; that my political station is most important, my means of doing good numerous and great; my cup full of blessings, spiritual above all. The times how critical! Death perhaps at hand. May God be with me for Christ's sake."

He was summoned soon after to Hull, by the sudden death of Dr. Clarke, who had married his only sister, and spent three weeks in cheering his aged mother and the afflicted widow.

Though the circumstances of the family saved him

from the necessity of paying visits, yet he had little leisure. "Late morning hours and early dining, many calls, a vast many letters, and attention to my mother, prevent my getting any thing done. Reading the Bible with my wife." "I wish I could have a recluse, devotional, thinking birth-day, but that is impossible. On its return I have the utmost cause for self-humiliation, for gratitude, for grateful confidence, for earnest breathings after usefulness. I have no time to write, but let me use the few minutes I have in praying to God in Christ, the Author of my mercies, beseeching Him to hear me, to fill me with spiritual blessings, and enable me to live to His glory. My marriage and the publication of my book are the great events of the past year. In both I see much to humble me and fill my mouth with praises. Let me resign myself to God, who has hitherto led me by ways that I knew not, and implore Him yet to bless me."

A rope-yard behind his mother's house was almost the only place where he could here take his quiet musing walks; and the pleasure he had found in it he would mention long afterwards with gratitude. "It is hardly in human nature," wrote Dr. Milner, the day after his departure, "to continue long as happy as you are at present." "My cup was before teeming with mercies," he himself tells Mr. Macaulay, "and it has at length pleased God to add the only ingredient almost which was wanting to its fulness. In this instance, as in many others, His goodness has exceeded my utmost expectations, and I ought, with renewed alacrity and increased gratitude, to devote myself to the service of my munificent Benefactor. I am half ready to blame myself for thus descanting on the topic I have chosen, but it is the strongest proof I can give you of my friendship, that I have opened myself to you on a subject, on which, in speaking to a mere acquaintance, I should have been the least likely to dwell.

"We lately spent a week with our excellent friends, the Babingtons, who, to the blessing of their neighbourhood, are now returned to the Temple. I own I am obliged to bite my cheek and set my teeth hard, when I

quit such an enviable retirement to plunge into the bustle and wickedness of political life. But slave or free, every one is to remain and do his Lord's work in that state in which he was called; and so I fall to work again, though, I own, mine is one of the last trades which I should have selected. But life will soon be over, and we are assured that no situation presents temptations which the grace of God cannot and will not enable us to resist if we diligently seek it. Once more, my dear sir, farewell, and in the assurance of every friendly wish,

Believe me always sincerely yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

CHAPTER XI.

Efforts to promote observance of Lord's day—Censures Mr. Pitt's duel—Letter on patronage—Liberality—Christian Observer.

UPON the 1st of November Mr. Wilberforce returned to London to be present at the opening of the session. The conduct of the French government during the negotiation of the summer months, convinced him that it was his duty as a loyal subject to strengthen the hands of administration; and on the first night of the session he made an effective reply to an extravagant eulogy upon the political conduct of Mr. Fox.

He still maintained his wonted independent position. Though he supported the administration in their measures, it was not from any desire for war, but from a settled conviction that the French government was averse to peace. He felt alarmed at the heavy expenses into which the nation was plunged, and remarks in his Diary his having "vexed Pitt by plain dealing" on this subject.

To Mr. Hey he wrote, "It has long been my opinion that next to the violence of opposition, this country has

most to dread from the unbounded acquiescence of those who support administration. I have been urging these considerations in private upon Mr. Pitt, but unless my hands are strengthened, I doubt of my success. He is really—I say it solemnly, appealing to Heaven for the truth of my declaration—in my judgment one of the most public-spirited and upright, and the most desirous of spending the nation's money economically, and of making sacrifices for the general good, of all the men I ever knew: but I have met only with two or three (except truly religious men) who have been able to do obnoxious duties, and above all to act in opposition to the feelings of false honour, by resisting the improvidence and restraining the weakness of colleagues.”

And again, “I have been writing to the Speaker and to Pitt, confirming one and urging the other to a relinquishment of a portion of their income during the war.”

These subjects he continued to urge upon the minister. “Saturday, Dec. 2d. Dined at the Speaker's—large party—talked much with Pitt. Hastell speaking of general corruption. 9th. Much serious talk with Pitt, stating the necessity of economy, and preventing profusion and jobs.” “You may perhaps think,” he wrote afterwards, “that I was disposed to be liberal at the expense of others in advising men to give up a part of their incomes; but in truth though I originally contended against encouraging the voluntary contributions as a general measure, yet when they had been set on foot, I subscribed at the Bank what, with my assessed taxes, which are extremely low, amounted to near an eighth of my clear income, and also contributed in my parish, and for Mrs. Wilberforce in the ladies' subscription.”

Whilst the Assessed Tax Bill was passing through the House, he was “exerting” himself “to prevail upon the merchants and bankers in the city, to bring forward in the commercial world a proportionate impost upon all property.”

His support of this Bill was of great importance to the ministry; as it evinced the judgment of an independent man in favour of its absolute necessity. “Nothing,” he de-

clared, "can make me support it, but the consciousness that we have no alternative. I dread the venomous ranklings which it will produce, during the three years of its operation."

The part he took rendered him peculiarly obnoxious to the opposition, and in the debate upon the final passing of the Bill, Mr. Fox charged him with indulging in acrimonious personalities. "Fox," he says, "unjustly accusing me. Uneasy—fearing that I had been guilty." "I was sadly disturbed," he writes afterwards, upon a fuller examination of his conduct, "at Fox's imputations—too much, alas, on scrutinizing, from the fear of losing credit with all, even the moderate oppositionists. But I think I can appeal to God that his charge was false, and that I feel even good-will to him. Oh may I learn to distrust and keep my heart with all diligence."

Having just rendered him such material service, he was much hurt by Mr. Pitt's conduct on the night the Bill passed through committee, in rejecting some slight exemptions which he pressed earnestly upon him. "Dec. 30th. House very late on Assessed Taxes. I sparred with Pitt, and he negatived several exempting clauses. I much cut, and angry." "Alas! alas!" is his reflection on the following day, "with what shame ought I to look at myself! What conflicting passions yesterday in the House of Commons—mortification—anger—resentment, from such conduct in Pitt; though I ought to expect it from him, and can well bear with his faults towards God—all these feelings working with anger at myself, from the consciousness that I was not what a Christian should be. Oh what a troubled state! When I got home I prayed to God, and looked to Him for help through Christ, and have in some measure found my heart restored to peace and love, to reconciliation, (which in the House was but hollow I fear,) and to a desire of returning good for evil, of being above the little slights and rufflements of this life, looking upwards and forwards. Yet even still I find my heart disposed to harbour angry thoughts. I have found the golden rule useful in quieting my mind—putting myself in Pitt's

place, &c. May this teach me to know myself, to walk more watchfully, to seek more earnestly for strength, help, and peace, and love, and the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Oh may God guide me."

Though he had been so much occupied by public business since his return to London, yet his letters and journals refer continually to other important engagements. "Dined and slept at Battersea Rise," he enters on Nov. 9th, "for Missionary meeting—Simeon—Charles Grant—Venn. Something, but not much, done—Simeon in earnest." This was the first commencement of a plan for promoting enlarged missionary exertion, to which he had recourse upon the failure of his efforts to obtain by vote of parliament some national provision for Christianizing India. It occupied his attention for the two following years, and issued in the year 1800, in the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East.

"I may be indispensably occupied to-morrow, (December 31st,) so let me now look back on the past year, and bless God for its many mercies. Oh how wonderful are His ways! An eventful year with me—my book—my marriage—health restored in sickness. How ungrateful have I been, and how often tempting God to withdraw from me! But His mercy endureth for ever; and the vilest, prostrating himself before Him with penitence and faith in the blood of Jesus, may obtain remission of his sins, and the Spirit of renewing grace. This is my hope—here I rest my foot. Friends died this year—Eliot—Dr. Clarke—Joseph Milner. I still spared. How strongly do these events teach us that the time is short! Oh! may I learn and be wise. Public events—mutiny terminated—Dutch victory. I will go to pray, and humble myself before God. The lessons I have learned of my defects teach me to strive earnestly against pride; inordinate love of the favour of man; every feeling of malice; selfishness in not judging fairly between others and myself; above all, earthly-mindedness, not having my mind raised above the region of storms. May I learn wisdom and watchfulness from past falls, and so grow in grace. Oh what a blessed thing is the

Sunday for giving us an opportunity of serious self-examination, retrospect, and drawing water out of the wells of salvation!"

The Christmas recess was spent by him at Bath, where he complains that his "time was frittered away in calls and dining out. Let me try to get more time for meditation and Scripture. I have read barely a chapter each day through this hurrying week. Dining out every day has a bad effect on the mind; I will try to dine at home, at least once, and if I can twice every week." "Entire solitude I find a different thing from even being with my wife only; it seems to give me over more entirely to the power, and throw me more absolutely upon the mercy of God. O what cause have I for gratitude! but my heart has been cold—it is overgrown with weeds; may God enable me at this crowded place to live to His glory." "This morning I thought I felt some of the powers of the world to come when I went to church. G. broke in upon my walk intended for meditation. I have found this week the benefit of reading Scripture almost daily."

Many important matters now claimed a share of his attention. He still acted as a director of the Sierra Leone Company: and that infant colony, struggling with peculiar difficulties, and visited with the ravages of European warfare, was a source of ceaseless anxiety to its conductors. "We have been," he writes to the Governor, "what we call *unfortunate* in having our ships so often captured, &c.: but we are a little prone (perhaps not a little) to expect to be secured by Providence against the common accidents to which human beings are liable, when engaged in works of piety and charity. It should cure us of this erroneous estimate of things to recollect that St. Paul, in recapitulating his sufferings, not only enumerates stoning and the malice of men, but 'thrice was I shipwrecked, a night and a day have I been in the deep.' In short, Providence seemed to fight against him, as well as a world which was not worthy of him."

At home he was still the watchful guardian of public

morals, and at this time was especially engaged in an attempt to promote the better observance of the Sunday. "March 12th. All morning at the Bishop of Durham's on Sunday Bill. 13th. Bishop of London's—Sunday Association—long discussion—Archbishop unwilling." The result of these deliberations was the suspension of all attempts at legislative interference, and the adoption of a voluntary engagement to promote the observance of the day. Much was effected by this effort: many amongst the highest ranks made the declaration, and faithfully observed their pledge. One great object at the present moment was to stop the Sunday entertainments of the Speaker of the House of Commons; but tho attempt was almost defeated by the too forward communications of some who were privy to the consultation.

"March 21st. Bishop of Durham's. The King to have the declaration laid before him by the Bishop of London. Bishop of Durham's early on Proclamation sub-committee—Bishop of London's report. The King heard him out and turned the conversation. The Bishop of Durham tried the Speaker but in vain." "Evening to the Speaker on Sunday declaration plan; he very unreasonably angry—I deeply moved and much hurt. Stayed late with him, and afterwards could not get to sleep." "Interview with the Speaker, who extremely offended at the declaration, and being asked to change [the] day [of his parliamentary meetings], 'Personal insult,' &c. I told him that it was not so meant. The attempt has failed, but I hope God will accept it."

He mixed too upon principle as much as he was able in general society. On this subject he remarks,

"I am much disturbed between a sense of the necessity of not giving up the world, and the evil effects from my present great intercourse with it both to my heart and understanding." "Many doubts about company, whether I ought not in great measure to give it up." The secret of his maintaining an untainted spirit in this full bustle of worldly distractions may be found in the motive from which alone he mixed in them, and in the

habits of self-communing which he carefully maintained. The perfect rest of succeeding Sundays . . . "I feel the comfort of Sunday very sensibly to-day." "Oh, it is a blessed thing to have the Sunday devoted to God" . . . - was of great service to him here; and the full entries of his Journal are a searching review of his conduct and spirit through the week.

"This last hurrying week has kept and now leaves my soul in a sad state. How little does my heart seem to have its affections above! I doubt about giving up much of this ruffled, hurrying system. May God for Christ's sake guide and support me. Last week, angry from pride at Pitt and the Speaker—vain in regard to Belsham's letter. Oh what a multitude of mercies have I to be thankful for! Compare my lot with K.'s."

"This last week, in which I hoped so much to be done, has gone by, and how little got through! And though my affections this day are a good deal called forth, how little have I of late been under the influence of real Christian tempers! How sadly defective am I in humility! When I look into myself I find myself poor indeed, compared with my highly-favoured state; but how little do I feel this habitually! How fond am I of distinction (my constitutional vice)! This would not be, if I was truly humble within, at the core. Here meditation daily, or as frequent as might be, would do much. Let me try for it. Oh may this day be of lasting service to me! and at this time, when probably war and tumult are at hand, may I serve God and fear nothing. May I boldly walk in the might of the Lord, and sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. May I grow in humility, peace, and love, in meekness, holy courage, self-denial, active exertion, and discreet zeal." "I feel a firm confidence, that if through God's grace I am enabled to keep close to Him in love, fear, trust, and obedience, I shall go on well; most likely even in this life, being perhaps remarkably preserved from evil: but at all events I shall be supported under whatever may be laid upon me. These are days in which I should especially strive to grow in preparedness for changing worlds,

and for whatever sharp trials I may be called to. Oh what humiliation becomes me when I think of my innumerable mercies!" "I resolve to be up in time to have an hour before breakfast for serious meditation, prayer, and Scripture preparation for these dangerous times; also more time for unbroken thought; half or three-quarters of an hour on parliamentary topics."

His marriage interfered far less than might have been expected with his various occupations. "The cause of my long silence," he tells his sister, "has been really, as I believe, my having been more than even commonly busy. . . How fast time and life too rolls away! It seems but a span since we were together at Hull; and more than six months have since gone over our heads. My hours have passed pleasantly; greatly indeed have I reason to be thankful for the signal blessing which Providence last year conferred upon me. My dearest wife bears my hurrying way of life with great sweetness; but it would be a sort of gaol-delivery to her no less than to myself to escape the tumult of this bustling town, and retire to the enjoyment of country scenes and country occupations. But I am well aware that it is not right for me to indulge in such reveries. My business is cut out for me, and Providence has graciously blessed me with the means of being cheered under it; which means I should do wrong to pervert into a source of indolent self-enjoyment, flinching from my collar and refusing to draw my load because a little weary of being in the harness. At all times in which one feels this sense of weariness, and longs for quietness and peace, one should endeavour to make it subservient to the purpose of raising one's mind heavenward, and of establishing a practical feeling of the vanity and transitoriness of all human things, and of this life being but a passage, and our home that 'rest that remaineth for the people of God.'"

Early in the spring he again brought the Abolition question before parliament. April 3d. "Busy preparing for Slave motion, which made. Fox, Grey, Sheridan, &c. came. Thought we had carried it—83 to 87." The debate was again long and earnest, and the West Indian

opposition still fought under the cover of apparent concession. The horrors of the Trade were now candidly admitted by Mr. Bryan Edwards and his followers, who contented themselves with the safer objection, that a vote of Abolition would only substitute an illicit for a legal traffic.

Though defeated on the division, "on the whole," says Mr. Wilberforce, "we got ground." This conviction rendered the present and succeeding year a period of the most active exertion in the cause. It was resolved to propose the immediate Abolition of the Trade along the northern coast of Africa. Upon the 4th of May, the measure was brought forward by Mr. Henry Thornton; but the session was found to be too far advanced, and the House too full of business, for its present consideration; and on the 18th of June it was deferred until the following session.

As the season advanced the Diary exhibits his usual amount of daily occupation, with slight notices of the most important amongst passing events.

In his letters to his intimate friends at this period, he confesses the difficulty of the position he occupied. Whilst he differed on principle from the opposition, he often found the measures of the administration such as he was unable to support. And about the end of May he was compelled, by the duel between Mr. Pitt and Tierney, to incur the risk of forfeiting entirely the friendship of the Minister, by the expression of his views of that transaction.

May 28. "Ashley came in at my dressing time, and brought word of Pitt and Tierney's duel yesterday. I more shocked than almost ever. I resolved to do something if possible. 30th. To town. Found people much alive about duel, and disposed to take it up. I gave notice [of a motion on the subject in the House of Commons]. Letter from Pitt, evening."

TO W. WILBERFORCE.

"My dear Wilberforce,

I am not the person to argue with you on a subject in

which I am a good deal concerned. I hope too that I am incapable of doubting your kindness to me (however mistaken I may think it) if you let any sentiment of that sort actuate you on the present occasion. I must suppose that some such feeling has inadvertently operated upon you, because whatever may be your *general* sentiments on subjects of this nature, they can have acquired no new tone or additional argument from any thing that has passed in this transaction. You must be supposed to bring this forward in reference to the individual case.

In doing so, you will be accessory in loading one of the parties with unfair and unmerited obloquy. With respect to the other party, myself, I feel it a real duty to say to you frankly that your motion is one for my removal. If any step on the subject is proposed in parliament and agreed to, I shall feel from that moment that I can be of more use out of office than in it; for in it, according to the feelings I entertain, I could be of none. I state to you, as I think I ought, distinctly and explicitly what I feel. I hope I need not repeat what I always feel personally to yourself.

Yours ever,

WILLIAM PITT.

Downing Street, Wednesday,
May 30th, 1798, 11 P.M."

The hope which had led Mr. Wilberforce, in spite of all his personal feeling, to give notice of his motion had now almost deserted him. Instead of being able to carry a strong resolution against the principle of duels, through the general feeling which had been excited by an apprehension for the safety of Mr. Pitt, he found that the fear of censuring the minister would lead many to defend the system in order to screen the man. He began therefore to doubt the wisdom of persevering in his motion. "June 1st. To town to-day and yesterday, and back in the evening. Much discussion about duel motion. Saw Pitt and others—all pressed me to give it up. Consulted Grant and Henry Thornton, and at length resolved to give it up, as not more than five or six would

support me, and not more than one or two speak, and I could only have carried it so far, as for preventing *ministers* fighting duels. June 2d. Being resolved, I wrote to Pitt to give it up."

TO THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM PITT.

" My dear Pitt,

I scarcely need assure you that I have given the most serious and impartial consideration to the question, whether to persist in bringing forward my intended motion or to relinquish it. My own opinion as to the propriety of it in itself, remains unaltered. But being also convinced that it would be productive on the whole of more practical harm than practical good, and that it would probably rather impair than advance the credit of that great principle which I wish chiefly to keep in view, (I mean the duty of obeying the Supreme Being, and cultivating His favour,) I have resolved to give it up; and when thus resolved, I cannot hesitate a moment in sending you word of my determination. At the same time, I shall be much obliged to you if you will not mention my resolution generally, though you may, where you may think it necessary; but for many reasons I do not wish it to be publicly known till it is heard from myself. The Speaker is the only person of our town friends, to whom I shall open myself at present.

I am sure, my dear P., that I need not tell you that the idea of my being compelled by duty to do any thing painful or embarrassing to you has hurt me not a little; but I know you too well not to be sure that even you yourself would not wish me to be influenced by this consideration against the dictates of my conscience. I will only hint the pain you have been the occasion of my suffering on the subject itself, which I had intended to bring into discussion. I will only say, that whatever mischiefs may hereafter flow from it, will not be imputable to me. It is my sincere prayer, my dear Pitt, that you may here be the honoured instrument of Providence for your country's good, and for the well-being of the

civilized world; and much more that you may at length partake of a more solid and durable happiness and honour than this world can bestow. I am, and I trust I ever shall be,

Your affectionate and faithful Friend,
W. WILBERFORCE."

Broomfield, Sat., June 2, 1798."

"Received an answer from Pitt that he was greatly relieved by my relinquishment—he seriously ill."

"Monday, June 4th. Stayed away from court on account of motion impending. The King asked the Speaker if I persevered. Pitt told me the King approved of his conduct. 5th. To town. House—declared that I gave up my motion because no support."

The following letter, which was written in reply to one which he received from Sir Christopher Sykes, one of his principal supporters in Yorkshire, on occasion of his having refused to solicit a living for his son from Mr. Pitt, will place his manly independence of character in an interesting point of view.

TO SIR CHRISTOPHER SYKES, BART. SLEDMERE, YORKSHIRE.

"Broomfield near London, June 16, 1798.

"My dear Sir Christopher,

Amidst the various feelings which your last letter excited, there were none, I can truly assure you, which were not of a friendly quality, and I was highly gratified by the frankness and candour with which you opened your mind to me. I did not receive it till late the day before yesterday, on my arrival in town for the House, and yesterday I was so much occupied as to be absolutely prevented from writing to you. This morning, (though my having had several inmates and visitors at our new residence, near Clapham Common, has swallowed up my time,) I prefer scribbling you a hasty reply to suffering you to wait for my answer till I have a little leisure.

The subject on which I shall have to give you my

sentiments is one on which, whatever I write, though put down on paper in a hurry, will be the result of deliberate reflection. I can have no objection, my dear Sir Christopher, to treat you with the same frankness you have used towards me, and to state to you the principles on which I think it right to regulate my conduct in the case of all ecclesiastical preferments. What you say of the minister and Chancellor being, in their capacity of patrons, trustees for the public, is a very just remark, and shows that you have thought over the subject so as to have fixed principles on it. But there is another consideration to which, though I am sure it must have been in your mind, you have not so much as adverted in your letter, and this therefore I will state as briefly as I am able.

