

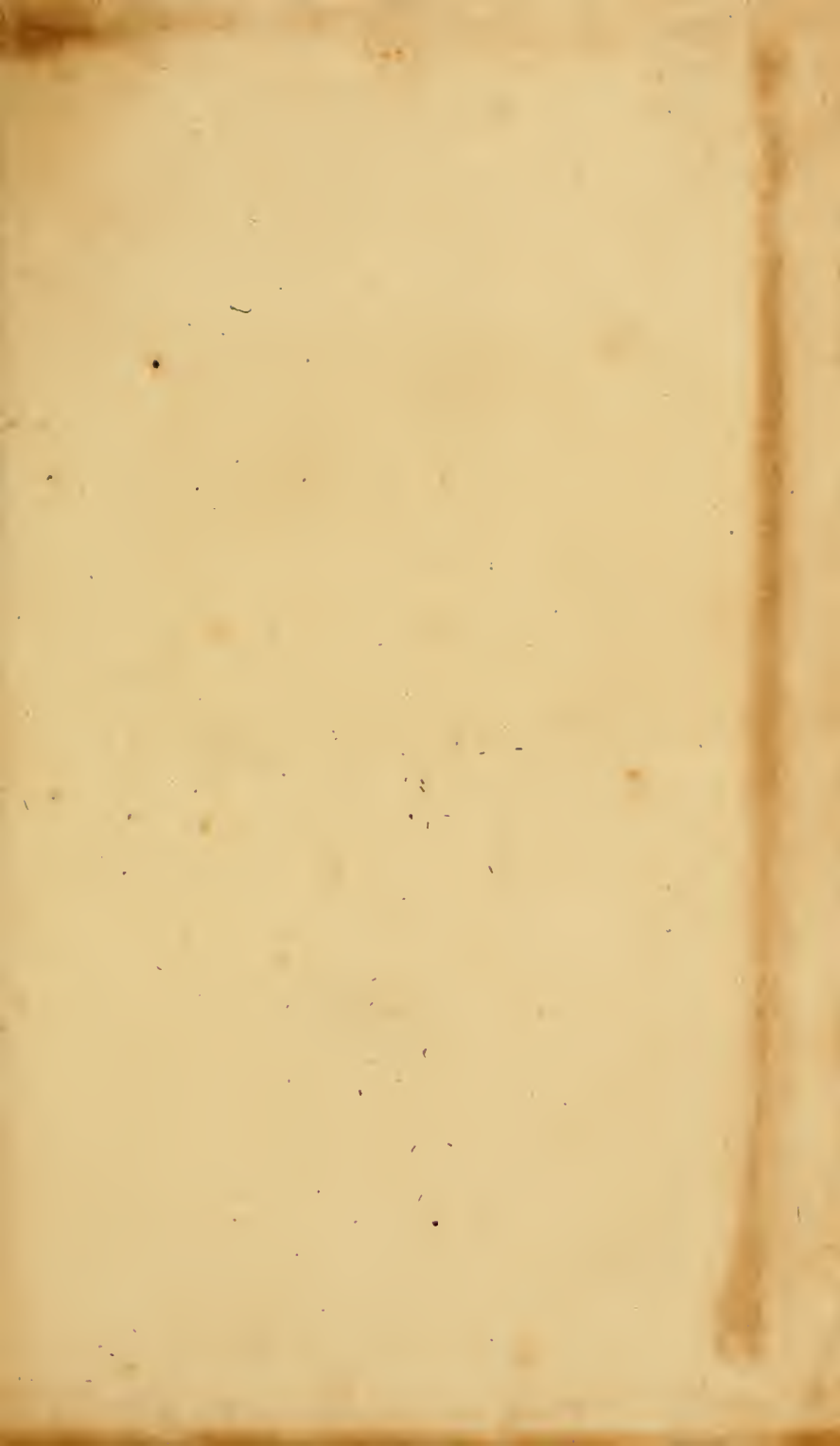
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A  
PORTRAITURE  
OF  
METHODISM:  
BEING  
*AN IMPARTIAL VIEW*  
OF THE  
RISE, PROGRESS, DOCTRINES, DISCIPLINE, AND MANNERS  
OF THE  
WESLEYAN METHODISTS.

IN A  
SERIES OF LETTERS, ADDRESSED TO A LADY.

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BY JOSEPH NIGHTINGALE.

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Sit mihi fas audita loqui—  
VIRGIL.

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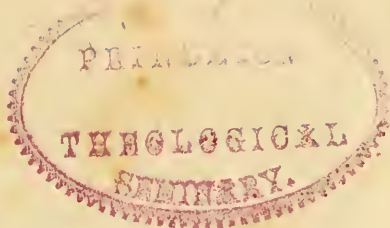
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## PREFACE.

As far as concerns the *manner* in which the following work is executed, I must be allowed to deprecate the severity of criticism; in what relates to the *matter* of it, I desire only that it should stand upon its own merits, as an *impartial* and fair account of the people whose history and internal economy I have attempted to develop. If I appear to have been too personal in my remarks on some living characters among the Methodists, it has arisen from my utter detestation of bigotry and intolerance; and from a desire of distinguishing the precious from the vile. And it should be remembered, that those remarks refer to them in

their public, and not in their private, capacity. In this latter point of view, no man is more ready than myself, to acknowledge their zeal, sincerity, and moral worth.

From the candid and honest Methodist I can have nothing to dread : he will observe, that impartiality and truth are the leading features of the work : while the enthusiast and the bigot will condemn me for having disclosed the

“ Secrets of the prison house.”

From persons of this class, however, I expect, court, I desire no mercy. Let them ransack the stores of abuse—let them cast their jaundiced eyes over every page; and let them see, or fancy they see, errors in every line, and mischief in every sheet; as they are incapable of discerning excellences, should there happen to be any, so remarks on defects, from *them*, will not be noticed or regarded by the author. “ I would rather,” to use the language of Dering, “ bear *the scourge of their tongues*, than have *the kisses of their lips* : the latter would make me suspect myself; the former would beget a hope of some merit in me.”

To the Methodists in general, I may safely appeal for the faithfulness of the following Portraiture. They will perceive that I have never blamed their community, either individually or collectively, without also awarding them their due degree of praise : so that, upon the whole, I have not a doubt, but an impression will be left on the mind of the candid and discerning reader, favourable to the cause and interest of the Wesleyan Christians.

It has ever been my object to state, rather than to controvert or defend, the opinions and practices of the Methodists ; and herein, I conceive, in part, lies the merit of my book above others who have attempted the same subject.

The Methodists have certainly met with unmerited abuse from various quarters, and on various occasions ; yet I have not thought it particularly necessary to notice those several attacks, as they have already met with due censure from Mr. Benson and others. I may, nevertheless, be here permitted to remark on one or two instances of this nature.

On the detraction and disapprobation of Methodists and Dissenters in general,

given in the first volume of *The Orthodox Churchman's Magazine*, I shall say little, because, much to the credit of the former editor of that *mis-named* Miscellany, he has ingenuously disavowed the party spirit with which it was conceived and conducted, and which "too fatally leads men to discredit and disgrace their opponents rather than give them a candid hearing."—He has frankly acknowledged that the general charges against Methodists and Dissenters originated in inexperience and a *zeal without knowledge*, which then received no check nor censure from older and wiser heads than his own, and whose age and experience should have taught them better things—Vide *THE MONTHLY REPOSITORY OF THEOLOGY AND GENERAL LITERATURE*, for February, 1806. In justice to the same author I must also observe, that this acknowledgment applies to another work: "The Rise and Dissolution of Infidel Societies in this Metropolis." In this copious dissertation, so far as the author's remarks are connected with the progress of modern deism and the licentiousness of anti-Christian principles, they are excellent; his information is curious and important; but as the

fifth chapter of that work was written as a vindication of the *Established Church of England*, and with a particular view to degrade the character of Methodists and Dissenters in general, though it obtained the warm approbation of a third of the Reviewers, the author, within a twelvemonth after its appearance, took every opportunity of avowing the change in his sentiments, in favour of toleration, and of expressing his disapprobation of a narrow, persecuting, party spirit.

Such an acknowledgment, from a writer allowed to possess *no mean talents*, is another instance of the many who have publicly renounced the old persecuting spirit, and the temporal advantages attending it, in favour of true Christian charity, with universal toleration and forbearance in matters of conscience.

It is much to be lamented, that the Annual Review, a work of such distinguished excellence, and conducted by persons of the first literary reputation, should have admitted so gross a dereliction of principle as appeared in a critique on Myles's *History of the Methodists*, in the second volume of that work. And it is, perhaps, the more

to be regretted, the writer of that critique being pretty generally known, that abuse, so scurrilous, should have come from the pen of one capable of much better things, and whose labours, in other walks of literature, will continue to amuse and instruct while there is any taste left for works of genuine and intrinsic merit. It is somewhat remarkable, that more than twenty-four columns, in royal octavo, should have been devoted to the Review of a work, which the critic himself declares "is no subject for criticism!" and it is equally strange, that nearly one half of those columns should be filled, not in reviewing Mr. Myles's book, but in abusing the whole body of Methodists in the most shameful and unjust manner imaginable! In like manner has Mr. Benson acted in his reply to this Reviewer: Not contented with answering the Critic's objections, he has taken that opportunity of shewing his implacable zeal and anger towards the Unitarians! It is difficult to discern any connexion between the Unitarians and the Annual Review; but the fact is, Mr. Benson, being exceedingly mad against this class of Christians, is glad of every opportunity of

abusing them. To do this, he is certainly instant in season and out of season!

Mr. Benson has manifested a similar spirit and conduct with regard to Mr. Evans, author of the *Sketch of Religious Denominations*, which was attacked in a most rude and scurrilous manner in the *Methodist Magazine* for 1805. The paper to which I here allude was written by a certain banker of Hull, and is signed INSPECTOR. Why INSPECTOR should have taken a dislike to a work which has been so very favourably received by the public (nearly forty thousand copies having already issued from the press) it is not easy to conceive. He seems indeed to have taken great offence at the author for having prudently avoided extolling his own party, the General Baptists, at the expense of all others; and this is the most probable motive for his conduct; a motive truly worthy of the head and heart of him who could write such an attack on the *Sketch*.

The chief blame which attaches to Mr. Benson, in this business, as editor, arises from the mutilated and garbled copy he has given of "Mr. Evans's Defence of himself;" which appeared in the same magazine, some time after the appearance of

INSPECTOR'S attack. Nay, Mr. Benson did not only insert the defence in a partial manner, but he even attempted to answer it, paragraph by paragraph; thereby endeavouring to prejudice the mind of the unsuspecting reader still more against the Author of the Sketch. To fill up the measure of insult, he then triumphantly exclaims, "Mr. Evans has now had full justice done him!" The man who could thus act, is certainly unworthy of having the management of any publication whatsoever. The *Sketch*, a tenth edition of which has just made its appearance, has been re-printed in America, and has also been translated into several of the continental languages; and will, I doubt not, continue to be read when its few illiberal enemies are deservedly forgotten.

In drawing the following Portraiture, I have had recourse to every publication I am acquainted with, which could enable me to do it fully and faithfully. It is not, however, necessary that I should enter into a detail of those authorities: they are chiefly to be found in the various biographical and historical works which throw any light on the subject of Methodism.

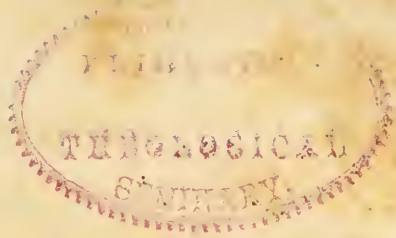


In addition to those several authorities, I may be allowed to mention my own personal knowledge of the Methodists: more particularly in what relates to the internal economy of this sect, and to the several peculiar customs and modes of expression and action which they have adopted. From this source I have been able to produce much original and interesting information: original, at least, to the public at large; and even, I may add, to numbers of the Methodists themselves.

I have throughout aimed at strict *impartiality*; and if at any time I have failed of my object, it has been through mistake and inadvertence, and not from any wish to exhibit the Methodists either in a favourable or an unfavourable point of view; but to draw a faithful and accurate Portraiture of the origin, progress, discipline, and manners of the Wesleyan Methodists.

Fleet-street, June 18, 1807.





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A

PORTRAITURE

OF

METHODISM, &c.

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*LETTER I.*

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*Introductory.*

DEAR MADAM,

THE last time I had the pleasure of dining at — —, you requested me to recommend to you some Book containing an *impartial* account of the WESLEYAN METHODISTS. But, you may possibly remember, I then remarked, that ignorance, prejudice, and selfish prepossession, had hitherto united their baneful influences to withhold from the public eye the information you desired. Solicitous, however, of gratifying the curiosity of a lady of Mrs. — —'s character and literary celebrity, I gladly take upon myself the task of collecting into one view some information concerning the origin, progress,

doctrines, church-discipline, and singular customs, of the Wesleyan Methodists; and I deem myself somewhat fitted for this task, because they are a people with whom I have, during a period of *nine* or *ten* years, been intimately connected, and with whose doctrines and peculiarities my situation, as minister among them, must have necessarily rendered me tolerably familiar.

This information, Madam, it is my intention to communicate to you, from time to time, as the avocations of my profession may permit me; or as your more important pursuits and engagements may allow you time and inclination to peruse my several epistles.

In the performance of this engagement I anticipate much pleasure, and some pain. It will be gratifying to me to be able to satisfy your laudable curiosity on the subject of Methodism, as well as pleasing to observe the influence of religious principle on a body of Christians who, in the course of less than eighty years, have sprung from a number not exceeding half a dozen persons, to the astonishing amount of nearly two hundred and seventy thousand. This pleasure, however, must experience some abatement, from the consideration of the necessity I shall be laid under, either of repressing some necessary and important facts, or of relating several instances of the evil nature and contami-



nating influence of bigotry, enthusiasm, and superstition.

Confident that my fidelity in the relation of facts will receive due credit, and that all possible candour will be exercised in the perusal of that relation, I shall proceed with my narrative, more anxious to observe accuracy and faithfulness in its execution, than to decorate the portrait with the less necessary ornaments of elegance of style and purity of diction. It will, however grieve me, should I inadvertently fall into any glaring mistake even of this latter kind, which might offend the just taste and delicate ear of my correspondent.

It will, Madam, be my chief ambition to please and inform by stating facts and circumstances exactly as they are, unbiassed by any difference of sentiment and opinion, or by the blinding influence of interested predilection. Were this not my determination, I might save both you, Madam, and myself, the trouble of this correspondence, by recommending to your perusal the work of Bishop Lavington, on the Enthusiasm of Methodists and Catholics; the late publication of the rector of Killesandra, entitled, "Methodism Inspected;" the "Methodism Unmasked," of Mr. Owen; or, the "Defences," of Wesley, Fletcher, Benson, and others, who have treated the subject of Me-

thodism in a partial, or in an uncharitable manner.

The Portraiture of Methodism, as drawn by the dexterous hands of these gentlemen, is too often caricatured and distorted on the one hand, or over-coloured and enlarged on the other. Extremes having been observed on both sides, it will be no very difficult task to draw the line of truth between them; and thus to delineate such a picture of modern Methodism as shall, I flatter myself, gratify you, Madam, and, by so doing, confer an honour on,

DEAR MADAM,

Your most obedient,

Humble servant,

J. NIGHTINGALE.

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LETTER II.

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*Origin of the Term METHODIST, and of its  
application to the Wesleyans.*

DEAR MADAM,

THEMISON, the John Wesley of an ancient sect of physicians, flourished about thirty or forty years before the Christian era. The college of physicians, of which Themison was the founder, affected a more easy *method* of teaching and practising the art of **physic** than was at that time observed in Rome, where the college was founded; and their peculiarities, like those of the Wesleyan Christians, procured them the appellation of Methodists. This sect flourished about three hundred years, and had some of the greatest physicians of the age among its members. But of its founder, Juvenal seems to have entertained no very flattering idea, when he observes, concerning the bodily infirmities of an old man, that it were as difficult to enumerate

the patients killed by Themison in one autumn, as to tell the names of all the diseases which, like a troop, rush upon the aged and infirm on all sides—

————— *Circumsilit agmine facto*  
*Morborum omne genus, quorum si nomina quæras*  
*Promptius expediam*—————  
*Quot Themison ægros autumnò occidit uno.*

It is doubtful, however, whether Juvenal here alludes to the Methodist, Themison, or to some other physician of the same name; and certainly, Madam, there is a most material difference in the character of Themison, as spoken of by this fiery satirist, and the venerable founder of that sect of Christians concerning which I am about to give you some information. The practice of the ancient physician seems to have been very extensive, and so was that of the modern divine; but while the one was engaged in killing or curing the bodies of his patients, the other was most successfully exercised in saving the souls, and reforming the morals, of many of those whose cases in other hands would have been thought desperate; and who indeed had been discharged as incurable by practitioners of less zeal and more limited experience.

Hannah Adams, in her “View of all Religions,” mentions a species of polemic doctors

in the Roman Catholic church, who were termed *Methodists*.

It has been somewhat unusual, in the formation of the numerous sects into which the Christian world is divided, for the members of any denomination of Christians voluntarily to adopt the appellations which their enemies have given them, as their regular and proper terms of distinction from the rest of their Christian brethren. My very worthy and much respected friend, the well-known author of a "Sketch of the Denominations of the Christian world," has furnished his readers with a useful table, exhibiting at one view the names, and origin of the names, by which the chief sects in the Christian world are distinguished; and from this table you will observe, that these distinctive appellations are almost all of them derived either from some opinions respecting the person of Christ; the means and extent of the divine favour; from some peculiarities respecting church-government, and the administration of ceremonies; or from the names of their respective founders: but not one, I believe, of this list, amounting to upwards of thirty, has unequivocally taken to itself a name originally applied to it as a term of ridicule and reproach, excepting the Methodists. For although Mr. Wesley often distinguished the society of which he was head, by a mode of expression somewhat similar to that used by the

Society of Friends, and denominated his followers, "The People called Methodists," yet in several publications, he gravely sanctions the term and its application; and his people have most unreservedly adopted it, by making it the title of a Magazine published by themselves, which the author of a critique on Myles's History of the Methodists, in the second volume of the Annual Review, calls their Official Gazette.

If we remark the conduct of Mr. Wesley, both in his public capacity, as head and founder of a sect, and in his more private concerns, as a Christian and a scholar, we shall observe a methodical strictness in all his undertakings, which will cause the term Methodist, when applied to himself, to possess a great degree of propriety.

Though an itinerant, a wanderer, through the whole of his life he observed the greatest regularity in the times and places of his ministerial engagements; and when his societies were in some degree organized, he might, making proper allowances for the vicissitudes of fortune, and the natural uncertainty of all human affairs and undertakings, have written a large portion of his each day's journal, a day, or even a week, prior to his engagements, with almost as much accuracy as when those engagements had been fulfilled; so much was he

addicted to those habits which are the great sources of success in all momentous concerns—punctuality and regularity.

In the early part of Mr. Wesley's life, a disposition to methodical exactness in all his undertakings displayed itself in a manner bordering upon an unnecessary and superstitious formality: it was, however, doubtless, of wonderful assistance in his various pursuits as a student and a man of letters. It is pleasing, Madam, to observe this man of regularity, this finished Methodist, so early in life as his twenty-fourth year, entering with determined seriousness on a plan, which he had before fixed, of appropriating certain hours in the mornings and afternoons to certain branches of study; and it has been observed, that Mr. Wesley never suffered himself to depart from the rules he had once laid down. His hours of study on Mondays and Tuesdays were devoted to the Greek and Latin classics, historians, and poets; Wednesdays, to logic and ethics; Thursdays, to Hebrew and Arabic: on Fridays, Mr. Wesley embarked on the unfathomable ocean of metaphysics, or recreated himself in the amusing paths of natural philosophy. His Saturdays were very properly given to oratory, and the delightful exercises of poetry and poetical composition; and his Sundays were still more appropriately devoted to the study and practice of divinity.

Certain intermediate hours, in each day, were given to the study of the French language.

Mr. Wesley's mode of reading was, first to read an author regularly through, and in his second reading to transcribe favourite passages into his collections.

So strictly did Mr. Wesley adhere to order, "Heaven's first law," that, I believe, all his discourses, and even many of his familiar letters, were regularly divided into an almost puritanical exactness of—firstly, secondly, thirdly, fourthly, &c. Most aptly, therefore, was Mr. Wesley called a *Methodist*.

At what precise period this term was first applied to the sect of Christians now so called, is not quite certain. It appears that the term was first applied to Mr. Charles Wesley, one of Mr. John Wesley's brothers, and to a few others, at Oxford, some time before November, in the year 1729, while Mr. John Wesley was at Epworth, the place of his birth, and where his father was at that time rector. Mr. Wesley's own account of the matter is as follows:—"The exact regularity of their lives, as well as studies, occasioned a young man of Christ Church to say, 'Here is a new sect of *Methodists* sprung up,' alluding to some ancient physicians who were so called. The name was quaint, so it took immediately, and the Methodists were known all over the University."



This, however, is not the only term by which the disciples of Mr. John Wesley were distinguished:—Sacramentarians; The Godly Club; The Holy Club; Supererogation-men; and Swaddlers—are all appellations which satire or ridicule has at times used to apply to “the people in connection with the Rev. John Wesley.” The term Swaddlers was first given to these people in Ireland, where one of the early lay-preachers in that country took for a text that passage from Ezekiel, where the prophet says, “Thou wert not swaddled at all.”

Thus much, Madam, for the origin and application of a term which is now often used to distinguish all who make pretensions to superior sanctity of mind and manners, and to a more than ordinary spiritual intercourse with the Almighty. Indeed this term is now very commonly given to all who presume, on the grounds of morality, to violate the boundaries of any branch of modern etiquette. It is become the invidious catch-word of the careless and the indifferent—the countersign of the unbelieving sophist, as well as the pride and glory of the hypocrite, the enthusiast, and the bigot.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER III.*

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*“A Brand plucked from the burning.”*

DEAR MADAM,

MR. JOHN WESLEY, “the father of the Arminian Methodists,” was born at Epworth, in Lincolnshire, in the year 1703. He was the son of Samuel and Susannah Wesley, who, as appears from Dr. Whitehead’s account of them, were persons of much respectability, and were remarkably serious and devout.

When Mr. John Wesley was about six years of age, he was almost miraculously saved from being destroyed by fire, on which account he used to consider himself in another besides a spiritual sense, “a brand plucked from the burning.” As I wish, Madam, to have you interested in whatever concerns the hero of my history (for the history of all sects must be connected with the biography of their founders);

I will give you a circumstantial account of this calamity which had so nearly proved fatal to the whole of Mr. Samuel Wesley's family. I cannot do this better than by transcribing Mrs. Wesley's letter to the Rev. Mr. Hoole, in which she gives a full account of the whole transaction. This letter is dated August 24, 1709.

“ Rev. Sir,

“ My master is much concerned that he was so unhappy as to miss of seeing you at Epworth; and he is not a little troubled that the great hurry of business about building his house will not afford him leisure to write. He has therefore ordered me to satisfy your desire as well as I can, which I shall do by a simple relation of matters of fact, though I cannot at this distance of time recollect every calamitous circumstance that attended our strange reverse of fortune.

“ On Wednesday night, February the 9th, between the hours of eleven and twelve, our house took fire, by what accident God only knows. It was discovered by some sparks falling from the roof upon a bed where one of the children lay, and burnt her feet. She immediately ran to our chamber and called us; but I believe no one heard her, for Mr. Wesley was alarmed by a cry of fire in the street, upon which he rose, little imagining that his own house was on fire; but on opening his door, he

found it was full of smoke, and that the roof was already burnt through. He immediately came to my room (as I was very ill he lay in a separate room from me), and bid me and my two eldest daughters rise quickly, and shift for our lives, the house being all on fire. Then he ran and burst open the nursery door, and called to the maid to bring out the children. The two little ones lay in the bed with her; the three others in another bed. She snatched up the youngest, and bid the rest follow, which they did, except Jacky. When we were got into the hall, and saw ourselves surrounded with flames, and that the roof was upon the point of falling, we concluded ourselves inevitably lost, as Mr. Wesley in his fright had forgot the keys of the doors above stairs. But he ventured up stairs once more, and recovered them, a minute before the staircase took fire. When we opened the street-door, the strong north-east wind drove the flames in with such violence, that none could stand against them. Mr. Wesley only had such presence of mind as to think of the garden-door, out of which he helped some of the children; the rest got through the windows. I was not in a condition to climb up to the windows; nor could I get to the garden-door. I endeavoured three times to force my passage through the street-door, but was as often beat back by the fury of the flames. In this distress

I besought our blessed Saviour to preserve me, if it were his will, from that death, and then waded through the fire, naked as I was, which did me no further harm than a little scorching my hands and face.

“ While Mr. Wesley was carrying the children to the garden, he heard the child in the nursery cry out miserably for help, which extremely affected him; but his affliction was much increased, when he had several times attempted the stairs then on fire, and found they would not bear his weight. Finding it was impossible to get near him, he gave him up for lost, and kneeling down, he commended his soul to God, and left him, as he thought, perishing in the flames. But the boy seeing none come to his help, and being frightened, the chamber and bed being on fire, he climbed up to the casement, where he was soon perceived by the men in the yard, who immediately got up and pulled him out, just in the article of time that the roof fell in, and beat the chamber to the ground. Thus, by the infinite mercy of Almighty God, our lives were all preserved by little less than a miracle; for there passed but a few minutes between the first alarm of fire and the falling of the house.”

Mr. John Wesley's account of this calamitous affair does not exactly agree with that I have just given from his mother. Permit me, Madam,

to transcribe his own account of what more immediately concerns himself in what then happened.

“ I believe it was just at that time (when his father supposed he heard him cry) I awaked; for I did not cry, as they imagined, unless it was afterwards. I remember all the circumstances as distinctly as though it was but yesterday. Seeing the room was very light, I called to the maid to take me up: but none answering, I put my head out of the curtains, and saw streaks of fire on the top of the room. I got up and ran to the door, but could get no further, all the floor beyond it being in a blaze. I then climbed upon a chest, which stood near the window: one in the yard saw me, and proposed running to fetch a ladder. Another answered, there will not be time; but I have thought of another expedient. Here I will fix myself against the wall: lift a light man, and set him on my shoulders. They did so, and they took me out of the window. Just then the roof fell; but it fell inward, or we had all been crushed at once. When they brought me into the house where my father was, he cried out, “ Come, neighbours! let us kneel down! let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children: let the house go, I am rich enough!”

In the language and conduct of old Mr. Wesley, when he found all his children safe from the devouring element, you will doubtless recognise Dr. Primrose, the virtuous Vicar of Wakefield, who, under similar circumstances, is made to exclaim, holding up his rescued children—"Now let the flames burn on, and all my possessions perish. Here they are; I have saved my treasures. Here, my dearest, here are our treasures, and we shall yet be happy!"

In the subsequent part of Mr. Wesley's life he had several of these "hair-breadth escapes," sometimes from one danger and sometimes from another; but chiefly, I believe, from the fury and bigotry of enraged and encouraged mobs. The Methodists love to dwell on these miraculous interpositions of divine Providence, as they suppose them to have been. Every circumstance is generally related with the most scrupulous exactness; and the narrative is heightened with all the colouring which the facts will possibly bear, that the picture may possess as large a portion of the marvellous, as the truth, sometimes, especially in verbal representations, aided by a slight tincture of hyperbole, will allow.

There is a strong propensity in the human mind to excite wonder and astonishment, when we are relating what concerns ourselves and connections; and the Methodists have come in for

their full share of this disposition. Mr. Wesley's conclusion of the above account partakes not a little of this spirit: he evidently wishes to make every circumstance appear as astonishing as possible.

“The next day,” continues Mr. Wesley, “as he, (his father) was walking in the garden, surveying the ruins of the house, he picked up part of a leaf of his Polyglot Bible, on which *just those words* were legible—*Vade ; vende omnia quæ habes, et attolle crucem, et sequere me*—Go ; sell all that thou hast, and take up thy cross and follow me.”

I am, &c.



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*LETTER IV.*

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*“The Father of Methodism,” a Poet.*

DEAR MADAM,

THE seeds of Methodism (if by this term I may here be permitted to mean a more than common degree of piety) were early sown in the mind of John Wesley. He received the first rudiments of his education from his mother, who, for devotion, appears to have been another Mrs. Rowe. She was a most worthy woman, and an excellently good mother towards all her children; but her son John seems to have shared her most particular attention. “I do intend,” says she, in one of her evening meditations, “to be more *particularly* careful of the soul of this child, that thou hast so mercifully provided for, than ever I have been; that I may instil into his mind the principles of true religion and virtue, Lord, give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently, and

bless my attempts with good success." How far this good woman succeeded in her pious endeavours, you will be able to judge, when you are informed that John Wesley was admitted as a communicant at the Lord's table so early as his eighth year; and it is somewhere, asserted that he used to say, he had not sinned away the grace of baptism until, I believe, his fifteenth or sixteenth year!

In his tenth year, Mr. Wesley was placed at the Charter-house; and in his sixteenth he was elected to Christ Church, Oxford, where he made such progress in his learning, that in his twentieth year, Mr. Baddock writes of him, that "He appeared the very sensible and acute collegian—a young fellow of the finest classical taste, and of the most liberal and manly sentiments."

You, Madam, will be pleased to find such a man as John Wesley a poet of no mean rank, although he was not perhaps one of the very first order. I will here present you with a specimen of his talents as a poetical translator from the Latin, written, I believe, in his twenty-first year. "Since you have a mind," says he, in a letter to his brother Samuel, "to see some of my verses, I have sent you some, which employed me above an hour yesterday in the afternoon. There is one, and I am afraid but

one, good thing in them, that is—they are short.

## FROM THE LATIN.

“ As o'er fair *Cloe's* rosy cheek,  
 Careless a little vagrant pass'd,  
 With artful hand around his neck  
 A slender chain the virgin cast.

As *Juno* near her throne above,  
 Her spangled bird delights to see ;  
 As *Venus* has her favourite dove,  
*Cloe* shall have her favourite flea.

Pleas'd at his chains, with nimble steps  
 He o'er her snowy bosom stray'd ;  
 Now on her panting breast he leaps,  
 Now hides between his little head.

Leaving at length his old abode,  
 He found, by thirst or fortune led,  
 Her swelling lips, that brighter glow'd  
 Than roses in their native bed.

*Cloe*, your artful bands undo,  
 Nor for your captive's safety fear ;  
 No artful bands are needful now  
 To keep the willing vagrant here.

Whilst on that heaven 'tis given to stay,  
 (Who would not wish to be so blest !)  
 No force can draw him once away,  
 Till death shall seize his destin'd breast.”

These verses, Madam, you will think not quite so good as those written by Burns on *a kindred insect*, both of which, I fear, are rather of too mean and indelicate a species to be the subject of poetic composition. I have transcribed the poem, partly to shew you that Mr. Wesley was not quite that dark, *saturnine* creature, which Archbishop Herring took him to have been. But it must be granted, that Mr. Wesley was not then so methodistical as he was at a subsequent period of his life. If he had, he certainly would have thought it a sin to have exercised his talents in writing a poem on a *favourite flea—Cloe's rosy cheek—panting breast—and swelling lips*, which he then called a *heaven*, for the blessings of which he himself seems so ardently to wish. He was, however, at all times witty—sometimes satirical.

Mr. Wesley began to prepare his mind for Methodism and ordination, by reading and *studying*—Thomas à Kempis, and Dr. Taylor on Holy Living and Dying. His natural good sense and constitutional vivacity suggested some objections to the extraordinary *strictness* of these devotees, which notwithstanding laid the foundation of that seriousness—or *Methodism*—for which he afterwards became so conspicuous. The damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed also very justly furnished his mind with some scruples, which his father, by what species of

logic I cannot tell, removed, and Mr. Wesley, accordingly, was ordained deacon, on Sunday the 19th September, 1725, by Dr. Potter, the author of the Grecian Antiquities, and at that time Bishop of Oxford.

Mr. Wesley now began to be more and more *serious*—more and more devout. He commenced an inquiry into the truth and evidences of that religion of which he was now about to become a public teacher ; but he did not neglect the necessary study of the classics, and books of science in general. Indeed such was his diligence and success as a scholar, that the following year he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, and Greek Lecturer and Moderator of the Classes.

You will excuse me, Madam, if I give you one more specimen of Mr. Wesley's poetical talents, written about this time. It is his paraphrase on the first *eighteen* verses of the *hundred and fourth* psalm, and will give you a more pleasing idea of my hero, as a poet, than the verses I have just transcribed.

“ V. 1. Upborne aloft on vent'rous wing,  
 While, spurning earthly themes, I soar,  
 Through paths untried before,  
 What God, what seraph shall I sing?  
 Whom but thee should I proclaim,  
 Author of this wond'rous frame?  
 Eternal, uncreated Lord,  
 Enshrin'd in glory's radiant blaze!  
 At whose prolific voice, whose potent word,  
 Commanded, nothing swift retir'd, and worlds began their  
 race.

2. Thou, brooding o'er the realms of night,  
 Th' unbottom'd infinite abyss,  
 Bad'st the deep her rage surcease,  
 And said'st—LET THERE BE LIGHT!  
 Æthereal light thy call obey'd,  
 Glad she left her native shade,  
 Through the wide void her living waters past;  
 Darkness turn'd his murmuring head,  
 Resign'd the reins, and trembling fled;  
 The crystal waves roll'd on, and fill'd the ambient waste.

2. In light, effulgent robe, array'd  
 Thou left'st the beauteous realms of day;  
 The golden towers inclin'd their head,  
 As their sovereign took his way.

3, 4. The all-encircling bounds (a shining train,  
 Minist'ring flames around him flew)  
 Through the vast profound he drew,  
 When, lo! sequacious to his fruitful hand,  
 Heav'n o'er th' uncolour'd void her azure curtain threw.

Lo! marching o'er the empty space,  
 The fluid stores in order rise,  
 With adamantine chains of liquid glass,  
 To bind the new-born fabric of the skies.

3. Downward th' Almighty Builder rode,  
 Old *Chaos* groan'd beneath the God,  
 Sable clouds his pompous car,  
 Harnest winds before him ran,  
 Proud to wear their Maker's chain,

And told, with hoarse-resounding voice, his coming from afar:

5. Embryon earth the signal knew,  
 And rear'd from night's dark womb her infant head,  
 6. Though yet prevailing waves her hills o'erspread,  
 And stain'd their sickly face with pallid hue.  
 7. But when loud thunders the pursuit began,  
 Back the affrighted spoilers ran;  
 8. In vain aspiring hills opposed their race,  
 O'er hills and vales, with equal haste,  
 The flying squadrons past,  
 Till safe within the walls of their appointed place:  
 9. There firmly fix'd, their sure enclosures stand,  
 Unconquerable bounds of ever-during sand!  
 10. He spake! from the tall mountain's wounded side  
 Fresh springs roll'd down their silver tide:  
 O'er the glad vales the shining wanderers stray,  
 Soft murmuring as they flow,  
 11. While in their cooling wave inclining low,  
 The untaught natives of the field their parching thirst  
 allay.  
 12. High seated on the dancing sprays,  
 Chequering with varied light their parent streams,  
 The feather'd quires attune their artless lays,  
 Safe from the dreaded heat of solar beams.

13. Genial showers at his command,  
 Pour plenty o'er the barren land :  
 Labouring with parent throes,
14. See ! the teeming hills disclose  
 A new birth : see cheerful green,  
 Transitory, pleasing scene,  
 O'er the smiling landscape glow,  
 And gladden all the vale below.
15. Along the mountain's craggy brow,  
 Amiably dreadful now !  
 See the clasping vine dispread  
 Her gently-rising verdant head :  
 See the purple grape appear,  
 Kind relief of human care !
16. Instinct with circling life, thy skill  
 Uprear'd the olive's loaded bough ;  
 What time on *Lebanon's* proud hill  
 Slow rose the stately cedar's brow.  
 Nor less rejoice the lowly plains,  
 Of useful corn the fertile bed,  
 Than when the lordly cedar reigns,  
 A beauteous but a barren shade.
17. While in his arms the painted train,  
 Warbling to the vocal grove,  
 Sweetly tell their pleasing pain,  
 Willing slaves to genial love.
18. While the wild-goats, an active throng,  
 From rock to rock light-bounding fly,  
*JEHOVAH's* praise in solemn song,  
 Shall echo through the vaulted sky."



Had these lines not been so good, some apology would have been necessary for my having transcribed them into this letter, on account of their number and extent. I will, therefore, proceed, in my next, to acquaint you with the progress of Methodism in the mind of Mr. Wesley, and of its origin among the students at Oxford.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER V.*

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*Origin of Methodism at Oxford.*

DEAR MADAM,

IN my last I remarked to you Mr. Wesley's increase of piety on his entering into holy orders. This spirit of religion advanced with his increase of learning, and with his promotion at the university; which, compared with the progress of the generality of collegians, was, I believe, rather in a retrograde motion. But John Wesley was destined for greater things; he was to perform on a more extensive theatre than any of his fellow-collegians; and it was perfectly natural he should make advances suitable to his high and important destination: high and important, as being supreme head, and sole director, of a body of his fellow-countrymen, whose union and influence affect the interests, if not threaten the existence, of the ecclesiastical establishment in this island.

He took his degree of Master of Arts, on the 14th of February, 1727. His time was now more at his own disposal, and he proceeded to follow his studies according to a *method* he had previously laid down. Of this plan I gave you the outlines in my second letter. In his literary pursuits he made rapid progress; but still more, as I have already remarked, did he improve in spiritual matters.

Of Mr. Wesley's manner of recommending the spirit and practice of religion to others, the following anecdote will afford you a very favourable specimen. "About a year and a half ago," says he in a letter to his mother, "I stole out of company at eight in the evening, with a young gentleman with whom I was intimate. As we took a turn in an aisle of St. Mary's church, in expectation of a young lady's funeral, with whom we were both acquainted, I asked him if he really thought himself my friend? and if he did, why he would not do me all the good he could? He began to protest—in which I cut him short, by desiring him to oblige me in an instance, which he could not deny to be in his own power—to let me have the pleasure of making him a whole Christian, to which I knew he was at least half persuaded already; that he could not do me a greater kindness, as both of us would be fully convinced when we came to follow that young woman.

“ He turned exceedingly serious, and kept something of that disposition ever since.”

The seriousness which Mr. Wesley thus recommended, and which he was so successful in producing in others, he himself possessed in a very eminent degree; and as he was in all things an enterprising man, so did he still make advancement in this spirit of piety and the practice of religion.

In the year 1728, he accepted one of his father's livings, for he had two, Epworth and Wroote; and accordingly left Oxford to perform the duties of a curacy at the latter place: but he was soon called back to Oxford, by a letter from Dr. Morely, his rector at the college.

It was during Mr. John Wesley's residence in Lincolnshire, that his brother Charles, with a Mr. Morgan, and one or two others, formed themselves into a little society, principally with a view of studying the Greek scriptures, and to encourage each other in a devout and holy life; and when he left his curacy at Wroote, he became the head of this society. This was towards the close of the year 1729.

Notwithstanding his sincere piety, a strong disposition *to rule* was always very predominant in his character. You doubtless have heard, Madam, the anecdote of his haranguing his fellow school-boys, when very young, from the

writing-desks and forms; and that when he was reprimanded by his master for this forwardness, he exclaimed—

“ Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven !”

What truth there is in this anecdote, I will not take upon me to say; but it appears well enough to accord with the spirit and conduct which he manifested in the subsequent part of his life.

That he was every way forward to govern, is certain; and from this persuasion, the young gentlemen who met together at Oxford willingly put themselves under his spiritual superintendence. When the management of this little society first devolved upon Mr. Wesley, it consisted of the following persons—Mr. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College; Mr. Charles Wesley, Student of Christ Church; Mr. Morgan, Commoner of Christ Church; and Mr. Kirkman, of Merton College. They were soon after joined by two or three of Mr. John Wesley's pupils; by Mr. Clayton, with two or three of his pupils; Mr. Ingham, Mr. Broughton, and by one of Mr. C. Wesley's pupils. They were afterwards joined by the celebrated author of *Meditations among the Tombs*, at that time one of Mr. J. Wesley's pupils; and in the year 1735, by the still more celebrated Mr. George Whit-

field, then of Pembroke College, who afterwards became the great importer of the Genevan doctrines of election and reprobation.

“ At that time,” says Mr. Myles, “ they were fourteen or fifteen in number, all collegians, of one heart and of one mind, and must be considered as the first Methodists.” Mr. Myles adds, “ Our Lord’s parables of the leaven hid in three measures of meal, and of the grain of mustard-seed, Matt. xiii. 31—34, are herein strikingly illustrated, for from these small beginnings what a great increase has been given!” This illustration will be still more striking, when we consider that this grain of mustard-seed, now grown into a large and spreading tree, has some of the wildest fowls of the air lodging in its luxuriant branches.

The Methodists, when reflecting on the success of their exertions in making proselytes to their cause, often sing, in strains the most rapturous and enchanting—

“ Saw ye not the cloud arise,  
 Little as a human hand ?  
 See it spreads along the skies—  
 Hangs o’er all the thirsty land !  
 Lo ! the promise of a shower  
 Drops already from above,  
 And the Lord will shortly pour  
 All the spirit of his love !”

I am, &c.

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*LETTER VI.*

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*Decline of Methodism at Oxford.*

DEAR MADAM,

THE pious and zealous collegians, whose names I mentioned in my last, under the special guidance of Mr. J. Wesley, and encouraged by the indefatigable zeal of Mr. Morgan, extended the sphere of their exertions beyond the precincts of their college. They had already begun to communicate once a week; and they now resolved to visit the unfortunate persons, confined for debt or otherwise, in the castle at Oxford. They got the Bishop's consent to establish a monthly service at the castle, where they preached to, and conversed with, the prisoners. This small society, also, commenced a regular plan of visiting the sick, and of encouraging a few children to become good Christians, by distributing books, or some other

pleasing little matters among them. This line of conduct, pursued with the most unremitting attention, and accompanied, if we may credit their friendly historians, with a correspondent behaviour in their private and individual capacity, one would have thought should have secured to them the countenance and support of the whole university. There is nothing unreasonable, I apprehend, in the supposition, that the Vice Chancellor and Heads of Houses should most gladly have encouraged and forwarded so good a work. The very reverse of this conduct being the fact, would lead one to suppose, that the *practice* of religion does not enter into the rules and regulations of our learned universities—that the theory of Christianity is all that a student ought to attend to while at college, reserving the exercise of it to a period, when, settled in a quiet country curacy, undazzled by the glare of learning, the bustle of company, and the dreams of preferment, a man may find his account in rendering himself beloved by his parishioners, and revered by the good and wise, for a steady adherence to the eternal principles of truth and virtue, and the uniform practice of a religion, in the acquisition of which he has spent four, six, or eight years, at Oxford or Cambridge.

There is, however, a religious duty, which, when carried to an improper extent, and per-



formed in even the appearance of an unbecoming spirit, is sure to defeat its own salutary purposes—I mean that of *reproof*. It was one of the divine injunctions under the Mosaical law, and the duty, like all other moral obligations, retains its force under the more perfect dispensation of Christ, that a man should not hate his brother in his heart ; that he should in anywise rebuke his neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. A mistake in the performance of this duty will generally produce effects which the zealot will denominate persecution, but which the person reprov'd will think only a just and proper retaliation for an unbecoming insult, though couched in the form of a friendly reproof. It is very certain, that the *persecutions* which the Methodists and other zealots, have at times been made to suffer, have had their origin in a dictatorial and insulting mode of reproof. How far this was the case in the instance before me I will not pretend to determine. It is, however, certain, that these young men had to encounter very considerable opposition : arguments of various kinds were resorted to, if possible to convince them of the very great impropriety of pursuing any plans, or adopting any rules, contrary to the long and well-established usages of the university. It was not to be expected that the Vice Chancellor and Heads of Houses should enter into any formal mode of

argumentation with these young men ; neither could it be supposed that reasons, however strong, which had their foundation in the minds of half a dozen young collegians, should overturn the practice of a whole university. Among the various methods adopted to bring these unruly religionists to order, that is, to persuade or force them to lay aside some or all of their austerities, that of shaking one of them by the collar was thought necessary. But, Madam, this was a species of logic by which John Wesley and his companions were not very likely to be convinced of their errors or their disobedience. The cajoling plan had a far more powerful effect ; and some of the younger brethren were soon persuaded, it was not absolutely necessary to salvation, that a man should fast two days out of every seven, or that a weekly participation of the body and blood of Christ is entirely needful to the eternal welfare of an immortal spirit. Be this, however, as it may, from more causes than one did the spirit and the practice of Methodism begin to decline very rapidly at the university. It is somewhat strange, but it is nevertheless true, Madam, that as a spirit of piety and devotion increased in the mind of Mr. J. Wesley, a proportionate decrease of zeal and number took place among the young Methodists at Oxford.

The abuse or the ridicule which tended to damp the zeal, and cool the religious fervour of the weak, the unstable, and the cowardly, had a very different effect on the mind and conduct of Mr. Wesley. Before he had set out with a resolution to be more than usually devout, he had counted the cost. He had already anticipated opposition. He knew, the ignorant and the vicious, would all be against him; when therefore the storm arose, he was prepared for it. He puzzled his opponents with questions concerning the reasonableness of his conduct. He did more; he confounded them by an uniform regularity of life, and an astonishing proficiency in his studies. He thus, as far as respected himself, put to flight the armies of the aliens. No one could withstand his arguments—no one ventured to impugn his moral character. He triumphed in the truth—he rejoiced in the testimony of a good conscience. The wise, the sober, and the good, encouraged him; and he determined to be yet more zealous: or, as some of his followers express such a pious resolution, he said, *I will yet be more vile*. But, though this resolution and his still increasing austerities might stand uninjured by the shafts of his enemies, yet did those shafts light with redoubled force on the heads of some of his weaker colleagues; and they shrunk from the performance of duties which exposed them to

so much obloquy and reproach. Mr. Wesley lamented their want of courage: but he soon discovered a far greater source of mourning than even the decay of his infant society of collegians; and this discovery, of whatever benefit it might be to himself, was, in its consequences, highly prejudicial to the Oxonian Methodists. He began to suspect, that he himself, as yet, did only possess *the form of godliness*, being almost wholly destitute of the power of it! The fact is as follows:—He had contracted an acquaintance with Mr. Law, author of “A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life,” who possessed much of the spirit which dwelt in the minds, and directed the devotions, of some of the French and German mystics; and Mr. Wesley, admiring the piety, and longing for the devotional spirit, of this gentleman, became, as Dr. Whitehead himself acknowledges, too much captivated with the views which *some* of the mystic writers gave him of religion. In fact, he caught, at least to a certain degree, the spirit of mysticism, and became restless and uneasy within himself. He read Law’s Christian Perfection, studied the *Theologia Germanica*, became desirous of being all eye, all ear, all soul; pure intellect; he hungered and thirsted after mysteries, and sighed to know what *God’s presence with his people* meant. To obtain this information, he often rambled from

the university, that he might have the advantage of spiritual advice and instruction from Mr. Law and others more advanced in the *divine life* than himself. He wrote to his mother, who possessed a still stronger sense of piety and inward devotion than even old Mr. Wesley himself. It must be acknowledged, that few men were ever more ready to receive information from others, than was Mr. John Wesley. It appears, however, that neither his mother, nor even Mr. Law, could satisfy the inquiring mind of this pious *seeker*. This caused him great pain. His philosophy and good sense on the one hand, and his Methodism on the other, seem to have given him much uneasiness, so that, on the 25th January, 1738, he complains, that —“ For many years he had been tossed about with various winds of doctrine ;” that his acquaintance with the mystic writers had led him into numerous mistakes ; that their “ noble descriptions of union with God and internal religion, had made even good works appear flat and insipid” to him ; “ yea,” adds he, “ faith itself, and what not ?” Whether this unsettled state of mind, or, which I think, Madam, is very likely, this spirit of mysticism, like that of the Athenians, loving to be hearing and communicating *some new thing*, had inspired its victim with a rambling disposition, I cannot say ; but during this hurricane, or rather dead calm of

the soul, Mr. Wesley often visited Epworth and London, and always contrived to go through as many towns as he could, often going much out of his way, in order to see some friend, or to converse with one *after his own heart*. He observes, that about this time he had walked a thousand and fifty miles in the course of one year. The effects, however, of one of these journeys had nearly proved fatal to the young society at Oxford, and made him resolve to stay more at college in future. While the shepherd was absent the sheep began to stray. One of his pupils had learned to be afraid of singularity—another had read an excellent piece of Mr. Locke's, which had convinced him of the mischief of regarding authority: they both concluded that it was not quite necessary to fast on Wednesdays. A third had been convinced of the uselessness of fasting, by a fever and Dr. Frewin. The seven and twenty communicants at St. Mary's, were shrunk to five; and the last of Mr. Clayton's pupils who continued with them, now informed them, that he did not intend to meet with them any more. This, Madam, you will readily conceive must have been a terrible blow to the young methodistical colony. None of these things, however, moved our hero, who soon reconciled himself to the loss—*methodized* his reasoning on the subject; and reduced his ill success to *three* causes: di-

*diminution of fortune, loss of friends, and of reputation.* These three general heads he, in his usual *methodical* way, subdivided into about six times that number of inferior heads; comforted himself with the consolations of Christianity; redoubled his diligence that he might recover the ground he had lost; and finally syllogisticated the whole matter away.

About this time died Mr. Morgan, one of their most active members. It was reported that this gentleman had shortened his days by excessive fasting; but this charge, which the discernment of Mr. Wesley foresaw would, if not timely refuted, prove of great hurt to his society, he took care to repel in a long letter to Mr. Morgan's father, who it seems had been before rather averse to his son's manner of life while at Oxford. Mr. Morgan was satisfied; and this stroke was very opportunely warded off by the dexterity of Mr. Wesley. All these things, however, made against the prosperity of Methodism at Oxford; and shortly after, on Mr. Wesley's removal to Georgia in America, this young society became nearly, if not entirely, extinct at the university. He was the life and soul of the cause. His spiritual valour gave courage to the cowardly; filled the drooping with animation; and lifted up the falling, when assailed by the shafts of envy and re-

proach. It was in his absence only, that any defection of zeal in his brethren took place: when, therefore, he was led by a sense of duty or inclination to leave them, *the work of God* at Oxford began to experience a visible decay.

I am, &c.



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*LETTER VII.*

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*Methodism visits America.*

DEAR MADAM,

IN my last, I informed you of the decay of Methodism at Oxford. The few that remained of the society continued steadfast and immovable, abounding in every good word and work. I do not know that the society experienced any revival after the death of Mr. Morgan and the backsliding of the pupils; and an event was now approaching, that threatened its final dissolution: this was the removal of Messrs. John and Charles Wesleys, and Mr. Ingham, of Queen's College, to America.

Be not alarmed, my dear Madam, to embark with our Methodists on the rude and ungovernable ocean—where the ark of the Lord is, there must be safety. We shall be in good company;

and amidst the boisterous surges, the rolling billows, and the fierce combat of contending elements, the song of gladness shall be heard; the murmurings of despondency shall be stilled; and the consolations of hope shall be our support. Our cargo is religion; and our object the conversion of the Indians.

In the formation of all wise governments some mode of religion has ever been deemed an essential requisite. As man is a social, so also is he a religious, being; hence has arisen the policy of associating civil and ecclesiastical interests in the same government. The philosopher, from a sense of honour, and from a concern for the happiness and dignity of human nature, will voluntarily and cheerfully submit to the restraints which the condition of a mixed community render necessary. The ignorant, the unruly, and the wicked, require a stronger band of union than the general laws of morality: the obligations of religion, the stimulus of fear, and the allurements of hope, must be held out to these, as inducements to order, and as restrictions on the immoderate gratification of selfish interests and sensual desires.

But I must have done with my speculations, Madam, and inform you, that the trustees of the newly planted colony of Georgia, wanting some missionaries to conduct the service of religion in that settlement, and to endeavour to

convert their neighbours, the Indians, turned their attention towards the two Wesleys, as proper persons for such a service. It seems the trustees for settling and establishing the colony of Georgia, were men of a pious turn of mind, and they could not, one should have supposed, have made a more fortunate choice than they did, in sending Messrs. John and Charles Wesleys as missionaries to their colony.

A long and somewhat tedious correspondence had for some time been carrying on between Mr. John Wesley and his relations respecting his removal to Epworth, to take charge of his father's flock. Old Mr. Wesley was now advanced in years; his growing infirmities daily gave him assurances that his sheep at Epworth would soon lose their shepherd. If his son John did not succeed him in the living, it appears that a Mr. M. must; and such was the old gentleman's dread of this, that he assured his son, "the prospect of that mighty Nimrod's coming thither shocked his soul; and was in a fair way of bringing down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." His unbending son, however, had no desire to leave Oxford; and he resolved not to accept the Epworth living. His brother Samuel wrote to him on the subject; but it seems without hope of success, for he tells him, he believes that no one could move his mind but him that made it. He neverthe-

less used several arguments, by way of trial, but all to no purpose. John replied to them in a long letter to his father, containing no fewer than six-and-twenty pretty long paragraphs, being so many reasons why he should remain at Oxford, contrary to his father's and brother's wishes. I thought it necessary, Madam, to mention this circumstance, as it unfolds a trait in Mr. Wesley's character, to which he was so much indebted for success in his subsequent conduct as head and governor of the *Methodist connexion*. His father died in April, 1735, and the living was disposed of in May following; so that now he thought himself at rest at the university. But he was soon undeceived in this matter; application being made to him, by Dr. Burton, who introduced him to Mr. Oglethorpe, governor of the colony of Georgia, requesting his removal to America. Mr. Wesley, after having consulted his friends, with some little hesitation, consented to become a missionary to convert the Indians. Accordingly, on Tuesday, the 14th of October, 1735, he set out for Gravesend, in order to embark for Georgia, accompanied by his brother Charles, Mr. Ingham, and a Mr. Delamotte, a merchant's son in London. "Our end," says he, "in leaving our native country, was not to avoid want, God having given us plenty of temporal

blessings; nor to gain the dung or dross of riches or honour; but singly this, to save our souls, and to live wholly to the glory of God.”

In the afternoon of the same day, they embarked on board the *Simmonds*. The next day Mr. John Wesley wrote to his brother Samuel, who kept a school at Tiverton, informing him that, having presented his father's Commentary on the Book of Job, to the Queen, he had received, in return, *many good words and smiles*. *Good words and smiles*, Madam, must always be acceptable from a lady; but when they come from a Queen of England, they are surely doubly enchanting. Not that I would insinuate that these kind of favours are but seldom granted at court; yet as they were bestowed on a Methodist, I hope, Madam, you will not think the mention of them unbecoming the gravity of my history. In this letter, Mr. Wesley cautions his brother against the *beggarly elements of Greek and Latin* in his school. Not that he wished him to lay aside the use of them; but to mind the gospel much more. He, however, besought him, by the mercies of God, to banish all such poison as *Ovid*, *Virgil's Æneid*, and *Terence's Eunuch*, from his school. That he should speak of these matters just at a time when he was about to leave his friends and his country, was owing, as he says, to the

uncertainty of having another opportunity of telling his brother his thoughts in this life.

On board the Simmonds were twenty-six German Moravians; and Mr. Wesley immediately began to learn the German language, that he might converse with them. David Nitchman, the Moravian bishop, and two others, began to learn English, that the benefit of conversation might be mutual. It was here that Mr. Wesley's acquaintance with the Moravian brethren commenced; and here were confirmed the notions of mysticism, of faith, and of holiness, which he had imbibed some time before. When they had set sail from Gravesend, and gotten into the Downs, "We began," says he, "to be a little regular. Our common way of living was this—From four in the morning till five, each of us used private prayer. From five till seven, we read the bible together, carefully comparing it (that we might not lean to our own understandings) with the writings of the earliest ages. At seven we breakfasted. At eight were the public prayers. From nine to twelve I usually learned German, and Mr. Delamotte Greek. My brother writ sermons, and Mr. Ingham instructed the children. At twelve we met, to give an account to one another what we had done since our last meeting, and what we designed to do before our next. About one we dined. The time from dinner to

four, we spent in reading to those of whom each of us had taken charge, or in speaking to them severally, as need required. At four were the evening prayers; when either the second lesson was explained (as it always was in the morning), or the children catechised, and instructed before the congregation. From five to six we again used private prayer. From six to seven I read in our cabin to two or three of our passengers (of whom there were about eighty English on board), and each of my brethren to a few more in theirs. At seven, I joined with the Germans in their public service; while Mr. Ingham was reading between the decks, to as many as desired to hear. At eight we met again, to exhort and instruct one another. Between nine and ten we went to bed, where neither the roaring of the sea, nor the motion of the ship, could take away the refreshing sleep which God gave us."

