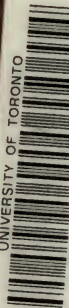


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LIFE
OF
JAMES DIXON. D.D.
R. W. DIXON. M.A.

John L. Scott
Canada, Nov 3, 1874

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THE LIFE OF JAMES DIXON, D.D.





Yours most aff.
James Dixon

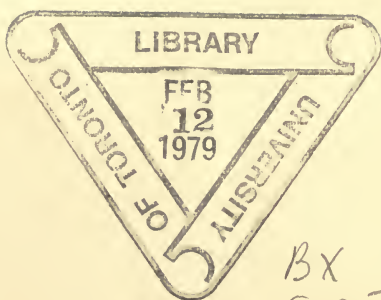
THE LIFE
OF
JAMES DIXON, D.D.,
WESLEYAN MINISTER.

WRITTEN BY HIS SON,
RICHARD WATSON DIXON, M.A.,

*Assistant Minor Canon in Carlisle Cathedral Church, and Librarian of the Cathedral
Library.*

Published for the Author at the
WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE,
2, CASTLE STREET, CITY ROAD;
SOLD AT 66, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1874.



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P R E F A C E .

THE following volume is somewhat late in appearing: and yet for some of the imperfections to be found in it the Author may allege the plea of haste. His engagements prevented him for six months after the death of Dr. Dixon from undertaking it: and when he was more at leisure, it was thought by friends that the work should be put into the hands of some member of the religious community to which Dr. Dixon belonged. In this the Author fully concurred; and the work was offered to a gentleman, who, however, after some months, gave satisfactory reasons for being unable to undertake it. It then devolved upon the Author, by whom it was executed with all despatch in the first months of the present year: but a further unavoidable delay was caused through communications with the "Wesleyan Conference Office," by whom it was thought most appropriate that it should be published, whilst the writer should be left wholly responsible for its contents.

Facility for the publication of the volume has been afforded by the "Conference Office" in the most frank and generous spirit; the circumstances have been acknowledged peculiar; and free scope has been given to the writer for exhibiting the opinions of his Father, and expressing his own. He has necessarily looked upon Methodism from his own standpoint—that of the Church of England, to which he belongs: but it is his hope not to have been found wanting in respect and admiration for that great religious system, with which he is connected by the ties of filial and hereditary obligation. His thanks are especially due to the Rev. Dr. Jobson, and other Wesleyan ministers who have shown personal interest in his work; and also to the numerous correspondents who have assisted him in executing it.

The Portrait at the beginning of the volume is of Dr. Dixon in middle life, when he was President of the Conference. It is from an oil painting by William Gush, Esq.

The Portrait in the volume represents him at an earlier age. It is from an oil painting by the celebrated John Jackson, R.A., which was left unfinished through the death of the painter.

The Wood Engraving at the end is from a

drawing, made by Miss Thomson, of the bust which was executed by Mr. J. Adams Acton, and is now in the Wesleyan Theological Institution, Didsbury.

The Headpiece of the first chapter, showing the birthplace of Dr. Dixon, is from the pencil of the Rev. Dr. Jobson.

CARLISLE, 1873.



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BIRTHPLACE OF DR. DIXON.

CHAPTER I.

1788—1812.

Birth and Parentage—Early Life and Anecdotes—Conversion—Becomes a Methodist Local Preacher—Early Letters—Is accepted for the Itinerant Ministry.

TO attempt the biography of such a man as the late Dr. Dixon is no easy task in itself; and the difficulty is greater to one who has had throughout life the most familiar and affectionate intercourse with him, than it would be to one bound to him by the ties of mere ordinary friendship, and knowing him chiefly in his public capacity. The former must be aware of the existence of many qualities which would escape the observation of the latter, and may be impelled to form an estimate of

the whole character which, though in reality correct, may seem exaggerated to many. The writer cannot but feel that he is attempting to deal with one in comparison with whom his own powers are but feeble, and whose career, most honourable and complete in itself, implied the possession of qualities which would, under different circumstances, have made a great national reputation. He is, however, encouraged to undertake a difficult and delicate task, relying upon facts, which will be disputed by no one acquainted with the subject,—that for about thirty years Dr. Dixon filled a foremost place in the public eye of a great community; that the greatness of his ministerial gifts, and the beauty of his personal character, never failed to impress all who approached him; that he was regarded with a respect and love, which, as age and infirmity increased upon him, arose to veneration; and that his memory is cherished in every part of the country by thousands. It is the aim of the writer simply to exhibit, so far as he can, the character and career which deserved and gained so much esteem.

JAMES DIXON was born at the hamlet of King's Mills, about two miles distant from the little market town of Castle Donington, in Leicestershire, on the 29th of October, 1788, of a respectable family. His maternal ancestors were named Drake, and for more than a hundred and fifty years rented a paper mill on the banks of the river Trent, being tenants of the Hastings family. Several generations of the

Drakes are buried in the church of Castle Donington. A tradition exists that the maternal great-grandfather of James Dixon was a bold Jacobite, and was the man who ferried the Pretender across the Trent.

His father, John Dixon, was a native of Castle Donington: a man of somewhat reckless character; and it was thought that his mother, Hannah Drake, had not done well in her marriage with him.

The mental character of the son was derived less from the father than the mother, who was remarkable for decision, good sense, and honest simplicity. This lady lived to the venerable age of eighty-seven, in the same secluded spot in which she was born. To her son she was bound by every tie of natural affection and community of disposition. To her and to the changeless home of his youth, where she remained so long, he continually turned amid the many changes of his life: that was the resting-place of his heart. In religious profession she was, like the rest of her family, a Methodist of the old school, uniting the religious services of the body to which she belonged with those of the Church of England. She was accustomed to go with her children to the Methodist chapel at six o'clock on Sunday morning, and afterwards to proceed to the church of Castle Donington.

James was the second son of a family of five brothers and two sisters. In his boyhood he went to school at Castle Donington in the summer months, but never after he was ten years of age.

He was then set to work in the mill, of which his uncles were the owners. He had to be at work by four in the morning; and retained through life a remembrance of the weariness which this caused him in tender childhood. He has often said that he was a politician by the time he was ten years old. He had acquired the faculty of reading, which was not very common among the villagers; and when the rare newspaper arrived, with the report of the stirring events of those days, he was often set up as the oracle of a group of eager workmen. From the first he was remarkable for taciturnity, independence, and love of freedom.

No more characteristic piece of English scenery can be found anywhere than the beautiful hamlet in which his youth was spent. The silver Trent winds down to it, and is parted into a mill-stream, which supplies the several mills from which the village has its name. Along one side of this mill-stream lie the few houses which compose the hamlet—neat white cottages, most of them. A little bridge passes over the stream, and across this the way leads to the river itself, where there is a ford and a ferry. On the farther side of the river are rich meadow-lands, in which the mushroom grows plentifully; and amidst these winds a bye-road, which joins the main road from Derby. From these fields the view of the village is most beautiful. On one side, somewhat detached from the rest of the village, stands the mill which was so long the property of the Drakes, and after them of the

Dixons. This mill is a somewhat striking object. It was originally designed for a church, and is built in the Gothic style, with buttresses and arched windows.* The woods of Donington Park, the seat of the Hastings, rise behind it in a solemn, shadowy mass; and in the midst of them is visible a little harbour, celebrated thereabout as the place where Thomas Moore wrote a great part of "Lalla Rookh." The Trent ripples in front, coming down from the west with many a silver turn, and is poured over a weir above the mill. Far away is sometimes seen the boat of the fisher, dipping an infrequent oar, and seeming poised between the water and the sky.

From the other end of the village a deep lane leads past the park lodge on to the little town of Castle Donington, two miles distant. This lane is over-arched by the birches, larches, and willows which lean toward one another on the top of its steep banks. When evening falls it becomes totally dark, and has the reputation of being haunted. Its banks are covered with trailing plants, and redolent of the peculiar scent of the wild strawberry.

The description must be pardoned of the native home of one whose life was destined to become one long wandering in the service of the Methodist Itinerant Ministry. By such as he the place in which their early years are passed is regarded with a fondness which can scarcely be conceived by men of more ordinary fate. And if the writer may be

* This mill was the subject of a large landscape exhibited in the Royal Academy, in 1864.

permitted for a moment to speak of himself, he would say that to him, in common with those of his kindred, who shared from infancy their father's wanderings, this beautiful village is also a home—for they know no other.

Doubtless the scenes in which his youth was passed aided to develop in James Dixon the stable and loyal character for which he was afterwards remarkable. The village is so secluded, and his opportunities were so few, that for years he seldom got more than a few miles from home. Almost the only communication with the outer world was the mail coach which passed through Castle Donington every day. The arrival of this coach was the great event of the little town, the inhabitants of which gathered together to witness it. We may be sure that James Dixon was often over from the Mills, eager to learn something of the great events, of which every day, at that time, brought the tidings. Besides this there were the heavy-laden waggons which came to the Mills from Derby. As these splashed through the ford of the river, they must have been hailed as messengers from the world outside. But the village continued to be his home; and the genial and yeoman-like associations with which he was surrounded fed his spirit. There was the park, with its boundless glades, its glorious oaks, its wild cattle and deer, over which he was free to wander at will. There was the level green, in front of the great hall, where he might play at cricket with his companions; and there was the hall itself, into

which he was at times heartily welcomed. There was the river, in which he might angle all day long. The remembrance of these scenes fostered in him the love of the old and kindly ways of England.

Of all who have ever been born in that obscure place none but he has attained a destiny in any way memorable. Yet the little place has been sending forth, generation after generation, its small rill of human life to join the great river which is ever losing itself in the unknown ocean.

James Dixon grew up remarkably strong and active. He was rather above the middle height, and most powerfully and firmly built. In his early youth he was fond of "soldiering, and singing songs, and fighting," according to the testimony of one correspondent. Once, when he had been singing very loudly, to the great annoyance of his aunt, she scolded him so severely that he resolved to run away and enlist for a soldier. When all were in bed he stole out, and made the best of his way to Burton-on-Trent, which he reached next morning. As soon as he was missed, his father, knowing his propensities, started off to Burton after him. The soldiers had taken out their horses for an airing, and James Dixon was loitering about, waiting for their return, when his father found him, and brought him back. In general, however, he was extremely shy and reserved, and fond of solitude. His surviving brother, John, remembers that he was always very resolute, and never shunned "fisticuffs." A young man, named James B——, who also became a well-

known Methodist preacher, came to work at a neighbouring mill, and "on one occasion he and James Dixon had a long fight, and James Dixon won." As an instance of his great bodily strength, it is related that he could hang a twenty-eight pounds weight on his thumb, and with his arm at full length write his name in chalk on a door. He joined the volunteer force which was formed throughout the country in 1806, at the time of Bonaparte's expected invasion: and for four years—1809-1812—he served in the local militia. The test of strength among the men was holding out the heavy Brown Bess at arm's length by the end of the muzzle. It is said that he was the only man in his company who could do this. To a late period in life he was remarkable for a sort of robust adroitness in all his actions.

His shy and hesitating manner concealed a most impassioned disposition. He was subject to an intense melancholy, which urged him to seek to be alone, conscious that none could either understand or share it. At times he was also tossed by terrible storms of anger, often seeming to be excited by some very trivial cause. In some of his letters he has alluded to the darkness and distress of mind which he endured for some years in youth, adding that he did not then know that sin was the cause of his misery. The expression must be understood in a strictly religious sense, for few persons have been more free from vice at all times. He never fell into the follies which degrade the youth of many; a

deep modesty and delicacy of mind kept him above every gross form of evil, and it may be safely affirmed that a more virtuous, chaste, and temperate youth never lived. All that he could charge himself with were those fits of passion, which arose mainly from his inborn melancholy. This melancholy was no doubt in part the emotion of a powerful mind gradually becoming conscious of its powers, feeling the disadvantages of its narrow surroundings, and seeking for an outlet. Ere long that which he sought for was supplied by religion.

In those days the great Methodist movement was still in its glorious prime. It was the greatest religious movement that ever took place among the people of England; and it is only by bearing in mind its essentially popular character that it can be rightly understood. The separations from the Church of England; which took place in the seventeenth century, all had their origin in differences of opinion among the ministers of religion. The people were not interested in them in the first instance; they were personal differences,—the question in dispute being usually church government. They became political, involving questions of civil and religious liberty, and thus it was that they gave rise to powerful organisations. But the origin of Methodism was widely different. It grew up from the resolution of certain clergymen of the Established Church to break through the routine of the parochial system, which they saw to be wholly inadequate to the wants of the population. It arose

out of no quarrel with the doctrines or discipline of the Church, or with the form of government established in the Church. It alleged no puritanical scruples, and asked for no revision of formularies. The object of Methodism was to make the Church more useful to the nation, and Methodism was faithful to its origin. It awoke the slumbering Church. It supplied religious enlightenment to the dark masses of the towns: it quickened into life the inhabitants of the secluded villages, whose morality was generally at the lowest ebb. In all cases it appealed directly to the people: its mission was to bring to them the Word of God. The travelling preacher was in innumerable instances the only messenger of salvation from whom the people could gain any impression of the realities of religion. At first he came as the willing ally, and indeed servant, of the Established Church. When the folly of the rulers of the Church rendered this no longer possible, he came as belonging to a separate organization. Still he came, and with him came the Word of Life. To this great movement, setting in at the beginning of the unexampled rise of the population, may be attributed no small share of the present Christianity of the country.

Methodism was brought into the family of Mr. Dixon by his maternal grandmother, Mrs. Drake, who happened to become possessed of the Journal of the famous itinerant preacher, John Nelson; and soon afterwards, hearing that John Nelson himself was to preach in one of the neighbouring villages,

determined to hear him. The word of Divine truth reached her heart: she joined the Methodist Society, and remained in it to the end of her life. She appears to have been anxious for her grandson, perceiving no doubt the mental struggles in which he was involved, which at times rose to a pitiable height. Seeing his love of reading, she put books in his way which she thought might be useful to him. He read them without comment; but they tended to deepen the religious impression which was forming in his mind. He became acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity, as exhibited in the writings of the *Evangelicals*. He received them as the truth, and at first they produced in him an almost inconceivable dejection, dismay, and horror. Few minds as powerful have ever passed through so terrible an ordeal. At times all was desolate submission; at times all was fierce, despairing revolt against what he read, and believed to be the decree of God concerning man. To this part of his history he very seldom alluded in after life.

At length these clouds were broken, and he was converted to God. The present writer feels it right to touch as lightly as may be on these spiritual mysteries, and to tell what happened briefly, and as far as possible in the words which he used who passed through this great spiritual crisis, on the few occasions on which he referred to it. The event happened on Whitsun-Day, 1807, when, in company with some other young people, he went to the Methodist chapel in Castle Donington.

The preacher was the Rev. John Denton : of whom Mr. Dixon said in a letter written some years after, "Under his preaching my dark eyes were first enlightened." In another letter, written nearly at the end of life, he said, "I often think, as I sit in this chair, of my early days, of the sovereign call of God on Whitsun-Day, 1807, the sense of pardon He gave me by His blessed Spirit, and the ecstatic happiness I enjoyed." After leaving the chapel he knelt down alone by the side of a hedge, in a place known as Studbrook Hollow, in the road between Donington and the Mills, and there, as if spoken by an audible voice, he heard the words, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Years afterwards he recognised and pointed out the memorable spot. Yet it was not until about a year after this that he joined the Methodist Society, on the 12th of April, 1808. His final determination was expressed to his mother in the words, "If I am to be a Methodist, I *will* be a Methodist." Certainly Methodism never gained a more faithful adherent. In a speech made nearly at the end of his life, he characteristically said, "Fifty-nine years since to-day I joined the Methodist Society. I read the rules, felt that I approved of them, and kneeling down, asked God to help me to keep them : then at night I went to the class of Joseph Twells."

Of the supernatural character of the change thus wrought in him by the grace of God Mr. Dixon never entertained the slightest doubt. It was a

true conversion : and very memorable and striking in the circumstances which attended it—the awful previous misery and distress, which had lasted for years, causing a deep melancholy, interspersed with flashes of reckless merriment : the sudden enlightenment and ecstatic joy. Few are called to pass through such a trial as this : and to the soul which has passed through such a trial religion can never henceforth be a secondary matter. Of him it may be said that religion became from that time the sum and substance of his being. The door was opened, and he saw his way. His mental development, which from this point began to be rapid, proceeded in the one direction which had been so strikingly set before him. A harmonising power was introduced into the chaos of vague aspirations in the midst of which he was tossed. He could now read systematically, having a principle by which to try all things—the profound sentiment of the living power of God, with whom he had been brought, as it were, face to face. This was in truth “the sovereign call of God.”

One cannot but admire also the deliberate temper which continued to make trial of itself so long after all this, before making the public profession of religion. It was well : for, as is often the case when a door has been really opened, there were several little hindrances raised, even on the part of good men, which in so sensitive a nature might easily have undone all.

Mr. John Dixon well remembers the studious habits of his brother at this time. “Paper-making

began at four o'clock in the morning, and at eight o'clock twenty minutes were allowed for breakfast. Short as the time was, James always made a practice, after his conversion, of going upstairs for prayer: and the same at dinner-time, when they had half an hour allowed them."

It was about this time that, on some occasion or other, he exclaimed, in the hearing of one now very old, who has never forgotten it, "Whether I live in glory, or die in infamy, I know that the change wrought in me was the work of the Holy Ghost."

It was not before the lapse of more than a year after joining the Methodist Society that he made his first attempt at preaching as a local preacher. This took place at Weston, a small village in the Derby Circuit, about a mile from King's Mills, towards the end of the year 1809. His perturbation was so great that he left the road and went through the fields a mile past the chapel before he dared enter it. His text was, "He brought me up also out of the horrible pit." (Ps. xl. 2.) Mr. Morley of Kegworth, his earliest surviving friend, who was drafted with him in the local militia the same year, says in an interesting communication: "Very shortly after that I heard him myself at Kingston, a small village in the Donington Circuit: his text was, 'The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit.' (Is. li. 14.) I was greatly surprised at the matured manner in which he handled the subject and delivered the sermon; the matter original, and the style easy

and natural." Mr. Morley adds that "the Rev. Marshall Claxton, who succeeded Mr. Denton as the superintendent of the Circuit in 1808, took a great interest in Mr. Dixon, and seemed to have formed some idea of his future character. I remember him once saying to me, when in his company at Kegworth, 'James Dixon will make a shining preacher some day.'" Mr. Morley, however, remembered another occasion on which Mr. Dixon broke down utterly in preaching.

There lies before the writer a manuscript volume of more than a hundred pages, entitled, "Skeletons as collected from different preachers for my own private use: James Dixon, September 27, 1810." It contains twenty-four sermons pretty fully reported, most of them preached by Dr. Taft and Mr. Edmondson, two well-known early Methodist preachers. With the latter of these Mr. Dixon formed a close friendship, and always expressed himself as greatly indebted to him for encouragement, advice, and direction in reading. This manuscript volume is interesting, as a proof of the pains Mr. Dixon took in training himself for his career. It also contains a few sketches entitled, "Outlines of sermons of my own composing." Like the innumerable skeletons of later years, which he has left behind, these are the merest outlines—bare divisions and leading thoughts. They are eight in number, and only occupy ten pages. But they represent sermons which no doubt were preached, and they serve to show how from the first the power

of extemporaneous speaking, in which he afterwards came to excel so greatly, was cultivated by him.

But there are more interesting monuments of this early period in the form of two letters written to Mr. Morley of Kegworth, mentioned before as his early friend and comrade in the militia; who was now become his fellow local preacher and bandmate in the Methodist Society. This venerable man still survives, living in the place where he has always lived, still in vigorous health at the extreme verge of life. He is said to bear a personal resemblance to his friend. The mental tie between them, at any rate, was very strong. The intimacy of youth was succeeded by an unbroken friendship, the memorials of which will be given in their due order. He was the first confidant of the religious aspirations which were agitating the heart of his friend.

The following letter from Mr. Dixon refers partly to his friend having become a local preacher:—

“ KING’S MILLS, *July*, 1810.

“ DEAR BROTHER,—

“ I trust your disappointment of meeting me yesterday at Castle Donington was amply made up by meeting with and receiving from the Lord the blessings which He alone could dispense. I do assure you I went to Thorphead with the strongest expectation of meeting you there, and the disappointment, added to the information I received, that you were gone over to Donington, gave me no small grief. But the cause of the whole appears to

be a mistake in the date of your letter. You have dated it the 1st instant, and say you shall be at Castle Donington the following Sunday, which would have been the Love Feast. Had this not been the case, assure yourself no prospect of pleasure whatever would have induced me to have gone from home yesterday. But although I had not the pleasure of a personal interview with you, it gives me no small satisfaction to hear of your present comfortable situation. You inform me that you feel resolved to persevere, and that the world cannot afford any satisfaction. This resolution, my dear brother, I trust you and I shall be able to keep. For they that endure to the end, and they only, shall be saved. Oh, let nothing retard us in our spiritual progress; though various and powerful are our enemies, yet let us remember that they that are for us far exceed those that are for them. 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation?' Let us then (seeing we have such encouragement from the Lord) go up to possess the good land, the spiritual Canaan, for we are well able. Let us contend for all the mind that was in Christ, who made Himself of no reputation. Oh, what a humiliating lesson is here for us proud mortals! Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time. He resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. But it is said that He is ascended on high to receive gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also. Let us, my brother, pray and

believe for the greatest of these gifts, which is love, that perfect love which casteth out all fear that has torment. If we are seeking for anything in preference to this love we are out of our way, our desire does not run in a right channel. This you will see fully amplified in the First of Corinthians and the thirteenth chapter. Leaving, therefore, the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection. And a perfect faith and perfect obedience can only be productive of this perfection: and for this I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would grant us according to the riches of His glory to strengthen us with the power of His Spirit in our inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may comprehend with all saints the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with the fulness of God. But by this time you may, perhaps, wish to know something of my present experience. I bless the name of the Lord, I trust I am growing up into Christ, my Living Head in all things. I feel, indeed, that my returns have been very inadequate to my obligations, for I owe all things to the Blessed Jesus, and while I am keeping any part of my little all from Him I am not doing what I ought to do! But I can give all into His hands, and say, 'Thy will be done.' Now, my dear friend, I must leave you. It is time for me to be

going my old accustomed road to life and happiness.