As the influence any man possesses, and his opportunities of usefulness, are all so many trusts for the employment of which he will hereafter have to give account, so there are no opportunities of usefulness which are trusts from their very nature more weighty and important than the power of recommending to any ecclesiastical preferment which has the care of souls. To speak seriously, and otherwise I can scarcely do justice to the argument, the number of the individuals who may be rescued from eternal misery and brought to the enjoyment of eternal happiness, and the degree of the eternal happiness even of the happy, must, humanly speaking, depend on the minister set over the parish to which they belong. Therefore, I am bound to remember, in the disposal of any living, (whether by my own presenting to it directly, or by using my influence with the patron,) that the interest the parishioners have in the nomination is that of as many persons as the parish consists of, and is of an everlasting, infinite value; that which the clergyman to be presented to it has in it is the temporal interest of one individual. It follows of course, that I must attend to the two following principles in my recommendations to church preferment. 1st, That of naming the man whom in my conscience I believe, on the whole, likely to do most good in the station to be filled; and 2dly, That of

endeavouring to employ my influence, so as that any given measure of it may be productive of the utmost possible benefit. This will require me, in looking out for pieces of preferment about which to interest myself, to advert to the size of the parish and its circumstances, to the number and situation of the flock, rather than to the value of the pasture; thus endeavouring to place the most useful man I can find in the most extensive sphere of usefulness.

But I must be still more particular in order to give you any adequate notion of my sentiments. It is my fixed opinion, formed on much reading, consideration, and experience, that there has been for many years among the majority of our clergy a fatal and melancholy departure from the true principles of Christianity, and of the Church of England; from those principles which prevail throughout her Articles, her Liturgy, the writings of her venerable martyrs, and of many of her brightest ornaments. I am not speaking of speculative matter; this declension, or, if I would give it its true name, this heresy, is important, because its practical effects are in the highest degree mischievous. I have stated this in my late publication as clearly and as strongly as I could. The inference from it is obvious. In selecting a minister for any living it is not enough to know that he is diligent and exemplary in his conduct, nor yet that his talents, knowledge, and manner of officiating are every thing that one could wish, but I must ask, what are his doctrines?

I have said enough to put you in possession of my principles, and I hope I can add that I have acted on them uniformly and without deviation for many years. In the case of those who have been nearest and dearest to me, I have adhered to them. I will only appeal in this view to the instance of Dr. Clarke, whose very laborious living produced him but about £250 per annum. The place was highly unpleasant (comparatively speaking) to him, and still more to my sister. But being convinced that he was on many accounts better fitted to do good at Hull than most other men would be, or than

he would be in almost any other place, I made no other effort for fixing him in any situation more eligible as to temporals; though I will frankly tell you that I had the deanery of York in view for him in case he had lived, as being that for which he was eminently qualified.

The account I have received of your son from a friend to whom he is pretty well known, is in many particulars highly creditable to him, and such as to allow me not to give up the hope (a hope which I contemplate with real satisfaction) of some time or other being instrumental in his preferment. I shall be very glad to become acquainted with him. I need scarcely say that it was a painful effort to me to write to you the answer I did, and I am sure I should commence my acquaintance with him with a bias in his favour, both from his general character and my good will towards you and your family.

There is much more in my mind, but I have not time to put it on paper, and what is more material is already said."

It was only upon general grounds that he now asked any such favours at the hands of government. "When I was a young man," he told a friend who had requested his good offices in favour of a client, "I own I was often sanguine in my hopes of obtaining situations under government for persons, whom, for their own sakes or that of their connexions, I wished to serve. But a longer acquaintance with life damped these expectations, and taught me, though slowly, that a man who would act on my principles and go on my plan, must not expect to be successful in this competition. Such things are only to be got by an earnestness and importunity very unbecoming my situation."

Parliament was prorogued upon the 29th of June, and Mr. Wilberforce immediately established himself at Broomfield for the summer. "My situation here," he says, "though so comfortable, will require much watchfulness, and plan, and circumspection, or my time will be frittered away, my usefulness abridged, and my soul

unspiritualized. I will consider well how to turn it to the best account, and form my plan deliberately, with prayer for wisdom and for strength to keep my resolutions. My wife's health absolutely requires a villa. A plan of study and an arrangement of time to be formed, and the business of the recess to be chalked out. Oh what cause have I for shame, comparing myself with my advantages and mercies." "To try this recess at six hours between breakfast and dinner, and two hours before breakfast for thought and real business." "Surely," he writes during a sharp attack of illness with which Mrs. Wilberforce was visited, "God is punishing me for a feeling of exultation. 'I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved. Thou, Lord, of Thy goodness hast made my hill so strong. Thou didst turn away Thy face, and I was troubled.' How uncertain are all human things! I hope I feel some Christian resignation, and holy reliance on the mercy and goodness of God and my Saviour."

While he was here engaged with "books, letters, a little dictating, and many friends," he received an account of the illness, and by the next post of the death, of his aged mother. Unwillingly leaving Mrs. Wilberforce, who was on the eve of her first confinement, he set off immediately for Hull to attend his mother's funeral. "You will join with me," he writes to Mrs. Wilberforce from Stamford on his return to Broomfield, "in thanking God for His goodness in having thus far protected me on my way. This morning, at six o'clock, I set out with, (in spite of all remonstrances) some little pomp, in the funeral procession to Beverley, and the last solemn service being ended, I returned to Hessle, and was again at Barton by eleven; and now here I am only eighty-nine miles from London, and hoping to be with you on Monday evening. I shall of course stay here all tomorrow; and though, not having heard from you, some thoughts and wishes about you will steal in, I have a pleasure in the idea of halting, and spending a quiet day in blessing and praising that gracious Being, who to me has been rich in mercy, and abundant in loving-kindness.

Oh that I were more warmly thankful and more zealously active!"

"Monday, up early, and travelled on as fast as I could; got to Broomfield by nine o'clock, safely, I thank God, and found all well." "My dear wife," he notes a few days later, "is now ill. How dependent does this make me feel upon the power and goodness of God! What a humbling impression have I of my own inability; that all my happiness, and all that belongs to me, is at the disposal of the Supreme Being! So it ought always to be. This is 'to walk softly.'" "Oh what abundant cause have I for gratitude," he says the following week: "how well all has gone on, both with mother and child! I will take a musing walk of gratitude and intercession. How full of mercies is God to me, and how void am I of gratitude! How little desirous of diffusing the happiness so freely given to me! Oh may I still feel more the weight of my burden, charging it on myself and pressing it home; placing myself in Christ's sight, in that of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect. O Lord, renew me; let this corruption put on incorruption, even here in heart, and bring forth the graces of the Spirit!"

The following characteristic letter exhibits the undiminished interest he felt in the school operations of Mrs. More.

"My dear Madam,

The letter you wrote to Mrs. Henry Thornton, concerning your Mongewell intercourse, has made a deep impression on me; and though no one can prize more highly than myself your services in Somersetshire, yet I believe it would be right for you to pay a visit to the Prince Bishop, at Auckland.* Henry Thornton and I agree in our judgment, that you cannot decline this new sphere of usefulness. Do you remember the idea of a great man, (I think Huygens,) that there might be stars,

* Mrs. Hannah More had been invited to assist the Bishop in his benevolent design of establishing schools in his diocese.

of which the light, though always on its journey, had not yet travelled down to us. It is somewhat like this with the light of the blessed gospel, to too many districts in this very country. I wish you to consider this as an opportunity of conveying it into a dark corner of the island. Go then to Auckland, and may the grace of God go with you. I am convinced that, on many accounts, you would be able to do far more than myself, or any other person living, with this primary planet, which is surrounded with satellites. It is more, it is a very sun, the centre of an entire system. I will with all my heart meet you there if possible. The Bishop has often invited me and Mrs. W.

But I am pressed for time, and have one point more on which I must detain you, I mean the extreme importance of your husbanding your strength. I have looked into the state of my finances, and am in good case in what respects this world. I can appropriate as large a sum as may be requisite for your operations. I am clear you ought to purchase ease, which is with you the power of continuing your exertions, though at a dear rate, by allowing yourself the accommodation of a carriage. Surely we know each other well enough to communicate on this or any other subject without embarrassment or reserve. You ought to permit the friends of your institutions to assist you with money to any extent which may be requisite for carrying them on. What signifies it in what shape and for what purpose the money is to be applied? In the composition and resolution of forces it all produces an effect in the required direction. It is really absurd that we who affect to be deeply interested for the maintenance of the system, should not give it the only support which our situation renders us able to afford. Each partner should supply that in which he most abounds: the moneyed, money: you and your sisters, what is far more valuable, and what no money can procure. Now do *act* if you are convinced." . . . "I love and admire the zeal of your young clergy. Indeed it refreshes and revives me when sickened by the shabby topics and shabby people, great and small, with whom

I am of necessity too conversant, to turn my eyes to you and your little Christian communion of saints.

Believe me ever sincerely yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

"I have talked with Henry Thornton," he writes again, concerning the Somersetshire operations, "and we have agreed that £400 per annum should be allotted by us to that service. Mrs. Bouverie's money in Henry Thornton's hands is to furnish £200, and he and I £100 each. I need not say any thing in addition to what I have before expressed of my earnest *impetration* that you would bear in mind that your best contribution, a thousand times over, is of trouble, time, and personal exertions, and your great object should be how you can furnish these in the most abundant measure, and the longest continuance."

"Never distress yourself, my dear Mary," he wrote this summer to another correspondent, "on the ground of my being put to expense on account of yourself, or your near relatives; you give what is far more valuable than money—time, thought, serious, active, affectionate, persevering attention: and as it has pleased God of His good providence to bless me with affluence, and to give me the power, and I hope the heart, to assist those who are less gifted with the good things of this life, how can I employ them more properly than on near relations, and when I strengthen your hands, who are always endeavouring to serve their best interest. You may say to —, that on your account, I am willing to take the charge of Charles's education for two or three years."

The sums which, as "a good steward," he thus dispensed to those who needed, formed a large portion of his annual income. As a young man, he had been charitable from the natural impulses of a generous spirit. By an account book, which has escaped destruction, he appears to have expended in the year 1783, between five and six hundred pounds in this way. There are in it many such entries as, "Sent to the Rev. Mr. Emeson of Keswick, a most excellent man with a large

family, and mean to do so annually, a bank note, £20." But his conduct was no sooner regulated by higher principles, than he determined to allot a fixed proportion of his income (obtained often by personal self-denial in small things) to works of charity. Before his marriage, at least one-fourth of it was so employed; and in this year the record still remaining (and it is incomplete) accounts for more than £2000. Some of the particular entries show the hidden channels in which his bounty flowed, cheering many hearts who never knew their benefactor. Besides regular almoners for the distribution of small sums, to one of whom in the course of this year he intrusted above a hundred pounds, he was in the habit of relieving through many others the distress which came under their observation. This he did especially in the case of active clergymen, in whose hands he often placed an annual sum of considerable amount for parochial distribution. Four of those which occur this year, and are marked annual expenses, are for sums of £25, £26, £30, and £40, respectively. Great zeal in their vocation constituted of itself a claim on his assistance, even in districts for which he had no local interest. "Mr. Charles's schools in Wales, annually £21."

Some of these entries are highly characteristic. "Expenses of Mr. Atkinson's act for Leeds church £100." "Lent Robert Wells £13, which never expect again—he has a wife and six children to maintain, and ekes out a scanty income by a trade in old clothes." "Sent Dr. Chapman five guineas for a book which not read, and impertinently sent me; but Irving says he is a worthy man, and he must be distressed to act in this manner." "Sent Captain S. five guineas (a gentleman in distress sometimes most of all so)." "Sent him ten pounds in addition, which he said would render him completely comfortable." "C., only justified by my having advised him originally to enter the law, £50." "Captain Pearce £5 5s. He is but a moderate hand I fear, but in urgent want." "Lent M. £100, not very willingly, because though I sincerely wish to serve him, I think this plan of paying off all his debts will not make

him economize. It is Mr. Pitt's plan." "In compliance with my rule I must put it down *given*, but if he lives I shall receive again from Captain Hall £100." "Given W. C. £55 on a solemn promise that he will never again issue a bill, and not borrow of any one without previously informing me. He is not economical, but has a claim on me from having lived in my service, and imprudence must be pardoned. He is sure that from his salary he can gradually repay me, but I cannot believe it." "Given W. C. £63 to enable him to refund what he has taken of the Board's money. I do it only because it would be ruin to him to withhold it. I doubt if even under these circumstances quite right. I have solemnly assured him it should be the last time of my assisting him, and have given him parting advice. He has treated me ill in applying only £21 of the last £70 I gave him to this purpose. As I have told him plainly, I fear he cannot be saved from ruin. I have had much anxiety and vexation from him, and my only comfort is that I treat him like a Christian, he me as a man of the world. He dislikes me, and feels no gratitude to me I know for what I have done. (Private; put down as a record of my judgment and feelings.)" "For Foulay Expedition, £50." "Rev. Mr. Scott, half a year of his son's College allowance, £15." "Paid Williams's bill for expenses of Dowlin and Devereux's trial, £200." "Remainder of Williams's bill unfairly coming upon me, £500." "For St. Anne's School annually £31 10s. 0d."

Almost every charitable institution of the metropolis, of Yorkshire, and of many other parts, (extending in some instances to Edinburgh,) is included in his list of annual subscriptions. He had also regular annuitants. Not a few who afterwards acquired independence and wealth were indebted to his support for carrying them through their early struggles. Two who rose to the judicial bench are this year mentioned as receiving from him £300. Besides his contribution to the Elland Society, he supported readily young men of promise in their education for Holy Orders; and through every year of its

protracted continuance he drew largely from his own resources for the expenses of the Abolition contest.

It was especially his habit to relieve those who in the higher walks of life were reduced to unexpected indigence. Many letters acknowledging such aid, and tracing to it oftentimes escape from ruin, appear in his correspondence. One such instance has been furnished by his secretary. " 'Mr. Ashley,' he once said to me, 'I have an application from an officer of the navy who is imprisoned for debt. I do not like to send Burgess' (his almoner) 'to him, and I have not time to go myself; would you inquire into the circumstances?' That very day I went, and found an officer in gaol for £80. He had a family dependent on him with no prospect of paying his debt; and as a last hope, at the governor's suggestion, had made this application." Mr. Wilberforce was well known among the London prisons, where, with the Rev. John Unwin, he had of old often visited and relieved the debtors. "The officer," continues Mr. Ashley, "had referred him to Sir Sidney Smith, to whom he wrote immediately. I was in the room when Sir Sidney called on the following morning. 'I know the poor man well,' he said, 'we were opposed to one another on the Baltic, he in the Russian, I in the Swedish service; he is a brave fellow, and I would do any thing I could for him; but you know, Wilberforce, we officers are pinched sometimes, and my charity purse is not very full.' 'Leave that to me, Sir Sidney,' was his answer. Mr. Wilberforce paid his debt, fitted him out, and got him a command. He met an enemy's ship, captured her, was promoted; and within a year I saw him coming to call in Palace Yard in the uniform of a post captain."

He was much occupied at this time with a plan for setting up a periodical religious publication which should admit "a moderate degree of political and common intelligence." Mr. Babington and I went this morning to Mr. Henry Thornton's to breakfast, to talk over the matter of the Magazine and its editor. We concur in opinion that a small committee, perhaps not more than three,

would form the best editor. Mr. Scott is a man of whose strength of understanding, correctness of religious views, integrity, disinterestedness, diligence, and perseverance, I think very highly; he is systematically opposing the vices, both speculative and practical, of the religious world; and they are many and great, and likely to be attended with numerous and important mischiefs. But Mr. Scott is a *rough* diamond, and almost incapable of polish from his time of life and natural temper; he has not general knowledge nor taste sufficient for such an office as you would commit to him. We have *anatomized* several other subjects, but I have not time to detail to you the result of our dissection."

After much consideration and discussion, the first number of the Christian Observer was published in January, 1802. Several of its early articles were from the pen of Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Henry Thornton.

It was the natural consequence of his public character, that those who were in any difficulty, especially if it was connected with religion, applied at once to him as the redresser of their wrongs. The Sunday drilling which had just been introduced into the Channel Islands, was most offensive to the religious principles of the Wesleyan Methodists; and their refusal to conform to the appointment of the local government subjected them in many instances to fine and imprisonment. They appealed to Mr. Wilberforce, and whilst still at Broomfield he had seen Mr. Dundas upon the subject, and procured the promise of his interference in their cause. Whilst at Bath, to which he had again resorted for the benefit of his health, he heard from Dr. Coke, that not only were these oppressive measures still maintained, but that on the 18th of October at the states meeting of the Isle of Jersey, it was determined to proceed to banishment against those who refused to perform this military duty. To appeal against this Bill he moved hastily to London; and having reached Broomfield on the 10th of November "went on the 13th to town on the Methodist business;" but found that "neither Pitt nor Dundas were come." Within a few days he convinced Mr. Dundas

of the injustice of such a needless violation of the rights of conscience, and after some delay succeeded in getting "the Jersey Methodists' cause decided in their favour—Banishment Bill assent refused."

Parliament met upon the 20th of November. A severe attack of indisposition confined him to the house at the commencement of the session; but by the 25th of November he was nearly in his usual health. "My feeling, when so ill on Wednesday morning, was, that I had not been active enough in the cause of God: oh let me now employ with greater diligence the powers which he has restored."

During the remainder of the Session he was anxiously occupied with attendance upon the House. Among other important matters which claimed his attention, none caused him more anxiety than the proposition for the union of England and Ireland. He sought the counsel of his friends on all the points which it involved, and especially respecting the provisions which it would be necessary to make in the case of the Romanists; he also proposed a plan for producing greater equality in the livings of the clergy of the Established Church, and another for the formation of schools in every parish in the kingdom. Nor did the necessity of increasing the Church accommodation in proportion to the increase of population escape his comprehensive mind. Upon all these questions, whilst he consulted his friends, he formed his own conclusions, and acted without reference to the feelings even of those he most esteemed. The following extract from his Diary will exhibit the diligence with which he schooled his heart even amid all the luxury of his present course of life. In the progress of a debate on the condition of one of the prisons, he had indulged in some rather sarcastic remarks on the speech of one of his opponents, who, in reply, after quoting in a tone of ridicule a passage from Mr. W.'s work on "Practical Christianity," complained of the "Christian rancour and religious facetiousness with which he had been treated. Mr. W. retorted that "a religious man might sometimes be facetious," and that "the irreligious did not of necessity escape being

dull." In reviewing this debate he says—"Oh how much do I want of that unruffled love which should reign in the heart of the true Christian! I hope I feel no ill will to any, and I pray and strive against it! Oh what are the little reproaches and assaults I encounter compared with those under which Stephen could say, 'Lord lay not this sin to their charge!' and 'Father forgive them!' Let me strive to grow in humility, in disesteem and disrelish of worldly estimation, and in love! In what fermentation of spirits was I on the night of answering Courtenay! how jealous of character and greedy of applause! Alas! alas! 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!'"

CHAPTER XII.

Renews Motion for Abolition of Slave Trade—Sunday Papers—Bath—Scarcity—Protects interests of Dissenters—Illness of Mrs. Wilberforce.

Upon the 1st of March Mr. Wilberforce brought forward his motion for the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade.

The sameness of a contest which had lasted for eleven years, was in some degree relieved by the wit of Mr. Canning, and the eloquence of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Wilberforce. Having shown the folly of leaving, as was now proposed, the work of Abolition to colonial legislation, he again brought before the House the evils which its continuance inflicted upon Africa. "The coast of that great continent, for a distance of four thousand miles, is kept by the influence of this trade in the lowest state of darkness, ignorance, and blood. Such has been the effect of intercourse with Europe. For, contrary to all experience, the civilization of the interior is three centuries advanced. Yet even there, may be perceived some fatal influence from this deadly traffic. The storm upon the surface stirs slightly even the still depths of the

ocean." Again he warned the House not "to provoke the wrath of Heaven by this hardened continuance in acknowledged guilt. I do not mean, sir, that we must expect to see the avenging hand of Providence laid bare in hurricanes and earthquakes; but there is an established order in God's government, a sure connexion between vice and misery, which through the operation of natural causes, works out His will and vindicates His moral government."

Though defeated by a majority of 84 to 54, he was convinced that the cause was gaining ground, and set himself to introduce into the system some immediate mitigation of its horrors.

His health had been unusually delicate this spring. "A serious return," he told Mr. Hey, "of illness, availing itself of the very severe and cheerless northeastern blasts, has stuck to me more obstinately than usual. This has compelled me to lessen the number of my working hours, and has crowded into them such a multitude of matters, that I have been quite unable to clear my way." This had enforced a "private resolution," which he tells Lord Muncaster he "had been forced to form, of giving up the dining system: for the evening is the only time when I can get an hour or two of uninterrupted quiet, and I cannot, like Burgh, extend my working hours at pleasure; expend a copious stream of midnight oil, and then be as fresh the next day as if nothing had happened." This resolution withdrew him in a measure from general society. More than once he mentions in his Journal "quiet as having had some good effect upon his heart, in enabling him a little to realize unseen things, and live more in the fear of God." "I have been more able to bridle my passions, and be more meek and gentle, and really full of love."