Now, Madam, what think you of our Methodists on board a ship? This is doing business systematically—in other words, it is doing it to some purpose—as it ought to be done. Mr. Wesley was determined that his society, large or small, should not be a rope of sand. O, Madam, this *Methodism* is the very life of business—the soul of enterprise!

I cannot conclude this epistle better, Ma-

dam, than by transcribing Dr. Whitehead's narrative of the remainder of their voyage.

“The wind being contrary, they did not set sail from Cowes till the 10th of December.— On Thursday, the 15th of January, 1736, complaint being made to Mr. Oglethorpe, of the unequal distribution of water to the passengers, new officers were appointed, and the old ones were highly exasperated against Mr. Wesley, who, as they supposed, had made the complaint. From the 17th to the 25th they had violent storms, the sea going frequently over the ship, and breaking the cabin windows. On these occasions, he (Mr. Wesley) found the fear of death brought him into some degree of bondage; and being a severe judge of himself, he concluded, that he was unfit, because he was unwilling, to die: at the same time, he could not but observe the lively and victorious faith which appeared in the Germans, and kept their minds in a state of tranquillity and ease, in the midst of danger, to which he and the English on board were strangers. Speaking of these humble followers of Christ, he said, ‘I had long before observed the great seriousness of their behaviour. Of their humility they had given continual proof, by performing those servile offices for the other passengers which none of the English would undertake, for which they



desired and received no pay; saying, 'It was good for their proud hearts, and their loving Saviour had done more for them.' If they were pushed, struck, or thrown down, they rose again and went away; but no complaint was found in their mouth.

"In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on. I asked one of them afterwards, 'Was you not afraid?' He answered, 'I thank God, no.' I asked, 'But were not your women and children afraid?' He replied, mildly, 'No; our women and children are not afraid to die.'

"On the 29th, they fell in with the skirts of a hurricane, which, however, did no damage. On the 4th of February, they saw land; and on the 6th, after a stormy passage, set foot on American ground, on a small uninhabited island over against the Tybee, whence Mr. Oglethorpe led them to a rising ground, and they returned God thanks; and then he took boat for Savannah."

During his passage, Mr. Wesley preached *extempore*—discontinued the use of flesh and wine,

confining himself to vegetables and biscuit—left off eating suppers—and as he had, when his bed was wet, lain upon the floor, and slept well, he concludes, in a triumphant manner, “I believe I shall not find it needful to go to bed, as it is called, any more.”

I am, &c.

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*LETTER VIII.*

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*Progress of Methodism at Georgia.*

DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE now conducted the brethren across the Atlantic; and have landed them in safety on the vast continent of America. In this letter, I purpose to develope the progress of Methodism, as it unfolded itself in the minds of our missionaries, or made advances in the infant colony of Georgia.

Methodism, considered as a strong spirit of piety and devotion, seems to be constitutional with some persons. Like the electric fluid, which pervades material substances, it often remains dormant in the soul, till by friction it is made visible, and brought into action. Mr. John Wesley was certainly, by nature, very highly charged with this spirit. Some of his very warm admirers have even thought him

*sanctified from the womb.* Himself was of a very different opinion; and indeed it is congenial with this spirit for its recipients to imagine, or say they imagine, themselves to be the *vilest of the vile.* I must confess, however, that I once knew a *travelling preacher*, who, although very pious, and very methodistical, declared to me, that he did not think himself *the chief of sinners*; but then, to be sure, he was only a *travelling preacher* in *Mr. Alexander Kilham's connexion*; and this may possibly account for his presumption. Mr. Wesley himself, even in his dying moments, more than once was heard to exclaim—

“ I the chief of sinners am.”

If Mr. Wesley, after having spent a long life in *carrying on the work of God among the people called Methodists*, could thus denounce against himself, what, Madam, will you think, when I inform you, that, although he had left his own country that he might convert the poor Indians to the truth, and, by introducing religion, give a permanency to the Georgian government, he was yet a stranger to the true faith, not having the witness in himself, or knowing his sins to be washed away by the blood of the cross? Whatever, Madam, you may think of the matter, this was certainly the case, as he himself was

made to understand, the very day after his arrival in America.

I have already intimated, that whatever might be his opinion of himself, he was certainly constitutionally *methodistical*. He was naturally devout, and he seems to have loved to know the worst of his own character. When, therefore, his spirit came into contact with the spirit of one of the German pastors, whom Mr. Oglethorpe introduced to him, he speedily caught the celestial fire. "I soon found," says Mr. Wesley, "what spirit he was of; and asked his advice with regard to my own conduct."—Hear, Madam, the reply which this Moravian divine made our inquisitive missionary. "My brother," says he, "I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness in yourself? Does the spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God? Do you know Jesus Christ? Do you know he has saved you? Do you know yourself?"—Mr. Wesley's inability to answer these searching questions in a satisfactory manner, half, if not entirely, convinced him, that hitherto he had been little more than merely a nominal Christian! It is true, he answered the last of these questions in the affirmative; but he observes, that he feared his answer was composed of *vain words*. About a week after this conversation, some

Indians were introduced to them, who shook them by the hand, one of them saying—"I am glad you are come. When I was in England, I desired that some would speak *the great word* to me. And my nation then desired to hear it. But now we are all confusion. Yet I am glad you are come. I will go up and speak to the wise men of our nation; and I hope they will hear. But we would not be made Christians as the Spaniards make Christians. We would be taught before we are baptized."

Mr. John Wesley answered—"There is but One, he that sitteth in heaven, who is able to teach man wisdom. Though we are come so far, we know not whether he will please to teach you by us or not. If he teach you, you will learn wisdom; but we can do nothing." This, Madam, was but very poor encouragement to these inquiring Indians, who looked up to the white men to teach them every thing; and not, when they made application to them for that purpose, to be coldly told, that *that they could do nothing*. With impressions, as we may well conjecture, not very favourable to the wisdom or kindness of these Christians, the poor disappointed Indians withdrew. Some months seem to have elapsed before any thing of consequence transpired between our missionaries and these simple-hearted heathens. In the meantime, Mr. John Wesley, and Mr. Delamotte, took a

temporary lodging with some of the Moravian brethren, their own house not being yet prepared for their reception.

Mr. Wesley was a careful observer of men and manners, particularly of religious men, and their mode of conducting themselves. Being now under the same roof with the pious Moravians, he had an opportunity, day by day, of observing their whole behaviour; "for," says he, "we were in one room with them from morning to night, unless for the little time I spent in walking." To know the real state of a person's moral character, it is often needful, Madam, to have opportunities of observing him in the daily domestic occupations of his life. To draw the human character with accuracy, we must not see men only, as they appear in the world, or in company. In the common concerns of social, commercial, or friendly intercourse, all men, whether they mean to be so or not, are more or less dressed for the character they wish to appear in. A man may be a cheerful companion, an honest trader, and even a steady friend; but he may be unreasonable and quarrelsome at home; tyrannical over his servants; insolent before his equals; and supercilious before his inferiors. It is an easy matter for some men *to make a fair shew in the flesh*; or, as the renowned alegorist, John Bunyan, expresses it, to be a saint abroad, though a devil at home. Nor,

Madam, is this double character only found among men professing religion: men who would not for the world be thought pious; in whose vocabulary saint and fool, devotion and hypocrisy, are synonymous; even these, Madam, do very often act the hypocrite; and it is necessary to see them in some other capacity than that of friend, companion, or chapman, in order to form a true estimate of their character. Indeed, I know none better prepared to *act a double part* on the great theatre of human life, than those who despise religion, and call a man a fool and a Methodist because he believes Christianity, and who can see any particular advantage to be derived from profligacy of manners, or licentiousness in conversation.

Mr. Wesley had already begun to entertain a favourable opinion of the Moravians; and he was glad to have that opinion confirmed, as he observed the Christian conduct and amiable tempers which they manifested, not only among themselves, but towards each other. He bears the most honourable testimony to their character, observing that “they were always employed, always cheerful themselves, and in good humour with one another. They had put away all anger and strife, wrath and bitterness, and clamour and evil speaking. They walked worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, and



adorned the gospel of our Lord in all things." It is no wonder, Madam, that Mr. Wesley should, after this, think so highly of the Moravians. So high, indeed, was his opinion of these Christians, that, having been present at the ordination of a bishop, he says, "The great simplicity, as well as solemnity of the whole, almost made me forget the seventeen hundred years between, and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not; but Paul the tent-maker, or Peter the fisherman, presided: yet with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Mr. Wesley, having made rather an unpromising visit to the Indians, entered on his ministerial engagements at Savannah, on March the 7th. Nearly a month elapsed, and finding no convenient opening for the conversion of the heathen, he and his companions proceeded to a more *methodical* arrangement of the flock at Savannah. The more serious of them were formed into a society, to meet once or twice a week; and these again were subdivided in little companies, that they might form a more intimate union with each other; and, by a close and friendly intercourse, strengthen each other's zeal, and be permanently and spiritually united. Here, Madam, was laid the foundation of what the Methodists call Classes and Bands, which, in the subsequent periods of Methodism, have

been the means of their union, and of their astonishing success. Whether, however, the unsettled state of Mr. Wesley's own religious opinions, or the quarrels and bickerings which had already begun to agitate them, operated in an unfriendly manner upon them, I know not; but the Georgian Methodists seem to have made very little progress; and in a short time it was thought necessary to abandon the scheme altogether. Of this I will treat in my next epistle; and in the mean time, permit me, Madam, as the conclusion of this, to transcribe a curious dialogue, which took place between Mr. Wesley and some Indians, on the subject of religion.

“ Q. Do you believe there is one above, who is above all things ?

Paustoobee answered—We believe there are four beloved things above; the clouds, the sun, the clear sky, and He that lives in the clear sky.

Q. Do you believe, there is but one that lives in the clear sky ?

A. We believe there are two with him; three in all.

Q. Do you think he made the sun, and the other beloved things ?

A. We cannot tell. Who hath seen ?

Q. Do you think he made you ?

A. We think he made all men at first.

Q. How did he make them at first?

A. Out of the ground.

Q. Do you believe he loves you?

A. I do not know: I cannot see him.

Q. But has he not often saved your life?

A. He has. Many bullets have gone on this side, and many on that side, but he would never let them hurt me. And many bullets have gone into these young men, and yet they are alive.

Q. Then cannot he save you from your enemies now?

A. Yes; but we know not if he will. We have now so many enemies round about us, that I think of nothing but death. And if I am to die, I shall die, and I will die like a man. But if he will have me to live, I shall live, though I had never so many enemies. He can destroy them all.

Q. How do you know that?

A. From what I have seen. When our enemies came against us before, then the beloved clouds came for us. And often much rain, and sometimes hail, has come upon them, and that in a very hot day. And I saw, when many French and Choctaws, and other nations, came against one of our towns; and the ground made a noise under them, and the beloved ones in the air behind them; and they were afraid, and went away, and left their meat and their drink,

and their guns. I tell no lie. And these saw it too.

Q. Have you heard such noises at other times?

A. Yes, often : before and after almost every battle.

Q. Do you often think and talk of the beloved ones?

A. We think of them always, wherever we are. We talk of them, and to them, at home and abroad ; in peace, in war, before and after we fight ; and indeed whenever and wherever we meet together.

Q. Where do you think your souls go after death?

A. We believe the souls of red men walk up and down near the place where they died, or where their bodies lie ; for we have often heard cries and noises near the place where any prisoners had been burnt.

Q. Where do the souls of white men go after their death?

A. We cannot tell. We have not seen.

Q. Our belief is, that the souls of bad men only walk up and down ; but the souls of good men go up.

A. I believe so too. But I told you the talk of the nation.

Q. We have a book that tells us many things

of the beloved ones above—would you be glad to know them?

A. We have no time now but to fight. If we should ever be at peace, we should be glad to know.

Q. What do the French teach you?

A. The French black kings (so they call the priests) never go out. We see you go about: we like that: that is good.

Q. How came your nation by the knowledge they have?

A. As soon as ever the ground was sound, and fit to stand upon, it came to us, and has been with us ever since. But we are young men. Our old men know more: but all of them do not know. There are but a few; whom the beloved one chooses from a child, and is in them, and takes care of them, and teaches them. They know these things: and our old men practise; therefore they know. But I do not practise; therefore I know little."

I am, &c.

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*LETTER IX.*

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*Bickerings, Persecutions, and Decline of Methodism at Georgia.*

DEAR MADAM,

MR. CHARLES WESLEY went with his brother John to America, for the same purpose, that of converting the heathen. He was appointed secretary to Mr. Oglethorpe, and also secretary to India affairs; and having been ordained before he left England, he entered upon the sacred office with much zeal and activity. He was appointed to superintend the flock at Frederica. Here he often read prayers and expounded in the open air; for the conveniences for social worship were here fewer even than those at Savannah. Mr. Oglethorpe himself attended those exercises, and for a short time encouraged Mr. Charles Wesley by his presence, and kindness: but, alas! a month had scarcely elapsed from

the time of their settlement, ere the private bickerings of the women began to disturb the infant church of Frederica. The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water. A Mrs. W. and a Mrs. H. took it into their heads, for what cause it does not appear, to be at variance, and our missionary, well knowing that the success of his labours depended much upon the tempers of his flock, endeavoured to disarm the fiend of discord before he had done much mischief.

Mrs. W. had come in the same vessel with our missionaries, and Mr. C. Wesley had in vain endeavoured to persuade her to lay aside the cares of the world, and “to give herself up to God.” Equally vain were his pious attempts to reconcile her and Mrs. H. At all times, it seems, these angry women rejected the word of reconciliation. Jealousies among the women, in various parts of the colony, now began to disturb the harmony of the church and the peace of Mr. Oglethorpe. Mr. Wesley’s serious deportment, his constant presence with them, and his frequent reproof of their licentious behaviour, soon made him an object of hatred; and plans were formed either to ruin him in the opinion of Mr. Oglethorpe, or to take him off by violence.

On the 11th of March, after he had performed divine service with about a dozen women, he

met Mrs. H.'s maid, in a great passion, and a flood of tears. She had left her mistress, with whom she had been quarrelling, and seemed resolved to make away with herself. Mr. Wesley did what he could to reconcile them; but failed in the attempt. It is insinuated by his biographers, that in endeavouring to perform this labour of love, he had some way exasperated Mrs. H. so as to induce her to seek private revenge; for in the evening of the same day he received the first harsh word from Mr. Oglethorpe, whose coldness increased to such a degree as to render it impossible for Mr. Wesley to remain in his presence.

It does not appear what was the real cause of these disputes. A dark cloud of mystery involves the whole affair in obscurity. Mr. Charles Wesley, however, seems to have been treated in a very harsh and cruel manner. Every convenient utensil was kept from his use. In some instances he does not appear to have had even a proper bedstead to lie down upon. Mr. John Wesley visited Frederica several times, and did whatever lay in his power to stem the torrent that seemed to threaten the most destructive consequences; but, alas! a most serious affair was now impending over the head of Mr. John himself; and the storms of persecution and private bickerings were fast gathering over the church of Savannah.



Mr. Charles Wesley and Mr. Ingham both returned to England; and Mr. John Wesley was left to bear the burthen and heat of the day, and to sustain the many trials and inconveniences which are ever attendant on the spirit of discord and uneasiness.

I will not trouble you, Madam, with a tiresome relation of all the petty quarrels which took place at Georgia. It is evident they made Mr. Wesley's life extremely uncomfortable. Of their real cause you must be content, Madam, to remain in the dark. The most serious dispute, however, and that which ended in Mr. Wesley's removal from America, had its origin in a love affair, between our missionary and Miss Sophy Causton, niece of Mr. Causton, the store-keeper and chief magistrate at Savannah.

This affair is also involved in mystery. So much, however, of the matter is made known, that Mr. Wesley loved, and once intended to have married, Miss Causton; but being rather tardy in satisfying the wishes of this lady, respecting their marriage, it seems her patience in the course of one year was worn out, and she married herself to a Mr. Williamson. This was a most grievous affliction to the mind of Mr. Wesley. He compares it to the plucking out of his right eye. But he soon discovered *something* in the conduct of Mrs. Williamson which caused him to bless God for his deliverance.

What that something was, his biographers have thought it prudent to keep behind the curtain. Not having signified her intention, some time before, of partaking of the Lord's supper, Mr. Wesley repelled her from that ordinance; and by so doing brought upon himself very considerable mischief. He justified himself on the grounds of the rubric, which requires that "So many as intend to partake of the holy communion, shall signify their names to the curate, at least some time the day before." And also, "That if any of these—have done any thing wrong to his neighbour, by word or deed, so that the congregation be thereby offended, the curate shall advertise him, that in any wise he he presume not to come to the Lord's table, until he hath openly declared himself to have truly repented." Neither the one nor the other of these conditions had Mrs. Williamson performed, and having *done something* to offend at least *part of the congregation*, she was therefore proceeded against according to canon law.

On the 16th August, 1737, Mr. Wesley actually read in the open congregation, a relation of the case between Mrs. Williamson and himself; and this lady as confidently and as *positively swore* to, and *actually signed*, a paper, containing several matters injurious to the character of her pastor and former lover.

A day or two after Mrs. Williamson had been repelled from the holy communion, a warrant was issued and served upon Mr. Wesley, and he was carried before the recorder and magistrates. Mr. Williamson's charge was, 1. That Mr. Wesley had defamed his wife. 2. That he had causelessly repelled her from the holy communion. The first charge Mr. Wesley denied; and concerning the second, he would not acknowledge the magistrate's authority to interrogate him. He was, nevertheless, given to understand, that he must appear at the next court holden for Savannah.

Mr. Causton, the store-keeper, also took up the cause of his niece; and, if we may credit Mr. Wesley's biographers, which I am disposed to think we may, employed himself very busily in preparing those who were to form the grand jury at the next court-day. Monday the 22d, the court was formed, and forty-four jurors were sworn in, to be a grand jury to find the bills. A long and earnest charge was given to them, "to beware of spiritual tyranny, and to oppose the new illegal authority which was usurped over their consciences."

*A list of grievances* was presented by the grand jury of Savannah; and, after various debates, examinations, shuffling, and quibbling, the list of grievances was transformed into two

presentments, containing ten bills, only two of which related to the affair of Mrs. Williamson; and only one even of these was cognizable by that court, the rest being of an ecclesiastical nature.

I will not trouble you, Madam, with any farther detail of this trifling business. Mr. Wesley was probably in some instances rash and imprudent; but he plainly told the court, that they knew their business, and that he knew his; at the same time intimating that they might act as they saw best; knowing that nothing criminal could be proved against him. The court of Savannah seems to have been composed of a most ignorant set; and that their general conduct was such as made it desirable to them to have so faithful and penetrating a minister as Mr. Wesley at a distance from the scene of their licentiousness.

Mr. Wesley seeing no prospect of converting the Indians, or of doing much good in Georgia, resolved, with the advice of his friends, to return to England. Accordingly, on the 24th of November, he put up the following advertisement in the great square, and prepared for his journey:

“Whereas John Wesley designs shortly to set out for England, this is to desire those who

have borrowed any books of him, to return them as soon as they conveniently can, to

“JOHN WESLEY.”

The magistrates of Savannah seeing him determined to leave America, sent for him, and required that he should sign a bond to appear at Savannah when required; and also to give bail to Mr. Williamson's action of one thousand pounds damages. It should be understood, that Mr. Oglethorpe had before this set sail for England. Had he been at the colony, it is probable he would have prevented these measures. It was now that Mr. Wesley, seeing, as he observes, into their design of spinning out time and doing nothing, plainly said—“Sir, I will neither sign one bond nor the other: you know your business and I know mine.” Notwithstanding an order of the magistrates had been that day published, requiring all officers to prevent his going out of the province, and forbidding any person to assist him so to do, Mr. Wesley left Savannah in the evening, in company with three other persons, no one attempting to hinder him.

During his voyage to England, he entered into a close and severe examination of himself. January 8, 1738, he writes thus: “By the most infallible of proofs, inward feeling, I

am convinced, 1. Of unbelief, having no such faith in Christ as will prevent my heart from being troubled. 2. Of pride, throughout my life past; inasmuch as I thought I had what I find I have not. 3. Of gross irrecollection; inasmuch as in a storm I cry to God every moment, in a calm not. Of levity and luxuriancy of spirit—appearing by my speaking words not tending to edify; but most, by my manner of speaking of my enemies.—Lord, save, or I perish! Save me, 1. By such a faith as implies peace in life and death. 2. By such humility as may fill my heart from this hour for ever, with a piercing uninterrupted sense, *Nihil est quod hactenus faci*, that *hitherto I have done nothing*. 3. By such a recollection as may enable me to cry to thee every moment. 4. By steadiness, seriousness, *σεμνοσνήσι*, sobriety of spirit, avoiding as fire, every word that tendeth not to edifying, and never speaking of any who oppose me, or sin against God, without all my own sins set in array before my face.”

A few days after this he adds, “I went to America to convert the Indians; but, Oh! who shall convert me? Who is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion; I can talk well, nay, and believe myself, when no danger is near; but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say—*To die is gain!*”

“ I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun  
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore!”

Such, Madam, was the success of the first methodistical mission to convert the heathen, and such were the reflections of the principal missionary on his return home, I leave you to make your own observations on the subject; and subscribe myself,

Yours, &c.

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*LETTER X.*

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*Progress of Methodism, and Conversion of the  
Wesleys.*

DEAR MADAM,

IN my last I left Mr. John Wesley on his return to England, writing bitter things against himself, and making the most gloomy and discouraging reflections on the state of his spiritual concerns.

He landed at Deal, on February 1, 1738; where he was informed Mr. Whitefield had sailed the day before for Georgia. He read prayers and explained a portion of scripture to a large company at the inn; and on the third arrived safe in London.

Mr. Charles Wesley arrived in London in December, 1736, in the same unhappy disposition of mind in which we have just seen his brother John. A confused notion of faith, and of sen-



sible conversion, kept him in a state of the greatest abjection of soul—the most unpleasant degradation of intellect.

Some time in January, 1737, the active Moravian, Count Zinzendorf, arrived in England, for the purpose of effecting a union between the Moravian and the English churches at Georgia. This gentleman, having heard of the piety and austerities of the Wesleys, soon after his arrival sent for Mr. Charles, and through his influence procured an introduction to those persons whose power and interest were necessary to the accomplishment of his object. In return for these ecclesiastical services, Mr. Charles Wesley seems to have received certain spiritual instructions relative to the nature of faith, and the mode and terms of partaking of the divine favour.

Mr. Wesley spent this year in attending on the Trustees and the Board of Trade; in extending his spiritual connections in London, Oxford, and the West of England. He consulted Mr. Law on the state of his soul; but seems to have received no very satisfactory information on that head. He had not resigned the reins of reason into the hands of an imaginary abstraction of soul, and could not easily comprehend the force of his friend's counsel, to "renounce himself, and not be impatient."

About the beginning of February, 1738, one Peter Bohler, another Moravian of note, arrived in England. Much about the same time Mr. John Wesley returned from Georgia. Peter cultivated an acquaintance with the two brothers, and seems to have laboured hard for their *conversion*. This gentleman appears to me to have been strongly tinctured with German enthusiasm. With much zeal for protelytism, he appears to have drank largely at the Bourignonian spring of mystical speculation, and fancied illuminations. He was now at Oxford with Mr. Charles Wesley, pressing upon the moral and regular scholars the necessity of *conversion*. But, as Dr. Whitehead observes, none of them seemed to understand him.

Mr. Charles Wesley being taken dangerously ill of a pleurisy, he requested Peter Bohler to pray for him. Peter hesitated: but at length, beginning faintly, he prayed for his recovery with *strange confidence*. He then took him by the hand, and calmly said, "You will not die now!!" What information Bohler could have received concerning this matter, it is not for you or me, Madam, to inquire. He asked his sick friend if he hoped to be saved. This question seems to have been put for a similar reason to that of a bad poet, who often writes one line for the sake of producing a jingle by another.

He foresaw that Mr. Wesley would answer his question in the affirmative, and immediately on this being the case, asked, "For what reason do you hope to be saved?" "Because," replied the worthy sick man, "I have used my best endeavours to serve God." The enthusiast shook his head, and was silent. Mr. Charles Wesley happily recovered, and confirmed the pious prognostications of his Moravian confessor.

Observe, Madam, the progress of Methodism! Remark the development of those speculations which, since the effervescence of puritanism was blown off the minds of our countrymen, had been almost wholly forgotten in these islands.

On the 25th of April, the two brothers, with a Mr. Broughton, and Mrs. Delamotte, fell into a warm dispute, whether conversion was gradual or instantaneous. Mr. John Wesley, being of a more sanguine disposition than his brother, very positively contended for the latter; and shocked his brother Charles, by producing some late instances of gross sinners being *converted in a moment!* So warm was Mr. John in his defence of this strange notion, that both his brother and Mrs. Delamotte found it impossible to stay any longer in the room! Mr. Charles, however, soon came over to his brother's opinion on the subject, and contended that sinners may be born again in the twinkling of an eye. This, Madam, will not appear so very strange, when

you are informed, that to attain this great end of instantaneous conversion, or indeed of any conversion at all, according to the opinion of a Methodist, a certain sort of faith is requisite; a kind of preparatory, accommodating, and initiatory principle or notion. But I will speak of this, when I come to treat of the *doctrines* of the Wesleyans. In the mean time, I must inform you, that after all the virtuous toil of the two Wesleys, during a period of nearly ten years, they were both well convinced, that as yet *they had not the faith of the gospel!* This great defect in the minds of these two zealous ministers, it seems, was owing to a want of *clear views of Christ*, and of a *living faith in him*. Accordingly, being very sincere, every thing that agonizing prayer, bodily mortifications, assisted by Haliburton, Martin Luther, and Peter Bohler, could do, was employed to effect the speedy conversion of Messrs. John and Charles Wesley. The time, however, was happily drawing near, when they should emerge from Egyptian darkness; when the candle of the Lord should shine upon them—the radiance of divine truth enlighten them; when the long black list of real or imaginary transgressions being removed, they should receive beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. I hasten, Madam, with pleasure, to the relation of so desirable an event.

This, however, is a most delicate matter to touch upon; and as I would not misconceive or misrepresent these facts, I will give you the account in their own or their friends' words.

Mr. Charles Wesley was the first of the two that was *set at liberty*. This was in Whitsuntide, about three days prior to the spiritual deliverance of his brother John. Of Charles's conversion, Dr. Whitehead writes as follows—

“ On Whitsunday, May 21, he waked in hope and expectation of soon attaining the object of his wishes, the knowledge of God reconciled in Christ Jesus. At nine o'clock, his brother and some friends came to him, and sung a hymn suited to the day. When they left him, he betook himself to prayer. Soon afterwards, a person came and said, in a very solemn manner, ‘ Believe in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and thou shalt be healed of all thine infirmities.’ The words went through his heart, and animated him with confidence. He looked into the scripture, and read, ‘ Now, Lord, what is my hope? truly my hope is even in thee.’ He then cast his eye on these words, ‘ He hath put a new song into my mouth, even thanksgiving unto our God: Many shall see it and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.’ Afterwards he opened Isaiah, xl. 1. of Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith our God; speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished; that

her iniquity is pardoned ; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.' In reading these passages of scripture, he was enabled to view Christ as set forth to be a propitiation for *his sins*, through faith in his blood, and received that peace and rest in God which he had so earnestly sought.

“ The next morning he waked with a sense of the divine goodness and protection, and rejoiced in reading the 107th psalm, so nobly descriptive, he observes, of what God had done for his soul. This day he had a very humbling view of his own weakness ; but was enabled to contemplate Christ in his power to save to the uttermost, all those who come unto God by him. Many evil thoughts were suggested to his mind, but they immediately vanished away. In the afternoon, he was greatly strengthened by these words, in the forty-third chapter of Isaiah, which he saw were spoken to encourage and comfort the true Israel of God, in every age of his church—‘ But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not : for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the

Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.”

Such, Madam, is the account given by Mr. Charles Wesley of his conversion. I forbear, at present, to make any remarks or observations on this event and the mode of its procedure, and hasten to lay before you the state of Mr. John Wesley's case under similar circumstances.

Wednesday, May the 24th, he writes thus—

“ I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words, ‘ There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.’

“ Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, ‘ Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.’ In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, ‘ Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord ! Lord, hear my voice,’ &c.

“ In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ—Christ alone—for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my*

sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.

“ I began to pray with all my might, for those who had in a more especial manner *déspitefully* used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there, what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, ‘ This cannot be faith, for where is thy joy?’ Then was I taught, that *peace and victory over sin, are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but, that as to the transports of joy, that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsels of his own will.*”

You have now, Madam, a faithful account of the conversion of these two well-meaning and pious clergymen. It would be improper, probably rash and presumptuous, to make any further observations on this matter: I therefore subscribe myself,

Your's, &c.



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LETTER XI.

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*Third Period of Methodism—Orders of a Religious Society—Mr. Wesley doubts of his Conversion—Visits Germany.*

DEAR MADAM,

“*MI frater, mi frater, excoquenda est ista tua philosophia:*”—My brother, my brother, that philosophy of your’s must be purged away: So said Peter Bohler to Mr. John Wesley, who could not easily exclude the use of his reason in matters of religion. We have, however, seen that the philosophy of Mr. Wesley did not finally prevent his *conversion*. After that event Methodism began to spread most astonishingly—Many run to and fro, and knowledge was increased.

You are not to understand, Madam, that the two brothers were the *first* that, about this time, stepped into the glorious liberty of Moravian Methodism. Many others had already been *set at*

*liberty*; and in particular, Mr. Hutchins, of Pembroke College, and a Mr. Fox, who were “two living witnesses, that God *can*, at least, if he *does* not always, give that faith whereof cometh salvation, in a moment, as lightning falling from heaven!” These, with the two brothers, and about forty others, had formed themselves into a society which met in Fetter-lane every Wednesday evening, that they might enjoy free conversation, and build each other up in the faith. Mr. Wesley, in his Ecclesiastical History, calls this the *third* period of Methodism. It was the first Methodist society in London, since the days of Puritanism: a society wherein was as much zeal, and as much piety, with less rebellion and less treason, than that which, about two hundred years before, met at Essex-house, in the Strand; when the fallen, the degraded, the infatuated favourite of Elizabeth, employing religion to the basest of purposes, laid up for himself (not like our Methodists in Fetter-lane, who devoutly sought a crown of righteousness) a treasure of wrath, which brought him to utter destruction, and gave the lie to all his religious pretensions. No, Madam, whatever similarity is discoverable in the religious notions, and pious practices, of the Puritans and Methodists, I am convinced there is a very material difference in their politics.

The following are the Rules by which the Society I am speaking of was governed; and were entitled—

“ORDERS of a RELIGIOUS SOCIETY, meeting in Fetter-lane; in obedience to the Command of God by St. James, and by the Advice of Peter Bohler.” These Rules being printed, it was agreed,

“1. That they would meet together once in a week, to confess their faults one to another, and to pray for one another, that they might be healed.

“2. That others, of whose sincerity they were well assured, might, if they desired it, meet with them for that purpose.

“3. That the persons, so meeting, should be divided into several bands, or little companies, none of which should consist of fewer than five, or more than ten persons.

“4. That some person in each band should speak to the rest in order, and be called the leader of the band.

“5. That each band should meet twice a week; once on Monday evening, and the second time as might be most convenient; every meeting to be begun and ended with singing and prayer.

“ 6. That every one in order should speak as freely, plainly, and concisely, as he could, the state of his heart, with the several temptations and deliverances since the last time of meeting.

“ 7. That all the bands should have a conference at eight every Wednesday evening, begun and ended with singing and prayer.

“ 8. That any who desired to be admitted into this society, should be asked, ‘What are your reasons for desiring this? Will you be entirely open, using no kind of reserve? Have you any objection to any of our orders?’

“ 9. That any one might make objections to any new member that should be proposed.

“ 10. That those against whom no reasonable objection appeared, should, in order for their trial, be formed into one or more distinct bands, and some person agreed on to assist them.

“ 11. That after two months’ trial, if no objection then appeared, they might be admitted into the society.

“ 12. That every fourth Saturday should be observed as a day of general intercession, which might continue from twelve to two, from three to five, and from six to eight.

“ 13. That on the Sunday sevensnight following, there should be a general *love feast*, from seven till ten in the evening.

“ 14. That no particular person should be allowed to act in any thing contrary to any order of this society; but that every one, without distinction, should submit to the determination of his brethren: and that if any person or persons did not, after being thrice admonished, conform to the society, they should no longer be esteemed as members.

“ 15. That any person whom the whole society should approve, might be accounted a corresponding member, and as such be admitted to the general meetings, provided he corresponded with the society at least once a month.”

These, Madam, are the regulations which constitute the basis of the whole Methodist economy to the present day. “ It would have been happy,” says Dr. Whitehead, “ for the Methodist societies, if these rules had been preserved among them, and rigorously kept: the work would in that case have been more pure than it has been, and much confusion would have been prevented.” A very just and rational observation.

It was a natural consequence, that, shortly after his *conversion*, Mr. Wesley should be attacked by various doubts, and by internal as well as external conflicts. The revoltings of his sub-

jected reason; the natural love of entire intellectual liberty; and the suggestions of friends and enemies all conspired to “*saw asunder*” his tender mind. The *conversion* of so good a man as Mr. Wesley could not be so perceptible as to admit of no doubt. Having no other *data* on which to build the certainty of his *acceptance with the Beloved*, than the fallible testimony of supposed internal feelings, or remote inferences from the scriptures, it was very often a matter of great doubt with him whether he even yet possessed the right faith; whether even yet God had pardoned his sins. Having myself known something of this wretched state of mind—this miserable halting between two opinions—I most sincerely pity the unhappy victims of such spiritual scepticism. The following stanzas, being part of a hymn composed by one under the influence of these doubtings, will give you a faint idea of this state of misery and suspense—

“ ’Tis a point I long to know,

Oft it causes anxious thought,

Do I love the Lord, or no?

Am I his, or am I not?

If I love, why am I thus?

Why this dull and helpless frame?

Hardly, sure, can they be worse

Who have never heard his name.

Could my heart so hard remain?  
 Prayer a task and burden prove?  
 Every trifle give me pain,  
 If I knew a Saviour's love?

When I turn my eyes within,  
 All is dark, and vain, and wild:  
 Fill'd with unbelief and sin,  
 Can I deem myself a child?

If I pray, or hear, or read,  
 Sin is mix'd with all I do:  
 Ye who love the Lord indeed,  
 Tell me, is it thus with you?"

Such, Madam, is the lamentable state of mind which generally follows the overflowings of joy, the divine ecstasies, the rapturous delights, of instantaneous conversion; and such was the humiliating condition of Mr. John Wesley. They are the after-pains of the new birth—the melancholy forebodings of an honest but fearful heart.

Never man was more desirous of building on a sure foundation in religion than was Mr. John Wesley. That he might be strengthened in his mind, by the example and advice of the Moravian brethren, he determined to visit Germany; where, at Hernhuth in particular, he would meet with many who had long trodden in these paths, and who would rejoice to be the

helpers of his joy. Accordingly, he left his mother, and embarked at Gravesend, accompanied by Mr. Ingham, on the 15th of June, and landed at Rotterdam. On his journey through Holland and Germany, he found several who had imbibed the same notions of religion with himself. At Marienborn, he met with Count Zinzendorf, Count de Solmes, and several other eminent Moravians, who all encouraged him to proceed in his spiritual course without wavering. At Hernhuth, where he arrived on the 1st of August, he staid a fortnight. At this place, he says, he was "exceedingly comforted and strengthened by the conversation of this lovely people," and that he "returned to England more fully determined to spend his life in testifying the gospel of the grace of God." "I would gladly," says he, "have spent my life here; but my Master calling me to labour in another part of his vineyard, on Monday, August the 14th, I was constrained to take my leave of this happy place."

"Oh!" he exclaims, "when shall THIS Christianity cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea!"

Soon after his return to England, he entered upon a strict examination of himself and the grounds on which he had reason to believe himself to be *a new creature*. Taking St. Paul's



assertion, that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, as the test of this examination, he proceeded to notice *five* particulars in which it was necessary such a one should be renewed, who is a new creature. These were—his judgments, his designs, his desires, his conversation, and his actions. The first of these particulars he subdivided into three separate branches—a man's judgment of himself, of happiness, and of holiness. Before a man can be said to be a new creature, "he must judge of himself to be altogether fallen short of the glorious image of God; to have no good thing abiding him, but all that is corrupt and abominable; in a word, to be wholly earthly, sensual, and devilish; a motley mixture of beast and devil!!" It is hardly credible, Madam; but Mr. Wesley adds, "Thus, by the grace of God in Christ, I judge of myself. Therefore I am, in this respect, a new creature!"

He proceeded with the other parts of his examination in like manner; and concludes thus—"Upon the whole, although I have not yet that joy in the Holy Ghost, nor the full assurance of faith, much less am I, in the full sense of the words, in Christ a new creature; I nevertheless trust, that I have a measure of faith, and *am accepted in the Beloved*. I trust the hand-writing that was against me is blotted

out, and that I am reconciled to God through his Son."

Such was the half-doubting, half-confidential, language of Mr. Wesley, even after his return from visiting the pious and well-experienced Hernhutters.

I am, &c.

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LETTER XII.

*Increase of Methodism—Specimens.*

DEAR MADAM,

It is wonderful to remark with what rapidity the new faith began to spread itself in London, Oxford, and Bristol. On the 13th of October, Mr. Wesley writes from Oxford to some of his friends in Holland and Germany, giving them an account of the success of his labours since his return. Permit me, Madam, to transcribe part of these letters, for your information, concerning this business.

To Dr. Koker he writes thus: "God's blessed Spirit has wrought so powerfully, both in London and Oxford, that there is a general awakening, and multitudes are crying out, 'What must we do to be saved?'" To Mr. Ingham, at Hernhuth, he writes thus: "A great and effectual

door is opened ; and we continue, through evil report and good report, to preach the gospel of Christ to all people, and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. Indeed, he hath given us many of our fiercest opposers, who now receive with meekness the ingrafted word. One of the bitterest of them could have no rest in his spirit, till, on Saturday, the 30th of September, Old Style, he was compelled to send for me, who knew him not, so much as by face, and to tell me the secrets of his heart." This man confessed himself in the most abject manner, declaring among other evils, that, the very night before, he had been guilty of gross drunkenness, notwithstanding his strong and repeated resolutions to the contrary. Mr. Wesley adds—"We fell on our knees, and besought our Lord to bring this sinner unto God, who through his blood justifieth the ungodly. He arose, and his countenance was no longer sad ; for he knew, and testified aloud, that he was passed from death unto life, and felt in himself that he was healed of his plague. And from that hour to this, he hath peace and joy in believing, and sin hath no more dominion over him !

"Mr. Stonehouse hath at length determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified ; and to preach unto all remission of sins through faith in his blood. Mr. Hutchins is

strong in the faith, and mightily convinces gainsayers, so that no man hath hitherto been able to stand before him. Mr. Kircher, Gambold, and Wells, have not yet received comfort, but are patiently waiting for it. Mr. Robson, who is now a minister of Christ also, is full of faith, and peace, and love. So is Mr. Combes, a little child, who was called to minister in holy things two or three weeks ago. Indeed, I trust our Lord will let us see, and that shortly, a multitude of priests that believe. My brother and I are partly here, and partly in London, till Mr. Whitefield, or some other, is sent to release us from hence."

To Count Zinzendorf, at Marienborn, Mr. Wesley writes, that the love and zeal of the brethren in Holland and Germany had stirred up many who would not be comforted till they came to partake of the great and precious promises.

"To the Church of God which is in Hernhuth, John Wesley, an unworthy presbyter of the Church of God in England, wisheth all grace and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. October 14th.

"Fourteen were added to us since our return, so that we have now eight bands of men, consisting of fifty-six persons."—"As yet we have only two small bands of women, the one of three, the other of five, persons. But here are many

others who only wait till we have leisure to instruct them."

"Though my brother and I are not permitted to preach in most of the churches in London, yet, thanks be to God, there are others left, wherein we have liberty to speak the truth as it is in Jesus. Likewise every evening, and on set evenings in the week, at two several places, we publish the word of reconciliation, sometimes to twenty or thirty, sometimes to fifty or sixty, sometimes to three or four hundred persons, met together to hear it. We begin and end all our meetings with singing and prayer; and we know that our Lord heareth our prayer, having more than once or twice, and this was not done in a corner, received our petitions in that very hour."

"Ten ministers I now know in England who lay the right foundation."—"Over and above whom, I have found one Anabaptist, and one, if not two, of the teachers among the Presbyterians here."

In another letter, to Dr. Koker, he says—"The harvest is plenteous, and the labourers few; and it increases upon us daily." To Mr. Viney, at Ysselstein—"After a long sleep, there seems now to be a great awakening in this place also. The Spirit of the Lord hath already shaken the dry bones, and some of them stand up and live. But I am still dead and cold; having

peace indeed, but no love or joy in the Holy Ghost. O, pray for me! that I may see and feel myself a sinner," &c.

These short extracts, Madam, will afford you some information respecting the spread of *the work* after Mr. Wesley's return from Germany. You will also thereby become a little acquainted with the vocabulary of Methodism. To one unaccustomed to the technical phraseology of these people, many of their writings are as unintelligible as the poems of Burns or Allan Ramsay to a merely English ear—a glossary being almost as necessary in the one case as in the other. Even the language and style of the scriptures, with a methodistical application, become as dark and mysterious, as the newly-coined phrases by which the writings and conversation of Methodists are so much obscured. Mr. Wesley, however, spoke much better *English* than did many of his followers.

During his residence in Germany, and Mr. Whitefield's in America, *the work of Methodism* had been making rapid advances in England, under the auspices of Mr. Charles Wesley. Numerous societies were formed in London, Oxford, and Bristol; and multitudes were *brought in*; instantaneous conversions became common; extravagances of the most marvellous nature were practised; and dreams, visions, sudden illuminations, and extraordinary agitations of

mind and body, gave witness that a great out-pouring of the spirit was soon to be expected.

When Mr. Whitefield returned from America, and Mr. Wesley from Germany, they found things in this flourishing state. The church of God in Fetter-lane continued to grow in number and grace almost beyond all former precedent; and letters of thanks, or of petition, were daily received from those who had found, or were eagerly seeking, the pearl of great price. Those who could not write themselves (this was a very numerous class), got their friends to do it for them; and with one consent, the believers and the penitents were looking for the great salvation. Please to take the following as a specimen of what was at that time going forward among the faithful—

At a love-feast in Fetter-lane, “About three in the morning,” says Mr. Wesley, “as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his majesty, we broke out with one voice—*We praise thee, O God! we acknowledge thee to be the Lord!*” After this specimen, and I do assure you it is one of the most favourable I could have given you, you will not be sur-



prised that many of the churches should have been shut against the Wesleys, which indeed now began to be very generally the case. I cannot avoid, Madam, presenting you with another specimen or two of methodistical raptures, which I have just met with in one of the books sold by the Methodists at their own preaching-houses, and therefore may be relied upon as authentic. They form, says the Editor, part of nearly three thousand quarto MS pages, written by a Miss Roe, of Macclesfield.

“I was so happy in the night,” says Miss Roe, “that I had very little sleep, and awoke with these words—‘The temple of indwelling God!’ My soul sunk into depths of nothingness, and enjoys closer union with him this day than ever before. Every moment I feel such a weight of love, as almost overpowers the faculties of nature! I know I could bear no more and live; but I often feel ready to cry, O, give me more, and let me die!”

“At preaching this morning, I was so overcome with the love and presence, and *exceeding glory of my TRIUNE GOD*, that I sunk down, unable to support it! I was long before I could stand or speak! All this day I have been lost in depths unutterable: At the love-feast, I was again overwhelmed with his immediate presence! All around me is God!”

Again—"As I came from meeting, I was so overpowered with the presence of God, that had not a friend supported me, I could not have walked home! I was lost in depths of love, and admitted, as it were, into the *immediate* presence of my Lord's glory! Yet, I cannot explain it—for I saw no *manner of similitude*."

Again—"At the prayer-meeting, my body was quite overcome for half an hour together; so did my Lord unfold his fulness to my ravished soul, I seemed as in the presence of his glory, confounded, and overwhelmed with a sense of his purity, his justice, his grace, and love! and was constrained to lie at his feet, in speechless adoration and humblest praise—while my body was covered with a cold sweat, and all around thought I was dying!"

Excuse, Madam, another specimen, and I will have done for the present—"Mr. P. preached from, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you!' Before he had spoken ten minutes, I was filled with the *Triune God*, and sunk motionless, under an exceeding great weight of love! My outward senses were locked up; but my spirit seemed surrounded with glory inexpressible! I beheld Jesus, and was, as it were, overshadowed, and weighed down by the presence, and exceeding

glory of the whole Deity! I knew not where I was, or whether *in the body*! But all was unutterable bliss and glory! After I came to myself, I continued full of the divine presence, and a weight of love, such as enfeebled my whole frame. For many days and nights, I could eat little; and had seldom more than one hour's sleep in twenty-four!"

Mrs. N——— knew this young lady, and can remember her coming often to her father's, to hold meetings with those after her own heart. She was the daughter of a respectable clergyman, and was as exemplary in her life as enthusiastical in her religion.

You will excuse the above extracts being inserted a little out of the chronological order of my history. I make them to let you see the manner in which the doctrines of the Methodists do sometimes operate on the human mind.

In the spring of 1739, Mr. Whitefield went down to Bristol, and there began to preach to incredible numbers of people. Mr. Wesley continued his labours in London and Oxford alternately. The latter end of March he received a letter from Mr. Whitefield, who entreated him in the most pressing manner to come to Bristol, that he might step into the new path which now lay open before him. After some hesitation, he consented to yield to Mr. Whitefield's solicitations, notwithstanding the remonstrances

of his brother Charles, and others, to the contrary. It was a rule of the society, "that any person who desired, or designed, to take a journey, should first, if it were possible, have the approbation of the bands." "So entirely," exclaims Dr. Whitehead, "were the ministers, at this time, under the direction of the people!" On the 20th, the matter was laid before them, and after some deliberation, they determined that he should comply with Mr. Whitefield's request. He left London the next day, and on the 31st reached Bristol.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XIII.*

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*“ A Shaking among the dry Bones ”—Dialogue  
between Mr. W. and the Bp. of Bristol.*

DEAR MADAM,

MR. WHITEFIELD having left Bristol, Mr. Wesley began to expound, to a small society, meeting in Nicholas-street, the sermon on the mount. On “Monday, April 2,” says he, “I submitted to be *more vi'e*, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people.”

This preaching was attended with extraordinary success; and many societies were soon formed on a plan similar to those in London.

Mr. Wesley's labours through the week were divided in the following order:—Every morning he read prayers and preached at Newgate. Every evening he expounded at one or more of

the societies. On Monday, in the afternoon, he preached abroad near Bristol. On Tuesday, at Bath and Two mile-hill alternately. On Wednesday, at Baptist-mills. Every other Thursday, near Pensford. Every other Friday, in another part of Kingswood. On Saturday in the afternoon, and Sunday morning, in the Bowling-green. On Sunday, at eleven, near Hannam-mount; at two, at Clifton; at five, at Row-green. All this labour of mind and body could not but become visible in its effects; and as Mr. Wesley's discourses were of the most urgent and searching nature, those effects were, perhaps, such as the world never heard of or saw before. To give a statement of these facts will, I fear, seem to have been done with an intention to throw ridicule upon the persons concerned; and a desire of bringing the Methodists into contempt; than which nothing is farther from my wishes. Impartiality, however, demands, that I give some account of the visible effects of Mr. Whitefield's and Mr. Wesley's preaching at Bristol, and other places. In my last, I gave you one or two specimens of these things: take the following as the complete climax of enthusiasm—the marvellous effects of the power of imagination when exercised on the awful subjects of religion.

“ Under the sermon, some persons trembled from head to foot: others fell down, and cried out

out with a loud and bitter cry; whilst others became speechless, and seemed convulsed as if in the agonies of death. After prayer for them, many rose up rejoicing in God, and testifying they had redemption through the blood of Christ, even *the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*. Some afterwards said, they had a strong representation of Christ to their mind at that time; that it seemed like a vision of him, *evidently set forth crucified among them*: and that moment they were enabled to believe on him. Others pretended they had a similar representation of him in a dream, and through faith received the remission of sins."—

“A woman suddenly cried out, as in the agonies of death, and continued to do so for some time, with all the signs of the sharpest anguish. One felt as it were the piercing of a sword, and could not avoid crying out even in the street. Two others were constrained to roar, as seized with great pain; another as out of the belly of hell. A young man, suddenly seized with violent trembling all over, sunk down to the ground. One, and another, and another, sunk to the earth. They dropped on every side as thunderstruck. One was so wounded with the sword of the Spirit, that you would have imagined she could not live a moment. A woman broke out into strong cries, great drops of sweat ran down her face, and all her bones shook. A

Quaker dropped down as thunderstruck, in an agony terrible to behold. Another person reeled four or five steps, and then dropped down. One fallen raving mad, changed colour, fell off his chair, screamed terribly, beat himself against the ground, his breast heaving as in the pangs of death, roaring out, 'O thou devil! legions of devils!' &c. Three persons, almost at once, sunk down as dead. A little boy was seized in the same manner; a young man, fixing his eyes upon him, sunk himself down as one dead, and beat himself against the ground; six men could scarce hold him. Others began to cry out, insomuch that all the house (and indeed all the street for some space) was in an uproar. Some were so torn with convulsive motion, in every part of their bodies, that four or five persons could not hold one of them. While I was speaking, one dropped down as dead; presently a second, and a third. Five others sunk down, most of them in violent agonies, in the pains of hell and snares of death; one an hour in strong pain; one or two more, for three days."

This, and an immense quantity of the like matter, is to be found in the journals of Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield; and such, Madam, are the materials on which the historian of Methodism is doomed to work.

You will doubtless ask, And did Mr. Wesley actually encourage this enthusiasm? Not, I am



happy to say it, in every instance: he would often exclaim against it in terms of just severity. Mr. Wesley was, however, sometimes too credulous concerning these extravagances, as appears by the following shocking relation. This was of a young woman, about nineteen years of age, that could neither read nor write. She was held in bed by two or three persons, with anguish, horror, and despair, above description, in her pale face. "A thousand distortions," says Mr. Wesley, "shewed how the dogs of hell were gnawing her heart. She shrieked, and screamed out, 'I am damned! damned! Six days ago, you might have helped me. But now it is all past. I am the devil's now: I have given myself to him. His I am. Him I must serve. With him I must go to hell. I *will* be his. I *will* serve him. I *will* go with him to hell. I cannot, I will not be saved. I *must*, I *will*, I *will* be damned!' She then began," continues Mr. Wesley, "praying to the devil. *We* began,

'Arm of the Lord, awake, awake!'

"She immediately sunk down as asleep; but, as soon as we left off, broke out with inexpressible vehemence. 'Strong hearts, break! I am a warning to *you*. *You* need not be damned, though I *must*.' She then fixed her eyes on a corner of the ceiling, and said, 'There he is! Aye, there

he is! Come, good devil! Come, take me away. You said you would dash my brains out. Come, do it quickly. I am your's. I *will* be your's. Come, just now, take me away.' We interrupted her by calling again upon God. We continued in prayer till past eleven; when God, in a moment, spake peace to her soul!"

I feel some apology to be necessary, Madam, for these intrusions on your feelings by the relation of such shocking and abominable scenes. I have done—and most gladly turn to a more pleasing part of the subject.

It must be allowed, that, notwithstanding all these horrid extravagances of raptures and despair, much real good was done. Multitudes of the vilest and most reprobate wretches were brought from a state bordering upon downright barbarism, to become sober, steady, useful members of society; the comfort of their families and friends—the praise and admiration of the wise and the good—the distinguished ornaments of religion and virtue. These instances operated in the most powerful manner on the mind of Mr. Wesley. His grand object was to do good to the bodies and souls of his fellow-creatures; whenever this was in any degree accomplished, he rejoiced greatly; and to forward so good a purpose, he made many painful sacrifices. He most assuredly possessed, in a very high degree, the charity that believeth *all things*;

but his credulity did himself and his cause much injury.

Dr. Priestley, in his Collection of Letters, has furnished the world with an interesting correspondence on these subjects between Mr. John Wesley and his brother Samuel. The last that appears was by Samuel, and is in substance as follows—

“ You yourself doubted, at first, and inquired, and examined about the ecstasies; the matter, therefore, is not so plain as motion to a man walking. But I have my own reason, as well as your own authority, against the exceeding clearness of divine interposition there. Your followers fall into agonies. I confess it. They are freed from them, after you have prayed over them. Granted. They say it is God’s doing. I own they say so. Dear brother, where is your ocular demonstration? Where, indeed, the rational proof? Their living well afterwards may be a probable and sufficient argument that they believe themselves; but it goes no further.”

These are sensible and rational arguments; but they had not, alas! sufficient weight with Mr. J. Wesley, as far as relates to dreams, visions, and agitations; for, some years after this period, Mr. Wesley expressed his opinion more fully concerning those agitations, &c. which attended the conviction of sin under his sermons this summer at Bristol. He supposes, it is easy to

account for them either on principles of reason or scripture.

“First,” says he, “on principles of reason. For how easy it is to suppose that a strong, lively, and sudden apprehension of the heinousness of sin, the wrath of God, and the bitter pains of eternal death, should affect the body as well as the soul, during the present laws of vital union; should interrupt or disturb the ordinary circulation, and put nature out of its course. Yea, we may question whether, while this union subsists, it be possible for the mind to be affected in so violent a degree, without some or other of those bodily symptoms following.

“It is likewise easy to account for these things on principles of scripture. For when we take a view of them in this light, we are to add to the consideration of natural causes, the agency of those spirits who still excel in strength, and as far as they have leave from God, will not fail to torment whom they cannot destroy; *to tear those that are coming to Christ.* It is also remarkable, that there is plain scripture precedent of every symptom which has lately appeared. So that we cannot allow even the conviction attended with these to be *madness*, without giving up both reason and scripture.”

The following conversation, which Mr. Wesley had about this time with the Bishop of Bris-

tol, will afford you a specimen of his mode of defence; and will at the same time exhibit a strong trait in his character. The subject of this conversation was *justification by faith alone*—a doctrine which Mr. Wesley had been taught chiefly by his Moravian brethren, and which he defended with success during the whole of his subsequent life.

*Bishop.*—“ Why, Sir, our faith itself is a good work; it is a virtuous temper of mind.

*Wesley.*—“ My Lord, whatever faith is, our church asserts, we are justified by faith alone. But how it can be called a good work, I see not: it is the gift of God; and a gift that presupposes nothing in us but sin and misery.

*B.*—“ How, Sir! Then you make God a tyrannical being, if he justifies some without any goodness in them preceding, and does not justify all. If these are not justified on account of some moral goodness in them, why are not those justified too?

*W.*—“ Because, my Lord, they resist his spirit; because they will not come to him that they may have life; because they suffer him not to work in them both to will and to do. They cannot be saved, because they will not believe.

*B.*—“ Sir, what do you mean by faith?

*W.*—“ My Lord, by justifying faith, I mean, a conviction wrought in a man by the Holy

Ghost, that Christ hath loved *him*, and given himself for *him*, and that through Christ *his* sins are forgiven.

*B.*—“ I believe some good men have this, but not all. But how do you prove this to be the justifying faith taught by our church ?

*W.*—“ My Lord, from her homily on salvation, where she describes it thus : ‘ A sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.’

*B.*—“ Why, Sir, this is quite another thing.

*W.*—“ My Lord, I conceive it to be the very same.

*B.*—“ Mr. Wesley, I will deal plainly with you. I once thought you and Mr. Whitefield well-meaning men ; but I cannot think so now. For I have heard more of you : matters of fact, Sir. And Mr. Whitefield says, in his Journal, ‘ There are promises still to be fulfilled in me.’ Sir, pretending to extraordinary revelations, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing !

*W.*—“ My Lord, for what Mr. Whitefield says, Mr. Whitefield, and not I, is accountable. I pretend to no extraordinary revelations, or gifts of the Holy Ghost : none but what every Christian may receive, and ought to expect and pray for. But I do not wonder your Lordship has

heard facts asserted, which, if true, would prove the contrary: nor do I wonder that your Lordship, believing them true, should alter the opinion you once had of me. A quarter of an hour I spent with your Lordship before, and about an hour now: and perhaps you have never conversed one other with any one who spake in my favour. But how many with those who spake on the other side! so that your Lordship could not but think as you do. But pray, my Lord, what are those facts you have heard?

*B.*—“ I hear you administer the sacrament in your societies.

*W.*—“ My Lord, I never did yet, and I believe never shall.

*B.*—“ I hear, too, many people fall into fits in your societies, and that you pray over them.

*W.*—“ I do so, my Lord; when any shew, by strong cries and tears, that their soul is in deep anguish, I frequently pray to God to deliver them from it; and our prayer is often heard in that hour.

*B.*—“ Very extraordinary, indeed! Well, Sir, since you ask my advice, I will give it you very freely. You have no business here. You are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore I advise you to go hence.

*W.*—“ My Lord, my business on earth is to do what good I can. Wherever, therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay, so

long as I think so. At present I think I can do most good here: therefore here I stay.

“As to my preaching here, a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me, and woe is me if I preach not the gospel, wherever I am in the habitable world. Your Lordship knows, being ordained a priest, by the commission I then received, I am a priest of the church universal; and being ordained as Fellow of a College, I was not limited to any particular cure, but have an indeterminate commission to preach the word of God in any part of the church of England. I do not therefore conceive, that in preaching here by this commission, I break any human law. When I am convinced I do, then it will be time to ask, ‘Shall I obey God or man?’ But if I should be convinced in the meanwhile, that I could advance the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, in any other place more than in Bristol, in that hour, by God’s help, I will go hence; which till then I may not do.”

I am, &c.



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*LETTER XIV.*

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*Fightings without, and Fears within.*

DEAR MADAM,

THE subject of my last epistle will naturally produce some degree of anticipation concerning the leading features of this. The irregularity of Mr. Wesley's proceedings; his forming religious societies not immediately under the direction of the bishops, nor governed by the canons of the established church; his frequent practice of field-preaching; and, particularly, the encouragement which he now gave to lay-preachers—were thought sufficient causes of alarm and discontent to the careless and the more regular part of his brother clergymen. The spirit of opposition was consequently excited in the minds of all those who either did not understand, or did not approve, the doctrines and practices of the infant sect. Most of the

churches were shut against the Wesleys. Every thing that reason or railing could effect was employed to crush the new faith. The sober part of the clergy lamented, and laboured to check, the rising spirit of enthusiasm; while the lethargic and the vicious employed the base arts of persecution and misrepresentation, to stifle that disposition to inquiry which now began so much to prevail among the people.

Nor was opposition from the enemies of Methodism among its greatest troubles: whilst the societies had fightings without, they were harassed by fears within; and although they increased in number daily, yet did intestine bickerings and misunderstandings begin almost to threaten their existence.

Some of the Fetter-lane brethren embraced the notion, that any Christian might preach and administer the sacraments; and that, in fact, Christianity knew nothing of any distinctive order of men, as spiritual church-officers. These began to trouble the brethren with their speculations, and to disturb their meetings by unseasonable intrusions. The Wesleys, it may well be supposed, set their face against so dangerous a heresy. Shaw, the leader of this faction, although a layman, claimed a right to baptize, &c. and brought several of the members to his own views of the matter. This was early in the year 1739. "I tried in vain," says Mr.

Charles Wesley, "to check Mr. Shaw in his wild, rambling talk against a Christian priesthood. At last, I told him I would oppose him to the utmost, and either he or I must quit the society. In expounding, I warned them strongly against schism, into which Mr. Shaw's notions must necessarily lead them." "I found Mr. Stonehouse exactly right (in his notions on the priesthood), and warned Mrs. Vaughan and Brookmans against Shaw's pestilent errors."—You see, Madam, even the ladies took an active part in the disputes at Fetter-lane.

This notion of Shaw's found its way to Oxford, where it soon produced "dismal effects." Whether those effects were seen to operate on the Oxonian priests, as threatening their craft; or whether their dismal tendency was to unsettle the minds of the lay-brethren, it does not exactly appear. I should suppose, however, that the innovations of Shaw must have been felt both in one instance and the other; for it was soon found necessary to insist upon his expulsion from the society.

Those who had embraced the opinions of Shaw, declared their dissent from the church of England. "Now," says Mr. Charles Wesley, "am I clear of them: by renouncing the church they have discharged me."

But the internal commotions in the methodistical church did not end here: one Bowers,

an enthusiastic zealot, gave much offence, by preaching in the streets of Oxford, &c. and thereby occasioned no small uneasiness to those of the society who had not as yet sufficiently imbibed the spirit of proselytism.

But, which was productive of greater disturbance still, the French prophets made several proselytes, who warmly defended their disgraceful wildness in the society. Mr. Charles Wesley had already been witness to the enthusiasm of one of these fanatics, and had imbibed a great dislike to their spirit and proceedings. Taking up his lodgings one night with a Mr. Hollis, at Wickham, he entertained him with his French prophets, "who," adds Mr. Wesley, "in his account, are equal, if not superior, to the prophets of the Old Testament. While we were undressing, he fell into violent agitations, and gabbled like a turkey-cock. I was frightened, and began exorcising him with, 'Thou deaf and dumb devil,' &c. He soon recovered from his fit of inspiration. I prayed, and went to bed, not half liking my bed-fellow; nor did I sleep very sound, with Satan so near me." I am here reminded of an anecdote I had from a Quaker some years ago.

A zealous Calvinist, and a sober Quaker happened to put up at an inn, where the accommodations were so scanty, as to render it necessary for them to sleep together in the same bed. The

*friend* undressed, and, according to the custom of his religion, *sans cérémonie* got into bed. The Calvinist thought it requisite to pay his evening devotions in an audible manner. He accordingly knelt by the bed-side; and, to humble himself in a suitable degree, run over a list of transgressions, of which, had he been really guilty, would have constituted him not only a grievous sinner before heaven, but a very dangerous bed-fellow for the Quaker. After he had finished writing bitter things against himself, he put down the clothes, in order to get into bed; upon which the honest Quaker, who had listened with horror and astonishment to the black catalogue of his companion's iniquities of heart and practice, rose up, exclaiming, "Nay, friend, if thou art but one half as bad as thou representest thyself to be, I will not on any account sleep in the same bed with thee!" Mr. Wesley, however, had more courage than our Quaker; and he slept all night without receiving any harm from his enthusiastical bed-fellow.

Another great source of discontent in the society, arose from the prevailing untractableness of the Moravian brethren. These were numerous, and were indeed the principal heads of the newly planted church of Fetter lane. They introduced several disputes into the society, about the degrees of faith, and the obligations of Christians *to be still*; and not to mind the

outward means of grace, lest they should be tempted to trust in them.

The Wesleys were now no longer babes in Christ: They were young men—nay, fathers; and needed no more to be fed with the milk of the word; for they were themselves feeding others with strong meat. Although they acted in a manner becoming the most zealous dissenters, yet were they still attached to the ritual of the church of England; and every attempt to dispense with the observance of any of her ordinances, or the belief of what they conceived to be her most distinguishable and glorious doctrines, was attended with very great pain to their minds; and was followed by a steady resolution to prevent, as much as in them lay, any avowed dissent from a church whose glory and happiness they conceived themselves raised up by the Almighty to promote and vindicate. They therefore withstood, with becoming zeal and fortitude, the innovations of Peter Bohler, who, with a Mr. Molther, and some others, seemed determined to controvert the doctrines, and oppose the practices, of the two Wesleys, and those who still adhered to the establishment. These disputes were conducted with considerable warmth on both sides; and finally produced a separation of some of the Methodists and Moravians.

Mr. Wesley, seeing the impossibility of bringing these disputes to a favourable issue, put an end to them in his societies, by reading the following paper, and taking a formal leave of the Moravians.

“ About nine months ago, certain of you began to speak contrary to the doctrine we had till then received. The sum of what you asserted is this: 1. That there is no such thing as *weak faith*: that there is no justifying faith, where there is ever any doubt or fear; or where there is not, in the full sense, a new, a clean heart. 2. That a man ought not to use those ordinances of God, which our church terms *means of grace*, before he has such a faith as excludes all doubt and fear, and implies a new, a clean heart. 3. You have often affirmed, that to search the scriptures, to pray, to communicate, before we have this faith, is to seek salvation by works; and till these works are laid aside, no man can receive faith.

“ I believe these assertions to be flatly contrary to the word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the law and to the testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn: but as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains, but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgment, follow me.”

—“ I then,” adds Mr. Wesley, “ without saying any thing more, withdrew, as did eighteen or nineteen of the society.” Thus terminated a connexion, which had begun in the most ardent, and apparently the most disinterested, esteem and affection; but which was followed by much bitter railing and foul-mouthed calumny.

Mr. Wesley, it seems, had anticipated this event; for, several months previous to its taking place, he, without consulting the society in Fetter-lane, the majority of which were alienated from him, had taken the building which had been formerly used as the King’s foundry for cannon. Here he had often preached to crowded audiences, and to this place he transplanted the church of the Methodists, which now became more than ever under his spiritual superintendence and support.

Another cause of complaint to the societies, originated in the unstable conduct and dubious morals of some of the members. When the first heats of inflamed passion had cooled; when the exuberance of spiritual affection had abated, and the effervescence of love or terror was removed, they returned, like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Instances of this kind were but too numerous, and caused the enemies of Methodism to blaspheme. It therefore required the most prompt and decisive measures to be pursued, to stem the torrent of



so dreadful a flood ; and to prevent that devastation and havoc which any known immorality in the members would infallibly bring upon the whole society. Proper measures were accordingly resorted to ; and the engines of terror, or the mild allurements of persuasion, brought back the straggling sheep ; or drove farther from the fold the detested wolves, which had alarmed the shepherds, and devoured the tender lambs of the flock.

Those disputes which in former times have so successfully preyed upon the vitals of the church—which have overturned states, depopulated villages, and blasted the happiness of thousands, were now beginning to infuse their baneful influence into the infant churches of the Methodists : I mean, Madam, the long-contested controversy about unconditional election, eternal reprobation, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. As yet, however, these controversies had not done much injury to our societies ; but they now begun to portend future calamities and disturbances.

This, Madam, has been altogether a most discouraging and unpromising epistle ; yet be not alarmed for our Methodists ; though the enemy has been busy sowing his tares in different parts, yet has the work of conversion been all the time going on with rapidity. Mr. Whitefield has paid another visit to America, where the new

doctrines are rapidly gaining ground. Mr. John Wesley has sown the seeds of the gospel in Wales; where the fields were already white unto the harvest, and where a most plentiful crop may be expected. The *heathen* at Kingswood, near Bristol, I mean the poor, ignorant, wicked colliers, have heard the glad sound of the truth; and light, and life, and love, and joy, beam on their countenances; while the song of praise is heard from those lips which had hardly ever before been opened but in blasphemies and execrations.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XV.*

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*Methodism extends itself over various Parts of  
the Kingdom.*

DEAR MADAM,

ROUSED by opposition, and encouraged by success, the Wesleyan Christians continued to extend their influence, and spread their name, over various parts of the kingdom. In London, the brethren found encouragement commensurate, one would have thought, with their most sanguine wishes. Agitations, dreams, and supernatural illuminations, increased among the saints, and still gave some little offence to the more sober and prudent; and although these might, in some instances, operate unfavourably, yet did the number of Methodists increase in almost every part of the town; and young persons, chiefly, I believe, servant maids, flocked in

crowds to Mr. Wesley, for information or encouragement in the duties and difficulties of their new character. Mr. Wesley travelled much; his lack of service in town was, therefore, supplied by the zeal of his colleagues, and the flock in London was never without some one to feed them with the food of the gospel. When cases of extraordinary difficulty occurred, recourse was always had, by letter, or by special messenger, to Mr. John Wesley himself, in whatever part of the kingdom he might happen to be at the time.

The practice of *field-preaching* was now become pretty common. At Moorfields, Kennington-common, and other places in the vicinity of London, thousands, and tens of thousands flocked to the ministrations of the Wesleys and their lay-helpers. All restraints of delicacy towards the establishment were fast diminishing; and the opposition of the regular clergy was, in a great measure, overpowered by the zeal, or removed by the virtue, of the new reformers. The judgments of men, concerning the work of Methodism, were directed by the warmth of their passions, by the evidence of their senses, or by the strength of their reason. The humane and the pious, moved with compassion towards the misery of the penitents, or astonished at the ecstasies of the converts, secretly encouraged what they conceived to be so

good a work. The gazing multitude beheld with wonder the effects of Methodism, and forwarded the cause by rioting and conversion. The sober and the rational, regarding the whole as originating in the ebullitions of a heated imagination, and as affecting the people only from the novelty of the scene, quietly looked on the whole business as one of the passing occurrences of the day, which would shortly be superseded by something else more novel and more attractive. It was *the poor* to whom the gospel was preached, and they received the word with gladness.

Mr. Whitefield opened the way to Bristol, which became a kind of nursery for Methodism. He levied contributions on his friends for a methodistical school, and alms-house at Kingswood. He did more; he frightened the poor ignorant colliers of that place, with the most awful denunciations of divine vengeance, and then allured them to peace and sobriety, by promises of pardon here, and of “palms, thrones, rivers of pleasure, trees of life, and the soft melody of golden harps, to ravish their souls, and lull them to eternal rest, in another and a better world!”

When Mr. Whitefield left Bristol and Kingswood, Mr. John Wesley went over to water the good seed of eternal life in the hearts of the poor colliers. With less of the terrors of the law, and

perhaps too with less of the raptures of the gospel, he promoted the civilization of the barbarian inhabitants of Kingswood, reduced them to order, and weaned them by degrees from habits of profaneness and drunkenness, to those of religion and virtue.

Of the rooted ignorance and barbarity of the Kingswood colliers, you may form some idea, Madam, from the following circumstance, which was told me by a gentleman, who has been a travelling preacher more than thirty years, and has often witnessed the fact himself. So much addicted were these colliers to cursing and swearing, in their ordinary conversation, that, even after their conversion, when they had just returned from a religious meeting, they would sometimes exclaim, that they had "had a d—d sweet season!" This most profound ignorance, and its shocking consequence, I should hope were, however, shortly removed by the instructions of their spiritual guides, and the force of better habits.

Mr. Charles Wesley, animated with the accounts he received of the state of affairs at Bristol and the neighbourhood, determined to share those good things with his brother John. Accordingly, on the 28th of August, 1739, he arrived at that city, and soon entered upon the work of the ministry with ardour and success. He contributed largely to the common stock of Method-

ism. Many were *converted* by his exertions, both of the colliers at Kingswood, and of the sober town's people.

On the 11th September, he rode with two friends to Bradford, near Bath, and preached to about a thousand persons. On many of them his harangues had the most powerful effect. On the 25th, the Bradford congregation amounted to about two thousand hearers. I cannot help, Madam, presenting you with part of the *experience* of one of the Bradfordian converts. This was one Sarah Pearce, who "received comfort," while listening to Mr. Wesley's explanation of the fifth chapter of the Romans. "I was extremely bigoted," says this good lady, "against my brethren the dissenters, but am now enlarged towards them and all mankind, in an inexpressible manner. I do not depend upon a start of comfort; but find it increase ever since it began. I perceive a great change in myself; and expect a greater. I find a divine attraction in my soul to heavenly things. I was once so afraid of death that I durst not sleep; but now I do not fear it at all. I desire nothing on earth; I fear nothing, but sin."

I make no apology, Madam, for this short extract: I know you will be charmed with the *experience* of Sarah Pearce; for in her was accomplished all the law and the prophets. O!

ye Gardiners! ye Bonners! of our day—ye, whose zeal for religion is only discoverable when ye seek to persecute others, or when ye exclaim, concerning your own church, “The temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord, are *we!*” When ye talk of faith, and grace, and love, and joy, and heaven and hell, call to mind the *experience* of Sarah Pearce, and let your hearts, like her’s, be ENLARGED TOWARDS ALL MANKIND!

And ye, too, poor, cold, frozen-hearted formalists! and gloomy children of monkish superstition! ye who are dead while ye live! who see no beauty in holiness—find no pleasure, not even in treading *the ways of pleasantness*, nor perceive any comfort in the paths of peace!—let your hearts be expanded with the generous benevolence of Sarah Pearce, and your joy shall abound! O! that all the *Lord’s people* were as this poor woman!

Mr. Wesley’s preaching at Bradford did not, however, always produce such pleasing effects; or rather, the seed, being sometimes sown in stony ground, could not take deep and effectual root. The sons of bigotry—the children of intolerance—raised an idle report that he was a high Calvinist; which laid him under the necessity of publicly declaring his opinion on this head. He did this in such a manner as caused him afterwards to say, that though the devil had



been very busy attempting to hinder his usefulness, he believed that this arch fiend would "no more slander him with being a predestinarian." It is evident, Madam, that so black a calumny could have proceeded from no other, than that slanderous old personage, who "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour!"

About this time he preached in the open air, *by night*, in a yard belonging to a Widow Jones. He observes, "The yard contained about four hundred persons; the house was likewise full. Great power was in the midst of us. Satan blasphemed without, but durst not venture his children too near the gospel, when I offered Jesus Christ to them. The enemy hurried them away, and all we could do was to pray for them." It is somewhat strange, that the prince of darkness should find himself aggrieved by an out-door preaching, *in the night*; especially as he appears to have manifested so much prudence in keeping his children at a becoming distance from the gospel. One would naturally have supposed, that *the night* was the most proper season he could have chosen for carrying on the works of darkness; but, it seems, the *devil* himself is sometimes off his guard; though it must be owned, that, by his blaspheming without, he was not asleep at his post.

In consequence of a pressing invitation, Mr. John Wesley visited the Principality. Though the churches were here also shut against him, yet were his zeal and perseverance repaid by the formation of several societies, and by the affection of the Cambrian converts. "I have seen," says he, "no part of England so pleasant, for sixty or seventy miles together, as those parts of Wales I have been in: and most of the inhabitants are indeed *ripe for the gospel*. I mean, if the expression seems strange, they are *earnestly desirous* of being instructed in it: and as *utterly ignorant* of it they are, as any Creek or Cherokee Indians." Mr. Wesley, having sown the seed in Wales, shortly after left it, for a season, to take root and fructify.

The year 1740 was spent in making new converts, and in adjusting differences, or fomenting fresh causes of disagreement in the Fetter-lane society. I purposely omit, in this place, entering into the disputes on predestination, &c. which took place about this time, occasioned by a printed sermon of Mr. Wesley's against that doctrine.

One Maxfield, who afterwards turned out an accuser of the brethren, and a violent opposer of the Wesleys, had begun to excite the attention of several by his zeal and industry. Maxfield was one of the first laymen that Mr. Wes-

ley regularly employed as a preacher. Of this man, the late Countess Dowager of Huntingdon writes to Mr. Wesley as follows: "I never mentioned to you, that I have seen Maxfield. He is one of the greatest instances of God's peculiar favour, that I know. He has raised from the stones one to sit among the princes of his people. He is my astonishment. How is God's power shewn in weakness! You can have no idea what an attachment I have to him. He is highly favoured of the Lord. The first time I made him expound, expecting little from him I sat over against him, and thought what a power of God must be with him, to make me give any attention to him. But before he had gone over one fifth part, any one that had seen me, would have thought I had been made of wood or stone, so quite immoveable I both felt and looked. His power in prayer is very extraordinary. To deal plainly, I could either talk or write for an hour about him."

This man, whose expounding had such an astonishing effect on the mind and body of the pious Countess, in a few years, fell into the most violent extravagances about perfection, and finally withdrew from the society, and took about two hundred of the members along with him. While he kept in any measure in his senses, he was of wonderful use to the Wesleys, and was instrumental of much good to the Methodists.

During the years 1741 and 1742, many societies were formed in Somersetshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, and Nottinghamshire, as well as in the southern parts of Yorkshire. Those in London, Bristol, and Kingswood, were much increased. The brethren still met with opposition, sometimes with persecution, from various quarters; but every new attempt to check the progress of Methodism, tended only to inflame the zeal, and increase the number, of its advocates. Persecution was considered a certain badge of true discipleship; a genuine characteristic of godliness. *He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.* Such being the advantages of persecution, it is not to be wondered at, that on some occasions the Methodists should count it; that they should provoke it by unseasonable reproofs, and the imposition of useless austerities. The blood of the martyrs had long before this been the seed of the church; and though none of the Methodists had ever to glory in the crown of martyrdom, yet did they profit by the very measures which were taken to destroy them.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XVI.*

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*Formation of the Societies—General Rules—Directions given to the Bands—Schism.*

DEAR MADAM,

ALTHOUGH I have hitherto endeavoured not to be tediously minute in detailing the rise and progress of Methodism, we have already seen thousands made converts to the opinions and practices of the Wesleys, both in our own and in other countries; for the preaching of Whitefield, and others, on the continent, was attended with similar effects to that of their brethren on this side the water. It is, therefore, time you should become acquainted with the progressive organization, and internal economy of the societies.

I have already laid before you the "Orders of the religious Society at Fetter-lane." In

consequence of the disputes with the Moravian brethren, you will remember I informed you, that Mr. Wesley, with his steady adherents, had removed to the Foundery. The Fetter-lane church was consequently soon swallowed up, or dispersed, by the growing influence of the Wesleyans. Those *Orders*, therefore, were no longer formally binding on the societies.

Numerous societies being now formed in various parts of the kingdom, exactly on the same principles, it became requisite, for the better management of so large a body, and for the general consolidation of the whole connexion, to have some General Rules. Accordingly, the two brothers drew up a set of rules which should be observed by the members of all the societies throughout the nation. In the year 1743, these rules were first published under the following title:—"The Nature, Design, and General Rules, of the United Societies in London, Bristol, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, &c." Permit me, Madam, to lay before you an exact copy of these Rules.

*RULES OF THE SOCIETY.*

“ I. IN the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to me in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day), that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together; which, from thenceforward they did every week; viz. on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), I gave those advices from time to time which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suitable to their several necessities.

“ II. This was the rise of the UNITED SOCIETY, first in London, and then in other places. Such a society is no other, than ‘ A company of men having the form, and seeking the power, of godliness: united in order to pray together, to

receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.’

“ III. That it may the more easily be discerned, whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called Classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in every class; one of whom is styled the Leader.—It is his business,

“ 1st, To see each person in his class, once a week at least, in order

“ To inquire how their souls prosper ;

“ To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require ;

“ To receive what they are willing to give, toward the support of the gospel.

“ 2d, To meet the minister and the stewards of the society once a week, in order

“ To inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reproved ;

“ To pay to the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding ; and

“ To shew their account of what each person has contributed.



“ IV. There is one only condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, viz. ‘ *a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.*’ But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shewn by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

“ 1st, By doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind : especially that which is most generally practised. Such as,

“ The taking the name of God in vain :

“ The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying or selling :

“ Drunkenness ; *buying or selling spirituous liquors ; or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity :*

“ *Fighting, quarrelling, brawling ; brother going to law with brother ; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing : the using many words in buying or selling :*

“ The *buying or selling uncustomed goods :*

“ The *giving or taking things on usury, i. e. unlawful interest :*

“ *Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation : particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers :*

“ Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us :

“ Doing what we know is not for the glory of God. As,

“ The *putting on of gold or costly apparel* :

“ The *taking such diversions* as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus :

“ The *singing those songs, or reading those books*, that do not tend to the knowledge or love of God :

“ Softness, and needless self-indulgence :

“ Laying up treasure on earth :

“ Borrowing without a probability of paying : or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

“ V. It is expected of all who continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

“ *2dly*, By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity : doing good of every possible sort, and as far as possible to all men ;

“ To their bodies, of the ability that God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick, or in prison :

“ To their souls, by instructing, reprov-  
ing, or

exhorting all we have any intercourse with: trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine of devils, that, ‘We are not to do good, unless our hearts be free to it.’

“By doing good especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be: employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in business: and so much the more, because the world will love its own, and them *only*.

“By all possible *diligence* and *frugality*, that the gospel be not blamed.

“By running with patience the race that is set before them, *denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily*; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ; to be as the filth and off-scouring of the world; and looking that men should *say all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord’s sake*.

“VI. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

“*3dly*, By attending on all the ordinances of God: such are,

“The public worship of God;

“The ministry of the word, either read or expounded;

“The supper of the Lord;

- “ Family and private prayer ;
- “ Searching the scriptures ; and
- “ Fasting or abstinence.

“ VII. These are the general rules of our societies ; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word, the only rule, and the sufficient rule both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be made known unto them, who watch over that soul, as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways : we will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

“ J. & C. WESLEY.”

*May 1, 1743.*

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To these very excellent Rules, the Conference have since made several important additions, some of which I shall copy, for your information, in a future epistle.

With some requisite alterations in the phraseology of these regulations, they are, generally, deserving of being adopted by all societies of professing Christians ; and it is not the least that

may be said in their favour, that they enjoin no peculiarities of doctrine—no dissocializing quality, arising from subscription to articles of faith, or modes of worship. Their general principles are founded on the broad, the permanent basis of rational Christianity and practical morality. The same, however, cannot, in every instance, be said of the following “Directions given to the Band Societies,” which were drawn up the year after the publication of the General Rules.

DIRECTIONS *given to the* BAND SOCIETIES.

“ YOU are supposed to have the *faith that overcometh the world*. To you, therefore, it is not grievous,

“ I. Carefully to abstain from doing evil: in particular,

“ 1. Neither to *buy* or *sell* any thing at all on the Lord’s-day.

“ 2. To taste no spirituous liquor, *no dram* of any kind, unless prescribed by a physician.

“ 3. To be *at a word* both in buying and selling.

“ 4. To *pawn nothing*, no not to save life.

“ 5. Not to *mention the fault* of any behind his back, and to stop those short that do.

“ 6. To wear no *needless ornaments*, such as rings, ear-rings, necklaces, lace, ruffles.

“ 7. To use no *needless self-indulgence*, such as taking snuff or tobacco, unless prescribed by a physician.

“ II. Zealously to maintain good works: in particular,

“ 1. To *give alms* of such things as you possess, and that to the uttermost of your power.

“ 2. To *reprove* all that sin<sup>d</sup> in your sight, and that in love, and meekness of wisdom.

“ 3. To be patterns of *diligence* and *frugality*, of *self-denial*, and taking up the cross daily.

“ III. Constantly to attend on all the ordinances of God: in particular,

“ 1. To be at church, and at the Lord's table every week, and at every public meeting of the Bands.

“ 2. To attend the ministry of the word every morning (this was always at five o'clock, winter and summer, in all kinds of weather), unless distance, business, or sickness prevent.

“ 3. To use private prayer every day, and family prayer, if you are the head of a family.

“ 4. To read the scriptures, and meditate therein, at every vacant hour. And,

“ 5. To observe, as days of fasting or abstinence, all *Fridays* in the year.”

As far as my observations have extended, the Methodists of the present day do certainly observe, with the greatest degree of exactness, the last of these general directions—that which enjoins them “constantly to attend all the ordinances of God.”

Of the first direction, the second, third, fifth, sixth, and seventh clauses, are not, I believe, uniformly observed: yet I would not have it understood that the Methodists are more culpable in these respects than other professing Christians: the fifth, and perhaps the seventh, clause alone excepted; in the breach of which they are certainly many of them shamefully guilty. The crime of scandal, I believe, is promoted by the very common practice of neglecting to observe the admonition given in the latter of these clauses.

The *particular* Rules by which the bands are governed, and the method of conducting the class and band meetings, I will give you in a future letter.

The formation of these separate societies very naturally suggested some doubts in the mind of Mr. Wesley, whether by encouraging them he was not making a schism in the established church; whether in joining these people to-

ther he was not gathering churches out of churches.

He soon satisfied himself, by the following mode of reasoning:—

“It is easily answered,” says he, “if you mean only gathering people out of buildings called churches, it is. But if you mean, dividing Christians from Christians, and so destroying fellowship, it is not. For, 1. These were not Christians before they were thus joined. Most of them were barefaced heathens. 2. Neither are they Christians from whom you suppose them to be divided. You will not look me in the face, and say they are. What! drunken Christians? Cursing and swearing Christians? Lying Christians? Cheating Christians? If these are Christians at all, they are *Devil Christians* (as the poor Malabarians term them.)—3. Neither are they divided any more than they were before, even from these wretched *Devil Christians*. They are as ready as ever to assist them, and to perform every office of real kindness toward them. 4. If it be said, ‘but there are some true Christians in the parish, and you destroy the Christian fellowship between these and them.’ I answer, That which never existed cannot be destroyed. Which of those true Christians had any such fellowship with these? Who watched over them in love? Who marked



their growth in grace? Who advised and exhorted them from time to time? Who prayed with them and for them as they had need?— This, and this alone, is Christian fellowship: But, alas! Where is it to be found? Look east or west, north or south: name what parish you please. Is this Christian fellowship there?— Rather are not the bulk of the parishioners a mere rope of sand? What Christian connexion is there between them? What intercourse in spiritual things? What watching over each other's souls? What bearing of one another's burdens? What a mere jest is it then, to talk so gravely of *destroying* what never was? The real truth is just the reverse of this: we *introduced* Christian fellowship where it was *utterly destroyed*. And the fruits of it have been, peace, joy, love, and zeal for every good word and work."

You, Madam, I doubt not, with several others, will be apt to suppose, that unless the discipline of the church of England is indeed "a mere rope of sand," the formation of Methodist societies, and particularly the introduction of lay-preaching, was, to all intents and purposes, making a schism in the church as by law established, however low some, or even all, of the members of that church might be fallen as to spiritual matters.

After I have given you some account of several persecutions which took place about this time, I will proceed with a description of all their different species of meetings, both for worship and for business.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XVII.*

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*Persecutions—Miraculous Escapes—Reflections.*

DEAR MADAM,

THE years 1744, 1745, and 1746, were years of alarm and agitation, both to the nation at large and to the Methodists in particular. The Scotch rebellion caused the greatest consternation throughout the kingdom, and prepared the minds of many for the reception of Methodism. Persecutions, however, of the most gross and shameful nature were employed in different parts of the country, to convince the poor Methodists that too much prayer was offensive to God, injurious to the good of the church, and dangerous to the safety of the nation. At Wednesbury, in the county of Stafford; at Sheffield, in Yorkshire, and various other places in the north of England, “the floods lifted up their voice,” and “raged horribly.”

Mr. Wesley published an account of these proceedings, in a little pamphlet, to which he gave this ironical, and very illiberal title—"Modern Christianity; exemplified at Wednesbury, and other adjacent places, in Staffordshire." How difficult it is to divest the mind of every degree of spleen and bitterness, when speaking of the injuries we receive from others!

It would be both tedious and disgusting, to enter into a minute detail of the riots which took place at the towns I have just mentioned. One or two extracts shall suffice.

"I Jonathan Jones, in the county of Stafford, farmer, am willing to pay the king and country their due, might I be at peace, and go about my lawful occasions, as I ought to do.

"On the 20th of June, at my neighbour Adams's house, two or three were singing a hymn, and a parcel of 'prentices and others, in a very rude manner, came and threw many stones through the windows; in particular, Mr. Richard Taylor's 'prentice. So my neighbour John Adams goes to Squire P. and brings a warrant for him; but Mr. Taylor goes to Walsal, to the justice, before the offenders were brought, and he was with Squire P. when we came, who would not act at his own hall, but sent us down into the town; where a great mob was waiting for our coming,

“ So the constable gave him the warrant, and he said, ‘ What ! I understand you are Methodists ? I will not act for you.’ Then he went to the door, and told a great mob, ‘ They might do what they would ;’ and took off his hat, and swung it about, and went away. They gave a great shout, and some of them swore bitterly, they would murder us all. We sent for the constable, to help us out of the town, but he was not to be found. So we staid in the house about two hours, till we thought the mob was gone ; but as soon as we came out, some began to hollow, and the street was quickly full. They beat and bruised us very much ; but through God’s mercy we escaped with our lives.

“ About a week after there arose a great mob at Darlestone, and broke me nine large windows, and many of my goods. The same day my man was coming home with my team, and they met him, and beat him, and much abused my horses. At night they came to break the rest of my goods ; but I gave them money, and they went away.

“ So I was at Richard Dorset’s, our churchwarden, and many of the mob came in and said, ‘ Come now d——n you, Dorset, we have done our work, pay us our wages.’ And I saw the drink come in, in large jugs, and every one drank what he would.”

“James Foster, nailer, Sarah Hires, widow, and Jonathan Jones, had their windows broke and money extorted, to save their houses.

“John Foster, nailer, and Joice Wood, had their windows broke, and their goods broken and spoiled.

“Jos. Spittle, collier, had his windows broke, his house broke open, some goods taken, and some lost.

“William Woods, brick-maker, had his windows broke twice, and was compelled to go along with the rioters.

“Elizabeth Linghem, a widow with five children, had her goods spoiled, her spinning-wheel (the support of her family) broke, and her parish allowance reduced from 2s. 6d. to 1s. 6d. a week.

“Valentine Ambersly, collier, had his windows broke twice, his wife, big with child, abused and beat with clubs.

“George Wynn had his windows and goods broke, and to save his house was forced to give them drink.

“Thomas Day had his windows and goods broke, and was forced to remove from the town.

“Jos. Stubs had his windows broke twice, and his wife so frightened, that she miscarried.”

“The first that came to my house (Thomas Parkes, of West Bramwick) on Tuesday, Feb. 7,

1743, were five with great clubs whom I met at the door. They demanded, ‘Whether I would deny hearing these parsons?’ I told them, ‘No; for I believed they spoke the truth as it is in Jesus; and if I were to deny them, I should deny him that sent them.’ They told me, ‘If I would not they would plunder my house.’ I replied, ‘They must answer it at God’s bar, and I would meet them there.’ I asked, ‘Whether I had done them any harm?’ They said, ‘No; but they would have me keep to the church.’ I told them, ‘Some of you may know that I worship among the dissenters; but I love a good man, let him go where he will, for there is but one church of Christ; and if you do not belong to that church, you had better never have been born.’

“I told them ‘God has allowed me liberty of conscience, and so have the king and parliament, and hope my neighbours will too; but if not, a day is coming, when the persecuted and the persecutor shall stand together; and if you wrong me now, God will right me then.’

“While I was speaking, I caught hold of their clubs, and the words seemed to have some influence on them; but by this time there was a great body of them gathered together; so they broke my windows, and then the door, and flocked into my house, and began to break my goods. But here the Lord suffered them not to go so

far as they had done in other places; for they soon fell to plundering and loading themselves with the things I had for myself, a wife, and seven children.

“However, in a while I had prevailed with some of them to stop. But they then said, ‘I must set my hand to their paper.’ I told them ‘They were cloaked over with the name of Protestants; but none but a Popish spirit would tie men’s consciences.’ So I committed my cause to God, and withdrew from my house and them.”

“Wednesday, October 19, 1744, I John Wesley came to Birmingham, in my way to Newcastle. Thursday, October 20, several persons from Wednesbury earnestly desired me to call there. I yielded to their importunity, and went. I was sitting writing at Francis Ward’s, in the afternoon; when the cry arose, that the Darlestone mob had beset the house. I called together those that were in the house, and prayed, that God would *scatter the people that delight in war*. And it was so; one went one way, and one another; so that in half an hour the house was clear on every side. But, before five, they returned with great numbers. The cry of all was, ‘Bring out the minister.’

“I desired one to bring the captain of the mob into the house. After a few words interchanged,



the lion was as a lamb. I then desired him to bring in one or two more of the most angry of his companions. He did so; and in two minutes, their mind was changed too. I then bade them who were in the room make way, that I might go out among the people. As soon as I was in the midst of them, I said, 'Here I am: what do you want with me?' Many cried out, 'We want you to go with us to the justice.' I told them, 'That I will with all my heart.' So I walked before, and two or three hundred of them followed, to Bentley-hall, two miles from Wednesbury: but a servant came out and told them, 'Justice Lane was not to be spoken with.' Here they were at a stand, till one advised, to go to Justice Persehouse, at Walsal. About seven we came to his house: but he also sent word, 'That he was in bed, and could not be spoken with.'

"All the company were now pretty well agreed to make the best of their way home: but we had not gone a hundred yards, when the mob of Walsal came pouring in like a flood. The Darlestone mob stood against them for a while; but in a short time, some being knocked down, and others much hurt, the rest ran away and left me in their hands.

"To attempt to speak was vain, the noise being like that of taking a city by storm; so they dragged me along till we came to the town, at a

few hundred yards distance ; where, seeing the door of a large house open, I endeavoured to go in ; but a man, catching me by the hair (my hat having been caught away at the beginning), pulled me back into the middle of the mob, who were as so many ramping and roaring lions. They hurried me from thence, through the main street, from one end of the town to the other. I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain or weariness. At the west end of the town, seeing a door half open, I made towards it, and would have gone in ; but a gentleman in the shop would not suffer me, saying, ‘ They would pull the house down, if I did.’ However, here I stood, and asked, ‘ Are you willing to hear me speak ?’ Many cried out, ‘ No, no ; knock his brains out.’ Others said, ‘ Nay, but we *will* hear him speak first.’ I began asking, ‘ What hurt have I done to you ? Whom among you have I wronged in word or deed ?’ And continued speaking till my voice failed. Then the floods lifted up their voice again ; many crying out, ‘ Bring him away, bring him away.’

“ Feeling my strength renewed, I spoke again, and broke out aloud into prayer. And now one of the men, who had headed the mob before, turned, and said, ‘ Sir, follow me : not a man shall touch a hair of your head.’ Two or three more confirmed his words. At the same time,

the mayor (for it was he that stood in the shop) cried out, ' For shame, for shame ; let him go.' An honest butcher spoke to the same effect ; and seconded his words by laying hold of four or five, one after another, who were running on the most fiercely. The people then dividing to the right and left, those three or four men who had spoken before, took me between them, and carried me through the midst, bitterly protesting, ' they would knock down any that touched him.' But, on the bridge, the mob rallied again ; we therefore went on one side, over a mill-dam, and thence through the meadows, till a little after ten, God brought me safe to Wednesbury, having lost only a part of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands."

On this occasion, Mr. Wesley makes the following curious observations :

" I never saw such a chain of providences before, so many convincing proofs that the hand of God is on every person and thing, over-ruling him as it seemeth him good.

" Among these I cannot but reckon the circumstances that follow : 1. That they endeavoured abundance of times to trip me up, as we went down hill, over the wet slippery grass to the town ; as well judging, that if I was once on the ground, I should hardly rise again : but I made no slip, nor the least stumble at all, till I was entirely out of their hands. 2. That al-

though many strove to lay hold on my collar, or clothes, they could not fasten at all; their fingers, I cannot tell how, slipping along, without fixing once: only one man seized the flap of my waistcoat, and took it away with him; the other flap, in the pocket of which was a twenty pound bank note, was torn but half off. 3. That a lusty man, just behind, struck at me many times with a large oaken stick; with which, if he had struck me on the back of the head, I should probably have preached no more: but every time the blow was turned aside, I know not how; for I could not move to the right hand or left. 4. That another man came rushing through the press, raised his arm to strike, let it sink again, and stroking my head, said, 'What soft hair he has? I cannot find in my heart to hurt him.' 5. That I went as streight to the mayor's door, when I was a little loosed, for a few moments, as if I had known it (which they probably thought I did), and found him standing in the shop, which gave the first check to the fury of the people. 6. That no creature (at least within my hearing) laid any thing to my charge, either true or false; having in the hurry, it seems, forgot to provide themselves with an accusation of any kind. And, lastly, That they were equally at a loss what to do with me, none proposing any determinate thing. The cry of most was, 'Away with him, away with him:' of others,

‘ Kill him at once.’ But none so much as once mentioned how ; only one or two (I almost tremble to relate it) screamed out (with what meaning I cannot tell), ‘ Crucify the dog, crucify him.’

“ By how gentle degrees does God prepare us, either for doing or suffering his will ! Two years since, one threw at me a piece of brick, which grazed on my shoulder, but hurt me not. It was a year after, that another threw a stone, which struck me between the eyes ; but the hurt was soon healed ; and still no man had power to lay a hand upon me.

“ At St. Ives, last month, I received one blow, the first I ever had, on the side of the head ; and this night two, one before we came into the town, and one after I was going out into the meadows. But though one man struck me on the breast, with all his might, and the other on the mouth, so that the blood gushed out, I felt no more pain, from either of the blows, than if they had touched me with a straw !!—October 22, 1743.”

It has ever been considered a matter of the greatest astonishment, that the three Hebrew children should pass unhurt through the burning fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar ; and that the presence of Daniel should suspend the savageness, or tame the fury, of a den of lions ;

and yet that a similar miraculous interposition of divine power, when manifested towards Mr. John Wesley, should not excite like sentiments of wonder and astonishment, is somewhat strange indeed. Nothing, surely, but the most invincible incredulity can hitherto have prevented mankind from speaking of this highly-favoured gentleman, in terms of equal admiration with those employed when we contemplate the wonders of Omnipotence, in the deliverance of the pious Hebrews! We read of martyrs, who, in the midst of devouring flames, when the lower extremities of the body have been actually destroyed, have still declared that they felt not the slightest degree of pain; and judging from their appearance and language in those awful circumstances, there seemed some reason to admit the fact. We know not, indeed, how capable the mind of man is, when strongly impressed with religious or philosophical speculations, of sustaining the body under pain. For my own part, Madam, I confess myself not a little sceptical in these matters; and although no one can more sincerely admit the rational doctrine of a divine superintending Providence than I do, yet the idea I have of the eternal laws of order—of the inseparable concatenation of cause and event, prevents me from admitting the probability of such miraculous interpositions as those I have just mentioned.

I mean, Madam, of those relating to our Methodist and the dying martyrs.

The general order, since the whole began,  
Is kept in Nature, and is kept in Man.

From Nature's chain, whatever link you strike,  
Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.

Be these conjectures right or wrong, Mr. Wesley appears to have conducted himself throughout the whole of these grievous sufferings, with the fortitude of a philosopher, and the patient dignity of a Christian. In the most trying seasons, his temper and conduct were such as became one whose duty it was to endure hardness as a good soldier; and whose glory it was to obey the injunction of his great Master, not to return evil for evil; but to imitate him, who when he was reviled, reviled not again; who when he suffered, threatened not:

However the rashness and unbecoming liberties of some of his followers might (which certainly was the case) bring upon themselves the fury of an enraged rabble encouraged by their superiors, Mr. Wesley himself always took care; if possible, to give no unnecessary offence to any one. He well knew how needful it was to act with caution and prudence under the various circumstances in which he was placed, as

a Christian minister, and as the head and chief support of a large party. The sufferings of the Methodists in these parts, as usual, greatly promoted their cause; and multitudes still flocked to the standard of the Wesleyans.

I am, &c.



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*LETTER XVIII.*

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*Conference—Prayer-Meetings—Specimens.*

DEAR MADAM,

FOUR years had now elapsed since Mr. Wesley and his adherents separated from the Moravians at Fetter-lane; and from a very small number, they were now increased to nineteen hundred, in and about London, besides several preachers and a vast increase of private members in different parts of the country. The societies had acquired a tolerable degree of stability; and that Mr. Wesley might have his people, particularly the preachers, more immediately under his supreme control and direction, it was necessary that he should have some general plan of union—some central point of action—where he might personally preside at the helm of affairs, and take such measures with the preachers, or adopt

such regulations in the societies, as the state of existing circumstances would from time to time require. This necessary regulation was adopted by appointing a conference with the preachers. Accordingly, on the 20th of June, 1744, Mr. John Wesley, being in London, he there met his brother Charles, two or three other clergymen, and a few of the preachers whom he had appointed to come from different parts of the country for that purpose. This first Methodist conference was holden on Monday, the 25th of June, and the three following days. A conference of the preachers has been held annually ever since; Mr. Wesley having presided at forty-seven such conferences. The subjects of their deliberations were proposed in the form of questions; which were amply discussed; and the questions with the answers agreed upon were written down, and afterwards printed, under the title of “Minutes of several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and others.” They are now commonly called, “Minutes of Conference.”

Such is a faint outline of the origin of a Methodist conference—a kind of conclave, a synod, or convocation. Before I enter into a minute detail of the proceedings of this general assembly of methodistical divines, I will present you with a regular portrait of the different *meetings*,

or, as the Methodists call them, *means of grace*, which obtain in their connexion.

I wish you, Madam, not to look upon my Letters as designed to convey a strictly regular "Chronological History of the People called Methodists," being superseded in that plan by Mr. Myles. It is not necessary, therefore, that I should be over exact as to the dates when the several regulations, or religious institutions, took place among this people. I will begin with what may be considered an institution of the lowest order—a *meeting* at which every member present may exercise his gift for the spiritual good of all present. This is called a Prayer-Meeting, and is generally conducted in the following manner:—

The prayer-meetings consist of an indefinite number of persons, members of the society and others, and are held at certain given places, in town and country, once every week. The leader is a member of the society, and is supposed to possess a degree of *grace* at least equal to the rest of his brethren. A prayer-leader must also have a good gift in prayer; be active and zealous, and be able to read so as to *give out* the hymns. He must also possess a sufficient degree of talent or boldness occasionally to give a word of exhortation. The meetings generally begin at about eight o'clock in the evening with singing. The prayer-leader, standing in the

middle of the room, reads a line or two of the hymn, which is sung in full chorus by the brothers and sisters present. He then goes to prayer, extemporary of course. He generally begins in a low and solemn tone; as he finds his heart warmed, or his passions fired, he raises his voice, until, in some instances, a prayer leader will address the God of Heaven as if he were deaf, or on a journey, or would not answer any other prayers but such as are loud and boisterous. If the prayer-leader happen to have a remarkably sonorous voice; if he be very fluent of speech; if he have a good memory, and can from that treasure bring forth things new and old, by repeating a long string of real or imaginary texts of scripture; if his language in prayer be more than ordinarily sweet, loving, fiery, enthusiastical, and intoxicating; and above all, if he seem to be in habits of strict intimacy with the Deity, and be able to manifest a very familiar intercourse with Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost;—in such cases, the free spirit of devotion immediately runs from heart to heart, as oil from vessel to vessel. I forbear to relate the confusion, the tumult, the noise, and uproar, which at these times disgrace the order, and scandalize the exercise, of Christian worship.

After the leader has ended the first prayer, the people rise, and he proceeds to *give out* a second hymn. On some of the stanzas he

will often feel himself disposed to expound; during which the people sit down, or continue to stand, as they may find themselves inclined, or as there may happen to be room and seats in the house for such an accommodation. Most of those exhortations which I have heard, have been by no means such as would do honour to the cause of a religious society, or which would have benefitted any other people besides Methodists.

I have more than once observed, that when a prayer-leader has attempted to expound the verse of the hymn which the people were next to have sung, he has rambled so much, or so lost himself, as absolutely to forget that the words he had been expounding the people had not yet heard; and the time being expired before he had finished his harangue, he has given his audience a half-hour's sermon without once having mentioned his text; and the good people have proceeded in their devotions without further singing or exhortation. For instance, the leader, stopping perhaps in the middle of a stanza, would address the people by saying, "My brethren, before we sing the following lines, I feel myself inclined to call your attention to their serious import." He would then proceed to such a length in what he thought exposition, as totally to forget his original subject, and lose himself in wildness and vociferation, till ex-

hausted, with fatigue, he would call upon some Brother, or Sister, to go to prayer;— which call, with several intervals of singing, on their knees, is obeyed by as many as feel themselves impelled to exhibit their powers of utterance by peremptory demands, or coaxing petitions, that the great Father of Heaven would send down his blessing, or himself make one in their assembly. A shaking among the dry bones takes place—the shout of a king is heard in the camp; and as strangers are permitted to be present at these assemblies, it often happens that some are so alarmed at the denunciations, or roused by the fervour, of the brethren, that *they* also begin to cry aloud for mercy; and afterwards become Methodists themselves.

These meetings, when soberly conducted, ought to be concluded in the space of an hour; but when conducted in the manner I have just described, the continuance is wholly *ad libitum*, at the will of the leader; who having opened the meeting, closes it by the usual benediction; and rises to give notice of the next.

The representation I have just given you of a prayer-meeting, will not, in all its circumstances, apply to every one of that kind held by the Methodists. There are numerous honourable exceptions to the wildness I have been describing: and a prayer-meeting, when conducted in a proper manner, with decency and in or

der; is a very rational mode of promoting the cause of true religion; and genuine devotion. I am well aware, that it is by no means the wish of several of the preachers, that any of their meetings should be conducted in a manner unbecoming the Christian profession and character; but I speak of facts; and it is incumbent upon me to represent the Methodists as they really are, and not as their more sober and rational friends could wish them to be. I have not yet attended one of these meetings in town; but in the north of England, where the Methodists are most numerous, the picture I have just sketched is, as every Methodist, were he so inclined, could safely testify, strictly faithful and exact in all its parts;—and that not only among what are called Revivalists, but among the regular members of the society.

By these prayer-meetings two important ends are obtained—that of strengthening the saints, and making of converts. The first of these objects is supposed to be promoted by the opportunities the prayer-meetings give to the exhorters of improving their gifts, and thereby fitting them to become local preachers, should the Lord in his wisdom see good to give any of them a *call* to that high office. It is supposed also, that the members at large, by thus waiting upon the Lord, renew their strength; when they mount as on the wings of eagles; when they run and

are not weary; walk and do not faint. The second object, equally important with the first, is gained in a very great degree by the zeal they manifest, and the attention which they at those times pay to every stranger present.

The hymns selected for the purpose of being used, more especially at the commencement of the meeting, have a wonderful effect on the feelings and passions of the audience. These hymns are to be found in Parts the First and Second of the Hymn-book in use among the Methodists; and are entitled, “Hymns exhorting and beseeching sinners to return to God—Describing the pleasantness of Religion—The Goodness of God—Death—Judgment—Heaven—Hell—Praying for a Blessing—And Hymns describing formal and inward Religion.”

I will here present you with a few specimens of methodistical melody at a prayer-meeting, and leave you to judge what effect it is likely to have upon the minds of the people. The first is a hymn of exhortation, or a kind of metrical invitation to all sinners.

“Sinners, obey the gospel-word!  
Haste to the supper of my Lord:  
Be wise to know your gracious day!  
All things are ready: come away!”



Ready the father is to own,  
 And kiss his late-returning son;  
 Ready your loving Saviour stands,  
 And spreads for you his bleeding hands,

Ready the Spirit of his love,  
 Just now the stony to remove :  
 T' apply, and witness with the blood,  
 And wash and seal the sons of God.

Ready for you the angels wait,  
 To triumph in your blest estate :  
 Tuning their harps, they long to praise  
 The wonders of redeeming grace.

The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
 Is ready with their shining host :  
 All heaven is ready to resound,  
 ' The dead's alive ! The lost is found !'

Come, then, ye sinners, to your Lord,  
 In Christ to paradise restor'd ;  
 His proffer'd benefits embrace,  
 The plenitude of gospel-grace.

A pardon written with his blood,  
 The favour and the peace of God ;  
 The seeing eye, the feeling sense,  
 The mystic joys of penitence :

The godly fear, the pleasing smart,  
 The meltings of a broken heart ;  
 The tears that tell your sins forgiv'n,  
 The sighs that waft your souls to heav'n :

The guiltless shame, the sweet distress,  
 The unutterable tenderness ;  
 The genuine meek humility ;  
 The wonder, ' Why such love to me !'

Th' o'erwhelming pow'r of saving grace,  
 The sight that veils the seraph's face ;  
 The speechless awe that dares not move,  
 And all the silent heav'n of love !"

The excellent and well-known stanzas of Dr. Watts, beginning, " Come, ye that love the Lord," are used as describing the pleasantness of religion. The following lines are also used for the same purpose :

" Happy soul, that, free from harms,  
 Rests within the Shepherd's arms !  
 Who his quiet shall molest ?  
 Who shall violate his rest ?  
 Jesus doth his spirit bear,  
 Jesus takes his every care :  
 He who found the wand'ring sheep,  
 Jesus still delights to keep."

The following also are supposed to be of a similar nature :

" Weary souls, that wander wide  
 From the central point of bliss,  
 Turn to Jesus crucify'd  
 Fly to those dear wounds of his :

Sink into the purple flood ;  
Rise to all the life of God !”

The following stanzas are said to describe the goodness of God :

“ Behold the Saviour of mankind  
Nail'd to the shameful tree ;  
How vast the love that him inclin'd  
To bleed and die for me !

Hark how he groans ! while nature shakes,  
And earth's strong pillars bend !  
The temple's veil in sunder breaks ;  
The solid marbles rend.

’Tis done ! the precious ransom's paid,  
‘ Receive my soul !’ he cries.  
See where he bows his sacred head !  
He bows his head and dies !

But soon he'll break death's envious chain,  
And in full glory shine :  
O ! Lamb of God ! was ever pain,  
Was ever love like thine !”

“ I thirst, thou wounded Lamb of God,  
To wash me in thy cleansing blood ;  
To dwell within thy wounds : then pain  
Is sweet, and life or death is gain.”

“ O love divine ! what hast thou done !  
The immortal God hath died for me !  
The Father's co-eternal Son  
Bore all my sins upon the tree :

The immortal God for me hath died ;  
My Lord, my Love, is crucified !”

“ Come see, ye worms, your Maker die !”

As a specimen of the sublime and terrible,  
please to take the following :

“ DESCRIBING HELL.”

“ Terrible thought ! Shall I alone,  
Who may be sav'd, shall I,  
Of all, alas ! whom I have known,  
Through sin for ever die ?

While all my old companions dear,  
With whom I once did live,  
Joyful at God's right-hand appear,  
A blessing to receive !

Shall I, amidst a ghastly band,  
Dragg'd to the judgment-seat,  
Far on the left with horror stand,  
My fearful doom to meet ?

While they enjoy his heavenly love,  
Must I in torments dwell ?  
And howl (while they sing hymns above),  
And blow the flames of hell ?”

One of the hymns under the head, “ Describ-  
ing Death,” is very excellent in its kind. It was  
written by Mr. Samuel Wesley, brother to the two

Methodists, and has been taken from a quarto volume of poems, written by that gentleman. I close my extracts with this hymn, because I should like to leave a more favourable impression on your mind than I fear the foregoing are likely to produce :

## A HYMN.

“ The morning flow’rs display their sweets,  
 And gay their silken leaves unfold,  
 As careless of the noon-tide heats,  
 And fearless of the evening cold.

Nipt by the wind’s untimely blast,  
 Parch’d by the sun’s directer ray,  
 The momentary glories waste,  
 The short-liv’d beauties die away.

So blooms the human face divine,  
 When youth its pride of beauty shews :  
 Fairer than spring the colours shine,  
 And sweeter than the virgin-rose.

Or worn by slowly-rolling years,  
 Or broke by sickness in a day,  
 The fading glory disappears,  
 The short-liv’d beauties die away.

Yet thou, new rising from the tomb,  
 With lustre brighter far shall shine ;  
 Revive with ever-during bloom,  
 Safe from diseases and decline.

Let sickness blast, let death devour,  
 If Heav'n must recompence our pains:  
 Perish the grass, and fade the flow'r,  
 If firm the word of God remains."

Thus, Madam, have I given you a true description of a prayer-meeting, and of some of the hymns used on those occasions.

All the prayer-leaders are met once every quarter, at least in those parts of the country where I have resided, by the preacher; when inquiries are made as to their character and success.

I am, &c.

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**LETTER XIX.**

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*Of Class-Meetings—Specimens.*

DEAR MADAM,

IN this letter, I purpose giving you some information concerning the origin and nature of what are called Class-meetings.

This is such a very important part of the economy of Methodism, that I must give you a circumstantial account of its origin, which I will do in Mr. Wesley's own words.

“As much,” says he, “as we endeavoured to watch over each other, we soon found that some did not *live the gospel*. I do not know that any hypocrites were crept in; for indeed there was no temptation. But several grew cold, and gave way to the sins which had long easily beset them. We quickly perceived there were many ill consequences of suffering these to re-

main among us. It was dangerous to others ; inasmuch as all sin is of an infectious nature. It brought such a scandal on their brethren, as exposed them to what was not properly the reproach of Christ. It laid a stumbling-block in the way of others, and caused the truth to be evil spoken of.