“I am your unworthy brother in the bonds of the Gospel,
“ J. DIXON.”

In the broken and imperfect expressions of this early letter, it is impossible not to perceive high enthusiasm and the utmost sincerity, along with the tenderest friendship. Friendship, never so tender and impulsive as in youth, is here seen sanctified by the possession of common hopes and feelings, which were unshared by the little world around, and unintelligible to them. The one friend is chosen, in whom all can be confided, by whom all will be understood. The loneliness of noble youth is the beginning of the first great friendship, when the character is unfolding itself, eagerly catching at whatever seems congenial, and unconsciously turning away from other things.

The following letter to the same is not less characteristic :—

“ KING’S MILLS, *Nov. 19th, 1810.*

“ DEAR BROTHER,—

“I received your invitation to accompany you to Mount Sorrel late on Friday morning, therefore had no time to inform you that I could not conveniently go till the present time; the reason of my confinement is that my father has been lame, and I have been under the necessity of supplying his situation, and have been much hindered, espe-

cially in my private duties. But I bless God, the prospect is now changing for the better, and I hope soon to be in possession of my former privileges, and to perform my duties therein with greater delight and ardour than ever. I bless the name of the Lord, dear brother, that I still find my soul loves Him as its supreme good, and delights itself in His service. I have long given up all thought or hope of being happy in the possession of any other good than that which is derived from a close union with the Saviour. Oh for that union which the Gospel holds to our view ! (See John xvii.) But while I give praise to God for His faithfulness, I would not be understood to speak of my own. I have bitterly often to lament sin : my hardness, my ignorance, my self-will, my proneness to pride, to wandering thoughts, and a number of other obvious evils so closely interwoven with our corrupt nature. I hope it is better with my dear friend, and that your soul is making daily progression towards the state of perfection so often commanded and promised. Let us contend with all our might for the glorious prize set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, with redoubled fortitude and courage. Let us fight against all the foes of this Captain of our Salvation ; and first it will be essential that we conquer those that remain in ourselves, and then all around us. Oh, that this may be the case with thee and me ! I expected to have seen you at this place before this time, and am sorry to have to remind you of your promise, and hope you

intend to fulfil it very soon. I propose next Saturday, and beg you will gratify me in coming at that time. Inform me of your resolution, and I will, if spared, meet you at Kegworth as soon in the evening as I can. Give my love to Mr. and Mrs. Peck, and any other of my acquaintance. I now conclude, dear brother, with praying that the love of God, which has been the mainspring of our friendship, may increase in us both; so shall we love each other with an ardour that death never can dissolve.

“J. DIXON.”

This beautiful effusion breathes the spirit of the saints. In the high-toned fervour of love which it manifests, it even reminds one of the exhortations of Xavier. In truth, we may see in it the birth, the first powerful utterance of a great religious man. It proves that the indispensable requisites of a great career have been gained—a settled conviction, and an absorbing devotion; and henceforth his course lay open before him.

After two years spent as a local preacher, during which he of course continued to work at his business as a paper-maker, Mr. Dixon presented himself as a candidate for the regular ministry. He was proposed by the Rev. William Holmes, then Superintendent of the Castle Donington Circuit, at the Quarterly Meeting, held at Hathern, in March, 1812, but at first it seemed doubtful whether he would be accepted. “The proposition,” says Mr. Morley,

“met with considerable opposition from some of the local preachers, who complained that his style was rough and uncultivated, and hardly up to the mark for the ministry; but Mr. Holmes had such confidence in him that he told the meeting if they rejected him, he (Mr. Holmes) would write to the President of the Conference about him. The meeting afterwards passed him. After this Mr. Dixon and I left the meeting, and went away together, and he felt very much at the rebuff which he had received.”

Before he entered on his work, however, as a minister of religion, he had to appear before the Quarter Sessions at Derby, take the oaths, and obtain a license to preach, in accordance with the Act of Toleration. This license, which he carefully preserved, is here given at length, as there may be few such documents now left. If he had been licensed a few years earlier he would have had to appear before the bishop of the diocese, instead of the Court of Quarter Sessions: an arrangement which he himself would have certainly preferred.

“Derbyshire to wit: At the General Quarter Sessions of our Sovereign Lord the King for the County of Derby in and for the said county on Tuesday the first week of the Feast of the Epiphany to wit the fourteenth day of January in the fifty-second year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Third by the grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland King Defender of the Faith and

in the Year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twelve before John Balguy Esquire (Chairman) and other Justices of our said Lord the King assigned to keep the peace in the said county and also to hear and determine divers felonies trespasses and other misdemeanors in the said county committed.

“At this Sessions James Dixon took and subscribed the oaths of Allegiance Supremacy and Abjuration and subscribed the Declaration against Popery mentioned in an Act of Parliament passed in the thirtieth year of the reign of the late King Charles the Second And also the Declaration mentioned in an Act of Parliament passed in the nineteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Third for the relief of Protestant Dissenting Ministers and Schoolmasters. By the Court, A. S. Maynard Clerk of the Peace.”

The “Declaration” referred to was that he was a Christian and a Protestant; that he believed the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, “as commonly received among Protestant Churches,” to “contain the revealed Will of God”; and that he received the same “as the Rule of his Doctrine and Practice.” On these terms he was allowed to become a candidate for what the Act called “pretended Holy Orders”; the assumption of the framers of that Act being, it is to be supposed, that there were no other real Holy Orders, or no other professed spiritual persons, than bishops, priests, and deacons,—an assumption (to say no more) contrary to the genuine

antiquity of the English Church, unwarranted by her formularies, and tending dangerously to narrow her comprehension. For the rest, the Declaration will be observed to be carefully liberal; and it was signed with all his heart by James Dixon. It was a substitute for the signing of the Thirty-Nine Articles, required by a former Act, which had been scrupled at by many Dissenters. Mr. Dixon would have signed the Articles with alacrity, for he always regarded them as the most admirable compendium of divinity in the world: but he was struck with the expressions "pretended Holy Orders" and "pretending to Holy Orders." The present writer has heard him more than once advert to them.

The first circuit to which he was appointed was Hereford, a place far enough, and different enough, from the village of his youth. In quitting the scenes of the early life of a remarkable man, the writer is not at liberty to withhold the few last particulars, which have been supplied by several correspondents.

His friend, Mr. Morley, and his brother, John, walked with him four miles through the park to Breedon, to catch the coach which was to convey him from home. Another young man, named G——, who was also entering on the Methodist ministry, went by the same coach. "G——," says Mr. John Dixon, "was the son of a wealthy farmer, and my brother was in poorer circumstances; but G—— did not travel long, and ended his days in the Derby workhouse."

“When James got to Hereford,” continues his brother, “his landlady said to him, ‘Well, you are come, but I don’t think you will do us any good.’ He had saved twenty pounds, which he took with him, or he could not have lived, for they were too poor to pay him his nominal salary. After being there a year, he returned home, and had some thoughts of giving up the ministry. He consulted his friend, Mr. Edmondson, about it, who said to him, ‘You must not give up, lad. Go on; it is best to begin at the *fag* end.’”

“My brother used to come to see us every year after he left home, and there used to be a good deal of crying. I remember on his going away once my grandmother trying to cheer my mother, who said, ‘When Jim used to leave us at first he used to cry; and he tries to cry now, but he can’t, and we won’t!’”

CHAPTER II.

1812.

Probation—First Circuit, Hereford—Letters.

AT the age of twenty-four years Mr. Dixon found himself beginning, as a probationer, the work of the regular Methodist ministry. He was embraced in the only religious system founded in modern times which can command admiration: the only Protestant system which can bear comparison with the great religious fraternities that were in existence before the Reformation. It was a system which took him up, and never forgot him: which disciplined him without vexation, and relieved him with regularity: a system which professed to give him poverty, but without the struggles and miseries of poverty: which directed and powerfully stimulated his energies, but was not all check and cog: which was strong to its very extremities; not overpowering by centralisation, but yet having a centre and even a heart.

It is of course beyond the province of the present writer to attempt to describe the Methodist system

in detail ; but he must at least express his conviction that no system has ever been framed by human wisdom more perfectly adapted to attain the end proposed.

That end was the diffusion of the Gospel.

No more eager recruit ever joined the service of this powerful organisation than the young man who now set forth from his native village to enter upon the distant circuit of Hereford. The spiritual struggle through which he had passed had tuned, refined, and set in equipoise his faculties, and bade him walk the earth as a new creature, a man with every passion of humanity in the fullest measure, but a transfigured and exultant man. Unalterable faith and self-devotion filled his heart and urged him forward, though they were mingled with deep depression caused by leaving the familiar scenes of youth and early manhood, the beloved faces of friends and kindred ; and the distress which he felt in parting and remaining asunder was great beyond ordinary measure. Few who have entered on a career of self-denial and public work have given more touching evidence at once of the strength of the impulse which has urged them on, and of the ties which have drawn them back.

Hereford, the first circuit to which he was appointed, was one of the poorest circuits of Methodism. It covered a large tract of country, where, often lying at great distances from one another, were little places in which a few people gathered together to hear the Word of God. The Methodist

Societies were, in many parts, not regularly formed, and consisted, without exception, of very poor people. The labour and fatigue of visiting this thin and scattered population was immense. Mr. Dixon started on long preaching rounds of a month's duration. He walked on foot twenty miles or more almost every day; preached nearly every day, and on Sunday walked twenty miles, and preached four times. In some places neither food nor bed were offered him; often he lay in barns or outhouses; often he purchased some simple food, such as wanted no cooking, out of his own resources, in the villages through which he passed. The circuit was too poor to pay him his nominal stipend, and his own little savings were consumed in providing the necessaries of life.

The tumult of religious zeal and natural affection are strongly depicted in the following letter, addressed to Mr. Morley immediately after his arrival on the first scene of his labours:—

“HEREFORD, *Aug. 31st*, 1812.

“DEAR FRIEND,—

“After a long day's study and preaching, I feel that nothing can afford me so much pleasure as a little conversation with one I so dearly love: excuse my effeminacy, for I cannot help informing you that I more than esteem you—I affectionately love you. Since leaving you I have been here a stranger to pleasure and happiness, till this afternoon in reading your book [some parting gift, per-

haps], I felt comfortable and happy in my mind. While believing and enjoying the sacred truths of our holy religion, the reason of my unhappiness was the inordinate attachment I felt to my friends at home, and the desire I had to see them. Ah, my brother, I little thought I was so weak and effeminate in my feelings! I have felt such an excessive regard for my mother especially, and everybody else, that I could scarcely do or think of anything beside her. Every little trifle about me which came from home has such an effect upon my mind that I almost look upon it as sacred. Indeed I feel a great affection for all my friends and relations. I knew not before that I had half the affection for you which I really have. Often have I looked with anxiety towards home, heaved a sigh, and dropped a tear. Often have I wished for a moment's conversation with my dear friend, but I am now cut off from all communication of creature happiness, and all my happiness is, and must be, divine. Respecting the state of things in this place and neighbourhood, as far as I have been able to discover, they are in a most barren and wretched state. I seem like one translated out of a primitive garden into a waste howling wilderness. Here are but few in Society, and these almost dead while they live; and as to the rest of the Circuit, so far as I have seen, it is in a worse state. The people appear altogether eaten up with the pleasures and cares of the world; indeed, they are all High Church people, so you may judge of their character from that circumstance. You per-

haps may wish for a narrative of my journey, and the circumstances attending it. I will state it in as brief a way as possible. On the day we left you we came to Birmingham, and stopped all night. While there we met with several preachers on their road to their circuits—especially Messrs. Woolmer, Pool, and Walmsby. On Friday we started for Gloucester, in company with Mr. Clayton, going to Bristol, and Jackson, going to Kingswood, who is a young man that never travelled before. On our arrival at Worcester I found a coach about to go to Hereford, but felt such pain at the idea of parting with my company, and being left by myself, that I determined to go forward to Gloucester, though it hindered me a full day, being upwards of thirty miles out of the way. On Friday morning I parted with brother James, who went forward to Cardiff about eight o'clock; and at that time my sorrow began to affect me much, and I felt all the pangs of separation, being obliged to stop till one o'clock for a coach.

Respecting the state of the country, I have to observe that it is beautiful beyond anything I ever saw, or ever conceived. The morning I was at Gloucester, I went in company with Mr. Truscott, the preacher, to the top of an eminence, called Robin Hood's Hill, a small distance out of the city, and such a scene I never beheld. At the foot of the hill, at the distance of a mile or two, is the city, watered by the river Severn, which widens within our sight to the size of a little sea, and forms what is called the Bristol Channel. On every side appeared the

most delightful variety of hill and dale, forests, with the richest variety of trees, corn, and verdure ; and, indeed, this is the state of all the country. Nothing is to be seen but the most charming landscapes and picturesque appearances. But all these charms in nature have afforded me but little pleasure : I want my friend to give life to my meditations. But I have one thing to beg of you—that is, to fulfil your promise in coming to see me. I wrote to my mother on Saturday, and if she has not received my letter I wish you to give her notice of it, and let her see this. Give my love to all my dear friends. I know that I need not mention names. I love them all alike, and I beseech you all to pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is among you. I wish you to write to me as soon as possible, and to inform me of the state of things with you. Direct for me at Mr. Wood's, Methodist Preacher's House, Hereford.

“I am your affectionate brother in Christ,

“J. DIXON.”

It is hardly possible not to be struck with the grace of many of the expressions in these letters. Although Mr. Dixon did not to the fullest extent cultivate his gifts as a writer, there belonged to him by nature a distinctly peculiar style, which was very full, deliberate, and noble. In these letters, for instance, there is a sort of reserve and formality, which is in effective contrast with the force of affection which they express. There is in them, as in his

subsequent maturer writing, the gracefulness of strength.

The next letter, about a month later, is addressed to Castle Donington, where Mr. Morley was staying. It is marked by the same deep and tender love of relatives and friends.

“LEDBURY, *Sept. 28th, 1812.*

“DEAR BROTHER,—

“I received your letter in due course, for which I return my sincerest thanks. You must be well aware that such a favour is a source of unspeakable pleasure to me in my present situation. You there remind me of the delightful interviews which we used to enjoy with each other (the loss of which I must constantly feel and deplore), of the subject of our conversation, the glory of God, the order of His government, the harmony of all His works and dispensations; subjects which often elevated our kindred souls to the highest pitch of happiness and delight. You there remind me of the importance of submitting to the Divine Disposer of all events, and of fulfilling the sphere of duty imposed upon me, though but a creature of the smallest magnitude. You reprove me for the aptness which I manifested in telling you my mind so fully, and for the disposition of discontent which I manifested on that occasion. Oh, my brother, I most sincerely thank you for your advice and reproof, and hope that I have and shall profit by it! I now wish to pour out my whole soul into your bosom in the

same friendly and unreserved manner as was the case when we had the happiness of conversing with each other. I now begin to see things in a different light to that in which I saw them in the first two or three weeks after I left you. The strength of my passion and affection, though unabated, is become more subject to reason and grace, and some things which appeared irreconcilable with my happiness now appear perfectly consistent with and congenial to it. I believe that our Circuit is the poorest circuit in all the kingdom, and that there is less religion in the county of Hereford than there is in any other county. This appeared at first directly opposite to my happiness; but I was satisfied with the following reasons on the subject which occurred to my mind a few days ago. First, I am cut off from every worldly source of happiness: here are no fawning, proud, worldly professors to poison the mind of a young man with their pretended kindness and good-will. Secondly, here are no temptations to squander time in idle visits and gossiping: I have only been asked once to tea from home. Thirdly, we are under no outward temptation to become gentlemen—an evil which Brother M—so much detested (give my love to him); for, besides our labour, which is sufficient for any weather-beaten ploughman, we are esteemed as the filth of the earth and the offscouring of all things. Fourthly, we are in no danger of being overburdened under the censures of the critical, and then of being puffed up by the plaudits of the admiring multitude.

These two things I feel particularly thankful for : I consider if I had been placed among a numerous body of people, if approved, then I might have been puffed up with pride, and, if despised, I might have sunk under the weight of contempt. But here, blessed be God ! I hope to be free from all these evils. From these reasons I have considerable consolation, and conclude that I am in the situation in which Providence would have me ; and though the place is barren and sterile in a spiritual and moral sense, yet I frequently find that God is a very present help in time of trouble, a covert from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Oh, how cheering and refreshing is the reflection that the fountain of our real happiness and pleasure is never exhausted, but His omnipresence and goodness enriches *you*, enriches *me*, enriches the faithful in all ages and nations, enriches the whole universe of creatures in heaven and in earth, angelic and human, rational and irrational, and yet after all (let it be spoken with reverence and joy) after all this display of more than exuberant bounty and goodness, He is still the same Inexhaustible, All-sufficient, Independent Fountain of Good ! Oh, my dear brother, when I can happily bring my earth-tied soul to reflect upon these glorious truths, how can I be unhappy ? It is impossible. Oh, do you come to this fountain, and drink and drink again of its enriching streams ; and, though I am a hundred miles from you, yet I promise to meet you every day at the throne of grace. There our happy spirits may

join in sweet union with each other ; for I assure you I have frequently felt a most delightful intimacy and union of spirit with you and my other friends while engaged in prayer. Of my manner of employment I would just observe that I follow the advice given me by that most excellent man, Mr. Edmondson, as much as I can ; and indeed I take great pleasure in reading and study, but fear the proficiency I make is but poor in comparison to the means which the Lord has put in my hand. My mother and brother informed me in their letter that nothing has been done by the friends at Donington in order to keep up their meetings at the Mills. I assure you I feel much grieved on account of that ; and I should be very glad if you would do all in your power for them. They tell me that they are determined to persevere in the good way, and likewise to keep up the Tuesday-night meeting. Now I think you ought to go and help them, at least sometimes, and I know they would be glad of your help. And I know myself well that they stand in need of it. I should wish to be informed what your present views and feelings are with respect to preaching, and I must still urge you to persist, and reflect that the design is usefulness to your fellow-creatures. Let this principle operate upon your mind, and it will be a strong support when you feel uncomfortable in the performance of the duty. I seem to have a great deal more to say to you concerning many things, but my paper is almost full, and they must remain to a future time ; and I begin

to anticipate with much pleasure the time when I shall see you, and unload myself wholly into your friendly bosom. I received my box safe, and could not help shedding a flood of tears when I opened the lid, and saw, as my imagination would paint to me, the impression of the hand of my dear friends upon everything as they lay. Forgive my weakness. I mean to write home soon, but give my love to my mother and to all my kindred, to Stinsons, Bradleys, Ironmongers, Hillhams, Archers, Mallows, Mrs. Dakins, and all my friends. Write as soon as you can, and tell me all you know.

“I am yours in Jesus Christ,

“J. DIXON.”

In this outpouring into a brother's heart there are the marks of true and ennobling religion. All is ardour, affection towards others, duty, exhortation; and these are the certain fruits of the Spirit of God. Labouring like a ploughman, without a ploughman's wages, and without aught of honour or esteem to stand instead of worldly gain, impelled solely by religion, and without religion nothing, this young man is seen simply divided between divine love and natural affection, and drawn from himself towards the objects of both.

The next letter, addressed to Mr. Morley at Castle Donington, is as follows:—

“HEREFORD, Dec. 14th, 1812.

“DEAR BROTHER,—

“The length of my silence may at first

sight make it appear necessary for me to apologize for my neglect. But when I reflect that it is my *friend* to whom I am writing, all ceremony appears unnecessary, and I think it my duty to unbosom myself at once to you. Through the blessing of God I continue to have a good share of health, and am enabled to do the duties of my office without any particular bodily inconvenience. This I esteem a blessing which calls for gratitude to God. Nothing very extraordinary has transpired in my experience. I still feel that religion is my only pleasure, happiness, and hope. Jesus and Him crucified is the only foundation on which my soul can rest. I hope He will be more than ever the object of my desires, the subject of my discourse, and the theme of my praise. What are we without Jesus? Helpless, hopeless, comfortless, joyless. But with Jesus in us in His office of Prophet, to teach, govern, direct; to sanctify, animate, strengthen; with Him before us as the object of our knowledge, and the end of all our actions, we may do all things. Oh! when shall Christ be all in all with us?

“Dear brother, I see the importance of Christ being exalted in us, as our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. I think I feel a greater indifference to the things that are seen, and deeper impressions of the importance of those which are not seen. But these impressions are not so powerful as they ought to be, for my reason informs me that an immortal creature ought to be constantly

impressed with the importance of immortality; that that world of eternity, which every day's experience convinces me I shall soon be an inhabitant of, ought to be very familiar to my mind. Many would be the advantages of such a state of mind. Our passions would be balanced, and neither prosperity nor adversity would unduly elevate our hopes or depress our spirit; but a calm, even serenity of mind would be maintained by us, and neither the disappointments of life, nor the arrest of death, would greatly discompose us; but constantly walking on the confines of eternity we should only have to cross Jordan to enter into the promised land. I feel that in the hurry and bustle of my present state it is easy to forget these important things, and to talk and preach about (so) as neither to feel nor fear. I hope this is not the case with me; but I was powerfully impressed yesterday with the thought, that it is possible to preach and pray, and after all at last be damned. Oh that the Lord may save us from all deception! I feel the office of the ministry to be of so much importance, in order to do justice to its various burdens, that I am constrained to lament over my deficiency in wisdom and grace. And to add to this, I have not much opportunity of improvement; it appears to be of vast importance for a minister to be skilled in all the arguments in favour of natural and revealed religion. But if an infidel were to attack Christianity in my presence I believe I should be constrained to be silent, or, worse than that, to expose

my cause to contempt. I hope you will remember to pray that wisdom and grace be given in proportion to my day. At present I feel pretty comfortable in my mind respecting the Circuit. I have had several opportunities of seeing Mr. Wood (the Superintendent), and find myself very happy with him. I believe him to be a sound, good man. I seem to anticipate the time with great pleasure when I shall have the happiness of once more visiting home. You seem to intimate that you do not intend to come to see me here; and I think that best meets my views. Don't suppose that I should not wish to see you,—that would give me the greatest pleasure; but I have to preach and walk every day, except two or three in six weeks, and therefore I think we could not have much pleasure together, for I do not seem to have a moment to spare. I received a great deal of comfort from your last letter, and desire you will write again as soon as you can. Give me as plain an account of the state of affairs at home as possible. I long to hear of your happiness. I hope you will still exert yourself in the cause of Christ, and remember my little flock at the Mills. Pray for more piety, and let all your studies be as the handmaid to piety, for this will be what we shall most want at death. If you want wisdom, go to the fountain, the Holy Scriptures."