These impressions he was most solicitous to deepen, setting apart from time to time a day for abstinence, and meditation. "Saturday at Broomfield all day. I meant it to be a day devoted to God. The morning serious, by myself, though not so completely as I had wished. I had refused several friends, but Carlyle came suddenly with offer about Lord Elgin, and compelled to see him.

I have with some difficulty and management kept this day clear, to be set apart for humiliation and devotion, and such abstinence as my body will bear. I am now about to fall to self-examination, and confession, and humiliation; looking into myself; condemning myself before God, and imploring forgiveness for Christ's sake. Oh what a terrible array of sins do I behold when I look back!—early renunciation of God; then, many years entirely sinful; then, since the good providence of God drew me forth from this depth of iniquity in the autumn of 1785, how little have I improved and grown in grace! Let me now humble myself, chiefly for forgetfulness of God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and invisible things; for ingratitude to God, though loaded with mercies, recalled by sicknesses; . . . a thousand gracious providences! I go to prayer, humbly throwing myself on the promised mercies of God in Christ." "Though, I thank God, I am less sensual than I was, yet I find my heart cold and flat. To-day I received the sacrament, but how dead was I! O God, do Thou enlighten me. May I attain what is real in Christian experience, without running into a sect, or party set of opinions."

As the session advanced, engagements increased upon him. The Slave Trade Limitation Bill, which had passed the Commons on the second of May, was exposed to severe opposition in the upper House. He was continually occupied in providing the witnesses who were examined at the bar, and watching daily over the interests of the Bill. "To Grenville's about Slave Limitation Bill. Drew up petition to the Lords. Then to city to get Sierra Leone common seal." "House of Lords—Slave Bill." "Dawes and Macaulay dined with me. Then House of Lords—Slave Limitation evidence." "June 4th. Did not go to the birth-day, because not well, and also Slave Limitation Bill not popular at court. 5th. To Bishop of Durham's—Proclamation Society—read Report. House of Lords—Slave Bill."

Nothing could exceed the hearty earnestness with which Lord Grenville defended the Limitation Bill. Unsupported by the immediate adherents of the govern-

ment, he was left to withstand the repeated opposition of one member of the royal family, the commercial sagacity of Lord Liverpool, and the sturdy bluntness of Lord Thurlow; yet he was ready for every encounter, and maintained the conflict to the last. While this Bill was passing slowly through its different stages, Mr. Wilberforce was busy in the Commons with a measure prepared by Lord Belgrave and himself for suppressing Sunday newspapers. It was brought forward by Lord Belgrave upon the 27th of May; upon the 30th he successfully defended its enactments from the gibes of Mr. Sheridan; but "it was thrown out, June 11th, upon the second reading."

When the Bill was first designed, Mr. Pitt had promised Mr. Wilberforce his co-operation, but he was persuaded by Mr. Dundas to retract his pledge, that government might not be weakened by the loss of their unlawful succour; three out of the four Sunday newspapers supporting ministry. The measure, which had almost succeeded in the hands of independent men, would have been carried through triumphantly with Mr. Pitt's concurrence.

Parliament was prorogued upon the 12th of July, and Mr. Wilberforce retired to the comparative rest of Broomfield. "The recess," he says, "is beginning. Oh may I spend it well, and try more and more to devote my understanding, and heart, and all my faculties and powers, to the glory of God and Christ, being more and more weaned from vanity, and the love of this world's praise; yet more and more active, useful, indefatigable, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour. Oh for more gratitude and love. Heard to-day of a clergyman in the Isle of Wight, to whom my book was blessed. Oh praise, praise!" "We trust," he wrote to Mr. Newton who was leaving London for a while, "that you will not forget us in your rural rambles, for I doubt not you have many an oratory where the spreading foliage forms your canopy, and the natural sounds of the country join with you in a harmonious chorus of praise. Farewell, believe me ever affectionately yours."

“I could not be quiet yesterday,” he says the day after his birth-day, “though I got a contemplative walk, and even to-day I have less time than I could wish for looking back through the year, and awakening pious gratitude for the multiplied mercies of God. How often have I been sick and restored! How few, if any, days of suffering, either bodily or mental! My wife and child going on well, and a daughter born (July 21st) and doing well. Instances repeatedly heard of my book doing good. How gracious is God through Christ, to fill my cup with blessings, yet not to lessen or commute in what is still more important.”

The time which he now had at his disposal was eagerly employed in general reading; and the first week of the recess he was engaged in “letters, Robertson, Hume, Bible, &c. Yet he was too near London to obtain the rest from business and society which his delicate constitution needed; and repeated attacks of debility with fever compelled him to abandon his numerous engagements and seek an increase of vigour in the repose of the country, and ultimately forced him unwillingly to Bath. Here he spent four months in full enjoyment of domestic life; “with more quiet than ever since we married;” “getting through a good deal of work and reading.” He mixed but little in society; and only for some such specific purpose, as, “Oct. 8th—evening to H.’s at Mrs. H.’s desire—and hoped with some serious intention, but found none. He looked like a skeleton, yet gay and irreligious. I tried in vain to bring him to close quarters.”

Compelled for a season to give up public life, his Diary shows that he watched quietly from his retirement the course of its troubled waters. The frequent recurrence of a necessity for visiting Bath, together with a desire to be as quiet as possible while there, induced him to purchase a house there, to which he could retire.

“Wilberforce has bought a house near Bath,” says Henry Thornton, “which I a little lament, on the ground of the bad economy of it; for he is a man, who, were

he in Norway or Siberia, would find himself infested by company; since he would even produce a population, for the sake of his society, in the regions of the earth where it is the least. His heart also is so large that he never will be able to refrain from inviting people to his house. The quiet and solitude he looks to, will, I conceive, be impossible, and the Bath house will be troubled with exactly the same heap of fellows as the Battersea Rise one."

"I bless God," he tells Mr. Babington, "I certainly am much improved in health since our arrival here; and we are now on a plan of great quiet, regularity, and ease. This is using the means, and I desire to use them with cheerfulness and gratitude, leaving the event to God. We have been reading, and are still engaged on Gisborne's Moral Philosophy; and I am quite pleased I own to be able to say, that I think he has fully established his charge against Paley, and shown, with great effect, how little such a principle as general expediency is fit for man. If I mistake not there are some errors, and I doubt if he might not have made his charge against Paley still more manifestly valid. I am glad to find he is publishing again. While he goes on thus, I will allow him to live in a forest. I found that so much use was made of my going to Jay's that I have kept away."

The improvement of his health, and increase of his knowledge, were not the only ends which he sought to attain from this opportunity of leisure. He began and closed it with a day of more than ordinary devotion, and his weekly Diary marks the careful watch which he kept over his spirit. "For some time," he says, "I have resolved to allot this day to God; to spiritual exercises, especially in the way of humiliation. Fasting disqualifies me, God knoweth, for religious communion by disordering my body, so all I can do here is to be very temperate. I am now about, as it seems, . . . but let me remember how uncertain are all earthly prospects, . . . to spend near four months quietly, compared with my past life; wherein I shall be able to attend to my health, which, next to my soul's prosperity, it seems right to make my

chief object; and at the same time to study a good deal, and cultivate faculties, my neglect of which I number among my very criminal omissions. My objects therefore in this day of solemn supplication and (in my measure) fasting, are to beg God's guidance and blessing on my endeavours to spend the ensuing interval between this time and the meeting of parliament, piously, usefully, wisely, holily; first, however, humbly imploring pardon for all my past manifold offences, which to be particularly noted, and earnestly supplicating for grace to deliver me from the bondage of my corruptions. Then should come praise and thanksgiving, for the multiplied and prodigious mercies and blessings of God. Then resignation and self-dedication to God, desiring to submit myself to Him to do and suffer His will. Lastly, intercession.

“To prepare me for all the rest, let me open by earnestly praying to Him to bless me in my present attempts, to chase away from me all evil spirits, and all wandering thoughts and worldly interruptions, and to soften, enlighten, warm, enlarge, and sustain my heart, and my spirits also, that I may not weary in the work, but delight in it, and rejoice in the privilege of spending a day in communion with my God and Saviour.”

“Last year,” he says upon the 5th of January, 1800, “has been marked with mercies to me. . . . When I look back upon the time spent here, it seems but a week or two, instead of since the 28th of October; and when I look forward to London life, how do I recoil from it! I humbly hope that I am resolutely determined for Christ, and not solicitous about worldly greatness, wealth, reputation. . . . And now that I am on the point of returning to London, I would humbly pray for a large measure of grace to enable me to stand against the world, the flesh, and the devil. I would humbly resolve through the Spirit to live by faith, and to go on diligently, devoutly, humbly, endeavouring to glorify God and benefit my fellow-creatures.” In this spirit he returned to public life.

Before he returned to town he wrote to Lord Mun-caster.

" Jan. 7th.

" My dear Muncaster,

' Merry Christmases' and ' happy New Years,' and all the good wishes that ever were poured forth from the fullest reservoir of benevolence within the heart of man; or rather which, like some rivers, gushed out spontaneously with a force not to be resisted; all these have inundated me, and still I remain dry and silent. Oil we know resists water more than any thing, and if I were polished all over with the courtly varnish of St. James's, it might be accounted for; but that a man who has not shown his face at court for these eighteen months, should thus suffer his friends to have so slippery a hold of him, is wonderful indeed, and not to be accounted for on the ordinary principles of human depravity. Yet, though so long silent, I have not been unfeeling, and though I have kept my emotions to myself, I have been warmed with cordial good wishes for the happiness of you and yours. And now, though somewhat of the latest, accept my hearty prayers for your welfare here and hereafter.

The day of meeting approaches. You ask me what is then to come forward. I know not positively, though I suspect that the Income Tax Bill will be one of our first matters; and that the recent correspondence between the King and Buonaparte will find us some discussion. On this head I would be loath to form a hasty opinion. But I must say I was shocked at Lord Grenville's letter; for though our government might feel adverse to any measure which might appear to give the stamp of our authority to Buonaparte's new dignity, yet I must say that, unless they have some better reason than I fear they possess for believing that he is likely to be hurled from his throne, it seems a desperate game to play—to offend, and insult, and thereby irritate this vain man beyond the hope of forgiveness. Alas! alas! Muncaster, my heart aches. However there is a perfect home of love, and peace, and happiness, and we are invited to the enjoyment of it. Let every fresh proof therefore of the unsatisfactoriness of human things have

the effect of urging us forward towards this one true point of rest with renewed energy.

Believe me ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

He reached the neighbourhood of London upon the 23d of January, two days after parliament had met.

In the debate of February 13th, upon the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus, he supported ministers in a speech. Other business now multiplied upon him. "Much occupied," he says, Feb. 17th, "about the scarcity: urging government, which sadly torpid and tardy—Sheffield and Speaker our way. King but middling. Dutch expedition debate. Government made good their point. Canning clever . . . genius . . . but too often speaking, and too flippant and ambitious. All things rising in price. What shocking work, Grattan and Corry fighting during debate, and Cradock putting the sheriff into a ditch, who stopping them."

"I have been striving," he tells Lord Muncaster, "to prevail on my Yorkshire manufacturers to make herrings half cured a material article of their consumption. You cannot well imagine how much prejudice must be encountered in such an attempt." The prospect of increasing scarcity rendered this a gloomy season. "We know not what times are coming on, but if God be for us, who can be against us? Oh may I therefore lay up treasure in heaven, and wait upon the Lord." "Now that He seems about to try His people, what cause have I to pray, and gird up the loins of my mind! May I grow in grace, and become more 'meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.' How amiable is the simple, childlike spirit of Lady Catherine Graham!" "I have much before me, oh that God would enable me, and move the hearts of others: doubtless I might better hope it, if I were deeply earnest in prayer."

The plan which he was most anxious to persuade the minister to sanction, throughout this time of scarcity, would have proved no less politic than it was humane. Instead of meeting the present emergency, increased as

it was by the sudden change of prices, by the ordinary machinery of Poor's Rates, and so establishing a dangerous precedent, he would have made an extraordinary grant for cases of extreme distress: but he could not prevail. "I am much grieved," he says, "at Pitt's languor about the scarcity. They will do nothing effectual. Great sufferings of the West Riding people. I dread lest God have given our government over to a spirit of delusion—that they should think of attacking the Dissenters and Methodists: I fear the worst. I am very doubtful if we had not better have consented to treat. Chouans seem melted away—Russia gone—Austria too perhaps. Pitt I am convinced has no trust in me on any religious subject. To see this design drawn out in a bill! Never so much moved by any public measure."

This was the impression of a moment of despondency: for though one at least to whose opinion Mr. Pitt naturally deferred on questions which concerned religion, was continually on the watch to lessen Mr. Wilberforce's influence, it was still great, and in this very instance successful. "There are ideas," he tells Mr. Hey, "of materially abridging the privileges enjoyed under the Toleration Act. I am persuaded that restraints would quicken the zeal of the Methodists and dissenters to break through them, that prosecutions would be incessant, and that the prevalence of the persecuted opinions and the popularity of the persecuted teachers would be the sure result. I hope still that I may be able to prevent any strong measure from being brought forward. I am not at liberty to open to you." Two days afterward he writes, "All on the important subject on which I lately wrote to you remains in statu quo; except that the Methodists have got to the knowledge of some measures being in contemplation, through Michael Angelo Taylor at Durham. I have kept them quiet. I am more and more clear that if the measure does go forward, the effects will be most important."

"I told Mr. Pitt that I was ready to assent to one restriction, namely, that no one should exercise the office

of a teacher without having received a testimonial from the sect to which he should belong. This would put a stop to the practice which I am told prevails at Salisbury, and (as I heard from Mr. Jay the dissenting minister) at Bath, of a number of raw, ignorant lads going out on preaching parties every Sunday. I fear the Bishop of Lincoln (this is whispered to your private ear in the strictest confidence) will renew his attempt next year. If such a bill as was lately in contemplation should pass, it would be the most fatal blow both to church and state, which has been struck since the Restoration.

“ I believe I before told you, and I do not retract the sentiment on further reflection, that I place more dependence on Mr. Pitt’s moderation and fairness of mind, (though less in this instance than in any other,) than either on the House of Lords or Commons. In short, so utterly ignorant in all religious matters is the gay world, and the busy, and the high, and the political, that any measure government should propose would be easily carried. I find no success in my endeavours to convince my friends on the bench, of the expediency of facilitating the building of new churches with a right of patronage. More than once I have proposed in private a general law to that effect; but it would answer no good end to bring forward such a measure in the House of Commons, without having previously secured support for it.”

Among his private papers, there appears a full statement of the great service to religious peace which he rendered on this occasion. “ A member of parliament, who on his accession to a large fortune, by his father’s death, discontinued the practice of the legal profession, but who acted as a magistrate with a considerable sense of his own importance, got into a quarrel with a person who came to be licensed as a dissenting teacher. Finding the applicant very ignorant, and somewhat forward, he at first resisted the man’s claim, but discovering that the law clearly entitled him to a license on paying the specified fee of 1s. or 6*d.* he warmly exclaimed, that if such was the law then, it should not so continue. Ac-

cordingly he considered how best to introduce some discretionary power to magistrates, in the granting or withholding of dissenting ministers' licenses. His purpose reached the ears of the Methodists and Dissenters of the city which he represented in parliament, and he soon found that if he should persist in his endeavour, it would be at the expense of his seat. His intention had perhaps been rather the effervescence of the moment, than the deliberate result of that consideration which so serious a subject might well require. He set himself therefore to devise how best to get out of the difficulty, and through what medium I never heard, he actually prevailed on Mr. Pitt's government, indeed on Mr. Pitt himself, to adopt his measure. The precise nature of the regulations I cannot recollect with certainty, but I am positively sure, that they tended materially to restrict the freedom hitherto enjoyed by Protestant Dissenters, and a fine for the first offence, and imprisonment for the second, were the sanctions by which they were to be enforced. The intelligence that some such measure was about to be proposed to parliament, reached the ears of some of the dissenting ministers, from one of whom I believe it was that I received the first intimation of the design.

"I lost no time in conferring with Mr. Pitt on the subject, but he had been strongly biased in favour of the measure by Bishop Prettyman, on whom I urged in vain the serious consequences that must infallibly ensue. I well remember stating to him my firm persuasion, that within a few weeks after the passing of the intended law, several of the dissenting ministers throughout the kingdom, most distinguished for talents and popularity, would be in prison; and I urged on him, that even supposing them not be actuated by a sense of duty, for which I myself gave them credit, or to be cheered by the idea of suffering for righteousness' sake, they would be more than compensated for all the evils of imprisonment by their augmented popularity. The bishop, however, would not assent to my view of the case, and finding Mr. Pitt intended to bring the measure forward, I begged I might

have a full confidential discussion of the subject. Accordingly we spent some hours together at a tête-à-tête supper, and I confess I never till then knew how deep a prejudice his mind had conceived against the class of clergy to whom he knew me to be attached.

“It was in vain that I mentioned to him Mr. Robinson of Leicester, Mr. Richardson of York, Mr. Milner of Hull, Mr. Atkinson of Leeds, and others of similar principles: his language was such as to imply that he thought ill of their moral character, and it clearly appeared that the prejudice arose out of the confidence he reposed in the Bishop of Lincoln. I remember proposing to him, to employ any friend whose mind should not already have received a bias on either side, to visit the several places I had mentioned, to inquire into their characters, and to ascertain the principles and conduct of their adherents, adding my confident persuasion that both their moral and political principles would be found favourable to the peace and good order of society; indeed I went further, and alleged that they were in general friendly to his administration, from believing these to be promoted by its continuance. All, however, was of no avail, and all I could obtain from Mr. Pitt was an assurance that the measure should not be actually introduced without his giving me another opportunity of talking the matter over with him. Happily that opportunity never occurred; of course I was in no hurry to press for it; and the attempt never was resumed; but some years after, when Lord Sidmouth’s memorable bill was in progress, which excited such an immense ferment and produced a vast number of petitions by which it was defeated in the House of Lords, Lord Redesdale (formerly Sir John Mitford) stated, that he well remembered that during Mr. Pitt’s administration a stronger than the bill then in progress had been in contemplation, and that he did not know why it had been dropped. I must say considering every thing I have always been extremely thankful for any share I had in preventing the introduction of this scheme.”

He was much “hurt,” he tells Mrs. Hannah More this

session, at the defeat of another measure bearing upon the moral interests of the people. "Sir William Pulteney, who brought forward the bill to suppress bull-baiting at the instance of some people in the country, (I declined because I am a common hack in such services, but I promised to move it if nobody else would,) argued it like a parish officer, and never once mentioned the cruelty. No summonses for attendance were sent about as is usual. In consequence not one, Thornton, nor many others, were present, any more than myself. I had received from some county magistrates an account of barbarities practised in this generous pastime of Windham's, which would be surpassed only by the tortures of an Indian warrior. A Surrey magistrate told a friend of mine yesterday, that some people met for a boxing match, and the magistrates proceeding to separate them, they threw their hats into the air, and declaring Mr. Windham had defended boxing in parliament, called out, 'Windham and Liberty.' A strange and novel association, by the way! Canning, to do him justice, was ashamed of himself, and told me when I showed him the account of cruelties, (which Windham read coldly,) that he had no idea of the real nature of the practice he had been defending. Alas! alas! we bear about us multiplied plague spots, sure indications of a falling state."

"A letter from Rossie Castle," he writes at the same time to Mr. Ross, "finding me stewing in this crowded and dusty city in the middle of a delightful summer day, excites a natural longing for lakes, and mountains, and shady retreats, and other such luxuries of nature. But we have all our several posts, and, whether in town or country, 'the time is short,' and we have much to do in it."

Summer was now far advanced, but the House was still sitting, and this long continuance of business greatly exhausted his strength. "I had serious thoughts," he says, July 23d, "of attending the assizes this summer, but parliamentary business is not yet quite at an end, and we have sat so late that I shall have but a short time for 'pruning my feathers and letting grow my wings.' In

truth, both body and mind with me, and understanding too, call for a little quiet after the incessant turmoil and drudgery in which they have been engaged for six or seven months." "I feel myself a good deal shattered, and reminded of the necessity of more regularity and care than I have of late observed." "I pant for a little quiet, and think I feel a more than ordinary languor permanently; however the promises of the gospel fail not, yet whenever I look back upon the little I have hitherto done in life, I long to be more executive in what remains." Upon the 22d of August he was on his road into the country.

"Leatherhead, Aug. 22.

"My dear Muncaster,

My life has been one continual worry for some time past, and I quite pant for a little rest. I have been paying and receiving a few visits round the capital, though still a bankrupt in civilities; and we are now on our way to Bognor Rocks, that my wife and the children may breathe sea air, after repeated illnesses. In the beginning of October we design to move to Bath. A box full of unanswered letters accompanies me, but before I enter on the task of replying to them, I will break the long silence I have observed to you."

Soon after his arrival he wrote to Hannah More.

"Bognor, Aug. 29.