“ We groaned under these inconveniences long, before a remedy could be found. At length, while we were thinking of quite another thing, we struck upon a method, for which we have cause to bless God ever since. I was talking with several of the society in Bristol, concerning the means of paying the debts there, (which had been incurred by building, &c.) when one stood up and said, ‘ Let every member of the society give a penny a week till all are paid.’ Another answered, ‘ But many of them are poor, and cannot afford to do it.’— ‘ Then, said he, put eleven of the poorest with me, and if they can give any thing, well. I will call on them weekly, and if they can give nothing, I will give for them as well as for myself. And each of you call on eleven of your neighbours weekly : receive what they give, and make up what is wanting.’ It was done. In a while some of these informed me, ‘ they found such and such a one did not live as he ought.’ It struck me immediately, ‘ This is the thing ; the very thing we have wanted so long.’ I



called together all the leaders of the classes, (so we used to term them and their companies) and desired, that each would make a particular inquiry into the behaviour of those whom he saw weekly: they did so. Many disorderly walkers were detected. Some turned from the evil of their ways. Some were put away from us. Many saw it with fear, and rejoiced unto God with reverence.

“ As soon as possible the same method was used in London and all other places. Evil men were detected and reprovèd. They were borne with for a season. If they forsook their sins, we received them gladly: if they obstinately persisted therein, it was openly declared, that they were not of us. The rest mourned and prayed for them, and yet rejoiced, that, as far as in us lay, the scandal was rolled away from the society.

“ It is the business of a leader,

“ I. To see each person in his class, once a week at the least: in order

“ To inquire how their souls prosper;

“ To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require;

“ To receive what they are willing to give, towards the relief of the poor.

“ II. To meet the minister and the stewards of the society, in order

“ To inform the minister of any that are sick,

or of any that are disorderly, and will not be reprov'd ;

“ To pay to the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.

“ At first they visited each person at his own house : but this was soon found not so expedient. And that on many accounts. 1. It took up more time than most of the leaders had to spare. 2. Many persons lived with masters, mistresses, or relations, who would not suffer them to be thus visited. 3. At the houses of those who are not so averse, they often had no opportunity of speaking to them but in company. And this did not at all answer the end proposed, of exhorting, comforting, or reprov'ing. 4. It frequently happened that one affirm'd what another denied. And this could not be cleared, without seeing them together. 5. Little misunderstandings and quarrels of various kinds, frequently arose among relations or neighbours ; effectually to remove which, it was needful to see them all face to face. Upon all these considerations, it was agreed, that those of each class should meet all together. And by this means, a more full inquiry was made into the behaviour of every person. Those who could not be visited at home, or no otherwise than in company, had the same advantage with others. Advice or reproof was given as need required ;

quarrels made up, misunderstandings removed. And after an hour or two spent in this labour of love, they concluded with prayer and thanksgiving."

This, Madam, is Mr. Wesley's account of the origin of class-meetings at Bristol; which branch of Methodism being attended with the most beneficial effects, though instituted at first only to answer a temporary purpose, soon became common throughout the whole connexion; and is at this time the chief support of the methodistical hierarchy. I will, therefore, be still more minute in detailing to you the nature and objects of a class-meeting.

A class-meeting, at present, consists of an indefinite number of persons, generally from twelve to twenty; though sometimes fewer even than twelve. This meeting is designed for the spiritual advantage of members only, or of those that are desirous of becoming such. It is composed either of persons of both sexes, of men only, or of the fair sex. In the two first cases, the leader is always a brother; in the last case, the leader is chosen out of the sisterhood. These meetings are generally holden at private houses, and commence at eight in the evening. The leader having opened the service by singing and prayer, all the members sit down, and he then relates to them his own *experience* during the preceding week. His joys, and his

sorrows; his hopes and his fears; his conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil; his fightings without and his fears within; his dread of hell, or his hope of heaven; his pious longings and secret prayers for the prosperity of the church at large, and for those his brothers and sisters in class in particular. This *experience* is generally concluded with some such language as the following:—"After all, my dear brethren, I still find a determination in my own soul to press forward for the mark of the prize of my high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He is still precious. His word is as ointment poured forth. After all my short-comings—my doubts and anxieties—my wanderings, weakness, and weariness, his spirit still whispers to my heart—'Thou art black but comely. Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it. Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices!' so I still may say to my sweet Jesus—

' I hold thee with a trembling hand,  
And will not let thee go.'

After some such harangue as this, the leader proceeds to inquire into the state of every soul present; saying, "Well sister, or well brother, how do you find the state of *your* soul this evening?" The member then proceeds, without

rising, to unbosom his or her mind to the leader ; not, as has often been said, by particular confession, but by a general recapitulation of what has passed in the mind during the week. Such advice, correction, reproof, and consolation, is then given, as the state of the case may require ; so the leader passes on to the next, and the next, until every one has received a portion of meat in due season.

After this, the leader, or some other on whom he may be pleased to call, gives out a stanza or two of a hymn, which being sung, standing, they proceed with prayer ; when such thanksgivings, deprecations, or petitions, are poured forth as the different *experiences* may have suggested.

Any one is at liberty to exercise the gift of prayer, and no strangers being present, a freer vent is given to the effusions of the mind and the soft meltings of the soul, than is usual at a public prayer-meeting. Those who are still unconverted, or who labour in the pangs of the new birth, lay their unhappy case before God ; and in the most pressing manner, beseech the merciful Jehovah *then* to pity them—at last to lend a willing ear to their complaints—to bow the heavens of his love and come down—to open the bowels of divine compassion towards them—to look upon the bleeding wounds of his suf-

fering Son; and to pardon all their sins upon the consideration of his merits.

Those who are groaning for *full redemption*—who seek to have their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb—who will not be comforted until the last remains of sin are removed from their hearts, and God declares that they “are all fair, that their is no spot in them,” are more than commonly solicitous that the Holy Ghost would come and dwell in their souls without a rival; and that the enemies they had seen that day they should see no more for ever.

For the careless, the formal, and the lukewarm, the most earnest prayers are put up, lest the Almighty, in disgust, should “spue them out of his mouth.” In short, Madam, every case is fully canvassed, and the great Physician of souls is applied to for

A sovereign balm for every wound—

A salve for every sore.

As singing forms a considerable portion of the service at a class-meeting, I must give you one or two specimens of their hymns.

*Praying for Repentance.*

“ Jesu ! my heart’s desire obtain !  
My earnest suit present and gain :  
My fulness of corruption show,  
The knowledge of myself bestow :  
A deeper displacence at sin,  
A sharper sense of hell within :  
A stronger struggling to set free !  
A keener appetite for Thee !”

“ Jesus, on me bestow,  
The penitent desire ;  
With true sincerity of woe  
My aching breast inspire ;  
With softening pity look,  
And melt my hardness down,  
Strike, with thy love’s resistless stroke,  
And break this heart of stone !”

*A Mourner convinced of Sin.*

“ I am all unclean, unclean,  
Thy purity I want ;  
My whole heart is sick of sin,  
And my whole head is faint !  
Full of putrifying sores,  
Of bruises, and of wounds, my soul  
Looks to Jesus ; help implores,  
And gasps to be made whole !”

“ Poor, alas ! thou know’st I am,  
 And would be poorer still,  
 See my nakedness and shame,  
 And all my vileuess feel :  
 No good thing in me resides,  
 My soul is all an aching void,  
 Till thy spirit here abides,  
 And I am fill’d with God.”

“ Friend of sinners ! in thy heart,  
 Tell me, doth there not remain  
 One unarm’d and tender part,  
 Capable of human pain ?  
 Lord, I wait for the reply ;  
 Groan an answer from within ;  
 Tell me, Comforter, that I,  
 I shall be redeem’d from sin.”

“ Look not on me, a beast, a fiend,  
 All wrath, all passion, and all pride ;  
 But see thyself the sinner’s friend,  
 The son of man ; the crucified ;  
 The God, that left his throne above,  
 The bleeding Prince of peace and love.”

*A Mourner brought to the Birth.*

“ I’ll weary thee with my complaints :  
 Here at thy feet for ever lie,  
 With longing, sick ; with groaning, faint :  
 O give me love or else I die !”



*Rejoicing.*

“ My God, I am thine ! What a comfort divine !  
 What a blessing to know that my Jesus is mine !  
 In the heavenly Lamb, thrice happy I am ;  
 And my heart it doth dance at the sound of his name !

True pleasures abound in the rapturous sound ;  
 And whoever hath found it hath paradise found ;  
 My Jesus to know, and feel his blood flow,  
 'Tis life everlasting, 'tis heaven below !

Yet onward I haste to the heavenly feast ;  
 That, that is the fulness : but this is the taste :  
 And this I shall prove, till with joy I remove  
 To the heaven of heavens in Jesus's love !”

“ Ah ! why did I so late thee know,  
     Thee, lovelier than the sons of men ?  
 Ah ! why did I no sooner go  
     To thee the only ease in pain ?  
 Asham'd I sigh, and inly mourn,  
 That I so late to thee did turn !”

*A Believer groaning for full Redemption.*

“ Lo ! on dangers, deaths, and snares,  
     I every moment tread ;  
 Hell without a veil appears,  
     And flames around my head.

Sin increases more and more,  
 Sin in all its strength returns:  
 Seven times hotter than before  
 The fiery furnace burns.

Sin in me, the inbred foe,  
 A while subsists in chains;  
 But thou all thy power shalt show,  
 And slay its last remains;  
 Thou hast conquer'd my desire,  
 Thou shalt quench it with thy blood,  
 Fill me with a purer fire,  
 And make me all like God."

"O, Love! I languish at thy stay!  
 I pine for thee with lingering smart!  
 Weary and faint through long delay:  
 When wilt thou come into my heart?  
 From sin and sorrow set me free,  
 And swallow up my soul in Thee!"

Such, Madam, are the hymns which are often sung on these occasions. They are poured forth in the most soft, soothing, languishing, and melting strains that music is capable of; and music, you know, has charms to soothe a savage breast.

The leader having closed the meeting, in the usual manner, by benediction, proceeds to call over the names of every member present; and to collect what they are disposed to give towards the support of the *work of God*. The

usual sum is one penny each ; but some, who can afford it, pay two-pence, three-pence, or even six-pence, as they may be able, or willing. These several sums are entered on the class-paper: a sheet being provided for that purpose, ruled and divided into columns and squares for every separate account ; the leader himself always contributing his proper share.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XX.*

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*Of Band-meetings—Strictures by the Annual Reviewers—Defended by the Methodists.*

DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE already given you the General Directions to all the bands. I now proceed to lay before you the Particular Rules of the band societies, and to give you some account of the different kinds of band-meetings.

These rules were drawn up by Mr. Wesley, on December 25, 1738, and with few, if any, alterations, are still in force among the Methodists.

“The design of our meeting, is to obey that command of God—‘Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed.’ To this end, we intend,

“1. To meet once a week, at the least.

“ 2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.

“ 3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.

“ 4. To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed, in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting.

“ 5. To end every meeting with prayer, suited to the state of each person present.

“ 6. To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations.

“ Some of the questions proposed to every one before he is admitted among us, may be to this effect—

“ 1. Have you the forgiveness of your sins?

“ 2. Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?

“ 3. Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God?

“ 4. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart?

“ 5. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you.

“ 6. Do you desire to be told of your faults?

“ 7. Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plain and home ?

“ 8. Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you ?

“ 9. Consider ! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you ?

“ 10. Do you desire, that in doing this, we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom ?

“ 11. Is it your desire and design, to be on this and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak every thing that is in your heart, without exception, without disguise, and without reserve ?

“ Any of the preceding questions may be asked as often as occasion offers : the four following at every meeting :

“ 1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting ?

“ 2. What temptations have you met with ?

“ 3. How was you delivered ?

“ 4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be a sin or not ?”

These, Madam, are the rules which govern the *private bands*. A band-meeting is composed of

about four or five persons. The single men meet by themselves; the young, or unmarried sisters, by themselves; and the married members of both sexes in like manner. The time of meeting is as may best suit the convenience of the members. One person being appointed leader opens the meeting, as usual, by singing and prayer. He then proceeds, according to the rules I have just transcribed for your information. As less reserve is used in the band, than in any other meeting; and as the members are generally those who have either attained, or are earnestly seeking, a state of perfection or complete sanctification, the hymns and prayers are of as melting and warming a nature as any they can adopt; and when the regular hymns fail of expressing the full sentiments of their enlarged and swelling souls, the deficiency is often made up by several auxiliary ones, composed by different persons, which have found their way into the hands of the Methodists, in the form of pamphlets, open sheets, or MS. copies. Some of these poetical effusions are the most luscious and enthusiastic productions you can possibly conceive; but as they are not regularly appointed by conference, nor indeed encouraged by the sober and thinking part of the society, I spare your modesty, by not transcribing any of them into this letter.

In perusing the rules, you have perceived that the fullest and most particular confession of every sin, in thought, word, or action, that any in the band may have committed, is insisted upon. That some inconveniences should follow from this auricular confession, you will readily perceive. I will not here, however, retail the numerous anecdotes which have had their foundation in the subjects often discussed at a band-meeting; because I wish to bring no disgrace on an institution which may be productive of good, and which so many of my fellow-Christians regard with such profound and religious veneration. I am persuaded that the tales which the late Chiswell-street bookseller has heaped together, about men dressing themselves in women's apparel, and thereby taking advantage of the innocence or the weakness of several band-sisters, are wholly without foundation; and I should have been disposed to have thought more favourably of that gentleman's *Confessions*, had he unequivocally denied many of the scandalous and indecent stories which, in his Memoirs, he thought proper to relate to the prejudice of the Methodists.

That auricular confession, in the full and proper sense of the word, is practised at a band-meeting, is certain; but that the evils which have resulted from a like practice in the church



of Rome have followed these methodistical confessions, is, I think, very doubtful.

A writer in the second volume of the Annual Review, has the following remarks on these band-confessions:—"Is it possible, that they who devised this confession should be ignorant of its consequences? Every incipient feeling, every lighter thought that would have passed over the maiden's mind, and been forgotten, is to be remarked and remembered, that it may be renewed and rivetted, and *burnt in* to the heart by the pain and shame of confession!—of confession, not to one, whom for his age and character, she has ever from her infancy been taught to regard with fatherly, or more than fatherly reverence, and who, by the holiest oaths and the severest penalties, is bound to inviolable secrecy—but to companions of her own sex and age, who will make it their tea-table talk; and each of whom is, by a similar confession, to renew and sear her shame! Either from natural and sacred modesty, the thought will be concealed, and made more intense by the imagined sinfulness of that concealment; or it will be confessed, and that action will strengthen the idea, and the idea will recur more frequently, because it is thus strengthened; and thus confession will be again and again required, till a sinful pleasure be at length extracted from confession itself, the atonement

will partake of the nature of the sin, and all modesty and all shame be utterly destroyed."

These observations, Madam, are upon the whole strictly just and proper: they manifest a considerable knowledge of the human heart; but they are made in a wrong place. It is the office of a reviewer to state, not to controvert, the opinions of an author, or the practices of a sect.

It is but just I should here make you acquainted with the manner in which the above objections to the band-confession is vindicated by the Methodists. This vindication made its appearance in the Methodist Magazine during the last year, under the superscription "VERAX."

The reviewer having started some objections to the separation of the sexes in the Methodist chapels, Verax asks, "What mischief is there in this?" He then observes, "This introduces a subject which the wicked imagination of these reviewers has worked up to a delicious morsel. 'In these societies each is to confess to all; *to confess* in the strict and popish sense of the term.' It may not be improper to observe here, that, in what are called the *band-meetings* of the Methodists, three or four persons, always of the same sex, agree to converse and pray with each other, or, according to St. James's direction, to confess their faults one to another, as far as they

may think it useful to do so, and to pray one for another, in order that, by mutual advice and prayer, they may be the helpers of each other's faith and love in Christ Jesus. But, notwithstanding these reviewers know that the men and the women meet separately, and have just been exclaiming against the Methodists for separating the sexes, their depraved mind immediately brings together 'the father confessor (a Methodist preacher) and a single woman.'— 'We must touch lightly,' say they, 'on this abominable subject.' Then they begin to suggest what must pass in 'the maiden's mind,' until 'all modesty and all shame be utterly destroyed.' Now this is all pure fiction of their own invention, as ten thousands of persons can testify, who have long been of the Methodist societies, and as every honest and decent man in the nation will readily believe."

How far Verax has been successful in vindicating the practice of the Methodists in this particular, it is not for me to determine. Be this, however, as it may, the Annual Reviewer has certainly fallen into a most glaring error, by supposing that confession is ever made by any woman in the Methodist society to any preacher whatsoever. I would hope, also, that no band sister or brother is ever so lost to all sense of shame and honesty, as to repeat abroad what

passes in confidence at a private band-meeting. For my own part, I never knew an instance of the kind during my connexion with the Methodists.

Mr. Wesley defends the band-confessions in the following manner:—

“An objection boldly and frequently urged, is, that ‘all these bands are mere Popery.’ I hope I need not pass a harder censure on those (most of them at least) who affirm this, than that they talk of they know not what; that they betray in themselves the most gross and shameful ignorance. Do not they yet know, that the only popish confession is, the confession made by a single person to a priest? (And this itself is in nowise condemned by our church; nay, she recommends it in some cases). Whereas, that which we practise, is the confession of several persons conjointly, not to a priest, but to each other. Consequently, it has no analogy at all to popish confession. But the truth is, this is a stale objection, which many people make against any thing they do not like: it is all popery out of hand.”

You will understand, Madam, it is not positively insisted upon, though earnestly requested, that all the members of the Methodist connexion should belong to some band: a regular attendance on public worship and class, being

all that is required of this nature to entitle a person to full membership.

At certain stated periods, all the bands assemble together in the chapel, where they are met by the preacher, who relates his own *experience*, and hears the *experience* of any others who may be disposed so to favour him. At these public bands, no confession is required. The meeting commences with singing, and is carried on by alternate intervals of speaking, singing, and prayer. No persons are admitted to the public bands, but those who meet in some one of the private bands, and can produce a proper certificate to that purpose.

There are also what are called *select bands*.— These are, I believe, conducted in the same manner as the public bands; but consist of those members only who have attained to what is called a state of perfection; that is, those who *never, on any account, or on any occasion, or temptation whatsoever, commit the slightest sin, in thought, word, or deed!*

You would suppose, Madam, that the number of these must be very small; but, I assure you, the select band is better attended than you would imagine! As I had never the unspeakable happiness of having arrived at a proper degree of perfecting grace, I never could be admitted into the *sanctum sanctorum* of a select

band; and cannot therefore inform you, from personal observation, of all that passes on those occasions. Nothing, however, I am confident, that is in itself wrong, or unbecoming the character of a Methodist, takes place in a select band.

I am, &c.

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LETTER XXI.

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*Of Agapæ, or Love-Feasts—Specimens.*

DEAR MADAM,

I now proceed to give you some account of the agapæ, or love-feasts, of the Methodists. No branch of the Wesleyan church-discipline has been more mistaken, or more grossly misrepresented, by persons ignorant of the subject, than this. I remember, when I first attended one of these meetings, I thought surely a new species of beings had come among us, in the form of men, to tell what was passing in the realms of light, and in the regions of eternal darkness.

Mr. Wesley borrowed the practice of holding love-feasts from the Moravian brethren. The first he ever saw was in the year 1737, during his residence in America, when he attended at one among the Germans. He was so struck with the

order and decency with which it was conducted, that he afterwards introduced these agapæ into the economy of Methodism.

At first they were designed for the bands only. Afterwards, the whole society were permitted to partake with them.

“ The agapæ, or love-feasts, or feasts of charity, were held among the primitive Christians, during the three first centuries of Christianity. St. Chrysostom derives the love-feasts from the practice of the apostles; and we know that St. Jude speaks of wicked persons, who had crept in among the Christians of his time, and were spots in their feasts of charity. The first Christians had, for a short period, all things in common; but that equality of possession very soon ceased, and it is probable that the agapæ, or love-feasts, were substituted in the place of it. On certain days, after partaking of the Lord’s supper, the primitive Christians met to eat and drink together; the rich bringing a sufficient quantity of provisions for themselves and the poor.”

Such is the account the Methodists give of the ancient love-feasts. As I am not engaged to oppose or defend this practice, I may be excused from entering further into the question. I shall, therefore, proceed with my description of a Methodist love-feast.



These meetings are kept, in most places, once every quarter; viz. the Sunday immediately following what the Methodists call Quarter-day, of which I shall give you some account by and by.

After the regular public service is ended, and the whole congregation is dismissed, when it is intended that a love-feast should be kept, the members return into the chapel; having shewn their certificates, or notes of admission, to some persons, appointed for that purpose, who stand at the door.

The preacher being still in the pulpit, opens the service by singing and prayer; which being ended, every one sits down, while the *stewards* hand to all present a little plain, or spiced, bread and water. It was originally the practice literally to *break bread* with each other; but much confusion and disturbance throughout the whole assembly being thereby occasioned, that practice is now prohibited by positive command of conference. It would very often happen, that a person might have a particular attachment to some brother or sister who might be seated several pews distant; and when an attempt was made to manifest this attachment by breaking bread with the favourite, the noise and trouble of scrambling over the backs of the seats, or of pressing through the aisle, not only retarded the more important business of the

love-feast, but gave considerable offence to those who had either more modesty or less violent and impatient prepossessions. It was therefore a prudent step to prohibit that species of *breaking of bread*; and I believe that disorderly practice is now entirely laid aside.

After the ceremony of carnal feasting is ended, another hymn is usually sung, during which the stewards are handing the plate round, for the purpose of collecting what every one is disposed to give for the relief of the poor members. I have known, that where the society's finances have been in a low state, the love-feast money has been put into the general stock. This, however, I believe, is not a very common practice; and was not resorted to at all in the days of primitive Methodism.

After this the preacher rises, and relates his *experience* to the whole congregation. He usually begins, more especially if he is but lately come among them, with the first *drawings of the Spirit* on his mind. He tells how long, and sometimes in what instances, he resisted those gracious strivings. He relates any remarkable deliverances, and extraordinary interpositions of Providence, which he may at any period of his life have experienced. He tells how his eyes were first opened to the truth—who was the happy instrument of his conviction—how, when, and where he found the pardon of his sins—

what have been his trials, backslidings, persecutions, and comforts, since he first *knew the Lord*—how his labours in the vineyard of Christ have been crowned with success, or hindered by opposition—and, lastly, what he then feels of a spiritual nature going forward in his soul, with his fixed resolution to spend and be spent in so good a cause.

“ O ! that if with my latest breath  
I may but gasp his name !  
Preach him to all, and cry in death,  
Behold ! behold ! the Lamb ! ”

While the preacher is thus engaged, sighs, groans, devout aspirations, and even audible ejaculations of prayer or praise, are issuing from the audience in every direction ; who are of course more or less impressed, as the experience of the preacher may happen to be more or less wonderful, uncommon, or striking. I have often noticed, that some appropriate anecdote, or smart saying, produces the most sensible and visible effect. This effect, however, has not been so permanent as when the preacher has related some of the *deep things of God*—the secrets of the Almighty.

The preacher, having concluded his harangue, if no other person rises immediately, a stanza or

two is sung, to inspire their minds with due fervour and becoming confidence.

“ Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire,  
 Let us thine influence prove,  
 Source of the old prophetic fire!  
 Fountain of life and love !

Expand thy wings, celestial Dove,  
 Brood o'er our nature's night ;  
 On our disorder'd spirits move,  
 And let there now be light !”

During the time of singing, the Methodists are uniformly in a standing posture. They now sit down ; and, after a few moments of “ expressive silence,” some one rises to tell what the Lord has done for *his* soul. The same routine of striving, resistance, yielding, conviction, conversion, trials, temptations, present feelings, and future resolutions, is pursued ; varying only in those circumstances which the accidental differences of condition in life may have occasioned.

During this meeting, which usually lasts about two hours, numerous *experiences* are related, both by men and women.

I have often been exceedingly pained, on observing the resisting bashfulness, and the evident signs of inward agitation, which some of

the younger part of the females have betrayed, just before they have risen to speak. It is thought by many well-meaning Methodists, that not to tell their experiences on these occasions, is to quench the Spirit of God in their hearts, if it be not even a tacit denial of Christ himself. This opinion, I believe, uniformly obtains where the modest or the cowardly member has had some extraordinary work of grace on the heart—where God has been *deepening* his work—making bare his holy arm in the soul, and putting to flight the inward armies of the aliens. On these occasions, to feel backward to speak for God, is to listen to the suggestions of the devil; who will always strive to prevent his enemies from *telling* of any of his temptations, or of any battles he may have lost, in fighting against the good Spirit of Truth in the heart. Thus, when these convictions happen to take place in a modest or a fearful mind, the struggle between a sense of duty, and the force of temptation, inclination, or habit, is violent beyond description. I have witnessed and felt these internal conflicts with the most poignant sorrow, and have known them, in some constitutions, productive of very alarming consequences. If the enemy happen to prove victorious, the labour of a thousand prayers is scarcely sufficient to restore the unhappy victim; but if his hellish

power is overcome, or the sense of shame removed, by the virtue of inward prayer, or the power of example, the most happy consequences follow; and the victorious champion rises with confidence to tell of the engagement, and thereby so effectually shames the adversary, that he skulks away in disgrace and wrath, to try his powers upon less resisting subjects.

I remember being once very much struck with the expressions of an old man at a love-feast, who had just recovered from a very dangerous fit of sickness. "I was," said he, "given over by the doctor, and every one thought I was about to take my flight into eternity. I thought so myself; and though I could easily 'read my title clear to mansions in the skies;' though I knew that God for Christ's sake had pardoned all my sins; and that whenever the silver cord should be loosened at the fountain, I should sink into the arms of Jesus; yet as I drew near the swelling floods, I thought *I felt Jordan cold to my feet, and I shrunk back!*" What a fine poetical figure!

It will frequently happen, during a love-feast, if the presiding preacher is either a more than commonly wise and prudent man; if he is old and nerveless, or careless and lukewarm; that the business of the meeting will for a time, like the wheelless chariots of Pharaoh, move on

heavily. In this case, recourse is always had to the fascinating and invigorating power of vocal music.

“ Come, Lord, from above, these mountains remove ;  
O’return all that hinders the course of thy love :  
My bosom inspire, enkindle the fire,  
And fill my whole soul with the flames of desire !”

“ Ah, Lord ! enlarge our scanty thought,  
To know the wonders thou hast wrought !  
Unloose our stammering tongue to tell  
Thy love immense, unsearchable !”

Love-feasts are always well attended. Public notice having been previously given, the country people flock in crowds to these meetings. Although they are intended for the regular members only, yet vast numbers of well-disposed strangers gain admittance, by procuring notes for that purpose from the preacher, on being recommended by a member. It consequently happens, that numerous conversions take place on these occasions. When the *speaking* is concluded, several of the people go to prayer, one after another, or all at once, as the preacher may be well or ill disposed to favour a little spiritual romping, and holy confusion. Many of the preachers, however, of the present day, having drunk a little into the spirit of the world, that is, having become

ashamed of the conduct of some of their brethren who have encouraged noisy meetings, are led to deprive their people of their Christian liberty, and consequently to check all extravagances of this nature whenever they perceive them beginning to break out. This cannot, however, be said of all the Methodist preachers even of the present time. I know some who would rather attend a meeting of enthusiastic bawlers than peaceably to enjoy the marrow and fat things of this vain world.

I will close this account of a Methodist love-feast by transcribing for your perusal one or two of the hymns sung on those occasions. I must not, however, forget to tell you, that when two or more persons rise to tell their experience, at one and the same time, the preacher, like the Right Honourable Speaker in the House of Commons, rises to put them to rights, and to say who is to have the precedence.

#### THE LOVE-FEAST.

“ Come, and let us sweetly join,  
Christ to praise in hymns divine !  
Give we all with one accord,  
Glory to our common Lord ;  
Hands, and hearts, and voices raise ;  
Sing as in the ancient days ;  
Antedate the joys above,  
Celebrate the feast of love.



Strive we, in affection strive ;  
Let the purer flame revive,  
Such as in the martyr's glow'd,  
Dying champions for their God ;  
We like them may live and love ;  
Call'd we are their joys to prove ;  
Sav'd with them from future wrath,  
Partners of like precious faith.

Sing we then in Jesu's name,  
Now as yesterday the same ;  
One in every time and place,  
Full for all of truth and grace ;  
We for Christ, our master, stand  
Lights in a benighted land :  
We our dying Lord confess ;  
We are Jesu's witnesses.

Witnesses that Christ hath died,  
We with him are crucified :  
Christ hath burst the bands of death ;  
We his quickening spirit breathe :  
Christ is now gone up on high,  
Thither all our wishes fly ;  
Sits at God's right hand above :  
There with him we reign in love."

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" COME thou, high and lofty Lord ;  
Lowly, meek, incarnate Word ;  
Humbly stoop to earth again ;  
Come and visit abject man !

Jesu! dear expected guest ;  
 Thou art bidden to the feast !  
 For thyself our hearts prepare ;  
 Come, and sit, and banquet there,

Jesu, we thy promise claim :  
 We are met in thy great name ;  
 In the midst do thou appear !  
 Manifest thy presence here !  
 Sanctify us, Lord, and bless !  
 Breathe thy Spirit ! give thy peace !  
 Thou thyself within us move ;  
 Make our feast a feast of love.

Let the fruits of grace abound ;  
 Let in us thy bowels sound ;  
 Faith, and love, and joy increase,  
 Temperance and gentleness :  
 Plant in us thy humble mind,  
 Patient, pitiful, and kind :  
 Meek and lowly let us be,  
 Full of goodness—full of thee,

Make us all in thee complete ;  
 Make us all for glory meet ;  
 Meet t' appear before thy sight,  
 Partners with thy saints in light :  
 Call, O ! call us each by name !  
 To the marriage of the Lamb !  
 Let us lean upon thy breast !  
 Love be there our endless feast !”

Permit me, Madam, here to protest against  
 the very illiberal reflection of Mr. Fellowes ;

who, in his "Religion without Cant," asserts, that, "In the agapæ of the fanatics (alluding, I suppose, to the Methodists), desire is often indulged without restraint, because it is thought to contribute to the perfecting of the saints in love." If Mr. Fellowes, by this indecent reflection, does really mean to insinuate, that any thing of a licentious nature is permitted at a Methodist love-feast, I would recommend it to him, before he ventures another censure of this nature, to make himself a little better acquainted with his subject.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXII.*

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*Of Watch-Nights—Wrestling Jacob.*

DEAR MADAM,

PERMIT me, in this letter, to conduct you to a methodistical watch-night. Yet be not startled, dear Madam, at the lateness of the hour at which you will have to return home from this *meeting*. The sons of Thespis will scarcely have gone to rest; and some hours before

“The cock’s shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,”

shall have roused the industrious to labour, or the sportsman to the field, you shall have spent the proper time in spiritual exercises, and be calmly laid in the arms of Morpheus.

It has been often asserted, that a watch-night lasts until day-break in the morning; and that

during the soft and silent hours of midnight, when all is dark, and calm, and soothing, a full loose is given to the passions, and the sensual desires are gratified without shame or restraint. I do assure you, Madam, that such representations are false and wicked. I have attended at many watch-nights, and scarcely ever knew them to last longer than one o'clock in the morning, and very seldom to that hour, unless there happened to be a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit, a great revival of the work of God; or there were many souls in distress; and it would have been cruel and dangerous to have forsaken them before they were *set at liberty*, that is, till they believed themselves to have obtained the pardon of their sins. In these cases, indeed, I have known a watch-night to last until day-light the next morning. This was the case at Bolton, in Lancashire, a few years ago, where, in the course of about a fortnight, near two hundred persons, men and women, were converted to Methodism, and joined the society.

That I may be wholly impartial in my descriptions, I will, as usual, give you Mr. Wesley's own account of the origin of watch-nights, and his remarks in defence of them.

“I was informed,” says he, “that several persons in Kingswood frequently met together, at the school, and (when they could spare time)

spent the greater part of the night in prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving. Some advised me to put an end to this: but upon weighing the thing thoroughly, and comparing it with the practice of the ancient Christians, I could see no cause to forbid it. Rather, I believed, it might be made of more general use. So I sent them word, 'I designed to watch with them, on the Friday nearest the full moon, that we might have light thither and back again.' I gave public notice of this, the Sunday before, and withal that I intended to preach; desiring they, and they only, would meet me there, who could do it without prejudice to their business or families. On Friday abundance of people came. I began preaching between eight and nine: and we continued till a little beyond the noon of night, singing, praying, and praising God.

“ This we have continued to do once a month ever since, in Bristol, London, and Newcastle, as well as Kingswood. And exceeding great are the blessings we have found therein: it has generally been an extremely solemn season; when the word of God sunk deep into the heart, even of those who till then knew him not. If it be said, ‘ this was only owing to the novelty of the thing ( the circumstance which still draws such multitudes together at those seasons) or perhaps to the awful silence of the night;’ I am not careful to answer in this matter. Be it so:

however, the impression then made on many souls, has never since been effaced. Now, allowing that God did make use either of the novelty, or any other indifferent circumstance, in order to bring sinners to repentance, yet they are brought. And herein let us rejoice together.

“Nay, may I not put the case farther yet? If I can probably conjecture, that either by the novelty of this ancient custom, or by any other indifferent circumstance, it is in my power to ‘save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins:’ am I clear before God if I do it not? If I do not snatch that brand out of the burning?”

You perceive, Madam, that the watch-nights were originally kept once every month. They are now held once a quarter only; the greatest attendance being generally on the night immediately preceding the new-year’s-day; when the infant year is ushered in with songs of gladness, praise, and thanksgiving, while the sweet concert of a million of bells, in every part of the nation, loudly proclaim the same returning season!

The other three watch-nights are kept on the eve of the quarterly-meetings, after a day of fasting and prayer.

Having been quarter-day, the preachers are usually all at home that night; and the pulpit

is adorned by the appearance, and honoured by the exertions, of two or three ministers on the same evening.

The service is opened, as on other occasions, with singing and prayer; both of which exercises are more than usually long. Next follows a long discourse by the senior preacher, on the duty and advantages of holy watching, and spiritual waiting. By the time this is ended, it may be about half past ten o'clock. After this follows more singing and prayer. Then another of the preachers rises, and, without taking a text, harangues the audience as long as he pleases, and upon any subject that may suggest itself to his mind. They sing and pray again; and a third, if there happen to be so many present, which is often the case in large circuits, goes over the same round. In most places, liberty is then given to any one of the brothers or sisters, in the body of the chapel, to exercise the gift of prayer; when several, whose souls have been long waiting to be poured forth in vocal prayer, give vent to their feelings, and address the God of Heaven as they may be severally disposed to make known their requests, or to express their gratitude.

It now becomes a matter of the greatest difficulty for those preachers who are concerned for the honour of religion or the credit of Methodism, to prevent the most shameful and dis-



graceful vociferation and disturbance. Indeed, when any one begins to cry out for pardon, under an apparent sense of extraordinary guilt and condemnation, no persuasions, threats, or exertions of the ministers, can prevent the good people from indulging themselves. I have seen a preacher bite his lips with anguish and chagrin, or gnash his teeth with just indignation, when he has found himself so completely outpoured by the obstreperousness of his audience, that he has been forced to sit down with fatigue in the pulpit, or to descend, and wander from pew to pew, endeavouring in vain to quell the tumult, of which his own sermon has often been the efficient cause. These disturbances are, I am informed, not very frequent in Town. In Manchester, Liverpool, Macclesfield, and other places, they are by no means, even to this day, unusual or uncommon: and this all the preachers in the connexion, would they speak out, know to be a fact. I speak it, however, to their praise, that, both by the exclusion of the most boisterous members, and by express prohibition, they do all they can to stop these disgraceful proceedings. Partial divisions are frequently taking place on this very account. There are, nevertheless, many of the preachers themselves, who still openly countenance and abet this work, believing, with great sincerity, that God

is at these times pouring out his good Spirit on the people, and that to discountenance a noise among them, would be to fight against God himself!

Watch-nights, as you will readily suppose, are always very prolific sources of proselytism; and the Methodist interest owes much to the soothing strains and intoxicating influence of watch-night prayers, and watch-night hymns.

Were I disposed to dispute the moral and religious advantages of any part of the Methodist discipline, it would be that which enjoins the holding of these midnight assemblies. Old and young, married and single, persons of both sexes, being here joined in promiscuous intercourse, undoubtedly get their senses inflamed to a pitch of fervour which it will require all the prudence, and all the *watchfulness*, of which the most sober and reflecting are capable, to prevent falling into fervours less pure and innocent than those which the sacred fire of devotion has enkindled. Consequences the most dangerous may arise from the temptations which are laid in the way of two young persons returning home together, in the dead of night, after having attended a watch-night. I speak only from conjecture, and what is likely to be the result of these assemblies without great care and prudence on the part of the persons concerned. I declare, however, that I never knew an instance of any materially

evil consequence arising from an attendance at watch-night; unless I may call long and violent colds, asthmas, and stubborn rheumatisms, such; and these can but seldom happen, the number of watch-nights being so few during the year.

I must, Madam, be allowed to give you "Wrestling Jacob," one of the hymns sung on watch-nights; and I am the more inclined to transcribe this poem, from the great esteem in which it was held by the late pious and venerable Dr. Isaac Watts, who is reported to have said, "That single poem, 'Wrestling Jacob,' is worth all the verses I ever wrote." This, then, shall be my apology for transcribing in my letter so long a production.

### WRESTLING JACOB.

"COME, O, thou Traveller unknown,  
Whom still I hold, but cannot see!  
My company before is gone,  
And I am left alone with thee:  
With thee all night I mean to stay,  
And wrestle till the break of day.

I need not tell thee who I am,  
My misery or sin declare;  
Thyself hast call'd me by my name;  
Look on thy hands and read it there;  
But who, I ask thee, who art thou?  
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.

In vain thou strugglest to get free,  
 I never will unloose my hold :  
 Art thou the man that died for me ?  
 The secret of thy love unfold :  
 Wrestling, I will not let thee go,  
 Till I thy name, thy nature know.

Wilt thou not yet to me reveal  
 Thy new, unutterable name ?  
 Tell me, I still beseech thee, tell ;  
 To know it now resolv'd I am :  
 Wrestling I will not let thee go,  
 Till I thy name, thy nature know.

What though my sinking flesh complain,  
 And murmur to contend so long ?  
 I rise superior to my pain :  
 When I am weak then I am strong :  
 And when my all of strength shall fail,  
 I shall with the God-man prevail.

Yield to me now for I am weak ;  
 But confident in self-despair !  
 Speak to my heart, in blessings speak ;  
 Be conquer'd by my instant prayer :  
 Speak, or thou never hence shalt move,  
 And tell me if thy name is Love.

'Tis Love ! 'tis Love ! thou died'st for me ;  
 I hear thy whisper in my heart ;  
 The morning breaks, the shadows flee,  
 Pure, universal Love thou art :  
 To me, to all, thy bowels move,  
 Thy nature and thy name is Love.

My prayer hath power with God ; the grace  
 Unspeakable I now receive ;  
 Through faith I see thee face to face ;  
 I see thee face to face, and live :  
 In vain I have not wept and strove ;  
 Thy nature and thy name is Love.

I know thee, Saviour, who thou art,  
 Jesus, the feeble sinner's friend,  
 Nor wilt thou with the night depart,  
 But stay and love me to the end :  
 Thy mercies never shall remove ;  
 Thy nature and thy name is Love.

The Sun of Righteousness on me  
 Hath rose, with healing in his wings ;  
 Wither'd my nature's strength ; from thee  
 My soul its life and succour brings ;  
 My help is all laid up above ;  
 Thy nature and thy name is Love.

Contented now upon my thigh  
 I halt till life's short journey end ;  
 All helplessness, all weakness I  
 On thee alone for strength depend :  
 Nor have I power from thee to move ;  
 Thy nature and thy name is Love.

Lame as I am, I take the prey ;  
 Hell, earth, and sin, with ease o'ercome ;  
 I leap for joy, pursue my way,  
 And as a bounding hart fly home,  
 Through all eternity to prove  
 Thy nature and thy name is Love."

The foregoing poem, from the muse of Mr. Charles Wesley, has some merit as the rapturous effusion of a zealous and devout mind.—What could induce Dr. Watts to assert its superiority to all that he had ever written, I know not; unless it was from the resemblance it bears to his own poem, entitled “Converse with Christ.”

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXIII.*

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*Of the Yearly Covenant.*

DEAR MADAM,

THE *Covenant*, one of the most solemn and awful assemblies of the Methodists, has often been the subject of mistake and severe animadversion. I will therefore give a perfectly impartial account of this sacred ceremony, having myself attended at more than one or two of them.

The Reviewer, to whom I alluded in a former epistle, asserts of the Methodists, that “the increase of madness, in England, has been proportioned to the increase of Methodism,” and he seems to suppose that the increase of this national disorder is owing, in a great measure, to “denunciations of damnation, and to that tremendous blasphemy, their yearly covenant with

Almighty God!" To this heavy charge, Verax answers as follows:—

“Tremendous blasphemy! What is there blasphemous in covenanting or agreeing to serve God? Good King Josiah, and his people, both small and great, made a covenant before the Lord, to ‘keep his commandments with all their heart, and all their soul. And all the people stood to the covenant.’ 2 Kings, xxiii. 3. Jeremiah, when describing the effects of the preaching of the gospel, informs us, that the people shall ask the way to Zion, &c. saying, ‘Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten,’ chap. l. ver. 5.

“In the small pamphlet, entitled, ‘Directions to Penitents and Believers for renewing their Covenant with God,’ which is extracted from a larger work of the pious and excellent Richard Alleine, and may be had at any of the chapels of the Methodists, the whole of what these men call a *tremendous blasphemy*, may be seen. The pamphlet begins with these words—‘Get these three principles fixed in your heart:—That things eternal are much more considerable than things temporal—That things not seen are as certain as the things that are seen—That upon your present choice depends your eternal lot. Choose Christ and his ways, and you are blessed for ever; refuse, and you are undone for ever.’



After this exordium, a short account is given of the fallen state of man, and of the sentiments of an awakened sinner, who sees and feels that the wrath of God abideth on him. This sinner is called upon to cast himself on the merit of Christ Jesus for the pardon of his sin; and he is then described as choosing Christ for his portion and salvation, and the commandments of God for the rule of his conduct. 'I do here take thee, the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for my portion; and I do give up myself, body and soul, for thy service, promising and vowing to serve thee, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of my life.' Good Richard Alleine recommended, that this covenant or engagement to serve God, should not only be made in word and in heart, but in *writing*, in order that it might be more particularly remembered and adverted to, as an inducement to flee from sin, in time of temptation and danger. But these reviewers make a mock at sin, and as they think it *tremendous blasphemy* to covenant to serve God, it cannot be expected, that they will condemn those who covenant to serve the devil.

Wednesday, August 6, 1755, Mr. Wesley writes thus: "I mentioned to the congregation another means of increasing serious religion, which had been frequently practised by our forefathers, and attended with eminent blessing;

namely, the joining in a covenant to serve God, with all our soul. I explained this for several mornings following; and on Friday, many of us kept a fast unto the Lord, beseeching him to give us wisdom and strength, to promise to the Lord our God, and keep it. On Monday, at six in the evening we met for that purpose, at the French church in Spitalfields. After I had recited the tenor of the covenant proposed, in the words of that blessed man, Richard Alleine, all the people stood up, in token of assent, to the number of about eighteen hundred. Such a night I scarce ever knew before: Surely the fruit of it shall remain for ever." Since that period, the covenant has been renewed once every year, generally on the night of the new year, or on the Sunday next following.

The renewal of the covenant is always, I believe, preceded by a sermon, very often on Joshua's resolution—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." After sermon, those who are disposed to enter into this most solemn compact with Jehovah, return into the chapel, shewing their tickets at the door.

Singing and extemporary prayer being ended, the following awful address is read aloud from the pulpit, all the people kneeling:—

"O, most dreadful God! for the passion of thy Son, I beseech Thee, accept of thy poor prodigal, now prostrating himself at thy door;

I have fallen from Thee by mine iniquity, and am by nature a son of death, and a thousand-fold more the child of hell, by my wicked practice; but of thine infinite grace thou hast promised mercy to me in Christ, if I will but turn to thee with all my heart; therefore, upon the call of thy gospel, I am now come in, and throwing down my weapons, submit myself to thy mercy.

“ And because thou requirest, as the condition of my peace with thee, that I should put away mine idols, and be at defiance with all thine enemies, which I acknowledge I have wickedly sided with against thee; I here, from the bottom of my heart renounce them all; firmly covenanting with thee, not to allow myself in any known sin, but conscientiously to use all the means that I know thou hast prescribed, for the death and utter destruction of all my corruptions. And whereas I have formerly, inordinately and idolatrously let out my affections upon the world, I do here resign my heart to thee that madest it; humbly protesting before thy glorious Majesty, that it is the firm resolution of my heart, and that I do unfeignedly desire grace from thee, that when thou shalt call me hereunto, I may practise this my resolution, to forsake all that is dear unto me in this world, rather than turn from thee to the ways



by which sinners may have access to thee; and do here solemnly join myself in a marriage-covenant to him.

“O, blessed Jesus! I come to thee hungry, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked; a most loathsome, polluted wretch, a guilty, condemned malefactor, unworthy to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord, much more to be solemnly married to the King of Glory; but since such is thine unparalleled love, I do here, with all my power, accept thee, and take thee for my Head and Husband, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, for all times and conditions, to love, honour, and obey thee before all others, and this to the death. I embrace thee in all thine offices: I renounce mine own unworthiness, and do here avow thee for the Lord my Righteousness: I renounce mine own wisdom, and do here take thee for my only Guide: I renounce mine own will, and take thy Will for my law.

“And since thou hast told me, I must suffer if I will reign, I do here covenant with thee, to take my lot, as it falls, with thee, and by thy grace assisting, to run all hazards with thee, verily purposing, that neither life nor death shall part between thee and me.

“And because thou hast been pleased to give me thy holy laws, as the rule of my life, and the way in which I should walk to thy kingdom, I

do here willingly put my neck under thy yoke, and set my shoulder to thy burden, and subscribing to all thy laws as holy, just, and good, I solemnly take them, as the rule of my words, thoughts, and actions; promising, that though my flesh contradict and rebel, I will endeavour to order and govern my whole life according to thy direction, and will not allow myself in the neglect of any thing that I know to be my duty.

“ Now, Almighty God, Searcher of Hearts, thou knowest that I make this covenant with thee this day, without any known guile or reservation, beseeching thee, if thou espiest any flaw or falsehood therein, thou wouldst discover it to me, and help me to do it aright.

“ And now, glory be to thee, O God the Father! whom I shall be bold from this day forward to look upon as my God and Father; that ever thou shouldst find out such a way for the recovery of undone sinners. Glory be to thee, O God the Son! who hast loved me, and washed me from my sins in thine own blood, and art now become my Saviour and Redeemer. Glory be to thee, O God the Holy Ghost! who by the finger of thine Almighty Power hast turned about my heart from sin to God.

“ O dreadful Jehovah, the Lord God Omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, thou art now become my covenant-friend, and I through

thy infinite grace, am become thy covenant-servant. Amen. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven."

In some instances, the preacher addresses the people thus—

"This covenant I advise you to make, not only in heart, but in word; not only in word, but in writing; and that you would with all possible reverence spread the writing before the Lord, as if you would present it to him as your act and deed: And when you have done this, set your hand to it: Keep it as a memorial of the solemn transactions that have passed between God and you, that you may have recourse to it in doubts and temptations."

Then is sung the following

#### HYMN.

"COME, let us use the grace divine,

And all with one accord,

In a perpetual covenant join

Ourselves to Christ the Lord:

Give up yourselves, through Jesu's power,

His name to glorify;

And promise in this sacred hour

For God to live and die.

The covenant we this moment make,  
 Be ever kept in mind :  
 We will no more our God forsake,  
 Or cast his words behind.

We never will throw off his fear,  
 Who hears our solemn vow :  
 And if thou art well pleas'd to hear,  
 Come down and meet us now !

Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
 Let all our hearts receive !  
 Present with the celestial host,  
 The peaceful answer give !

To each the covenant-blood apply,  
 Which takes our sins away ;  
 And register our names on high,  
 And keep us to that day !"

The people then stand up, and lift their hands  
 in token of their determination to serve the  
 Lord from that time.

" I swear, and from my solemn oath  
 Will never start aside,  
 That in God's righteous judgments I  
 Will constantly abide !

The world's contempt of his commands  
 But make their value rise  
 In my esteem, who purest gold  
 Compar'd with them, despise."



How far the foregoing covenant may be said to be a "tremendous blasphemy," I will not take upon me to say. People will form separate and different judgments on the matter, as they may be disposed to regard it in the light of a *rational* or *spiritual* form of self-dedication, or as a formulary unwarranted by the light of reason and the scriptures of truth. I have thought it my duty to give it to you *verbatim* as it is used by the Methodists; and I now leave it with yourself to assent, differ, or remain, like myself, neuter on the subject. So highly, however, is this form of covenant with the Almighty regarded by many Methodists, that instances have occurred where, in the most solemn manner, it has been actually signed by *the blood of the creature*, imagining that such a mode of ratification is required, from its analogy to the bloody seal of the Creator!!! The covenant-meeting is concluded, like others, with singing and prayer.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXIV.*

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*Of the Society-meetings.*

DEAR MADAM,

THE members of the Methodist societies are composed of persons enjoying various degrees of moral attainments, or, as they express it, in different states of grace. There are careless and lukewarm unbelievers, who have, nevertheless a sufficient *hankering* after Methodism to join the society; and are so far moral in their conduct, as not to merit excommunication. There are also awakened members, who, from some cause or other, have not experienced the new-birth. There are the penitents, or “mourners convinced of sin.” Others are those who are not only convinced that they are sinners, and mourn on that account; but are sunk to very considerable depths of sorrow; yet, being half

inclined to think they shall not “go sorrowing all their days,” are denominated, “mourners brought to the birth.” Others, again, are those who have stept into the glorious liberty of God’s children, and know their sins to be blotted out of the book of the divine remembrance. It too frequently happens, that the vain allurements of the world—the smiles or the frowns of mankind—the force of unconquered habits—the rebellions of unsubdued lusts—and the diabolical instigations of their enemy, the devil—will all combine their baneful influences to increase the number of a fifth class of the members of the Methodist societies; I mean the backsliders in heart: the open apostates are either forcibly expelled, or voluntarily withdraw from the connexion. Again; a sixth class of members, are those who are “convinced of backsliding,” and are undergoing the same internal struggles, and spiritual conflicts, they experienced before their first conversion. A seventh class is composed of the “groaners for full redemption;” that is, those who have the witness of the Spirit that they are pardoned; but not satisfied with this, are earnestly seeking *all* the mind that was in Christ; or, in other words, those whom nothing will satisfy but *perfection*. The last class of Methodists I shall mention, is made up of the *pure in heart*—the *sanctified*—the saints that are already perfected

in love; who literally rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks.

It being impossible in every instance to separate the precious from the vile; the members composing these several sorts or degrees of Methodists, being promiscuously blended in the classes and bands, they are all met together, on a Sunday evening, immediately after public preaching; when the preacher gives them such advice, &c. as their several states require. You must, however, understand, that they are not spoken to individually, as at a class-meeting; but are addressed from the pulpit in general, yet pointed, terms of reproof or advice. This is called the Society-meeting; and is a very useful and proper mode of promoting the moral and spiritual good of the members.

A society-meeting, however, is not confined to this object alone. At this time the preacher gives such general information respecting the state of the work in other parts, as he may have received. He reads any circular or other letters which he conceives will benefit or interest the members; in short, every thing that immediately concerns the purely spiritual affairs of the whole society, is here made known to the people; who mourn or rejoice as the reports may be favourable or otherwise. Reports, however, of an unfavourable nature seldom are made,

as they would only tend to damp the fervour, and weaken the exertions, of the brethren.

The following hymn is appropriate to a society-meeting.

“ Two are better far than one,  
 For counsel or for fight ;  
 How can one be warm alone,  
 Or serve his God aright ?  
 Join we then our hearts and hands ;  
 Each to love provoke his friend ;  
 Run the way of his commands,  
 And keep it to the end.

Woe to him whose spirits droop !  
 To him who falls alone !  
 He has none to lift him up,  
 To help his weakness on ;  
 Happier we each other keep,  
 We each other's burdens bear ;  
 Never need our footsteps slip,  
 Upheld by mutual prayer.

Who of twain has made us one,  
 Maintains our unity :  
 Jesus is the corner-stone,  
 In whom we all agree :  
 Servants of one common Lord,  
 Sweetly of one heart and mind,  
 Who can break a three-fold cord,  
 Or part whom God hath join'd ?

O that all with us might prove  
 The fellowship of saints!  
 Find supplied, in Jesu's love,  
 What every member wants!  
 Grasp we our high-calling's prize,  
 Feel our sins on earth forgiv'n!  
 Rise, in his whole image rise,  
 And meet our Head in heav'n!"

When we consider the cementing tendency—the uniting influence—of these meetings, and these hymns, need we be surprised, Madam, at the union and increase of the Wesleyan Methodists? Here is every thing to warm the imagination—to inspire the affections—to engage the heart. All the generous passions of the soul, and all the tender sympathies of love, are here invited to share the sweets of benevolence—the mystic pleasures of devotion—the alluring anticipations of futurity, accompanied by the rapturous delights of present enjoyment, and the upholding influence of social intercourse. How far these apparent enjoyments are actually realized by the Methodists, I will inquire, when I come to treat of their general character. In the mean time, I cannot help observing, on this occasion, the strong propensity to amplification, hyperbole, and exaggeration, which some of the younger preachers often manifest at a society-meeting.

I have already said, that one part of the business of these meetings, is to relate to the people what information may have been obtained concerning the state of the connexion in distant towns, or in other countries.

So desirous are the preachers of having it understood that the cause in which they are engaged is always in a thriving, flourishing state; and at the same time, so natural is it for a man to believe whatever he wishes to be true, that a little amplification—a slight degree of *extra* colouring, is sometimes thought to be almost allowable, when a preacher is relating the state of religion, and the increase of its votaries. Such a practice, however, so nearly resembles *lying for God*, and doing evil that good may come, that I am sure the preachers, as a body, do by no means encourage it. This foolish propensity has been observed even by Mr. Wesley himself; and he has more than once been under the necessity of checking it among his preachers. Dr. Whitehead, also, seems to have witnessed something of this disposition towards enlargement of description in the Methodist preachers.

But I will press this matter no farther.—Though I have often witnessed its existence with sorrow, I should hope it is not *very* common. It is a weak and childish prac-

tice, unbecoming the character of a man and a Christian; and to which the Methodists, of all others, have the least occasion to resort.

The society-meetings end with singing; and it not unfrequently happens that several *find peace* on those occasions.

Often do I reflect with no small pleasure on the ecstatic joy I have felt on hearing the accounts at a society-meeting. It was delightful to anticipate an approaching Millennium—to see the period at hand, when war and tumult, sin and misery, shall no longer desolate the earth; when universal peace, charity, and good-will shall be established among mankind; when the whole race of men shall rally round the standard of Methodism, and every one, laying aside his prejudices, and his pride, shall exclaim—“This people shall be my people, and their God my God!”

“ O Jesus! ride on, till all are subdued;  
Thy mercy make known, and sprinkle thy blood!  
Display thy salvation, and teach the new song  
To every nation, and people, and tongue!”

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“ How pleasant and sweet,  
In his name when we meet.



Is his fruit to our spiritual taste !  
We are banqueting here,  
On angelical cheer,  
And the joys that eternally last !”

Such, Madam, are the effects—such the invigorating sensations—produced at a meeting of the society.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXV.*

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*Of the Quarterly Visitation of the Classes.*

DEAR MADAM,

IN the year 1742, commenced the quarterly visitation of all the classes. Mr. Wesley gives the following account of this visitation:—

“As the society increased, I found it required still greater care to separate the precious from the vile. In order to this, I determined, at least once in three months, to talk with every member myself, and to inquire at their own mouths, as well as of their leaders and neighbours, whether they grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? At these seasons, I likewise particularly inquire, whether there be any misunderstandings or differences among them? that every hindrance of peace and brotherly love may be taken out of the way.