This letter is more experimental in tone than the last, but not beyond the warrant of the example of St. Paul. The next of the letters sent to Mr. Morley exhibits the same character of religion and tenderness.

“LEDBURY, *Feb. 8th*, 1813.

“DEAR BROTHER,—

“I hope grace, mercy, and peace will be given you from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. I received your long-expected letter in due order, and began before I received it to think that I was almost forgotten, so long it seemed since I heard from you. Excuse this surmise ; true love and friendship is always jealous of a rival. What a world of change and confusion, though in the short space of six months ! I am informed of the death of some, of the marriage of others, of the failure of others, and of the removal of others. When I first heard of these things I felt my mind forcibly impressed with the idea of the mutability of all earthly things ; and thought, in a little time, if I lived, I should lose my anxiety for home, because I should have nothing to come home for. Yes, in a little while parents and brethren, familiar friends, and old companions in the way to Zion, will all be scattered as water which cannot be gathered again. Let it be our study to meet where friendship will be perfected and pleasure consummated, where tears shall be wiped from off all faces, and disappointment never enter. You wish to be informed of my state and experience. I will tell you in the plainest manner I am able. I am in very good health, and think it not too much to say that I believe the watchful providence of God is over me in this respect. I have been fre-

quently exposed to wet and cold, been in all sorts of houses, slept in all sorts of rooms—some exposed to the thatch, and plenty of room for the blustering wind to find its way. I believe I have slept in two very damp beds; and yet in the midst of all this I have scarcely had the least cough, cold, or headache. With respect to my soul, I have reason to believe that I am making some advancement in some things. I have had some very hopeful seasons within the last two months. God has been with me both in private and in public. My labour seems less burdensome to me in general, and on many occasions it is my delight and pleasure. And though in general the work of the Lord seems in a barren state, yet in some places we hope that good has been and will be done. The ignorance and bigotry of the people is amazing beyond anything you could imagine. I could give you many instances, but shall satisfy myself with one which happened in Hereford the last time I was there. There are a great number of young men and young women generally attend for fun, some of them of the better sort of people. When I was at prayer I made use of the great name Jehovah; and when this genteel throng came out of chapel they inquired one of the other what it was that he said (meaning me), and when they could think of the word they began to shout ‘Jehovah, Jehovah!’ along the streets. I know not whether such profound ignorance and wickedness should have more of our pity or indignation. Happy are those who learn to distinguish between

good and evil in their youth! They are here kept in awe a good deal by the bishops and clergy, of whom there was never (I should hope) a more impious set—no, not even in Rome. But the Lord will, I hope, work a change even in these dark places. For according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘What hath God wrought?’ and what is He not able to do? While some four or five of our people were engaged in holding a prayer-meeting in this place on Thursday evening, God manifested His power in a peculiar manner to one pious woman. When she began to pray, the heavens seemed opened, and showers of grace descended. She continued upon her knees for two hours praying and praising, till her whole strength was exhausted. This is such a thing as the people are strangers to, and some of them thought she was about to die; and indeed it seemed as if the Lord was about to take her to Himself in a chariot of fire, as Elijah of old. This was no enthusiasm, but a real fact, and the real power of God. The woman is both a sensible, prudent, and pious woman; so that I hope the Lord will work for His own glory. You inform me that you are likely to enter into business on your own account. I can give you no advice on this head. I only wish you to follow the leadings of Divine Providence, and hope for you every possible blessing. But you inform me of a far greater undertaking than this—*viz.*, to preach the Gospel. I should wish to be informed how you felt in your mind at the time, and how you are going

on in preparing yourself for preaching ; for I presume you are persuaded that it is your duty. If you will give me leave to speak a word of advice on this subject, I should say, Make the sacred Scriptures your rule, and, if not altogether, yet let your principal theme be experimental and practical religion. We find that people generally relish this sort of preaching best, and we may be sure it does them most good. I feel and know that we young heads wish to be aspiring after something fresh, and are in danger of seeking applause for ourselves instead of the profit of the people. I know that this was a great temptation to me, but I hope and believe the Lord is curing me of it. You will not imagine that I am in the least decrying wisdom and knowledge. No ; I think a preacher of the Gospel ought not to be a fool. He rather ought to be a man of sound understanding, and acquainted with all the arguments for and against Christianity. But wisdom must be made the handmaid of piety. I feel that I have a great deal more to say, but my paper fills. Give my love to all friends. I should wish you to go over to the Mills some day, and see my dear mother."

Mr. Morley fulfilled the purpose here mentioned, by becoming a Wesleyan local preacher. He has ever since continued to labour acceptably in that office.

The last letter written to Mr. Morley from the Hereford Circuit is as follows :—

“HEREFORD, *April 13th*, 1813.

“DEAR BROTHER,—

“I felt very much disappointed this day, on coming home from my monthly round, at finding no letter either from you or any other person. I wrote to you ten or eleven weeks ago, and to Mr. Stinson five or six, and have had no answer from either; and to Mr. Ironmonger I suppose half a year ago, and desired him to forward me a line, but have not received any. Oh, how painful is disappointment! I would not think indeed that any of my dear friends would on any account wound my feelings, but oh, with what a degree of pain I was forced to think that I was almost forgotten! You will tell me I need more humility. True; I must be little and unknown. Yet when you recollect how few of the blessings of religious friendship I enjoy in this barren wilderness, you will make some allowance for my fondness to converse with my oldest friends. Friendship! How pleasing the recollection of its blessings with you on former occasions! My recollection brings back to my mind the many happy, happy hours we spent together. My fancy paints to me in the most gloomy colours the loss of such opportunities; my heart seems almost sunk within me, and my eyes ready to gush with tears. Pardon my weakness, if weakness it is, but I cannot help looking behind me, and wondering at the amazing road which has led me to this place—to leave my home, to leave

my friends, and to come to this place as a preacher of Christ Jesus! When I recollect my former self as a vile, ungodly sinner, and survey the amazing series of providences which have led me to the present, I stand astonished, and wonder at the Divine goodness. But the question which concerns me most at present is whether I am in the place which the Lord would have me be in?—whether I am really commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach His Gospel? He Himself says many will say unto Him in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?’ But He will say unto them, ‘Depart from Me, I never knew you.’ How awful is such a thought! Now, if Christ sent a person to preach His Gospel, would He not turn it to the conversion of sinners? I have preached ten times this week, and generally preach eight or nine times a week, and yet after all I do not know that one soul has been converted. Oh, surely God is love, and is not willing that any of His creatures should perish! Is then the fault in me? I am just thinking that I would gladly return to my business again if I was certain that it was the will of the Lord. It is true I believe that I frequently find the help of the Lord in the work. I sometimes feel a love for perishing souls, and willingly labour with a desire for their good. But on other occasions I feel my mind dark, and would gladly shrink from every cross. Indeed I want more light, more fire, more humility—yea, more of every good. My friend, pray for me. I

have very little time for study and improvement, and can scarcely ever get time to read a book regularly and to profit. This I think is a serious difficulty. I am convinced that young men ought to have a considerable share of information on various subjects before they go out to travel (if they are placed in such circuits as this), as well as a capacity for improvement. I find, indeed, that I am very much wanting in all things, and perhaps all that I have learned since I left you is to know my own ignorance; and yet I suppose pride will not suffer me to know that as I ought to know it. Oh, what a complication of vanity and folly is man! I delight to read of, to think upon, and to examine the nature, design, and evidences of our holy religion: but, after all, our experience of its blessedness upon the heart and life is of the greatest moment to us. Oh, the boundless grace and love of the Three-One God!—the Father in giving the Son, and the Son in becoming incarnate, and the Holy Spirit in performing His offices! But I know that I do not enjoy that fathomless love of the Father which is the privilege of the believer; that great, perfect, and glorious salvation wrought out for us by the Son; and that fulness of spiritual blessings which the Holy Spirit is ready to work in the soul. I feel unbelief, pride, sloth, anger, a backwardness in taking up the cross, hurry and confusion of mind, wanderings in prayer, a great want of fervency in that duty, a mixture of the fear of man with a desire for his applause; self-will, and vain-glory. I hope the

Lord will deepen the work of piety upon my soul, and give me more of the mind which was in Christ.

“When you last wrote to me you gave me some reason to suppose you were likely to take a business, that you were likely to be put in the office of a class-leader, and that you had preached at Ratcliff. You will need much Divine grace to assist you in all these things. Oh, how awful is our responsibility! Be faithful in the discharge of all your duties in the Church of God, and remember, if you feel your mind shrink from the cross, it will be no excuse in the last day to have to say you feared the reproach of men, or the displeasure of an individual. My friend, our duty is our duty, and that we must labour to discharge at our peril. Go on, therefore, in the name of the Lord. Give my love to all my dear friends at Donington, at Kegworth, and any person who may think it worth while to inquire after me. You may perhaps see my very dear mother and relations at Donington. Remember my love to them all, Mr. Andrews especially.

“I am yours in Christ,

“J. DIXON.”

The momentary despondency of a young man under apparent ill-success, after such labours, will not be denied the sympathy of the reader. Youth, if it aspire at all, knows only of the ardour within itself—knows little of its own powers. The ardour is so intense as to fill the whole consciousness, and make all things seem possible. The attempt is

made; the untried powers are put forth to the utmost, and, if success does not instantly follow, disappointment is felt in all its keenness. If to the want of success be added ridicule, the greatest pain is then endured that can fall to the share of rectitude and high intentions. Mr. Dixon was not destined to see those striking results follow his ministry, which commonly attended the ministry, not only of Wesley and Whitefield, but of far inferior men; results of which he had often read, and which he was eager to behold. But though he was not to be the originator of a wide religious movement, yet he had gifts which brought him to the first rank as a preacher of the Gospel, and have made his name memorable in the annals of the religious body to which he belonged. What those gifts were, what was that altogether original and peculiar style of preaching which he carried to perfection, we shall hereafter try to describe. Meanwhile we may see in what manner the foundations of his public character were laid. We see the strongest sense of duty and responsibility shown in the letters which have been given. From the outset of his ministry he sets before him the benefit of the people as the end to be attained, and he perceives that what is most for the benefit of the people is also what they most willingly listen to,—namely, experimental religion. It shows no small degree of intelligence to have seen these two things from the beginning; and the same remained the unaltered conviction of his riper years. It is true: no brilliancy, no culture, no novelty, no

learning, nor any other human gift, can make a successful preacher. No subject can take the place of expounding the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of man; nothing is heard with so much attention, and produces such powerful effects. But then, who is sufficient for these things? Who is to declare the work of God in renewing man, but one who has himself experienced it? In this sense the labourers still are few; and we may understand how serious the task which this young man set before himself in entering the Wesleyan Methodist ministry. He undertook to stand before the people as the living witness of the living work of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER III.

1813—19.

Probation continued—Early Circuits, Kington and Brecon—
 Letters, Studies, and “Notes on Books and Authors”
 —Received into Full Connexion, and Appointed to Car-
 diff—Marriage—Reappointment to Kington—Successful
 Ministry—Other “Notes on Books and Authors.”

AT the end of his year in the Hereford Circuit Mr. Dixon was removed by the Conference of 1813 to Kington, another circuit in the same county. The three following years were spent in this circuit and in Brecon—both of them very similar to Hereford in laboriousness and poverty. Yet to these years he always looked back as the happiest of his life. He had now attained his full strength; his constitution was fortified by the immense walks and rides which he was called to perform; and his mind was developed by solitude and meditation. Those peculiar habits of loneliness were now fixed which were characteristic of him through life. He acquired a power of abstracting himself from surrounding objects, and pursuing his studies amid the noises of the farms and cottages in which

he often lodged, which made him somewhat impatient of the plea that little or nothing can be done by the student unless discordant sounds be hushed, and he shut up within his own study. Wherever he went he studied, and began the practice, which he continued in later life, of withdrawing from the company of the house in which he found himself, into his own room, where he read and wrote for hours together, regardless of the severest weather. He was naturally endowed with a great power of enduring cold, though somewhat impatient of heat.

Of this period the chief remaining record is a long letter, written at two dates, to his friend Mr. Morley, which breathes the same spirit of love, humility, and devotion as the former ones, and is full of biographical interest. That period of life in which letters of the sort are written lasted long with him. After a certain point the impulse becomes weaker which leads young people to pour out their minds to one another: the friendship remains, but the spontaneous expression of feeling, the urgent need to exchange thoughts and emotions, cannot last for ever.

“KINGTON, *May 24th*, 1814.

“DEAR BROTHER,—

“I was agreeably surprised this morning, on coming to town, to find your letter of the 16th instant. If there had been nothing in it but your name, it would have given me pleasure to see that; and had you been acquainted with the unpleasant

sensations of mind which I have often felt on your account, I think you would not have disappointed me so long. I have sometimes cried out to myself, 'Oh that I could once again see my dear friend! I would press him to my heart! Oh that I could converse with him, open my mind, and ask his advice!' I have again been ready to declaim against you, and pronounce all men faithless. But in your letter this morning I still read the language of friendship, and I am ready to bless God that I have still a friend in the world. You kindly inquire after my welfare and spiritual state. I bless God that though things are not so well with my soul as might be, considering my advantages, yet they might have been infinitely worse. I have had many refreshing times from the presence of the Lord, and have been greatly assisted in my important work. On many occasions I have been made happy, in private and in public; and, though far from being that perfect Christian which I might and ought to have been, yet I think I may say with truth that it is the prevailing wish of my soul to live to God, and promote His glory among men. I feel it my indispensable duty to study that sort of knowledge which is calculated to assist me in the important duty of preaching the Gospel of Christ. I have had *no* help from any living master on this head, and if I have acquired anything, it has been from books. I have read but few sermons which I approve. I think a number of sermons are exactly like pictures; they have no substance, no body, and

are only decked out with jingling words, as the canvas in a picture with paint. This is not the character of Wesley's sermons: they contain the body and soul of experimental and practical religion. The more I read them the more I admire them, because they do my soul good. I have read Dr. Buchanan's 'Sermons and Researches' with a great deal of interest; they are full of historical and religious information, and are perfect in their orthodoxy. Saurin's sermons are full of the purest sentiments, the most refined ideas, and the loftiest language. His eloquence overwhelms and exalts the mind in an almost incredible manner. But I never read a sermon which I more admired than one preached before the Missionary Meeting at Leeds, by Mr. Watson. I have read it over and over again with delight and enthusiasm. The subject is of the greatest importance, and I think represented in its proper light and in a manner the most masterly. I lent this sermon to a very good and wise clergyman in this circuit, at whose house we call, and who constantly attends our preaching, and he told me a better sermon never was composed by man. If you have not seen it I would recommend it to you, with the one preached by Mr. Sutcliffe at the Macclesfield district meeting. I have been attempting to make myself a little acquainted with the history of the Church, and find great pleasure and profit in it. I want somebody to correspond with who is able and willing to speak freely on the subject of reading, writing, etc., the means of attain-

ing wisdom, etc. I find that these persons are very thinly strewed: and to whom should I freely communicate but to you, a long-trying friend? I wish you would tell me what you have been doing, and direct me to something that will do me good. I think it a matter of great thankfulness to God that I had got a few books before I became a preacher, for I find it impossible to get many in my present state.

“*June 13.*—My dear friend, I began this letter according to the above date, but was prevented from finishing it. I shall not say that I could not accomplish it till this night, but sometimes I feel a natural backwardness in writing, and on other occasions a pleasing delight in the work. This is my state of mind at the present time. I would dwell with a sort of melancholy pleasure upon the various instances which I have had of the genuineness of your friendship; and I can tell you with truth that I still feel an unalterable attachment to you, though now separated from you by time and distance, and perhaps never to meet again till we recognize each other in heaven. Oh the happy day which shall unite friends together in the bonds of immortality, and consummate their happiness in glory! I have felt several times since writing the former part of this letter a delightful sense of the favour of God, and a most satisfactory evidence of my own trust in the merits of Christ. Christ is the foundation of my faith and hope, and I bless God that I have been

kept upon this foundation to the present. You wish me to give you my opinion of your character, and my advice respecting preaching. You know friendship gives a strong bias to the mind, and discovers excellencies which others who are not prepossessed cannot discover. I do not, therefore, pretend to be an impartial judge of your character, for my attachment must be put into the scale and weighed with the opinions I give. But I will tell you what I think to be the truth; and first, I believe that God has given you a naturally good understanding, capable of great improvement and of extensive and various knowledge. Your mind is naturally of a philosophical turn. You feel it very difficult to receive anything upon trust. Nay, do you not feel it very difficult to receive truth upon the most convincing testimony? You are led to turn things over and over, to investigate, and inquire *how* things are so and so, and *why* they should be so and so. You would pull everything you handle to pieces, see how it is constructed, examine every part of it, and prove the reality and truth of things by *demonstration*. But the means which are afforded you are not sufficient for this; you have not light enough to see through everything, and hence arise doubts. I believe a mind of your cast has many advantages over others which are all air and vapour, without any solidity or stay. But I think they are in danger of being led astray by mere philosophical disquisitions, and feel it extremely hard to live by faith and not by sight.

But the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of Christ are all received by faith; and we who possess the casket, the Bible, in which the precious jewels of that kingdom are deposited, ought we then to defer receiving them till we can infallibly demonstrate their real qualities, how they were prepared, etc.? How ridiculous would a grand philosopher appear if he refused to partake of a good dinner till he had demonstrated the reality of the beef, and that it was not a delusive dinner; how the various things which compose it grew; whether animal or vegetable, and so on! Then how the miller ground the corn, the cook provided it, etc., etc. I think we should be ready to say such a person deserved to go without his dinner. Just so in a spiritual point of view. I think it has been fully proved that the Bible is the Word of God, and that all the promises of God are true, therefore it is folly for us to wait till we can get through the depths of its mysteries before we embrace its promises. Perhaps I have gone astray a little from my point, but I mean to say that it is my fixed opinion that God has given you a capacity to understand the Gospel, and to teach it to others. But I think you want a little more gospel simplicity (take George Millnes for an example). I have no objection to propriety, great thoughts, good language, etc., but there is a simplicity consistent with all this. In public characters that simplicity which I mean is not seen in the niceties of composition, in flowery language, in far-fetched words, in soaring ideas, and in stiff,

dry, dead essays ; but it is seen in a firm renunciation of self, and a steady looking to God as the great end of all, to Christ as the Author of all good, either received or done ; and instead of talking about ideas, talking to people's hearts ; and instead of seeking popularity, seeking people's souls. You see that I tell you my mind very plainly, and I feel that I need to attend to these remarks myself, and hope by the grace of God so to do. It is my advice, then, that you still persist in the work, and labour to be more simple and spiritual, and depend upon it you will be the happier in your own mind, more pleasing to God, and more useful to the people.

“I could say much more, my dear friend, upon your character, and the estimation I put upon your various excellencies, but it is now midnight and my paper is almost filled. I must therefore come to an end, and I pray that God would fill you with all peace and joy through believing, and make you truly useful.

“I hope you will favour me with a line as soon as convenient, and do not let me be tormented with suspense as I have been ; and I should be glad to be informed of the state of things amongst you. Please to give my love to all friends, and, believe me, I am still your affectionate friend,

“J. DIXON.”

This interesting letter contains the first mention made by Mr. Dixon of one who was destined to

influence his future career more than any other man—Richard Watson. That celebrated preacher was at this time rapidly rising into fame. The sermon to which allusion is made in the letter is on Ezekiel's vision of the winds blowing upon the dry bones in the valley—one of the early published compositions of Mr. Watson. He was nine years older than Mr. Dixon, and travelled in the Castle Donington Circuit for a year in 1797, being then no more than eighteen years of age. One of the earliest recollections of Mr. Dixon, as a boy, was hearing him preach in the chapel there, and being impressed by his youthful appearance and the quietness of his manner. He also remembered being once or twice in the same room with him, and, as a boy, feeling rather surprised at the recklessness of his conversation. It is curious that four years later, in 1801, when in consequence of some unfortunate misunderstandings "Richard Watson desisted from travelling by his own choice" (as the Minutes record), he returned to Castle Donington, and lived there for some time in private, and married there, at the time when James Dixon was working at King's Mills, two miles distant. Both of them received the most kindly counsel about that time from the Rev. Jonathan Edmondson, and both learned to regard that excellent man with filial veneration. But at that time they never met.

James Dixon was, however, long afterwards, destined to become the near relative, and in a sort the successor of Richard Watson; he long survived him,

and was among the chief of those who carried the spirit of the age of Methodism to which Watson belonged far into the succeeding generation.

In the time which we are now considering—the first part of the present century—Methodism was still in its first apostolical vigour. It often happens that the founders of great organisms, the beginners of great movements, are succeeded by a generation or two of followers who have so wonderfully imbibed their spirit as to carry on their work with undiminished vigour, and bring it to perfection. Great impulses are never felt by one alone; they communicate themselves from one to another, like the electric shock which simultaneously and with undiminished force startles all who are placed within its range. It has been so especially in religious history in all times, and it was so in the case of the great religious movement of the eighteenth century. Wesley and the men who were coeval with him were succeeded by others who continued to spread the movement with no perceptible declension of zeal and simplicity. With these men, as with their predecessors, the preaching of the Gospel was the end and aim of their whole course, the only object which they professed; and they organised themselves only for this and so far as was necessary for this. Thus at the time when Mr. Dixon began his ministry, the Wesleyan connexion was filled with men venerable for their long labours and patient endurance of reproach and hardship in a glorious

cause; or still in the fulness of apostolic zeal and energy.