"My dear Friend,

I am in a course of answering a full box of letters, which have long reproached me for my negligence, but let me steal for a while from them, and their comparatively uninteresting subjects, and refresh myself by a few minutes' intercourse with you. Indeed I am ashamed of not having sooner replied to your last very interesting report. But first a few words of my own proceedings.

We spent three or four days with Lady Waldegrave, thence we came back to Broomfield to receive a visit or

two, and at length, with no small difficulty, we go off with my budget at my back, and by slow but laborious journeys arrived at this quiet place on Saturday last. Henry joined us on Wednesday, and Mrs. Thornton and Mimy yesterday. So here we are reading and discussing, and through the mercy and overflowing goodness of God, enjoying ourselves not a little. We seem only too happy. It really shocks me to think that the flames of war still rage, and that there are multitudes who do not get off for an additional ten per cent. paid to the tax-gatherer, but who are subject to all its alarms, and dangers, and miseries. Oh be thankful that a gracious Providence has cast your part in pursuits so different. You are bold people to be thus flying at new game. Yet I give you so much credit for discretion, as to believe you would not be too adventurous, and without spirit nothing is to be done. I am really much obliged to you for your kind frankness in calling on me for my debt; I will send you £50 in a day or two, indeed I have taken measures for it immediately.

Poor Mrs. Montagu is gone. It is an awful migration! Our friends were indefatigably assiduous in their care of her. Our whole house joins in every kind remembrance to you, Lieutenant-General Patty, and the whole family. May God bless you, guide you, and keep you. It is the cordial wish and frequent prayer of your
Affectionate and sincere friend,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"What blessings," he says to Mr. Stephen, "do we enjoy in this happy country! I am reading ancient history, and the pictures it exhibits of the vices and miseries of man, fill me with mixed emotions of indignation, horror, and gratitude; and when I look on the water, and consider that the sea only is interposed between me and France . . ! But I am pressed for time, and no leisure for lucubrations."

"Since we have been here," Mr. Henry Thornton tells Mrs. H. More, "we have been chiefly reading history, and talking with Wilberforce over many points, left

short through the hurry of our London life." This rest in the bosom of his family and with the society of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Thornton, was most refreshing to his spirit. "We are all," he says, Sept. 11th, "I thank God, pretty well, and living more quietly than common, to my no small satisfaction." But this repose was not to last long. "Perhaps," wrote Dr. Milner, (Sept. 19th,) "these wonderful smiles are for some future trial: continue to watch." This very letter found him in the deepest anxiety, which he thus imparted to Hannah More.

"Bognor, Sept. 27.

"My dear Friend,

I am unwilling you should learn from any other pen, that it has pleased God to visit my dearest Mrs. Wilberforce with a very dangerous fever. I am told the final issue is not likely to be very speedy, but that from the violence of the outset, I have every reason for apprehension, though not for despair. But oh, my dear friend, what an unspeakable blessing to be able humbly to hope that to my poor wife, death would be a translation from a world of sin and sorrow, to a region of perfect holiness and never-ending happiness! How soothing also to reflect that her sufferings are not only allotted but even measured out by a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness, who loves her, I trust! ay, better than a dear child is loved by an earthly parent. I am sure you will all feel for me, and pray for me, and for my poor dear sufferer.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Thornton are all kindness and consideration for us. I am not sufficiently used to sick-beds, and it is extremely affecting to me to hear her wildness and delirious distresses, and sometimes fancies, mixed with her usual kind looks and gentle acquiescence. May we all be ready, and at length all meet in glory; meanwhile, watch and pray, be sober, be vigilant; strive to enter in, and assuredly we shall not be shut out. I had used to say such words as these, not I hope wholly without meaning; but how much more forcibly are they impressed on the mind by the near view of death to

which I am brought! God bless you all. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all.

Yours always,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"You will, I am sure," he tells another friend three days later, "hear with no little emotion, that it has pleased God to visit my dearest wife with a very dangerous fever. I had, I own, nearly dismissed all hope. But to-day matters wear a more favourable aspect, though Dr. Fraser, who is with us, (having most kindly hurried down on my first imperfect statement, which conveyed to his discernment the idea of no time being to be lost,) tells us not to be elated, but still to be prepared for the worst. What an unspeakable consolation and support it is in such a moment to entertain full confidence that my dearest wife has made her peace with God, and is not unprepared for the awful summons! I thank God, I am enabled to submit to His chastisement (too much, alas! deserved) without murmuring, and I humbly hope with resignation, I would say cheerfulness and gratitude, to His holy will. He best knows what is good for us; and if our sufferings here serve in any degree, by rousing us from sloth, and urging us to cleave to Him more closely, to increase the happiness of eternity, well may we exclaim in the triumphant language of the apostle, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

"But I must stop. I am sure you will feel for us. The Dean and the Stephens are come, and the Henry Thorntons, who were with us, are all kindness and assiduity. What a blessing to have such friends! Kindest remembrances. Under every circumstance I am yours affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. My dear wife has been delirious ever since we knew she was seized. How little could we have attended to her spiritual state if it had been before ne-

glected, and we had wished to prepare for death! What a practical lesson to us all!"

"Wilberforce tells me," wrote his friend Henry Thornton to Hannah More, "that he has written to you a few lines on this distressing subject of Mrs. Wilberforce's illness. Poor fellow! he cleaves now to his old friends, and he finds a relief in employing a little time in writing to them, which is what we encourage, and especially as the sick-room is not the place either for him or for her. He seems more softened and melted than terrified or agonized, and shows the truly Christian character under this very severe and trying dispensation."

The issue of the fever was long doubtful, nor was it before the 14th of October, that he was able to thank God for any decided improvement. The tone of his own feelings throughout this painful time, shows the height to which he had attained in the school of Christ. Truly he had learned to take patiently the loving corrections of his heavenly Father. "Mr. Wilberforce," writes Mrs. Henry Thornton, "has behaved *greatly*, if one may so say of a Christian; he is now very calm, and waiting the event with much submission and quietness." "My mind, I thank God, is very composed. O Lord, take not Thy Holy Spirit from me: take away the heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh; that under Thy chastisements, I may lift up to Thee a humble, reverential, and even thankful eye, and desire that thy correction may work its due effect, and keep me closer to Thee for strength, and light and warmth, and all things. Much affected and struck to-day in the address, Rev. iii. to the Laodicean lukewarm church, (too much my own condition,) with the words of kindness at the close—'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent.'" "I am much struck," he writes to a friend, with whom he was soon after called to sympathize, "by this fresh visitation. Alas! we go on commonly in a course of too uniform and uninterrupted comfort. Read St. Paul's list of sufferings. Yet let us praise

God, and extract good from present evil, and turn temporary suffering into everlasting happiness."

Carefully did he scrutinize his own spirit when the hand of God was taken from him, lest he should lose any of the blessing of affliction. "I have heard," he writes to Mr. Hey, "of all your affectionate sympathy with me in my late heavy trial. God has in his chastisement remembered mercy; and my beloved wife is spared to me, and is gradually recovering her health and strength. May I improve from the discipline through which I have gone; but it is truly melancholy and humiliating to observe, how the strong feelings of the mind in the moments of suffering, decay and grow cold after it is over. This hardness of heart towards God, in spite of the uniform and unvarying dictates of the judgment, is a sad proof of corruption."

His stay at Bognor was not much prolonged. A scanty harvest had increased the general discontent; and parliament was summoned to meet for the despatch of business on the 11th of November; "ministry," he says, "being, I fear, influenced not merely by the scarcity, but by a warlike disposition. My heart is sick at so much misery and sin, and when I consider what chastisement we deserve at God's hands on the one side, and contemplate the storms I see brewing on the other, I begin to tremble."

He was soon afterwards in London, earnestly endeavouring both in private and in the House of Commons to obtain some effectual relief for the sufferings of the working classes. "I have not," he tells Lord Muncaster, "not for one morning omitted to take my place at the committee, and that cuts such a solid lump out of the day as to leave the rest composed but of fragments."

"I have been using my utmost endeavours to impress the minds of ministers, and of my brother members, with a sense of the necessity of taking effectual steps for the relief of the lower orders; and though thinking their measures too weak, I am by far the most urgent in pressing forward those very weaker measures, to the execution of which they proceed languidly and lukewarmly.

It is really beyond expression vexatious to experience such indifference. Though the House of Lords concurred with us on Friday, Nov. 28th, in addressing the King to issue the proclamation, it was not issued until Thursday last; and nothing is yet done in consequence of it, though I have been daily pressing the extreme urgency of our communicating the disposition to economize, like an electric shock, by the promptitude and force of our proceedings." "All this wears an aspect of exhibiting a show to the country. But we should either do less or do better. Alas, my friend, Providence has not done with us I fear! Not a word or a thought about God. We seem in general to recognise Him as little in his chastisements as in His mercies. How little does all seem, compared with His favour! May you and I, my dear friend, possess a share of it."

The year closed upon him in these employments; and early in the following spring he tells Mrs. Hannah More that he still has on him "the heavy burthen of obtaining relief for our starving manufacturers in the West Riding of Yorkshire. The callousness, the narrow and foolish wisdom of servilely acquiescing in Adam Smith's general principles, without allowance for a thousand circumstances which take the case out of the province of that very general principle to which they profess allegiance, is producing effects as mischievous as the most determined and studied cruelty. This is rather too strong, but not much. However, I must leave this topic or I shall never have done. I send you half a bank note for £50. I beg you, besides my ordinary debt, to regard me as your debtor for any sum you may call for, on account of the peculiar distress of the present times. I thank God that I am able, without inconvenience, to make an extraordinary exertion; and as to keeping strictly within one's income at such a season as this, it is as unreasonable (not to say any thing of its wickedness) as it would be for a man to keep determinately to his ordinary rate of walking, when a hungry lioness was at his heels; but we feel for our own safety more than for others' sufferings.

“Mrs. Wilberforce, thank God, regains strength gradually. You hold out better than I expected; but the tenement gives indications (mine also) that it will ere long fall to pieces, and enforces on the spirit within, the duty of providing a surer and better habitation. Farewell, I am too much indulging my disposition to chat with you. Kindest remembrances.

Ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.”

CHAPTER XIII.

Freedom from Ambition—Progress of Abolition—Re-elected Member for Yorkshire—Newgate.

THE opening of the nineteenth century was dark and threatening. “What tempests,” says the Journal of January, 1801, “rage around, and how are we urged to seek for that peaceful haven, which alone can insure real security and happiness!” He writes

TO LORD MUNCASTER.

“Near London, Feb. 7, 1801.

“My dear Muncaster,

I have strange tidings to communicate. The King and his Cabinet have quarrelled concerning the emancipation (as it is called) of the Irish Roman Catholics,—and Pitt, Dundas, Lord Grenville, Windham, and probably Lord Spencer also, and Lord Camden, are to go out of office.

The King and Pitt part on affectionate terms. The King saying, that it is a struggle between duty and affection, in which duty carries it. I am vexed that some of the Cabinet whom I least *affect* are to continue.’

It was well understood that more pacific councils

were to be expected from the new administration, and many of his friends hoped therefore that Mr. Wilberforce would be included in its number. He himself just felt the influence of the eddy which was sweeping by him. "I am too much for a Christian, yet not greatly, intruded on by earthly things, in consequence of these late political changes, and all the considerations which they call forth. I was for a little intoxicated, and had risings of ambition. Blessed be God for this day of rest and religious occupation, wherein earthly things assume their true size and comparative insignificance; ambition is stunted, and I hope my affections in some degree rise to things above."* His views upon the Slave Trade differed too decidedly from those of the new Cabinet to allow him to take office with them, and he continued therefore with unbroken cheerfulness his independent labours. His great present object was to relieve that distress, which the failure of the harvest and the continuance of the war, had produced in the manufacturing districts. "Indifferent health alone prevented" him "from going down into the West Riding to ascertain facts" for himself; and his private aid was given so liberally, that he speaks of having "spent this year almost £3000 more than his income;"† and as "thinking in consequence of giving up his villa for a few seasons." "I should thus save £400 or £500 per annum, which I could give to the poor. Yet to give up the means of receiving friends there, where by attending family prayers, and in other ways, an impression may be made upon them, seems a great concession. And with Broomfield I can by management give away at least one-fourth of my income. O Lord, guide me right. But there or wherever else I am, O Lord, do Thou grant me Thy Holy Spirit to fill me with every Christian grace; love, joy, peace, long-suffering."

The summer was occupied with attendance on parlia-

* Journal, Sunday, Feb. 8.

† The sum of 3173*l.* is accounted for as bestowed during this year in charity.

ment, where he pressed earnestly and perseveringly on the government the duty of making some effort for the relief of the poor, who, especially in the manufacturing districts, were suffering from the high price of corn.

“Our dear and benevolent friend,” writes Dr. Milner from Palace Yard, “absolutely exhausts his strength on this subject. He is the most feeling soul I ever knew; and also the most patient and indefatigable in endeavouring to lessen the miseries of the people: and how he does get misrepresented and abused! But you may kick him as long and as much as you please; if he could but fill the bellies of the poor, he would willingly submit to it all.”

“About ten days ago,” he writes to Mr. Bankes in September, “I brought Mrs. Wilberforce and my three children to these my old bachelor quarters in Needwood forest; Gisborne my host. This you may remember is the forest which we devoted to the axe and the ploughshare a few months ago. I confess I have been not a little provoked to see such extents of miserable hopeless wastes suffered to continue in their present state of unprofitable nakedness, whilst these beautiful retreats are sacrificed. However, if wheat be pulled down one shilling a quarter, it will be a reimbursement.”

He was still at Mr. Gisborne’s when he “heard” upon the 2d of October, “from Pitt and Addington, that Lord Hawkesbury and Mr. Otto had signed preliminaries of peace the evening before.”

He soon after went to Bath, from which place he wrote—

“My dear Gisborne,

* * * * * This is a sad place for visiters; and as I cannot think it right to say, through my servant, ‘not at home,’* and am not allowed

* He was brought to this conviction by the bluntness of a faithful north-country servant, to whom he had carefully, and as he believed successfully, explained the true meaning of this conventional refusal. A tedious visiter had been suffered to intrude upon his busiest hours, and when he asked, “Why did you show him in? why did you not say that

to tell people so myself, I may be interrupted before I have done writing the letter I have promised you. Before I enter on my task let me only assure you, as the best thanks I can offer for your hospitality, that I do not know when we have spent our time so happily as under your roof. I could enlarge, but time must be economized. Let us in such a world as this maintain between our families a close alliance, that by mutual aid and countenance we and they may the better, through God's help, stem the torrent in some degree, or at least (a rap at the door) stand our own ground. Kindest remembrances. God bless you.

Ever affectionately yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

"My days," he complains, "at this place roll rapidly away, and in a most unprofitable and laborious succession of frivolities. Yet I know not how this could be avoided. I am returning soon to the bustle of London and political life. May God protect me by His grace, and enable me to stand the fiery trial. I shall if I honestly wait on Him." On the 27th he left Bath, "with a heart heavy from the prospect of returning soon to parliament; from the fear of the war's going on; from the bustle, turmoil, and contention of my parliamentary life."

His journal at this time is filled with notices of various events as they transpired, both at home and abroad, mingled with expressions of humiliation for national sins, and gratitude for deliverances; and we find him in frequent conference with the ministry upon the subject of the African Slave Trade, and nothing prevented his bringing it forward but the certainty of its failure in the House of Commons. As the session advanced, the popularity of the peace gave firmness to the

"I was not at home?" the answer he received convinced him that he could not lawfully employ this convenient phrase. "So I did, sir," was the reply, "but he looked so hard at me, as much as to say, I know that you are telling a lie, that I was ashamed to stand to it, so I e'en let him in."

new administration, which was also supported most magnanimously by Mr. Pitt, with all his influence. "Opposition," he tells Lord Muncaster, "are laying aside their unreasonable prejudices against Addington. I should not wonder if several of them could so far conquer their repugnance as to accept office under him. You know I was always sanguine as to this administration, knowing Pitt might be depended on. He has really behaved with a magnanimity unparalleled in a politician; new instances of it are daily occurring." "I do not wonder if it be misunderstood," is the remark in one of his memoranda; "this may be owing not merely to prejudice, but to natural incapacity. Little minds cannot receive the idea; it is too grand for their comprehension. But to any one who fairly considers it in all its bearings, and who estimates its full worth, it will appear one of the noblest instances of true magnanimity that was ever exhibited to the admiration and imitation of mankind."

The estimate he here forms of Mr. Pitt may be transferred not unaptly to himself. It is a rare and most instructive sight which his private Journals of this date exhibit. There have been many whom the love of ease has shielded from every temptation of ambition; and not a few in whom waywardness of temper has nourished a fierce and untractable independence; but it has seldom happened that one who was possessed of every quality of mind and fortune which could most encourage and reward ambition, has been seen to put away soberly and quietly its utmost offers. This he now did. Those who saw only the result, would never have suspected that his easy course was the result of any struggle—yet so it was: his freedom from ambition was no natural immunity, but a victory of Christian principle. "I have of late," he says, "perceived on looking inwards, the workings of ambition, of love of this world, its honours, riches, estimation, and even of worldly desires for my family, of which before I do not recollect that I was conscious. The settled judgment of my mind I would humbly hope is right. I trust that I am comparatively indifferent in my cool estimate of things to the goods of this life: but,

alas! I become soiled and worldly-minded." "That our feelings do not correspond with our judgments, is one of the strongest proofs of our depravity and of the double man within us. I believe that retired, domestic life is by far the most happy for me, blessed as I am with affluence, &c. Yet when I see those who were my equals or inferiors, rising above me into stations of wealth, rank, &c. I find myself tempted to desire their stations, which yet I *know* would not increase my happiness, or even be more truly honourable. I speak not of the desire of an increased power of usefulness. That is another and a right feeling. Mine, against which, however, in its risings I struggle, and which I strive to suppress, is a sadly depraved appetite, rooted in an inordinate love of this world. Oh may the compunction I now feel be the blessed operation of the Holy Spirit.

"I suspect I have been allotting habitually too little time to religious exercises, as private devotion, religious meditation, Scripture reading, &c. Hence I am lean, and cold, and hard. God, perhaps, would prosper me more in spiritual things if I were to be more diligent in using the means of grace. And though in the main I have thought myself pursuing the course chalked out for me by Providence, and with a diligence prompted and enjoined by the injunctions of Scripture, yet I suspect that I had better allot more time, say two hours or an hour and a half, to religious exercises daily, (besides Sundays,) and try whether by so doing I cannot preserve a frame of spirit more habitually devotional, a more lively sense of unseen things, a warmer love of God, and a greater degree of hunger and thirst after righteousness, a heart less prone to be soiled with worldly cares, designs, passions and apprehensions, and a real, undissembled longing for heaven, its pleasures, and its purity.

"I know that all external means are nothing without the quickening Spirit; but the Scripture enjoins constant prayer, and the writings and example of all good men suggest and enforce the necessity of a considerable proportion of meditation and other religious exercises, for

maintaining the spiritual life vigorous and flourishing. Let me therefore make the effort in humble reliance on Divine grace. God, if he will, can turn the hearts of men, and give me favourable opportunities, and enable me to use them, and more than compensate for all the hours taken from study, business, or civility, and devoted to Him. O God, give me a single heart and a single eye, fixed on Thy favours, and resolutely determined to live to Thy glory, careless whether I succeed or not in worldly concerns, leaving all my human interests and objects to Thee, beseeching Thee to enable me to set my affections on things above; and walking by faith, to wait on Christ, and live on him day by day here, till at length, through His infinite and wholly unmerited mercy, I am taken to dwell with him hereafter in everlasting happiness and glory."

He had confined himself in the preceding session to a declaration of his unaltered feelings on the subject of the Abolition of the Slave Trade without bringing on his usual motion. The prospect of peace had suggested to him a "grand Abolition plan," and he was "trying at a general convention." This scheme would have been impeded by a fresh defeat, upon which he could not but calculate in the existing House of Commons. He thought it better therefore for his cause to let the session pass in silence, and exert his chief strength in private with the government. To this attempt he was now urged afresh. He learned from Otto, the French minister, "that if our government would propose to negotiate for the Abolition, theirs would probably consent to it."

Under these circumstances he was "busy writing Addington a long letter on negotiation for general Abolition," begging him to allot to it a quiet half hour as soon as he was able.

He enters in his Diary "If Mr. Pitt had been minister when this peace was negotiated, the question would have come into discussion;" but Lord Hawkesbury and Mr. Addington could not be persuaded. "At last I wrote to both of them very serious letters, telling them I so did to leave it with them solemnly."

Yet, though unsuccessful, he was not disheartened. Within a fortnight he was again in correspondence with Mr. Addington. Ever since our occupation of Trinidad and the Carib lands in the Island of St. Vincent, speculation had been clamorous for their cultivation. Twice already he had defeated these attempts; and greatly was he now alarmed at hearing that the commission for their sale was making out.

“I am grieved,” he says, “at Addington’s not at once recoiling from the idea of settling Trinidad with imported slaves, of which it would take a million. Pitt has had a long conversation with Addington, and says it was satisfactory.”