“ To each of those, of whose seriousness and good conversation I found no reason to doubt, I gave a testimony under my own hand, by writing their name on a ticket prepared for that purpose; every ticket implying as strong a recommendation of the person to whom it was given, as if I had wrote at length—“ I believe the bearer hereof to be one that fears God and works righteousness.”

“ Those who bore these tickets (these Σύμβολα, or *Tesserae*, as the ancients termed them; being of just the same force with the ἐπιστολαὶ συστατικαὶ, *commendatory letters*, mentioned by the apostle), wherever they came, were acknowledged by their brethren, and received with all cheerfulness. These were likewise of use in other respects. By these it was easily distinguished when the society were to meet apart, who were members of it, and who not. These also supplied us with a quiet and inoffensive method of removing any disorderly member. He has no new ticket at the quarterly visitation (for so often the tickets are changed); and hereby it is immediately known that he is no longer of this community.”

That you may understand this very excellent regulation still more clearly, I here lay before you an exact representation of two of these tickets, viz. the common, or class-ticket, and a ticket for those who meet in band; premising

that the alphabetical letter, and the texts of scripture, are varied on every renewal of the tickets.

## A CLASS-TICKET.

*March, 1807.*

That which ye have already,  
hold fast till I come.

REV. ii. 25.

M.

J— N—

## A BAND-TICKET.

*March, 1807.*

Thou art all fair, my love,  
there is no spot in thee.

SONG OF SOL. iv. 7.

M. *b.*

M— N—

These tickets are printed at the Conference-office, North-green, Worship-street, and are regularly sent to every town and village in the United Kingdom which contains a Methodist society.

The classes being now very numerous in almost every town in the kingdom, it has become necessary for the preacher to notify from the pulpit, some time before the visitation, the particular days on which he proposes to meet each of them severally. Accordingly, at the appoint-

ed time, two, three, or more, of the classes, with their respective leaders, are convened at the chapel vestry, and, after singing and prayer, the preacher proceeds to receive the testimony of every individual present. He inquires how their souls prosper; what advancement they make in the divine life; or what occasion there may be for correction and reproof, or for the expulsion of any of the members.

While the member is answering his interrogatories, he writes his or her name on the ticket, and in a very solemn manner presents it, with the requisite advice, &c. &c.

For these tickets, the members are expected to pay about sixpence each, more or less, as may suit their several inclinations or circumstances.

In answer to a question, proposed the last conference, respecting further regulation in the financial affairs, they say, "We earnestly recommend to all our societies, a strict compliance with that original rule of Methodism, which requires that each member shall pay, for the support of the work, at least one penny per week, and one shilling per quarter." It has hitherto escaped my observation, that it is an original rule of Methodism, for each member to pay, at least, one shilling per quarter, in addition to the weekly class-money and such other contributions as the stated and contingent col-

lections in the chapels may demand. A rule of Methodism is a law of conference.

This money is received by the preacher, and is afterwards deposited in the hands of the stewards, who are the treasurers of the society.

“ Now, Jesu, now thy love impart,  
 To govern each devoted heart,  
 And fit us for thy will!  
 Deep founded in the truth of grace,  
 Build up thy rising church, and place  
 The city on the hill.”

Now, Madam, should you hereafter be disposed to visit a Methodist chapel, and after the sermon is ended, should hear the minister entertain his audience for five or ten minutes, with a long list of names and dates, you will not be entirely ignorant of what is about to be transacted, when you hear him proclaim—“ On Sunday, the            day of            , immediately after morning preaching, I shall meet the following classes: Brother J.’s, Brother N.’s, and Brother W.’s. After the noon preaching, Brother D.’s, Brother R.’s, and Brother F.’s two classes. On Sunday, the            day of            , immediately after evening preaching, Brother B. will meet Sister A.’s, Sister L.’s, and Sister B.’s classes,” &c. &c. &c. I say, Madam, on these occasions, you will hereafter be less *fidgety* and impatient during this ceremony, because you

will be better acquainted with the nature and meaning of the long bead-rolls to which your attention will be called, after having heard a pressing Methodist sermon.

It were to be wished the Methodists could select a more convenient season for these advertisements, than after their public services of preaching, &c. It is certainly very disagreeable to strangers, to be condemned either to leave the chapel before the benediction, or to wait while the minister reads a long list of names and appointments, in which no one besides himself and his brethren is in the least interested. This is peculiarly distressing, when it occurs on a cold winter's day, and, as is very commonly the case, when the strangers, sitting in the vicinity of the door, are nearly starved. It happens too, sometimes, that they are farther mortified by the additional interruption of half a dozen written notes of request from the sick, or of thanksgiving from the recovered. And when to all this is added one or two proclamations, that Brother ——— intends, God willing, to preach a funeral or charity sermon that day week, at Widow ———'s, in ———, or Brother ———'s, in ———, the ceremony becomes absolutely intolerable, and is sometimes productive of much confusion and impatience. All these concurring hindrances happening on a

collection-night, would exhaust the patience of the most forbearing.

The distribution of tickets, and the quarterly-visitations, are, however, among the wisest and most politic institutions in the Methodist economy. I much question whether Solon himself ever made a wiser law, or Lycurgus devised a better statute. But, as the Wesleyans sing—

“ Except the Lord conduct the plan,  
The best concerted schemes are vain,  
And never can succeed.”

I am, &c.



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*LETTER XXVI.*

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*Of Preaching, &c. with Specimens.*

DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE now described to you, in as clear and impartial a manner as I am able, almost all the different modes of worship or religious service which obtain in the Methodist connexion. On the two ordinances of baptism, and the Lord's supper, I have been silent, as those institutions are not observed in any manner peculiar to this people; neither are they, as yet, universally administered in the Methodist chapels. It only remains for me, on this head, to give you some account of their manner of conducting the constant public service of preaching, &c.

The mode of conducting divine worship among the Methodists, is of all others the most regular and simple. If their plan be defective

in any point, it is in not having the scriptures read to the people. This certainly ought never to be dispensed with. In every other respect, it is impressive and engaging in the highest degree.

Here is no pomp; no idle parade; no vain shew of unmeaning ceremonies, nor irksomeness of tedious liturgies; all is simple and intelligible, agreeable to the easy decorum and decent order of a Christian temple, and a spiritual worship. It is not the least of its recommendations, that, although musical instruments are not generally permitted in a Methodist chapel to divert the attention from the inward contemplation of divine and spiritual pleasures, the charms of vocal melody warm the zeal, and animate the spirits, of the numerous worshippers. Hence it is, in a great degree, that the meeting-houses of the Methodists are always so well attended by hearers. Thousands, I make no doubt, repair to the meeting, as well as to the church,

“Not for the worship, but the music there.”

Public worship is begun by singing; the hymns being given out, line by line, by the preacher. After singing follows prayer; then singing again; to which succeeds an extempore sermon; after this another hymn is sung; and the service is finally concluded by prayer, and

the customary benediction. The whole service usually lasts about an hour in the morning; at noon, and in the evening, about an hour and a half. This, however, depends much upon the prudence, the zeal, the modesty, or the loquacity, of the preacher. I have known the congregation kept in pain more than two hours. This service of the Wesleyans is, however, upon the whole, shorter and more simple than that of the Whitefieldians, or Calvinists, whose preachers are usually extremely tiresome.

Mr. Adam Clarke, in his admirable "Letter to a Methodist Preacher," gives his brethren the following advice on this subject: "In whatever way you handle your text, take care when you have exhausted the matter of it, not to go over it again. Apply every thing of importance as you go along; and when you have *done*, learn to make an *end*. It is not essential to a sermon, that it be half an hour or an hour long. Some preach more in ten minutes than others do in sixty. At any rate, the length of time spent in preaching, can never compensate for the want of matter; and the evil is double, when a man brings forth *little*, and is *long* about it. There are some who sing long hymns, and pray long prayers, merely to *fill up the time*: this is a shocking profanation of these sacred ordinances, and has the most direct tendency to bring them into contempt. If they are of no more import-

ance to the preacher, or his work, than merely *to fill up the time*, the people act wisely, who stay at home and mind their business, till the time in which the sermon commences. Have you never heard the following observation?— ‘ You need not be in such haste to go to the chapel: you will be time enough to hear the sermon, for Mr. X. Y. always sings a *long* hymn, and makes a *long* prayer.’ This is excellent counsel, Madam; but the Methodist preachers do not always attend to it.

Many of the Methodist preachers shew considerable acuteness in the choice, and dexterity in the elucidation of their text. I have known the most quaint and out of the way passages chosen for the subject of a Methodist sermon. Such as, “ Set on the great pot,”—“ Two legs and a piece of an ear,” &c. Mr. Clarke mentions two of his colleagues, “ who trifled away the whole year in this way.” “ Their texts,” says he, “ were continually such as these: ‘ Adam, where art thou?’—‘ I have somewhat to say unto thee.’—‘ If thou wilt deal justly and truly with my master, tell me.’—‘ I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?’—‘ Thy mouth is most sweet,’ &c.” “ These solemn triflers,” adds Mr. Clarke, “ did no good; and they are both, long since, fallen away.”

This gentleman seems to be aware of the fact, that many of these “ solemn triflers” are still re-

remaining among the Methodists. It would be much to the credit of their cause, were they all "fallen away."

Notwithstanding Mr. Clarke's advice, many of his brethren still assume an air of importance while in the pulpit; and have many fantastic attitudes; being still afflicted with that species of *paralysis* termed *St. Vitus's dance*, as is evident from their *queer noddings*, *ridiculous stoopings*, and *erectiions* of the body, skipping from one side to the other of the desk, knitting their brows; with other theatrical and foppish airs. Yea, many do still flourish their handkerchiefs, and gaze about upon the congregation, before they begin their work. They still *whisper* in the beginning of their prayer, *stom* and *bellow* in the middle, and *scream* towards the end; always, however, losing their fervour when they come to repeat the Lord's prayer.

Neither has this worthy and sensible man been more successful in reclaiming his fellow-labourers from the weak and childish practice of interlarding their discourses with quotations from the poets. To this practice, *you*, Madam, would probably have no objection; especially when you found that the muses had the merit of all that is really excellent in the discourse, to the aid of which they are only dragged in as ornamental auxiliaries.

The last time I had the honour of hearing a sermon by Mr. Benson, one of their most popular preachers, I could not help remarking, that Thomson, Young, Blair, and Charles Wesley, contributed as much, or more, to that discourse, as the writers of the four gospels, or even St. Paul himself. It is true, Mr. Benson spouted well; and his favourite authors were introduced with spirit and grace. I must, however, be allowed to conjecture, that when Thomson wrote "The Seasons," Young "The Night Thoughts," and Blair "The Grave," none of them *dreamed*, poets as they were, that they were at that time composing Methodist sermons.

Mr. Clarke very properly cautions his brethren against the common practice of treating a subject "negatively and positively;" of "shewing *negatively* what a thing *is not*," and adduces the following instances of this injudicious mode of handling the word of God, which he says have come within the compass of his own observation. "A gentleman took for his text, Isa. xxviii. 16. 'He that believeth shall not make haste.' On this he preached *two* sermons. His division was as follows: 'I shall first prove that he who believeth *shall make haste*: and, 2dly, Shew in what sense he that believeth *shall not make haste*.' On the first, which was a flat contradiction to the text, he spent more than an hour: and the

congregation were obliged to *wait* a whole month before he could come back to inform them, that he who believeth *shall not make haste.*"

"Another took his text from Psalm xxxiv. 19. 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but God delivereth him out of them all.' His division was as follows: 'In handling this text, I will first prove, that there is *none righteous*: 2dly, That the afflictions of the *righteous* are many: and, 3dly, That the Lord delivereth them out of them all!"

I myself knew an instance of this kind, and from this very text, with only a slight variation in the words of the division. My champion, 1. Enumerated the troubles of the *righteous*: 2dly, Proved "*there is none righteous, no not one:*" and, 3dly, Shewed how the Lord delivereth them out of them all!

"Another took Luke, xii. 32. 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' In opposition to the *letter* of this text, the preacher laboured to prove, that the flock of Christ is not a *little*, but a very *large* flock: and in order to do this, brought in multitudes of pious heathens, vast numbers who sought and found mercy in their last hour, together with myriads of infants, idiots, &c."

Instances of such glaring absurdity are not, however, *very common*; and when they do occur, they are chiefly among the local-preachers, or the very young and very aged travelling-preachers.

A disposition to allegorize and spiritualize the most plain and obvious texts, is not very uncommon with the Methodist preachers.

I was informed a few years ago, by a very respectable and worthy gentleman, who was then, and is now, a preacher among the Wesleyan Methodists, that a certain preacher did actually allegorize that passage in the 2 Kings, iv. 38. "Set on the great pot," something in the following manner: 'The pot itself is the church—the meat in the pot, the word of God—and the broth the grace of God! After having enlarged on these several heads, the preacher, in imagination and gesture, turned the pot upside down, and from the circumstance of its having three feet, placed in a triangular direction, took occasion thence to demonstrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity!

I could enumerate a variety of similar instances; but I fear the disclosure would give pain to the minds of those preachers who so much despise this practice. They; however, are not themselves at all times over delicate in their representations and exposures; and I ho-



nour them for it: let them go on, until the "solemn triflers," are gone to rest with their forefathers, the allegorizers of the sixteenth century.

Some of the preachers, who, though more judicious in the choice of texts, and more rational in their explications, are nevertheless too much disposed to eke out a text into several divisions and subdivisions—to wire-draw and distort a passage, till every word, and almost every letter, like the well-known sermon on the word MALT, is made the subject of a division.—From numerous instances which have fallen within the compass of my own observation, the two following shall suffice: Ezek. xviii. 31. "Why will ye die?" Divided as follows; *Why will ye die?—Why will ye die?—Why will ye die?* Again: Rev. iii. 20. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Divided as follows: (1.) *Behold!* (2.) *I* (3.) *stand* at the (4.) *door* and (5.) *knock*; if (6.) *any* man hear my (7.) *voice*, and (8.) *open the door*, (9.) *I* will (10.) *come in* to him, and will (11.) *sup with him*, and (12.) *he with me*. These, duly and appropriately subdivided, with an exordium, application, recapitulation, and conclusion, made up a sermon of no contemptible dimensions. The person who thus exhibited his skill in

the rule of division, is at this time a travelling preacher!

The Methodist preachers have been accused of *always* preaching so as to inspire their hearers with terror and alarm. This is not the fact: they do often fall into the other extreme; and keep the congregation in a constant *titter*, during the whole sermon. They abound in witty sayings, smart repartees, and laughable anecdotes. Some of them are little inferior, in these respects, to those merry preachers, who so powerfully excited the risibility of the Puritans during the reign of that profligate monarch Charles II. and the hypocritical *Protector*, Oliver Cromwell.

The practice of spiritual jesting, and pious punning, is, however, fast going to decline among the Wesleyan Methodists. Though some of their popular and eloquent preachers still occasionally indulge in this habit, it is not encouraged by their more serious and useful brethren. Mr Samuel Bradburn, whose powers of oratory are *neither few nor small*, may be ranked among those preachers who take delight in seeing their audience merry under the word; while Mr. Adam Clarke, whose learning, zeal, and indefatigable industry, do honour to his sect, would rejoice to see and hear of nothing but what is serious and becoming in a Christian minister. Upon the whole, the Wesleyan preach-

ers seem to be transferring their wit to their Calvinistic brethren; who, with the boisterous and intolerant joker of Surry chapel at their head, are drawing thousands to their meetings by holy mirth and devout jocularity.

The Annual Reviewer, to whom I alluded in a former letter, asserts that the sermons of the Methodists are "seasoned with brimstone, and glowing with hell-fire." This is not always the case; neither are the flames of hell, and the torments of the damned, resorted to so frequently as they were by some of the early preachers.— They still, however, deal pretty largely in the terrors of the Lord; and seek to draw back the wandering children of men to a sense of duty, by proclaiming that hell and damnation, devils and furies, brimstone and flames, tortures and torments without mitigation or end, shall ere long be commissioned by an angry God to punish their numerous transgressions.

That *some* of their sermons are still pretty highly "seasoned," the following quotations fully demonstrate. "A damned spirit"—"a devil damned," "in the abyss of perdition, in the burning pool, which spouts cataracts of fire!" "Sinners may lose their time in disputing against the *reality* of hell-fire, till awakened to a sense of their folly, by finding themselves plunged into what God calls 'the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.' Many are desirous of *seeing* an

inhabitant of the other world, or they wish to *converse* with one to know what passes there. Curiosity and infidelity are as insatiable as they are unreasonable. Here, however, God steps out of the common way to indulge them. You wish to see a disembodied spirit?—Make way!—*Here* is a damned soul, which Christ has evoked from the hell of fire! Hear HIM! Hear him tell of his torments! Hear him utter his anguish! Listen to the sighs and groans which are wrung from his soul by the tortures he endures! Hear him asking for a drop of water to cool his burning tongue! Telling you that he is tormented in that flame; and warning you to repent, that you come not into that place of torture! How solemn is this warning! How awful this voice!” “Hear the groans of this damned soul, and be alarmed!”

Well, Madam, what think you? Have the Methodists forgotten to

“ — deal damnation round the land?”

But what will you say, when I inform you, that the foregoing specimens are extracted from a sermon, on Dives and Lazarus, printed the very last year, and written by Mr. Adam Clarke !!

Loudly alarming as the language in these short extracts may appear, I do assure you, Madam, they

are gentle as the vernal spring, refreshing as the cooling breeze, and lulling as the gurgling rivulet, when compared to those thunderbolts of everlasting vengeance, which a certain methodistical Doctor sometimes hurls at the devoted heads of the poor Arians and Socinians!

This *little* man, with the most barefaced effrontery, and in direct opposition to all truth, common sense, decency, religion, and even the express rules of his own society, embraces every opportunity to make the pulpit a vehicle of abuse and insult, especially when what he chooses to call Arianism and Socinianism are concerned. The fourth clause in the 29th section of the General Minutes (Rules of Conference), expressly provides, that “*No person (among the Methodists) shall call another heretic, bigot, or any other disrespectful name, on any account, for a difference in sentiment.*” And in the third clause of Addenda to the 26th section, called “a Plan of General Pacification,” it is said, “We (the Methodist preachers) *all* agree, that the pulpit shall not be made the vehicle of *abuse.*” These identical rules and prohibitions are signed THOMAS COKE, *Secretary!!!* As some extenuation, however, of the pious and consistent Doctor’s conduct, I must not forget to inform you, that Arianism is expressly mentioned in these Minutes, as being a “pernicious doctrine;” and that the

431st hymn, in the *Large Hymn Book*, contains the following very liberal and pious petitions:

“ O! might the blood of sprinkling cry,  
 For those who spurn the sprinkled blood;  
 Assert thy glorious Deity!  
 Stretch out thy arm, thou Triune God,  
 The Unitarian fiend expel,  
 And chace his doctrine back to hell!”

So that, every thing considered, the good Doctor is not so highly culpable as one might at the first imagine. And he no doubt thinks he is doing God service, by thus damning the poor Unitarians. This being the case. I do not expect the excellent Letter, lately addressed to him, by the Rev. Job David, of Taunton, will have any very salutary effect; more especially as his intolerant abuse is kept in countenance by the oratorical railing of Mr. Bradburn, and the declamatory powers, and even *active exertions*, of the Editor of the Methodist Magazine

“ Where is the man, who, prodigal of mind,  
 In one wide wish embraces human kind?  
 All pride of sects, all party zeal above,  
 Whose guide is reason, and whose God is love,  
 Fair nature's friend, a foe to fraud and art—  
 Where is the man, so welcome to my heart!”

LANGHORNE.

Were I here to close my description, I am persuaded you would never, on any account, enter the door of a Methodist chapel. But as that would be an effect it is not my wish to produce, I gladly call your attention to the favourable side of the picture.

When, Madam, you wish to see the most important of all concerns engaged in with ardour and seriousness—when you feel yourself weary of the toil and drudgery of life, yet are still clinging to the soil from whence grows all your cares—when you would have your heart engaged, and your soul warmed with the love of religion, and the beauty of holiness—when you feel a more than ordinary hatred of moral evil, and wish to see the monster depicted and exposed in all its hideous deformity, go to a Methodist chapel. See the zeal of the Wesleyans—listen to the representations of a blissful futurity—let all within you admire the union, the love, and affection, of those who are inquiring the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward! I do not say you would not find these incentives to virtue and holiness at any other place of Christian worship; or that you actually require them; but this I do say, that no body of Christians are more earnestly and sincerely engaged in the service of heaven than the Wesleyan Methodists. Nor are they without preachers who would do honour to any party. The

learning and piety of Mr. Adam Clarke—the zeal and liberality of Mr. Jabez Bunting—the simple and unaffected devotion of Mr. Joseph Entwisle—and the blunt honesty of Mr. Joseph Bradford, are noble and honourable exceptions to the censure I have been impelled, by the demands of impartiality, to pass upon one or two of their brethren; and I could mention the names of several others who are perhaps equally deserving of praise. The very strenuous support which most of the Methodist preachers give to the common notion of the eternity of hell-torments, gives an unfavourable cast to their sermons, and leads them at times into heats and extravagances in the pulpit, which, on other occasions, they would disavow and abhor.

The Methodists preach two, and in some places three, times every Lord's day, besides almost every evening during the week, either in the town where they are stationed, or in the surrounding country, which forms what is called a circuit, or *round*. The morning's discourse is usually addressed, in a more pointed manner, to the members of the society. These discourses are often very excellent in their kind. They are generally upon some moral or religious duty, and are of the most consoling and pressing nature. The evening sermons are either controversial, inviting, awakening, or alarming. It is at those seasons



the sons of thunder officiously seek to light the flames of hell in the hearts of sinners—to accelerate the bolts of divine fury—and to point the barbed arrows of conviction to the souls of the wicked, the careless, and the unawakened. It is unnecessary for me to recommend morning preaching to your attendance. With respect to the hours of preaching, these vary in different places. The seven o'clock preaching is, however, I believe, observed in almost all the large towns; and the usual time of preaching in the evening is about five in the winter, and six in the summer season. I speak now of the Sunday services. The morning preaching on work-days is at five, winter and summer; and the field-preaching happens according to the fineness of the day, the state of existing circumstances, and the zeal of the preacher. The following is the rule concerning service in canonical hours :

“ § XXIII. *In what cases we allow Service in Church-Hours.*

“ Q. 31. In what cases do we allow service in what are commonly called church-hours?

“ A. When the minister is a notoriously wicked man. When he preaches Arian, or any equally pernicious doctrine. When there are not churches in the town sufficient to contain the people.

And when there is no church within two or three miles. And it is expected that every one who preaches in church-hours, will either read Mr. Wesley's abridgment of the common-prayer, or else the lessons for the day."

Pray, Madam, suspend your inquiries a little, concerning the *authority* which a church of England minister has to alter or *abridge* the book of common-prayer. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXVII.*

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*Of Prayer-leaders, Class-leaders, and Local-  
Preachers.*

DEAR MADAM,

HAVING now, as I conceive, faithfully delineated all those associations which compose what may be denominated the spiritual economy of Methodism, I might proceed to describe the various secular meetings, which form the outward discipline of its professors: but I must first make you acquainted with the different church-officers of which their assemblies are composed. These are six in number; four of whom are lords spiritual; the remaining two belong to the *lower house*, but are of infinite weight and importance in the constitution of Methodism. I will treat of them in order; beginning, agreeably to my plan, with those of the lowest order.

I have already given you some account of the qualifications of a prayer-leader, or exhorter. These are men of very considerable service in the cause of Methodism. They are the hewers of wood and the drawers of water in the church; men who labour incessantly for the conversion of souls. They employ themselves with unwearied industry to gather people to the meeting. I have often known these men to go out in small parties, seeking opportunities of prayer and exhortation among their country neighbours. When one of these theological hunts takes place (and they used to be pretty frequent in some parts of the north of England), one of the party must be a smoker of tobacco; (for the rule against smoking and snuff-taking is not often kept). It is this person's business, whenever he comes to a place where he knows there are few if any Methodists, to call at some one of the houses, and to request the liberty of lighting his pipe. While he is performing this ceremony, his brethren are standing near the door. On some remarks being made by the smoker, on the heat or coldness of the weather, &c. it not unusually happens that the good people of the house will request him to take a chair and rest himself while he smokes his pipe. To this proposal he gladly accedes, and mentioning his friends at the door, they also are invited, and a familiar conversation soon

takes place between the people of the house and their pious guests. While they are thus employed, some one of the party is looking round to see if there are any religious books on the tables or desks. In short, Madam, the subject of religion is some way or other introduced, and recommended to the affections of the people; and if they happen to receive the counsels of the Methodists favourably, a prayer-meeting is soon begun at the house—Methodism is introduced into the village—some of the people get converted; these convert others—a class is formed of the new converts—the local preachers are appointed; and if they succeed pretty well, an opening is made for their travelling brethren, and an out-pouring of the Spirit is the glorious consequence. Thus are the prayer-leaders employed, although, perhaps, not in every place exactly as I have been describing them, to pave the way for Methodism, where it would otherwise never be known.—Some of the prayer-leaders are also class-leaders. Of so much use are prayer-meetings to their cause, that to appoint them wherever they can make it convenient is an express rule of Conference. The prayer-leaders have meetings, composed of their own body, to consider of the nature and extent of their exertions, and of the best means of promoting their cause.

The next order of men in the Methodist connexion are the class leaders, who are usually chosen out of the body of prayer-leaders. With the business of these persons you are already acquainted. The following injunctions are laid upon the superintendants relative to them.

“It is the duty of the superintendant to take care that the leaders be not only men of sound judgment, but men truly devoted to God. Let each of them be diligently examined concerning his method of meeting a class. Let this be done at the quarterly visitation of the classes. And in order to this, allow sufficient time for the meeting of each society.

“Let each leader carefully inquire how every soul in his class prospers; not only how each person observes the rules, but how he grows in the knowledge and love of God. Endeavour to make the meeting of the classes lively and profitable. Therefore change improper leaders. But in doing this, great care and tenderness must be used; and it is highly necessary to consult the rest of the leaders on such occasions.”

“It was agreed at the conference in 1797, that no person shall be appointed a leader or steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with the leaders’ meeting: the nomination to be in the superintendant, and the ap-

probation or disapprobation to be in the leaders' meeting.

“ Let the leaders frequently meet each others classes.

“ Let us observe which of the leaders are most useful, and let these meet the other classes as often as possible.”

These officers are, for the most part, chosen from among the brethren ; there are, however, not a few class-leaders in the sisterhood.

The class-leaders are the body-politic ; the great representatives of the people ; and as you will have already observed, they are the principal tax-gatherers in the Methodist government. That they are, therefore, of infinite importance to the *cause*, is very evident. An insurrection among the leaders would be attended with fatal consequences to Methodism. Out of this body are often chosen the local-preachers ; a species of officers in the Wesleyan church which I must next attempt to describe.

In the early days of Methodism, all the lay-preachers might be called local-preachers ; for by this term is meant, in their vocabulary, all those preachers who follow some secular employment for their livelihood ; receiving no remuneration at all for their ministerial services. These men are consequently employed on Sundays only, except where the week-night preach-

ing happens to be in the vicinity of their residence.

Their *call* to the ministerial office is both inward and outward; the process being generally carried on somewhat in the following manner: After a person has been a regular member for some time, if he possesses a tolerable share of boldness, and can speak with moderate fluency before a number of persons at a prayer-meeting; and especially if he be successful in making converts, it not unfrequently happens that a suggestion will arise in his mind, of his being called to preach the gospel. This, at first, is but a faint and transient thought, which vanishes on the least exertion of rational consideration. If the person thus acted upon be of rather a timorous disposition, or if he have a considerable share of natural modesty, the first thoughts of his becoming a preacher are repelled as suggestions of the devil, who thus seeks to draw him away from the humble simplicity of the gospel; and desires to raise him up, that he may cast him down with greater force. If, however, the man's exertion in the prayer-meetings, or at class, are still attended with success, the inward motions to become a preacher will grow upon him; they will return with redoubled strength on every repelling attack of reason, timorousness, or modesty. These thoughts will



cause him to be still more active in the way of exhortation, advice, &c. He will try his strength in the way of reproof; wherever he has an opportunity; on some occasions the reproofs will have the desired effect in the conversion of the sinner; on others, they will re-act upon himself, in quite a contrary manner, and bring upon him a greater or a less degree of persecution. In whatever way his reproofs operate, they tend to strengthen the thoughts of his having a *call*. If he is successful in his feeble attempts upon others, that is a sure indication that he was so employed by the motions of God's good Spirit, who speaks in him to the convinced sinner. If his reproofs produce an unfavourable effect, he remembers that the true prophets of the Lord must expect the buffetings of the enemy; and that to suffer persecution is a sure badge of discipleship, as well as a strong mark of a true call to the ministry.

It will often happen, that some one or other, seeing the zeal and usefulness of this brother, will hint to him, that God has very likely more work for him to do in his vineyard. This is very often enough—this gives the final blow to all the revoltings of worldly prudence and carnal reason.

If, however, some doubts should still remain upon his mind, they are removed, either by some

extraordinary dream, or by his having some text of scripture *applied to his mind*, in a very powerful manner: such as—“Woe is me if I preach not the gospel;” “Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in;” “Behold I send you out as sheep among wolves,” &c. &c. Accidentally to *open* upon a text of this nature is a good prognostic of future public service in the church.

As I have mentioned dreams being sometimes employed to thrust labourers into the vineyard, I may be allowed to mention a case in point. Some time after I first joined the society of Methodists, I was induced, after a thousand inward conflicts, which affected my health not a little; to yield to the pressing solicitations of some of the brethren, and to try my powers of extemporaneous effusion, before a very crowded audience; but not succeeding exactly as I wished (though some of my friends told me it was only the pride of nature and the temptations of the devil), I resolved to make no farther attempts; until some time after, I went to hear a Mr. Thomas Wood, one of the travelling preachers, who assured me, in the presence of two or three others, that a few nights prior to his having seen me for the first time, at the preaching, he had dreamed, that a young man, of my name, had lately been converted to God among the Methodists; that this young man

was possessed of considerable talents; had, before his conversion, been led to entertain some very erroneous opinions;—and that he was become a preacher of the gospel!—This appeared very extraordinary; and what seemed to me to confirm the truth of Mr. Wood's statement, was his actually calling me by my name, and appearing to know my person, although I was certain he could never before have seen me; and he declared that no one had told him my name.

Can you wonder, Madam, that after this, your humble servant should soon become a Methodist preacher? But you will ask me, if I now believe the facts asserted by Mr. Wood? I answer, I certainly do. Mr. Wood is a man of some learning, of unimpeachable integrity; and so much was he at that time averse to the enthusiasm of some of the people, that I have often heard it asserted of him, that he was a backslider in heart—a mere formalist, without any of the true spirit of revival. This gentleman is still living. I saw him a few years ago at Manchester, where, before several of the preachers, he mentioned his extraordinary dream. You will smile at my credulity; but I find an insuperable objection to believe that Mr. Wood is capable of any species of known falsehood. And after all, the thing is not so wonderful as to render the belief of it impossible.

All dreams are more or less defective. In one instance, Mr Wood's was particularly so: his young man possessing "very considerable talents." In every other respect his ramblings of fancy were tolerably correct: for I had formerly entertained a very strong prejudice against the truth of Christianity; and, at the time of the dream, had been recently converted to Methodism.

A young man, who formerly resided at my house in the country, was strongly convinced that he was called to preach the gospel; but being of an uncommonly timid disposition, as well as of a most unpromising address, he was never able to break through his timidity and bashfulness; so that he actually threw himself into a consumption, and died in the work-house, in the most abject state of poverty and distress.

He was a virtuous and worthy young man; but so much was he harassed with what he conceived to be an inward call to the ministry, that I have known him, after a restless and sleepless night, to throw himself across the bed, and there to lie, groaning and bemoaning his want of resolution the whole of the day. "Lord, I am not eloquent!"—"Send me *not* against this people;" was his constant cry. But the more he sought to get rid of these impressions, the stronger they grew upon him; until it became

impossible for him to attend to his business, and he left my house to go to his own town, where he soon sunk under the weight of his conflicts.

Many of the Methodists are not, however, so backward to do the Lord's work; the slightest impulse, and the most distant encouragement, will cause some of them to stand forward with boldness; saying,—“Here am I, Lord, send me!”

The society are prudent enough not to accept the overtures of every one who may think he has the inward call; he must also have the outward call, or he is no true minister of Christ.

The following are the rules respecting local preachers:—

*“Of the Local-Preachers, and their Meetings.”*

“1. The superintendant shall regularly meet the local preachers once a quarter, and no person shall receive a plan, as a local-preacher, nor be suffered to preach among us as such, without the approbation of that meeting. Or, if in any circuit a regular local-preachers' meeting cannot be held, they shall be proposed and approved

at the general quarterly-meeting of the circuit.

“ 2. All local-preachers shall meet in class. No exception shall be made in respect to any who have been travelling preachers in former years.

“ 3. Let no local-preacher, who will not meet in class, or who is not regularly planned by the superintendant of the circuit where he resides, be permitted to preach.

“ 4. Let no local-preacher be permitted to preach in any other circuit than his own, without producing a recommendation from the superintendant of that circuit in which he lives; nor suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, except from men in office, who act in conjunction with the superintendant of that circuit which he visits.

“ 5. Let no local-preacher keep love-feasts, without the consent of the superintendant, nor in any wise interfere with his business. Let every one keep in his own place, and attend to the duties of his station.

“ 6. No preacher who has been suspended or expelled, shall, on any account, be employed as a local-preacher, without the authority of Conference.”

Though some of the local-preachers are extremely ignorant, they are, upon the whole,

useful and valuable body of men; and they are gradually improving in point of learning and abilities. I know one, however, at this time, who very lately knew not the use of a common English dictionary; nay, there are some among them, I believe, that cannot read at all.

The respectable local-preachers by no means despise human learning, nor neglect to avail themselves of every opportunity of cultivating it. From a tolerably extensive acquaintance with these men, I am well persuaded, that as they are more independent, so are they more useful in spreading the name, and promoting the influence, of Methodism, than even the travelling preachers themselves; who, many of them, to their great shame be it spoken, often act as if they affected to despise them.

In the circuit where I last resided, it was agreed, that when a local-preacher had an appointment which led him to the distance of six miles from his own home, he should be allowed what would defray the expense of horse-hire, &c. But, as this money was to be raised by a subscription in the poor country places, to be made by the local preachers themselves, it almost always happened that these gentlemen had to defray their own costs; as they had not sufficient impudence to levy contributions upon the people, who they knew could scarcely afford to pay their weekly class-money; and who very often

had been pretty well drained by the travelling-preachers, by collections on sundry occasions; which I will explain to you in a future Letter. I do not know what are the regulations in other towns; but in the circuit to which I am alluding, if most of the local-preachers were not men of some little property, and very willing to contribute every thing in their power to the cause in which they are engaged, both travelling and every other kind of preaching among the Methodists, would very speedily be at an end. I would hope some more equitable mode of proceeding has since been adopted.

When it is considered that many of the local-preachers are not at all inferior to their travelling brethren, either in zeal, piety, usefulness, or learning, it is a most flagrant abridgment of their Christian liberty, as well as an insult to their character and judgment, that they are never, on any account, admitted into the *sanctum sanctorum*—a yearly conference.

The travelling-preachers have, doubtless; good and sufficient reason for thus shutting the conference doors against their local brethren; lest, therefore it should be imperiously and pettishly demanded of me, as it is of the Annual Reviewer, respecting Kingswood-school—"What right have you, Sir, to meddle about the rules of conference?"—I will say no more on this priestly law. I must, however, be permitted to add, that



in an address to conference, written by one of the local preachers a few years ago, it is asserted that they (the travelling preachers) are extremely God-like—*their ways*, in many instances, being past *finding out*.

From the body of local-preachers are chosen the travelling, or, as a country friend of mine used to call them, the *gentlemen preachers*.

I will close this account of the local preachers with one or two extracts from a publication entitled, "The Methodist Monitor," published in the year 1796.

"There seems something contaminating in the ministry. While a man follows a lawful trade, and preaches the gospel among us, he remains on a level with his brethren. But take a number of persons of this character, from a variety of places, and let them travel in union with the itinerant preachers, and you will soon perceive what rapid progress the spirit of priest-craft generally makes in their hearts. There may be exceptions. Some think them but few."

"At present, they (the local preachers) go to break up new ground, as it is called, and after they get a congregation established, and see some fruit of their labour, the travelling-preachers are introduced, and form classes immediately. A great number of places have been opened this way. With propriety they might say, 'We

have laboured, and they have entered into the fruits of our labours.

“It would be impossible to support the cause without local-preachers. They are numerous in many circuits, and all employed. They preach a great deal more than the circuit preachers. If it were not for their labours, the people would be in a very trying situation.”

“If matters were brought to this alternative, that either the travelling or the local preachers must be parted with, it would be easy to determine which could be best spared. The people would suffer no loss, comparatively speaking, by all the travelling preachers being dismissed, from what they would sustain by all the local preachers being silenced; because it would be easy to fill up the places of the former out of the body of the latter, with men every way as acceptable preachers, and for considerable less expense. Because, if they were ever so disposed, it would be several years before they became as much effeminate—as afraid to go out in a stormy day—as indifferent about supplying the circuit—as expensive in their houses, &c.—or, to speak all in one word, as much gentlemen as many of the travelling-preachers are.”

I do both hope and believe, that some of the insinuations in the latter part of this extract are both illiberal and unjust. This writer, considering St. Paul as a kind of Methodist local preach-

er, thus indulges his fancy in describing him and his labours :—

“ I often fancy in my own mind, when St. Paul first went to Athens, that he had not a good coat to put on, nor was he able to appear decent in public without his cloak ; which he once forgot, and desired his son in the gospel to bring to him. With a knapsack on his shoulders, filled with tools for making tents, his books, and provisions, he entered that populous city. Having just as much in his purse as would pay for his lodgings that night, and as much bread, &c. in his scrip, as served for his breakfast, he was obliged to look out for a job of tent-making or mending, to keep body and soul together. After he had been sweating at work, as he returned to his lodging, he saw an inscription upon one of their altars—‘ To the Unknown God.’ While he refreshed himself with the fruit of the labours of the day, and performed the other duties necessary to fit him for public company, he digested his subject, and prepared to give the Athenians a lecture. He repaired to Mars-Hill, and preached to the wise philosophers and others, that frequented that place. When he had finished, several were ready to dispute with him ; and some went so far as to propose giving him a second hearing ; but we do not read of any offering him a night’s lodging, or the least refreshment. The apostle, however,



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**LETTER XXVIII.**

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*Of Travelling Preachers—Specimens—*

*Trustees—Stewards.*

DEAR MADAM,

**DURING** the lifetime of Mr. Wesley, such persons were admitted itinerant preachers as he himself might think proper to raise to that high office. His well-known credulity introduced many persons who proved a disgrace to **Methodism**; but since his decease, more caution has been observed in transplanting the brethren from their humble stations as local preachers. Still the door of Methodism is very **wide**, and various are the ways by which a local preacher may become an itinerant; as the people have not the power of choosing their own ministers. The writer I quoted in my last Letter states the following:—

“ I,” says he, “ as an assistant, may wish to have the honour of sending many labourers into the vineyard of Christ, and therefore thrust out, against the minds of the people, such men as are unfit for the work, to gratify my vanity. Or, I may like to lounge at home with my family, when I ought to go to disagreeable or distant places, and appoint a local preacher to supply for me. He does it cheerfully, hoping one good turn will make way for another. When he has hacked about for me throughout the year, as a reward for his services, I get him a place among the travelling preachers, without stooping to ask at a quarterly-meeting, whether it will be suitable or not. Or, I may see a man that has not attended well to his business, and is on the border of being a bankrupt, and does not know what to turn his hand to. His pitiful stories may work upon my passions, and, without consulting with the people in the circuit where I labour, I may get him accepted both at the district-meeting and at the conference.”

These hindrances to a pure ministry have been in some measure removed by a law made in the year 1797, requiring every candidate to be approved of at a quarterly-meeting. The following are the rules on the admission of persons to become travelling-preachers :—

§ III. *The method of trying Candidates for the Ministry.*

“ Q. 3. How shall we try those who think they are moved by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel ?

“ A. Inquire, Do they know God as a pardoning God ? Have they the love of God abiding in them ? Do they desire and seek nothing but God ? And are they holy in all manner of conversation ? Have they gifts as well as grace for the work ? Have they a clear, sound understanding ? Have they a right judgment in the things of God ? Have they a just conception of salvation by faith ? And has God given them an acceptable way of speaking ? Do they speak justly, readily, and clearly ? Have they had any fruit of their labour ? Have any been truly convinced of sin, and converted to God by their preaching ?

“ As long as the above marks concur in any one, we believe he is called of God to preach. These we receive as sufficient proof, that he is moved thereto by the Holy Ghost.

“ Before any one can be received even upon trial among us, it is necessary, that he should have been a member of the society for some considerable time ; that he should have acted

as a local-preacher; that he should be recommended by the quarterly-meeting to the district-meeting, and by that to the conference: and at the conference in 1797, it was agreed, that before any superintendent propose any preacher to the conference as proper to be admitted on trial, such preacher must not only be approved of at the March quarterly-meeting, but must have read and signed the General Minutes, as fully approving of them. Nor must any one suppose, or pretend to think, that the conversations which have been on any of these minutes were intended to qualify them, as in the least to affect the spirit and design of them. That he should then travel four years upon trial, during which time he must not marry. And being well recommended by the people where he has laboured, and by the preachers who have laboured with him, he shall then be received into full connexion. The proper time for doing this is at a conference. After serious solemn prayer, the following questions shall be proposed to each candidate, which he shall be required to answer as in the presence of God:—

“ Have you a lively faith in Christ? Do you enjoy a clear manifestation of the love of God to your soul? Have you constant power over all sin? Do you expect to be perfected in love in this life? Do you really desire and earnestly seek it? Are you resolved to devote yourself



wholly to God, and to his work? Do you know the Methodist plan of doctrine and discipline? Have you read the plain account of the Methodists? The appeals to men of reason and religion? Do you know the rules of the society and of the bands? Are you determined by the help of God to keep them? Do you take no snuff, tobacco, or drams? Have you read and seriously considered the minutes of the conference? Especially, have you considered the rules of a helper? And above all, the first, tenth, and twelfth, and will you keep them for conscience sake? Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God? Will you preach every morning and evening, when opportunity serves, endeavouring not to speak too long or too loud? Will you diligently instruct the children where you can? Will you visit from house to house where it may be done? Will you recommend fasting and prayer, both by precept and example? Are you in debt?"

"Having answered the above questions to our satisfaction, we then give him the minutes of the conference inscribed thus:

To A. B.

"You think it your duty to call sinners to repentance. Make full proof hereof, and we shall rejoice to receive you as a fellow-labourer."

“ We have been disappointed by married preachers coming out to travel, in expectation of being themselves able to maintain their wives independently of the conference, who very soon became entirely dependent. How shall this be prevented? Let no preacher be received on this plan, unless he can bring in writing such an account of his income, signed by the superintendent, as shall satisfy the conference. And if any person shall promise to maintain a preacher’s wife, or children, he shall give a bond to the conference for the sum he intends to allow.”

“ Every preacher, before he is admitted into full connexion, shall write an account of his life, and give it to Mr. Story,” (at that time Editor of the M. Magazine).

Mr. Wesley appointed one of the preachers in each circuit to *assist* in governing the societies in the places where they were stationed. The other preachers were called Helpers. The assistant is now denominated the Superintendent.

The office and duties of a superintendent are as follow.

“ § V. *The peculiar Business of a Superintendent.*

“ Q. 6. What is the business of a superintendent?

“ A. To see that the other preachers in his circuit behave well, and want nothing. He should consider these (especially if they are young men), as his pupils: into whose behaviour and studies he should frequently inquire; and at proper times should ask, Do you walk closely with God? Have you now fellowship with the Father and the Son? At what hour do you rise? Do you punctually observe the morning and evening hour of retirement? Do you spend your time profitably? Do you converse seriously, usefully, and closely? Do you use all the means of grace yourself, and enforce the use of them on all other persons? These are either *instituted* or *prudential*.

“ I. The *instituted* are these:

“ 1. Prayer: in private, in the family, and in public; consisting of deprecation, petition, intercession and thanksgiving. Do you use each of these?

“ Do you use private prayer every morning and evening at least; if you can, at six in the evening, and the hour before or after morning preaching? Do you forecast daily, wherever you are, how to secure these hours? Do you avow it every where? Do you ask every where, Have you family prayer? Do you retire at six o'clock?

“ 2. Searching the scriptures, 1, By reading constantly, some part every day, all the Bible,

in order, carefully, seriously, and with earnest prayer, before and after, and do this fruitfully, immediately practising what you learn there.

2, Meditating, at set times, by a fixed rule.

3, Hearing the word preached at all opportunities, carefully, with earnest prayer to God for a blessing upon his word. Have you a New-Testament always about you?

“ 3. The Lord's Supper. Do you use this at every opportunity? With solemn prayer, and with earnest and deliberate self-devotion?

“ 4. Fasting. Do you fast every Friday? The neglect of this is sufficient to account for our feebleness and faintness of spirit. We are continually grieving the Holy Spirit by the habitual neglect of a plain duty! Let us amend from this hour. There are several degrees of fasting which cannot hurt your health. Begin next Friday, and avow this duty wherever you go. Touch no tea, coffee, or chocolate in the morning; but if you want it a little milk, or water-gruel. Dine on potatoes; and if you want it, eat three or four ounces of flesh in the evening. But at other times eat no flesh-suppers. These exceedingly tend to breed nervous disorders.

“ 5. Christian conference. Are you convinced how important, and how difficult it is to order your conversation aright? Is it always in grace, seasoned with salt, meet to minister grace to the

hearers? Do not you converse too long at a time? Is not an hour commonly enough?—Would it not be well always to have a determinate end in view? And always to conclude with prayer?

“ II. *Prudential means*, we may use either as common Christians, or as preachers of the gospel.

“ 1. As common Christians. What particular rules have you in order to grow in grace? What arts of holy living?

“ 2. As preachers. Do you meet every society, also the leaders, and the bands, if there are any? Do you live in holy watchfulness; denying yourself; taking up your cross; and in the exercise of the presence of God? Do you steadily watch against the world, the devil, yourself, and your besetting sin? Do you deny yourself every useless pleasure of sense, imagination, and honour? Are you temperate in all things? Instance in food? Do you use only that kind, and that degree, which is best both for your body and soul? Do you see the necessity of this? Do you eat no more at each meal than is necessary? Do you eat no flesh suppers, and no late suppers? Do you use only that kind and degree of drink which is best both for your body and soul? Do you drink water, or wine, or ale? Do you want these?

“ Wherein do you take up your cross daily? Do you cheerfully bear your cross (whatever is grievous to nature) as a gift of God, and labour to profit thereby?

“ Do you endeavour to set God always before you? To see his eye continually fixed upon you? *Never* can you use these means but a blessing must ensue. And the more you use them the more you will grow in grace.

“ A superintendent ought also to visit the classes quarterly, to regulate the bands, and to deliver tickets. To take in or to put out of the society, or the bands. At the conference in 1797, it was agreed that the leaders' meeting shall have a right to declare any person on trial, improper to be received into the society: and after such declaration, the superintendent shall not admit such person into the society. And no person shall be expelled from the society for immorality, till such immorality be proved at a leaders'-meeting. To keep watch-nights and love-feasts. To hold quarterly-meetings, and there diligently to inquire both into the temporal and spiritual state of the societies. To take care that every society be supplied with books. To send to London a circumstantial account of every remarkable conversion, and of every remarkable death. To take an exact list of all the societies in his circuit once a year. To meet

the married men and women, and the single men and women, in the large societies once a year, and to over-look the accounts of the stewards.

“ The following advices are recommended to all the superintendents.

“ Leave your successor a regular catalogue of all the societies in the circuit. See that every band-leader has the band-rules. Calmly and vigorously enforce the rules concerning needless ornaments, drams, snuff, and tobacco. Give no band-ticket to any person who does not promise to leave them off. As soon as there are four men or women believers in any place, put them into a band. Suffer no love-feast to last more than an hour and a half: And instantly stop all from breaking the cake with one another. Warn all from time to time, that none are to remove from one society to another, without a certificate from the superintendent in these words: ‘ A. B. the bearer, is a member of our society in C. I believe he has a sufficient reason for removing.’ Every where recommend decency and cleanliness. Cleanliness is next to godliness. Read the thoughts upon dress once a year in every large society. In visiting the classes be very mild, but very strict. Give no ticket to any who follow the foolish fashions of the world. Meet the bands once a week, and keep a love-feast for them *only*, once a quarter.

Exhort every believer to embrace the advantage. Give a band-ticket to none, till they have met a quarter on trial."

" § IX. *The proper Business of a Helper.*

" Q. 9. What is the particular business of those preachers who do not act as superintendents ?

" A. To feed the flock, by constantly preaching morning and evening. To meet the society and the bands weekly. To meet the leaders weekly. To preach every morning where he can have twenty hearers; but where he cannot, then to sing and pray with them. And to do any other part of the work which the superintendent may desire him to do.

" Q. 10. Should any of our preachers follow trades ?

" A. The question is not, whether they may not occasionally work with their hands, as St. Paul did : But whether it be proper for them to buy or sell any kind of merchandize ? It is fully determined, that this should not be done by any preacher, no not the selling of pills, drops, or balsams."

As I wish to give you a general view of the whole system of Methodism, I have been parti-



cular in detailing the rules by which their officers are appointed and governed.

Circumstances of rather a disagreeable nature having sometimes taken place among the preachers, it is become necessary to enforce the following advice—"Converse sparingly and cautiously with women, particularly with young women."

The travelling preachers in these kingdoms are in number about five hundred, and in America also about five hundred; making the total number of Methodist preachers, including the local brethren, in the Wesleyan connexion only, about five thousand. These gentlemen (the travelling preachers), says Mr. Kilham, who had himself travelled several years, "have access within the veil, and should they write what they have *seen* and *heard*, it would amazingly affect the whole body of the people."

In the year 1739, the first Methodist preaching-house was built at Bristol. It was settled by Mr. John Wesley on eleven feoffees. Being soon convinced, by a letter from Mr. Whitefield, that these men had too much power, and that they could even turn both himself and his preachers out of the chapel, he called them together, cancelled the writings, and took the whole management respecting the building into his own hands.

Soon after, he got a form of trust-deed drawn up for the settlement of the preaching-houses. This trust-deed, with only a few alterations and additions, is still in use among his followers.

It would be tiresome in the extreme to lay before you the words of this instrument. It provides, that the persons in whose trust the chapels are vested, shall admit such preachers as shall be appointed at the yearly conference, and no others, to have and enjoy the chapels, &c. provided always, that the said persons preach no other doctrines than those contained in Mr. Wesley's Notes on the New-Testament, and his four volumes of sermons.

The stewards of the society are of two orders, town and circuit. The town-stewards have the management of what more immediately concerns the business of the society in the town; and the circuit-stewards superintend the temporal concerns of the country societies belonging to their respective circuits.

The trustees are not, in every instance, required to be members of the society; yet it is always desirable to have them men at least well-disposed towards Methodism; otherwise their powers being extensive, they might do great mischief, by cramping the authority and influence of the preachers.

The rules of the stewards are: "1. Be frugal

—Save every thing that can be saved honestly. 2. Spend no more than you receive—Contract no debts. 3. Have no long accounts—Pay every thing within the week. 4. Expect no thanks from any man.” These rules were particularly adapted to the state of the society in London, at the time they were first made by Mr. Wesley. They are not now always attended to; particularly in what relates to the weekly payment of all monies, &c.

You are now, Madam, I hope, pretty well acquainted with the duty and business of the different officers, both spiritual and temporal, which are appointed to govern the church of the Methodists. When I have described to you their various secular associations, I will proceed with the history before and after the death of Mr. Wesley.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXIX.*

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*Of Meetings for Business—Leaders'-meetings—  
Quarterly-meetings—District-meetings—Con-  
ference.*

DEAR MADAM,

THE *Leaders'-meetings* are held once every week. The superintendent presides at them as a kind of chairman. Into his hands the different leaders pay their respective collections of class-money. At this meeting the preacher looks over the several class-papers; when, by the number of Ps, As, Is, or blanks, which are to be found in the several squares and columns, he sees, at one view, which of the members have been present or absent; who have paid, and who have not. By this admirable regulation, the preacher is enabled to exhort, reprove, rebuke, or praise, the several members of his church; and by this he is also enabled to form

a judgment of each persons's zeal and attention to the great concerns of his own mind, and to the society to which he belongs.

At a leaders'-meeting, almost every other temporal concern of the society may be investigated.

The friends of the late Mr. Alexander Kilham thought that the leaders'-meeting had not sufficient power and weight in managing the affairs of the society; but the conference have since extended the power of that meeting; and it now seems to have a pretty fair and adequate share in the management of the connexion, and in checking the power and influence of the preachers, with respect to the admission and rejection of members, the sending out preachers to travel, &c.

The *Quarterly-meetings* are composed of all the travelling-preachers in the circuit where such meetings are held; of the leaders and stewards of the society; and of such of the local-preachers and members as may be invited by any of the travelling-preachers or stewards.

At this meeting, the whole of the society's books are audited; the preachers paid their respective salaries; and such other receipts and disbursements settled as circumstances may require, or the finances permit. In some circuits, a dinner is provided at the quarterly-meetings,

when, if there be no jarring-strings, much sober pleasantness and hilarity takes place. The quarterly-meetings are often followed by a watch-night.

The *Local-preachers' meetings* are usually held once every quarter of a year. At these times their plans are renewed, and such arrangements made as are necessary for the furtherance of the *work*. A local-preacher's plan, is a paper properly divided and subdivided into columns and squares, on which the names of all the preachers are inserted, the respective places of their preaching-appointments, and the dates of the month; by which it is known at what time and at what place each of the brethren is to officiate.— One of these plans is given to every local-preacher.

As the societies continued to increase, the circuits became both more numerous and extensive; it consequently was more difficult for Mr. Wesley and the assistants to manage so vast a concern. That the government might be carried on with success, the kingdom was divided into districts; each district comprehending two, three, or more circuits. Over each of these united methodistical provinces or states, there is appointed a kind of supreme governor, called the *Chairman of the District*, who has a power

of assembling all the preachers in full connexion, i. e. who have travelled four years, in his dominions, to form a *district-meeting*, which has authority, 1. To try and suspend preachers who are found immoral, erroneous in doctrine, or deficient in abilities. 2. To decide concerning the building of chapels. 3. To examine the demands from the circuits respecting the support of the preachers, and of their families. And, 4. To elect a representative to attend and form a committee four days before the meeting of the conference, in order to prepare a draft of the stations of the preachers for the ensuing year. These are the general matters which form the business at a district-meeting. These districts have, however, several other powers, privileges, and immunities, which make them of very considerable consequence in working the great machine of modern Methodism. The additional laws and regulations which are yearly taking place in this and in almost every other department, render it difficult to define all the power and influence of the districts. If the conference proceed in enacting laws at the rate they have done of late, a few years hence the general minutes must be little inferior in bulk to the statutes at large; and it will be as difficult to tell what is law and what is not, in the court of Methodism, as in the high court of chancery, or any other circumlocution register-office in Great

Britain. This is pretty clear, that every circuit is a kind of parish, where the superintendent is rector or vicar; every district a diocese, over which the chairman is bishop; and the conference a sort of conclave, or general council. The chapels in the large towns may be called methodistical cathedrals; those in the surrounding villages, parish-churches, and the consecrated barns, out-houses, &c. &c. so many chapels of ease.

I hasten, with pleasure, to conduct you to *conference*, to which, as a kind of theological watering-place, all the beaux and belles, the old men and matrons, among the Methodists, resort in shoals, that they may have their natural propensity to novelty gratified for a season, by the glorious sight of hundreds of priests; that they may catch the healing virtues of grace, as they drop from the lips of a favourite preacher, or descend in torrents from an inspired multitude; and that they may be near the fountain-head of intelligence, ready to join in the disputes, or to participate in the union, of all their brethren.