But to return. In the last of the Morley letters above given Mr. Dixon speaks of books and reading, lamenting the smallness of his opportunities, and passing judgment on one or two authors. In process of time he became possessed of a large library, gradually acquired by honourable care and industry, chiefly consisting of history and theology. In many of the volumes of this library the date and place of their purchase are written, showing how gradually they were accumulated. Few books have travelled so much as these: for near half a century they took a journey every three years at least, were packed and unpacked, and went to every part of the kingdom. Their owner was a great reader, whom the size of none of them could appal. He never acquired the use of any foreign language, though he made many attempts; but there have been few men better acquainted with general history than he was: and of those subjects to which he directed his attention fully he became a thorough master. He was one of the most deeply read English theologians of his age, familiar with the works of the great English divines, especially those of Barrow, Tillotson, and Jackson, whose immense tomes he read and read again with unflagging delight. Of his profound knowledge of Methodist theology and history proof will be given hereafter. But next to theology his great pursuit was English constitutional history. No one who

was not a lawyer or constitutionalist by profession could have a more extensive and indeed curious knowledge of those parts of our history in which the great constitutional struggles have taken place; and from this study he imbibed not only knowledge, but a dauntless and enlightened love of freedom, which he displayed on several occasions in his own sphere.

Those who are interested in watching the efforts of a powerful mind pushing itself forward in the pursuit of knowledge, will thank the present writer for not suppressing a document which belongs to this period, bearing the title, “An Account of Books read in Brecon Circuit, 1815-1816, with Notes and Remarks upon Authors.” The remarks will be found to be frequently acute, and always characteristic: the reading (as might be expected) somewhat lacking direction.

“*Beattie’s Essay on Truth.*—A most valuable book: with great strength of reasoning there is mixed a beautiful simplicity, and an appeal to nature, and facts so happily chosen that his conclusions are irresistible. The truths which he handles are admirably defended, and rescued out of the hands of their enemies in a masterly manner. Dr. B. appears to have been a masterly logician, a sound philosopher, and a pious man.

“*Haslam on Imputed Righteousness.*—The texts which teach the doctrine of the imputation of faith for righteousness are well considered in this work, both with a view to show that it is faith, and not

the double righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to the sinner for justification; and I think with complete success, though I thought, when reading this book, in one place the author was too general in his representation of the object of faith—he spoke of Truth as being the object of faith, without, I thought, sufficiently distinguishing the various dispensations and subjects of Truth. Because there are many truths revealed in the Word of God which have no connection with the justification of the sinner before God. However, this deficiency is made up towards the latter end of the book, where the author treats of the immediate dependence which our free justification has upon Christ. Upon the whole it is a valuable book, and one calculated to promote practical godliness.

“ *Atterbury's Sermons.*—Dr. A. appears to have been a powerful speaker, and in saying this you have said all—though, for aught I know, he might have been a sincere man. But his doctrine is anti-evangelical and false, and the blessed Saviour of sinners is almost banished out of the system of religion which the zealous doctor taught, while he rested upon salvation by works. I was very weary, and nothing profited by reading this book, and hope never to read it again.

“ *Buchanan's Address to Messrs. Norton, Greenwood, etc., Missionaries.*—This is a most valuable address; the Christian simplicity, piety, wisdom, disinterestedness, zeal for the work of God and honour of religion, so often manifested by the author,

are fully displayed in this address, and it brings one's mind back to the period when the great Head of the Church and His Apostles delivered their charges to those who were sent out to evangelise the nations.

“*Coke's Letters upon Justification, the Direct Witness of the Spirit, etc., against Horne.*—In this work the good doctor has displayed much strength and ingenuity of argument, perspicuity, and often eloquence, of language, and has fully rescued his friends and the doctrines they taught from the hands of their enemy. The subjects of this book are of the greatest importance to vital religion among us as a body, and I hope no part will ever be given up. The book is very valuable.

“*Bunting's Sermon on Justification.*—In doctrine, clear, scriptural; in language, perspicuous, pure, elegant; in composition, neat and regular. The subject is what he justly calls a master-truth, and it is stated and defended in a masterly manner; well calculated for popular use.

“*Goodwin's Redemption Redeemed, 1651.*—The language of this book is a little antiquated, and some of the words obsolete in the present day: the arguments diffuse, and sometimes a little tedious, with some repetitions, much in the way of writings of the period in which he lived. But I may say it is a book the like of which I scarcely ever met with before for depth of thought, strength of argument, soundness of doctrine. The truths which he maintains are of the greatest importance, and some of

them the most choice within the compass of religious investigation; and he has done them honour. The book, I think, is an impenetrable bulwark against the errors of Calvinism, and a firm pillar in the cause of universal redemption—the most glorious truth of the Book of God. Goodwin appears to have been a pious man; in his controversy with the Calvinists he seems to have been actuated by a pure love of truth, and manages it in that temper in which all controversies ought to be conducted. If he was not one of the brightest and most splendid geniuses of the Christian Church, he was one of the soundest, and appears to be one of those choice characters here and there raised up by Providence to make all the rest of the world ashamed of themselves. His adversaries appear like infants in the hand of a giant.

“*Mrs. Hannah More’s Sacred Dramas.*—As I know nothing about the merits of dramatic composition, I can say nothing about this. It appears to me as if it was the intention of this celebrated authoress in this, as in ‘*Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*,’ to accommodate the religion of Christ to a worldly taste and the refinements of genteel life. But the Saviour says His kingdom is not of this world. Proud, dissipated human nature would undoubtedly hail with rapture a system of religion suited to its taste. But the religion of the Bible is intended to humble the proud heart of man, and turn the tide of vanity and dissipation flowing in his veins; to exalt the soul to heavenly objects by making him a new creature.

"*Pearson on the Creed: Fol.*, 1683.—This I esteem a very valuable body of Divinity. Most of the leading doctrines of Christianity are set forth in a very clear and forcible light, with a few exceptions. What I particularly object to is his doctrine of the forgiveness of sins by Baptism. . . . The doctrines of the Remission of Sins at first in Baptism, and afterwards upon the condition of repentance, appear to have been doctrines held by many in the ancient church, but I think false ones, as they go upon the supposition that none can be saved but such as are admitted by baptism into the visible Church of God, and that baptism is the condition: opposing the great truth taught by St. Paul, that as judgment came upon all men to condemnation, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life; and in the other case substituting repentance for faith, leaving us to sin and repent, and sin and repent, and suppose we shall be forgiven as often as we do this,—setting aside by this the glorious doctrines of justification by faith, salvation from sin, etc. With these exceptions (and certainly they are of vital importance) I think the book valuable. It is written in a nervous style; candour and piety appear to have been distinguishing traits in the author's character; and I was pleased and profited in reading it.

"*Life of Longden, of Sheffield.*—He appears to have been an extraordinary character in common life, formed by nature for extraordinary things. When converted to God, he appears to great advan-

tage. Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, he appears to have been mighty in prayer, in zeal, in labours. Naturally bold, he appears to have been free from timidity, and peculiarly qualified to plant the Gospel standard in the little places of Derbyshire, while his great attainments in religious knowledge and experience made him no less eminently qualified to polish the souls which were to be placed in the spiritual temple of God, and to build up that temple a praise and glory in the earth. He was a truly great and good man.

*“ Dr. Evans’s Sermons upon the Christian Temper.—*This work is calculated to be useful, though it is written in a dry, dull, formal style, and the want of pathos, energy, life, novelty, makes it less interesting than it would be if written in a different way. Yet the importance of the subjects makes them always interesting to those who wish to live the Christian; so that I think the Christian may gather some useful matter, though his feelings will be interested very little. While the pious author enters largely into the nature of Christian practice, etc., it appears to me that he understood but little of the great doctrine of justification by faith, spiritual regeneration, the witness of the Spirit. He would perhaps shudder at the thought, yet he sometimes evidently preaches salvation by works; while the doctrine of Christian perfection appears to be perfectly hateful to him, and he only makes use of the term to assert the impossibility of the thing, though in contradiction to the Word of God.

“*Bishop Watson’s Apology for the Bible.*—This great man is perfectly master of the great cause he undertakes to defend, while an innumerable host of Paine and his fraternity are but as shadowy night’s meteors before the glorious sun. Critical skill, logical power almost irresistible, and an eloquence the most charming, are his least excellencies. He joins with all these a candour, meekness, and forbearance which I think piety alone can inspire, and an unshaken confidence in a great cause. If I mistake not, he must have been one of the greatest orators of his day.

“*An Easy Introduction to Religion, Natural and Revealed, principally taken from the work of Dr. Jenkins on that subject : by a Clergyman of the Church of England.*—The author of this work gives us a picture of the outworks of Christianity ; shows that these were proved to be Divine by miracles, prophecies, etc., but he says very little upon the most important subjects. I believe he was destitute of experience, and did not understand the subject in that point of view. The glorious peculiarities of the Gospel he leaves untouched. His system is merely a system of Heathenism refined by appending to it some scraps of Christian morality, without glancing at the great doctrines of salvation through faith in Christ, regeneration through the Spirit, etc. As well teach a builder to erect a castle upon the sand by the side of the swelling wave, as teach morality without regeneration, and salvation without a Saviour. The book will give the young

beginner a superficial view of the arguments used to defend religion, but it will do very little for him as a teacher of religion, and leave his heart perfectly at ease, and his mind undisturbed.

“*Jones on the Trinity.*—This is a little book of great worth. Almost all that can be said on this important doctrine is comprised in a small compass, stated in a plain, perspicuous manner, and reasoned upon with great strength of argument. Scripture here speaks for itself in its own native simplicity and force, and managed in such a manner as to free itself from all contradiction and enforce its own meaning.

“*Life of Sam. Bradburn, by his Daughter.*—The life of such a man must always be interesting. Undoubtedly one of the greatest preachers of his day, and though some eccentricities marked his conduct through life, now he is permitted to speak for himself, and we see him in the closet in sweet intercourse with God, hear him acknowledging his faults, lamenting them, praying for deliverance from them, maintaining his integrity in the midst of temptations, and delighting in his work and faithfully discharging it,—when we look at these things we shall be led to say that Bradburn was a good as well as a great man. It will be seen that he hung up no false colours, but wrote as he felt and acted. The Miscellaneous Pieces enhance the value of the book, the piece upon conversation is very excellent, and the other upon conduct to be observed in the pulpit ought to be engraven upon the memory of every preacher who wishes to excel.

“*Hare’s Preservative against Socinianism.*—The doctrines of the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, existence of the Devil, the Atonement, etc., are proved in this work from the Scriptures with the most convincing arguments. It is a good book upon the subject.

“*Robinson’s (of Cambridge) Sermons.*—Mr. Robinson’s method is peculiarly pleasing and engaging. I do not recollect to have read sermons more peculiarly fascinating—smooth, perspicuous, and easy,—but there is a sad want of evangelical doctrine.

“*Facts and Evidences upon the Subject of Baptism, by the Editor of the Calvinistic Dictionary.* The baptism of infants, together with the different modes besides plunging, are defended in this book with very great acuteness of reasoning. I think it a full refutation of the peculiarities of the Baptists.

“*Coke’s History of the West Indies.*—I think a second edition of this work will never be called for. The merchants will not read it because it is a religious work, and the religious world will not because it is a mercantile, political, and civil history. I think the Doctor does not excel as an historian. The simplicity of narration is lost in the midst of a profusion of figures, tropes, etc., which are an evident aim at being the orator. There is a good deal of sameness through the whole; I believe Mr. Wesley would have said as much in one volume as the Doctor has in three. But one thing however I have learnt in reading this work—that the Methodist

Mission in the West Indies has been much underrated, for it has done vast good."

In these notes, intended only for his own assistance, it is easy to see benevolence, great veneration and candour, along with unalterable and fervent convictions on religious doctrines. The volume in which they are written contains also a number of indices of various kinds of works—religious, biographical, historical, etc.—executed after an original plan. A topic, such as Justification, is put into the index, and references made to all the books in the author's possession in which anything can be found about it. To do this with advantage a man must have a good library: then this method will make him perfectly master of it. Mr. Dixon, as was said before, gradually formed a very valuable library. One of his peculiarities was that he very much disliked reading a book unless it was his own property, and scarcely ever would do so. We shall have some more "Notes on Books and Authors" to give a little further on.

At the Conference of 1816, held in London, he was received into Full Connexion, and appointed to Cardiff, then one of the poorest circuits in the country. The same year he married Miss Eliza Watkins, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Watkins, of Kington, a young lady of great personal attractions and sincere piety. Her health began to fail soon after her marriage, and she had to be taken from Cardiff to her native place Kington, from

which it was afterwards found impossible to remove her. Her husband therefore left Cardiff at the Conference of 1817, and was reappointed to Kington; but she died there shortly after, at the early age of twenty-four.

At Kington Mr. Dixon continued two years longer, and it was there that he began to attract public notice. His preaching created an impression in that little town which has not been forgotten to this day. It roused attention not only among the Methodist people, but attracted from other quarters a number of professional men with their families, who acknowledged the benefit which they derived from hearing him. There can be little doubt indeed, that his full admission into that noble band of men, whose early portraits bear their most exact description—Preachers of the Gospel—together with the domestic bereavement following so rapidly upon this, would give a strong impulse to his powers as a minister of religion. All, in fact, that had gone before was but a probation—a probation singularly long and hard, but yet bearing a fit proportion to the long career which was to follow it. It was not before this time that he must be considered as fully launched into public life, after mental struggles and efforts at self-culture, and a course of training and discipline such as we have seen.

It now becomes necessary to make some inquiry into those qualities which had been thus carefully and rigorously trained, and by surviving such a

training proved themselves essential parts of his character.

Mr. Dixon had now become, and was long to continue, a great public servant: this was his vocation, this was his nature; he was more entirely and disinterestedly a public servant than any person whom the present writer, at least, has ever known; and in his own sphere he became a great public servant.

For this it was indispensable that he should have a high moral nature. Selfishness in the bad sense of the word made no part of him, nor self-indulgence (which has taken away the usefulness of many a capable man), though he had a natural melancholic slowness which sometimes hung heavy upon him; still less was he capable of self-seeking in any form, or self-advancement at the cost of public interests. Anything mean, shabby, or double-faced, he recoiled from with the utmost abhorrence.

Severity to one's self is often accompanied by a generous indulgence towards others. It was to Mr. Dixon a matter of difficulty to think evil of any man; he was magnanimous, generous, willing to find excuse. These things made him to be loved and trusted; it was instinctively felt that he had a nature in which nothing harmful lurked, and men delighted to come to his knowledge, and expand themselves before him. The careworn and poor, environed by their narrow circumstances, or hard pressed by the requirements of their fellow-men, felt pleasure in getting him to speak with them:

he seemed to be somehow freer, bolder, nobler than other people. This faculty of inspiring confidence and love is surely very important in a public man. At the same time he had the highest sense of personal dignity, and would never endure the least familiarity. No one who attempted that with him once ever did it twice.

In his maturity he embraced a very large range of subjects: all things of whatever sort that concerned the nation and the public service were deeply interesting to him; and he became what Milton calls a *statist*,—a word for which we seem to have no exact modern equivalent. This could not have been so at the outset of his career, but in one part—the root of all the rest—it was so already. His whole conception of a public character was evolved from religion,—from what he felt to be his duty as a minister of the Gospel. We have seen from his correspondence that he set before him, as the end of preaching, the good and profit of the people. For this cause he aimed at preaching simple, practical, and experimental sermons: studying neither profundity, elegance, nor novelty: but regarding these as temptations of selfishness, and things to be avoided rather than sought after. They were afterwards added to him, but they were secondary considerations with him, and his first care was for the good of the people. This motive of usefulness was the root of all the subsequent development of his character; and, as his points of contact with the living world were multiplied, this

still remained, and gave harmony to his whole career.

There lay in him a great capacity. He was a religious man above everything else; but his religion was of a kind that drew all things into itself. There is a story in Plutarch of a magpie which, happening to hear the sound of a trumpet skilfully played, became totally silent, though a great talker, and spent two days apparently meditating how to reproduce the sounds it had heard. At the end of the second day it succeeded at the first attempt in imitating exactly every tone, change, and repetition of the trumpet: but it had utterly forgotten all that it could say before, and never again recovered its former speech. Some preachers are not unlike this magpie. They learn one tune and one tone, and they seem in the pulpit to forget everything else that they know. But Mr. Dixon was not like this. He heard, indeed, the terrible sounds of the trumpet of Sinai: they wrought within him a prolonged and silent horror, such as few men have passed through and lived; and he learned all their notes of woe, of warning, and judgment. But he forgot not the sweet lessons of nature, of friendship, and of home; and with the awful solemnities which remained present to his mind were mingled softer influences from all other things. The terrible sound and the awful silence passed; the voice of Divine benignity, the call of infinite love succeeded, and bade him go forth into the world, see good in everything, and preach the Gospel to every creature.

The present writer has tried to bring before himself some idea of the early preaching of one destined to be so eminent. According to all accounts it must have been very powerful; it has been described by one who heard some of it as "glorious." We may be sure, for one thing, that it was devoid of hardness, for there never was any hardness in his nature, and it probably had many of those indescribable touches which mark the presence of genius of whatever order. It was no doubt full of distinct doctrine, aiming at the good of the people by the unfolding of Divine truth, and always dealing with the essentials of religion. The essence of it must have been impassioned thought, as it always was in after years; and it is difficult to suppose that he did not in the outset possess much of that peculiar power, which afterwards distinguished him, of dealing with the sublime and infinite; though he could hardly in youth have had the breadth and ease which he possessed in his maturity. It may be imagined also that his early preaching was somewhat unequal, as it continued to be—sometimes dull, amorphous, and unlighted: for his temperament, whatever the strength of reason with which he was endowed, was that of the enthusiast, capable of rapture, but also subject to deep depression.

Several interesting memorials remain of the years passed in Cardiff and Kington. His reading seems to have been interrupted by domestic events during the former part of this period, but was

resumed extensively in 1818, and the "Notes on Authors" become so numerous that it is only possible to give the more characteristic ones, and those which exhibit the growth of his own opinions. They include historians, poets, and philosophers, as well as theologians. Of Milton he says, "Great, sublime beyond anything; the Prince of English poets." Of Cowper, "The most évangelic of any of the poets; simple, natural, pious, highly poetical, yet easy and free; I like him better than any other." He was not much of a reader of poetry in after life. But to recur to the notes:—

"*Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies.*—Such an impression of the truth of the Christian Religion was never made on my mind by any book as by this.

"*Faber on the Prophecies.*—There is a great deal of very plausible reasoning in this work to support a favourite hypothesis. When I first read it I thought it must be true, but subsequent events have falsified this opinion, and the whole of it has demonstrated how limited are the faculties of man, and how uncertain to us what shall be on the morrow. A similar fate, I am persuaded, awaits every attempt to explain those prophecies which are not explained by events.

"*Fenelon on the Deity.*—Pious, animated, ingenious, eloquent. Fenelon is a most pleasing writer. Whether all his sentiments are just and scriptural I cannot say.

"*Addison's Evidences of Christianity.*—Many

papers in this work of this great man are truly sublime, pathetic, pious, and well calculated to impress the mind. I remember being raised into the highest ecstasy by reading that on Omnipresence. The subject is not treated in a methodical way.

“*Simpson’s Plea for Religion.*—Famous for being an exposure of the corruptions of the Church of England. Simpson was a very pious man,—there are many excellent things in the book, and yet I am not quite certain but his remarks upon abuses may in some cases, with the shallow and profane, be made a handle against religion itself.

“*Dodd’s Discourses on the Miracles and Parables.*—These sermons, though not destitute of excellence, yet are rather dry, being more expositions than sermons, and as such are good.

“*Blair’s Sermons.*—Valuable only (with few exceptions) on account of the beauty and propriety of the style. Young men may read them to improve themselves in the graces of utterance, but their souls will flee from them to the altar of incense to get a live coal.

“*Robinson’s Scripture Characters.*—A very excellent book; an eminent strain of piety running through the whole; plain, practical, energetic, with a happy turn of forcibly applying anything to the hearts of his readers. Sometimes led into inconsistencies to support a favourite creed, which was Calvinistic.

“*Benson’s Sermons.*—Powerful, pathetic, clear, full, and spiritual. Here we have the very marrow of Evangelical truth brought home to the soul.

“ *Walsh’s Life and Sermons, by Morgan.*—Walsh was one of the brightest luminaries of the Methodist Church. His diligence, self-denial, zeal, fervency of spirit, great knowledge in Biblical studies, made him almost a prodigy; and he died at the age of twenty-eight, worn out with excessive labour. The sermons are plain, heart-searching, and full of scriptural language and sentiments. They show us what Methodist preaching was once.

“ *Baxter’s Works.*—The fire and vehemence of Baxter make him one of the most useful writers in the world. He speaks with all the fervour of one just on the verge of the grave. The ‘Aphorisms’ are a most judicious performance. The ‘Reformed Pastor’ is a most faithful work. If we all observed the directions contained in it, we should see more good done; and how we shall stand in the great day if we do not, I cannot tell.

“ *Goodwin on Justification.* — This work is usually esteemed a good one, but I am not much taken with it. It is, I think, too dry and scholastic for general use.

“ *Romaine’s Life of Faith in the Soul.*—Romaine was doubtless a very good man, but not a good writer. There is a perpetual repetition and sameness in all he writes. There is no beginning, and there is no end. He writes in a circle and never gets out of it; and many of his sentiments are perfectly Antinomian.

“ *Nelson’s Journal.*—A highly interesting account

of that good man, who was raised up by the peculiar providence of God to be a useful apostle of the Methodist Church. It shows, as well as Walsh's Life, what Methodists were and endured.

“*Myles' History of the Methodists.*—This may be an authority as a book of reference, but I think the Methodists deserve a better history.

“*Tillotson's Sermons.*—I have read a good many of these sermons ; they are perspicuous and practical, but wanting in the true spirit of the Gospel. They are moral, as all sermons should be, but the power is wanting.

“*Dr. Adam Clarke's Discourses.*—Dr. C. possesses a grasp and comprehension of mind, an extent of knowledge, a power of reasoning, an originality of thought, an independence of soul, a love of truth, which raise him above all little party distinctions, and render him one of the most excellent of men and writers. One of the greatest luminaries of the Church below.

“*Benson's Life and Works of Fletcher.*—Fletcher I conceive to be the most holy man who has been upon earth since the apostolic age. I have seen nothing like his life in all the biography I have read. His works are a mighty bulwark against Antinomianism which will never be beaten down. I purchased these books and read them when I first set out in religion, and they were the means of quieting my soul and settling my mind, so that I am much indebted to them as a source of great good.