He was not sufficiently satisfied with the conduct of the government to leave the matter absolutely to them. “The Slave Trade,” he tells Lord Muncaster, “will, in some shape or other, be one of the first questions brought before parliament. Perhaps Canning will bring forward a motion for preventing the importation of slaves for clearing new lands. I am happy to tell you that I think Pitt remains firm. Oh what an eternal blot would it be on the character of parliament, if, after having resolved by an immense majority that the Slave Trade should be gradually abolished, we should enter on the cultivation of a new settlement, the complete peopling of which with negro slaves, reckoning the number always lost in opening uncleared lands, would take near a million of human beings!”

His Diary proves him to have been much occupied with various schemes of benevolence, both in parliament and in private life. “The Slave Trade,” “Society for bettering Condition of the Poor,” “Proclamation Society,” “Sierra Leone,” “Condition of Children in Cotton Mills,” “Sunday Bill,” “Oath Bill,” are all frequently noticed as drawing his attention both in the House and in his conversation with his friends.

The adverse temper of the existing House of Commons on the subject of Abolition had been shown too plainly to be doubted. Mr. Addington had coldly and reluctantly engaged to pause before he opened St. Vincent’s

and Trinidad for the reception of another million of Africans; whilst the fierce conflicts of St. Domingo, and the insurrections of Dominica and Tobago, had brought general reproach upon the negro name. To all this was added the miserable state of Sierra Leone, which having struggled through external difficulties was now threatened with destruction by the rebellious spirit of the Nova Scotia negroes. Yet upon the whole he resolved to bring his motion forward, and introduced it upon the 3d of June, though "not able to get it on till too late, when the House was almost empty." But a dissolution was too near to allow him to bring his motion to any practical conclusion, and upon the 14th he felt "compelled to give it up for this year."

Parliament was prorogued upon the 28th of June, and dissolved upon the 29th. Upon the 30th, he was "off before nine from Broomfield," on his journey to the north. The "Beverley, Hull, and York elections" were already "raging;" but "no opposition" was "talked of for the county." Early in the spring there had been some rumours of a contest, but they had "now vanished." He had of necessity, been more than ever absent from the county since his last election; and this had given rise to a report, that he intended to retire from its representation. "I have been strongly urged," he told Mr. Hey, "to advertise my intention of offering my services in the ensuing general election. But I pause. Nor do I think it probable, unless something happens in the interval, that the peace of the county will be disturbed. I fear my pride would be wounded were I to be turned out; but after the risings of this bad passion should have been conquered, I own I should rejoice in my liberty. However, I would leave my continuance in public life to Providence, and not retire till its signal be given for my release."

"I can scarcely enough impress you with a sense of the degree in which I shrink from the very idea of a parliamentary struggle. Whether it be the effect of my being so much older, or from some other cause, I quite abhor the prospect of a general election; and to be

active in preserving my situation seems like labouring to be permitted to tug at the oar like a galley-slave with fetters on my legs and the lash at my back. I pant for quiet and retirement; and what is more, I entertain serious doubt whether I should not act wisely in retiring from my public station, whether I should not be able to promote the glory of God and the good of my fellow-creatures more in private. My pen might then be employed regularly and assiduously. But I am deterred from yielding to the impulse I feel thus to secede, by the fear of carving for myself."

He reached the West Riding upon the first of July, and after a hasty canvass, was at York upon the "election day. July 12th. Got up earlyish to think of speech. To tavern by ten, and mounted at half-past ten. I pleased people in speaking, and did well. Crowded hall, and castle yard immensely so." "It was, indeed," says a by-stander, "an august and interesting scene; not one hand was lifted up against him, and the surrounding countenances were expressive of the greatest delight and esteem towards him."

Immediately on his election he returned to the labours of that honourable post which he had occupied for eighteen years. "The event," writes his cousin, Lord Carrington, (in a letter docketted, "kind condolence on my re-election,") "which has given your other friends so much pleasure, has filled me with sentiments of an opposite nature. No constitution can stand, during the ordinary period of active life, such exertions as yours have been in the service of the county of York. It would have been better if, like Windham, but without his struggle and defeat, you had taken refuge in a close borough, the means of which I should have been proud to have afforded you."

A period of unusual leisure seemed now before him, and he entered on it with a degree of deep and serious reflection, for which few find opportunity in the middle of a busy life. He took a calm and thoughtful estimate of his situation and his faculties, inquiring where they were most capable of employment and improvement.

The result of these reflections in "the reed house," (a favourite arbour in his garden,) he "put down on paper, that they might not be the fugitive thoughts of the moment, but the deliberate conclusions of his judgment recorded for his own use; or possibly, that my dear wife, for the benefit of my children, may know the considerations by which I am guided in the direction of my labours and the employment of my time."

"When I look into my own mind, I find it a perfect chaos, wherein the little knowledge which I do possess is but confusedly and darkly visible; and where, from the want of classification and recapitulation, and from having satisfied myself with a superficial acquaintance with things, and having propositions brought into and left in my mind, without settling the result, discriminating the true from the false, the certain from the uncertain—I am in truth, shamefully ignorant of many subjects which I seem to know, and should be thoroughly acquainted with. What has brought me into this state is a treacherous memory, and my having from nature a quick perception and lively imagination, with an understanding (either naturally or from bad habits) defective in the power of steadily contemplating many objects without confusion. This is really weakness of intellect, but it might have been lessened by early and habitual efforts. The mathematics and algebra would here have been eminently useful to me; method too might have been highly beneficial in keeping me from a habit of half attention.—Alas, these remedies were neglected, and from 17 to 21, when I ought to have been under that strict and wholesome regimen which the peculiar diseases of my intellectual powers seemed to require, I was strengthening these natural maladies: and this till *æt.* 26. And though since that time I have been endeavouring to employ my talents, in the largest sense, to the glory of God, and the good of man; yet, alas, how ineffectually! and my peculiar situation, and the great variety of things and persons with which it renders me conversant, has kept me sadly back.

"I am tempted to think that it is now too late to mend

my plan practically, with any effect; yet as it has pleased God to call me again to parliament, and as the greater my natural infirmities the more every aid is wanted, I am resolved to enter on a course of more systematic retention of the little I know or can acquire, and I mean to note down roughly the scheme of study it will be best for me to pursue. I would not overrate knowledge, or proficiency in any human pursuits or acquirements; but inasmuch as God works by human means, it seems to be our duty to labour diligently in the pursuit of those qualifications, which appear to be the instruments of usefulness for our particular station and occupation in life. Eloquence in its right sense is of great effect in every free community; and as it has pleased God to endow me with a certain natural turn for public speaking, and by His providence to place me in a situation in which there is room for the use of that talent, it seems to be my duty to improve that natural faculty, and cultivate that true eloquence which alone is suitable to the character of a follower of the Saviour, who was full of love, truth, and lowliness. Besides, the very basis of eloquence, in the sense in which I use it, is wisdom and knowledge, a thorough acquaintance with one's subject, the sure possession of it, and power of promptly calling up and using it. But let me ever remember here what cause there is for continual watchfulness and godly jealousy, lest the pursuit should lead to an inordinate love of worldly estimation, to vanity, and pride; and if to them, in its consequence to the malignant passions."

The recurrence of his birth-day (æ. 43) led him again a few days later to review his situation and employment. He had of late found more time than usual for general reading. To this he was so much devoted, that he found it, he has often said, likely to encroach more than any press of business upon the hours allotted to devotion. "I find books," he says, "alienate my heart from God as much as any thing. I have been framing a plan of study for myself, but let me remember that one thing is needful, that if my heart cannot be kept in a spiritual state without so much prayer, meditation, Scripture reading, &c. as

are incompatible with study and business, I must *seek first* the righteousness of God. Yet, O Lord, when I think how little I have done, I am ashamed and confounded, and I would fain honour God more than I have yet done."

Again he says, "Is it that my devotions are too much hurried, that I do not read Scripture enough, or how is it, that I leave with reluctance the mere chit-chat of Boswell's Johnson, for what ought to be the grateful offices of prayer and praise? Yet if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. I must then grow in grace. I must love God more. I must feel the power of Divine things more. Whether I am more or less learned signifies not. Whether even I execute the work which I deem useful is comparatively unimportant. But beware, O my soul, of lukewarmness.—I feel it difficult to adjust the due degree of time to be allotted to prayer, Scripture reading, and other religious exercises. God loves mercy better than sacrifice, and there is a danger of a superstitious spirit, of being led to depend on the forms of religion. Yet the experience and example of good men seems a fair guide. At all events, however, some way or other, my affections must be set on things above. God is willing to supply our needs. They who wait on Him shall renew their strength. I humbly trust in his promises."

"I have lately been led to think of that part of my life wherein I lived without God in the world, wasting and even abusing all the faculties He has given me for His glory. Surely when I think of the way in which I went on for many years, from about sixteen to 1785-6, I can only fall down with astonishment as well as humiliation before the throne of grace, and adore with wonder, no less than remorse and gratitude, that infinite mercy of God which did not cast me off, but on the contrary, guiding me by a way which I knew not, led me to those from whom I was to receive the knowledge of salvation, (not more manifestly His work was St. Paul's instruction by Ananias,) and above all, softened my hard heart, fixed my inconstant temper, and though with sad occa-

sional relapses, and above all, shameful unprofitableness, has enabled me to continue until this day. Praise the Lord, O my soul !”

“ Venn called ; kept him to dinner. Most interesting conversation ; telling us many most affecting incidents about his father, displaying especially his zeal and success in God’s cause, his powers of conciliating people who were prejudiced against him. Mr. Kershaw and another going over from Halifax to laugh, Kershaw completely conquered, and to his dying day devoted to Mr. Venn. Mr. Venn’s trust in Providence, and one singular interference : when all gloomy for want of means to pay the butcher, a £50 note came ; from whom he never found out. At Tadcaster the minister really proposed to him to drink a glass of brandy, and when he refused, said he would do the duty himself.”

The whole of this autumn was spent at Broomfield in comparative retirement, though its vicinity to London caused him to be much interrupted by company, and his diary contains notices of frequent visits from the prominent individuals of the day, foreigners as well as citizens, and comments on the information they afforded respecting passing events. Having heard that Mr. Fox had been well received by Buonaparte, he wrote to him urging him to bring the abolition of the slave trade to his notice, and he also contemplated preparing a pamphlet on the subject in order to arouse attention at home, but the press of business, connected with the meeting of parliament which took place in November, compelled him to postpone it.

At the very commencement of the session, he declared his views upon our foreign policy. “ Nov. 24th. Address moved. Opened debate. Spoke strongly against engaging in continental alliances as principals.” And again, “ Spoke, having been much urged by Canning and Ryder, on continental alliances.” “ Our national integrity and good faith renders us unfit to enter on them. We cannot keep or break engagements as it suits the convenience of the moment.” He went on to urge upon the government a due employment of the present time of peace.

The part he took in these debates attracted much attention both in and out of parliament. "We hear a great deal of a famous speech of yours and Sheridan's," writes Mrs. Hannah More, "so much that we regret that our economy had cut off the expense of a London paper." "You talk of my speech," he answers; "whatever it was, the newspapers would have given you no idea of it. Never was any one made to talk such arrant nonsense, and on a subject too on which I wished not to have been misstated."

The year concludes with some striking secret meditations. "How many and great corruptions does the House of Commons discover to me in myself! What love of worldly estimation, vanity, earthly-mindedness! How different should be the frame of a real Christian, who, poor in spirit, and feeling himself a stranger and a pilgrim on earth, is looking for the coming of his Lord and Saviour; who longs to be delivered from the present evil world, and to see God as He is! I know that this world is passing away, and that the favour of God, and a share in the blessings of the Redeemer's purchase, are alone worthy of the pursuit of a rational being; but alas! alas! I scarcely dare say I love God and His ways. If I have made any progress, it is in the clearer discovery of my own exceeding sinfulness and weakness. Yet I am convinced it is my own fault. Let me not acquiesce then in my sinful state, as if it were not to be escaped from. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, we may, I may, become holy. Press forward then, O my soul. Strive more vigorously. God and Christ will not refuse their help. And may the emotions I have been now experiencing, be the gracious motions of the divine Spirit, quickening my dead heart, and bringing me from the power of Satan unto God."

The new year began with his receiving the Holy Communion, and forming vows of more devoted service. "I will press forward and labour to know God better, and love Him more—assuredly I may, because God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, and the Holy

Ghost will shed abroad the love of God in the heart. Oh then pray—pray—be earnest—press forward and follow on to know the Lord. Without watchfulness, humiliation, and prayer, the sense of Divine things must languish, as much as the grass withers for want of refreshing rains and dews. The word of God and the lives of good men give us reason to believe, that without these there can be no lively exercise of Christian graces. Trifle not then, O my soul, with thy immortal interests. Heaven is not to be won without labour. Oh then press forward; whatever else is neglected, let this one thing needful be attended to: then will God bless thee. I will try to retire at nine or half-past, and every evening give half an hour, or an hour, to secret exercises, endeavouring to raise my mind more, and that it may be more warmed with heavenly fire. Help me, O Lord—without Thee I can do nothing. Let me strive to maintain a uniform frame of gratitude, veneration, love, and humility, not unelevated with holy confidence, and trembling hope in the mercies of that God, whose ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. I should almost despair of myself, but for His promises. Strive, O my soul, to maintain and keep alive impressions, first, of the constant presence of a holy, omniscient, omnipotent, but infinitely merciful and gracious God, of Christ our Almighty Shepherd, of the Holy Spirit, of the evil one, and the invisible world in general. Secondly, of the real nature and malignity of sin, as a holy curb on my inclinations, which will check me and keep me from evil. Thirdly, of my own vileness and unprofitableness. And to these let me add a fourth, a sense of the multiplied blessings of my situation. Surely never cup was so full. Oh that I were more thankful! My ingratitude should humble me in the dust.” He was spending this vacation at Broomfield, though often called to London by the claims of charity and business.

The following characteristic entry in his Diary occurs at this time:—“Lord Teignmouth dined—much talk with him about Lord Cornwallis’s statue inscription. Wrote a long letter to poor Finley. 20th. Vaccine

meeting. Afterwards an interview with poor Finley in Newgate—very affecting—shocked at Newgate and its inhabitants.”

This impression was, no doubt, increased by his having been too constantly employed of late to continue his early custom of visiting our prisons. This case had been brought casually before him. It was one of great affliction. Finley was an officer in the army, the son of a clergyman whose venerable widow still survived. “He had been patronised,” Mr. Wilberforce writes to Mr. Babington, “by the Marquis of Buckingham, Windham, and others; and being dissipated and profuse beyond his means, is now under sentence of death for forgery, and sure to suffer. I heard of him through his wife, a poor Scotch girl, young and handsome, whom he had brought out of the north, and who has not a friend or acquaintance in London, while, poor soul, she has a sucking child at the breast. I heard some things of the man which made me entertain an indifferent opinion of him, and was averse to sending any clergyman to him; but my dear wife prevailed on me to do it, and I put Doddridge’s *Rise and Progress* into his hands, and Crowther* undertook to visit him. To be short, we trust it has pleased God to bless the means which we have used, and that the poor man is a true convert. Providentially he has had far more time than usual for preparation, and, as he remarked himself when I was with him the other day, he has enjoyed much more space and leisure for religious consideration than if he had been lying on a sickbed. His venerable mother, a most pleasing old woman above fourscore, told me with tears, that she was indebted to me beyond what language could express for having been the instrument of her son’s happy change.”

Finley was executed upon the 8th of February.—“My note written to Crowther with a message to him, consoled and cheered him. Crowther came to dine. Delighted with his account of Finley’s latter days—his deep humility and his soundness.” What he witnessed in this instance

* Rev. Samuel Crowther, vicar of Christ’s Church, Newgate.

strengthened his disapprobation of the usual haste with which execution is made to follow sentence. He had once intended to bring the matter before parliament, and gave it up only from the fear of inflicting a useless injury upon religion, by provoking an unsuitable discussion. "To bring forward," was his answer when it was pressed upon him, "such a motion would lead to much profane ribaldry, and no good result. You could only argue it on grounds to which the great mass of members are altogether strangers." No man with a bolder maintenance of truth united a nicer sense of the reverence due to holy things; and he would not needlessly expose the sanctuary to the hard gaze of coarse and careless spirits. He had studied carefully his audience, and would reprove the low tone of doctrine which he sometimes heard from the pulpit by remarking, "I could say as much as that in the House of Commons."

CHAPTER XIV.

Interest in Vaccination—Prospect of War—Attends Meeting in Yorkshire—Private religious Memoranda—Narrow escape from Drowning.

ZEALOUS and faithful as he was in all he undertook, there was always an unwillingness to put himself forward, and discretion in judging as to what might be promoted, and what injured by his agency. The friends of Jenner were at this time seeking to procure for him from Parliament some compensation for the pecuniary loss he had sustained in the prosecution of those experiments which resulted in conferring upon mankind the highest temporal boon ever bestowed on our race. And Mr. Wilberforce was requested to take the lead in presenting the question before the House of Commons. We are not informed what were the motives by which he was induced to decline this active part—but that they were wholly foreign

to any want of interest in the cause itself, is proved by the following letter to Mr. Jenner.

“Palace Yard.

My Dear Sir,

I have often thought of addressing you on the subject we conversed about formerly: that I mean of your valuable discovery becoming the topic of parliamentary discussion with the view to your receiving some compensation for your eminent services to the community. I hoped long ere now to see the matter brought forward, and always intended, whenever it should be so, to give you my best assistance on a principle of duty. I really thought as I told you, there were reasons why I was by no means an eligible introducer of the subject, and I could not just now undertake it on account of my being engaged to render a similar service (though contrary to my own judgment) to another gentleman. But are you aware that Friday is the last day for presenting private petitions, and that a petition is the proper mode of bringing your discovery before Parliament? If I can be of any use in advising you, I shall be unfeignedly glad, and in rendering you any assistance I am able. At all events, I am persuaded you will do justice to the motive which prompts me to address you thus frankly, and believe me with esteem and regard, Dear Sir,

Your faithful servant,

W. WILBERFORCE.”

Some British merchants were at this time furnishing the French government with transports for the conveyance of troops to the West Indies. “House of Commons.—Busy about our helping Buonaparte with ships for St. Domingo” to re-establish slavery.

“Would that, as you desire,” he writes to Mr. Stephen, “I could give myself up wholly to this business. But it is impossible. I have had a deputation of clothiers with me for two hours almost, while your messenger has been waiting. If you can help me with good proof that the act we deprecate is contrary to the law of nations, I shall be most thankful for it. But the House adopts so

implicitly the maxim, *Cuilibet in arte sua, &c.* that all my assertions would weigh not a feather against Sir William Grant's ipse dixit, or Sir William Scott's pausing. If one could get an answer from a civilian of note, declaring the transaction illegal, the showing it to the merchants might deter them."

He was just about to bring on the Abolition question, when he was seized, he tells Mr. Babington, who was then resident in Madeira, "with a certain illness which is going through all London, called from its generality the influenza. I conceive it is this complaint under which I have laboured, for I am only now recovering, I thank God, after a more serious illness than I have had for many years. But this, as well as every other dispensation, has furnished abundant matter for thankfulness. I suffered no pain worth speaking of; I had every possible comfort; my mind was in a very tranquil, comfortable state, and the Dean of Carlisle *happened*, as we speak, to be upon the point of coming up, and was an unspeakable comfort to my wife."

Whilst he was still confined at home, "a message from the king announced the necessity of immediate military preparations." *Silent leges inter arma*: and for the remainder of the year threatenings of invasion and provision for defence engrossed the minds of all.

"Your heart would ache," he writes upon the 22d of March to Mr. Babington, "could I unload to you my budget and make you a partaker of my political grievances. The premier is a man of sense, of a generous mind, of pure and upright intentions, and of more religion than almost any other politician. But alas! he has sadly disappointed me; I trusted he would correct abuses, but in vain have I endeavoured to spirit him up even when convinced of their reality. Just now, when I expected I should hear of the members of a particular Board, that they were about to be hanged, or (as I am writing to a sober matter-of-fact man) more literally, that they were turned out with disgrace, I have heard that they are going to have £200 per annum each added to their salaries. In almost every department, but most in the differ-

ent branches of the naval, there has been sad mismanagement. Then my poor slaves! This king's message, which came down before I had returned to the House after my illness, (by which I was attacked almost immediately after my arrival in London,) has made it improper to bring forward my intended motion. And all this time the wicked abominations of the Slave Trade are going on in a greater degree than ever."

It was at this very time, amidst the din of warlike preparation, that the foundation-stone was laid of an institution which was to leaven all nations with the principles of peace. The great difficulty of obtaining Bibles for home, and still more foreign, circulation, had for some years been a matter of unavailing complaint. A new scheme to effect this purpose was now in agitation. The designers of the new society proposed to combine for this common object the scattered energies of all professing Christians; and so to create a mighty instrument for the circulation of the truth. Mr. Wilberforce had secretly done much in this very work; and the catholic aspect worn by this new society delighted his large and liberal mind. He was accordingly one of its first framers. "Hughes, Reyner, and Grant breakfasted with me," says his Diary, "on Bible Society formation." And a few days later, "city—Bible Society proposal." Here, as he would often mention, "a few of us met together at Mr. Hardcastle's counting-house, at a later hour than suited city habits, out of a regard to my convenience, and yet on so dark a morning that we discussed by candle-light, while we resolved upon the establishment of the Bible Society."