The first conference was held in London, on the 25th of June, 1744. There attended six clergymen and four travelling preachers; all of whom, with only, I believe, two exceptions, afterwards forsook the Wesleys, either from not



liking their proceedings, or from a want of zeal.

At the early conferences were settled what doctrines the Methodists should preach; what plans they should pursue to spread their tenets; and what regulations were necessary to preserve union among those persons who had already believed: so that the minutes of those conferences may now be referred to, in case of any dispute, as so many decrees of council.

Since the death of Mr. Wesley, according to Mr. Myles's account, when the preachers assemble, the first thing they do is to elect a president and secretary, which is done by ballot. [Who has the nomination of candidates?] The minutes of the districts are then read over: after which the conference proceeds to inquire—

1. What preachers are admitted into full connexion?
2. Who remain on trial?
3. Who are admitted on trial?
4. Who desist from travelling?
5. Who have died this year?
6. Are there any objections to any of the preachers? (They are then *named* one by one; *examined* they cannot properly be said to be, as no one besides themselves are admitted within hearing of this farcical *naming*).
7. How are the preachers stationed this year?
8. What numbers are in the societies?
9. What is the Kingswood collection?
10. What boys are received this year?
11. What girls are assisted?
12. What is con-

tributed for the yearly expenses? 13. How was it expended? (This question may be properly answered; but the answer is never published—or at best, in a very partial and imperfect manner). 14. What is contributed for superannuated preachers and widows? 15. What demands are there upon it? 16. How many preachers' wives are to be provided for? 17. By what societies? 18. When and where may our next conference begin?

The above, and such other questions as circumstances may require, are made the subject of an annual Methodist conference. Every old law is repealed (if any laws are ever repealed by the Methodist government), and all new ones proposed and enacted in the form of question and answer. Acts of conference may very properly be called, *The Assembly's Catechism*.

The conference, considered in a legal sense, consists of one hundred preachers, who were first chosen by Mr. Wesley, empowering them to fill up all vacancies in their body, occasioned by death or otherwise, by an election by ballot.

One of the many treacherous friends of the late Mr. Kilham, who is to this day a travelling preacher, thus divulges

“The secrets of the prison-house:”

In a letter addressed to Mr. Kilham, prior to

that gentleman's trial and subsequent expulsion, Mr. J. Crowther represents their proceedings as an "annual sublime sight of six or seven men, getting round the table at conference, and fighting with each other, talking by turns (except when several of them talk together), engrossing all the speechifying; while the rest sit round in sullen, stupid, or indignant silence—the devil perching on the front of the gallery; while love, meekness, and wisdom, together with our guardian angels, and even the Holy Ghost, quit the assembly; and the confused group appears to the weeping heavens, somewhat like the assembly in a cock-pit.'

As this gentleman has never yet been called to account for this representation, which was published a few years ago, I should suppose it is a tolerably just picture: but having myself been only a local brother, I have not had an opportunity of seeing the original. It is, however, but just to give the counter part of this representation. They describe themselves at conference, as doing every thing as in the immediate presence of God: that they meet with a single eye, and as little children, who have every thing to learn: that every point which is proposed may be examined to the foundation: that every person may speak freely whatever is in his heart; and that every question which arises may be thoroughly debated and settled. They say that

they act upon the grand principle of private judgment, on which all the reformers proceeded — “Every man must judge for himself, because every man must give an account to God.” These were their professions at the first conference, and the present race of Methodists pretend to act upon the same liberal principles.

At the forty-ninth conference, held in 1792, which sat nearly three weeks, the brethren proposed the following question: “What shall we do more to promote the work of God?—Ans. We do, at this solemn hour of the night, (past ten o’clock, on the 15th of August) devote ourselves to the service of Almighty God, in a more unreserved and entire manner than ever we have hitherto done; and are all determined to spend and be spent in this blessed work. And this our solemn dedication of ourselves to God, we do unanimously signify, by rising from our seats in the presence of the Lord.”

Mr. Crowther’s letter, which speaks of the absence of love, meekness, wisdom, the guardian angels, and the Holy Ghost; and of the devil perching on the front of the gallery at one of these conferences, is dated January 12, 1794!!!

At the fifty-sixth conference, held at Manchester, in 1799, I was present when Mr. Samuel Bradburn, being president, preached the conference-sermon, from these words in the se-

cond and third verses of the 126th psalm :—  
“ Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.” After the worthy president had discharged his pious virulence against the Kilhamites, who had separated themselves from the connexion, he called upon every preacher present who was still determined to be on the Lord’s side, to signify that determination, by then publicly rising from his seat. As Mr. Bradburn pronounced the word of command, he suddenly clapped his hands; and in the same moment the preachers, being placed in the front seats of the gallery, and other conspicuous parts of the chapel, rose up as one man! They continued on their feet a few seconds—the president was silent—the most rapturous sensations and enthusiastic ardour were diffused throughout the whole congregation—some, nearly fainting with delight, fell back in ecstasies; others loudly exclaimed, “Glory be to God! Glory be to God!” and had not the chief actor in this scene interposed, by requesting the brethren to sit down, I am confident there had been no more occasion for the preacher that day. I sat in the gallery, and heard a female voice, from the farthest corner of the chapel, cry out with all her might, “Come and pray for a soul in distress!” so that it appeared the exhibition had produced sensa-

tions of a painful nature upon some stranger who happened to be present. The chapel was exceedingly crowded indeed.

From these circumstances, Madam, one would be led to hope that Mr. Crowther must have mistaken the spirit and conduct of his speechifying brethren, at that sublime sight—an annual conference.

I would recommend it to conference, to publish Mr. B.'s sermon of 1799, with a *plate*, introduced in that part of the discourse where he gives the all-commanding clap of his hands. As the thing itself was performed in the presence of hundreds of strangers, there could be no danger in publishing an engraved drawing of the exhibition, of thereby casting pearls before swine.

When will “solemn trifling,” and “theatrical” manœuvres be excluded from the pulpit! When will modesty and Christian simplicity take place of high-sounding professions, and boisterous declamation!—That Mr. Bradburn is capable of better things, is evident from the following advices which he drew up for the conduct of the preachers during the time of the sitting of conference:—

“Be tender of the character of every brother, but keep at the utmost distance from countenancing sin.

“ Say nothing in the conference but what is strictly necessary, and to the point in hand. ”

“ If accused by any one, remember, recrimination is no acquittance, therefore avoid it. ”

“ Beware of impatience of contradiction; be firm, but be open to conviction. The cause is God’s, and he needs not the hands of an Uzzah to support the ark. The being too tenacious of a point, because *you* brought it forward, is only feeding self. Be quite easy if a majority decide against you. ”

“ Use no craft or guile, to gain a point. Genuine simplicity will always support itself. But there is no need always to say all you know or think. ”

“ Beware of too much confidence in your own abilities, and never despise an opponent. ”

“ Avoid all lightness of spirit, even what would be innocent any where else. ‘Thou God seest me.’ ”

I cannot but exclaim, with Young—

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,  
How complicate, how wonderful, is Man!

The answers which are given to two or three of the conference-questions, are worthy of particular remark.

“ 1. What preachers are admitted into full connexion? ” You have already observed, Madam, that every travelling-preacher is to be four

years on trial before he is admitted into full connexion. To be in full connexion, has some very capital advantages. 1. Relating to marriage. A person cannot marry among the travelling-preachers, until he is admitted into full connexion. This may be sound policy with the Methodists; but it is both unjust and unscriptural. It savours too strongly of popery; and it is no wonder that effects of a most scandalous and disgraceful nature should sometimes be the result of so cruel a law. 2. As it relates to power and authority. Until a preacher is admitted to full connexion he is not eligible to any post. He can neither be made a superintendent, nor a chairman of the district; neither can he, being only a probationer, have any vote or influence at conference, nor consequently be elected on any conference-committee; nor derive any advantage from the sale of the society's books in his circuit. These are considerations of no small importance. 3. Until a preacher has travelled four years, he is liable to be dismissed from the service, without that formal trial which the other preachers might demand. So that you see, Madam, while a preacher is on trial, he may be said to stand in jeopardy every hour, as a slight offence given to the superintendent might be attended with very fatal consequences to the probationary preacher,



I have the honour to know a very respectable dissenting minister, who once travelled among the Methodists, but was expelled for marrying before the expiration of his years of probation. The language of St. Paul is very strong against the doctrine of forbidding to marry. How far it will apply to a certain law of Methodism, the reflecting mind will judge.

The following extracts from the minutes of the last conference, shall close my account of the meetings both for worship and business, which are established in the Methodist connexion:—

“The *Sixty-third General Conference* of the People called *Methodists*, late in connexion with the Rev. *John Wesley*, deceased, held in Leeds by several Adjournments, from July 28, to August 9, 1806.

“We are happy in having it in our power to inform our readers, that all our affairs, temporal and spiritual, at this conference, were transacted with the utmost peace and harmony; and that the accounts received from different parts of the United Kingdom, as well as from the West India islands, and from America, afford ample proof of the great prosperity of the work of God, in general, among us. In Great Britain, the

numbers in society have received an increase of more than eight thousand souls last year, and fifty new chapels are erecting, or appointed to be erected. Some of the manufacturing districts have been peculiarly favoured; and a multitude have been converted to the Lord. In one large village, in the West of Yorkshire, in particular, almost the whole of the inhabitants have been brought under good impressions. In North and in South Wales, the work continues to revive and prosper, and it has been conducted with a degree of order which affords us the greatest consolation.

“In many parts of Ireland, also, much good has been done, through the preaching of the word. A spirit of hearing has been excited in the minds of people of almost all descriptions, insomuch that no inconveniences of time or situation could prevent hundreds, in various places, from assembling in the streets, to hear the gospel of Christ. These encouraging openings, we have reason to believe, will be followed up by the brethren, and will, we doubt not, be productive of the greatest benefit to mankind.

“Our great doctrines were again taken into serious consideration; and, for their security, three of the brethren were appointed to draw up a *digest*, or *form*, expressive of them, confirmed by a sufficient number of texts of Scrip-

ture, properly selected; a copy of which form or digest, is ordered to be sent to the chairman of each district before next May.

“ We are happy to observe, likewise, that a plan for the improvement of the young preachers was laid before the conference, the heads of which were ordered to be printed, and a copy thereof sent to every preacher, that the brethren may have the opportunity of considering it maturely at their next district-meetings, and may report their collective judgment concerning it to the ensuing conference.

“ Matters of discipline also engaged the peculiar attention of the preachers; and from the sundry regulations made respecting this, we select the following:—

“ Q. 24. How may the union of the brethren, who labour together in the same circuit, be more effectually promoted?

“ A. 1. The conference insists, that no helper shall countenance or encourage any person who opposes the superintendent, in the proper discharge of his official duties, according to our rules.

“ 2. We advise the brethren to meet together once a week, or as often as it is practicable, in order to converse freely with each other, respecting the affairs of their circuits.

“ Q. 25. Is any advice necessary respecting the Lord's supper ?

“ A. 1. We once more earnestly beseech all the members of our societies, conscientiously to attend this sacred ordinance of God our Saviour, at every opportunity ; and do entreat them to approach the Lord's table, *at least*, once in every month, either in our own chapels, or elsewhere ; and to make a point of staying till the whole service be concluded.

“ 2. In the visitation of the classes, let every preacher closely examine the members on this head, and strongly enforce our rules concerning it. And, in order to remove every excuse, let this blessed sacrament be *regularly* and *frequently* administered, wherever it has been appointed by the conference.

“ Q. 26. Can any advice be given concerning the mode of conducting the Sunday-service in our chapels ?

“ A. We insist upon it, that the Holy Scriptures shall be constantly and stately read in public, wherever we have preaching in the forenoon of the Lord's day. Our fixed rule is, that ' Wherever divine service is performed by us in England, on the Lord's day, in church-hours, the officiating preacher shall read either the service of the established church, our venerable father, Mr. Wesley's Abridgment of it, or at

least the Lessons appointed by the Calendar.—  
See the Minutes of 1795.

“ Q. 31. What can be done to prevent extravagant and costly dress?

“ A. Let us all enforce our rules concerning dress; and, with love and meekness, endeavour to put an end to every unjustifiable custom.

“ Q. 32. One of the standing rules of our societies expressly prohibits ‘the buying or selling uncustomed goods.’ How may this rule be more fully enforced?

“ A. Let our old minute on this subject, be executed with respect to every species of smuggling. It is as follows, viz.

“ Q. How shall we put a stop to smuggling?

“ A. 1. Speak tenderly and frequently of it in every society near the coasts.

“ 2. Carefully disperse Mr. Wesley’s ‘Word to a Smuggler.’

“ 3. Expel all those who will not leave it off.

“ 4. Silence every local preacher who defends it.

“ There were present at this conference of the Methodists about 240 itinerant preachers, and an amazing concourse of people; probably on some days, especially Sunday, August 3, not

fewer than fifteen or twenty thousand. The effects of this day's solemnities, we doubt not, will be found after many days. Tuesday, August 5, in the evening, was appointed by the conference for the admission, and solemn dedication to God, of the candidates for the ministry. They had been examined in private by the president, and in full conference. A crowded audience was present in the chapel. The young men were in the front seat of the gallery. They were called, in succession, to give an account of their experience, and the ground on which they exercised the office of the Christian ministry. The examination concluded with appropriate addresses by the president, and Mr. Thomas Taylor, when the young men were commended to God by solemn prayer.

“Thirty-two preachers have been admitted into full connexion this conference, having been four years on trial.

“There remain still on trial, ninety-four, having not yet completed their four years.—Admitted on trial, forty-five.—Ten of the preachers died the last year.”

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXX.*

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*Progress of Methodism in the Field of Battle—  
John Nelson—Preachers' Talents—The Chris-  
tian Library—Great Labours—Liberality—  
Illiberality.*

DEAR MADAM,

IN the year 1745, the spirit of Methodism had not only spread over the greatest part of these kingdoms; but had also found its way into the English army abroad. Societies were formed by the soldiers, and some of the dragoons had begun to preach! John Haime, William Clements, and John Evans, were all three courageous soldiers, both in the service of the king, their master, and in that of the King of kings. In the hottest moments of battle, when the swift-winged messengers of death were flying about with desolating velocity; when the demons of destruction were stalking around; and when the shrieks of the wounded and the groans

of the dying, were unheard amidst the tremendous roar of cannon, and the sickening clangour of martial music—these men were heard to encourage each other with loud assurances of soon meeting the face of their Saviour in “another and a better world!”

William Clements writes as follows, after the battle of Fontenoy—“On the 29th, we marched close to the enemy, and when I saw them in their camp, my bowels moved toward them, in love and pity for their souls. We lay on our arms all night. In the morning, April 30th, the cannons began to play at half an hour after four: and the Lord took away all fear from me; so that I went into the field with joy. The balls flew on either hand, and men fell in abundance; but nothing touched me till about two o’clock. Then I received a ball through my left arm, and rejoiced so much the more. Soon after, I received another into my right, which obliged me to quit the field. But I scarce knew whether I was on earth or in heaven. It was one of the sweetest days I ever enjoyed.”

John Haime says, “The Lord has been pleased to try our little flock, and to shew them his mighty power. Some days before the late battle, one of them, standing at his tent-door, broke out into raptures of joy, knowing his departure was at hand, and was so filled with the love of God, that he danced before his comrades. In



the battle, before he died, he openly declared, 'I am going to rest from my labours in the bosom of Jesus.' I believe nothing like this was ever heard of before, in the midst of so wicked an army as ours. Some were crying out in their wounds, 'I am going to my Beloved;' others, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;' and many that were not wounded, were crying to their Lord to take them to himself. There was such boldness in the battle among this little despised flock, that it made the officers, as well as common soldiers, amazed. And they acknowledge it to this day. As to my own part, I stood the fire of the enemy for above seven hours. Then my horse was shot under me; and I was exposed both to the enemy and our own horse. But that did not discourage me at all; for I knew the God of Jacob was with me. I had a long way to go, the balls flying on every side; and thousands lay bleeding, groaning, dying, and dead on each hand. [Ye gods, what havoc does ambition make among your works!] Surely I was in the fiery furnace; but it never singed one hair of my head. The hotter it grew, the more strength was given me. I was full of joy and love, as much as I could well bear. Going on, I met one of our brethren with a little dish in his hand, seeking for water. He smiled, and said, he had got a sore wound in his leg.

I asked, 'Have you got Christ in your heart?' He answered, 'I have, and I have had him all the day. Blessed be God, that I ever saw your face.' Lord, what am I that I should be counted worthy to set my hand to the gospel plough? Lord, humble me, and lay me in the dust!"

John Evans belonged to the train. At the battle of Fontenoy, one of his companions saw him laid across a cannon (both his legs having been taken off by a chain-shot), praising God, &c. until he fell down dead!

One John Nelson, a stone-mason, who had been pressed for a soldier, refused at the same time to be an ambassador from the Prince of Peace and to choose the weapons of his warfare from among the carnal instruments of death.

John very justly thought, that a fighting minister of the gospel would be a strong contradictory character; and as he was resolved to preach, so he refused to fight. Which of these Methodist soldiers acted the most consistent part, I leave to the decision of those who can fully comprehend the meaning of that prohibition in the gospel—"Put up thy sword into its place; for every one that taketh the sword shall perish with the sword."

Mr. Wesley, encouraged by the accounts which he every day received of the wonderful

success of his and his assistants' labours, proceeded with increasing ardour in the business of proselytism. He rejoiced in the work of his hands, and he thought his spiritual sons who laboured with him in the gospel were men of a most extraordinary character. He saw multitudes added to his societies wherever they went; but he knew they were men of no education, having been taken from the meanest and most common occupations, to become ministers of the gospel. Their abilities, as Methodist preachers, were certainly great. Considered in any other capacity, than as tradesmen, labourers, mechanics, and Methodists, their talents were quite *médiocre*. Mr. Wesley was aware of this; and foresaw much reproach would fall upon his cause, unless something were done to enlighten and instruct his lay-preachers. He wished to have them "workmen that needed not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." We have already seen how far some of the brethren succeeded in *dividing the word*; whether they do it rightly or no is another question. That the early preachers were men of very scanty literary attainments, will admit of no doubt; and it is to be feared, that the plan of instruction which Mr. Wesley laid down for their improvement, was not very likely to expand their views beyond the sphere of their own notions in theology, or their favourite prejudices in politics.—

Indeed, as to general politics, the Methodists have never, as a body, known any thing about the matter.

It is much to the honour of Mr. Wesley, that he previously consulted that very excellent and worthy man, Dr. Doddridge, on the choice of books for the perusal of his lay-preachers. After some time, the Doctor sent him a list of such theological books as he thought would be of service to them. These Mr. John Wesley thought proper to garble, mutilate, and abridge, to make them speak, in every point, his own sentiments. He then published them at his own press, in fifty duodecimo volumes, under the title of "The Christian Library."

I believe, comparatively few of the present Methodist preachers have ever read all the volumes of the Christian Library. The collection abounds with much sound practical morality, such as you may suppose the author of the Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul would recommend. They are chiefly the works of the most eminent Puritan divines. Dr. Doddridge, in his answer to Mr. Wesley's letter which requested his assistance in the compilation of books for this undertaking, writes of himself thus: "I trust I can call God to record, on my soul, that to bring sinners to believe in Christ, and universally to obey him, from a principle of grateful love, has been the main busi-

ness of my life." The man who could thus write, would be cautious how he selected books for the improvement of others.

It never was Mr. Wesley's intention to make scholars of his lay-preachers. The great bulk of Methodists, to this day, have a sort of dread of human learning. The preachers may raise an outcry against this charge; but it is nevertheless just, as every one who has been at all conversant with the private manners of this people must acknowledge. The majority of Methodists, notwithstanding the present much improved and refined state of the connexion, are still to be sought for among persons in the lowest ranks of life, and these have nearly as strong an aversion to what they call head-knowledge, as any of their brethren in the lifetime of Mr. Wesley. A local-preacher whom I know, was a few years ago forbidden to preach at one of the places in his circuit, because he spoke rather better English than did the rest of his fellow-labourers in the same place! If such be the character of the Methodists at this day, what must it have been at the time when Mr. Wesley projected the Christian Library?

We may form some notion of the labours of the itinerant preachers, from a letter written to Mr. Wesley by one of them, who travelled through various parts of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Cheshire.

“ Many doors,” says he, “ are opened for preaching in these parts, but cannot be supplied for want of preachers. I think some one should be sent to assist me, otherwise we shall lose ground. My circuit is one hundred and fifty miles in two weeks; during which time I preach publicly thirty-four times, besides meeting the societies, visiting the sick, and transacting the temporal business. I think the above is too much for me, considering my weak constitution.”

Great as these exertions were, they bear a very small proportion to the labours of the two brothers. They preached as many times, frequently travelled near treble the number of miles in the same space of time, and had besides upon them the “ care of all the churches.”

About this time, 1747, Mr. Wesley received a letter from one of the preachers who had been sent to Ireland. A society had been formed in Dublin, and Mr. Wesley determined to visit them immediately. Accordingly, August 4, he set out from Bristol, and passing through Wales, he arrived in Dublin on Sunday the 9th, about ten o'clock in the forenoon. At three, the same day, he wrote to the curate of St. Mary's, offering his assistance, which was thankfully received: “ So,” says he, “ I preached there, another gentleman reading prayers, to as gay

and senseless a congregation as ever I saw." In the course of the day, he went to wait on the archbishop; but he was out of town. He saw him the next day, and had the honour of conversing with him two or three hours; during which he answered abundance of objections.

Both the Wesleys were very much abused by mobs during their labours in Ireland; at the head of which were generally the Roman Catholics. Their brethren, the Protestants, were nevertheless, at times pretty active in persecuting the poor Methodists. Still they triumphed over every difficulty; still they exulted in the success of their labours.

On the 17th of the same month in which Mr. John Wesley arrived in Ireland, he began to examine the society, which contained about two hundred and eighty members. Notwithstanding the opposition he met with in that island, he remarks that the people in general are of a more tractable spirit than in most parts of England; but on that account, he adds, they must be watched over with the more care, being equally susceptible of good and ill impressions.

The following letter, written in November, may shew us how careful Mr. Wesley was, at times; to guard the preachers against a party spirit in their public labours: "My dear brother," says he, "in public preaching, speak not one word against *opinions of any kind*. We

are not to fight against notions, but sins." Mr. John Wesley has compiled many books, he has preached many sermons, and said many good things in his time, but he never uttered a finer sentiment, nor one more agreeable to the mild spirit of Christianity, than the one I have just quoted. But do his disciples follow this advice at present? Did Dr. Coke follow this advice, when he said that the *Lord Jesus Christ vomited forth Arianism, which ran like a stream into the gulph of hell?* Or, did Mr. Samuel Bradburn, when he publicly asserted, at Bolton, not long ago, that a certain character was *a devil in the shape of a man, like a sponge dipped in the devil's lake, and squeezed in wrath over the guilty nations; and that Socinians are not only condemned sinners, but damned fools!* and that *they are as certain of being damned in hell, as if they were already there?*

What ought we to think of the piety of men who can thus transfer the language of the tap-room to the pulpit? Surely their zeal is composed of the rankest bigotry; their sanctity is the most disgusting grimace, and their pretended holiness is founded on the very worst species of hypocrisy.

I am, &c.



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LETTER XXXI.

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*Persecutions—Inconveniences of the first Preachers—Marriage of Mr. C. Wesley—A Parody—Riots—Instability of some of the Preachers.*

DEAR MADAM,

ON Sunday, the 23d August, 1747, Mr. Wesley took ship for England; on the Wednesday following, he landed at Holyhead, in Wales. On Saturday, 29th, he preached at Garth, in Brecknockshire, where he met his brother Charles, on his way to Ireland.

Mr. Charles arrived in Dublin on the 9th of September following.

“The first news we heard,” says he, “was, that the little flock stands fast in the storm of persecution, which arose as soon as my brother left them. The popish mob broke open their room, and destroyed all before them. Some of

them are sent to Newgate, others bailed. What will be the event we know not, till we see whether the grand jury will find the bill."

The grand jury threw out the bill, and thus gave up the Methodists to the unrestrained fury of a popish mob. Still undaunted, Mr. C. Wesley proceeded to the Green adjoining the barracks, and crying out, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," was presently surrounded by a large concourse of people, both Catholics and Presbyterians.

To the Papists he quoted Thomas à Kempis and their own Liturgy; so that none lifted up his voice or hand to oppose; but all listened with strange attention, and many were in tears. He advised them to go to their respective places of worship; and thus, for that time, conciliated the favour of all. The Papists declared he was a good Catholic at heart.

On a future visit to Ireland, when he was at Kinsale, it is remarked, that every denomination of Christians claimed him as their own. "The Presbyterians say I am a Presbyterian; the people who go to church, say I am a minister of theirs; and the Catholics are sure I am a good Catholic in my heart."

As Mr. Wesley maintained many of the fundamental doctrines of all these denominations, such as the trinity, atonement, original sin,

&c. it were very easy so to manage the phraseology of his discourses as to be taken for a friend to any or all of them.

At this early period of Methodism, the two brothers and the lay-preachers suffered great inconveniences at the places where they lodged, even in large towns; and we may suppose, says Dr. Whitehead, that both their accommodations and provisions were worse in country societies. The rooms also where they assembled, when they could not preach in the open air, began to be much too small for the number of people who attended. This being the present state of things in Dublin, Mr. Charles Wesley purchased a house near the place called Dolphin's Barn. The whole ground-floor was forty-two feet in length, and twenty-four in breadth. This was to be turned into a preaching-house, and the preachers were to be accommodated with the rooms over it; but before he completed the purchase, he wrote to his brother for his opinion on the matter. His letter is dated October 9, in which he says, one advantage of the house was, that they could go to it immediately; and then adds, "I must go there, or to some other lodgings, or take my flight; for *here* I can stay no longer. A family of squalling children, a landlady just ready to lie-in, a maid who has no time to do the least thing for us, are some of our inconveniences. Our two rooms for four people (six

when J. Healy and Haughton come), allow no opportunity for retirement. Charles (he means Mr. Charles Perrenot) and I groan for elbow-room in our press-bed; our diet answerable to our lodgings; no one to mend our clothes and stockings; no money to buy more. I marvel that we have stood our ground so long in these lamentable circumstances. It is well I could not *foresee*, while on your side of the water."—October 17, he observes, "I passed the day at the house we have purchased, near Dolphin's Barn, in writing and meditation. I could almost have set up my rest here; but I must not look for rest on this side eternity."

The Methodist preachers of the present day sometimes speak of their hardships in the exercise of their ministerial duties. They, however, feed upon marrow and fat things, when compared with the manner in which their ancestors fared. Surely the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places, and they have a goodly heritage.

On the 9th February, 1748, Mr. C. Wesley left Dublin, and took an excursion into the country, where, particularly at Tyrrel's Pass, much good had been done among the poor people by the instrumentality of the lay-preachers. At this place, which had long been a proverb of wickedness, one hundred persons were joined in society; and a visible alteration

had taken place in their moral character. Not an oath was then heard, nor a drunkard seen among them—*aperto vivitur horto.*

Mr. C. Wesley continued his labours in the country, through much opposition, but with wonderful success, till the 15th of February, and then returned to Dublin, where the society was also rapidly increasing. On the 8th March, his brother John arrived from England, and gave him relief from his present situation. He left Dublin on the 20th, and on the day following reached Holyhead; from thence, after great fatigue, he arrived at Garth, where he forgot his troubles in company with Miss Gwynne, for whom he had for some time entertained a very great regard; and to whom he had in fact a kind of embryo intention of making proposals of marriage.

During his present visit at Garth, this intention ripened into a fixed resolution; and he thought it necessary to take the advice of his friends.

For one that is in love, to ask advice concerning what steps he should take, is generally nothing more than mere ceremony. When the obstacles to marriage are not absolutely insurmountable, a union of the parties will always take place, whatever may have been the advice of real or pretended friends. Miss Gwynne was a young lady of good sense, piety, and agreeable

accomplishments. Mr. John Wesley did not oppose the match; and if he had, Mr. Charles loved the lady, and was of a bold and independent spirit: so that on the 9th of April, 1749, he was married by his brother John, at Garth, who observes of the marriage-day, that “it was a solemn day, such as became the dignity of a Christian marriage.”

On the 15th of February, 1748, Mr. John Wesley left Bristol, and proceeded through Wales, on his way to Ireland. Being detained at Holyhead about twelve days, he says, “I never knew men make such poor excuses, as these captains did for not sailing. It put me in mind of the epigram—

‘ There are, if rightly I may think,  
Five causes why a man may drink.’

“ Which, with a little alteration, would just suit them—

‘ There are, unless my memory fail,  
Five causes why we should not sail—  
The fog is thick: the wind is high:  
It rains: or may do by and by:  
Or——any other reason why.”

He arrived at Dublin on the evening of the 8th of March.

On the 16th, he made inquiries into the state of the society. "Most pompous accounts," says he, "had been sent me from time to time, of the great numbers that were added to it; so that I confidently expected to find therein six or seven hundred members. And how is the real fact? I left three hundred and ninety-four members; and I doubt if there are now three hundred and ninety-six!

"Let this be a warning to us all, how we give in to that hateful custom of painting things beyond the life. Let us make a conscience of magnifying or exaggerating any thing. Let us rather speak under than above the truth. We, of all men, should be punctual in all we say, that none of our words may fall to the ground." On this advice Dr. Whitehead makes the following very just and necessary observations: "It is to be greatly lamented, that some few of the preachers have not given more attention to this caution, and to some others Mr. Wesley has left on record, concerning evil-speaking, than they seem to have done. I cannot conceive how a man can keep a good conscience, who does not religiously observe them."

That some of the Methodist preachers do still deal pretty largely in amplification, when speaking concerning the success of their labours, it is very certain. I could produce some shameful instances of this species of pious fraud. Of evil-

speaking, I believe it may fairly be said, that it is the great besetting sin of Methodism. Certainly there are few professing Christians so much guilty of slander and back-biting as these people. They exercise this disagreeable propensity even against their own friends: what then have those to expect who they regard as their enemies?

Who steals my purse, steals trash—'twas something—nothing—

'Twas mine—'tis his, and has been slave to thousands :

But he that filches from me my good name,

Robs me of that which not enriches him,

And makes me poor indeed !——

During this visit to Ireland, Mr. Wesley seems to have had little success ; for the people in the country places were very kind. A shower of stones which had been poured against his brother by the papists, so far prejudiced the protestants in his favour, as to cause the people to weep when he left them ; yet none of them seems to have been *set at liberty from the guilt and burthen of their sins*. “The waters,” says he, “were too wide to be deep.” In Dublin, the cause prospered rather better ; for there “he had the satisfaction to find, that the work of God not only spread wider and wider, but was also much deepened in many souls.” On Wednesday, the 18th, he prepared to leave Ireland, and arrived at Holyhead the next day.



June 24th, he opened the school at Kingswood, for the reception of boarders, and preached there on—"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

During the summer of 1748, the Methodist doctrines and discipline made wonderful progress in Northumberland, the county of Durham, and in the *savage* parts of Lancashire, as Dr. Whitehead very politely denominates the county that gave birth to your humble servant. In the village where I was born, being to the full, perhaps, as *savage* a part of Lancashire as any other district of that county, the Methodists were never able to get much footing. I allude to Chowbent, a pretty large village, lying between Manchester and Wigan, where there are three places of public worship, viz. a large and very respectable Unitarian chapel, an Episcopal chapel of ease, and a chapel originally built by a Methodist, who afterwards became a Moravian, and opened his meeting-house to the *Unitas Fratrum*. Some few years ago I preached in this chapel to a very numerous audience, composed of Deists, Methodists, Moravians, Calvinists, Baptists, Arians, what are called Socinians, and Swedenborgians. This chapel was at that time in the possession of the friends of the *illuminated Swedish Baron*. There

were then very few Methodists in the place; indeed the preachers under the superintendence of Mr. John Wesley were never successful at Chowbent. I would, therefore, fain persuade myself, that the village of my nativity is not to be really included in "the *savage* parts of Lancashire." It was, however, *savage* enough, God knows! when it drove one of the best men I ever knew, the Rev. Harry Toulmin, to seek shelter, from the fury of an enraged mob of pretended churchmen, in the woods of Kentucky, in North America.

It is certain, however, that some of the Lancastrians abused Mr. Wesley and his preachers in a most shameful manner; and it was often with very great difficulty that he escaped with his life.

Mr. Wesley seemed to delight in a storm: when the waters were troubled, many poor impotent sinners stepped into the pool of Methodism, and were healed of their diseases. It was in these troubled waters that our hero delighted to fish. Accordingly, in the beginning of September, 1750, having been informed of the violence of the mobs at Cork, he determined to set out for the scene of riot. He arrived at Cork on the 19th of May; and the next day proceeded to preach on Hammond's-marsh, then a large open space. The congregation was very large, and very attentive; but the floods soon began to lift up their voice, and the most shocking out-

rages were permitted by the magistrates. Scenes of riot and persecution took place at Cork and the neighbourhood, which will be an eternal blot on the memory of the magistrates of those places.

During these shameful proceedings, the cause of Methodism made rapid progress in various parts of Ireland. Many, both of the Roman Catholic and the Protestant faith, were brought over to the interest of the Wesleyans; and many more of the Papists would have been converted, had not the Protestants, as well as their own priests, taken pains to hinder them.

Violent as was the opposition which Mr. Wesley met with from avowed enemies, he had to encounter evils of a more dangerous and alarming kind from some of his preachers and people. Many of the preachers had begun to wish to have the Methodists a body distinct from the church of England, from which Mr. Wesley had never avowed his dissent. The slightest hint of a rebellion of this nature gave him no small pain. He thus writes to a confidential friend, Mr. Edward Perronet—

“ I have abundance of complaints to make, as well as to hear. I have scarce any on whom I can depend, when I am an hundred miles off. 'Tis well I do not run away soon, and leave them to cut and shuffle for themselves. Here is a

glorious people. But, O! where are the shepherds?

“The society at Cork have fairly sent me word, that they will take care of themselves, and erect themselves into a dissenting congregation. I am weary of these sons of Zeruah: they are too hard for me. Dear Ted, stand fast, whether I stand or fall.”

He afterwards writes to the same person, saying, “Charles (Charles Perronet, the brother of Edward) and you *behave* as I want you to do. But you cannot, or will not, preach *where* I desire. Others can and will preach *where* I desire; but they do not *behave* as I want them to do.” Again—“I think both Charles and you have a right sense of what it is to serve as sons in the gospel. And if all our helpers had had the same, the work of God would have prospered better, both in England and Ireland.”—And again—“You put the thing right. I have not one preacher with me, and not six in England, whose wills are broken enough to serve me as sons in the gospel.”

These were alarming symptoms, Madam; and they seem to have shocked the ambition of Mr. John Wesley not a little. The fact is, the Methodists were already practical dissenters; and it was but honest in the society at Cork, and all the ingenuous preachers, to avow their dissent

at once. It was Mr. Wesley himself who was cutting and shuffling between the church of England and the Protestant dissenters, and not those societies which determined to act an honest, open part, by leaving the church whose rubric they had broken, and whose ritual they had in a great measure discarded. How the Methodists of the present day can persist in calling themselves members of the church of England, I cannot tell. When will they lay aside their double-dealing?

Mr. Wesley left Ireland on the 22d of July, and proceeded to visit the societies through the West of England.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXII.

*Mr. Whitefield—Hypocrisy of Unbelievers—  
Dreadful Alarms—James Wheatley.*

DEAR MADAM,

MR. WHITEFIELD, having become a zealous Calvinist, had separated himself from the Wesleyan connexion, and was proceeding with astonishing success in making proselytes to the cause of Predestinarianism. With respect to the notion of sensible and instantaneous conversion, and of almost all the other peculiarities of Methodism, the Whitefieldian and the Wesleyan Methodists still agreed pretty well.

Whitefield's manner in the pulpit was more engaging than that of either of the two Wesleys: he had formerly been very much attached to theatrical entertainments, and after his conversion, when he had become a preacher, he carried along with him many of the graces of

oratory and the attractive gestures of the stage into the pulpit : his ministrations were consequently always very well attended. Sometimes, indeed, he was honoured with the attendance of some great personages, who, at that time, were making a figure in the literary and political world. Under the patronage of the celebrated Countess of Huntingdon, he acquired considerable celebrity both as a Christian preacher and an orator.

After his return from Georgia, in 1748, the Countess wrote to him, informing him that several of the nobility and gentry were desirous of hearing him preach. In a few days that complete man of the world, the Earl of Chesterfield, and a large circle of his friends attended at the preaching, and having heard him once, expressed a desire of hearing him again. "I therefore preached again," says he, "the same evening, and went home, never more surprised at any incident in my life." This, Madam, is perhaps the first and only instance in which a sermon has been known to be *encored*. Mr. Whitefield adds, "All behaved quite well, and were in some degree affected. The Earl of Chesterfield thanked me, and said, 'Sir, I will not tell you what I shall tell others, how I approve of you;' or words to this purpose. At last Lord Bolingbroke came to hear, sat like an archbishop, and was pleased to say, 'I had

done great justice to the divine attributes in my discourse.' Soon afterwards her Ladyship removed to town, when I preached generally twice a-week to very brilliant auditories—Blessed be God, not without effectual success on some."—It has been said that the celebrated Scotch historian, Hume, was occasionally a hearer of Mr. Whitefield, and that he was much captivated with his eloquence. We must not, however, look among the Chesterfields, the Bolingbrokes, and the Humes for converts either to Arminian or Calvinian Methodism. Had the preaching of Whitefield been attended with any lasting effects on the mind of the Earl, he might perhaps have been spared some of those gloomy and heart-appaling reflections which made the close of his days bitter to him; instead of looking upon his entrance upon another state of existence as "a leap in the dark," he might have left the world, which he had so long and so faithfully worshipped, with a hope blooming and full of immortality. He would have learned also in his lifetime to have guarded the morals of his son against the fascinating allurements of a gay and thoughtless age. Instead of endeavouring to initiate him into the mysteries of fashion, and of teaching him to prevaricate for good manners' sake, he would, probably, have learned himself in simplicity and godly sincerity to have had his conversa-



tion among men. I greatly fear, when this votary of flattery told Mr. Whitefield he approved of him, by which he meant to be understood that he approved of his preaching, he was only paying the preacher *a compliment*; which he might think it his duty to do from a regard to the demands of *good breeding*.

Of the sincerity of Lord Bolingbroke's professions I would say less. He has been said to be a Deist; but he certainly at one time thought highly of Christianity. "No religion," says he, "ever appeared in the world whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind as Christianity." But indeed, Madam, there is no trusting to the professions of those who have thrown off all obligation to the restraints imposed upon them by the religion of Christ; a religion which *requireth truth in the inward parts*. I know some unbelievers, and those too men of respect in the world, who have scrupled not, in writing, to signify their belief of the Christian Doctrine; but who, in conversation, are professed enemies to our common faith. That most fallacious and pernicious of all worldly maxims, to "think with the wise, and speak with the foolish," is near a-kin to this species of prevarication, which, if it had been always acted upon, would have left the world in a fixed state of barbarism and misery. Voltaire received

the Sacrament, at the very time he was engaged in a conspiracy with the king of Prussia and others to *crush the wretch*, meaning Christ. Rousseau declares that the evangelic history does not bear the mark of fiction. "On the contrary," says he, "the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ!" Thomas Paine, who tells us that the Bible teaches rapine, cruelty and murder, and that the New Testament teaches us, that—but I must not be allowed to repeat his very indecent blasphemy about the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit;—that to love our enemies was only one out of many others of our Saviour's dogmas of false morality; I say, Madam, this man also confesses, that "Jesus Christ taught and *lived* the purest morality," that he was "a virtuous reformer;" and that his morality has not been exceeded by any. I forbear to quote from one or two authors of the present day, who have thus shamefully and basely prevaricated. I repeat it then, that no dependance can be placed on the professions of unbelievers.

As to Hume, he might possibly admire the eloquence of Whitefield; but surely he despised his Christian virtues: else he would have had more manly and exalted enjoyments on a bed of death, than a game at whist, or a joke about Lucian, Charon, and the River Styx.

Had poor Emerson, the mathematician, lived the morality which Christ taught, instead of creeping on his hands and knees, covered with dirt, shame, and infamy, alternately praying and blaspheming, he might have been as happy as he was learned, and have closed his days, exclaiming, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." "O, death! where is thy sting? O, grave! where is thy victory?"

Excuse this digression, Madam. I now proceed with the progress of our Wesleyan Christians.

While Whitefield, by his eloquence, was drawing some of the *mighty and the noble* to the Tabernacle, and while John Wesley was fighting with beasts in Ireland, Mr. Charles Wesley was making converts in England, and labouring to purge the Church of the Methodists from those members, preachers and others, who were a disgrace to the society. His marriage, which was rather an unusual one, had not lessened his zeal for Methodism, nor hindered his exertions to spread its name and influence. He had, however, much to labour against, by the unsoundness of some; the rebellion of others; and the enthusiasm of a third class.

In the months of February and March, 1750, the city of London felt several shocks of an earthquake, which alarmed the inhabitants exceedingly, particularly the Methodists, who flocked in shoals to the Foundery and the Tabernacle.

Mr. Charles Wesley wrote to his brother John, on the 8th March, giving some account of this affair. "This morning," says he, "a quarter after five, we had another shock of an earthquake, far more violent than that of February 8. I was just repeating my text, when it shook the Foundery so violently, that we all expected it to fall on our heads. A great cry followed from the women and children. I immediately cried out, Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved and the hills be carried into the midst of the sea : for the Lord of Hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

"He filled my heart with faith, and my mouth with words, shaking their souls as well as their bodies. The earth moved westward, then east, then westward again, through all London and Westminster. It was a strong and jarring motion, attended with a rumbling noise, like that of thunder. Many houses were much shaken, and some chimnies thrown down, but without any further hurt."

Earthquakes not being very common in England, when they do happen, are always productive of great terror and alarm to the inhabitants; while every unusual phenomena in nature, is sure to find work for the dreamers of dreams; every total eclipse of the sun, every appearance of a comet, every agitation of the earth, the combination of sulphureous and metallic particles, yea, every extraordinary storm of thunder and lightning, will rouse the prophets to action; who will cause "confusion to be worse confounded" by their alarming prognostications. The convulsions of nature are always regarded by the Prophets of our day, as the sure harbinger of its final dissolution. I have seen nearly all the inhabitants of a village running about the streets, in the most wild and frantic state of consternation, quite certain that the day of judgment was about to commence, because there had been a long and violent tempest of hail, thunder, and lightning. This was the case on the 3d of August, 1793, at Tildsley-Banks, near Manchester; at which place there was such a storm of this kind as perhaps the inhabitants of our island never saw before. During the space of eighteen minutes, the heavens were in one continual roar. The lightnings blazed incessantly, and the hail descended in such large stones, and with so much velocity, as to break almost every pane

of glass in the village that fronted southward. It might truly be said, that "fire mingled with hail ran along upon the ground." In a farmhouse, where I was then sitting, I saw the glass and leads in the windows torn away as by an invisible hand. This being just after the surrender of Valenciennes to the British troops, it had been proclaimed through the village; that a general illumination should take place in the evening——When, lo! if the stars in their courses could once be said to fight against Sisera, it might then be concluded, that contending elements combined to check the unhallowed triumphs of ambition and bloodshed. It appears, Madam, that the storm I have just been describing was not wholly confined to the village of Tildsley-Banks; for the Prophet, Brothers, then in London, mentions it, in one of his pamphlets, as being one of the angels then engaged in pouring out his vial on the sun! To return to the earthquake. On the 4th of April, Mr. Wesley observes, "Fear filled our Chapel, occasioned by a prophecy of the return of the earthquake this night. I preached my written sermon on the subject, with great effect, and gave out several suitable hymns. It was a glorious night for the disciples of JESUS. April 5, I rose at four o'clock, after a night of sound sleep, while my neighbours watched. I sent an account to M. G. as fol-

lows:—The late earthquake has found me work. Yesterday I saw the Westminster end of the town full of coaches, and crowds flying out of the reach of divine justice, with astonishing precipitation. Their panic was caused by a poor madman's prophecy. Last night they were all to be swallowed up. The vulgar were almost in as great consternation as their betters. Most of them watched all night; multitudes in the fields and open places; several in their coaches: many removed their goods. London looked like a sacked city. A lady just stepping into her coach to escape, dropped down dead. Many were all night knocking at the Foundery door, and begging admittance for God's sake!"

This account is confirmed by a letter from a W. Biggs to Mr. John Wesley, dated on the fifth of the same month, in which he says, "This great city has been, for some days past, under terrible apprehensions of another earthquake. Yesterday thousands fled out of town, it having been confidently asserted by a dragoon, that he had a revelation, that great part of London, and Westminster, especially, would be destroyed by an earthquake the 4th instant, between twelve and one at night. The whole city was under direful apprehensions. Places of worship were crowded with frightened sinners, especially our two Chapels and the Tabernacle, where Mr. Whitefield preached. Several

Classes came to their Leaders, and desired that they would spend the night with them in prayer: which was done, and God gave them a blessing. Indeed all around was awful!"—"Though crowds left the town on Wednesday night, yet crowds were left behind; multitudes of whom, for fear of being suddenly overwhelmed, left their houses, and repaired to the fields and open places in the city. Tower-Hill, Moorfields, but above all Hyde-Park, were filled best part of the night, with men, women, and children, lamenting. Some, with stronger imaginations than others, mostly women, ran crying in the streets, an earthquake! an earthquake! Such a distress, perhaps, is not recorded to have happened before in this careless city. Mr. Whitefield preached at midnight in Hyde-Park. Hereby God will visit this city: it will be a time of mercy to some. O may I be found watching!" Does not this last remark amount to something like a belief in the dragoon's revelation?

These confusions, like all other public disturbances, turned to good account in the cause of Methodism. Many who had been driven to the preaching through dread of the earthquake, when the prophecy came not to pass and their fears were abated, still continued attached to the Wesleyans and the Whitefieldians, and thereby augmented the numbers in



society, and the hearers at the Foundery and Tabernacle. But these alarms also increased the number of enthusiasts and fanatics, which gave much pain to Mr. Charles Wesley.

A worse calamity befel the Methodists soon after, through the lewdness of one of their preachers. His name was Wheatley, and was a kind of a quack in physic as well as in theology. This man made dreadful havoc among the sisterhood. Your modesty forbids that I should enter into farther detail of this wretch's dealings among the women. Wheatley continued his licentious depredations until he was discarded by the two brothers on the 25th of June, 1751. Such was the notoriety of this man's lewdness, that it became necessary, for the credit of the cause, to publish the note of his expulsion, which was as follows :

“ Because you have wrought folly in Israel, grieved the holy spirit of God, betrayed your own soul into temptation and sin, and the souls of many others, whom you ought, even at the peril of your own life, to have guarded against all sin ; because you have given occasion to the enemies of God, whenever they shall know these things, to blaspheme the ways and truth of God.—We can in no wise receive you as a fellow-labourer, till we see clear proofs of your real and deep repentance. Of this you have given us no proof yet. You have not so much

as named one single person, in all England or Ireland, with whom you have behaved ill, except those we knew before.

“The least and lowest proof of such repentance which we can receive is this. That till our next Conference (which we hope will be in October) you abstain both from preaching and practising physic. If you do not, we are clear; we cannot answer for the consequence.

“JOHN WESLEY,

“CHARLES WESLEY.”

This Wheatley was such a sad rake among the ladies, that even three years after his expulsion, we find the Mayor of the city of Norwich employed a whole day in taking the affidavits of the women whom he had tried to corrupt. These accounts being printed and cried about the streets, occasioned great confusion. Fresh discoveries were daily made of his lewdness, “enough,” it is said, “to make the ears of all who hear it tingle.” I will have mercy on your ears, Madam, and drop the subject, observing, that this Methodistical Adonis published a book, which I have read, entitled “Advice to Married Persons!”

I am, &c.

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LETTER XXXIII.

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*Prejudices against Mr. Charles Wesley—Desists from Travelling—His Sickness and Death—His Character—Specimens of his Poetry.*

DEAR MADAM,

THE conduct of James Wheatley put the brothers upon a strict inquiry into the character and abilities of the rest of the lay-preachers. This unpleasant office fell, with very great propriety, on Mr. Charles Wesley. He accordingly commenced a kind of inspecting tour through all the circuits. This service, as we may well suppose, was attended with no very pleasing effects. Many were found deficient in abilities; many were discovered to be disobedient and ungovernable, especially in what regarded the union of the Methodists with the church of England; many were found careless and luke-

warm in their duties ; and some were discovered to have been immoral in their conduct. It was neither safe nor possible to silence all these offending preachers. Charles Wesley, being of a more resolute and discerning mind than his brother John, acted under these circumstances with as much prudence and courage as he possibly could. But his high-church principles, nearly amounting to bigotry, induced him, at times, to number among the sins of the preachers, their non-attendance on the service and ordinances of the church of England. He consequently created himself many enemies ; some from motives of moral principle, and others from those of revenge. The lukewarm and the immoral hated him as an enemy that had found them out ; the dissenting brethren, sometimes looked upon him as one seeking to lord it over God's heritage ; those who were deficient in abilities to preach, despised him, as one wishing to oppose human learning and head-knowledge to the inspiration and operations of the Spirit.

Concerning a preacher of this last class, he writes as follows—

“ August 5, I went to the room, that I might hear with my own ears, one of whom many strange things had been told me. But such a preacher never have I heard before, and hope I

never shall again. It was beyond description. I cannot say he preached false doctrine, or true, or any doctrine at all; but pure unmixed nonsense. Not one sentence did he utter that could do the least good. Now and then a text of scripture was dragged in by head and shoulders. I could scarcely refrain from stopping him. He set my blood a galloping, and threw me into such a sweat, that I expected the fever to follow. (He was then just recovering from a severe indisposition). Some begged me to step into the desk, and speak a few words to the dissatisfied hearers. I did so, taking no notice of M. F———k (meaning, I suppose, Mich. Fenwick, who died in the connexion, in 1797), late superintendent of all Ireland! I talked closely with him, utterly averse to working, and told him plainly he should either work with his hands, or preach no more. He complained of my brother. I answered, I would repair the supposed injury, by setting him up again. At last he yielded to work." The same day he silenced another preacher; for what offence it does not appear.

It is very commonly thought among the Methodists, that Mr. Charles Wesley used, at times, to backslide from his religious course; and that on one of these occasions he wrote the following stanza—

“ Ah ! where am I now ?  
When was it, or how,  
That I fell from my heaven of grace ?  
I am brought into thrall,  
I am stript of my all ;  
I am banish'd from Jesus's face !”

The rumour of Charles Wesley falling from grace, and of his being deficient in zeal, was, I believe, unfounded. Be this, however, as it may, he did certainly desist from travelling in conjunction with his brother John, some time before his death. The cause of this circumstance is perhaps to be sought for in the spirit of dissent from the church, which began to prevail among the brethren, and which John had not sufficient courage to oppose, as Charles thought he ought to have done. The foolish and ridiculous practice, which his brother had begun, of ordaining some of the lay-preachers, who vainly thought that such an honour would give them greater influence with the people, considerably strengthened him in his separation. Charles was very desirous of abiding by his ordination-oaths ; and when John began to make such very glaring innovations, as to take upon himself the power and office of ordination, it grieved him exceedingly. Not that he formally withdrew himself from the connexion : for although he laid aside, in a great measure, his itinerant plan, he still preached

at the chapel in London, and sometimes visited that at Bristol.

Mr. Charles Wesley having now in a great measure resigned the very active part which he took in the societies, we must proceed to take our final leave of him.

Of the last hours of this champion of Methodism, we are not furnished with any thing very important. "He possessed," says Dr. Whitehead, "that state of mind which he had been always pleased to see in others—unaffected humility, and holy resignation to the will of God. He had no transports of joy, but solid hope and unshaken confidence in Christ, which kept his mind in perfect peace. A few days before his death, he composed the following lines—

"In age and feebleness extreme,  
Who shall a sinful worm redeem?  
Jesus, my only hope thou art,  
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;  
O! could I catch a smile from thee,  
And drop into eternity!"

He died, March 29, 1788, aged seventy-nine years and three months; and was buried, April 5, in Marybone church-yard, at his own desire. The pall was supported by eight clergymen of the church of England. On his tomb-

stone are the following lines, written by himself on the death of one of his friends—

“ With poverty of spirit blest,  
 Rest, happy saint, in Jesus rest :  
 A sinner sav'd, through grace forgiv'n,  
 Redeem'd from earth, to reign in heaven !  
 Thy labours of unwearied love,  
 By thee forgot, are crown'd above ;  
 Crown'd, through the mercy of thy Lord,  
 With a free, full, immense reward !”

Mr. Charles Wesley is described as a man of a warm and lively disposition, of great frankness and integrity, and generous and steady in his friendships. In conversation he is said to have been pleasing, instructive, and cheerful; and that his observations were often seasoned with wit and humour. As a husband, a father, and a friend, his character was amiable; and that, as a minister, he delivered from the pulpit what flowed from the present views and feelings of his own mind.

No one will be disposed to call in question the faithfulness of this account. But was he not at times severe, haughty, over-bearing, and dogmatical in his manner? Too tenacious of his own opinion? Was he not tinctured with bigotry, when he declared that the scripture came with a peculiar sweetness to him when read in *a church*? Though he often opposed the spirit



of enthusiasm among his brethren, was he not sometimes enthusiastical himself? He became almost as firm a believer in sudden conversions, in extraordinary illuminations, as his brother John. He did not always check the ecstasies, and wild raptures, into which his commanding eloquence and terrible descriptions often threw his hearers.

Charles Wesley was the great poet of Methodism—the bard of the saints. Of the Collection of Hymns made, and I believe chiefly composed, by the two brothers, Mr. John says, that they will not soon be worn thread-bare; that the book “is large enough to contain all the important truths of our most holy religion, whether speculative or practical; yea, to illustrate them all, and *to prove them both by scripture and reason!*”

“May I be permitted,” he continues, “to add a few words with regard to the poetry? Then I will speak to those who are judges thereof, with all freedom and unreserve. To these I may say, without offence, 1. In these hymns there is no doggerel; no botches; nothing put in to patch up the rhyme; no feeble expletives. 2. Here is nothing turgid or bombast on the one hand, or low and creeping on the other. 3. Here are no *cant* expressions; no words without meaning.—4. Here are both the purity, the strength, and the elegance of the English language; and at the same time the utmost simplicity and

plainness, suited to every capacity. Lastly, I desire men of taste to judge (these are the only competent judges), whether there is not in some of the verses the true spirit of poetry; such as cannot be acquired by art and labour, but must be the gift of nature. By labour a man may become a tolerable imitator of Spenser, Shakespèare, or Milton, and may heap together pretty compound epithets, as *pale-eyed*, *meek-eyed*, and the like. But unless he is *born* a poet, he will never attain the genuine *spirit of poetry*."

I have already laid before you several specimens of these hymns, mostly by Charles Wesley; I cannot, however, resist the pleasure of transcribing the following

#### FUNERAL HYMN.

AH! lovely appearance of death!  
 What sight upon earth is so fair?  
 Not all the gay pageants that breathe  
 Can with a dead body compare.  
 With solemn delight I survey  
 The corpse when the spirit is fled,  
 In love with the beautiful clay,  
 And longing to lie in its stead!

How blest is our brother bereft  
 Of all that could burden his mind!  
 How easy the soul that has left  
 This wearisome body behind!

Of evil incapable thou,  
 Whose relics with envy I see,  
 No longer in misery now,  
 No longer a sinner like me.

This earth is affected no more  
 With sickness, or shaken with pain :  
 The war in the members is o'er,  
 And never shall vex him again :  
 No anger henceforward or shame  
 Shall redden this inuocent clay ;  
 Extinct is the animal flame,  
 And passion is vanish'd away.

This languishing head is at rest,  
 Its thinking and aching are o'er ;  
 This quiet immoveable breast  
 Is heav'd by affliction no more.  
 This heart is no longer the seat  
 Of trouble and torturing pain ;  
 It ceases to flutter and beat—  
 It never shall flutter again.

The lids he so seldom could close,  
 By sorrow forbidden to sleep,  
 Seal'd up in eternal repose,  
 Have strangely forgotten to weep :  
 The fountains can yield no supplies ;  
 These hollows from water are free ;  
 The tears are all wip'd from these eyes,  
 And evil they never shall see.