“*Wesley's Life, by Coke and Moore : his Sermons.*

—Wesley is too great and good for human applause. If I were to attempt it I should not know where to begin, nor where to end. This Life by Coke is inferior to that by Whitehead. The sermons and appeals are very excellent, clear, plain, perspicuous, nervous. Just what they should be to be the standard of Methodism. They cannot be read too often, because they cannot be read without getting good. Every Methodist should possess and read them often.

“*Wood on Religious Declension.*—A faithful, heart-searching discourse on a most interesting subject. Mr. Wood treats it in a popular and experimental, and not in a controversial way. He does not labour to prove the possibility of apostasy, but takes it for granted (as well he may in writing for Methodists), and then addresses himself to the heart.

“*Hodgson’s Life of Bp. Porteus.*—I had a much better opinion before I read this account of the Bishop than now, but I am afraid his biographer has not done him justice, as we hear nothing of the great leading doctrines of evangelical religion; and if the letter directed to an inquirer, in strictness, be admitted as a specimen of the Bishop’s views of experimental religion, I must conclude that he was sadly erroneous, if the Scriptures and language of all pious Christians may be appealed to. How few in high life but unite in the vulgar cry of fanaticism, enthusiasm, etc., when experimental religion is the subject!—and I am afraid the Bishop often

applied these epithets to this subject. However, there was much in him to admire; he was a firm, upright, zealous prelate, a scourge to ecclesiastical corruption, and liberal in his views respecting toleration.

“*Eyton, Rev. J., Vicar of Wellington: Sermons.*—The arrangement of these sermons is highly judicious,—no confusion; and the doctrine truly evangelical on the Methodist scheme, with one or two exceptions. First, where he confounds regeneration with repentance, and places it before faith in Christ; second, when he says the fleshly principle is the same in the regenerate and the unregenerate. With these two exceptions, these are the best sermons next to Wesley I have seen. Clear in argument, perspicuous and forcible in language, pious and pathetic in address, heart-searching, experimental and mighty, eloquent and judicious in Scripture, beyond any author I have read.

“*Watson’s Letters on the Eternal Sonship of Christ, in reply to Dr. Clarke.*—A giant wrestling with a giant. The profound, the lofty, the argumentative, the dispassionate, the eloquent Watson, here appears very great. The controversy is, I think, an unhappy one. I am afraid it will do harm among us. I think, however, that Watson is sometimes beating the air, as he reasons against the opinion of Dr. Clarke as if he denied the Divinity of our Lord, just as he would reason with a Socinian. Whichever of these two great men is

right I cannot say. However, Watson has taken up the subject, as all such subjects ought to be taken up, as a matter of pure revelation, and his arguments upon the use and place of reason in matters of revelation are very weighty.

“*Moore’s Thoughts on the Eternal Sonship.*—Much inferior to the work of Watson. Mr. M. is rather a dry writer.

“*Wesley’s Journals.*—After reading these volumes over again, I think as follows: 1. That the rise and progress of Methodism was of God; that it is true Scriptural Christianity; that Mr. Wesley was as truly sent of God to preach the Gospel as St. Paul. 2. That Methodism, in the number of true conversions, the extraordinary effusions of the Holy Ghost, the great success which has attended the preaching of the Word, the wide and extensive range it has taken in every quarter of the world, the purity of doctrine and discipline maintained in the Methodist Societies, and in the method in which God has called and qualified the preachers for their work, comes nearest to the account given us in the Acts of the Apostles of the primitive Church of any work of which we have a history since that period; and that in all this Methodism bears all the marks which characterized Christianity originally as the religion of God, with the exception of miracles. 3. That Mr. Wesley, as a man, a Christian, and especially as a minister of Christ, has had few equals, perhaps none since the days of St. Paul. One thing I have been struck with as

forming a very striking trait in his character, which I do not recollect to have seen much noticed. I mean his very fine taste. The grandeurs and even the minutiae of nature and art were observed by him with the most delightful attention, and had it not been for the superior pleasures of religion and doing good, he certainly would have enjoyed the most rapturous pleasures amid the grandeurs of the works of God. This appears to have been the case with his reading. He was capable of relishing all the beauties of composition both in verse and prose.

“*Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History.*—This is, I presume, a good history of the visible state and polity of the Church, but not a clear and evangelical history of the state of religion. Indeed it is pretty evident that though great praise is due to Mosheim for learning and industry, yet his views of the Gospel were not evangelical. He firmly stands up for the established order of things, and considers the Church all through more as a political engine to effect certain State purposes than as the kingdom of God to counteract this world's spirit and to conduct souls to heaven. Hence he often brands those as heretics who were evidently the true Church and people of God.

“1. We see in this history how very soon the doctrine of Christ was corrupted. 2. That worldly aggrandisements were the principal means of that corruption. 3. That the priesthood courted such aggrandisement, and when the State conferred it

the Church was ruined. 4. That when the simple truth as it is in Jesus was abandoned, and human opinion, fancy, and interest left to guide the doctrines of the Church, a full tide of the most grievous errors flowed in. 5. That Popery, with all its fooleries and blasphemies, sprang up as the necessary consequence of the previous state of error and wickedness. 6. That Popery itself, after its establishment, was scarcely anything else but one continued history of folly, madness, and blasphemy. 7. That though the Greek Church did not go to the full length of the Church of Rome in all her pollutions, yet she too was extremely corrupt. 8. That in the midst of the general darkness and depravity through the middle ages, God had a seed to serve Him, especially in the highly injured and persecuted Waldenses. 9. That the Reformation was a great work, and the Reformers great men; yet it was not a perfect work,—many errors were retained, and too great a leaning to the world observed. 10. That for many ages after the Reformation the Protestant Church had no just or adequate ideas of religious toleration or liberty of conscience. 11. That among the sectaries which sprang up after the Reformation the most unhal- lowed zeal and furious bigotry were often manifested, to the great scandal of true religion. 12. That upon the whole in every age of the world, if we are to judge of the religion of Christ by its fruits, it has had a very limited influence, and though professed by many it has been possessed by few.”

One or two remarks may be made upon these notes. The controversy concerning the Eternal Sonship was waged in the Methodist body with considerable heat, the chief combatants being Dr. Clarke and Mr. Watson. The view which Mr. Dixon wished to express was entirely orthodox, and the same with that expressed in the Articles of the Church of England: but he thought that Dr. Clarke was misunderstood and censured too severely by Watson. He refers to the subject in a letter which will be given hereafter.

It must not be concluded from the tone of some of these notes that Mr. Dixon was hostile to the Church of England as an established church. The contrary of this will be abundantly manifested as we proceed. He maintained the necessity of the Church of England to the good of the nation, regarded the Methodists as her allies and friends, and always studied to maintain the distinction between them and the Dissenters. But he was an enemy to corruptions, abuses, and inefficiency in every form.

It ought to be mentioned that about this time he voluntarily resigned a not inconsiderable fortune, of which he had become the legal and undisputed, but not, as he thought, the rightful possessor. This was a course of conduct which he repeated in a similar case in after life.

CHAPTER IV.

1819—24.

Second Marriage—Appointment to the Luton Circuit—Letters—Design of becoming a Missionary—Appointment to the Gloucester Circuit—Letters containing Reflections on the State of Methodism—"Notes on Books and Authors"—Appointment to the Station of Gibraltar and Failure there—Letters from Gibraltar—Letter to Dr. Bunting on the Question of Ordination.

ON the 23rd of August, 1819, Mr. Dixon married Miss Mary Cooper, the daughter of Mr. Thomas Cooper, of Knighton.

Immediately after his second marriage he was appointed to the Luton Circuit, in Bedfordshire, with residence at Toddington, a pleasant village situated in the midst of an open and fertile country. It was a laborious circuit; the distances to be traversed were very great, and no horse was kept by the circuit. Mr. Dixon thought at first that the fatigue would have taxed his strength, but soon found that instead of being injured he grew more vigorous under the toil which nearly every day imposed. He found the people very kind and affectionate, and many excellent Societies and congregations in various places besides Luton.

We find however from some letters which he wrote to the Rev. George Birley, who had been his colleague in Brecon, that he was dissatisfied with the state of the people and the progress of religion. His mind was in a state of uneasiness with regard to himself and others, and he sought, and apparently found in Mr. Birley, a correspondent who could sympathise with the thoughts and feelings which agitated him.

The following is taken from the first of these letters, dated Toddington, Nov. 17, 1819.

“I think it probable that the long silence which has taken place between us has been a mutual disappointment, and I feel at length an inclination to break it; to inform you of my state and prospects, and to inquire after yours. . . . If the Lord is pleased to crown my feeble ministry with success in the awakening and conversion of sinners, and the building up of believers in their most holy faith, I shall be quite satisfied with my new circuit. I have an excellent, friendly, and affectionate Superintendent, who from his amiable spirit and respectable talents is highly esteemed by all the people. The circuit is pretty extensive; we have a hired local preacher, out of Yorkshire, to assist us, or else the labour would be rather too much. We have nine or ten chapels, several very good Societies, and the congregations on the whole very fair. The place we live at is Toddington, a very healthy and pleasant place, about seven miles from Luton. The house we occupy is very pleasantly situated, and in itself convenient. All that I want is more grace,

and to see the pleasure of the Lord prosper in our hands. . . . I should much like to be near you, to have the happiness of free conversation and a reciprocal change of ideas upon many subjects. What are you doing? Is your muse silent? What are you reading? What methods are you adopting for improvement? May we not make our correspondence more edifying by noticing these and similar subjects? I want to know your opinion upon the qualities of a good sermon, and the best mode of preaching in general. I want to know what books you have read, and your opinion upon them, with a general plan for reading and study. I want to know your opinion upon all the doctrines held by the Methodists, and their harmony with the Word of God. I want to know your opinion upon the Church government among us—whether Scriptural—with the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the Itinerant and Pastoral schemes of preaching and presiding over churches and congregations. I want to know your opinion upon the state of Methodism in general, with our prospects of success, or dangers and temptations. All these subjects alternately occupy a share of my own attention, and if I had a friend at hand I should often propose questions with a view to their elucidation. Will you favour me with a long letter, and if you feel at liberty to enter upon the discussion of any or all of these subjects—or any other which you may deem of more importance—I shall be very glad to receive your opinions. I have had the

pleasure of hearing Messrs. Watson and Atmore since I have been in this country. Watson is a master in the art of preaching, and I felt peculiarly delighted in hearing him. I spent a few hours also in his company—he is very intelligent and very pleasant.”

There is something of the imperiousness of genius in this—the desire to find another interested in the same objects and animated with the same desire to penetrate them thoroughly. There is also the strong feeling of imperfect knowledge, which is one of the marks of a great mind. A small mind keeps to its own first conclusions, and dwells in them as long as it exists; but a great mind knows its own imperfection of knowledge, its own prejudices, and is eager to compare the reasonings and conclusions of others. And yet when inquiry has done its work, and a thing is known to its shreds, the mind often only returns to its first instinctive convictions.

It is interesting to read here the short account of the first meeting between Mr. Watson and Mr. Dixon, after the entrance of the latter into the ministry. From what soon afterwards followed, it would seem that the favourable impression was mutual, and Mr. Watson was the first influential person who perceived the great qualities which lay beneath the shy and modest, yet keenly intelligent, manner of the young preacher.

The following letter contains the earliest expression of those convictions as to the course and position of Methodism, which he afterwards upheld throughout his life.

TODDINGTON, *Sept. 15th, 1820*

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—

"I have been expecting to hear from you for a great length of time, but as my expectations are not realized, I think it best to write. I know not, however, that I have anything very interesting to say, I only think the fire of friendship and Christian love should not be suffered to expire for the want of fuel. Perhaps between choice friends it is worth while writing now and then, if it is only for the purpose of the exchange of mutual assurances of unalterable affection. I can assure you that, though separated by distance and by revolving time from you, my attachment and affection continue the same. I have not forgotten the first meeting, the impression made upon my mind, the opening of our esteem and Christian love, the many conversations we had together, the hopes and joys which used to play upon our fancies respecting the designs and prospects of future life. Ah! those were days of boyish pleasure. Perhaps you may not like this remark, as not suited to the gravity of our official character and the more chastened and holy pursuits of our life. Well then, let me say that the religious pleasures of those days were such as have left the best effect upon my mind, and I know not that I can select many portions of my life which have been more happy in that respect. I hope after the anxieties and afflictions of this state are ended, we shall renew our friendship in a better world.

“One event has taken place since I wrote to you last, which calls for gratitude, and on account of which I hope you and your beloved S—— will unite in praising God. My dear wife has blessed me with a daughter, and I find that this has added very much to my temporal happiness. I find my dear little girl excites in my bosom feelings of pleasure and love that I was a stranger to before. Indeed I have every blessing which perhaps I ought to expect in this life. I pray that they all may be sanctified.

“As it respects my spiritual state, all that I can say is, that the Lord is very good, and I am very lukewarm. I do not mean that religion appears less necessary or less excellent, but I feel a want of that fervent love and burning zeal which glowed in the bosom of the first and best Christians. My feelings and ministry do not correspond with my views of the exalted privileges of the Gospel and the self-denying nature of the duties of the Gospel ministry. Instead of rising into the high and exalted character of a perfect Christian, I stop short, and creep along the road to heaven, as if there were nothing worth running and fighting for; and instead of the holy, self-denying, zealous, faithful, laborious minister of Christ—oh, I am but a coward still! May our heavenly Father awake me to a sense of the awful importance of these great and glorious things!

“I think you will approve the answer of the Conference, Question Twenty-six in the Minutes. This is considering the great work of Religion in the spirit of Religion. If we attend to this direc-

tion we shall not have to lament a decrease of numbers in the Societies next year. I hope this will produce an humbling, and a fervent turning to God among us. I have thought for a great length of time that it would be a difficult task to preserve the genuine spirit of religion among so large a body of people as the Methodists; and my full conviction still is, that it will be ten times more difficult to preserve the body pure and holy in doctrine and life (especially the latter), than it used to be, since it has got to its present large and extended state. This will depend much upon the preachers and official characters. But is there not a danger of our Conference business, Quarterly-meetings' business, Missionary-meetings' business, and all the 'framework' business, being so transacted as to banish God from His Church, and do all that is done in the little spirit of strife and party? Do we not often witness this, especially in our Quarterly-meetings? and instead of being purely religious meetings, as they ought to be—why, you may very often give them any other character, but as to religion, I am certain they have nothing to do with it. I hope the Lord will interpose by His Holy Spirit and save us from the danger to which we, as well as others, are very evidently exposed.

“Have you any thoughts of becoming a missionary? If you will go to New South Wales, I will go with you. I often think upon this glorious work, and if I had more piety and resolution, I should live and die a missionary. I think the

aspect of things in this country gloomy ; perhaps a most severe sifting time is not very far distant, when we shall be tried as by fire. I often think either some very great mercies or judgments await us. If we could see genuine religion upon the increase we might hope for better days, but, alas, I am afraid it is rather upon the decline.”

In a letter, written a few months before to the same correspondent, he describes a visit to London, and pursues the same kind of reflections as in the above letter.

“ Early in January we paid a visit to our friends in London, and continued there about a fortnight. I had an opportunity of hearing most of our great men, several among the Dissenters, and also several among the Church people, also of attending several meetings for benevolent purposes—Bible Society Meeting, Jewish Synagogues, Courts of Law, Public Buildings, etc. In that busy world all is bustle and activity. There are many monuments of piety and philanthropy ; a laudable zeal for the Redeemer’s cause, and innumerable things to gratify the finest taste. But one thing I am afraid of (and we may apply it to ourselves),—it is that in many cases the holy and spiritual interests of religion are conducted in a secular and worldly spirit. It is possible for our own excellent institutions, and the institutions of other people, to become a mere piece of machinery, conducted with the most admirable order, and yet for their spirituality to be lost, and though there is all the apparatus of a spiritual work, yet for God to

be absent, and in the noise of business to be forgotten. Many things, however, pleased me, but nothing so much as several of the finest lads I ever saw going to distant lands in the sacred character of missionaries. Oh, what a reproach, thought I (and still think) to us ! Here are a number of young lads coming forward year after year, who leave home and friends and country, and cross the seas, and brave every danger, and preach Christ to perishing heathen, and we sneak from such a task, and are afraid of the difficulties which we leave inexperienced youth to cope with alone, and are only scrambling and bawling about our circuits from one year to another. Oh, I am ashamed before the Lord ! May He forgive me and many more this sin !

“You complain, my dear friend, of the company you have been in. I can assure you I have lately been in much better. I have lately read with uncommon interest the lives of three eminent men—Coke, Fuller, and Henry Martyn—all missionary men. The former the father of Methodist missions, the second of the Baptist Missions, and the latter a zealous missionary himself. I never was more interested by any piece of biography than by that of Martyn. In addition to his pre-eminent talents, learning, zeal, and piety, there is so much sensibility and sentiment about him as throws such a colouring, and inspires such a spirit, as interests you in all his feelings and the whole of his history. I have lately read a few more works, such as Ellis on ‘The Knowledge of Divine Things,’ a book which overthrows

the theory of the Natural Religion men ; Magee on 'The Atonement,' a book of great value, sound reasoning, vast research, and orthodox ; some of Fuller's works, a sound, sensible writer ; Howe's 'Living Temple,' one of the most acute and serious writers in the world ; J. Bromley on 'Prescience,' a work which does credit to so young a writer, though I at present think his theory false. I have read all the pamphlets about the Eternal Sonship dispute, and think the dispute itself a very unhappy one. I am perfectly certain if the old method of interpretation be adhered to, the perfect Deity of Jesus Christ cannot be maintained. I think Jones on 'The Trinity' one of the best books on the subject, and its great excellency consists in the absence of all metaphysical reasoning on both sides of the question, and a simple statement of the proofs of the Divinity of Christ as recorded in Scripture. That is enough. I have made up my mind to stand by that, and not to admit of any explanation which makes Him less than God. In London I purchased many books."

Whether the idea of becoming a missionary was suggested to him by Mr. Watson, or originated out of the disturbed reflections put down in these letters, is uncertain, but the latter is perhaps the more probable, as we see that in 1820 he made a proposal to Mr. Birley that they should go together to New South Wales. At all events, in the following year a proposal was made to him by Mr. Watson, who was then Secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society,

that he should go out to New South Wales as a missionary, and in reply he formally offered himself for the work. In a letter to Mr. Watson he says :—

“The subject of being employed as a missionary to New South Wales has engaged my anxious thoughts both before and since you spoke to me on the subject at the District Meeting. The result is that I feel it my duty to offer myself as a candidate for that important situation.”

The reason why his offer was declined is not known ; but in late years, now that the Australian colonies have become so important, he often spoke of the different complexion which his life would have taken if he had been permitted to carry out his intention. Doubtless he would have proved a great power in consolidating the Methodist Church in those young flourishing colonies, but Methodism at home would have lost one of her brightest ornaments and most faithful sons.

It will be seen, however, in due course, that he was sent by the Missionary Society to Gibraltar, which was the only piece of missionary work in which he was ever engaged.

The reader will by this time probably admit that Mr. Dixon ranks high as an epistolary writer. There is remarkable beauty, aptness of expression, sweetness and nobility, in many of his letters. There are graceful and unstudied turns in them which could only come from a truly tender and loving mind ; they are sometimes very solemn, often very impassioned, and generally very weighty.

There are no letters in the language that are at all like them, and few that surpass them in the expression of friendship, thought, and religion.

The following was addressed about this time to Mrs. Dixon's sister :—

“TODDINGTON, Feb. 9th, 1821.

“MY VERY DEAR SISTER,—

“If you expected me to answer your kind and interesting letter at all, I dare say you have before this blamed me for my silence and inattention. But as you did not say anything respecting an answer, I did not think about it at all till within a day or two past, when my dear Mary told me I ought to answer it; but I suspect it is to save herself the trouble of answering the one you wrote to her. Be this as it may, be assured the contents of both your letters gave us very great pleasure, and pleasure which we have not felt from any intelligence received either from Kington or elsewhere since we left you. I hardly know where to begin my remarks. Perhaps it ought to be in congratulating you and Mr. D. upon the birth of your daughter. The birth of a being whose existence will never terminate is, though it be little thought of, no ordinary event, and on the part of parents calls for the warmest expressions of gratitude. We, who are only the parents of one, consider it a great honour and happiness: how then must you feel who have *nine*? Ah, but the care, you will say,—the responsibility! I am not talking about the care and responsibility, but the happiness

of being blessed with such a family, and the bringing of them up in the fear of God, and for His church and family. This will be ample compensation for all the care felt.

“Those parts of your letter which refer to the revival of the work of God gave me unspeakable pleasure. I feel an interest in Kington and the neighbourhood which will ever cause me to receive such intelligence with sincere gratitude to God. My soul has often sorrowed over Kington in consequence of the little visible good I had the privilege of beholding. But now I rejoice that the Lord has visited you, and poured His Spirit from on high. I should be glad to share with you the pleasure of worshipping in your happy assemblies, and pouring out with you my poor and unworthy prayers, and seeing precious souls brought into the liberty of God’s children: but what I cannot enjoy I am glad to hear of, and though not with you I can meet you at the same throne of grace, and mingle my praises and prayers with yours. I feel especially thankful that William Ellis has been brought to cast in his lot among you. I highly esteem him, and hope you will do all you can to keep him in the good way. Poor Charles! I never thought to hear of him engaging in public prayer, and especially with such acceptance and power. But we see that those who are taught of God are made wise indeed. Aye, while the wise and noble of this world are living and dying fools as it respects God and the things of God, the poor and the simple are living in the

enjoyment of saving knowledge, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. It must be reviving to the elder friends, who have borne the burden and the heat of the day, to see what the Lord is doing among you. You cannot but partake largely of the Divine influence which operates in the awakening and conversion of those who are out of the way. If I might be allowed the liberty, I would suggest the necessity of those who have enjoyed the blessings of salvation to improve under this most gracious visitation. The shining of the sun on the return of spring not only causes the seeds sown in the earth to vegetate, but also the old trees, which have stood through the winter, to unfold their leaves and blossoms, and to bring forth the fruits of their season. So may it be with the old trees of the garden of the Lord, planted by His own hand! I am happy to learn that the work among you is deep as well as wide, and that real awakenings and conversions take place. Their union with the visible Church would be of little importance without this—this was the great work of original Methodism, and, thank God! it has not lost its character. Oh that the Lord may still favour you with His presence, and make you ten times more numerous than you are! We have nothing to communicate from these parts. We continue to labour on in the cause of our Lord, but hitherto see nothing particular. I hope it will appear in the last day that we have not spent our strength for nought. Our little girl grows very fast, and is very healthy and strong, and what

is better, some of the people say she looks very *heavenly-minded*. I am afraid, however, she partakes the evils of the Fall, and is too much like her sinful father to be very heavenly-minded without much grace.