Little did it promise, when thus planted as "the smallest of seeds," to grow to such a goodly stature amongst the trees of the forest. Mr. Wilberforce saw no danger to the Church from the co-operation of Dissenters, who at that time professed an affectionate regard for the national establishment. Bishops Porteus and Barrington, who had supported his efforts for enforcing the king's proclamation, readily joined with him here; and by no other machinery could the result have been obtained. So great was the

torpor of the Church, that all more strictly regular exertions had absolutely failed, and they who devised this powerful instrument of good, are hardly to be blamed, though they have with a holy daring called up a spirit too mighty for their absolute control. But we must turn to public affairs.

Every eye was now fixed upon the dangers of the country. An army of 500,000 veterans, flushed with victory and imbittered by former disappointment, lay just across the Channel, ready to invade its shores. He was giving a "dinner to King, the American minister, on his taking leave, when Henry Thornton came over with the sad tidings of Addington's having declared in his place, that Andreossi had asked for a passport, that Lord Whitworth returning, in short, that war. The news had the effect on the sudden of making me feel a sort of intoxicating flush, though my judgment so deeply deplores it.* 7th. Morning, on opening the Bible, after praying to God for guidance and protection, I accidentally just glanced my eye on Jeremiah xxxix. 16-18. Oh that I may have God for a refuge, and then it matters not what befalls me. I would not lay much stress on such incidents, because we are not warranted so to do by the word of God, but it seemed fit to be noticed and recorded."

His Journal during this year is more than usually full of the secret workings of his mind. "What a mystery of iniquity," he says, "is the human heart! How forcibly do thoughts of worldly pursuits intrude into the mind during the devotional exercises, and how obstinately do they maintain their place, and when excluded, how incessantly do they renew their attacks!—which yet the moment our devotional exercises are over, fly away of themselves. To-day the Slave Trade thus harassed me." And on a following Sunday—"I have been at prayer, and I hope with some fervency of desire for the blessings for which I prayed; but alas, my worldly mind! Surely it is the temptation of the evil spirit. Having called for

* Diary, May 6th.

the first time at Grant's on the way from church, and having talked quite at random of my probably taking a house near him with a back door to Museum Gardens, my mind keeps running on it; it absolutely haunts me, and will recur do all I can. Oh may Christ by His Spirit give me that self-possession and sobriety of mind, that low estimate of temporal things, that strong impression of their uncertainty and transitoriness, that I may not be thus at the mercy, the mere sport of my imagination. In these times especially (yesterday the news of Lord Whitworth's leaving Paris, and consequent expectation of war) I should be weaned from this world, and be as one who is here a stranger and a pilgrim."

Having thoroughly investigated the condition of our foreign relations he found himself reluctantly compelled to oppose the government. "Lord Teignmouth came after breakfast to talk politics. He and I had taken exactly the same view of the state of affairs; thinking our government had improperly asked to retain Malta, and that they ought to have offered to acquiesce in any arrangement for making it independent. Read the papers, and talked and considered. House till half-past twelve. Spoke late, and House very impatient, being against their opinions." "Malta," he said, "is indeed a valuable possession, but the most valuable of all the possessions of this country is its good faith. It is a possession which, above all others, we should watch with jealous circumspection, and guard from the very suspicion of infringement. This then is my grand objection to the conduct of ministers, that by claiming the possession of Malta, instead of its independence, they took ground which was barely tenable; they gave our inveterate enemy an opportunity of misstating our real views both to France and to Europe." The debate was renewed the following day. "House till four in the morning. Divided in minority of 67 against 398. Henry Thornton, Bankes, and I agreed. Fox spoke three hours with wonderful ability, as Pitt last night, in quite different style, for an hour or more, appealing to national pride, honour, &c."

To this appeal he had himself replied in the conclusion

of his speech. "I have not descanted on the evils of war, and endeavoured to affect your passions by turning your minds to the contemplation of its various horrors; not but that I think a very unjust outcry is raised against all those who touch on those topics, whilst appeals to pride, to glory, to the reputation of our brave forefathers, are heard with delight and clamorously applauded. It might tend, sir, to the discovery of the path of truth and wisdom, if appeals to the passions were in all cases to be excluded from our discussions, and if we were to confine ourselves to a dry, cold, strict, logical investigation and analysis. But if we allow of appeals to those passions, the influence of which on persons in our rank of life must be particularly strong, surely we should not so squeamishly reject every appeal to those feelings of our nature, which teach us to sympathize with the widow and the orphan, and to deplore the various sufferings of which war is, above all other calamities, the sure and prolific source." He felt deeply upon this subject, and published his speech.

The palmy days of Addington's ministry were past, and the difficulties of the war soon displayed its inherent feebleness. "July 4th. People already begin to sicken of the war. I see secret discontents and fears, but no one speaks openly. The citizens outrageous against Addington's incapacity, as they call it."

The excitement of these stirring times caused no relaxation of that careful scrutiny with which he tried his temper and his conduct. "I have not been considerate," he says, "or kind enough towards Addington. Poor fellow, what annoyances has he! He has no peace as I have, alas!" And again, "July 17th. I fear I did not act honestly in persuading myself that I might neglect the House of Commons yesterday for Lord St. Helen's, whom I had asked to dinner. It is dangerous to act contrary to conscience, in little things as well as great. It is tempting God to withdraw His Holy Spirit. That way of persuading ourselves, which we are apt to practise, when inclined to a thing which the first simple suggestion of conscience opposes, is to be carefully watched

against. Yet we seem not to be deceived either, but to see as it were out of the corner of our eye the right all the while."

It was no light excuse which ever led him to absent himself from parliament. Three days after this last entry, he says, "To town, meaning Levee, but so poorly that I gave it up. House. Defence Bill till late. Alas, Sunday drilling introduced contrary to Yorke's declaration, from his being put out of sorts about another clause. I spoke. Pitt answered me." He never ceased to oppose this injurious practice until he succeeded in preventing it. "I strongly opposed this war," he wrote many years afterwards, "differing from those with whom I commonly agreed, at a great cost of private feeling; but when once it had begun, I did not persist in declaiming against its impolicy and mischiefs, because I knew that by so doing I should only injure my country."

No one saw with more regret the strange inertness of the government. His long and tried friendship for Mr. Addington made it the more painful to him, and he did all he could by personal remonstrance to stir him up to greater energy of conduct. He exerted himself to kindle a proper ardour in the country; and for this purpose he determined upon travelling into Yorkshire, to be present at a public meeting for voting an address. Upon the 26th of July he set out from London, and leaving his family at Wood Hall, in Hertfordshire, he pushed on to York, which he reached upon the 28th. "Found the meeting begun. I had better have been there the night before—many gentlemen—castle yard. I spoke, and pretty well, but I did not feel myself warmed."

To the expenses of the volunteer force he subscribed £500; and finding that he "could do no more good by remaining" in the north, he set out upon the following day, and on the 30th rejoined his family in Hertfordshire. Here he stayed some time; going to London on important questions, and rejoicing at every interval of leisure to shake off its dust and turmoil, and wander at will in the beautiful retirement of Wood Hall. Here he de-

scribes himself as "reading Hume, considering topics, running over many books. Much time consumed about letters—a great accumulation of these, and necessity of writing to stir up and do good in various ways; and," not the least characteristic, "visiting daily the sick-room of one of Mr. Smith's footmen, to read and pray with him." Aug. 5th. "A charming day. Walked about an hour with Cowper's Poems—delightful—park—deer—water—wood. Delightful walk in the evening—a most romantic scene for a gentleman's park. They have family prayers night and morning. What a lesson to try to do good by speaking to others! I remember when at Wilford, many years ago, I mentioned to my cousin about family prayers, and he adopted the custom the very next night."

Leaving Wood Hall late in August, and spending a week with his family upon the road at the house of his friend Matthew Montagu at Sandford Priory, he arrived on the 3d of September at the village of Bath Easton, where he designed to take up his quarters for the remainder of the vacation. "Delighted with the beauty of our new villa. Weather delicious. Afternoon and evening read and heard, out of doors, in a lovely arbour by the river. This is a beautiful country; our house exactly like Westmoreland, saving lakes." "I am now come," he says on the first Sunday after his arrival, "to a place where there is a prospect of my living in more quiet than I have long enjoyed. Oh may I improve it for the best purposes. May I remember that such a precious opportunity as this place affords me of keeping my heart, and making a progress in divine things, may never occur again; that I shall have to render account of it as of a talent committed to my stewardship." He was "occupied chiefly on letters till arrears of correspondence were paid off. Last night had twenty letters ready. Reading a little Hume in dressing, also Greek Testament. Evening, on the water."

The public dangers which at this time beset the nation induced him to make his residence at Bath Easton a

season of more than usual devotion: and the record of his employments on the first Friday after his arrival there, shows how he usually spent the days which he devoted to religious services. "Friday, Sept. 9th, half-past eleven. Destined this day for fast-day, meo more, with that degree of abstinence which may best qualify my weak body to go through the day without molesting the soul. My chief objects in this act of humiliation are, to deplore the sins of our country, and still more my own grievous share of them: my manifold provocations of the righteous displeasure of my God and Saviour. To deprecate the wrath of God from our land, and draw down His blessings on us. I would also beg a blessing on our residence at this place, that my time here may tend to my religious advancement, that it may be productive also of benefit to my children and family, and to others with whom the providence of God connects me."

"Half-past twelve—Let me go now to confession and humiliation, in direct prayer, for my time wears away. Let me deplore my past sins—many years in which I lived without God in the world—then my sins since my having in some degree become acquainted with him in 1785-6. My actual state—my not having duly improved my talents—my chief besetting sins." [Here a reference to a private paper carried about him.] "(My birth-day was worse kept this year than I have long known it, from its being my last day at a friend's house. This therefore to be a sort of birth-day review. I am come here into the arbour by the river side, and am quite secure from interruption.) How greatly are my sins aggravated by the extreme goodness to me of my God and Saviour! I am encumbered with blessings, my cup is so full of them as to overflow. During life all has gone well with me, so far as God has ordered matters, and all the evil has been the result of my own follies. All that I enjoy has been from God—all I suffer from myself. My temporal blessings are superior to those of almost any human being who ever existed. But then my spiritual! Born in the happiest country, at a season of the

greatest enjoyment, for hitherto I have suffered nothing from the storms which have raged around me. In a condition of life perhaps the happiest of all, except that possibly a little lower might be both safer and happier, (because I can live less to myself, less in the privacy and quiet I am now enjoying,) but mine is surely one of the very happiest. Then as to what is personal—good natural talents, though not duly improved, and injured by early neglect; a cheerful and naturally sweet temper (a great blessing); the want of that proud self-confidence, (though this has grown in me to the fault of too great diffidence,) which is unfavourable to the reception of religion; a most enjoyable constitution, though not a strong one; an ample fortune, and a generous disposition in money matters. (I speak of this as a mere natural temper, not as having in it the smallest merit, for I hope, *at this moment*, I can feel that it is no more than any other natural instinct, except as referred to the will and power of God.) To these blessings have been added most affectionate friends, and near relatives.” [Here a reference to his domestic relations.] “My being honoured with the Abolition cause is a great blessing.

“But far more my spiritual blessings. How few are there in parliament on whom the mercy of God has been so bounteously vouchsafed! On none of the early acquaintances with whom I entered life. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Above all, let me adore God’s unspeakable kindness and long-suffering, in not being prevented from calling me to His fold, by the foreknowledge which He had of my hardness of heart and ingratitude. Then the preventing grace of God. What else has prevented me from bringing a scandal on my profession and Thy cause?” [Here a reference to some occasions in which he supposed himself in especial danger.] “Let the impression of these incidents ever remain with me, to humble me, to keep me mindful how weak I am in myself, how constantly I need the grace of God, how carefully I should avoid all temptation but such as occurs in the path of duty.

“After having lamented my sins before God, that I

may feel them the more, and the contrition which they should produce, let me meditate awhile on the guilt of sin, on the majesty and holiness of God, on the base ingratitude and sottish stupidity of man. I will read (meditating way) Witherspoon's excellent sermon, 'A View of the Glory of God, humbling to the Soul.' O Lord, let Thy Spirit accompany me, let it make me see and feel towards sin as Thou dost, and long to be delivered from every remainder of my corruptions, and to be holy as Thou art holy. (I am reminded, by thinking I hear somebody coming, to pray ejaculatorily to God, to keep me from peevishness if I am interrupted. I have taken the best precautions against it, let me desire this day particularly to be full of love, meekness, and self-denial.)

"It is near half-past two; I have been hitherto quite free from interruption, and even the fear of it. Let me now go to prayer, after a short meditation on the promises of God. I have been large, though how imperfect in confession. It remains for me to supplicate for the pardon of my sins, and for growth in grace—for a blessing on this place and its employments—for a blessing on my intercourse with others. (Constant previous ejaculatory prayer.) Intercession for country and mankind—slaves—enemies—then for servants—friends—enumeration of different classes, and wife and children. Then thanksgiving enumeration. O Lord, give me Thy Spirit to help me to pray, and praise Thee acceptably, to worship in spirit and in truth. Amen."

The following extracts are from his entry on the public fast day in the succeeding month, the appointment of which he had himself been instrumental in procuring.

"It becomes me on this day to humble myself before the Lord; first, for national sins, those especially wherein I have any share. And alas, I may too justly be said to be chargeable with a measure of that guilt, which I have not sufficiently tried to prevent. Have I then used my utmost endeavours to amend the public, or my own particular circle, or even my own family? Who knows but that if I had been sufficiently on the watch, and had

duly improved all the opportunities of doing good, and preventing evil, which have been afforded me, many who are now strangers and enemies to God might have become known and reconciled to Him? Many grievous sins, which greatly swell the sum of our national account, might never have existed. What openings for usefulness have I enjoyed as an M. P. both in and out of the House of Commons; as an author, actual and possible; as a friend, an acquaintance, a master, &c. Alas, which way soever I look, I see abundant cause for deep humiliation. How much guilt might I have kept out of existence, and consequently how much misery:—East Indian idolatries; internal profaneness; even Slave Trade. And especially, have I sufficiently supplicated God and done my utmost in the most effectual way, by calling in His aid?

“Secondly, for my own manifold transgressions. These I have down on another paper; they are present with me, and I humbly hope I lament them before God.—We know not what scenes we may be called on to witness. My own death may be at hand. O then, while it is day, work out, O my soul, thy own salvation. Pray to God—

“For thyself—that thou mayst be accepted in the Beloved; that thou mayst be supported under whatever trials it may please God to expose thee to; and if it be His holy will, but not otherwise, that thou mayst be continued with thy wife and children in the enjoyment of domestic peace and happiness.

“For thy country—that God would have mercy on us, and deliver us from the power of our enemies; that He would also bless to us our difficulties and our dangers, and cause them to be the means of our turning to Him with repentance and holy obedience; that he would restore to us the blessing of peace, and sanctify to us our enjoyments.

“For our rulers—the King and his ministers, and all the public functionaries.

“For my friends, acquaintances, and connexions, particularly for those whom I habitually remember in my

prayers.”—[Here a list.] “Another class.”—[Here a list of his early connexions, including many political friends.”] “These are relics of old times. I would especially implore the Divine mercy for Pitt, who is peculiarly exposed.

“Let me pray fervently and sincerely for our enemies, that God would have pity on them, that he would turn their hearts, &c.

“Let me pray for all my fellow-creatures, for all that are in pagan ignorance, particularly for the poor negroes, both in Africa and the West Indies. O Lord, do Thou at length visit them with spiritual blessings and a termination of their temporal sufferings. Amen.

“And to all my supplications and intercessions, let me add abundant and warm thanksgivings; for, O Lord, Thou hast been to us, and above all to me, abundant in loving-kindness. For our unequalled national blessings, both temporal and spiritual. Run them over in detail, whether as exemption from evils, or possession of good, &c.

“For my own blessings. So peculiarly full a cup amidst so liberal a banquet. All around me are feasting, but mine is Benjamin’s mess. Consider, O my soul, thy country; the period of the world wherein thy lot is cast; thy station in life; thy personal circumstances as to body and mind; thy externals—rank, fortune, favour with men, and especially numerous, kind, and useful friends; the events of thy life; thy having been kept out of office, and too intimate connexion with political companions; thy being kept from utter falling, &c.” [Here an enumeration of particulars like that before given.]

Such was his preparation against those perils to which none but the careless were indifferent.

But while his attention was thus directed to the common alarm, he was preserved from one of those imminent and unexpected dangers which continually surround our path. He was a constant observer of the advice of Bishop Berkeley, “that modern scholars would, like the ancients, meditate and converse in walks and gardens and open air.” His favourite haunt at this time was a

retired meadow, which bordered on the Avon. A steep bank shaded by some fine trees, one of which by its projection formed a promontory in a deep part of the stream, was his common seat. On the 25th of October, he says, "Walked with pencil and book, and wrote. A charming day. I was sitting by the river-side, with my back to the water, on a portable seat, when suddenly it struck me that it was not quite safe. Writing, I might be absent, and suddenly slip off, &c. I moved therefore a few yards, and placed my stool on the grass, when in four or five minutes it suddenly broke, and I fell flat on my back, as if shot. Had it happened five minutes sooner, as I cannot swim, I must, a thousand to one, have been drowned, for I sat so that I must have fallen backwards into the river. I had not the smallest fear or idea of the seat's breaking with me; and it is very remarkable, that I had rather moved about while by the river which would have been more likely to break it, whereas I sat quite still when on the grass. A most providential escape. Let me praise God for it."

Several of his private observations during this summer and autumn are too characteristic to be omitted. When visiting a house where there was much society of a trifling kind, "Sad work, indeed," he says, "oaths of minor kind, most unprofitable talk, alas! I would not live at 'a Place' to be subject to much of this, for almost any consideration. Quite tired of our relaxation. What absurd work!" At another time, "A servant here is dangerously ill. I know they have no objection to my talking to him, yet I feel a sad lukewarmness, and even averseness to it. Did Christ feel the same towards me and other poor sinners? Whatever be the cause of my disinclination, shyness, pride, what it may, let me not search out for reasons to justify the abstaining from what I wish to avoid, but obey the plain primary dictates of conscience." "Praying with the sick servant"—"I saw the poor man for twenty minutes, and prayed with him"—appear as entries almost daily during the residue of his visit.

In another place he says, "Nothing could exceed the

kindness with which our friends received us. Alas, it grieves me to see a family, in all respects so amiable, fooled at all by the world. Their wealth is their bane. It connects them with fashionable, thoughtless neighbours, connects their children with frequenters of scenes of dissipation. Oh may God bless them! How hard is it for them that have riches to enter into, and keep in, the narrow road! Beware, O my soul."

Among his Sunday's observations, he says, "I have allowed so little time for evening devotions, that my prayers have been too often hurried over. 'Tis my old fault; my profane studies, or my letters, engross me. Yet if we be alienated from God at all, it matters not by what it is, whether our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, drunkenness, or cares of this life; whether with literature, or pleasure, or ambition. I have often on a Saturday evening found in myself, though I hope not allowed, this kind of sentiment—'Oh I shall have time enough for religious occupations to-morrow, and how shall I find sufficient employment for the Sunday?' O Lord, this indicates a sad want of love. How different David's feelings, Psalm lxxxiv. Oh quicken me in Thy righteousness. Give me all holy affections in their just measure of vigour and force."

His Journal, in which he had lately inserted many notices concerning his state of mind, concludes with this striking caution—"Let me beware, lest I make Christ the minister of sin, by comforting myself too easily when any temptation has prevailed over me, with the reflection, that I have a remedy at hand; it is only to humble myself and implore pardon, and, the promises being sure, to obtain forgiveness. There is in truth no other way; but beware, O my soul, lest thou provoke God to withdraw His Spirit and leave thee to thy natural weakness. Not I hope that I sin in the view of this willingness of God to forgive, but I fear, after having discovered the workings of corruption, that I too easily take comfort. Let me rather, when I have thus detected in myself the humiliating marks of my imperfect state, go softly for some time. Let me think of that God and Saviour with

whom I have trifled; of my base ingratitude; of the aggravating circumstances of my sins; of the multitude of the mercies which have been poured out on me; of the signal advantages and privileges with which I have been favoured. These reflections, through the goodness of God and the working of His Spirit, may produce a more settled lowliness and watchfulness of mind."

His health, at all times weak, had been so shattered by the fatigues of the preceding session, as to create great alarm amongst his nearest friends. The quiet of the vacation, early hours, and the Bath waters, had in a great measure restored him to his average state: though he "was reminded by" his "sensations that" his "frame was not susceptible of that thorough repair which it used to receive at Bath in earlier days." How he would bear the renewed fatigues of London seemed a doubtful question, and one friend wrote repeatedly and urgently to press upon him the duty of withdrawing altogether from public life. But he was not of a temper to retire and leave his task half done; and though he was constitutionally inclined to defer too much to the opinion of those whose moral qualities he valued highly, in this instance happily his own view of duty was unshaken.