To mourn and to suffer is mine,  
 While bound in a prison I breathe,  
 And still for deliverance pine,  
 And press to the issues of death :

What now with my tears I bedew,  
 O might I this moment become!  
 My spirit created anew,  
 My flesh be consign'd to the tomb!

These verses do not, I conceive, disgrace the muse of Mr. Charles Wesley, whose production I believe they are. But you will perceive, Madam, that very great poetic licence has been taken with some of the doctrines of Christianity, as well as with the common experience of men concerning a state of death:

Mr. John Wesley, in his preface to these hymns, asserts, that “no word is there used but in a fixed and determinate sense.” In what sense, then, are we to understand the third line of the fifth stanza?—

Seal'd up in *eternal* repose——

And how are we to reconcile that petition in the Litany, against *sudden death*, with many of the expressions, and the general sentiment of the above stanzas? particularly with part of the last?—

And still for deliverance pine,  
 And press to the issues of death:  
 What now with my tears I bedew,  
 O might I *this moment* become!

But they who feel not the beauty and the poetic fire of the verses altogether, have never paid their court to the muses.

I may be allowed to give you one or two specimens of Charles Wesley's lighter and more lively poetry.

### THE MAN OF FASHION.

WRITTEN IN 1784.

WHAT is a modern Man of Fashion?  
 A man of taste and dissipation:  
 A busy man, without employment;  
 A happy man, without enjoyment.  
 Who squanders all his time and treasures,  
 On empty joys and tasteless pleasures;  
 Visits, attendance, and attention,  
 And courtly arts too low to mention.  
 In sleep, and dress, and sport, and play,  
 He throws his worthless life away;  
 Has no opinion of his own,  
 But takes from leading beaux the ton.  
 With a disdainful smile or frown,  
 He on the rif-raf croud looks down:  
 The world polite, his friends and he,  
 And all the rest are—Nobody!  
 Taught by the great his smiles to sell,  
 And how to write, and how to spell;  
 The great his oracles he makes,  
 Copies their vices and mistakes;  
 Custom pursues, his only rule,  
 And lives an ape, and dies a fool!

From a perusal of the following lines, one would almost be led to conclude, that Mr: Charles Wesley was a dissenter :

“ Inventions added in a fatal hour,  
 Human appendages of pomp and power ;  
 Whatever shines in outward grandeur great,  
 I give it up—a creature of the State !  
 Wide from the church as hell from heaven is wide,  
 The blaze of riches, and the glare of pride,  
 The vain desire of being entitl'd Lord,  
 The worldly kingdom, and the princely sword.  
 But should the bold usurping spirit dare  
 Still higher climb, and sit in Moses' chair,  
 Power o'er my faith and conscience to maintain,  
 Shall I submit, and suffer it to reign ?  
 Call it *The Church*, and darkness put for light,  
 Falsehood with truth confound, and wrong with right ?  
 No ! I dispute the evil's haughty claim,  
 The Spirit of the World be still its name ;  
 Whatever call'd by men, 'tis purely evil,  
 'Tis Babel, Antichrist, and Pope, and Devil !”

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXXIV.*

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*Marriage of Mr. Wesley—Success of Methodism in Scotland—Causes of its Failure there—Testimony in favour of the established Clergy of these Kingdoms.*

DEAR MADAM,

IN the year 1750, Mr. John Wesley began to entertain thoughts of marriage; but his brother Charles, for reasons which do not now appear, set his face against that measure. Mr. Wesley was not, however, to be diverted from the purpose he had once seriously embraced. He had long been accustomed to follow the dictates of his own will in things less important than that of *carnal love*. It could not then be expected from him that he should suffer a determination of such consequence to his happiness to be frustrated by any of the ordinary occurrences of life. Accordingly, in the year 1751, he gave

his hand to Mrs. Vizelle, a widow lady of independent fortune. This was a most unhappy match indeed. He loved his wife, but he loved to travel and preach much more. Indeed he made it a kind of marriage-article during his courtship, that he should not preach one sermon or travel one mile less on that account. "If I thought I should," said he, "my dear, as well as I love you, I would never see your face more." It seems Mrs. Wesley soon broke this engagement, and at last took her leave of him, signifying her resolution that she would never more return. On this event Mr. Wesley coolly observes, "*Non eam reliqui, non dimissi; non revocabo.*"

She died in the year 1781, at Camberwell, near London. The stone, which is placed at the head of her grave, sets forth, "That she was a woman of exemplary piety, a tender parent, and a sincere friend."

Her fortune, which had been secured to her prior to her marriage with Mr. Wesley, she left to her son by her former husband. To Mr. Wesley she bequeathed a ring!

Mr. Wesley found it less difficult to govern a society, consisting of some thousands of members, than he did to bring his *wife* into due subjection. He was determined in all his undertakings with others to be complete lord and master himself. Of the importance of his own



character, contrasted with that of his wife's, he had very high notions. In one of his letters he thus asks her: "Of what importance is *your* character to mankind? If you was buried just now; or if you had never lived, what loss would it be to the cause of God?"

According to the accounts which his biographers have given us of this unfortunate match, it appears, that Mrs. Wesley used her husband in a most unjustifiable manner: robbing him—suspecting him of a criminal intercourse with other women—aspersing his moral character, &c. Yet he writes to her, saying, "I love you still, and am as clear from all other women as the day I was born. At length know me, and know *yourself*. Your enemy I cannot be; but let me be your friend: asperse me no more; provoke me no more. Do not any longer contend for mastery, for power, money or praise. Be content to be a private insignificant person, known and loved by God and me. Attempt no more to abridge me of my liberty, which I claim by the laws of God and man. Leave me to be governed by God and my own conscience. Then shall I govern you with gentle sway, and shew that I do indeed love you as Christ loved the church."

Though I am disposed to believe Mrs. Wesley was very censurable; yet, if I have not mistaken the general temper of you ladies, Madam,

there are some very obnoxious words and phrases in the letter from which I have made this short extract. The question respecting Mrs. Wesley's importance in society—"know *yourself*"—"do not contend for mastery, for power, or *praise*"—a "private *insignificant* person"—"I will *govern* you with gentle sway," &c. are such phrases which few *wives* will patiently submit to from their husbands.

Mr. Wesley paid his first visit to Scotland in this year (1751). The labours of the Methodists have, however, never been crowned with extraordinary success in that country; and Mr. Myles seems to intimate that their reason for still preaching in Scotland is, that Methodism there may act by way of check upon the spread of Arianism and Socinianism. The manner in which the Methodists proceed against these heresies, as they suppose them to be, is not by the common mode, such as force of argumentation, or strength of reasoning; but simply by ranking Arians and Socinians with Atheists and Deists. It is an easy matter to knock down a man of straw. But I will be bold to assert, that not one out of a hundred of the members have read a single line on the subject, and that not one out of fifty, even of the preachers, ever gave it half an hour's impartial consideration in their whole lives. Satisfied with the verbal representations of Dr. Coke and a few others, and thereby relying

on the accounts of professed enemies, they take it for granted that Arianism and Socinianism are synonymous with Deism and Atheism; though I much question whether many of the good brethren know what is meant by those two last terms. They very justly think it unfair in others to condemn them and their doctrines without first having given them an impartial hearing; but do they always attend to this themselves? The Unitarians have, however, nothing to fear from the attacks of the Methodists, who are every way incompetent to the question. The Methodists have other work to do than the conversion of Unitarians; work in which they are more likely to succeed.—That is not *their calling*; neither is a spirit of accurate investigation, or of unrestrained inquiry their *forte*. Let them be content to civilize the mob, and they will continue to do good. If they attempt more than this, they labour in vain. They ought not to meddle in matters they do not understand. Highly as I think of the editor of the Bibliographical Dictionary, I am well persuaded that were all the preachers like to that gentleman, Methodism would shortly be no more. It is said, Madam, that Mr. Wesley declared, he never could retain a bookseller in his society for any length of time; and Charles Wesley says he never knew a genius that did any good.

I would not be understood to pass these censures indiscriminately. I have the pleasure of knowing and corresponding with some whose minds are as liberal as their hearts are good, and their views methodistical. To one of them, a much esteemed friend, whose virtues reflect an honour on his connexions, I applied for some of the Methodists' publications, to assist me in this work; and he answered me—"Though I am a member of the Methodist society, I have not one of their books in my library, excepting an odd volume of the Magazine, and Wesley's tract on Electricity." To proceed:

What with Unitarianism on the right hand, and Calvinism on the left, the Wesleyan Christians have not succeeded so well in North Britain as in other parts of the world. Besides, the state of morals among the North Britons leave very little for Methodism to work upon; whose business it is, not so much to change the opinions, as to reform the manners, of the people. It were much to be wished, that other denominations would be more ambitious to emulate the Methodists in this particular. But every one in its own order:—How many of the members of other communities can now look through Methodism, to the rock from whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence they were dug!

The Methodists have never been persecuted in Scotland; that is another reason why they have succeeded so ill in that country. We have already observed, that the Wesleyans fish the best in troubled waters. The Calvinists have no power, and if they had, I believe they would not *now* use it; and the Unitarians have no inclination to persecute others; therefore has Methodism in Scotland been left to make its way by its own inherent excellence: the consequence has hitherto been, that they have done little good there. The Methodists, however, have not been wholly unsuccessful in that part of the Lord's vineyard; and they do not despair of yet doing more to bring the people to embrace their opinions and practices.

"Scotland," they say, "it is certain, like Geneva, has, since the Reformation, ran from high Calvinism, to almost as high Arianism or Socinianism: the exceptions, especially in the cities, are but few. And who can stem the torrent?" Not, I am persuaded, the Methodist preachers. If Arians and Socinians are to be subdued, it must be by reason and argument, not by abuse and declamation; and these latter are the only weapons the Wesleyans have in their power to use against them. They, however, wield them with all their might; while the objects of their implacable hatred seem to smile at the feebleness

of their attempts; and to flourish with the increase of learning and sound morality in the kingdom.

About this time arose various disputes in the societies, concerning their union with the church of England. The dissenters, who had been converted to Methodism, retained their former non-conforming prejudices: many who had before been used to consider themselves church-people, became dissenters; and, lastly, the intemperate conduct of some of the preachers, in pointing out what they conceived to be the crimes of the clergy, are said to be the leading causes of those disputes which ever after gave Mr. Wesley great uneasiness, and which have increased so much since his death.

It is necessary to make one or two remarks on the last of the above-mentioned causes of disturbance; viz. the intemperate conduct of some of the preachers, in pointing out the errors of the clergy. We may ask, Madam, Who made these Methodists judges in Israel? Who gave them authority to abuse, in public and private, the character of a body of men whose learning, piety, and morality, are in a great degree the honour of our island? Although myself a dissenter, I am constrained to acknowledge, that the great bulk of our national learning is to be found among the clergy of the establish-

ment. In the practice of morality in general, what body of men in the world exceeds that of the regular clergy of these kingdoms? I am persuaded, not any. Pray who are the great promoters of those public charities, those learned and beneficent institutions which are at once the glory, the happiness, the bulwarks, of our country? Not the Methodists; but the bishops and clergy of the established church. Were they to withdraw their patronage and support from every charitable institution in the kingdom, the widow's heart that now sings for joy would droop within her; the poor, now raised by their munificence and public spirit, would fall to rise no more. Let us only look at the lists of names which are printed with the periodical reports of almost every literary and charitable institution in these kingdoms, and we shall find this feeble testimony to the worth of our national clergy confirmed in the amplest manner. Considered as a body, they are, doubtless, the ornaments of the religion they teach, and of the country that supports them. And shall a few mistaken Methodist preachers take upon them, without censure, to vilify these men as "dumb dogs;" as unenlightened, worldly, unregenerate, unconverted sinners, without hope and without God in the world? Is it to be tolerated, that because the regular clergy are disposed to act soberly in their pub-

lic ministrations, and to *read* their discourses, instead of pouring out upon the people a heap of crude, undigested, extemporaneous matter, that, therefore, they shall be considered as blind leaders of the blind?

It is in vain for the Methodists to pretend to be of a spirit different to the one I have been here alluding to, concerning their respect for the clergy. Every Methodist in the kingdom knows, if he would confess it, that those clergymen who do not preach extempore, are looked upon as unevangelical, unconverted men. Nothing is a surer test of a clergyman's being an *unenlightened man*, than his using notes in the pulpit. The exceptions to this illiberal notion are very few indeed. Else, whence is it that those clergymen who preach extempore are alone called gospel, evangelical, and enlightened ministers? Many aged and truly respectable ministers of the established church may now say: "Those who are younger than I, have me in derision, whose fathers I would have scorned to have set with the dogs of my flock!"

I am aware, Madam, that the praise I have here bestowed on the ministers of our church, must be given with some painful exceptions; that pluralists, and non-residents, do still disgrace the establishment; and that some of the clergy are immoral men, regardless of the flock,



while they secure the fleece; but I repeat it with pleasure, the bulk of the clergy is composed of men of profound learning, sincere piety, and extensive liberality. I should be sorry to see these men removed from their livings, to make room for their calumniators. I should be sorry to see our ecclesiastical establishment reduced to that state of barbarity from which it has long been emerging. It has been said, that we have an Arminian clergy and a Calvinistic liturgy. Admit this: but we had better have only one evil than two; and if we let them alone, the time will come, I make no doubt, when the evil will be purged away by the growing influence of the good.

At any rate, such serio-comic-episcopo-dissenting clergymen as the author of *The Sale of Curates*, are not the men to reform the church; but rather to augment the number of her blemishes, and to re-barbarize her ministers and supporters. Under their hands she will be

“Worse for mending—wash’d to fouler stains.”

You will excuse, Madam, this apparent digression from the subject in hand; and believe me to be,

Yours, &c.

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*LETTER XXXV.*

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*Mr. Fletcher—Anecdote—A Revival—Perfection  
—Mr. Maxfield—George Bell—Prophesying—  
Pandora's Box.*

DEAR MADAM,

THE disputes, which I mentioned in my last, greatly agitated the Methodist connexion, and produced many partial divisions and separations from the societies, in different parts of the kingdom; yet upon the whole the work went on well; that is, the members in the societies continued to increase.

In the year 1757, Mr. Wesley first received assistance in his ministerial labours from John William de la Fléchère, a Swiss gentleman, who had just taken Priest's orders in this country.

Mr. Wesley notices this circumstance in the following manner:—"March 13, 1757, finding myself weak at Snowfields, I prayed that God, if he saw good, would send me help at the chapel. He did so. As soon as I had done preaching, Mr. Fletcher came, who had just then been ordained Priest, and hastened to the chapel, on purpose to assist me, as he supposed me to be alone. How wonderful are the ways of God! When my bodily strength failed, and no clergyman in England was able and willing to assist me, he sent me help from the mountains of Switzerland! And a help meet for me in every respect! Where could I have found such another!"

Mr. Fletcher is said to have been one of the holiest men of the age; and I am not disposed to call the truth of this assertion into question: There have been many holy men this age: Mr. Fletcher was eminently of the number. He certainly *professed* to have attained a state of *perfection!* and he wrote much in defence of that notion. Whatever were his spiritual attainments, his abilities as an able and powerful reasoner must remain undoubted while *The Checks to Antinomianism* are extant. These books never were, they never can be, answered. The late venerable Member of Parliament for Shrewsbury, and his witty brother, the author of *The Sale of Curates*, to whom I alluded in a former

letter, did all they could to overturn Fletcher's arguments; but in vain—Never were the admirers of that man who gave Servetus such a *warm* reception, more completely foiled, than when they fell into the hands of the Rev. John Fletcher. This gentleman's polemic writings made the Countess of Huntingdon tremble.—To ease her mind, her minions railed against the Wesleyans, and gnashed their teeth at John Fletcher. But John kept his temper and his ground, until the disciples of Calvin retired from the field in disgrace. The pious Countess, however, was pretty well contented that Fletcher had been *answered*. The pious Countess was more easily satisfied than was James I. when under somewhat similar circumstances. When this monarch had read Calderwood's book, entitled, "Alter Damascenum," he manifested great uneasiness: "Let not this disturb your Majesty," cried one of the Bishops, "we will answer the book."—"Tush, mon," replied the King, "what wid ye aunser! 'tis nothing but scraptur and rason!"

Nothing remarkable seems to have taken place in the Methodist society from the time of Mr. Fletcher's *debut*, till the year 1760, in which year a mighty *revival* commenced, which lasted some years. This was "that glorious work of Sanctification, which," Mr. Wesley

says, "had been nearly at a stand for twenty years." But which "from time to time spread, first through various parts of Yorkshire, afterwards in London, then through most parts of England, next to Dublin, Limerick, and through all the south and west of Ireland." One would almost suppose that Mr. Wesley is here describing the course of a *real* meteor, such as that which made its appearance in the year 1783, and was seen by so many thousands of his Majesty's subjects, in most parts of his dominions! No, Madam, it is a meteor of the mind which our hero is here speaking of. He calls it is day of Pentecost—the perfecting of the saints. Dr. Whitehead speaks of it as follows:—"From the present year (1756) I find little more than a recurrence of circumstances similar to those already related, till we come to the year 1760; when religious experience, or at least the profession of it, began to assume an appearance among the Methodists, in some respects quite new." The thing is this: Mr. Wesley had long entertained an opinion similar to that held by the Papists and the Quakers, (*viz.*) that it is possible for a person to attain to a state of *perfection* even in this life. Farclay, the Apologist of the Quakers, thus describes this doctrine. "In whom this pure and holy birth is fully brought forth, the body of death and sin comes to be crucified, and removed, and

their hearts united and subjected to the truth; so as not to obey *any* suggestions or temptations of the evil one, to be free from actual sinning and transgressing of the law of God, and in that respect *perfect*: Yet doth this *perfection* still admit of a growth; and there remaineth always in some part a possibility of sinning, when the mind doth not most diligently and watchfully attend unto the Lord."

How Mr. Wesley held this notion, I will explain to you, when I come to treat of his doctrines: suffice it at present to observe, that he improved upon Barclay's opinion. One of his improvements was, that this state of perfection might be attained *in a moment*, during preaching, prayer, reading, conversation, or any other spiritual exercise; nay, I have known it take place while the person was smoking a pipe of tobacco!

Against the doctrine itself, Dr. Whitehead thinks there can be no just objections: "but," says he, "this *instantaneous manner* of attaining perfection in the Christian temper, seems to have no foundation in scripture; it even appears contrary to reason, and to the constitution and order which God has established through all animated nature, where we see no instance of any thing arriving at perfection in a moment. And though there can be no doubt but *some* of those who made professions of this happy state

were both sincere and deeply pious, perhaps beyond most of their brethren, yet there seems just reason to affirm they were mistaken in the judgment they formed of their own attainments." From the consequences which attended this *revival*, it is just to conclude that many of the perfectionists were thus mistaken.

About the beginning of this business, Mr. Maxfield, the first regular lay-preacher among the Methodists, having been ordained by the Bishop of Londonderry, was in London. For some time he laboured conjointly with the rest of the preachers. But this did not continue. He became, with many others, a mighty dreamer of dreams. Antinomianism began to rear its head, as it had often done before. Dreams, visions, and revelations were now honoured more than the written word. The reproofs of some preachers only made things worse. One George Bell, whom I before mentioned, as an intimate of Mr. Maxfield, was a serjeant in the life-guards. This man fell into strange errors, if the accounts published of him are true. He believed he had the miraculous discernment of spirits, and prophesied, in January, 1763, that "the end of the world would be on the 28th of February following!" Mr. Wesley warmly opposed this, both from the pulpit and the press. When the day arrived he preached at Spital-fields in the evening, on "Prepare to meet thy

God." This text, taken at such a time, no doubt increased the superstitious fears of the poor Methodists, many of whom, notwithstanding all he could say against Bell's absurd prophecies, were afraid to go to bed, and some wandered about in the fields, being persuaded, that if the world did not end, at least London would be swallowed up by an earthquake !

Mr. Wesley silenced Bell, and a separation, with Maxfield at the head of it, soon took place.

Mr. Maxfield lived about twenty years after this, and preached in a meeting-house, near Moorfields, to a large congregation. So little do some ministers regard their ordination oaths !

George Bell died very lately, at his house near Paddington. He had, I believe, long given up all pretensions to religion.

Though the *separation* had removed one hundred and seventy-five persons from the Wesleyan connexion, yet was not the *revival* thereby stopped ; many still professed, that after a deep conviction of inbred sin, and of their total fall from God, they were so filled with faith and love, (and generally in a moment) that sin vanished, and they found, from that time, no pride, anger, evil desire, or unbelief ! You may, therefore, well suppose, that his Majesty, the king of the bottomless pit, would rage ter-



ribly; and stir up all his Antinomian, Calvinian, and Pelagian subjects to oppose this great work of perfection. He did so. How far he succeeded I will describe to you in the words of Mr. Fletcher himself, who was the great champion of the Doctrine of Perfection; and who professed to have attained it himself. Speaking of the increase of Methodism, he says, "Leaning on her fair daughters, *Truth* and *Love*, she took a solemn walk through the kingdom, and gave a foretaste of heaven to all that entertained her." "She might," says he, "by this time have turned this favourite isle into a land, flowing with spiritual milk and honey: if Appollyon, disguised in his *angelic* robes, had not played, and did not continue to play, his old game."

"At this time we stand particularly in danger of splitting upon the Antinomian rock. Many smatterers in Christian experience talk of finished salvation in Christ, or boast of being in a state of justification and sanctification, while they know little of themselves, and less of Christ. Their whole behaviour testifies, that their heart is void of humble love, and full of carnal confidence. They cry Lord! Lord! with as much assurance, and as little right, as the foolish virgins. They pass for sweet Christians, dear children of God; but their secret reserves, evidence them to be only such be-

lievers as Simon Magus, Ananias, and Sapphira. Some with Diotrophes love to have the pre-eminence, and prate malicious words; and not content therewith, they do not themselves receive the brethren, and forbid them that would. Some have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, who loved the ways of unrighteousness; they are wells without water, and clouds without rain, and trees without fruit: with Judas they try to load themselves with thick clay, endeavour to lay up treasures on earth, and make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. Some, with the incestuous Corinthian, are led captive by fleshly lusts, and fall into the greatest enormities. Others, with the language of the awakened publican in their mouths, are fast asleep in their spirits: You hear them speak of the corruptions of their hearts in as unaffected and airy a manner, as if they talked of freckles upon their face. It seems they run down their sinful nature only to apologise for their very sinful practices; or to appear great proficient in self-knowledge, and court the praise due to genuine humility.

“Others quietly settled on the lees of the Laodicean state, by the whole tenor of their life say they are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing: utter strangers to hunger and thirst after righteousness, they never

importunately beg, never wrestle hard for the hidden manna: on the contrary, they sing a requiem to their poor dead souls, ending, Soul take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up in Christ for many years, yea, for ever and ever; and thus, like Demas, they go on talking of Christ and heaven, but loving their ease, and enjoying this present world.

“ Yet many of these, like Herod, hear and entertain us gladly; but like him also they keep their beloved sin, pleading for it as a right eye, and saving it as a right hand. To this day their bosom-corruption is not only alive, but indulged; their treacherous Delilah is hugged; and their spiritual Agag walks delicately, and boasts that the bitterness of death is past, and he shall never be hewed in pieces before the Lord: nay, to dare so much as to talk of his dying before the body, becomes almost an unpardonable crime.

“ Forms and fair shews of godliness deceive us: many, whom our Lord might well compare to whited sepulchres, look like angels of light when they are abroad, and prove tormenting fiends at home. We see them weep under sermons, we hear them pray and sing with the tongues of men and angels; they even profess the faith that removes mountains; and yet by and by we discover they stumble at every mole-hill; every trifling temptation throws them into

peevishness, fretfulness, impatience, ill-humour, discontent, anger, and sometimes into loud passion.

“Relative duties are by many grossly neglected: husbands slight their wives, or wives neglect and plague their husbands; children are spoiled, parents disregarded, and masters disobeyed: yea, so many are the complaints against servants professing godliness on account of their unfaithfulness, indolence, pert answering again, forgetfulness of their menial condition, or insolent expectations, that some serious persons prefer those who have no knowledge of the truth, to those who make a high profession of it.”

“With more truth than ever we may say,

‘Ye different sects, who all declare,  
Lo! here is Christ, or Christ is there;  
Your stronger proofs divinely give,  
And shew us where *the Christians* live.  
Your claim, alas! ye cannot prove,  
Ye want the genuine mark of *love*.’

“The consequences of this high, and yet lifeless profession, are as evident as they are deplorable. Selfish views, sinister designs, inveterate prejudice, pitiful bigotry, party-spirit, self-sufficiency, contempt of others, envy, jealousy, *making men offenders for a word*—possibly a scriptural word too, magnifying innocent

mistakes, putting the worst construction upon each other's words and actions, false accusations, backbiting, malice, revenge, persecution, and a hundred such evils, prevail among religious people, to the great astonishment of the children of the world, and the unspeakable grief of the true Israelites that yet remain among us.

“ But this is not all. Some of our hearers do not even keep the great outlines of heathen morality : not satisfied practically to reject Christ's declaration, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, they proceed to that pitch of covetousness and daring injustice, as not to pay their just debts ; yea, and to cheat and extort, whenever they have a fair opportunity. How few of our societies are there, where this, or some other evil has not broken out, and given such shakes to the ark of the gospel, that had not the Lord wonderfully interposed, it must long ago have been upset? And you know how to this day the name and truth of God are openly blasphemed among the baptized heathen, through the Antinomian lives of many, who say they are Jews when they are not, but by their works declare they are of the synagogue of Satan.”

This Pandora's box of Methodism, was opened, Madam, not by an enemy, nor yet by one differing in opinion from the Wesleyans,

but from their best friend, and great defender of all their doctrines—not by one whose own bad spirit and evil conduct might lead him to expose the crimes of others as some excuse for his own; but by one, on whose morals and spirit his most bitter enemies could never fix a stain, whom even the corrosive rancour of Calvinian malice could never blacken or convince of sin.

Had any other man besides Mr. Fletcher, drawn such a portrait of the Methodists, a nest of hornets had been raised to torment him; and the guilt of the accused would have levelled a blow at the honesty and faithfulness of the accuser.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXXVI.*

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*A Revival at Kingswood—Erasmus—Methodistical Ordination.*

DEAR MADAM,

ALTHOUGH hindred by separations, and scandalised by false brethren, the society of Methodists continued to increase; so that in the year 1766, notwithstanding four of the preachers had desisted from travelling, during the preceding year, there were one hundred and four preachers, twenty-five thousand nine hundred and eleven members, and forty districts, in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales united.

In the following year a great *revival* took place among the *children* at Kingswood! Many of them were converted, and became zealous Methodists. I mention this circumstance be-

cause it is somewhat remarkable, both from the age of the converts, and the unfrequency of the scholars at this Methodistical college becoming *serious*. Kingswood sends few members to the Methodist societies, and very few preachers to Conference.

During the *revival*, which I mentioned in my last, a Greek Bishop, named Erasmus, came to London on a visit. Application having been made to the Patriarch of Smyrna, respecting the reality of his office, it appeared that he was Bishop of Arcadia in Crete. This point being ascertained, Erasmus was shortly after beset with a whole host of applications from the Methodist preachers, both *local* and *travelling*, to give them episcopal ordination! This real or supposed Greek, (for many still thought the matter extremely doubtful) having nothing to fear in this country from such a measure, willingly complied with the request of these ambitious Methodist preachers. It was even said, that Mr. Wesley himself did *strongly press* Erasmus to ordain him a Bishop! This charge, Mr. Wesley partly denied; but not so as to leave no doubt on the minds of some of his friends. Ordained Bishop, however, he was not; yet that did not hinder him from exercising the power and office of one: for, strange to tell! Mr. Wesley did afterwards actually take upon himself to ordain some of the lay-preachers; yea,



some of them he made into a kind of Episcopal Bishops!—Was ever such a thing known before or since in the annals of our Church history?—But he was teased into that weakness by the repeated importunities of Dr. Coke and a few others; and though Mr. Wesley often boasted that he did nothing in a corner; yet was this mock ordination—this episcopal farce, performed in a private manner, in a chamber!

A great increase of Methodism had been brought about in America by the labours of Whitefield and some others; and after the Independence of the American Colonies had been acknowledged, Mr. Wesley thought himself justified in ordaining Dr. Coke, and through him, Francis Asbury, to be joint superintendants over the brethren in North America. That is to say, he made Dr. Coke into a Methodistical Bishop, who communicated his second-hand functions to F. Asbury! Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey were ordained Elders, to administer the blessed Sacraments to the newly emancipated Americans!

Mr. Wesley also prepared a Liturgy, little differing from that of the Church of England, which he advised the travelling-preachers to use on the Lord's day, in all the congregations, reading the Litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days; at the same time he advised the newly-created

Elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.

"If any man," says he, "will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

"It has indeed been proposed to desire some of our English Bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object, 1. I desired the Bishop of London to ordain only one; but could not prevail. 2. If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. 3. If they would ordain them *now*, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us! (Mark this, Madam!) 4. As our American brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the state and the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other! (And mark this also!) They are now at full liberty to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty, wherewith God has so strangely made them free!!!"

This *reasoning*, and the consequent practice of ordination, came, Madam, not from a Dissenting Minister and one who had *always* been

friendly to the cause of the oppressed Colonists, but from the Rev. John Wesley, M. A. sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, and at that time a true son of the Church—a Presbyterian of the Church of England; who had a little before written “A calm Address to the American Colonies,” in which he takes the side of their oppressors! It is probable that he had “*forgotten*” both that he had ever written the Address, and that he was Presbyterian of the Church of England, for surely nothing but forgetfulness could have allowed so gross a dereliction of all his former principles, as appeared both in the practice of ordination, and his manner of defending it. We know Mr. Wesley could, occasionally, remember to forget, as he did in the instance which formed part of his short controversy with the late Dr. Evans of Bristol. In that instance, Mr. Wesley did actually pretend to have forgotten ever having read a certain pamphlet, written in favour of the Americans, and which he strongly recommended for notice in a Bristol newspaper to Mr. Pine the printer. Mr. Wesley had changed his opinion concerning the subject of dispute between the Americans and the mother country, and when he was charged with a deviation from his former principles, he said he had forgotten ever seeing or recommending the book which had, if not actually produced, yet very much strengthened, his

favourable opinion of the Colonists!! Court politicians can occasionally *forget* such important matters; as our late celebrated Premier could once have testified; but that Mr. Wesley had really forgotten the circumstance here alluded to is the most unlikely thing in the world. Those who have read Dr. Evan's sensible and interesting Letter to Mr. Fletcher, will be able to form their own opinion of the matter; for the credit of my hero I will not enter farther into the question. For the same reason, I should wish to decline any farther observation on the practice of Methodistical ordination; but as this affair forms a new case in the history of Methodism, I cannot pass it over slightly.

Mr. Charles Wesley set his face against the practice, and opposed it with all his might; so did several of the lay-preachers, and other persons of respectability in the society. Yet however repugnant it might be to the wishes of the English Methodists, it met the approbation of the Americans, who at their Conference, held at Baltimore, in the year 1785, agreed to publish Dr. Coke's Letter Testimonial, with their own sanction of the affair. "Therefore," say they, "at this Conference we formed ourselves into an independent church: and following the counsel of Mr. John Wesley, who recommended the episcopal mode of church government, we thought it best to become an

episcopal church, making the episcopal office elective, and the elected superintendant, or bishop, amenable to the body of ministers and preachers.

“As the translators of our version of the Bible have used the English word *bishop* instead of *superintendant*, it has been thought by us, that it would appear more scriptural to adopt their term *bishop*.”

At that time there were more than eighteen thousand members in the societies in America, who submitted to his advice and authority.

About this time Mr. Wesley observes, “I was considering, how strangely the grain of mustard-seed, planted about fifty years ago, had grown up. It has spread through all Great Britain and Ireland, the Isle of Wight, and the Isle of Man: then to America, through the whole Continent, into Canada; the Leeward Islands, and Newfoundland.”

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXXVII.*

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*Methodistical Ordination, concluded.*

DEAR MADAM,

WHEN Mr. Wesley ordained some of the itinerants, says Dr. Whitehead, a foundation was laid for a change in the ancient constitution of Methodism, of very extensive influence, and which, if frequently acted upon, would effect the downfall of the present order of things among them, if not totally extirpate the name of Methodist.

Mr. Wesley had long claimed the power or right of ordaining to the ministry, but said it was not probable that he should ever exercise it. For a long course of years he steadily resisted every measure which tended to alter the relative situation of the societies to the established church, and to the various denominations of dissenters

to which any of the members might belong. It is not easy, says one of his biographers, to assign a sufficient reason why Mr. Wesley, in the eighty-second year of his age, should depart from a line of conduct he had hitherto so strictly observed; especially if he acted according to his own judgment, and of his own free choice. However this may be, a plan was proposed in private, to a few clergymen who attended the conference in the year 1784, at Leeds, that Mr. Wesley should ordain one or two of the preachers for the societies in America. But the clergymen very properly opposed it. Mr. Fletcher was consulted by letter; who advised, that a bishop should be prevailed upon to ordain them, and then Mr. Wesley might appoint them to such offices in the societies as he thought proper, and give them letters testimonial of the appointments he had given them. Mr. Wesley well knew, that no bishop would ordain them at his recommendation, and therefore seemed inclined to do it himself! In this purpose, however, he appeared so languid, if not wavering, that Dr. Coke thought it necessary to use *some further* means to urge him to the performance of it.— Accordingly, August 9, Mr. Wesley being then in Wales, on his way to Bristol, the Doctor sent him the following letter:—

“ Honoured and dear Sir,

“ The more maturely I consider the subject, the more expedient it appears to me, *that the power of ordaining others should be received by me from you*, by the imposition of your hands; and that you should lay hands on Brother Whatcoat and Brother Vasey, for the following reasons: 1. It seems to me the most scriptural way, and most agreeable to the practice of the primitive churches. 2. I *may* want all the influence in America which you can throw into my scale. Mr. Brackenbury informed me at Leeds, that he saw a letter in London from Mr. Asbury, in which he observed, that he would not receive any person deputed by you, with part of the superintendency of the work invested in him; or words which evidently implied so much. I do not find any the least degree of prejudice in my mind against Mr. Asbury; on the contrary, a very great love and esteem; and am determined not to stir a finger, without his consent, unless mere sheer necessity obliges me; but rather to lie at his feet in all things. But as the journey is long, and you cannot spare me often, and it is well to provide against *all events*, and an authority *formally* received from you will (I am conscious of it) be fully admitted by the people, and my exercising the office of ordination without that *for-*



*mal* authority may be disputed, if there be any opposition on any other account; I could therefore *earnestly* wish you would exercise that power in this instance, which I have not the shadow of a doubt but God hath invested you with for the good of our connexion. I think you have tried me too often to doubt whether I will in any degree use the power you are pleased to invest me with, farther than I believe absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the work.

3. In respect to my brethren (Brothers Whatcoat and Vesey); it is very uncertain, indeed, whether any of the clergy mentioned by Brother Rankin, will stir a step with me in the work, except Mr. Jarrit; and it is by no means certain that even he will choose to join me in ordaining: and propriety and universal practice make it expedient, that I should have two presbyters with me in this work. In short, it appears to me that every thing should be prepared, and every thing proper be done, that can possibly be done *this side the water*. You can do all this in Mr. C——n's house, in your *chamber*; and afterwards (according to Mr. Fletcher's advice) give us letters testimonial of the different offices with which you have been pleased to invest us. For the purpose of laying hands on Brothers Whatcoat and Vasey, I can bring Mr. C——— down with me, by which you will have two presbyters with you. In respect to Brother

Rankin's argument, that you will escape a great deal of *odium* by omitting this, it is nothing. Either it will be known or not known; if not known, then no *odium* will arise: but if known, you will be obliged to acknowledge that I acted under your direction, or suffer me to sink under the weight of my enemies, with perhaps your brother at the head of them. I shall entreat you to ponder these things.

Your most dutiful,

T. COKE."

Soon after the ordination, Dr. Coke, with his two companions, sailed for America; where they arrived in time to meet the American conference held at Baltimore. Here the Doctor opened his commission, and consecrated Mr. Asbury a bishop; and gave the societies, formed by the preachers on that continent, a new name, calling them "The Methodist Episcopal Church in America." He preached a sermon on this occasion, which was afterwards printed, and in which he labours to defend this new order of things. He begins this sermon by abusing the English hierarchy; yet, in a letter from Ireland, written some time after, he tells Mr. Wesley, that he would as soon commit *adultery* as preach publicly against the church. On this, Dr. Whitehead observes, "I must say this of the Doctor, that with respect to *adultery* I think him very

innocent, but in bringing *railing accusations* against *others*, I think him very guilty." It has already appeared, in the course of these letters, that this observation is strictly just and proper.

I have already said, that Mr. Charles Wesley opposed his brother's ordination-work with all his might. He did so, to his great credit as a minister of the church of England and an honest man. As a dissenter, I can have no objection to Mr. Wesley, or any other Christian man, *laying hands* on as many of their fellow-Christians as *wish it*; but I do contend, that as a regular clergyman, Mr. Wesley did certainly violate every principle of the church to which he still professed to belong; and that, by taking upon himself to ordain others to the ministry, he threw off that subjection to the legal bishop which every regular clergyman is supposed to owe to those under whose authority he acts.

There may, perhaps, be no express law forbidding presbyters of the church of England to make bishops of their brethren; but that law which gives the power of ordination to the bishops themselves, plainly implies, that it shall not be assumed by any inferior order of men in the church.

It may be remarked, that had Mr. Wesley refused to exercise his supposed power of ordina-

tion, by not listening to the earnest solicitations of his ambitious counsellors, Dr. Coke might have exercised his own power; for he also is a presbyter of the church of England. He might have agreed with some ambitious lay-preacher, first to ordain him presbyter, when he would be on an equal footing with Mr. Wesley himself; and in return for this honour, the newly-made episcopal brother might have conferred a greater honour on the Doctor, by consecrating him a bishop. Thus would the lay-preacher pay the ordained presbyter with interest, for the honour which had been conferred on himself! This method would have been equally legal with that which was taken with Mr. Wesley. But it was *influence* the Doctor sought after, as well as power and a title; and this could not be obtained through any other channel than that of Mr. Wesley—the great father of all the churches. Whenever *he* spake, it was done; when *he* commanded, it stood fast! Yes, Madam, had the name, and even the office of bishop, been all the good Doctor had wanted, he might easily have obtained the end of his wishes, by taking the method I have just laid down. The bargain would shortly have been struck; it was only saying, “I’ll make you a presbyter of the church, if you’ll afterwards consent to make me a bishop.” Or as some

Roman Catholics have expressed themselves concerning the broken order of succession at the Reformation: "If you'll make me archbishop of York, I'll make you archbishop of Canterbury!"

As Mr. Wesley was never publicly elected by any presbyters and people to the office of a bishop, nor ever consecrated to it, when he presumed to usurp that office, his brother Charles exclaimed—

" So easily are bishops made,  
By man's or woman's whim,  
Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid;  
But who laid hands on him?"

Dr. Whitehead concludes his very able reasoning on the subject of methodistical ordination, with the following observations:—"A scheme of ordination so full of confusion and absurdity, as that among the Methodists, can surely never filiate itself on Mr. Wesley: it must have proceeded from a mere chaotic brain, where wild confusion reigns. Nor can I easily believe that Mr. Wesley would ever have adopted so mis-shapen a brat, had not his clear perception of things been rendered feeble and dim, by flattery, persuasion, and age."

Should you be disposed to enter farther into the subject of methodistical ordination, give me leave to refer you to Dr. Whitehead's Life of Wesley, volume the second, where this matter is treated in a perfectly full and satisfactory manner.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XXXVIII.*

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*Tolerant Spirit of Methodism mistated—Conventicle-Act—Tolerant Spirit of the Church.*

DEAR MADAM,

IN the year 1788, Mr. Wesley taking a review of the nature of the work in which he had so long been engaged, thus speaks of it: "There is no other religious society under heaven, which requires nothing of men in order to their admission into it, but a desire to save their souls. Look all around you; you cannot be admitted into the church or society of the Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, or any other, unless you hold the same opinions with them, and adhere to the same mode of worship. The Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this or that opinion, but they *think* and *let think*. Neither

do they impose a particular mode of worship, but you may continue to worship in your former manner, be it what it may. Now I do not know any other religious society, either ancient or modern, wherein such liberty of conscience is now allowed, or has been allowed since the age of the apostles! Here is our glorying, and a glorying peculiar to us! What society shares it with us?"

Were this representation, in all its parts, exactly true and just, the Methodist would indeed be the Church of God—the glory of every other church—the Lamb's wife, adorned as a bride for the bridegroom. We should never hear of expulsions for supposed heresies—there would no longer be proud looks and disdainful carriage manifested towards those who differ in opinion from their brethren—all anger and strife and bitterness would be done away—persecution would hide its horrid visage—bigotry would be forgotten, and uncharitableness be swallowed up of Christian love and philosophical forbearance. But is this the case among Methodists more than any other sect? I know it is not. I know, that to call into question any of their doctrines, or to dispute the validity of any part of their discipline, is a sure ground of excommunication. Nay, the very last Conference, (1806) they expelled one of the travelling preachers, for holding some opinions concerning



justification by faith and the witness of the spirit, which the Conference **thought** were Anti-Methodistical; but which the expelled preacher has since attempted to prove, are strictly agreeable to the doctrines taught by Wesley and Fletcher.

Whatever the society of Methodists may require of candidates on their admission, it is certain, that, having once entered, it is expected they will not vary one jot or tittle from the true Methodistical creed. Else why is it that the trust deeds of their chapels have a clause in them, requiring all the preachers to preach only such doctrines as are laid down in Wesley's Sermons and Fletcher's Checks? Nay, Madam, if any private member should broach any other faith than theirs, expulsion from the society would infallibly be the consequence! What confidence then are we to place in the boasting professions of liberality contained in the extract I have just made? Truly it may be said of it that "All is false and hollow!"

Mr. Wesley did not, I am persuaded, design to deceive when he made those declarations concerning his connexion; but he forgot himself in the warmth of his admiration; and spoke of Methodism rather as he wished it to be, than as it really was. I have thought it necessary to let you know this that you may not be misled by false appearances, and partial repre-

sentations; and let not the Methodists deem me their enemy because I have told the truth.

I ought to have informed you before, that after a long conversation with Mr. Clulow, an attorney, Mr. Wesley judged it expedient to have all his chapels and travelling preachers duly licenced according to the act of toleration, hoping thereby, notwithstanding their professing to belong to the church, to escape the inconvenience arising from the conventicle act. This was certainly a safe and prudent step; but they ought from the moment of taking the oath, to consider the meeting-houses as dissenting chapels, and the preachers as dissenting ministers; for the act, whose protection they claim, was made for persons "Dissenting from the Church of England." While Mr. Wesley and his people continued to belong to the church, I know not why they should expect to be exempted from the penalties of the conventicle act. That act, like all others that would infringe the liberty of conscience, I grant is "an execrable act," as Mr. Wesley himself calls it; but that gentleman ought not to have lost sight of his still being a churchman, and that as such he was bound to obey all the laws of the church to which he belonged. He had taken the church for better and for worse; and ought either to have submitted to her dictates, or honestly to have withdrawn from her communion.

It argues very strongly for the spirit of liberality which is now found among the members of our national establishment, that so few prosecutions take place against clergymen holding doctrines, and following practices, contrary to the canons and articles of the church to which they belong. Here we have Calvinian, Arminian, Unitarian, Swedenborgian, Pelagian, Arian, Socinian, Sabellian, Trinitarian, and I do not know how many other sorts of clergymen in our church, some starving on a curacy, and others fattening on a bishopric; we have Methodist clergymen, and clergymen following no *method* at all, but that of lounging at home, and hiring others, at *half price*, to do their duty. All these classes of clergymen are retained in the church; live upon her revenues, and are protected by her laws. And yet we are sometimes told of the intolerance of the church, of persecutions for righteousness' sake, and of the operations of certain "execrable acts!" Truly, Madam, I think our national church is the most liberal of churches; and her pale every way the most extensive.

The test acts will ever be a stumbling block to the Dissenters, and the Catholics have just cause of complaint; but let these men once enter the church, and they may follow any practices, and hold any doctrines they please.— They have only to find out the true method of

stifling conscience; and the ingenious one of reconciling principles and practices otherwise in opposition to each other; and then sign Archdeacon Paley's "Terms of Pacification;" and none shall afterwards dare to make them afraid!

Were the *letter* of our canon laws agreeable to the *spirit* and general *practice* of their present supporters, I should have very few objections to uniting in fellowship with the Church of England, neither do I see how any reasonable man could object to such an union. The example and influence of Dissenters have made it unfashionable to persecute for conscience sake; and hence it is that a great majority of our regular clergy have imperceptibly imbibed that spirit of toleration, which prevents the laws against Dissenters being put into execution, I look forward with pleasure to the time when even the *letter* of our ecclesiastical laws shall breathe a perfectly mild and liberal *spirit*, when the pious wish of Archbishop Tillotson shall be accomplished; and we shall no longer hear of Christians "perishing everlastingly" for any venial error of judgment. To the light of science and the humanizing influence of reason and philosophy, I look for that spirit which will counteract the growing authority of Calvinian bitterness, and finally triumph over puritanic barbarity. Yet while we hear men, and those calling themselves the only true sons of the

church, pleading for persecution, by the vindication of Calvin's affair with the unfortunate Servetus, there is certainly something to dread from the spread of this branch of Methodists, especially when we consider how many of their preachers have found their way into the church. This alarm is not a little strengthened when we see the crowds that attend the ministry of these pretended evangelicals.

Finding great inconvenience from a professed adherence to the church, and not willing either to alter the mode of his proceeding, nor yet to acknowledge himself a Dissenter, Mr. Wesley stated the case to a member of parliament, hoping the legislature might be prevailed on to interpose, and free the Methodists from the penalties of the conventicle act. He states the cause thus:—"Last month a few poor people met together in Lincolnshire, to pray, and to praise God, in a friend's house: there was no preaching at all. Two neighbouring Justices fined the man of the house twenty pounds. I suppose he was not worth twenty shillings.—Upon this, his household goods were distrained and sold to pay the fine. He appealed to the quarter-sessions, but all the Justices averred, 'The Methodists could have no relief from the act of toleration, because they went to church; and that, so long as they did so, the conventicle act should be executed upon them.'

“ Last Sunday, when one of our preachers was beginning to speak to a quiet congregation, a neighbouring Justice sent a constable to seize him till he had paid twenty pounds—telling him his licence was good for nothing, ‘Because he was a Churchman.’

“ Now, Sir, what can the Methodists do? They are liable to be ruined by the conventicle act, and they have no relief from the act of toleration! If this is not oppression, what is? Where then is English liberty? The liberty of Christians, yea, of every rational creature, who as such, has a right to worship God according to his own conscience? But waving the question of right and wrong, what prudence is there in oppressing such a body of loyal subjects? If these good magistrates could drive them, not only out of Lincolnshire, but out of England, who would be gainers thereby? Not his Majesty, whom we honour and love: not his ministers, whom we love and serve for his sake. Do they wish to throw away so many thousand friends, who are now bound to them by stronger ties than that of interest?—If you will speak a word to Mr. Pitt on that head, you will oblige,” &c.

This reasoning is certainly very just and proper; yet it must be granted, that the Justices in Lincolnshire did no more than they were bound to do by the laws. While the church

and state continue to be united, it is the business of the civil magistrate to see that the ecclesiastical, as well as all the other laws, are duly kept and obeyed; and surely it must be allowed, that the church of England has as much right as other churches to make what laws she chooses for the government of her own members; and such the Methodists professed themselves to be. If any do not like those laws and regulations which she has enacted, they are at liberty to dissent; after which neither the church of England, nor any other church, has a right to interfere with them: But while they continue in membership, they ought to pay proper deference to all established rules of her communion. The Methodists may thank the lenient spirit of the churchmen of the present day, that they are not forcibly expelled as unruly members. This they would think a hard case; and so it would be: But law is law, said the facetious George Alexander Steevens; and I wish the Wesleyans would imitate the forbearance of their brethren of the church, when any one of their own members sees fit to violate the conventicle acts of Methodism. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.

The time is now approaching that we must take our leave of the chief hero of this history, Mr. John Wesley. The last annual Conference

at which he presided, was held at Bristol, in the year 1790. At that time there were in the connexion, 216 circuits; 511 preachers; and 120,233 members!

When we consider that all these preachers and people had arisen among the Methodists in little more than fifty years, we shall be astonished at the success which attended the preaching of Mr. Wesley and his lay-brethren. Thus have they continued to increase, yea, and they do still continue to make converts to their faith and practices with equal, if not with greater, rapidity than ever.

I am, &c.



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LETTER XXXIX.

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*Mr. Wesley's Reflections on himself—The last Words and Sentiments of dying Men no Test of Truth—Sickness and Death of Mr. Wesley—Inscriptions—Remarks on Mr. Wesley's general Character.*

DEAR MADAM,

ON the 28th of June, 1790, Mr. Wesley observes:—"This day I enter into my eighty-eighth year. For above eighty-six years I found none of the infirmities of old age; my eyes did not wax dim, neither was my natural strength abated. But last August I found almost a sudden change; my eyes were so dim that no glasses would help me; my strength likewise quite forsook me, and probably will not return in this world. But I feel no pain from head to foot,

only it seems nature is exhausted, and humanly speaking, will sink more and more, till—

“ The weary springs of life stand still at last.”

The reflections of a great man, on his own approaching dissolution, must always be interesting. We watch such a one with anxious curiosity, and listen to his dying words as the test of his former sincerity, if not of the truth of his former opinions. The notion, however, which Dr. Young has broached, that though men may live fools, they cannot die such, is certainly not in every instance to be relied upon. For we may be certain, that as the wicked have no bands in their death, so neither will the circumstance of approaching dissolution operate upon the mind so as to remove ignorance and infuse knowledge. If we would be truly wise, we must suffer the discipline of the mind in life; and correct our mistaken notions or vicious propensities while in health and vigour. The night cometh, when no man can work. It is easy from hence to infer, that the dying language of a man ought never to be regarded as the sure test of any thing more, respecting the truth of his opinions, or the propriety of his former actions, than that he was a man of honesty and sincerity.

Mr. John Wesley, and Dr. Joseph Priestley, held sentiments in religion directly opposite; yet *both* these gentlemen left this world, as every good and wise man must wish to leave it.

The momentous period which Mr. Wesley had so calmly anticipated, at length arrived; and he met the last attack of the king of terrors with true Christian fortitude. After having dined at Islington, on Saturday, the 19th of February, 1791, he desired a friend to read to him from the fourth to the seventh chapter of Job, inclusive. The next morning he rose at his usual hour, but found himself quite unfit for the duties of the day. He lay down again about seven in the morning, and slept several hours. In the evening, he came down to supper. On Monday, the 21st, he seemed much better, and rode to Twickenham to see a friend. The next morning he proceeded with his labours, as usual, at the City-Road; and on the Wednesday, he preached his last sermon, at Leatherhead, from "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near."

On Friday he returned from visiting a Mr. Wolf's family, at Balaam, and found himself extremely ill. He immediately requested to be left alone for half an hour. He afterwards drank a little mulled wine, which he immediately threw up, and said, "I must lie down." Dr. White-

head, his future biographer, visited him. When that gentleman came into the room, "Doctor," said Mr. Wesley cheerfully, "they are more afraid than hurt." Most of the day he had a quick pulse, and a degree of fever and stupor; which continued till Sunday morning, when he got up, and attempted to resume his wonted cheerfulness. But attempting to converse much, his strength failed him, and he lay down, saying, after his friends had prayed with him—"There is no need of more; when at Bristol (in 1783) my words were—

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

Intimating that such were his present feelings and language.

On Tuesday morning, the 29th, he sung two stanzas of a hymn: then lying still a short time, he called for pen and ink, and attempted to write; but could not. A person desired to write for him, and requested to know what he would say. He replied, "Nothing, but that God is with us!" These words he repeated more than once before his departure, with considerable force and energy. His weakness, and his joyful state of mind, continued till the last great struggle of nature gave him release from

his pain and weakness, and sent him triumphing to

“ Another and a better world !”

He died without a groan, on the second of March, while a number of his friends were kneeling around his bed. This was in the eighty-eighth year of his age, and the sixty-fifth of his public ministry. His death was such as we might reasonably expect such a life as he had spent would naturally produce—

“ The chamber where the good man meets his fate  
Is privileg'd beyond the common walk of virtuous life,  
Quite in the verge of heaven !”——

Various have been the attempts to delineate the character of the late Rev. John Wesley ; and these uniformly bear testimony to his patient industry, great zeal, and moral worth. That drawn by Mr. John Hampson, in his *Life of Mr. Wesley*, is perhaps the most just and impartial of any that has yet appeared. Most others are too much in the sickening style of fulsome panegyric ; and some few are found to have been too severe upon Mr. Wesley's foibles ; for foibles he certainly had, and those at times rather glaring ; but his excellencies outshone all his errors, and his name and character must continue to be

respected, while the human mind retains its inherent love of virtue and order.

He was honest, punctual, and regular; cheerful, warm, and generous; but credulous, ambitious, and enthusiastical. Some people have thought, that his character had something of cunning in it; and indeed his affair with the late Dr. Evans, which I mentioned in a former letter, seems to justify such an opinion: but it should be remembered, that he was placed in a very critical situation. His private principles might sometimes be at variance with the general good of his societies; and this latter consideration outweighed every other with him. In such cases, it is hard to withstand the temptations to pious fraud, and to the doing of evil that good may come. If, therefore, Mr. Wesley was at any time the slave of circumstances, or the dupe of others, great charity ought to be exercised towards him. Perhaps not another man then living could have been found, who would have acquitted himself with greater credit to his own character, and to the cause in which he was engaged, than did the Rev. John Wesley.

In controversy, he was sometimes dogmatical in a very great degree; and when he conceived any of his people in danger of being drawn aside from his communion, he would interpose his authority in a manner that bore the appearance of much self-confidence and authority. The

following *original letter*, furnished me by the gentleman to whom it was addressed, will exhibit a fair specimen of his manner on those occasions—

“ *To Mr. John Simpson, Yarmouth.*

“ *London, Nov. 28, 1774.*

“ My dear Brother,

“ Read over, with earnest humble prayer, Mr. Fletcher’s three Checks, and I think you will see things clearly. Or read the Farther Appeal, in the beginning of which those points are clearly stated. You ask, 1. Are any persons mentioned in the New Testament, as *seeking* faith, who have not *found* it? Certainly there are. *Seek and ye shall find.* They had not found it yet, and every man must *seek for the good pearl* before he can find it. But the word *seeker* you do not use. 2. Is any thing proposed to a convinced sinner in scripture, but to *believers only*? Yes. How readest thou? Cease from evil, learn to do well; or God will not give you faith. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; otherwise you are never likely to believe. 3. Ought every unbeliever to pray or communicate? Yes. Ask, and it (faith) shall be given you. And if you believe Christ died for guilty, helpless sinners, then eat that bread, and drink of that cup.

“The Philistines are upon thee, Sampson!— Beware the Lord do not depart from thee! I am afraid, in confidence of your own strength, you have been disputing with some subtle Antinomian, and he has confounded your intellects. Talk with him no more, at the peril of your soul, and beware of their pernicious books. You have been warned by me, now, escape for your life!

“I am your affectionate brother,

“JOHN WESLEY.”

I shall, in my next, lay before you a full and impartial view of the principal doctrines that are taught by the Methodists. In the mean time, believe me,

Yours sincerely.



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*LETTER XL.*

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*Of the Methodist Doctrines.*

DEAR MADAM,

I MUST now proceed to give you an account of the doctrines maintained by the Methodists; and lest I should be accused of partiality in the performance of this duty, I will state the opinions of this people in their own words.

In a pamphlet written by Mr. Wesley, entitled, "A further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," he has laid before the world a summary of his religious opinions. I shall, therefore, give such extracts from this book as are necessary to communicate the needful information on this subject.

"All I teach respects either the nature and condition of justification; the nature and con-

dition of salvation ; the nature of justifying and saving faith ; or the Author of faith and salvation.

“ First, The nature of justification. It sometimes means, our acquittal at the last day. But this is altogether out of the present question : that justification whereof our articles and homilies speak, meaning present forgiveness, pardon of sins, and consequently acceptance with God : who therein declares his righteousness or mercy, by or for the remission of the sins that are past, saying, I will be merciful to thy unrighteousness, and thine iniquities I will remember no more.