“Mrs. MORGAN DAVIES,
“Kington, Herefordshire.”

By the Conference of 1821 Mr. Dixon was appointed to the Gloucester Circuit, with residence at Tewkesbury, and there he travelled for three years. He found things in a very low state in this circuit; the congregations dispersed, the Societies divided and disheartened, the chapels in debt, and the town of Tewkesbury in great commercial embarrassment. In a letter written soon after his arrival he says: “They had been quarrelling with the preachers, and the preachers had been quarrelling with them, and everything was wrong. I have sometimes thought my fate hard, for this is the third circuit to which I have been appointed in nine years in this wretched state of contention and disquiet. My work in these instances, instead of going on peaceably and successfully preaching the Gospel, has been to heal disorders excited by others, and I am sure you know that such work is very unpleasant work. However I begin to hope that the evil day is past. We have perfect peace in our Society; several have united, and we think we have a reasonable prospect of a little increase of prosperity and success.”

One of his most remarkable qualities indeed was

the power of making peace. His own nature was so high-strung and sympathetic, so broad and generous, that men did not hesitate to confide to him their griefs and grudges, even if these were so petty and miserable as to shame the mind that nursed them. He knew equally well how to humour the weakest and to contend with the strongest. Sometimes by banter, or even by a peculiar, half-astonished, broad sort of laugh, he has shamed people out of their bitterness to one another; but in more serious cases he knew how to assume an almost irresistible tone of command. He was constantly sought for as a mediator; and men who had been standing haughtily apart from one another, and would have disdained the friendly offices of almost every other person, were frequently willing to commit their honour into his hands, and found their differences brought to an end.

All this time he continued to be impressed with the fear lest the institutions in the midst of which he worked should become too complicated in their organism for the freedom of spiritual life,—lest means should become ends, and the simplicity of the ministers of religion be entangled in the multitude of ordinances and ministrations. No unreasonable fact surely, but one which arose from what has been the great danger of every part of the Church in every age. In a letter to his former correspondent, Mr. Birley, written from Tewkesbury in 1822, he says:—

“ There is an evil which I think very prevalent

in our Superintendents, (and other preachers as well); it is a sort of secular spirit—doing things too much in the spirit of this world, and talking about and evidently delighting in that part of their work which is of a secular nature more than in that which is of an intellectual and spiritual nature. I have seen, or think I have seen, so much of this in the course of my life, that sometimes I stand and tremble at the consequences. It is a serious question with me whether we have not too much to do with money matters. It imperceptibly and silently steals upon the preachers, till, in fact, we hardly ever, at our private meetings with one another, at the leaders' meetings, and at the quarterly meetings, hear anything else but about money. Now this must sadly secularise and sensualise a man's mind. A minister of Jesus Christ ought to dwell in a purer region. And how can he come down to the temple of the Lord, and diffuse the holy spirit of religion all around him, if his own mind is only conversant with temporal things? But, you will say, as many have said before you, must not the temporal business of the Connexion be taken care of? Yes, it ought and must; but then ought the temporal business of the Connexion to be done in the spirit of religion and the Gospel, or ought the Gospel to be preached in the spirit of the world? Ought our earthly things to be raised up to the standard of God's Word, or ought God's Word, and the Gospel, and the sanctity of the ministry to bow down to a worldly standard? Now I have seen

temporal things done so as to cause a neglect of the closet, of reading, of spiritual conversation, and consequently a lowering of the character of a preacher, and especially the success of his office.

“You will say I am always grumbling and grunting. The fact is, I have not half done. The world is full of deadly evils. There is not half the good in existence among any of the professing bodies of Christians that their fond and blind admirers think there is. This is true of ourselves, it is true of our preachers, it is true of our societies, it is true of our cause in general. It is not a malignant or discontented feeling which makes me say so, for I trust I am free from both; but it is an opinion I have come to after mature thought and consideration. There is, I am afraid, an awful propensity in the present generation of men to varnish things over, and leave rottenness at the core. Go to the public meetings, and from the large concourse of people and the fine speeches you hear you would conclude that ours has become a successful religion in the world; go to the streets and lanes and alleys of our towns, go to our prisons and brothels and hospitals, go to the gay circles of private life, and you will see that, with all this show and noise, there is a deadly principle still at work, and death eternal is swallowing up millions at a meal. It is not the time yet for the Church to array herself in her wedding robes, and to sing the hallelujah of triumph. That time will come, but it is not yet; sackcloth upon her back, ashes upon her head, her mouth in

the dust, and fervent and importunate prayer offered up, are at present her posture and duty. When the multitude is shouting around you at the missionary meetings, at hearing the eloquence of Watson, remember that at that moment millions of souls are just entering the gulf of eternal night."

Seldom have words been uttered more worthy to enter into the ears of the Church. The rest of this letter gives an interesting view of his own unintermitted studies:—

"I am now reading Whitby on 'The Five Points,' 'The Christian Library,' and Burnet's 'History of his own Times.' I have lately read Ward's 'Farewell Letters,' Chalmers' 'Civic Economy,' and last volume of Sermons; Paley's Sermons, Hale's 'Golden Remains,' and some of Dr. Isaac Barrow's Sermons. I have lately enriched my library with Baxter's 'Christian Directory,' and 'Reasons for the Christian Religion.' I am well off for periodical publications; by being at peace with my neighbours, the Dissenters, I see the *Eclectic Review*, the *London Investigator* and *Quarterly Magazine*, by Collier, Raffles, and Brown; the *New Evangelical Magazine*, and some others. I find the Non-conformist divines great indeed. There were, as our good old king said, 'giants in those days.' I think the literary qualities of our magazine much improved by our excellent Jabez [Bunting].

"Let me hear of you soon, and if you will give me an account of your missionary meeting I will thank you. It is a shame that Watson does not

employ his splendid talents in writing something worthy of himself; but I am afraid he is in that respect idle."

This last surmise was unfounded, as, just a year after it was written, in the spring of 1823, Mr. Watson published the first part of his most elaborate work, the "Theological Institutes," on which he had long been engaged. That work has continued to be the most systematic text-book of Methodist Theology; and as it appeared in successive parts, it produced in the mind of Mr. Dixon an admiration to which the present writer has often heard him refer.

On some of the works which he mentions in the above letter Mr. Dixon has left some characteristic remarks in his "Notes on Authors," which it may be well to quote for the last time.

Of Chalmers he says: "We discover such a train of powerful and convincing arguments from one end of his volumes to the other, on subjects of vital importance, as we scarcely ever find. On all points connected with the very prime and essential doctrines and duties of religion the Doctor speaks out with freedom and boldness. There is a great deal of new and original thought (in his sermons), expressed in the most glowing language, and convincing argument." Of Chalmers' work on "The Evidence and Authority of the Church" he says: "I have read the same arguments for the evidence of our holy religion in other authors; but few are capable of putting such strength of language in an argument as Dr.

Chalmers; he not only places the subject in a clear and vivid light, but by his peculiar style carries you along with him in his grand and triumphant march toward the promised goal—evidence and conviction.” Of his “Christian Revelation viewed in connection with Modern Astronomy” Mr. Dixon says: “Strength of argument, sublimity of sentiment, grandeur of representation, a nervous and flowing diction, are among the excellencies of this book. The design of the work is grand and bold, a task for the genius of Chalmers, and he has executed it with great success. If the hypothesis upon which it is built be true—and there is the greatest reason to suppose it—then nothing can appear more grand than the exhibition here given of the sublimity of the design of the death of Christ and the Christian Revelation. It is impossible for any one to read this work without rising from the perusal of it astonished and elevated with the idea of the greatness of Deity, the beauty and glory of His works, the admirable adaptation of the Christian scheme to promote the Divine glory, and the exalted scale of being which even man holds in the creation and destinies of the universe.”

We go on to quote what he says of several other books.

“*Baxter’s Life and Times.*—Baxter was one of the greatest men and greatest divines the world ever saw. He gives a most interesting and faithful account of his own parentage, conversion, employment, call to the ministry, mode of life, afflictions, means used to promote the Lord’s work; and it

appears that a work was wrought at Kidderminster in extent and depth such as is rarely on record. He was, it is evident, a most pious and laborious minister of the Lord Jesus.

"The times in which he lived were among the most eventful in British history, and his work is perhaps the most impartial history of those times. It is evident from his account that the king, though in the main a good man, yet was in religion an intolerant bigot, and in politics arbitrary, impolitic, and foolish; that he had such an idea of the rights of kings as to raise him to a state of infallible independence of his subjects; his word was not to be taken, and he blindly rushed upon his own ruin.

"The party against him was at first moderate and constitutional; but, being again and again deceived by him and their rights trampled upon, they afterwards became violent and acted unconstitutionally. It is evident that it was not a religious faction which originated the Revolution, for there were only one or two Presbyterians in the House of Commons at the time, but it originated in a constitutional opposition against the king, and was driven by himself to an extremity; that during the first period of the Revolution, when the prelacy was abolished, and all the pious ministers of the land were at full liberty to do as they pleased, great good was done; and there was perhaps as much real godliness in many parts of the country as ever existed before or since; that Cromwell was at first a good and sincere man, but being elated with success and fed with spiritual pride, he

finally became ambitious and deceitful; that he encouraged the religious fanatics who flattered his pride and served his ends, and great religious disorders ensued; that the restoration of Charles II. was in a great measure brought about by the Presbyterians; that he first promised them great things, but after having made them serve his own ends he betrayed them, and established the old order of things.

“Baxter took a great share in the ecclesiastical affairs of those times, and he evinced great acuteness of reason, boldness of address, perseverance, fortitude, and pious integrity.

“*Southey's Life of Wesley.*—I scarcely know what to say of this work, there is so much good and evil mixed. Mr. Southey, however, must have the praise of a beautiful and fascinating writer. His narrative, too, is generally true, and his quotations fair. In many things he has done justice to Wesley's character, but then it is mixed with so many blots and insinuations that one can scarcely come at the real opinion of Southey or the real character of Wesley. His motives are so often ascribed to ambition, and his piety to enthusiasm, and the work he did to I know not what agency—generally that of disease of some sort—that it becomes very difficult to fix upon anything decided in the book.

“The principal objection, however, lies against the divinity of the work. There is not a doctrine of Christianity which a good man holds important and vital, but is impugned in this book. The devil is made a personified principle of evil, and all the vital

principles of religion are served the same way, for they too have no existence in the creed of Southey. His attacks upon Mr. Wesley's doctrine lie with equal force against the New Testament. It is a mischievous book, not so much on account of the evil it is likely to do to Methodism, as by poisoning the minds of a class of readers for whom Southey writes, who it is to be feared are already sufficiently distant from a scriptural creed and a godly life. It can do us no hurt; it will hurt the disciples of Southey.

"*Watson's Observations on Southey's Wesley.*— This is a most triumphant performance. The doctrines of Scripture opposed by Southey are here ably advocated. The arguments are presented with great strength of reason, and the whole truly eloquent and often sublime. Watson has in this, as in all other performances, taken the sure ground of Scripture, and here wrests the palm of victory out of the hands of his opponent. He very wisely in his defence of the opinions of Mr. Wesley makes it a defence of the doctrines of the Bible: and indeed this is the fact; but a less skilful polemic would have entered into a warm defence of the peculiar sentiments of Mr. Wesley, without referring to principles, and placing his conduct and success as a minister upon the broad and secure foundation of scriptural sentiment. I therefore value the work as an able and successful vindication of some of the most valuable and precious truths of our holy religion.

“*Life of Henry Martyn.*—The most inimitable memoir I think I ever read. I felt more interested in following that blessed man through the sacred scenes of his eventful pilgrimage than in any one before. There is such a charm of elevated piety running through the whole, and yet so congenial with the feelings and sympathies of our common nature, that it bore me along with the narrative, while every feeling and affection of my heart was touched with the tenderest emotions. His voyage, his labours in India, his translations of the Scriptures, his journey into Persia and disputes with the Mohammedans, and, last of all, his death among barbarians, without a home and without a friend, are all subjects in the history which must interest all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, or are capable of the tender and affectionate feelings either of human nature or of Christian sympathy. The Church is proud of such a son, and well she may be.

“*Drew’s Essay on the Soul.*—Whether the ingenious and philosophical mind of Mr. Drew would have been able to frame the arguments of this book had he not previously known the soul to be spiritual and immortal by the light of revelation it is difficult to say. As it is, however, his book contains some very powerful arguments in proof of an immortal spirit in man. The essential difference between matter and spirit is freely made to appear, and the consequent difference between the qualities and properties of each. But whether the necessary and absolute immortality of the soul is proved from the

principles laid down is not quite so clear. I am inclined to think that though many plausible reasons might be advanced in favour of the soul's immortality, yet nothing absolute and certain is to be proved upon any tangible principles in that soul without the light of revelation. I heard Mr. Watson say twice, 'If the doctrine of this book were true, the human soul was God, and if that on the resurrection were true, then the resurrection was vegetation.' I cannot fully subscribe to these sentiments, yet perhaps Mr. Drew has pushed his argument for a sort of necessary and independent immortality too far, without considering that God 'only' has a proper and independent 'immortality.'

"The style of the work is necessarily dry, the argumentation is powerful, and the language good. Considering the disadvantages of Mr. Drew, he is truly a wonder, and discovers a greatness of mind which proves him to be by nature or the gift of God a very great genius.

"*Ellis's Knowledge of Divine Things.*—This is one of the most valuable books in the world. It is so because it knocks on the head a thousand folios written to prove a lie—*viz.*, that religion is natural and framed by nature; that revelation is a sort of secondary thing built upon Natural Religion. This was the folly of ancient times; and in the writings of many of the old divines we discover nothing but this flimsy speculation brought forth to make the people wise and good, while the great doctrines of revealed religion were kept out of sight. All these

opinions are here consigned to their proper place, and revelation is brought forward to its proper situation in the Church—not a secondary thing, but the book of books.

“Some of the errors of Locke and other great men are combated with much force of argument, and the truth exhibited in lucid colours. All those who are proud of human speculations and reasonings should read this work; it would moderate their high towering notions, and put reason in its proper situation.”

These extracts will be sufficient to show what Mr. Dixon sought for in books. It was religion, and religion not merely as a sentiment, but in the form of positive and accurate doctrine. In the former case, he would not have read theology in the systematic and careful manner in which he read it; one thing would have been to him the same as another, and with his speculative and discursive turn he would have preferred to launch into the wide sea of philosophy or of general literature, rather than confine himself to the doctrines of Christianity as expounded by the evangelical divines. But he saw in those doctrines the only effectual means of grappling with the evils of the world; he believed that when they were set forth and embraced, then only was the renewal of the human heart and the reformation of society to be expected; and he delighted above all things to notice their agreement with his own experience, and their power in developing the charac-

ter of holy men. The spiritual life within his soul made known its presence by the multiplication of spiritual wants: that which fed him he believed to be the food necessary for others: what quickened and refined his own nature he felt to be a spiritual bread which must be multiplied to others: and hence he is seen seeking for the doctrines of the Gospel under every phase and manifestation, even the humblest, and detecting the absence of them amidst all the beauties of moral speculation. His reading, like everything else, shows how entirely he lived in religion. —

His continuous anxiety for Methodism, his jealous fears of the decline of spiritual life in his church, are manifested in the following letter to Mr. Birley,

“TEWKESBURY, *May 28th*, 1823.

“MY DEAR BROTHER,—

“I wish I were innocent, that I might have the pleasure of giving you a good scolding for sending me the little shabby note of yesterday. Why did you not write me a letter? The principle upon which you are acting appears to be that you will be no better than I am: so of course you cannot claim for yourself the pleasure and the privilege of admonishing and provoking me ‘to love and to good works.’ However, I owe you an apology for my long silence, and can most conscientiously assure you that I had often resolved to write, but through the procrastination of my nature was led to put it off from time to time, meaning well, but neglecting to perform.

“We held our district meeting last week. Nothing

at all occurred at it of any public importance. There was no charge against any of the brethren ; the temporal business was settled as usual. I heard of no particular good, and of no unusual evil.

“The Bristol district missionary meeting was held at the same time, Mr. Butterworth in the chair. It was a good meeting, well attended, and more than usually productive. I only heard one of the sermons, preached by Mr. Stephens, of London : a very great and excellent one. It was the first time I ever heard Mr. S., and he quite exceeded my expectations. He is one of our genuinely great men. But I begin to feel an objection against holding our missionary meetings at the time of the District Meetings. The latter meetings, I feel fully persuaded, are not what they used to be in consequence. We hear nothing but Missionary Divinity now. We hear no sermons now on the Christian ministry, pastoral duties, or even doctrinal and experimental religion. Missionary Divinity swallows up all the rest. Now, I cannot believe it used to be so, and I cannot bring my mind to think it ought to be so. We used to hear our venerable fathers in the Gospel address the junior preachers on the duties of their pastoral office ; and I cannot but think that the assembling of a District, as it affords a fair opportunity, so it ought to be embraced for this purpose. The effect is seen too upon the people. After being kept in a state of excitement for three or four days by the Missionary business they feel no interest in the District preaching, and

the poor brethren who are doomed to perform the task have generally to do it to empty pews.

“I have obtained leave to attend Conference, and if you go should be glad if we could contrive to go together. I have also consented to stay in this circuit a third year.

“Let us, my brother, endeavour to cherish and guard the work of God in our souls. It is, after all, simple experimental religion which constitutes our real good, and the period will soon arrive when it will be the distinguishing mark of real glory. Oh for more holiness! I hope by the teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit I shall be led to seek an abundant increase of vital and heartfelt religion, that I may bring forth more of the fruit that shall remain. I hope now that I have given you all the information in my power, and proof that I have not forgotten you, you will give me some news respecting your District Meeting, and the state of things in Cornwall. Do not delay this, for I want to know how you are going on. We are all tolerably well in health, and as comfortable in our situation as perhaps we have any reason to expect in the Church militant and the World's world. You will not fail to pray for me. I like to have an interest in my friends' prayers, then I feel sure that our friendship will be pure, profitable, and lasting.”

After spending three years in the Gloucester Circuit, Mr. Dixon was appointed, in 1824, to Gibraltar, with the intention, it is believed, on the part of

the Missionary Committee, that if that station suited his health, he should in due course proceed to India. Landing, however, at Gibraltar in the hottest season of the year, he very soon had an attack of yellow fever; and so unhealthy did the climate prove to his family, that, contrary to his own inclination, he was compelled to return to England in twelve months, the medical opinion being that his wife and children would die if he persisted in remaining.

The appointment was not a mission, but a sort of chaplaincy; and illness and the unsettled state of the country made it impossible for Mr. Dixon to render it more than this; though he tried to learn Spanish and preach to the Spaniards. For the first time in his life he found himself checked in the service of his Master by physical impossibilities; and he felt in consequence greatly humbled and mortified. But he could not have imbibed a greater horror of Popery if he had encountered all the priests and mobs of Spain. He saw that noble country still struggling in the grasp of the tremendous despotism which had cast her down from her pre-eminence; he saw the system at work, extending its ramifications through society, crushing civil no less than religious liberty; and he was fired with an undying zeal against it, which he had afterwards many and by no means insignificant opportunities of signalising. Some interesting letters belong to the time of his sojourn in Gibraltar, of which the first was addressed to Mr. William Mumford of Tewkesbury.

“GIBRALTAR, *Sept.* 23rd, 1824.

“MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—

“It is a month to-day since we landed at this place, and but few days have passed since that time in which I have not purposed to sit down to the pleasing task of writing to you and my other beloved friends at Tewkesbury. I am afraid an impression has by this time been made on your minds to my disadvantage; you have concluded that those appearances of attachment and affection, which were mutually expressed when we parted, have on my part subsided, occupied as I have been by new objects and new pursuits. If any such feeling has found its way to your minds, I hope it will be immediately dismissed when I inform you that I still feel, and I am persuaded ever shall, so long as memory holds her seat and my heart continues to beat, the same most cordial and warm affection for you all; and I indeed consider it one of the principal sources of my happiness that it is so. I often muse with melancholy pleasure on the happy days I spent among you—now gone for ever. The many happy opportunities we enjoyed together at the house of God, at the throne of grace, at the Lord’s Supper, in Christian fellowship, in familiar and social intercourse, in the interchange of mutual kindness and affection, in the feeling of kindred joys and sorrows, and in cordial and united, though feeble, efforts to promote the Redeemer’s glory, are all familiar to my thoughts and recollection. I think of your persons, your habitations, your beau-

tiful town and flowing river and picturesque and delightful scenery, and there is enchantment in the thought of these inanimate glories. There is nothing like them here. Our town is a prison from which we cannot escape; our houses full of filth and vermin inside and dust on the outside; our rock is, what its name indicates, all barrenness and sterility, and there is not a thing within the range of the eyes which is at all in unison with our English ideas of comfort and beauty.

“We landed here just at the worst season of the year—in the height of summer. The heat has been intense—I understand, considerably greater than it has been for some years. The inconvenience suffered in consequence of the heat here is peculiar on account of the situation. The town is built as near the water’s edge as possible, and the houses generally ascend up the hill. Behind the town is what is properly called the Rock, fifteen hundred feet high. This immense rock, as you will easily conceive, just behind the houses in which we live, effectually prevents a free circulation of air, and when the wind is in the east (and this is always the case a great part of the summer) we scarcely get any air at all. It is the want of a free circulation of air, prevented by the rock, which renders the heat so peculiarly oppressive, and consequently unhealthy. We have all suffered considerably in our health. I broke my shin the first night after landing, and in consequence of the change going on in my habit of body, through the heat, cannot get it

well. It is still ulcerated, and is making very little progress, if any at all. My dear wife is often exceedingly languid and ill—so much so, that her state is quite distressing. Mary has suffered the least; the other two have been very poorly—dangerously so for some days. They now begin to improve a little, and I hope will continue to do so.