He could not desert his post at a time of so great peril when the threats of invasion were constantly repeated, and the imbecility of the ministry was daily becoming more apparent. He entered on his duties with renewed ardour, and used every exertion to bring about an union between Pitt and Addington, hoping the energy of his friend might diffuse new life into the preparations for defence. He thus laboured through the autumn session, but welcomed with no small pleasure the approach of Christmas and the ensuing vacation, as usual anxious to turn it to the best advantage. "Who knows but that it may be my last preparation for eternity." "My heart is in a sad state. O heal my backslidings. Bring me back to Thee. Take away the heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh. Blessed be God that I am not now about to plunge immediately into the bustle and hurry of London and parliamentary business, but that a

recess is before me, in which I may have the means of some privacy, and opportunities of meditation and devotional abstraction. O Lord, do Thou vouchsafe me Thy quickening Spirit; without Thee I can do nothing. Mortify in me all ambition, vanity, vain-glory, worldliness, pride, selfishness, aversion from God, and fill me with love, peace, and all the fruits of the Spirit." "This is a dull day with me; my mind is sadly heavy. I see with my judgment the great truths which this day commemorates; that he who enjoyed the glory of the Father before the world was, came down, emptied Himself, and became a wailing infant for our sakes. I see that it was unutterable love, but I seem incapable of feeling any thing. I have got up early this last week, and have had some three quarters, or an hour, for private devotion in a morning. I hoped to have perceived on this day the blessed effects of it; but I believe I have too much reckoned on it as a settled thing, as any effect follows its cause. *Res delicata est Spiritus Dei*. Perhaps this dull, spiritless frame is designed as a punishment to me for this thought. But this same course, with more constant humility and watchfulness, must be right. O Lord, enable me to press on. How wonderful is this callousness! a sort of mental paralysis. It may not however be without its uses; it may make me feel more how absolutely helpless I am in myself; may keep me more simply dependent on the grace and Spirit of God. O Lord, I know not what I am, but to Thee I flee for refuge! I would surrender myself to Thee, trusting Thy precious promises, and against hope believing in hope. Thou art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and therefore however cold and dull I am, yet, waiting on the Lord, I trust I shall at length renew my strength. Even now my heart seems to grow warmer; oh let me fall again to prayer and praise, and implore fresh supplies of strength and grace."*

"Give me, Lord, spiritual understanding: let me drink of the water of life. To Thee, O Lord, I fly for succour; Thy promises are sure! and Thou wilt cast

* Private Journal. Christmas day.

out none that come to Thee. *There* is my stay; otherwise Thou mightest well cast me out; but by commanding us to 'have grace,' 'to grow in grace,' Thou showest that we may. Oh let me then rouse myself, lest, having preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away. I have found my heart much affected by looking at past entries in my Journal; and at the idea, that, to the eye of God, all my various crimes, vanities, and follies, are present, in their full, unabated, unsoftened size and character, as they at the time appeared to me. O Lord, enable me to purify myself as Thou art pure." "I humbly hope I feel deeply humbled at the footstool of God's throne, and prostrate I plead the atoning blood of Christ, and humbly trust in His promises of pardon and of grace. When I look forward to the scene before me, and think how ill I have gone on, I shrink back with dread. But, O Lord, I cast my care on Thee; I flee to Thee for succour. Saviour of sinners, save me. Help, Lord, help, watch over me, and guide and guard me. Amen. Amen."

It is no slight proof of the high measure of holiness to which he had attained, that he should have been thus lowly in his own sight, whilst those who most continually watched his conduct, could only give God thanks for the great grace vouchsafed to him.

It is delightful to contrast with his own language the observation of one who, with as holy and as humble a soul, was just entering on his brief but glorious course. Henry Martyn was now passing a few weeks in London, and was brought by Mr. Grant to Broomfield. Here he saw Mr. Wilberforce surrounded by his family and friends. Their "conversation," is the language of Mr. Martyn's private journal, "during the whole day was edifying, agreeable to what I should think right for two godly senators; planning some means of bringing before parliament propositions for bettering the moral state of the colony of Botany Bay. At evening worship Mr. Wilberforce expounded sacred Scripture with serious plainness, and prayed in the midst of his large household."

The session opened upon the 1st of February, and the

breach was evidently widening between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Addington. "I need not tell you," writes Mr. Wilberforce to Lord Muncaster, "that I have endeavoured to keep them in amity: but each has been surrounded with enemies to the other. Dear Muncaster, Pitt and Addington were intimate friends—I reflect with thankfulness to Heaven that I have friends who deserve that honourable appellation; who are bound to me by ties which no political differences can ever loosen."

It was in great measure his perfect freedom from the taint of party spirit which kept his natural affections unimpaired amidst the hardening incidents of public life.

It helped him also to maintain a sober estimate of their relative importance, amidst the crowd of objects by which he was surrounded; and he would frequently lament the want of this safeguard in other public men, even when he formed a favourable judgment of their real principles.

The Easter holidays suspended for a time the rising strife of parties, but when parliament met early in April, things at once assumed a hostile aspect. Immediately on his return Mr. Pitt desired an interview. In the course of Wednesday Mr. Wilberforce "went up to Pitt, whom missed yesterday. Talked with him. How changed from a few weeks ago!—ready now to vote out Addington, though he has not bound himself to Fox. I fear he has been urged forward by people of less wisdom than himself. I am out of spirits and doubtful about the path of duty in these political battles." "I fear that I am partly influenced by personal considerations. I cannot help regretting that Addington's temperance and conciliation should not be connected with more vigour. Lord, direct me right, and let me preserve an easy mind, resigned to Thee, and fixed on Thy favour. All else is vanity."

His Sunday thoughts turned in the same direction. "I am distressed just now by the state of political parties. My distress arises partly I hope from real doubts how I ought to act, yet I fear there is also a mixture of worldly fear, and also a weakness of nature, which though not unamiable, ought not be suffered to influence conduct, or

even to discompose me. O Lord, to Thee I will pray, to enlighten my understanding and direct my judgment, and then to strengthen me to take the path of duty with a firm and composed though feeling mind. Poor Addington! with all his faults, I feel for him. But what a lesson does he read me! Had he really acted up to his principles, he might probably have been above his present difficulties. O Lord, Thou rulest. Thy will be done. And keep me from being absorbed by, or too solicitous about, worldly things, remembering that a Christian is to regard and feel himself a stranger and a pilgrim, and to have his portion, his conversation, his treasure, his country in heaven. Be these my habitual feelings, through Thy grace, O Lord."

Various entries in his Journal prove the anxiety with which he laboured to maintain a friendly feeling between Addington and Pitt, but ineffectually, till at length the disaffection of the people caused the King to place Pitt once more at the head of government.

CHAPTER XV.

Progress of Abolition—Defeat of Bill in House of Commons—Nelson's Victory and Death—Death of Pitt.

THE new ministry had no sooner entered upon office than Mr. Wilberforce renewed his motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The question had seemed to slumber for the last four years. In 1800 and 1801, the plan of abolishing by a general convention had appeared too promising to be risked by a parliamentary defeat. In 1802, the important object of preventing new crimes in Trinidad had produced such delay that the session had closed before the measure had made any progress; and in the last year Mr. Wilberforce's purpose of secur-

ing the earliest season of discussion was defeated, first by his own illness, and then by the public danger. The time for a renewal of his motion had at length arrived, and it was under fresh and favourable auspices that he resumed his arms.

It was not to the change of government that the Abolition was indebted for these brighter prospects; though the substitution of a Cabinet, in which it had many warm friends, for one almost wholly hostile, was a favourable circumstance. But the cause of Abolition "had obtained many converts of late years," through the altered situation of the country. Its failure in 1792 had been occasioned by a fear of French principles, which the conduct of some leading advocates at home had too much countenanced. The House of Commons which was returned in 1796, when this fear was at its height, had been unreasonably but deeply prejudiced against any change in our Colonial system. But the aspect of affairs had now altered. In France, democracy had assumed the less attractive features of military despotism; while the common danger had rendered an unsuspecting spirit of loyalty almost general in Great Britain; and Jacobinism happily was too much discredited either to render to the Abolition her destructive aid, or supply a convenient reproach for its supporters.

Besides this important change, some of the West Indian body had withdrawn or moderated their opposition. When mentioning, early in the year, that he was "about to bring on again the question of Abolition;" "some of the principal West Indians," he says, "begin themselves to relish the idea of suspending the Slave Trade for three or five years. They have not the assurance to pretend to be influenced by any principles of justice, (this is literally true,) but merely by a sense of interest. The soil of Demerara, Berbice, and Surinam, is so fertile that one acre will produce as much as three (generally speaking) in our old islands. There is also in them an inexhaustible store of untilled land, fit for sugar. Consequently, the proprietors of estates, knowing that the demand for sugar is not even now greater than the

supply, are afraid lest they should be in the situation of owners of an old and deep mine, who are ruined by the discovery of some other, where the ore can be obtained almost on the surface. I can of course consent to no compromise, but I shall rejoice in Africa's having such a breathing time, and I am really in hopes of seeing some fruit of my labours in this field. I shall esteem it one of the greatest mercies if I am permitted to see the dawning of light in Africa; any disposition on our part to withdraw that black cloud by which we have so long shut out from its poor inhabitants the light of Christianity and the comforts of civilization."

He determined at once to introduce his motion; but not daring to look forward to entire success, he wished to engage Mr. Pitt to come forward to his succour by proposing the suspension of the Trade. To this proposal Mr. Pitt readily agreed, but wrote to him a few days afterwards, declining to do so.

He was therefore to renew single-handed this great contest, whilst against him was arrayed a body not stronger for its wealth and numbers, than for the character, talents, and station of many of its members; which extended its influence through the aristocracy of the land, which had a prince of the blood for its avowed advocate in the upper House of parliament, and above all was supported by men who, like George Ellis, ruled the literary world, and who plainly told him that they "differed from him totally on the great subject of Abolition."

Upon the 30th of May he moved the first reading of his Bill. Though complimented by one of his opponents for his ingenuity in finding new arguments on so hackneyed a subject, he was himself discontented with the spirit with which he introduced the question. "I never felt so discomposed, and stiff, and little at ease on any former occasion, and I own I think I did not do near so well as usual, though the Speaker said he hoped I had satisfied myself, as I had done every body else. The anti-abolitionists made no stand in speaking." They failed no less on a division. "We divided 124 against 49. All the Irish members voted with us. There was a

great Irish dinner, 33 or 34 dining together. Lord De Blaquiere gave my health as a toast, and they all came and voted for us. Lee and Lord De Blaquiere spoke and did good. Addington in a speech of one minute opposed us as impracticable, and blindly threw out a Committee. Barham with us. Pitt and Fox a few words. On coming home found Brougham, Stephen, Macaulay, Grant, Henry Thornton, &c. John Villiers came, and he, I, Stephen, Brougham, and William Smith talked over and settled Bill. Stephen and I had more talk afterwards. To bed late."

Thus was the Abolition of the Slave Trade for a third time voted by the House of Commons; but not as formerly, through the hesitating concurrence of a scarce perceptible majority. Its supporters were now as overwhelming in numbers as they had always been in argument. From that night the issue of the question was clear. The venerable Newton expressed his doubts whether he, who was "within two months of entering upon his eightieth year, should live to see the accomplishment of the work: but the prospect," he adds, "will give me daily satisfaction so long as my declining faculties are preserved." Mr. Wilberforce replied—

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

"Palace Yard, Friday.

"My dear Sir,

I steal one moment from business and bustle to thank you most cordially for your kind congratulations. I really scarcely deserve them for not having called on you for so long a time, yet I must do myself the justice to declare, that my having neglected so to do has in no degree arisen from any want of that affection and esteem which I must ever feel for you. O my dear sir, it is refreshing to me to turn away my eye from the vanities with which it is surrounded, and to fix it on you who appear in some sort to be already (like Moses descending from the mount) enlightened with the beams of that blessed day which is beginning to rise on you, as you

approach to the very boundaries of this world's horizon. May you soon enjoy it in its meridian lustre. Pray for us, my dear sir, that we also may be enabled to hold on our way, and at last to join with you in the shout of victory.

I fear the House of Lords! But it seems as if He, who has the hearts of all men in his power, was beginning to look with pity on the sufferings of those poor oppressed fellow-creatures whose cause I assert. I shall ever reckon it the greatest of all my temporal favours, that I have been providentially led to take the conduct of this business.

In extreme haste, I remain, my dear sir,
Yours, affectionately, and sincerely,
W. WILBERFORCE."

But many vexatious difficulties still opposed the progress of the Bill. Some friends deserted him, and even of Mr. Pitt he says, "never so dissatisfied with him as at this time." The Bill was postponed in the House of Lords till the next session, notwithstanding all his efforts to procure its passage. Through all his trials, however, he persevered with a patient determination which nothing short of the holy principles by which he was actuated could supply. Nor did he allow the one object to absorb his attention and prevent his active co-operation in other plans for the benefit of his fellow men.

"May 2d. Town—City Bible Society general meeting—they forced me to speak. 13th. After much doubt, resolved and went to hear Hall at meeting—very energetic and simply vehement, on 1 Tim. 'Glorious gospel.' He seemed to labour with a sense of the weight and importance of his subject. Truly evangelical also. Excellent indeed—language simple—thoughts just, deep, and often elevated—excelling in experimental applications of Scripture, often with immense effect—begins calmly and simply, warms as proceeds, till vehement, and energetic, and impassioned. All of us struck with him. Simeon with us—his first hearing of Hall. 14th. Breakfasted at Henry Thornton's to meet Hall—Hannah

More and Patty. Hall very clever, unaffected, and pleasing in conversation. Town—Hatchard's—Suppression of Vice Society—read their report of proceedings—highly useful. Lord Radstock had in a month got them about 153 members, many of them of high rank.

“Town. Sierra Leone Committee. House. Fever Institution. Brougham and Grant dined—much talk. Brougham very unassuming, animated, and apparently well inclined to religion.”

His own choice would have been a very different life. “Dined quietly,” he says, “for the first time this age. How delightful is a little peace in the country!” At times, indeed, as he tells Mr. Hey, he was disposed to seek more quiet by a change of residence. “Broomfield, (I wish you knew it better,)” for even at this moment his hospitable spirit would have added to the crowd of friends around him, “is a scene of almost as much bustle as Old Palace Yard. So much so, that the incessant *worry* (it is an expressive word) of this house makes me think of quitting it, and I should not hesitate for a moment, were it not for our having several valuable friends so near us. The Henry Thorntons, Stephens, Teignmouths, Venn, &c. I consider the neighbourhood in which I fix myself a point of still more importance, now that I am the father of several children. I should scarcely be able to avoid occasional visitings among my neighbours wherever I might live, and what irreparable injury might my young people receive from their accidental conversations with those who by courtesy of language are called friends. I have already discovered that children are very sagacious and attentive observers, and shrewd in detecting inconsistencies. Often when they seem to be playing about the room heedless of all that is going forward, it appears afterwards, that they heard and remembered too the conversation which was going forward.”

Leaving Broomfield in the beginning of September, he moved with his whole family to Lyme, in Dorsetshire, where he “hoped to enjoy something of to me the greatest of all luxuries, as well as the best of all medi-

cines, quiet. I allow myself two or three hours open air daily, and have enjoyed more than one solitary stroll with a Testament, a Cowper, or a Psalter, for my companion." He delighted to exchange the bustle of his public life for this domestic privacy. "Here," he breaks off in the midst of a letter to Hannah More, "I am irresistibly summoned to a contest at marbles, and in these days of the rights of man, as I would not furnish any valid ground for rebellion, and remembered I was at *Lyme*, I obeyed the call." He could now too indulge, in some degree, his keen relish of natural beauties, and the common air. He "read much out of doors, and wrote with a pencil," and "had many a delightful walk along the hoarse resounding shore, meditating on better things than poor blind Homer knew or sung of."

Yet this was no idle time. He tells Lord Muncaster, "You are not however to suppose me idle here, because I am not employed in business of the same kind as that which worries me in town. I scarce ever remember to have been more occupied. A friend has found me a good deal of work in revising an intended publication. I own I am selfish enough to grudge a little the trouble, for it sometimes costs me as much to piece in an addition which I think necessary, as it would to write a new chapter. I have also been scribbling a little thing for the *Christian Observer*, which I will send you, but you must not mention its author; and another for a similar work, for the benefit of our great cause. Thus I have given you a hint of some of my operations. But my letters are my grand employment; it is shocking to say it, but I brought to this place a box full of unanswered epistles, and each day has supplied a new demand. But surely I am become as great an egotist as the celebrated counsellor himself. Here have I filled all this sheet with an account of myself and my own avocations. It is not however egotism that is censured, but egotism in the wrong place. If I were to entertain the House of Commons with the manner in which I spent my time at *Lyme*, I should justly become the object of ridicule; but not in writing to a friend, who loves to hook on and run in

couples with me through the twenty-four hours, let me be employed how I may."

"Wrote an article for the Edinburgh Review; answer to Defence of the Slave Trade on Grounds of Humanity." "You would smile," he tells Mrs. Hannah More, "if you knew how I am now employed." "Also for Christian Observer—a review of Lord Chatham's Letters, with which I took pains; a paper on Baxter; and another introductory to a Narrative Series. Much of the morning spent in looking over Stephen's Manuscript, and Hannah More's intended publication on the Education of a Princess, and adding a good deal of new matter." He also devoted much time and labour during the three months spent in this happy seclusion to the preparation of new materials for the "holy war" against the Slave Trade, calling in also the assistance of his friends, encouraging them with the assurance that the time would come when it will be regarded as an honour and a blessing to have been permitted to co-operate in the work.

The 1st of January, 1805, found him "too busy to write much, yet desiring to record the goodness of the Lord; His great forbearance and long-suffering; His kindness during the last year in preserving us and our dear children, and enabling us to enjoy so much domestic happiness and social comfort, especially at this place. But I must stop and go to prayer."

This quiet happiness was speedily disturbed. Upon the 5th of January he "heard from Pitt that an opposition was expected the first day of the session," and judged "it right to come up." Mr. Pitt's summons was brief and earnest.

"Downing Street, Jan. 4, 1805.

"My dear Wilberforce,

I have hardly time for more than one word, and that word I am afraid must be '*Come,*' though I say so with reluctance under the circumstances you mention. But by my last accounts, opposition is collecting all its force, and it is therefore very important that we should secure

as full an attendance as possible. There are a great many points on which I shall be very impatient to talk with you, but on which I have no time to write.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. P.”

This call he at once obeyed, casting only one lingering look at the peaceful quietness which he was leaving. “If it were not best to acquiesce cheerfully and entirely in the will of God, I should grieve at being so poorly to-day, because it is probably my last Sunday before I go to London to engage in the hurly-burly scene I there dwell in. I feel like one who is about to launch into a stormy sea, and who knows from fatal experience how little his own powers are equal to its buffetings. O Lord, do Thou fit me for it. Enable me to seek thy glory, and not my own; to watch unto prayer; to wait diligently on God; to love Him and my Redeemer from the heart; and to be constrained by this love to live actively and faithfully devoting all my faculties and powers to His service, and the benefit of my fellow-creatures. Especially let me discharge with fidelity and humility the duties of my proper station, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; submitting patiently to the will of God, if it be His will that we should be defeated in our effort to deliver our country from the load of guilt and shame which now hangs round her neck, and is, perhaps, like a gangrene, eating out her vital strength, and preparing, though gradually, the consummation of her ruin. O Lord, do Thou lead and guide me.

“On looking back, what sad proofs have I had lately of the inward workings of ambition, on seeing others, once my equals, or even my inferiors, rise to situations of high worldly rank, station, power, and splendour! I bless God, I do not acquiesce in these vicious tempers, but strive against them, and not, I hope, in vain. Remember, O my soul, no man can serve two masters. Have I not a better portion than this world can bestow? Would not a still higher situation place both me and my children in less favourable circumstances for making our

calling and election sure? Covet not then, O my soul, these objects of worldly anxiety. Let God be thy portion, and seek the true riches, the glory and honour which are connected with immortality. Yet turn not from those who have these honours with cynical or envious malignity, but rejoice in their temporal comfort and gratification, while you pray for them, and strive to do them good by preventing them from being injured by their exaltation."

He reached Broomfield upon the 12th of January. "Through God's good providence we are all returned in peace and safety; and now, before I plunge into the stormy sea I am about to enter, I would pray to God through Christ, by the Holy Spirit, to strengthen me with might in the inner man; to enable me to walk by faith, to let my light shine before men, and to become meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. O my soul, remember thy portion is not here. Mind not high things. Be not conformed to this world. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and delight thyself in God. Let the men of this world pass by thee in the race of honours, but thine be the honour which cometh of God, thine the glory which is connected with immortality."