“ I believe the condition of this, is faith : I mean, not only, that without faith we cannot be justified ; but also, that as soon as any one has true faith, in that moment he is justified.

“ Good works follow this faith, but cannot go before it : much less can sanctification, which implies a continual course of good works, springing from holiness of heart. But it is allowed, that entire sanctification goes before our justification at the last day.

“ It is allowed also, that repentance and fruits meet for repentance, go before faith. Repentance absolutely must go before faith : fruits meet for it, if there be opportunity. By repentance, I mean, conviction of sin, producing real desires and sincere resolutions of amendment :

and by fruits meet for repentance, forgiving our brother, ceasing from evil, doing good, using the ordinances of God, and in general obeying him according to the measure of grace which we have received. But these I cannot as yet term good works; because they do not spring from faith and the love of God.

By salvation, I mean, not barely, according to the vulgar notion, deliverance from hell, or going to heaven; but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy, and truth. This implies all holy and heavenly tempers, and by consequence all holiness of conversation.

“Now, if by salvation we mean, a present salvation from sin, we cannot say, holiness is the condition of it. For it is the thing itself. Salvation, in this sense, and holiness, are synonymous terms. We must therefore say, We are saved by faith. Faith is the sole condition of this salvation. For without faith we cannot be thus saved. But whosoever believeth is saved already.

“Without faith we cannot be thus saved. For we cannot rightly serve God, unless we love him. And we cannot love him unless we know him; neither can we know God, unless by faith.

Therefore, salvation by faith is only, in other words, the love of God by the knowledge of God: or, the recovery of the image of God, by a true spiritual acquaintance with him.

“ Faith, in general, is a divine, supernatural  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\chi\omicron\varsigma$  (evidence or conviction) of things not seen, not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies not only a divine  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\chi\omicron\varsigma$ . That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, but a sure trust and confidence, that Christ died for *my* sins, that he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. And the moment a penitent sinner believes this, God pardons and absolves him.

“ And as soon as this pardon or justification is witnessed to him by the Holy Ghost, he is saved. He loves God and all mankind. He has the mind that was in Christ, and power to walk as he also walked. From that time (unless he make shipwreck of the faith) salvation gradually increases in his soul. For so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground—and it springeth up, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

“ The first sowing of this seed, I cannot conceive to be other than instantaneous; whether I consider experience, or the word of God, or the very nature of the thing. However, I contend not for a circumstance, but the substance; if

you can attain it another way, do. Only see that you do attain it; for if you fall short, you perish everlastingly.

“This beginning of that vast inward change, is usually termed The new birth. Baptism is the outward sign of this inward grace, which is supposed by our church to be given with and through that sign to all infants, and to those of riper years, if they repent and believe the gospel. But how extremely idle are the common disputes on this head! I tell a sinner, ‘You must be born again.’ ‘No, say you, he was born again in baptism. Therefore he cannot be born again now.’ Alas! what trifling is this! What if he was then a child of God? He is now manifestly a child of the devil. For the works of his father he doth. Therefore do not play upon words. He must go through an entire change of heart. In one not yet baptized, you yourself would call that change, the new birth. In him, call it what you will; but remember, meantime, that if either he or you die without it, your baptism will be so far from profiting you, that it will greatly increase your damnation.

“The author of faith and salvation is God alone. It is he that works in us both to will and to do. He is the sole giver of every good gift, and the sole author of every good work. There is no more of power than of merit in man; but as all merit is in the Son of God, in what he

has done and suffered for us, so all power is in the Spirit of God. And therefore every man, in order to believe unto salvation, must receive the Holy Ghost. This is essentially necessary to every Christian, not in order to his working miracles, but in order to faith, peace, joy, and love, the ordinary fruits of the Spirit.

“ Although no man on earth can explain the particular manner wherein the Spirit of God works on the soul, yet whosoever has these fruits cannot but know and feel that God has wrought them in his heart.

“ Sometimes he acts more particularly on the understanding, opening or enlightening it, (as the scripture speaks) and revealing, unveiling, discovering to us the deep things of God.

“ Sometimes he acts on the wills and affections of men; withdrawing them from evil, inclining them to good, inspiring (breathing, as it were) good thoughts into them: so it has frequently been expressed, by an easy, natural metaphor, strictly analogous to  $\pi\eta\eta$ ,  $\piνεϋμα$ , *spiritus*, and the words used in most modern tongues also, to denote the third person in the ever-blessed Trinity. But however it be expressed, it is certain, all true faith, and the whole work of salvation, every good thought, word and work, is altogether by the operation of the Spirit of God.

In order to be clearly and fully satisfied, what the doctrine of the church of England is (as it stands opposite to the doctrine of the Antinomians, on the one hand, and to that of justification by works on the other) I will simply set down what occurs on this head, either in her Liturgy, Articles or Homilies.

“Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults: Restore thou them that are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

“He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel.”

“Almighty God, who dost forgive the sins of them that are penitent, create and make in us new and contrite hearts; that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” *Collect for Ash-Wednesday.*

“Almighty God hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him.” *Communion Office.*

“Our Lord Jesus Christ hath left power to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him.” *Visitation of the Sick.*

“Give him unfeigned repentance and stedfast faith, that his sins may be blotted out.” *Ibid.*

“He is a merciful receiver of all true, penitent sinners, and is ready to pardon us, if we come unto him with faithful repentance.” *Commination Office.*

Infants indeed our church supposes to be justified in baptism, although they cannot then either believe or repent. But she expressly requires both repentance and faith, in those who come to be baptized when they are of riper years.

As earnestly therefore as our church inculcates justification by faith alone, she nevertheless supposes repentance to be previous to faith, and fruits meet for repentance: Yea, and universal holiness to be previous to final justification, as evidently appears from the following words:

“Let us beseech him, that the rest of our life may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy.” *Absolution.*

“May we seriously apply our hearts to that holy and heavenly wisdom here, which may in the end bring us to life everlasting.” *Visitation of the Sick.*

“Raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that at the last day we may be found acceptable in thy sight.” *Burial Office.*

“If we from henceforth walk in his ways, seeking always his glory, Christ will set us on his right hand.” *Commination Office.*



We come next to the articles of our church :  
The former part of the ninth runs thus :

*Of Original or Birth-Sin.*

“Original sin, is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness; and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit : And therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.”

*Art. X.—Of Free-Will.*

“The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.”

*Art. XI.—Of the Justification of Man.*

“We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works

or deservings. Wherefore that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the homily of justification."

I believe this article relates to the meritorious cause of justification, rather than to the condition of it. On this therefore I do not build any thing concerning it, but on those that follow.

Art. XII.—*Of Good Works.*

"Albeit that good works which are the fruits of faith and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins—yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith: Insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree may be known by the fruit."

We are taught here, 1. That good works in general, follow after justification. 2. That they spring out of a true and lively faith, that faith whereby we are justified: 3. That true, justifying faith may be as evidently known by them, as a tree discerned by the fruit.

Does it not follow, That the supposing any good work to go before justification, is full as absurd as the supposing an apple or any other fruit to grow before the tree?

But let us hear the church, speaking yet more plainly.

Art. XIII.—*Of Works done before Justification.*

“Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his spirit, (*i. e.* before justification, as the title expresses it) are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ—Yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not they have the nature of sin.”

Now, if all works done before justification, have the nature of sin, (both because they spring not of faith in Christ, and because they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done) what becomes of sanctification previous to justification? It is utterly excluded: Seeing whatever is previous to justification, is not good or holy, but evil and sinful.

Although therefore our church does frequently assert, That we ought to repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, if ever we would attain to that faith, whereby alone we are justified: Yet she never asserts (and here the hinge of the question turns) That these are good works, so long as they are previous to justification. Nay she expressly asserts the direct contrary, viz. ‘That they have all the nature of sin.’

Mr. Wesley next proceeds to shew what occurs in the Homilies on these subjects.

“ These things must go together in our justification ; upon God’s part, his great mercy and grace ; upon Christ’s part, the satisfaction of God’s justice ; and upon our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ.” *Homily on Salvation, Part I.*

“ So that the grace of God doth not shut out the justice (or righteousness) of God in our justification ; but only shutteth out the righteousness of man—as to deserving our justification.”

“ And therefore St. Paul declareth nothing on the behalf of man, concerning his justification, but only a true faith.”

“ And yet that faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, to be joined with faith (that is, afterwards ; see below) in every man that is justified—Neither doth faith shut out the righteousness of our good works, necessarily to be done afterwards. But it excluded them so, that we may not do them to this intent, to be made just (or, to be justified) by doing them.”

“ That we are justified by faith alone, is spoken, to take away clearly all merit of our works, and wholly to ascribe the merit and deserving of our justification unto Christ only.” *Ibid. Part II.*

“ The true meaning of this saying, We be justified by faith only, is this, We be justified by the merits of Christ only, and not of our own works.” *Ibid. Part III.*

“Thus far touching the meritorious cause of our justification : referred to me in the 11th article. The 12th and 13th are a summary of what now follows, with regard to the condition of it.

“Of (justifying) true faith, three things are specially to be noted, 1. That it bringeth forth good works. 2. That without it can no good work be done. 3. What good works it doth bring forth.” *Sermon on Faith, Part I.*

“Without faith can no good work be done, accepted and pleasant unto God. For as a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, saith our Saviour Christ, except it abide in the vine, so cannot you, except you abide in me. Faith giveth life to the soul; and they be as much dead to God that lack faith, as they be to the world, whose bodies lack souls. Without faith all that is done of us, is but dead before God. Even as a picture is but a dead representation of the thing itself, so be the works of all unfaithful (unbelieving) persons before God. They be but shadows of lively and good things, and not good things indeed. For true faith doth give life to the works, and without faith no work is good before God.” *Ibid. Part III.*

“We must set no good works before faith, nor think that before faith a man may do any good works. For such works are as the course

of an horse that runneth out of the way, which taketh great labour, but to no purpose." *Ibid.*

"Without faith we have no virtues, but only the shadows of them. All the life of them that lack the true faith is sin." *Ibid.*

"As men first have life, and after be nourished, so must our faith go before, and after be nourished with good works. And life may be without nourishment, but nourishment cannot be without life." *Homily of Works annexed to Faith, Pt. I.*

"I can shew a man, that by faith without works lived and came to heaven. But without faith never man had life. The thief on the cross only believed and the most merciful God justified him. Truth it is, if he had lived and not regarded faith and the works thereof, he should have lost his salvation again. But this I say, faith by itself saved him. But works by themselves never justified any man."

"Good works go not before, in him which shall afterwards be justified. But good works do follow after, when a man is first justified." *Homily on Fasting, Part I.*

From the whole tenor then of her liturgy, articles and homilies, the doctrine of the church of England appears to be this :

1. That no good work properly so called, can go before justification.
2. That no degree of true sanctification can be previous to it.

3. That as the meritorious cause of justification is, The life and death of Christ; so the condition of it, is faith. Faith alone; and

4. That both inward and outward holiness, are consequent on this faith, and are the ordinary stated condition of final justification.

And what more can those desire, who have hitherto opposed justification by faith alone, merely upon a principle of conscience; because they were zealous for holiness and good works? Do I not effectually secure these from contempt, at the same time that I defend the doctrine of the church? I not only allow, but vehemently contend, That none shall ever enter into glory, who is not holy on earth, as well in heart, as in all manner of conversation. I cry aloud, Let all that have believed, be careful to maintain good works: And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from all iniquity. I exhort even those who are conscious they do not believe, Cease to do evil, learn to do well: The kingdom of heaven is at hand; therefore repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

Many of those who are perhaps zealous of good works, think I have allowed too much.—Nay, my brethren, but how can we help allowing it, if we allow the Scriptures to be from God? For is it not written, and do not yourselves be-

lieve, Without holiness no man shall see the Lord? And how then, without fighting about words, can we deny, That holiness is a condition of final acceptance? And, as to the first acceptance for pardon, does not all experience as well as Scripture prove, That no man ever yet truly believed the Gospel, who did not first repent? That none was ever yet truly convinced of righteousness, who was not first convinced of sin? Repentance therefore in this sense, we cannot deny to be necessarily previous to faith. Is it not equally undeniable, That the running back into known, wilful sin, (suppose it were drunkenness or uncleanness) stifles that repentance or conviction? And can that repentance come to any good issue in his soul, who resolves not to forgive his brother? Or who obstinately refrains from what God convinces him is right, whether it be prayer or hearing his word?

And yet I allow this, That although both repentance and the fruits thereof are in some sense necessary before justification, yet neither the one nor the other is necessary in the same sense or in the same degree with faith. Not in the same degree. For in whatever moment a man believes (in a Christian sense of the word) he is justified, his sins are blotted out, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. But it is not



so, at whatever moment he repents, or brings forth any or all the fruits of repentance. Faith alone therefore justifies; which repentance alone does not; much less any outward work. And consequently, none of these are necessary to justification, in the same degree with faith.

Nor in the same sense. For none of these has so direct, immediate a relation to justification as faith. This is proximately necessary thereto; repentance, remotely, as it is necessary to the increase or continuance of faith. And even in this sense, these are only necessary, on supposition—if there be time and opportunity for them: For in many instances there is not: But God cuts short his work, and faith prevents the fruits of repentance. So that the general proposition is not overthrown, but clearly established by these concessions; and we conclude still, both on the authority of Scripture and the Church, That faith alone is the proximate condition of justification.”

You will observe, Madam, that in drawing up the foregoing formulary of the Methodist doctrines, Mr. Wesley's chief aim has been to prove, that the religious opinions of the Methodists are the same as those taught in the articles and homilies of the church of England. It is not my business to enter into the questions which

have been agitated among the Arminian or Wesleyan, and the Calvinistic, or Whitefieldian Methodists, respecting the true meaning of these articles.

There are some leading points in both their systems, which tend to bind them together in the same general interests. The doctrines of the Trinity, satisfaction to Divine Justice for the sins of men, by the sufferings of Christ, original or birth sin, sensible, and, generally speaking, instantaneous conversion, the necessity of supernatural influences to good works, justification by faith only, and the eternity of hell torments are points in which these two branches of Methodists agree. There are other sects of Methodists, agreeing with one or other of these in most points; but differing either as to baptism or the nature and order of church government.

The chief points in which the Wesleyan and Whitefieldian Methodists differ, are those respecting perfection, irresistible grace, the perseverance of the saints, imputed righteousness, and election and reprobation. The former believe that Christians may, nay, ought to attain a state of perfection before death; and that this may be attained in a moment, just as they received the forgiveness of their sins. This work they chiefly assign to the third person in the

Trinity, who is said to commence his cleansing operations in the soul, the same moment in which he *speaks peace to the soul* by the absolution of the sinner from all his past sins ; and that he, the Holy Ghost, silently and gradually, sometimes almost imperceptibly ; but at other times, as it were irresistibly, proceeds to work upon the remains of inbred sin, till in a moment the old man with his deeds is wholly put off, the soul is purged from every stain, and the saint stands up, complete in the whole armour of God, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing ! This state of perfection needs never be lost ; and, indeed, it seems morally impossible it ever should, because nothing but sin, we may suppose, could rob the believer of so precious a gift, and he being freed from sin ; the world the flesh and the devil having no more dominion over him ; having in fact lost “the power of sinning,” it does not appear how any perfect Christian can ever become imperfect or any way in the least sinful. It is, however, a lamentable truth, that the perfect Methodist is as liable to sin as the imperfect one ; which abundance of facts have long proved. Nor could I ever perceive any moral difference in these two characters, though I have had the honour of being intimately acquainted with many of the perfectionists. In fact, except in the bare profession

of the parties, a state of mere justification, and the highest attainments of sanctification are no wise morally different, at least to an ordinary beholder. I knew a good woman, who declared to me, that she had never said, thought, or acted any thing contrary to the pure will of God for the space of two-and-twenty years; except once, when she, through the violence of sudden temptation, just tasted a little wine, which she had been desired to purchase for a sick neighbour! And I know a man, who is so constantly filled with the love of God, and has such constant communion with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit, that the bare mention of the Holy Ghost will bring tears of joy into his eyes, check the powers of utterance, and sometimes throw him on the ground in the most devout ecstasies!

The Calvinistic Methodists do not believe in the doctrine of perfection; but as they admit that of divine influence, they also are sometimes lost in devout and holy raptures.

The doctrines of irresistible grace and of the final perseverance of the saints are not held by the Wesleyans; but are strenuously contended for by the Calvinists.

The Wesleyans reject the Calvinistic doctrine of imputed righteousness, and admit that of imputed faith, in lieu of it.

But the grand point of difference is that respecting predestination; which the Wesleyan Methodists reject, but which the Whitefieldians admit, and contend for on all occasions.

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XLI.*

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*Of Bibliomancy.—Scripture-Cards.—Women-  
Preaching—Street and Field Singing.*

DEAR MADAM,

HAVING detailed the rise, progress, and doctrines of the Wesleyan Methodists, I must now proceed to give you some information concerning certain religious practices which obtain among this people, but which are not publicly acknowledged as forming any part of the economy of Methodism. These are Bibliomancy, or the practice of determining the present or future state of the soul by accidental opening upon texts of Scripture—religious card playing—female preaching and exhorting—and street and field singing.

In the *Encyclopædia Perthensis*, it is observed, “the Methodists have long practised **Bibliomancy**, with regard to the future state of

their souls; but that some of their members having been driven to despair, by texts occurring to them, that threatened the most awful judgments, their late pastor, Mr. Wesley, to prevent such fatal consequences from recurring, improved upon the system of *sacred lottery*, by printing several packs of cards with a variety of texts, containing nothing but the most comfortable promises: and thus his disciples drew with courage and comfort, in a lottery where there were various *prizes*, great and small, but no *blanks*." This statement is not, I believe, exactly correct.

The manner in which Bibliomancy is practised among the Methodists is as follows: At a religious gossiping, when the tea-board is removed, the subjects of pious scandal are nearly exhausted, and religious chit-chat grows languid, it is not unusual, after *a word of prayer*, to introduce the Bible, as a kind of auxiliary, to the fading energy of evangelical conversation, as well as to secure obedience to the sacred command, to have all their words "mixt with grace." The company being placed in proper order, one of them takes the Bible, and asks the next person near her, (for this practice is mostly prevalent among the sisterhood) which text she will fix upon as the object of her present choice. It is answered by naming some particular number, and applying it to the

corresponding text on either the right or left page of the book, whichever the party may think proper to adopt. The Bible is then opened, with great solemnity, and every heart is engaged for the success of the enterprise. The all-important verse is then read aloud, which is immediately followed by such ejaculations of prayer or praise as the text chosen may happen to suggest! This ceremony is performed for the benefit of every individual in succession, who chooses to risk her peace of mind on the event of so solemn a lottery.

This practice is also very frequently resorted to in private; when a person is perplexed concerning the state of his mind, or before some important undertaking. I remember, on the day of my *conversion*, which was the 18th of June, 1796, being extremely distressed on a religious account, and living a few miles distant from the place where a class-meeting was held, I was induced to run, as if life and salvation depended thereon, through much rain, to the meeting, all in my undress, because I had *opened* upon that passage where our Lord tells his disciples, that they knew the truth, and that the truth should make them free. Had the meeting been at five times the distance; and had my good mother, who opposed, or wished to moderate, my youthful zeal, been much more averse to my going than she was, nothing could have stopt me, so fully was I persuaded, that that very



night, and at that very meeting, I should be set free from the pains of the new-birth, and be born again of the spirit of truth! I could enumerate several instances of the like nature, yea, where the most important concerns have depended on the accidental choice of a passage of scripture.

The practice of choosing texts naturally introduced that of choosing stanzas out of the hymn-book for the same pious purposes. Mr. C. Wesley's scripture hymns are often used on those occasions. It is known among some of the Methodists, that a preacher, now living, was indebted to the choice of a verse for a very amiable and rich wife. The case was this: Mr. R. a travelling preacher, having recently lost his wife, was one day employed with a lady or two, in *choosing verses*. "And pray, sister R.," said he, "what verse do you make choice of?" A certain number was given, and the text proved to be "Where thou lodgest there will I lodge, &c.!" The hint was good, and a visit to the shrine of Hymen was the happy consequence! It would be well if all the *prizes* in these sacred lotteries were equally valuable. The lady, who was a most excellent wife, and a sincere Christian, died a few years ago; but her worthy survivor is now too old to venture his fortune again in so precarious a manner.

The practice of religious card playing is now seldom used among the Methodists; and I believe the *scripture cards* are *out of print*; a few copies are, nevertheless, still extant; and are sometimes resorted to in a manner similar to that of text and stanza choosing.

These cards are very small ones, with a text of scripture printed on one side, and the same, in a poetical paraphrase, on the other. I have seen several *packs* of these "religious trifles," and have often witnessed their use and effects with no small degree of pain.

Mr. Adam Clarke, in his Letter to a Methodist Preacher, from which I made some extracts in a former letter, gives his brethren the following excellent advice. "Wherever you go," says he, "discountenance that disgraceful custom (properly enough termed) Bibliomancy; *i. e.* divination by the Bible. I need scarcely observe, that this consists in what is called dipping into the Bible, taking passages of scripture at hazard, and drawing indications thence concerning the present and future state of the soul. This is a scandal to Christianity. So also are those religious trifles, impiously and ominously called *scripture cards*. Thank God! these have never been very common among us; and are certainly not of Methodist growth. In an evil hour they were first introduced; and have since

been criminally tolerated. I have found them the constant companions of religious *gossips*; and have seen them *drawn* for the purpose of shewing the success of journies, enterprises, &c. Very great mischief they have done to my own knowledge; and sensible persons have through them been led to despise the whole of that system from which they never sprung, on which they have never been engrafted, and in which they have never been more than barely tolerated. Giving the authors of them all the credit we can for the goodness of their intention, we cannot help saying of their productions, (and this is giving them the very best character they deserve) that they are the drivellings of religious *nonage*, or of piety in *superannuation*. I do not find, that Mr. Wesley ever made, used, or approved, of these things; but as they were tolerated in his time, they have been attributed to himself."

He then proceeds to observe, concerning what the editors of the Encyclopædia Perthen-sis have said about the practice of Bibliomancy and the scripture cards, "I am sorry that there should have ever been the least shadow of ground for the above calumny: but let these gentlemen know, and let all men by these presents know, that the great body of Methodists never used them! that the preachers in general highly disapprove of them; and that what is said about

Mr. Wesley's fabricating them, &c. is, to use a lilliputian expression, *the thing that is not*. I am glad to find that they are daily *dying* among the few that did use them: I hope soon to hear that they are all finally *buried*, and earnestly pray that they may never have a RESURRECTION, except to shame and everlasting contempt."

This is very judicious counsel; and the prayer with which it concludes is wise and good: I wish all the Methodists may attend to it.

It has been thought by some, that the Methodists allow female preaching: this is not the case, if we must consider that practice as allowable by any *express rule of Conference*.—The practice has nevertheless been tolerated, and in some cases sanctioned even by Mr. Wesley himself, as the following letter, addressed to Miss Bosanquet, the present Mrs. Fletcher, of Madeley, will fully shew:—

“ Londonderry, June 13, 1771.

“ My dear Sister,

“ I think the strength of the cause rests there, in your having *an extraordinary call*: So I am persuaded has every one of our lay-preachers: otherwise, I could not countenance their preaching at all. It is plain to me that the whole work of God termed Methodism, is an extraordinary

dispensation of his providence. Therefore I do not wonder if several things occur therein which do not fall under ordinary rules of discipline. St. Paul's ordinary rule was, 'I do not permit a woman to speak in the congregation;' yet in extraordinary cases, he made a few exceptions, at Corinth in particular.

"I am,

"My dear Sister,

"Your affectionate brother,

"JOHN WESLEY."

What practice may not be allowed under the notion of having "an extraordinary call?"

At the Dublin conference, in the year 1802, a debate took place on the propriety of women preaching and exhorting in public congregations; which ended by making the following rule: "It is the judgment of the conference, that it is contrary both to scripture and prudence, that women should preach, or should exhort in public; and we direct the superintendants to refuse a society-ticket to any woman in the Methodist connexion, who preaches or who exhorts in any public congregation, unless she entirely ceases from so doing." I am informed that this motion was carried by a very small majority. In the English conference, no such

rule has yet been made. I have often heard Miss Mary Barret, now, if I mistake not, Mrs. Taft, preach, both in the pulpit and the open air, to immense crowds of hearers. If one might judge of Miss Barret's *call* by the success of her labours, it was very *extraordinary* indeed! She made numerous proselytes; but, as I remember, in Macclesfield and in Manchester, several of them soon began to *backslide*. She had a wonderful knack at inflaming the passions; but was *extraordinarily* defective in the art of informing the judgment. I took the substance of several of her sermons in short-hand; and they are very curious specimens of pulpit-eloquence, I assure you.

Though the practice of women preaching is not very common, particularly in the present day, yet that of female exhortation is frequent enough; and there are great numbers of women regularly appointed to be leaders of classes. The women pray in public as frequently as the men, and no censure is attached to the practice. Indeed the sisterhood are generally remarkably *gifted* in prayer. The warmth of feeling, the quickness of wit, and the extraordinary volubility of tongue, with which many ladies are possessed, render them peculiarly fitted for the public exercises of prayer and praise at a Methodist meeting. For my own part, I see no solid reason

why our fair country women should not be allowed to exercise their *gifts* as well as the men.

Why boast, O arrogant, imperious man,  
 Perfections so exclusive! Are thy powers  
 Nearer approaching to the Deity? Canst thou solve  
 Questions which high infinity propounds,  
 Soar nobler flights, or dare immortal deeds,  
 Unknown to woman, if she greatly dare  
 To use the powers assign'd her? Active strength,  
 The boast of animals, is clearly thine:  
 By this upheld, thou think'st the lesson rare  
 That female virtue teaches, poor the height  
 Which female wit obtains. The theme unfolds  
 Its ample maze, for Montague befriends  
 The puzzl'd thought, and blazing in the eye  
 Of bolden'd opposition, straight presents  
 The soul's best energies, her keenest powers,  
 Clear, vigorous, and enlightened.

MRS. ANN YEARSLEY.

Of the practice of street and field singing I shall say but little; because it is not very common among the Methodists, except at funerals. It is sometimes the custom, when a party of young people have been at a country love-feast, to return in a body, with some one at their head, giving out lines of several hymns, which they all sing, to the wonder of passing strangers, and to the sorrow of the sober and modest part of their own community. I have often heard

them pass my window, at very late hours, sublimely chanting—

Ye virgin souls arise,  
 With all the dead awake !  
 Unto salvation wise,  
 Oil in your vessels take :  
 Upstarting at the midnight cry,  
 Behold the heavenly Bridegroom nigh !

I am, &c.



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*LETTER XLII.*

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*Controversies with the Calvinists, &c.—Circular  
Letter.*

DEAR MADAM,

IN a work of this nature, it would seem improper not to notice some of the controversies in which Mr. Wesley and his friends were so long engaged. These were of various kinds, and with opponents of various sentiments and abilities. Indeed there is hardly any topic of theological controversy, in which, at one time or other, Mr. Wesley was not engaged. Arians, Calvinists, Antinomians, Papists, Swedenborgians, Moravians, and Moralists, all have felt the stroke of his pen; while under his auspices the *odium theologicum* has increased and multiplied with astonishing rapidity. Hardly yet is the wide champaign cleared of the dead and the

dying, who have fallen in those polemic battles. Their wounds yet smoke: though the fight is nearly over, the cries of the victorious, and the groans of the vanquished, are still heard in the camp.

It must be acknowledged, that Mr. John Wesley was the first that drew the ungracious sword of controversy between the Calvinists and himself; and it must also be owned that, by the aid of his commander in chief, Mr. Fletcher, he has come off complete conqueror.

Passing by the many flying skirmishes which took place between these angry religionists, I will give you some account of the war when the first pitched battle was agreed upon. This was about the year 1771, and was occasioned by certain strong expressions, and anti-calvinistic sentiments, contained in the minutes of the conference which was held the year before at Bristol.

The following extract will exhibit the most objectionable passages—

“ We said in 1744, ‘ We have leaned too much towards Calvinism.’ Wherein ?

“ 1. With regard to man’s faithfulness. Our Lord himself taught us to use the expression, and therefore we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert upon his authority, that if a man is not faithful in the un-

righteous mammon, God will not give him the true riches.

“ 2. With regard to working for life, which our Lord expressly commands us to do, ‘ Labour, ἐργαζέσθε, that is, work for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.’ And in fact, every believer, till he comes to glory, works for, as well as from, life.

“ 3. We have received it as a maxim, That a man is to do nothing in order to justification. Nothing can be more false. Whosoever desires to find favour with God, should cease from evil, and learn to do well. So God himself teaches by the prophet Isaiah. Whosoever repents, should do works meet for repentance. And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?”

“ As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: we are rewarded according to our works, yea, because of our works. How does this differ from, For the sake of our works? And how differs this from *secundum merita operum*? Which is no more than, as our works deserve. Let him that can, split the hair.”

To the above minutes the following remonstrances against Calvinism have since been added, which tend still more to widen the breach.

*Against Antinomianism.*

“ Q. What is most destructive of Methodism, or the doctrine of inward holiness ?

“ A. Calvinism, that is, the doctrine of unconditional predestination. All the devices of Satan, have done far less towards stopping this work of God, than that single doctrine. It strikes at the root of salvation from sin, previous to glory ; it puts the matter quite upon another footing. This doctrine seems to magnify Christ ; although in reality it supposes him to have died in vain. For the absolutely elect, must have been saved without him, and the non-elect cannot be saved by him. It is highly pleasing to flesh and blood ; unconditional perseverance in particular.

“ Let all our preachers carefully read over Mr. Wesley’s and Mr. Fletcher’s tracts.

“ Let them frequently and explicitly preach the whole truth, though not in a controversial way. Let them take care to do it in love and gentleness.

“ Lay hold upon any that you find newly convinced of the truth, and warn them against predestination. Answer all their objections as occasion offers, both in public and in private. But do this with all possible sweetness both of

look and accent. Frequently warn our people against hearing that doctrine. And pray much, that the Lord may prevent the evil."

The minutes I first quoted produced the following circular printed letter from Lady Huntingdon's chaplain, which was addressed to all *gospel ministers*, both episcopal and dissenting, i. e. to those who hold the doctrines of Calvin—

" Sir,

" Whereas Mr. Wesley's conference is to be held at Bristol, on Tuesday the 6th August next, it is proposed by Lady Huntingdon, and many other Christian friends (real Protestants) to have a meeting at Bristol, at the same time, of such principal persons, both clergy and laity, who disapprove of the underwritten minutes; and as the same are thought injurious to the very fundamental principles of Christianity, it is further proposed, that they go in a body to the said conference, and insist upon a formal recantation of the said minutes; and in case of a refusal, that they sign and publish their protest against them. Your presence, Sir, on this occasion, is particularly requested: but if it should not suit your convenience to be there, it is desired that you will transmit your sentiments on the subject to such person as you think proper to produce them. It is submitted to you, whether it would not be right, in the opposition to

be made to such a dreadful heresy, to recommend it to as many of your Christian friends, as well of the dissenters, as of the established church, as you can prevail on to be there, the cause being of so public a nature. I am,

“ Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ WALTER SHIRLEY.”

“ P. S. Your answer is desired, directed to the Countess of Huntingdon, or the Rev. Mr. Shirley, or John Lloyd, Esq. in Bath; or Mr. James Ireland, merchant, Bristol; or to Thomas Powis, Esq. at Berwick, near Shrewsbury; or to Richard Hill, Esq. at Hawkstone, near Whitchurch, Shropshire. Lodgings will be provided. Enquire at Mr. Ireland's, Bristol.”

It was now that Mr. Fletcher appeared in defence of his brethren the Methodists. What he wrote upon that subject, is contained in seven volumes duodecimo. He certainly put to flight the antagonists, for which their survivors will never, I believe, cordially forgive him. It is a fact, that a certain Calvinist, being asked if he had read *The Checks*, replied, “ No; nor do I intend to read them; for were I to do so, I should turn Arminian; a thing I am fully determined never to do while I live!”

Of the other controversies in which the Wesleyans have been engaged, it is not necessary to dilate. They bear a very small proportion of magnitude or importance to the one I have just been mentioning. Yet it would be deemed an unpardonable omission to pass unobserved the famous circular letter which Mr. Wesley addressed to the *Gospel Ministers* of the church of England; in which he proposed to them a plan of union and co-operation with himself, in the great work of making proselytes to Methodism.

The substance of this circular letter was, that all those ministers of the church of England, who held the doctrines of original sin, justification by faith, and holiness of heart and life, should cordially unite in one common cause to convert the world. They were to do this, by removing all hindrances from themselves, by not judging, hating, despising, slandering, nor devouring, each other. They should, on the contrary, *think, speak, and act* towards each other as brethren. Of between thirty and forty of these ministers to whom the letter was addressed, only three of them deigned to give him an answer. So the matter ended; but not until some unpleasant altercations had taken place.

I am, &c.

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**LETTER XLIII.**

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*Finances—Population*

DEAR MADAM,

YOU will readily conceive that a concern of so much magnitude as that of the Methodist connexion cannot be carried on without the aid of that great engine of power—the *primum mobile* of almost every important undertaking—MONEY. I will, therefore, in this letter, present you with such a statement of the Methodist finances as will, I flatter myself, give you every necessary information on the subject.

The public and private collections among the Methodists are numerous, and are made on a variety of pretences. The following I believe to be a pretty correct list of them:

Weekly class-money, at one penny each member, will produce about £29,218 per annum, in Great Britain and Ireland.—Monthly collection for the poor of the society; say at two-pence each member, will produce about £14,609



per ann. ; but this last collection is not now universally levied.—Quarterly collection for tickets: the rule is to pay one shilling each member: I estimate the average at six-pence only; thereby making ample allowance for the printing of the tickets, and also for deficiencies arising from non-payments, &c. This will produce about £13,457 per annum.—Love-feast money, at one penny each member, will produce about £2,242 per annum.—This money, in some places, is partly expended in the purchase of bread: the overplus is given to the poor.—Sacrament-money: As the sacrament is not allowed to be administered at all the Methodist chapels, no estimate can be made of the sum collected on those occasions. There are, however, but few large towns where the sacrament is not administered among the Methodists.—The yearly collection: the last year (1806) this collection amounted to £3,263 16s. 9d.—Kingswood school collection, the same year, amounted to £3,699 11s. 3d.—The Methodist preachers' merciful fund, from which provision is made for superannuated preachers, and preachers' widows, the last year produced £1,922 7s. 6d.—Money cleared by the book-room: This, I believe, amounts to about £2000 per annum.—Seat-money, or pew-rent: this source of finance, you will readily conceive, must be exceedingly prolific. It is impossible, however, I should make

an exact estimate of the sums so collected : There are in all nine hundred and forty chapels, every one of which is generally well filled with hearers : should suppose that the money collected for pew-rent cannot be less, per annum, than £26,914. In addition to the above collections, are to be reckoned sundry extraordinary collections, such as Missionary—Sunday-school—Collections for distressed chapels—and other contingent collections, producing very considerable sums annually.

Upwards of £1948, says Mr. Hubbert, was collected last year in aid of the patriotic fund, independent of the large sums which many respectable individuals subscribed. In the year 1798, when such large sums were collected for Government by voluntary subscription, in Hull alone, at the vestry of the Methodist chapel, no less a sum than £940 was subscribed at one time !

It appears from the above estimate, that the total amount of the several sums of money, annually collected from the members of the Methodist societies, in Great Britain and Ireland, is upwards of £97,285. I have said nothing of the voluntary donations of many wealthy gentlemen, who are friendly to the Methodists, and who regularly contribute to the funds of the society : I leave the money so collected to make up for deficiencies, should there be any, in the several collections above stated.

It has been often said, that the Methodists are much drained of their money to support their preachers; and if we only look at the foregoing list of collections, we shall be led to suppose it is indeed the case. I will now present you with an account of the number of their preachers, and of the people from whom the money is collected; and you will then be able to judge how far a Methodist preacher is likely to become rich by his profession.

There are at present about five hundred travelling preachers in the connexion, who have sixteen pounds, clear money, per annum. Their wives have the same; with six pounds for a servant, and, I believe, the same, per head, for every child; with an allowance for their education, if they do not go to Kingswood school. The expenses of housekeeping, &c. are defrayed by the respective circuits.

The state of the connexion, as to numbers, according to the minutes of the last conference, held at Leeds, August, 1806, is as follows:

In Great Britain	. . . . .	110,803
In Ireland	. . . . .	23,773
Gibraltar	. . . . .	40
Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland		1418
West India whites	1775 } . . . . .	14,940
Coloured people, &c.	13165 }	
United States—whites	95628 } . . . . .	119,944
Coloured people, &c.	24316 }	
Total	. . . . .	<hr/> 270,918

“Of these,” Mr. Hulbert observes, “upwards of 109,000 are found in England and Wales, to which we may add 109,000 more, who are thorough Methodists in sentiment, equally as upright in their conduct, and as constant at their places of worship, but from some modest motive or other, have not yet ventured to have their names enrolled on the class papers.

“To these we may further add, the younger branches of families, and those who are only generally influenced by their doctrines, fond of their preaching, and considerably reformed in life, making about 218,000 more, forming in the whole, nearly half a million of souls, or one twentieth part of the population of the kingdom and principality.”

If to all these we add the numbers of Methodists who are separated from the old connexion on some difference respecting the administration of the sacraments, or the mode of church government, the Wesleyan Methodists will make a very large body indeed. By the minutes of the last conference (May, 1807) of ministers and delegates of what is called the new connexion, it appears their number was six thousand four hundred and twenty-eight. I believe we may safely calculate on as many more, in various parts, who are separated in point of discipline, but who all agree in doctrines. By this it will appear, that the effective force, re-

gular and volunteer, of the Methodists, is about seven hundred thousand strong! Saying nothing of their allies, of various descriptions, both in the church, and among the *evangelical* dissenters, who all belong, more or less, to the same body, or compose what has been called, I hope improperly, "the combined armies against the Church of England."

I am, &c.

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*LETTER XLIV.*

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*Divisions—Conclusion.*

DEAR MADAM,

I SHALL conclude my series of Letters with giving you some information relative to one or two divisions which have taken place in the Wesleyan connexion of Methodists, since the death of its founder.

There have been, from time to time, numerous partial separations from the Methodists, concerning the administration of the sacraments, service in church-hours, &c. but the most formidable divisions have been those relative to the nature and exercise of religious liberty, and to the forms of church government. Disputes on these subjects have produced the Methodist new itinerancy, and also the society of Revival Methodists.

It has been observed, that there does not exist a denomination of Christians but what at one time or other has been guilty of persecution; the Quakers alone excepted: but since the recent transactions relative to Hannah Barnard, Mr. Rathbone, and others, have transpired, even this sect is shorn of its glory; and on its character also must now be written the humiliating word—*ICHABOD!* A more glaring instance of persecution is, perhaps, not to be found in the annals of modern sectarian bigotry, than that relating to the trial and expulsion of the late Mr. Alexander Kilham from the Methodist connexion. If ever man suffered for righteousness' sake, he most assuredly did, and that too from his own brethren; yea, even from many who had pledged themselves, in the most solemn manner, to stand by and support him. It appears from copious extracts of more than twenty letters, addressed to Mr. Kilham, from those very persons who afterwards signed his expulsion, that he was made the dupe of cunning and designing men. Those extracts are to be found in Messrs. Thom and Grundel's *Life of Kilham*. They exhibit a farrago of abuse and satire against many of the most eminent men among the Methodists, which one might have supposed would have ended either in their voluntary resignation, or their excommunication from the society of Methodists.

Even Mr. Myles, who insinuates that Mr. Kilham died by the particular judgment of Heaven, himself acknowledges, that he was a *sincere*, though a *mistaken* and *troublesome* man. The great sacrifices he made, for the cause in which he was embarked, give indubitable proof of his *sincerity*; his various publications, compared with the weak and puerile answers of the old Methodists, afford demonstrative evidence that he was not very much *mistaken* on the subjects he took in hand; while the effects which his inquiries have produced on the minds and conduct of his enemies, shew him to have been troublesome to those only, whose quiet it would have been criminal in him to have studied.

The division which took place on Mr. Kilham's expulsion from the society of Methodists, is of a magnitude and importance sufficient to entitle it to particular notice in this work.

The friends of the new Methodist connexion say, that the cause of the division was a few leading preachers having obtained such a power over the people and the junior preachers, as to keep them in the greatest subordination; and that this is effected by forming their conference, which they have attempted to support by the civil power, and by a legal claim over all the chapels in the kingdom. The exercise of this power they say is necessary to the support of the itinerant plan; but it is at length fully



discovered, to be only a pretence to introduce an episcopal government, by establishing a few with certain privileges, either given to them from their own body, or perhaps obtained by force or by fraud, as other freebooters have obtained their power, and establish themselves as ghostly rulers over their brethren, whom they mean to govern by a code of laws of the most singular nature, and which the preachers shew, by their silence on the subject, to be entirely indefensible.

The people, say they, have always joined with the preachers in a determination to maintain itinerancy; and had the preachers pursued those steps that reason and common prudence would have dictated unto them; had they plainly adhered to their profession of having *no other view* in establishing their conference, but to preserve itinerancy, no division would have taken place.

But at the time of Mr. Wesley's death, a period to which the attention of the societies had been long directed, expecting then to have a liberal form of government established, they found themselves quite neglected; they saw themselves left out in all the new regulations that were made, and they were treated with the greatest contempt.

The conference now began to shew plainly the end at which they had been aiming; they

endeavoured to establish themselves into a hierarchy, or priestly corporation, totally excluding the people from among them, and endeavoured to have all their acts, which were to be registered in a *Statute Book*, provided and kept for that purpose, supported and acknowledged by the government of this country. It now began to be fully discovered, that though to preserve the itinerant plan had been the original and ostensible reason for establishing the conference, there were other latent motives in the breasts of the leading preachers, that began to be developed. This was no less than to form themselves into the most arbitrary, and despotic system of government that human ingenuity could possibly invent. This first appeared in the forming district meetings, that were held by the preachers in many of the principal towns in the kingdom. These, like the Jewish *sanctum sanctorum*, were only open to the high priests; the local or stated preachers were entirely rejected. These meetings were in all respects so conducted as to cast the greatest insult on the people; the rejection of whom, and the secrecy observed by the members of these meetings, were facts that shewed very plainly the intention of the preachers as to their future government:—During Mr. Wesley's life, he frequently admitted his select friends into the conference; but that which followed his decease was fully closed to every

individual, but the travelling preachers. None of the people have, since that period, been permitted to enter those hallowed walls, except indeed on some occasions as errand-boys; and their business being dispatched, they were expected to retire with due obedience. So that no persons but the preachers have ever been present, either to advise on important business, to inspect accounts of large sums of money collected from them, or even to behold it with their eyes. For the preachers, amongst many other pretensions equally strange, claim the privilege of disposing of various contributions to a considerable amount, without giving any account to the societies. A preacher at Nottingham, having received contributions from the societies, refused to give any account of it to the people, saying he was accountable only to God and the conference for his conduct: had he denied giving account to the conference also, this circumstance would not have been mentioned, as it would have been only the conduct of an imprudent individual, and no general conclusion would arise from it. But this honest man spake at once the truth, and acted quite consistently with the laws of Methodism: he had not, it seems, been initiated into the art of *managing* the people; he at least acted openly and fairly, as all men, but particularly Christian ministers, ought to do.

Moreover, the conference at some of their meetings, but particularly at those of their committees, require from the members of them promises of secrecy; a circumstance highly disgraceful to them, and, as might naturally be expected, draws on them the suspicions and censures of all men acquainted with these singular transactions.

Thus the societies soon began to perceive they had been completely out-witted by the preachers. When the conference made this declaration, "The trustees (of the various chapels) may have the fullest assurance that the conference loves them, and has not the shadow of a desire to oppress them;" it was received by the people with that blushing indignation that a man feels when he discovers his prudence has been asleep till he has fallen into the snare, and becomes the dupe of others.

The societies now found that the preachers were attempting to form the most detestable priestly oligarchy that could be invented. Their eyes began to open; they saw the situation their credulity had brought them into, and that the preachers had completely juggled them out of every shadow of liberty.

For six years the societies remonstrated with the conference, and requested at different times an alteration in its laws and form of go-

vernment, which they thought highly oppressive; but all was to no purpose: and they were at length fully convinced that the conference would never make any of those alterations in favour of the people, that they thought so reasonable and necessary: and the various refusals they had received irritated them, as might naturally be expected, and stirred them up to opposition. In August, 1797, the conference was held at Leeds, and a number of delegates from societies in various parts of the kingdom assembled, to make another application to have their government placed on a liberal footing. They demanded of the conference that delegates should be suffered to meet with them, and this request was positively refused. After this the delegates requested that they might be permitted to assemble by themselves, and give their sanction or disapprobation to any important business that might be debated by the conference: this was not only refused, but the delegates were informed also, that they should not have the privilege of meeting with the preachers in the district meetings. These various refusals of these most reasonable requests of the societies, brought matters to a conclusion: a division immediately took place; many societies rejected the preachers sent to them by the conference, and a new conference and itinerancy was established on liberal and scriptural principles.

These people conclude with the following solemn declaration:—

“ Be it known to all the world, that we have not separated on account of any difference of opinion as to doctrines; nor is it an affectation of singularity, love of change, nor want of regard to the preachers of the old connexion, many of whom we highly esteem, that determined us to proceed in supporting the rights and liberties of the people; and therefore, every suggestion of that kind is entirely groundless. No: it was a conviction, arising from scripture evidence, and the constant practice of the primitive church, which, from the apostolic age to the time of Constantine, looked upon all the members of Christ as one, and always acknowledged their unquestionable right to the choice of their own officers, the formation of their own laws, and the distribution of their own property.”

Mr. Alexander Kilham, the chief actor in this business, on the side of the people, was expelled the connexion, at the London conference, in the year 1796!

You will observe, Madam, that the principal grounds of complaint among the people were that the preachers had too much power; and that they exercised that power in divers ways; particularly in refusing the ordinances to many of the societies. Numerous pamphlets were written for and against the administration of the

Lord's supper and of Baptism by the hands of the preachers; and surely they disclose, when put together, such a spirit of rancour and hatred as the religious world have seldom seen! The parties abused each other without shame and without mercy. The Sacramentarians were accused of an attempt to undermine the original foundation of Methodism, and to shake off their allegiance to the church. They were represented as the whigs—the innovators—the levelers of Methodism. The cry of *The old Plan!* was raised, sent forth, and reverberated, not indeed “from Siam to California,” but from the Land's End to the Tweed—from the Thames to the Severn! while the votaries of liberty and the rights of conscience were heard to exclaim, “Who art thou, O great mountain! before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain!” After the fight had been kept up, with great heat, for some time; and the connexion began to be threatened with very alarming consequences, a “Plan of Pacification” was concluded on, *by ballot*, in which the leading preachers made some concessions, but still retained, in effect, all their original power; demanding the “consent of conference,” before any important alteration could take place.

Mr. Kilham saw through the dust that was attempted to be thrown into the eyes of the people; and being of an undaunted and enter-

prising spirit, he did all in his power to represent the matter in a clear and distinct point of view. In short, Madam, he publicly exposed, not only the errors of the Methodist government, and the domineering spirit of some of the preachers; but he also unfolded many scenes of baseness and hypocrisy in the ruling preachers. He published a book, called *The Progress of Liberty among the People called Methodists*, in which he exposed the defects of the "Old Plan," and proposed a form of church government on a broad and liberal basis. This brought upon him denunciations of vengeance and revenge from the offended party. They branded him as a heretic, a leveller, a jacobin, a rebel—they likened him to the devil—they consigned him to hell—they made some feeble efforts to raise the secular power against him and his adherents—and they finally expelled him the connexion!

He was tried at the London conference, on charges, the most childish and frivolous imaginary, picked and culled from his pamphlets with all possible diligence. They even refused to give him a list of the charges they meant to exhibit against him, until he was summoned to the bar of conference, to give extemporary answers to such questions as the very persons he had accused should think proper to put to him!



“The accusations,” says he, “that were culled, with all possible diligence from my pamphlets, were, ‘that I had complained of want of abilities for the ministry in some of the preachers.’”

“That ‘the preachers tyrannised over their brethren in the societies, and restrained them in those liberties and privileges, that as a Christian church they ought to expect.’”

“That ‘many preachers had been taken out to travel against the consent of the societies, and that they were improper for the work, and that some of these were great weights to the societies.’”

“That ‘the examination of the preachers’ characters, under the particular circumstances in which they stood when at the conferences, taking into consideration that the preachers were the accusers of each other, at a remote distance from the place where they had laboured; that it was a mock examination, and made sensible people laugh at us.’”

“That I had affirmed, ‘there was great waste and want of economy in managing the public money, and a criminal secrecy in their accounts,’ and many other affairs of importance.

“These and many other charges of the same kind were brought against me; to all which I answered particularly, as related at large in the account I have published of my trial. During

my trial and the debates it occasioned, an important one took place, which was, 'Whether the conference was trying me or I was trying them?' Notwithstanding the reason I had to be dejected, I could not help smiling at it, which was imputed to levity, and want of respect.—Some of the preachers said I was trying them; but Dr. Coke and some others said they were trying me; but at length they came to the determination, 'that unless I would retract what I had said, or at least make certain concessions; that they would expel me;' but, as I refused these conditions, they proceeded to pronounce sentence on me, which the president did with all the gloom and gravity of an inquisitor. To make my expulsion secure, it was not only confirmed by every preacher standing up and giving his consent to the transaction, but every one of them was required to sign a paper, signifying the *justness* and *uprightness* of the transaction. The paper was taken to the communion table, and laid on the place where the memorials of the body and blood of Christ are laid, when the solemn ordinance of the Lord's supper is administered; and Mr. Bradburn (I cannot mention this tragical story without weeping), who had formerly professed himself a friend to liberty and to the rights of the people—Mr. Bradburn, I say, stood by the rails of the communion table, like the governor of the inquisition, to see that

none omitted signing. Here we find one hundred and fifty preachers of the gospel of Christ confirming the sentence of condemnation, in a way unheard of in the records of Methodism, if not in the records of ecclesiastical history, and stands as a sufficient proof that the leading men in that process, supposed that what I had written (to enlighten and save the people from the evils that they groan under) was worse than any crime that had ever been examined in any former conference.

“ The same day they lost no time in preparing a circular letter to be sent through the kingdom, giving an account of my expulsion, and among other things, affirming I had not supported any of my charges that I had published against them. How far I have done this, all who take the trouble to read the trial at large will be capable of judging. But if I had not discharged myself with that adroitness, so as to preclude all reflections of that nature, it is not much to be wondered at, when my situation is fully considered. I was without any friend to support me, singly opposed to one hundred and fifty persons, all my judges and accusers, and every one of them racking their ingenuity to embarrass or entrap me in any thing I said ; and I may add, they were so disorderly, that they were frequently five or six speaking at one time. When I was called to the bar of the conference, I had

not the least knowledge of the charges that were to be brought against me; when these were read I was required to answer immediately, without a single advocate; I was expected to give extemporary answers to the questions that were put to me, and was refused the liberty to examine them alone, and prepare for my defence. Can it be supposed that in such a situation I could make the best of my cause, and defend myself to advantage?"

It has always been my practice, in my accounts of disputable points, to give, as far as possible, both sides of the question: it shall be the case in this instance also. I, therefore, here present you with the substance of what Mr. Myles, in his History of the Methodists, has said relative to this subject.

"The Plan of Pacification had satisfied all the moderate people, who only desired scriptural and rational liberty. But there was a party who were not satisfied with this, but remained still contentious. A young man [thirty-four years of age!] named Alexander Kilham, (who had been admitted upon trial as a preacher, in the year 1785) became the champion of this party, and occasioned great uneasiness by various pamphlets which he published. He had not only unhappily imbibed the levelling doctrines which were common in that day, but had even strangely applied them to religion, and the order of the church of

Christ. He insisted that the people were held in gross bondage. That they ought to rise up and deliver themselves, and assume that power which of right belonged to them. That the preachers were merely their servants, and ought to be obedient to their will: and every thing contrary to this wild unscriptural theory he termed popery and priestcraft! He also traduced the character of the preachers in the vilest manner. The party whose cause he espoused supported and abetted him by every means in their power, so that the societies in several places were rent in pieces in the dispute. When the conference assembled, he was *unanimously* expelled the connexion. The minutes of the trial were published, and every preacher signed his name to a paper, testifying his approbation of the sentence. (This was the only instance of that kind.) He afterwards used all his influence from the pulpits of the dissenters to which he had access, and also from the press, to bring the [preachers into disrepute,] not only with the Methodists, but with the nation at large. But he failed of his object; and on December 20, 1798, while employed in his revolutionary schemes, he was called into eternity, at Nottingham, after a few days illness, occasioned by a bone sticking in his throat!"

The disaffected party being irritated by the expulsion of their partizan, Mr. Kilham, and

having no hope of being permitted to rule in the connexion (through the old pretence of vindicating the rights of the people), they laboured incessantly to bring about a division: and they determined that it should be as considerable as calumny, and the popular cry of liberty, could make it. Among other things, they asserted, in various publications, that the preachers were really divided in sentiment, and that a considerable number were of Mr. Kilham's judgment, only they wanted his courage to declare it."

A declaration of allegiance to the conference (held at Leeds, July 31, 1797), was drawn up, which was signed by all the preachers present, except Messrs. Thom and Eversfield: a third, Mr. Cummin, signified his dissent by letter.—“They,” says Mr. Myles, “joined Alexander Kilham, and made a schism, under the name of *The New Itinerancy*.”

The division which the conduct of the preachers towards Mr. Kilham occasioned, consisted of about five thousand members. They are now increased to more than six thousand. Five hundred new members were added the last year. They have nineteen circuits; thirty travelling or circuit preachers; and, I suppose, about sixty local preachers. They have lately purchased the large and elegant meeting-house, called Gibraltar chapel, in Church-street, leading to Bethnal-green; where there is an extensive public

burial-ground. The Rev. W. Brown, is the stationed minister there at present.

I would gladly have enlarged on the circumstances connected with this division; but it is time I should hasten towards a conclusion; besides, that I have been unsuccessful in endeavouring to procure several documents necessary to form a complete account of the Methodist New Itinerancy.

The Revival Methodists form a numerous body of the Wesleyan Christians. They are not, however, all of them formally separated from the old connexion; though they have, in many towns, separate places for religious worship.

The Revivalists are those Methodists who are more particularly partial to noisy meetings.— They claim, as a Christian privilege, a right to indulge their propensities to prayer and praise, at all times, and on all occasions. This liberty they will take during the time the minister is engaged in preaching; and indeed at any other time they think themselves called upon by the motions of the Spirit of God. They are a simple, harmless, and well-meaning body; but enthusiastical and ungovernable to an extraordinary degree. In Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Stockport, Preston, and Macclesfield, they are very numerous. At the last-mentioned place, they have lately erected a neat chapel, having been long separated from their brethren of the old

connexion. They have published their Rules, in a small pamphlet, entitled, “General Rules of a Society of Christian Revivalists, at Macclesfield, with a Preface, containing a Declaration of Doctrines.” The mottoes to this pamphlet are as follow—

“Let us walk by the same RULE.”—“We may truly pronounce those churches happy, however plain and poor, in which

‘No simony nor sinecure is known,

Where works the bee—no honey for the drone.’

“In the primitive church, profession of faith in Christ, accredited by a holy life, was accounted a sufficient title to membership.”

ROBINSON'S CLAUDE.

These mottoes will give you some idea of the *spirit* of the pamphlet to which they are prefixed.

I must now conclude my Portraiture of Methodism. I hope, Madam, you have found, in my series of epistles, all the information you wished to obtain, respecting the origin and history of the Wesleyan Methodists. I am not sensible of having omitted any point of sufficient importance to merit your attention; and I close my labours on the subject, with the tranquil consciousness of having used my best endeavours to gratify your curiosity; and to add something to the general stock of useful information.

I am, &c.



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## ERRATA.

Preface, page iv. line 19, after against, read †.
Page 31, line 10, for forward, read formed.
59, 14, can, cannot.
398, 14, case, era.
419, 4, dele Inscriptions.