“I can scarcely convey to you any adequate idea of the character of this place. The inhabitants are a motley group of all nations and all religions. We have English, French, Spanish, Italians, Moors, all dressed in their own peculiar costume, following their own modes of life, and speaking their own language. It would quite amuse you to see the different dresses and habits. All these people are in a most deplorable state in their moral and religious character. Our society is principally confined to the English. / We have a few Spaniards, and, if we had Spanish preaching, it is the opinion of the best informed of our friends here, that we should have a good congregation and ultimately do much good. This I trust will in time be accomplished. The state of things in Spain is truly deplorable; all is confusion, animosity, civil war, and misery. A party of Spaniards of the Constitutional side left this place a few days ago, and got possession of a place a few miles up the Straits. The French and Royalist Spaniards laid siege to the place, and after several days' firing, which we could hear quite plain in our house, they took the place by assault, and I suppose will put all the prisoners taken to death.

Scarcely a day passes but some of the Constitutional party are shot at a town called Algesiras, just opposite our window, at the distance of five or six miles. Last week two brothers were thus barbarously butchered, and the mother and sister of the two unhappy youths were galled to madness by the tragical event. In this state of things it is impossible for us to enter Spain at all. The English used to reside out in one or two of the neighbouring towns and villages during the hot weather, but owing to the troubles this has been prevented, and this has been the cause of our suffering so much from the heat. How long the present state of things is to last in Spain it is impossible for me to predict, but it cannot possibly last long. Their miseries are too great to continue: a change of some sort must take place. If a revolution is not effected in favour of liberty and religion, the country will become a land of complete darkness and desolation.

“All these things are in the hands of God. He ruleth among the nations. It is our duty to watch the moving cloud of His providential government, and follow every open door of usefulness. No doubt the thick and gloomy cloud which hangs upon this wretched and devoted country will one day be dispersed, and the light of the Gospel shine upon her. One thing I am deeply sensible of; it is, that there is no nation under heaven so highly favoured of the Lord as our own, and no men in the world are under such obligation of devotedness to Him as Englishmen.”

Then follows a long list of friends in Tewkesbury

to whom he desired to be religiously remembered, and the letter ends with the words, "The Lord be with you."

A few days previously, he wrote to his old friend and correspondent, Mr. Birley, in the following strain :—

" GIBRALTAR, *Sept. 8th*, 1824.

" MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,—

" Your letter by Captain Harris came safe to hand. I felt it to be exceedingly kind on your part to think of us, and to write under the circumstances which you mention. I consider it an additional evidence of real affection. I trust I feel the same, and can assure you that neither time nor distance has lessened the spirit of union and love which has existed between us ever since the happy, happy days when we wandered over the mountains of Wales together, seeking lost sinners. I trust the expectation of becoming a rich man, which is now set before you by the death of your uncle, will be of no injury to your soul and your character. Riches have been a snare to many a good man, and have probably injured many ministers of the Gospel. Do not think yourself at all the greater man for them, nor be the least less laborious in the duties of your calling. But you will think it presumptuous in me to dictate to you on these subjects ; however, I have a deep conviction of the vanity of all worldly greatness, and of the danger of being in possession of wealth. May the Lord keep us ! My mind is

deeply affected at hearing of so many apostasies among the brethren every year. Oh, what a call upon us who remain to walk humbly and circumspectly, and seek the protection of the Saviour, without whose grace none of us can stand!

“It will I hope excite you to pray for us, when I tell you our lot has been an afflicted one since we came here, and the cup we have been called to drink, a cup of sorrow. * * * The heat has very much affected my constitution, and last Sunday morning, while preaching, through a sort of faintness which came upon me, I was obliged to stop in the middle of the sermon, and retire out of chapel. I was in a high fever all day after, but by the Divine blessing I am now in some measure recovered, though still very languid and poorly.

“We have had great and almost continual heaviness of mind through one cause or other ever since we came, and see but little before us as a relief. The Lord, I trust, will support us. Gibraltar is to me one of the most barren, disagreeable places in the world; and at present what renders it worse, and indeed a complete prison, is, there is no escape. Owing to the troubles and disorders of Spain, we cannot with any safety enter that country. There has been dreadful confusion and civil war all around us ever since I came here. There is at present no hope of any extensive good being done in Spain either directly or indirectly. The door is completely shut.

“The state of religion here is, as you would sup-

pose, neither very prosperous nor the contrary. There are a few excellent characters among us, and some of the contrary stamp. I do not like the spirit and manners of the place: it is too military for me. All must be gentlemen and ladies; and this or the other is ungentlemanly. For instance, it is ungentlemanly through the army for an officer to enter the Methodist chapel. You will say I am writing you a miserable letter. I am. It is a picture of my mind; it is a picture of our circumstances. But let me not forget to tell you that I have had some happy moments in communion with God. On Sunday last especially, while lying on my bed of affliction, I had a gracious visit from above, and was as happy as I have been for a great length of time. I was led to reflect upon all that the Lord has done for me from my childhood, and I was led to admire the exceeding riches of His grace toward the vilest of men. I thought of our poor fallen brother, mentioned in your letter, and concluded I would rather be humbled and afflicted and exercised at Gibraltar, than fall from my Lord, and disgrace the holy calling in which I am engaged. Perhaps the trials we are now enduring are necessary, and are a part of the merciful discipline of our heavenly Father for the good of our souls. May they work the peaceable fruits of righteousness!"

Driven by every kind of discouragement to abandon the thought of engaging in the missionary work, Mr. Dixon unwillingly returned home with his family in August, 1825. In a letter in which

he announced his coming to his Tewkesbury friends, he says: "Since the day we left Tewkesbury not a moment of repose from ill has been granted to us. It has been a dark and gloomy period of my existence. The Lord has so ordered it for wise ends. I trust we shall learn wisdom by the things we suffer. But though we have suffered so much by our coming here, I quit the place with extreme regret, and the trial of being obliged to return home so soon is one of the most painful exercises of mind I ever met with."

It was painful, for it was the first and perhaps the only serious check which he met with in his ministerial course. In reality he was not made for missionary work; and the whole notion of becoming a missionary must be regarded as a beautiful outburst of religious ardour, while the attempt to put it in execution forms a curious episode in the life of one peculiarly called to do the work of an evangelist at home.

But this period is remarkable as exhibiting Mr. Dixon for the first time in a character which he ever afterwards consistently maintained—that of a most resolute maintainer and guardian of the original constitution of Methodism. His aim was to maintain Methodism as it was when he first received it, constant to the simple and active evangelistic character which rendered it so inestimably valuable and useful to the nation. He watched with anxiety anything that looked like a deviation from the original course, or an innovation on the original constitution, or that seemed to mark a tendency on

the part of his brethren to superadd anything to their simple and sublime vocation to be preachers of the Gospel. He thought that he perceived such a tendency in the introduction of part of the Ordination Service of the Church of England among the questions put to candidates for admittance into Full Connexion, at the Conference which he attended before leaving England; and he addressed to the supposed author of the innovation, the celebrated Dr. (then Mr.) Bunting, the following letter from Gibraltar:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—

“It will probably appear an odd circumstance to you that a person at so remote a distance as I am should address you; and your surprise will most likely be increased when you learn the subject of my letter. My apology is, if one is necessary, that though at a distance from my native country, it has lost none of its attractions, and though deprived of the pleasure of seeing and assembling with my brethren, the interests of Methodism are dearer to me than ever.

“When attending the Sheffield Conference in 1823, after being deprived of that privilege for the seven preceding years, I was struck very forcibly with what at first very much surprised me, and which to the present period I consider an innovation on the economy of Methodism. I allude to the questions proposed to the young men, candidates for admission into Full Connexion, in the public congregation, from the Ordination Service of the Church of England.

Not having heard of the practice before, I was greatly surprised when the President, Mr. Moore, began to propose questions which I immediately knew could not be found in our Minutes of Conference, and which I also knew were not proposed when I had the honour and happiness (the greatest of my life) of being admitted into Full Connexion. At length recollecting that it was the Ordination Service of the Church of England, I inquired of an elder and respectable preacher who sat near me, when that service was adopted by the Conference, and by what vote they had incorporated it into their Minutes and made it part of the law of Methodism. The answer was, 'Never.' I then inquired when it came into use, by what authority, and who introduced it. The reply was, 'Mr. Bunting.' The next day happening to meet Mr. Squance in Conference, I asked him if he knew that the questions from the Ordination Service of the Church were to be proposed to him, and assent and subscription to them required. His reply was that he did not know it till (if I recollect right respecting the place of meeting) as he was going up the gallery Mr. Bunting met him and informed him of it. They occasioned great surprise at the time, and have occupied my thoughts at intervals ever since.

"I have been anxious to learn the true character of the office of President: and the question I have been endeavouring to settle is this: "*Is the office of President ministerial or is it legislative?*" I conclude it cannot be legislative, because the doc-

trines and discipline of Methodism have ever been settled by the joint vote of the majority of the Conference. The Conference, then, has the sole legislative power in Methodism, and I conclude the President is the minister of its acts. The next question I have been attempting to settle in my mind is this: Is the adoption of the Ordination Service in the case referred to, by the President, a ministerial act or a legislative act? That it cannot be ministerial appears clear to my judgment, for this reason: The Ordination Service has never been made a part and parcel of the laws or usages of Methodism by any act of the legislative power. Therefore if it is not a ministerial act it must be a legislative one; but the President has no independent legislative character or authority, and consequently such an act must be an illegal one.

“I only know of one objection that can be made to this conclusion. It is that the Methodists are not Dissenters. The inference from this may be that, because not Dissenters, the whole of the ecclesiastical laws of the Church belong to us, and it can be no infringement of the spirit of Methodism to adopt those laws. But by whom are they to be adopted? I should think the reply must be, by the legislative power. And then the question meets us again, where does that power exist? It exists in the Conference; but the Conference has not adopted by any act of its own the service in question, therefore its adoption by the President must still be considered an unauthorized act.

“But if the above line of defence be adopted, that because not Dissenters therefore any part of the ecclesiastical laws of the Church may be adopted by Methodism, I think it will go to establish a principle which no Methodist would willingly acknowledge. Would it not go to the length of proving that the Thirty-nine Articles, the whole of the Rubric, the Canon Laws, etc., are all parts of Methodism? And at some future day a president who happened to be an advocate of the Thirty-nine Articles might require subscription to them, and another president who might happen to be an advocate of the Canon Laws might require subscription to them; so that the simple, intelligible, and Scriptural Rules of a Helper, which are the only rules to which subscription was required when I was admitted, may ultimately be supplanted, or lost and neutralised amidst others set up, if not in opposition, yet in such a position as I conceive entirely to alter the spirit of the old practice, and consequently the character of Methodism.

“It may be said this is mere hypothetical reasoning. The same thing might have been said a few years ago of any similar reasoning respecting the Ordination Service being adopted in the admission of young men. If one president may claim for himself the right, because he thinks it will be an improvement upon the old practice, to adopt a new form of admission—a form, too, requiring a very solemn assent on the part of the candidate, amounting, I should think, almost to the obligation of an

oath—why may not another President, from similar motives, require subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, or indeed to anything else which belongs to the Church?

“We are, I suppose, in no danger of having the usages of the Dissenters introduced among us, as the form of admission, because the Minutes avow to the world that we are not Dissenters. Were it not for this circumstance, I could easily suppose the Episcopal form might come to be opposed by the Independent form in our Connexion, for it is well known that there are Dissenters among the preachers, and for anything I know they may come to be Presidents. Now if one of these Dissenting Presidents should happen to prefer the Independent practice of admitting men to the ministry, it will appear rather inharmonious to see him laying the Prayer Book aside, and following a course quite the reverse. And if one President has the independent right of using one form at his own pleasure, I do not see, in the present state of the Connexion (for I take the opinion that because we are not Dissenters therefore all the laws and usages of the Church may be admitted, as a fallacious one), how the Dissenting President can be denied a similar right.

“I may be wrong in the view I have taken of this question, though at present I must confess I do not see where. If you think it worth while to attempt to set a wrong head right, I shall receive it as a favour. Let me meantime assure you that I write this letter with the utmost coolness, as you

will suppose from the length of time the subject has occupied my thoughts. But I must say that if my errors are not removed, supposing them to be such, I shall think every President who uses the Ordination Service of the Church as acting in the legislative character instead of the ministerial, and, till that service has been received by a vote of Conference, that he is infringing upon its rights and prerogatives, and consequently acting an illegal part.

“ P.S. As I am writing, will you allow me to say, from the learning, talents, rank, and influence of Mr. Bunting in the Connexion, it has a right to expect its theology and literature to be enriched from his pen by something worthy of himself.”

Mr. Dixon (the writer is told) was misinformed about these Questions from the Ordinal of the Church, which were introduced by the authority of the Conference; but the letter is too characteristic to be omitted, and it gives the first occasion of a difference of opinion between two eminent men, who, with mutual esteem and admiration, were destined to take opposite views on several public questions. Both Mr. Bunting and Mr. Dixon desired to keep Methodism from Dissent, but by different ways. Here, for example, the one was for doing it by bringing in the Ordination Service of the Church, the other would have kept things as they were. Two men equally powerful and more widely different in mental structure it would be difficult to find. The one as great an organizing genius as ever was created, with a predominant

will, amazing keenness and sagacity, a passion for activity, a centralizing intellect, and also a very refined mind, has been held the chief author of the alterations—whatever they are—which have made the Methodism of the present different from the Methodism of the past. The other was equally statesmanlike in his grasp; equally capable of marking out and adhering to a general policy: but inclined to allow the utmost freedom and independence of action that was compatible with general unity; averse from centralization, averse from organism more than the lowest necessary amount, desirous to retain the old traditional lines, to foster individuality: not fond of interference, though capable of showing himself strict in discipline. To minds so opposite the conceptions formed of the great public body with which they stood connected must have been different. The one thought of Methodism as an organism, having one part in subordination to another: the other conceived of the Connexion as a republic, in which all stood on the footing of equality, with the same course open to all. To be for a year the President, or superior magistrate, of this Republic, was the only official distinction which Mr. Dixon cared for or obtained: and he never withdrew from the regular work of a travelling preacher in a circuit.

It is out of the province of the present writer to discuss or compare the merits of these different views. We simply unfold them so far as they illustrate the character and conduct of the subject of this memoir.

But between the eminent men of whom we are speaking there could not but exist high esteem, though there never arose any great intimacy. They had in common the loftiest zeal for the public service, the sincerest piety, the most orthodox Evangelical belief, and most distinguished, though totally different, powers as pulpit orators. Of Dr. Bunting as a preacher, Mr. Dixon from first to last expressed the highest admiration; he considered him one of the greatest public men who ever existed; and in particular, as a debater, after hearing all the most powerful debaters of the House of Commons during about three generations, he always said that he never heard the equal of Dr. Bunting.

It may be added that the sons of this great man, the Rev. William Maclardie Bunting and Mr. T. Percival Bunting, were among his most valued personal friends.

A list has been preserved of the sermons preached by Mr. Dixon in Gibraltar, amounting to a hundred and fifty-eight. This would be enough for most men; but, after the nine years of incessant week-day preaching which he had in his English circuits, the year passed in Gibraltar must have been a season of rest. It may have aided him in digesting and fixing the great stores of religious thought and experience which he had now acquired; for we find that after his return to England his powers as a preacher began to show a maturity and enlargement which soon attracted public esteem, and he began to stand forth in his full stature.

CHAPTER V.

1825-28.

Appointment to the Wakefield Circuit—Letter—Maturity of Character—Great Labours—Letter on Family Religion—Death of Mrs. Dixon—“ Rules for Young Christians ”—Engagements as a Speaker on Missionary Platforms—Sermons and Speech at the great Missionary Anniversary of 1828 in London.

By the Conference of 1825, immediately after his return to England, Mr. Dixon was appointed to Wakefield, then—and until rent by agitation—one of the most flourishing circuits in Methodism. This important appointment was owing to the recommendation of Mr. Watson, whom we have seen to have been the first to discern anything uncommon in his character. Mr. Watson having heard him preach at some time subsequent to this, emphatically declared that he would rather sit under his ministry than that of any other man. It has been related to the present writer by the late excellent and venerable James Heald, Esq., of Parr’s Wood, Didsbury, that he well remembers Mr. Watson bringing Mr. Dixon and introducing him to him,

having previously spoken of him as a preacher of whom he thought a great deal. They passed the evening together, and "Watson plied Dixon hard on all sorts of subjects, sometimes very sarcastically, to bring him out." This may have occurred about this time.

From the time of his Wakefield appointment Mr. Dixon began to be known as one of the most powerful speakers and preachers of the Methodist body, exercising a ministry distinguished for vigour of thought, comprehensiveness of range, richness of evangelical truth, glowing imagination, and a sanctified fervour which often mightily moved the hearts of his hearers.

Shortly after his coming to Wakefield he wrote the following letter to Mr. Birley, which seems to have been the last of his correspondence with that gentleman. It contained an interesting review of the struggle that was past, and the new life to which he seemed to be called:—

“ WAKEFIELD, *Oct. 23rd*, 1823.

“ MY DEAR BROTHER,—

“Previously to leaving Gibraltar I began a letter to you, but owing to our coming away I deferred finishing it, with the intention of writing as soon as we came to England. Time like an arrow has fled along, and left my design, like many of my designs, unfinished. The last letter I had the pleasure of receiving from you was by Captain Harris, soon after our arrival at Gibraltar. It found us in

a state of great affliction and distress, and was the means of ministering great consolation to our minds. I answered it directly after, but know not whether you received it. Let me tell you I have no wish to let go my hold of the regard and affections of an old friend. I suppose our early friendships, being the most tender, and entering the soul when most ardent and alive, become the most firm and lasting. This is the case with my feelings towards you, and I now write with a special view to a perpetuation of our Christian friendship.

“I could fill my paper with a detail of the events connected with our Missionary expedition, but not one of them affords me any delight to reflect upon, and it is my wish to forget them. Not one day of light and joy dawned upon our souls from the moment we left our beloved Tewkesbury to our return. I had been vain and foolish enough to think for several years that I should like very much to be a Missionary; but, when the desire ripened into anything like maturity, the Lord in great mercy for a length of time found means to frustrate the design. At length, to convince me of the folly of my heart, He gave me up to follow its teachings, and headlong it plunged me into a scene of distress and suffering, at the thought of which my mind recoils. I am not conscious of any bad or wicked intention in going, except so far as going unsent may be considered so; for it is my full conviction (and I believe ever will be) that I was out of the way of Divine Providence. Being to be cured of a false notion

respecting my line of duty, and made satisfied with home work, the Lord found means to make my situation no very delightful one. Not a thing was right. But the affliction of my wife and family was most distressing. My wife can scarcely be said to have enjoyed one day's health from the moment we landed, and nothing but our removal in all probability saved her life. But to submit to come here I found to be the greatest trial of all, and I know not that any event of my life ever cost me so much shame and grief. But I am going into the thick of it, and must stop.

“ We sailed homeward on July 13th, and came to an anchor on the day Conference closed, being near a month at sea. I made no request for any circuit, being resolved no more to choose for myself, and Conference appointed me to this place. It is considered one of the best of the Yorkshire circuits. The town is good, the country fine, the air salubrious. The house we occupy is a very good one, well furnished, and the study in which I am now writing was once occupied by Watson, witnessed his lofty inspirations, and his great and gigantic plans to bless the heathen world. Our chapel, Mr. Atherton says, is the handsomest in the world. This is saying a great deal, but it is certainly the most beautiful chapel I ever saw. What is better, it is filled to overflowing, and our last Quarterly Meeting resolved to erect two additional ones in the suburbs of the town. One will be a small one, principally for the use of the boatmen, etc., but the other is intended

to be a good one, and to hold five or six hundred people. At present I am very comfortable both with my colleagues and the people, and trust by the blessing of God to continue to be so. The country parts of the circuit are not in character with the town. They are rather poor, and the congregations not equal to what I expected to find in this great Methodistic county. We have plenty of work, having to preach about thirty sermons a month. I was present at the opening of the great chapel at Leeds, and heard Dr. Clarke and Mr. Marsden. It is a very large building, and will contain a great number of persons. It is built in good style, but without ornament. The Leeds Missionary Meeting has been held this week, the collections £80 more than last year.

“I begin to feel myself in my proper element again, and am in hopes of entering into a closer communion with our living Head, enjoying more of His spiritual kingdom, and living a more devoted and useful life. How are you going on in your new circuit? I feared, when I saw your appointment, there would be no house, and other inconveniences attending new circuits; yet I applauded the wisdom which appointed you, for I well know you are the man to plan and execute too. How do you feel now that you are rich in this world? Should you hesitate to own me publicly in the street? If you grow purse-proud, and put on airs, and look contemptuously on your fellows, and grow idle, and a lover of this world, I for one shall wish the world

had its own rather than you. If you love God more for His gifts, and are more beneficent to man, and do more good in the world, I shall rejoice. I never yet knew a man the better for being rich, but many the worse, and probably many of our profession. The Bible is true in this as it is in everything else; let him that readeth understand. What are you doing in the book way? I grow fonder and fonder of the old divines, and especially of Mr. Wesley. I think him the first uninspired writer in the world on the doctrines and experiences of religion. I suppose it is a consequence of inceasing years that men grow less fond of novelties in religion—at least, I know this to be the case with myself. I think if I had my race to run over again, I would work out for myself a better course of study and reading than I have pursued, for I have often been like a seaman without compass, and in consequence have been drifted too far out of my straight-forward course by the currents which I have happened to fall in with. Bless the Lord for being kept in the course to heaven! Your life has been much more even and happy than mine. Ever since I first saw you at Brecon, and journeyed over the black mountains of Wales with you, yours has been a path of light, I trust shining brighter and brighter. But mine—what has it been since that happy period? I leave it—there have been breaks in the cloud, and I thank God it has not been all darkness. ‘Oh, to grace how great a debtor!’