The following morning he "called on Pitt, who told me of the offer of negotiation from Buonaparte. His schemes large and deep. His hopes sanguine." "You will, I know," he heard from Mr. Pitt, "be glad, independent of politics, that Addington and I have met as friends; but I hope you will also not be sorry to hear that that event will lead to political re-union." He was extremely pleased with this reconciliation between "two friends who had no public ground of difference." He was gratified too by Mr. Pitt's anxiety to acquaint him with it. "It showed me that he understood my real feelings." Upon the 1st of February he "called on Pitt, and walked with him round the Park. Pleased with his statements of disposition not to quarrel with Addington." "I am sure," he said, "that you are glad to hear that Addington and I are at one again." And then he added, with a sweetness of manner which I shall never forget,

‘I think they are a little hard upon us in finding fault with our making it up again, when we have been friends from our childhood, and our fathers were so before us, while they say nothing to Grenville for uniting with Fox, though they have been fighting all their lives.’”

In spite of the accession of Lord Sidmouth’s partisans, Mr. Pitt felt that his majorities were feeble, and wished to put aside all questions which could divide his friends. On this ground he pressed earnestly by private remonstrance for the postponement of the Abolition question; but Mr. Wilberforce would never “make that holy cause subservient to the interest of a party;” and being convinced by the experience of the former session, that he must begin at once if he would carry any measure through the House of Lords, on the 6th of February he gave notice of his motion. Mr. Pitt could estimate his motives—he “called upon me and was very kind about it. The Bill was “read a first time on the 19th, and the second reading fixed for the Thursday se’nnight.” He had no fears about the House of Commons, but that night brought one of those reverses, by which his constancy was so often tried during the twenty years of this hard struggle. After a “morning of business as usual,” and “eating at home in a hurry,” he went down to the House on the “second reading of the Abolition Bill. I said nothing at opening, and not enough at the close, but did not expect such an issue. Besides, felt as if I could not go well. Beat, alas, 70 to 77. Sad work! Though I thought we might be hard run from the face of the House, I could not expect the defeat, and all expressed astonishment. The Irish members absent, or even turned against us.”

This failure pained him deeply. “I never felt so much on any parliamentary occasion. I could not sleep after first waking at night. The poor blacks rushed into my mind, and the guilt of our wicked land.” Yet he had no doubts of his ultimate success. “I bless God,” are his private reflections on the Sunday following this disappointment, “that I feel more than of late I have done, that humble, peaceful, confiding hope in the

mercy of God, reconciled in Christ Jesus, which tranquillizes the mind, and creates a desire after that blessed state, where we shall be completely delivered from the bondage of our corruptions, as well as from all our bodily pains and sicknesses, and all our mental anxieties and griefs: where the injustice, oppression, and cruelty, the wickedness, the falsehood, the selfishness, the malignity, of this bad world shall be no more; but peace, and truth, and love, and holiness, shall prevail for ever. O Lord, purify my heart, and make me meet for that blessed society. Alas, how sadly do I still find myself beset by my constitutional corruptions! I trust the grief I felt on the defeat of my Bill on Thursday last, proceeded from sympathy with the wretched victims, whose sufferings are before my mind's eye, yet I fear in part also less pure affections mixed and heightened the smart—regret that I had not made a greater and better fight in the way of speaking; vexation at the shame of the defeat. O Lord, purify me. I do not, God be merciful to me, deserve the signal honour of being the instrument of putting an end to this atrocious and unparalleled wickedness. But, O Lord, let me earnestly pray Thee to pity these children of affliction, and to terminate their unequalled wrongs; and O direct and guide me in this important conjuncture, that I may act so as may be most agreeable to thy will. Amen."

On the following day he told Lord Muncaster—

"London, March 4, 1805.

"Alas, my dear Muncaster, from the fatal moment of our defeat on Thursday evening, I have had a damp struck into my heart. I could not sleep either on Thursday or Friday night, without dreaming of scenes of depredation and cruelty on the injured shores of Africa, and by a fatal connexion diffusing the baleful effects through the interior of that vast continent. I really have had no spirits to write to you. Alas, my friend, in what a world do we live! Mammon is the God we adore, as much almost as if we actually bowed the knee to his image."

He had been, as usual, overburdened with business throughout the session of parliament. "This living in Palace Yard," he complains, "is destructive to my time. In the morning I rise between eight and nine (being useless if I have not had my full *dose* of sleep.) I dress, hearing Terry [his reader] from half-past nine to ten. Prayers and breakfast at a quarter after ten. From thence constant callers, or breakfasters—proper people—and my house not clear commonly, and I able to get out, till near one. Then I have often to call at the public offices, and if a committee morning, I have scarce any writing time before dinner. Then after House, friends—Babington, Grant, Henry Thornton, and others drop in, so that I can scarcely get any time for thinking on political topics, or preparing for debates. A residence near London would withdraw me from company, and give me more time. Yet I dread the separation which my leaving Broomfield would make from my chief friends, the Thorntons, Teignmouths, Stephens, Venn, Macaulay, with whom I now live like a brother."

His feelings were again tried by "three of his warmest supporters in Yorkshire, who all solicited" of him "a living for M. I am forced to decline asking. I fear they will be affronted, yet God is able to turn the hearts of men as the rivers of water."

This was no unusual trial of his firmness. "I am much hurt by solicitations from my friend N. for a living. It *hurts* me greatly to appear ungrateful to one who has been so kind to me, and it may materially affect my interest also. But I must adhere to my principles, and trust the event to God. If I lose my seat really on this account, can I be removed more honourably? It would be a minor martyrdom."

His letters during this autumn bear marks of his nearness to the fountain-head of political intelligence. He not unfrequently "drove into town to see Pitt," and "had much talk with him upon political topics, finding him very open and kind."

TO MRS. HANNAH MORE.

"Near London, Sept. 9, 1805.

"My dear Friend,

Having my pen in hand, I must chat with you for a few minutes, though they must be but few. I quite rejoiced in your having the Bishop of London under your roof: I can picture to myself his innocent playfulness and affectionate vivacity, and how very happy he would be with you, and you all with him. I wonder you could keep it all to yourself, for it is really true, that when I heard he was to be with you, I was very near scribbling to you on the moment, to wish you joy of an event which would give you so much fair pleasure. How truly amiable he is.

I have no comfort in public affairs, except that our friend Lord Barham is at the helm; for though never man came to it in such trying times, (this is especially true in his department,) yet I cannot but hope that we shall see an illustration of 'Him that honoureth Me I will honour.'

With the experience of the last war fresh in my recollection, how can I participate in those visions of glory, in which I fear a friend of mine is even still ready to indulge, though I am afraid they will never receive a local habitation and a name. Well—the Lord reigneth. We are more and more driven for comfort to that bottom, and it is sound anchoring ground which will never fail us.

Have you received any more intimations from high places, about the disposition to act up to your hints? I greatly rejoice in your having written that book, on every ground, both public and personal.

Poor Lady Waldegrave has been with us, and on the whole as well as one could expect, though sadly weather-beaten. Oh what a change will the next world make to her! Her voyage has been tempestuous, but I doubt not she will reach the desired haven. And 'Oh the thought that thou art safe!' Yes, my dear friend, there

is nothing else worth living for. May we more and more feel this great truth, and live accordingly."

His want of confidence in the national counsels did not arise merely from his "recollection of the last war." His spirits were lowered by the consideration of the national sins. He reflected that there had been few, if any, symptoms of general amendment. "The parliamentary recognition of Sunday drilling has added, I must say, to the apprehensions which the Slave Trade, and the contemptuous treatment of Christianity in our colonial possessions, from first to last, have so long infused, I have been of late making strong representations to Lord Castlereagh, on the dreadful state of morals in New South Wales. I have been assured on good authority, that of near two thousand children now in the colony, there are not one hundred who receive any education at all."

One quarter, however, offered a less gloomy, though not less affecting prospect; and he did but share the feelings of the nation, at the news of Nelson's victory and death, when he was "so overcome that he could not go on reading for tears." There was too little of this chastened spirit in the official announcement of the great victory of Trafalgar. This was Lord Muncaster's remark upon their tone. "There would methinks have been something noble, dignified, and most uncommonly interesting in the great minister of the empire gratefully acknowledging as it were before the whole people, the Divine blessing given to the arms of the country. What *quizzism* could he have been afraid of, adopting the language of the hero victors? Lord Burleigh had not this fear when he made his reply to Walsingham. Lest you should not recollect it, I will briefly state it to you. Sir Francis Walsingham had been waiting to confer with him on some business or other, and at length Lord Burleigh coming in from prayers, Sir Francis jocularly (which in the cant of the present day would be styled quizzingly,) said to him, 'that he wished himself so good a servant of God as Lord Burleigh, but that he

had not been at church for a week past.' To which Lord Burleigh thus gravely replied: 'I hold it meet for us to ask God's grace to keep *us* sound of heart, who have so much in our power; and to direct us to our well-doing for all the people, whom it is easy for us to injure and ruin; and herein, my good friend, the special blessing seemeth meet to be discreetly asked and wisely worn.' This single trait of Lord Burleigh's character, standing upon most excellent authority, has always lifted him more in my estimation, than all his wise policies and councils. I should have been truly delighted and gratified, to have had the public proof I have alluded to, that somewhat the same train of ideas governed the great minister of our day. Lord Collingwood appears to be a worthy successor of Nelson."

Mr. Wilberforce heartily assented to these views.

"Yoxall Lodge, Nov. 25, 1805.

"My dear Muncaster,

Had I been in town you may be pretty sure you would have heard from me of the signal victories with which the Almighty had vouchsafed to bless our naval arms. I well know how your heart would expand on the intelligence. Would to God, my dear Muncaster, (I say it seriously and from the heart, not with levity, and therefore vainly,) that the nation in general, and especially that our great men and rulers, felt as you seem to have done on the occasion; that they had looked like you beyond second causes, and had seen the kind hand of the Almighty Disposer of all things, in the many, many deliverances our highly favoured nation has experienced.

I was delighted with Collingwood's general orders for a day of humiliation and thanksgiving. The latter I had heard of in the case of Lord Duncan's victory and some others, but I do not remember to have ever heard of the mention of imploring pardon for sins, as well as returning thanks for blessings. The former pleased me particularly, for nothing can more magnify goodness than its being unmerited, and that, on the contrary, punishment has been rather deserved. But, my dear

Muncaster, how abominable it is, that though, as we have recently learned, Lord Nelson and several others have ordered general thanksgivings on shipboard after victories, yet that these orders have never till now appeared in the Gazette; and consequently they have not been known, and have not produced their proper effect on the public mind."

He was on a visit to Mr. Babington when he heard "the sad news of the armistice after the entire defeat of the Austrians and Russians at Austerlitz. God can preserve us—apparently we shall be in the most imminent danger." But the full evil of this blow he did not learn until after his return to town. "Jan. 21st. To London on parliament's meeting. Heard sad account of Pitt, and opposition put off intended amendment." Austerlitz had struck a fatal blow at the health of this high-minded man, and a tie was about to be severed to which Mr. Wilberforce had owed much of the influence, and many of the difficulties, of his earlier years. "22d. Quite unsettled and uneasy about Pitt, so to town. Heard bad account. Called on various friends, and on Rose, who quite overcome. He had been long at Putney talking to Bishop of Lincoln. Physicians said all was hopeless. Rose suggested to me about paying Pitt's debts, and even that I should make the motion. I thought, but I own on reflection, my judgment decidedly against it. Consulted Bankes. He likewise contra. 23d. Heard from the Bishop of Lincoln that Pitt had died about half-past four in the morning. Deeply rather than pathetically affected by it. Pitt killed by the enemy as much as Nelson. Babington went to dine at Lord Teignmouth's, but I had no mind to go out."

TO LORD MUNCASTER.

"Broomfield, Jan. 25, 1806.

"My dear Muncaster,

* * * "There is something peculiarly affecting in the time and circumstances of poor Pitt's

death. I own I have a thousand times (ay, times without number) wished and hoped that a quiet interval would be afforded him, perhaps in the evening of life, in which he and I might confer freely on the most important of all subjects. But the scene is closed—for ever.

Of course what I am about to say is in strict confidence. I have heard, not without surprise, that his debts are considerable, a sum was named as large as £40 or 50,000. This must have been roguery, for he really has not for many years lived at a rate of more than £5 or 6000 per annum. I do not say this lightly; and he has had an income since he got the Cinque Ports of £10,000 per annum.

To whom are the debts due? If to tradesmen, they ought to be paid, but might not debts to other sort of people, rich connexions, &c. be suspected; and the very idea of the people's paying these is monstrous. I must say, however, that considering the number of affluent men connected with Pitt, some of whom have got great and lucrative places from him, I cannot doubt but that, with perfect privacy and delicacy, a subscription might be made, adequate to the pupose."

During the next week he was unceasingly employed "to get people to agree to a subscription to pay Pitt's debts. Tried many, but cold in general, except Attorney-General, [Perceval,] who warm and generous as always."

His plan was finally defeated by the motion about the debts in the House of Commons. The sum of £40,000 which was due to tradesmen, was discharged by the nation. Mr. Pitt's private friends had raised £12,000 in the autumn of 1801, to relieve him from embarrassment; and one amongst them who owed the most to the friendship of the minister, was anxious that these claims should be added to the public grant. This degrading proposition was happily defeated; but not till Mr. Wilberforce had solemnly declared, that if the matter were proposed in parliament, he would (being one of the creditors) give it his most earnest and persevering opposition. It is pleasing to turn from this conduct to that of Mr. Perceval,

who, with a large family and moderate fortune, at once offered £1000 to the proposed subscription.

This is not the place for his matured estimate of his friend's character, but his letters written at the moment afford a lively picture of his first impressions. "Mr. Pitt had foibles, and of course they were not diminished by so long a continuance in office; but for a clear and comprehensive view of the most complicated subject in all its relations; for that fairness of mind which disposes a man to follow out, and when overtaken to recognize the truth; for magnanimity, which made him ready to change his measures when he thought the good of the country required it, though he knew he should be charged with inconsistency on account of the change; for willingness to give a fair hearing to all that could be urged against his own opinions, and to listen to the suggestions of men, whose understandings he knew to be inferior to his own; for personal purity, disinterestedness, integrity, and love of his country, I have never known his equal." "His strictness in regard to truth was astonishing, considering the situation he had so long filled."

TO LADY WALDEGRAVE.

"Broomfield, Feb. 1, 1806.

"My dear-Lady W.

I was just about to take up the pen two days ago, when the account reached me of the melancholy event,* which will naturally call forth still more painful feelings and more tender sensibilities in your mind. It is indeed very awful, and is sufficient to strike with seriousness the most inconsiderate hearts, that just at this moment, when our old national fabric is assailed so powerfully from without, the Almighty seems to be taking from us our main props within; whatever was most eminent for talents and public spirit and heroism—Nelson, Pitt, and Cornwallis, all gone together. Yet the same

* The death of Lord Cornwallis.

events have very different aspects. It is possible, (reasoning from the contents of the Holy Scriptures, whence alone we can derive our scanty knowledge of the Divine principles of conduct,) it is possible, and I would hope, but I own with more than a counterbalancing of a contrary fear, that the Almighty may intend to show us our folly in trusting to an arm of flesh, and that He can deliver and protect us, when they are no more, in whom our ungrateful and irreligious nation has been used to repose its chief confidence.

How do these events tend to illustrate the vanity of worldly greatness! Poor Pitt, I almost believe died of—a broken heart! for it is only due to him to declare that the love of his country burned in him with as ardent a flame as ever warmed the human bosom, and the accounts from the armies struck a death's blow within. A broken heart! What, was he like Otway, or Collins, or Chatterton, who had not so much as a needful complement of food to sustain their bodies, while the consciousness of unrewarded talents, of mortified pride, pressed on them within, and ate out their very souls? Was he even like Suwaroff, another most useful example, basely deserted and driven into exile by the sovereign he had so long served? No, he was in the station, the highest in power and estimation in the whole kingdom—the favourite, I believe on the whole, both of King and people. Yes, this man who died of a broken heart was First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. The time and circumstances of his death were peculiarly affecting, and I really believe, however incredulous you may be, that it dwelt on the minds of the people in London for—shall I say, as I was going to say, a whole week?—I really never remember any event producing so much apparent feeling. But London soon returned to its gaiety and giddiness, and all the world has been for many days busied about the inheritance, before the late possessor is laid in his grave. Poor fellow! It is an inexpressible satisfaction to me to be able to reflect, that I never gave him reason for a moment to believe that I had any object whatever

of a worldly kind in view, in continuing my friendly connexion.

I have been interrupted, and must very unwillingly hasten to a conclusion. I had hoped to fill another sheet, and without unmeaning apologies for prolixity. Let me however add a few sentences. As to poor Pitt's death, I fear the account in the newspapers is not correct. But I have not been able to learn many particulars. Indeed he spoke very little for some days before he died, and was extremely weakened and reduced on Wednesday morning, when he was first talked to as a dying man. He expired early on Thursday morning.

Your Ladyship will conceive how this event has saddened my heart. Of Lord Cornwallis's death, I have not heard many particulars, and you will doubtless be fully and minutely informed. But I have learned from good authority, that the anxiety for the public good, and the earnestness in discharging the duties of his station, the forgetfulness of self, continued entire; and there were some remarkable proofs of it to the very last.

I have been labouring with great diligence, but unsuccessfully, to get poor Pitt's debts (amounting in the whole to near £50,000) paid by the private contributions of his friends, connexions, and admirers, rather than by the nation. I grieve lest the payment by a vote of parliament, should be made a precedent, though most unfairly, for the payment of other debts; and lest, considering the heavy burdens lying and still to be laid on the country, there should by-and-by remain in the mind of the bulk of the community an unpleasant feeling, which may have an effect on his memory, and associate with it an impression of a very undesirable kind. There are many who now join in the general cry, who will not hereafter be very tender of his credit.

You are near the Mores, if you see them give my kind remembrances, and do me the favour to say I would write, but that I am up to the chin in business. May God bless and support your heart, my dear Lady W. and cheer you under every trial; giving you in proportion to your temporal trials, a more than compensating

taste of that peace which passeth all understanding, and that 'joy with which a stranger intermeddles not,' the peace and joy in believing through the power of the Holy Ghost. O blessed words, 'The rest that remaineth for the people of God.'

I hope Lord W. and all your Ladyship's family are well; always let me know of your and your family's going on, for a deep interest will always be taken in your happiness by,

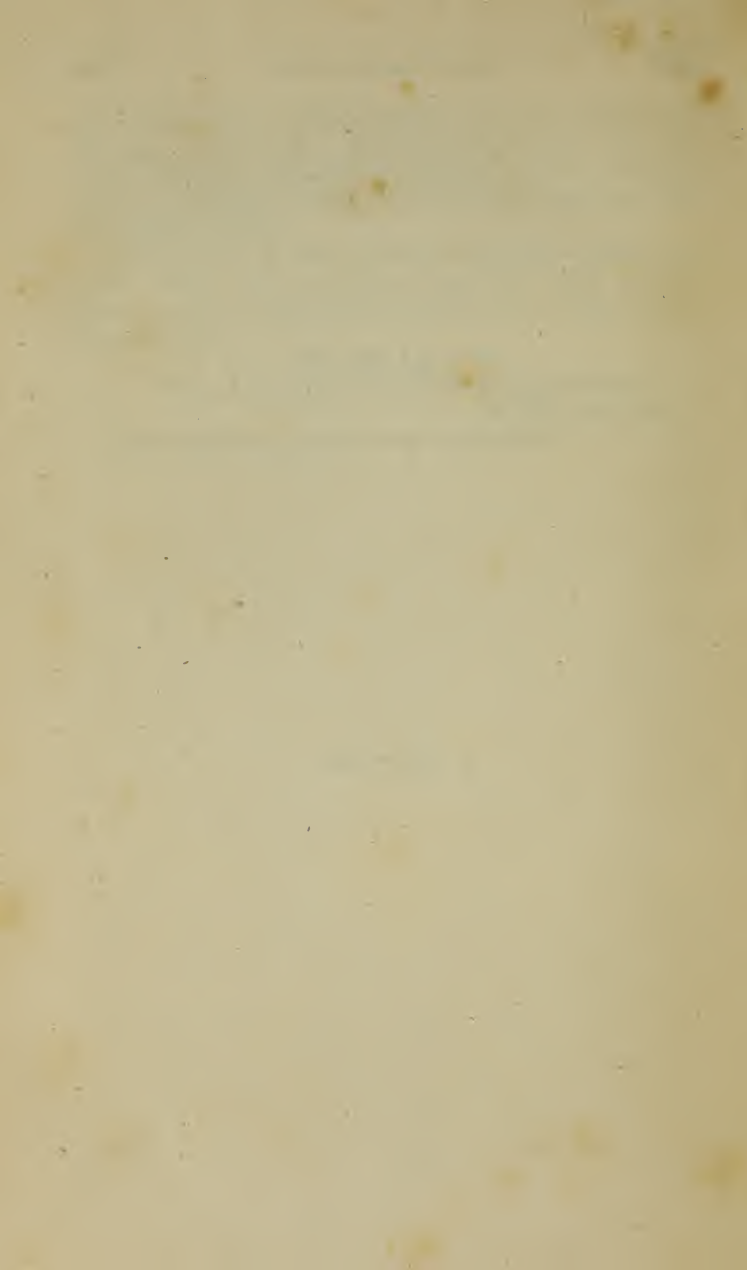
My dear Lady W.

Your Ladyship's faithful friend and servant,

W. WILBERFORCE.

I have not time to read over my scrawl."

END OF VOL. I.



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