“I suppose it is poor — who is put back on

trial this year, as there is no other person of his name. Can you tell me the reason? My soul mourns over these casualties. How many have we known to run well who have been hindered. Let me hear from you as soon as possible, and keep back nothing that I ought to know."

This is the last of those letters in which the sensibility of youth, eager for companionship, is fully apparent. While the character is still growing, and the habits are still being formed, the mind seeks for support, for sympathy, for confirmation; and the higher the standard of attainment which is set before it, the longer must this period of immaturity continue. Hence we see a character, which to the surrounding world appeared fully developed, craving the confidence of early friendship, seeking to renew old associations, and clinging to the memory of the past. But from this point there is a change in this respect. Mr. Dixon was now entering upon the period of middle life, and henceforth we find that the care of the churches, the concerns of public life, and the domestic cares of manhood, occupy the whole of his attention; while of his own personal feelings, religious or otherwise, there is little said in his correspondence. The reader will perhaps feel some regret in closing the last of those younger letters, which breathe an extraordinary sensibility and withal manliness of nature; but he may be assured that the full stature of manhood was in this case no way unworthy of the promises of youth. However, the

period was now reached after which no further great change in mental constitution was possible : a period which is no doubt earlier or later in different natures—but must finally be reached by all. The tree was fully grown, and had now but to bear its blossoms, leaves, and fruit for its appointed seasons.

It is evident from all that has gone before that we are to consider the development of a great spiritual person : of one to whom the commands and requirements of the Gospel were no dead letter, but the very law of life, to whom religion meant nothing less than a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, and was a thing not only to be understood but to be felt and experienced, and not only in general but in every particular. How touching those aspirations after holiness and Divine communion which have been read in those early letters, the struggles of a high-strung nature to answer fully to the call of God ! Hence resulted a perfect simplicity and integrity, the public and the private character answering to one another in every respect. He called upon the people of God to obey no law which he had not obeyed, to undergo no experience which he had not undergone, to expect no blessing which he had not enjoyed. His ministry was therefore marked by a peculiar boldness, fulness, and power, an impassioned fervour and a breadth of spiritual knowledge, which have perhaps scarcely ever been surpassed. The Christian economy seemed known to him with a wonderful familiarity, known as a living whole ; and as he expatiated in

the midst of the unseen realities in which he lived, the souls of his hearers were carried along with him, the small obstructions of the world seemed to fall away, and they felt that they also were dwellers in the spiritual kingdom of God. —

At the same time it must be understood that the peculiarities of his own temperament, so far from being eradicated, were rather increased. His constitutional melancholy at times brooded very heavily over him, and he continued to be subject to sudden gusts of passion. The word *passion*, or suffering, indeed is most expressive of what this was. He was suffering from unknown glooms, feelings of anguish and anxiety, to which some cause, perhaps very trivial, gave fire. How many of the greatest and noblest characters have had this about them! This is not the fault of the mean, the malignant, the cunning, or the self-interested; but has often clung to the great, the generous, and the public-spirited. In this case it was probably augmented by the great demands which through life were made upon his energies, especially upon great public occasions. He was sometimes laden with such a charge that even his capacity and retentive strength could hardly sustain it.

In the letter last quoted Mr. Dixon says something about the Methodist chapels, and the style in which they were built. The present writer does not presume to criticise, but he cannot but observe the change which has taken place of late years in respect to this. The old square unornamented

meeting or preaching houses have given place to cut-up, ornamented, ecclesiastical structures. He is absolutely certain that the old style was far more favourable to freedom in the pulpit than this new style. The most glorious sermons of the fathers of Methodism were uttered in buildings as plain and simple as they could be, and the instinct which led the old Methodists to build in that manner was a true one. There is something obstructive and embarrassing to a speaker—especially a really extemporary one—in a prim and ornamented building; and as a rule the plainer the chapel the better the preaching. This remark is not intended to apply to the heavy, ornate, classical structures of the middle period of Methodism. The change from those to the present style is an improvement.

Mr. Dixon's Superintendent at Wakefield was the Rev. William Atherton (mentioned in the last letter), the father of the late Sir William Atherton, Attorney-General. He was a well-known Methodist preacher, a man of large mind and high character, celebrated for his sarcastic wit. He and Mr. Dixon always remained friends.

The following letter addressed to his old friend Mr. Mumford, of Tewkesbury, gives evidence of the thoughts and aspirations of which the mind of Mr. Dixon was full:—

“WAKEFIELD, Dec. 27, 1827.

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—

“I know you will make some allowance for my apparent indifference and neglect in not

long since answering your kind letter. I must tell you in excuse that my time has been more than ever taken up with public matters; for, in addition to attending missionary meetings at York and Newcastle, I have been engaged a full week at Leeds, at an extra district meeting, on the very painful differences existing in that Society.

“It gave me much pleasure to hear of your happiness and prosperity, and I humbly pray that it may not only continue but greatly increase. I fully believe that our happiness in all its different forms will greatly depend upon our personal experience. If we enjoy the work and fruits of the Spirit in our souls permanently and increasingly, the first consequence will be personal happiness. But the effect will not end there; the happiness within will extend itself to everything without, and our families and the Church and society generally will be the better for our personal prosperity in religion. It is perhaps possible for a large measure of personal piety to exist, and yet great misgovernment of families to exist also; or at least we have often seen good people have very ungodly children. But there is a consistent and uniform religion to which all of us ought to aspire, and it will be often found that persons laying claim to high attainments in religion are destitute of this uniformity and consistency, and many of the evils of their families arise out of this want.

“Man—a great writer has said—is an imitative being, and it is found that example has much more

to do with the formation of the character of children than precept. You find that they gain most of their ideas of things in infancy and youth from their senses. Teach them to read, and they cannot enter into the argument and reason and consequence of things. They store a number of facts into their memory, and these facts will be useful to them in after life, but they do not enter into the reasoning of the books which they learn. They act very much from an impulse produced upon them by what they see and hear; they imitate the conduct of others, and become what others make them. Hence the importance of a consistent personal religion, bearing upon everything, and carried in everything into our families. Government—by which I mean a firm, affectionate, and undeviating right maintained by parents to be obeyed—is absolutely necessary to family religion. The consequences of the Fall are to render us all refractory and disobedient. We are impatient of control, and the soul of the smallest infant is in a disordered and rebellious state. If you can succeed in bringing the mind into subjection and the habit of obedience to yourself, there is then a greater probability of its being brought next into obedience to God. But I am really preaching, and I did not intend to preach. You appear, however, laudably desirous to maintain family religion. You are quite right in this. I am fully persuaded that men are happy or miserable just as things go well or ill at home. The art of securing that sunshine of enjoy-

ment which is granted to men on earth is to maintain the spirit of Christian piety burning perpetually upon the altar. No sight on earth is so lovely as that of a pious family living in the constant habit of family prayer and praise, and thus rendered harmonious by the pious and affectionate union of every member.

“Family religion is I fear often contaminated, and the blessing of God prevented by a too anxious desire to lay up riches for the benefit of our children. It is, I grant, a nice point to do exactly right in this—to avoid the extremes of both remissness and an irreligious anxiety. It seems but proper for parents to do something for their children; the point is to know exactly what that something is. I think from my observation I have generally seen that to make children independent is not the best thing that can be done for them, but almost the worst. It appears to be an immutable order of Providence in the present condition of our being that man shall be employed. By making men independent you only give them the time and means of doing mischief, and they usually occupy both for that end and purpose. The proper medium seems to be so to assist our children as to enable them to stand upon their legs, fairly to set them going on the road of life, and then to leave them to themselves, or rather to feel their dependence upon God, and to seek aid and direction from Him. The pretence set up so very often of making a handsome provision for children is often the germ

and root of a most miserable, covetous, and worldly spirit, the bane of true religion, and often destructive of the soul. It requires great wisdom and great piety fairly to balance the mind in its affections, and to direct our life to a suitable conduct. Religion is perhaps our safest and best law: let religion live in its light and love and power and purity in the soul, subordinating the mind to the obedience of Christ, as contained in His written Word, and we have then the best possible security against both error and sin. I have learnt one thing in the course of my experience; it is that very little happiness in any form is under our own control and at our own bidding. All comes from God, and it consequently follows that those who intend to enjoy most must live nearest to God. All the blessings of the New Covenant, as they are purchased blessings—purchased by the blood of Christ—are open to our acceptance. We may go up, and, by the exercise of a humble but bold and simple faith, attain to the enjoyment of them all. It is our high calling and privilege to embrace in the open and wide extended arms of faith every promised blessing. Those promises and blessings sometimes appear too great for our feeble grasp; but still it is true that they are for us, and it is unwise on our part to quarrel with God respecting the greatness and magnitude of the good which He is pleased to offer to us. I cannot wish you a greater good than a faith to comprehend and embrace all the salvation of God. Let us range in

the midst of the wide field of Scripture promise and Scripture privilege, and so go up and possess the good land. Our High Priest Jesus is entered for us at the right hand of the Father, gaining not only an admission into His presence and favour, but an entrance into the *holiest!*”

Then follows the long list of persons to be religiously saluted, with which these letters usually conclude.

There is much in this letter that is worthy of consideration, especially concerning the misdirection of parental affection, which is one of the most fertile sources of the evils of society, though little acknowledged to be such.

The health of Mrs. Dixon appears never to have fully recovered the shock sustained in the Gibraltar expedition. She continued in a weak and suffering state during the residence of the family in Wakefield, and at length expired on the sixth of June, 1828. On the following day Mr. Dixon wrote to his friend, Mr. Mumford of Tewkesbury, to communicate the event, in the following terms:—

“I write to inform you that my beloved and invaluable wife fell asleep in the Lord last night, about nine o'clock.

“Through her long protracted sufferings patience had its perfect work, and her end was assurance and peace. The struggles of expiring nature throughout yesterday were very distressing, but the Lord was graciously with her to bear her

through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. . . . Though I hope to get through the temporal part of this great calamity, I know not how I am to get through all the rest. In this I need your prayers to the Author of all wisdom and grace, that I may be able to command myself as a Christian. I trust I do not murmur against Divine Providence, but it is impossible for me to follow the wife of my bosom, and the mother of my children, to the grave without weeping bitter tears."

A month later he wrote to Mrs. Ball of Kington, the sister of Mrs. Dixon :—

" It is now to-day a month since we followed the remains of my beloved Mary to the tomb. It has been, as you will easily suppose, to me a month of grief and sorrow. I have often looked at that tomb with an eager, and it may be, a wrong desire, to inhabit it myself, and sleep by the side of my departed wife in the dust. The tide of life, never very high, is now lower than ever, and seems to have left me stranded on its shore with the wreck of all the prospects and hopes I had. But I must learn to meet the frowning tempest, and submit to that Will which cannot by any repinings of ours be disappointed of its purpose or thwarted in its great resolves. The events of my life have taught me in language not to be misunderstood that there is a Power and a Sovereignty governing and controlling the affairs of man against which he can offer no resistance, and for the turning aside of which no

prayers will be successful. There is no doubt reason in all this. God cannot act without reason, but it is a reason too profound for our penetration, and nothing is left us but to adore and to submit. I consider the death of my dear Mary of this mysterious kind. There was reason for it, but I cannot see it, and I feel that all that is left me is to bow in silent submission to God, and to seek that improvement from it which is designed. On this latter subject I feel deeply. I know that an awful responsibility is laid upon me to be more holy, more zealous, and more heavenly-minded, and while I feel this I am aware at the same time that just a contrary effect may follow. I cannot hope that as yet the proper impression has been made upon my mind; but humbly hope that God, who has sent the rod, will enable me to learn from it all the lessons of wisdom and piety intended to be learned.

“You will of course feel anxious respecting my dear, my precious children. I cannot but thank God that I have them: for though they do and must cost me much anxiety and care, yet I feel it an alleviation of my cross to have something to care for. . . . I feel in respect of them that their loss has no remedy. I love them, I trust, as a father, but I cannot supply to them the place of a mother. . . . When I visit them in bed on a night to supply to them in some degree the loss of their mother’s care and their mother’s kiss; or when sallying from my study I find them *alone*, passing the time in amusing and instructing one another; or when

they instinctively fly to me to make me the depository of their little troubles and pleasures,—oh, these things almost break my heart! But I must leave this: I can go on with it no further.”

The following brief “Rules for Young Christians,” which were written not long after this time by Mr. Dixon for one of his children after she had made a profession of religion, deserve insertion here. It would be difficult to give in the same space a better summary of practical religion.

“1. Guard against all sin in every form: but if you should, through the power of temptation, think, feel, say or do anything which you feel to be sinful, do not cast away your confidence, or sink into despair, but go and confess your sin before God, and earnestly pray that He would pardon it, waiting at the same time in the spirit of prayer till you receive His blessing.

“2. Live by faith in Jesus Christ. Remember you are not to place any dependence on what you do, say, suffer, and feel, as the ground of your acceptance with God, but *entirely* and *always* depend on the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ. Believe in Him always, and you will always be saved.

“3. Remember though it is your privilege to be continually happy in the love of God and the joys of His salvation, this happiness may be interrupted by many things which may arise. If it should, you must not allow that at all to alter your profession of religion and your pursuit of it in prayer, the use of the means, etc. If you should feel the absence

of joy and comfort, there is the greater reason for you to be found diligent in prayer.

"4. Always aim at being holy in heart and in all manner of conversation. Holiness is of much more importance and value than any other feature of religion. Look to God for this. Guard all your thoughts, tempers, feelings, desires, words, and actions. Propose holiness as the end of everything.

"5. Use as much private prayer as your time and duties will allow, and be careful to follow the secret teachings of the Spirit of God when He would lead you to prayer. When you feel a powerful inclination to pray, always follow it. These are the times when the Spirit of God more particularly works.

"6. Be sure you read the Word of God daily. It would be a good plan for you to commit a few verses to memory every day, and often make them the subject of thought and meditation.

"7. By all means guard against a forward spirit, or the very appearance of spiritual pride. Never turn your religion into an occasion of vanity, which is a most odious thing.

"Read these rules till you get the substance of them fixed in your memory. God will bless you, establish you, and keep you from falling."

How fresh, direct, and authoritative are these rules! As in the pulpit, so in these, Mr. Dixon is seen simply uttering aloud what was always within, as an unfailing spring of life and wisdom. This

perfect sincerity was the secret of his power as a teacher of religion. There was nothing hackneyed or commonplace in his ministry, for the reason that every truth which he uttered had been and was still felt as a living power within him. He had touched it with his soul, examined it, dwelt upon it, and made it the means of gaining other truths, until there seemed no limit, either to his experience or his power of putting forth the same for the edification of others. In everything he did—in these few directions to a child not less than in his most powerful public discourses—there was involved the history of a life. And this must be the case with every work of the human mind that is of worth, be it great or small, just as it requires the sun to shine in his full strength not less to ripen a single grain than to animate the whole face of nature.

In his work at Wakefield and the vicinity, Mr. Dixon was associated with some of the most famous names in Methodism. At the Leeds Missionary meetings, to which he refers in one of the above given letters, Dr. Townley, Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Hannah, Mr. Valentine Ward, and the famous Yorkshire orator, Mr. William Dawson, all took part along with him. At Huddersfield, the same year, he spoke on the same platform with Messrs. Watson, Lessey, W. M. Bunting, Newton, and Waddy; and was also engaged in a missionary tour, in which he met with the lately deceased and most venerable Mr. Thomas Jackson. These names will recall some of the best and most remarkable men

who have been engaged in the ministry in modern England. He also met with some of the more eminent Dissenting ministers, among whom may be mentioned Dr. Winter Hamilton and Dr. Boothroyd, a somewhat celebrated Hebraist.

Through the extraordinary power which Mr. Dixon displayed on these occasions, he was invited the same year—1826—to preach the Missionary Sermon in the Manchester South Circuit, and this may be regarded as the first great public occasion on which he took the leading part. It was the year in which Mr. Watson was President of the Conference, and he and Dr. Bunting spoke at the meetings. In the year 1828 he received the still greater honour of being summoned to preach before the Wesleyan Missionary Society in the City Road chapel, on Thursday evening, May 1st. This was as great a distinction as could be conferred on any preacher. All the greatest men in Methodism were assembled in that venerable chapel—the Westminster Abbey of the Connexion. On the forenoon of the next day the Society assembled in Great Queen Street chapel, and the sermon was preached by Watson; and in the evening they met in Southwark chapel, when the preacher was the Rev. James Bromley. It is curious that the three men who were thus summoned to London from different parts of the country—from Wakefield, Manchester, and Huddersfield—and associated in this manner, had been more or less associated in youth, and sprang from the same part of the country. Mr. Bromley,

who was now rising into some note, both as a preacher and a writer, was an old playmate of Mr. Dixon, at King's Mills, and worked in the next mill to that in which he worked. The sermons delivered by these three ministers, on this occasion, were powerful and successful.

This interesting and indeed memorable missionary anniversary made an impression which many still live to remember. Mr. Dixon was in after years called upon to bear part in many others.

On Sunday, May 4th—the Sunday following these preliminary services—sermons were preached in all the Methodist chapels in London on behalf of the Society, and the three ministers were again engaged in this.

The sermons of Mr. Dixon, like too many that he preached, are lost; those of Mr. Watson remain among his published works, and one of them, "The Oracles of God," is among the most striking which he ever delivered. The palm of finished oratory was no doubt due to him; he was in the zenith of his career; his perhaps scarcely equalled powers as an English preacher were at their fullest expansion, though he was beginning to yield to the mysterious and painful disease of which he prematurely died. An interesting account of his appearance on this occasion is given in his life by Mr. Jackson. "He preached," says his biographer, "with an energy and a glow of pious and benevolent feeling which it would be difficult to describe. The attendance was very large, and the wasted form of the preacher, and

his pallid countenance, indicative of intense suffering, created a deep sympathy in the assembly " (p. 465).

The next day the great annual meeting was held in the City Road chapel. Mr. Watson was present, but too ill to speak. Speeches were delivered by Lancelot Haslope, Esq., the Earl of Mount-Cashel, Sir G. H. Rose, the Rev. B. Allen, rector of St. Paul's Church in Philadelphia, Mr. Dixon, and others. As the speech of the latter is the earliest specimen on record of the eloquence of one who became one of the greatest of platform orators (by far the greatest that the present writer ever heard), an extract or two from it may not be unwelcome to the reader. It will be found most characteristic ; full of fervour, knowledge, and magnanimity, and with that *swing* about it which is the mark of the master of the platform.

"I never approach this subject without thinking it the greatest subject on which the human mind can descant, or reason exercise her faculties. I never approach the subject of sending missionaries to every part of the world without trembling at my own responsibility, and feeling my utter inability to do justice to so great a cause. But, sir, I must do as I generally attempt to do, come to the subject with simplicity ; come to it in the fear of God ; and, if I can do nothing beside, at least give it the warmest sanction of my heart. Sir, I promise you this cause shall ever be dear to me ; I promise you it shall ever have my feeble support ; and wherever Providence may please to cast my

lot, if I have the opportunity, it shall have as much of reason, and especially as much of affection, as I have it in my power to give. I perceive that the business of this meeting proceeds on the principle of offering gratitude to God for past success, and of urging on this very respectable and large assembly the obligation they are under of making still more extended exertions. It is a hopeful circumstance in our favour that we have perfect union among ourselves; that we are altogether one as a Christian body. It has been my lot to live in the country, and to have attended a great number of missionary meetings. I can report from Yorkshire, and from various other parts, that whatever difficulties may exist on other subjects, there is oneness of heart in this great cause, and the Methodist Societies throughout the world are but one united body on this important subject. I refer to a union of mind, of judgment, and of heart, which must, in the esteem of every reflecting man, be considered as capable of giving an impetus to the great Society whose cause we advocate to-day. This, sir, was not always the case; venerable and able and sage men looked upon the operations of this Society, at its commencement, with a degree of jealousy and mistrust: and I do not find fault with this. It belongs to age and wisdom, and to the judging mind to watch over events with some jealousy; but we have now lived down that jealousy, and it has been proved that we are no worse preachers, that we are no worse Methodists, for continuing to advocate and support

this great cause. Timid piety looked upon your first exertions with fear; and trembling to put forth its forces, felt the ground on which we were about to tread. But, sir, we have lived that down also; and charity and piety now unite with all that is venerable in age and experience for the support of our great and glorious enterprise. But, sir, I must advert to another topic. It happens that we have not only union in our own Society, but we have fellowship with everything that is wise and philanthropic, with everything that is Christian abroad as well as at home; for never yet have the labours of our missionaries been disturbed by controversy either in our own Society, or with those of other denominations. I hail this circumstance of perfect union, and am glad that in every part of the world there is a oneness of spirit among our Christian missionaries. I believe for my own part that the missionary spirit has really operated a very important change in the character and features of our theology. I believe that the divinity of the present day is a little different from that of former years. You had before to-day a divinity deep and powerful, a divinity supported by weighty arguments, a divinity full of knowledge, full of feeling, and full of Christian experience; but it was like a lake of water slumbering in the midst of a continent, and having no outlet; it was purified enough, but it was not extensive enough, and though deep and well refined, it never looked abroad upon the sufferings of the world. But now, sir, you have a

theology truly and properly missionary. There is however, as a reverend gentleman has already observed, necessarily a reaction from the cause to the agent. I confess that I feel myself to be a very insignificant man. I possess very small powers, very little reason and less elocution, and least of all of what I ought to have the most—and that is Christianity; but I feel, in such an assembly as this, and engaged in such a cause as this, a halo of glory surrounding my brow, and though little in myself I am great in my cause. Dr. Coke would have been an excellent preacher if he had not been a missionary. Carey would have been a most learned man if he had not been a missionary. Buchanan would have been a fine Christian character if he had not been employed in his Christian Researches; and Henry Martyn would have possessed a Christianity simple and almost patriarchal if he had not been in the missionary world. But, sir, they owe their especial greatness to the missionary cause; and a gentleman I could name on this platform [Watson] would have possessed a powerful judgment, a flowing elocution, and a benevolence as large as the world, if there had never been a missionary; but I question if he would ever have had a judgment so large, or an eloquence so powerful as that we have so often listened to with delight, but for his connection with this Society. Sir, there is a meliorating process going on in the nations of Europe highly encouraging to our exertions. If we stood alone as Christians, or as the British nation, I should utterly

despair: for the salvation of the world is too mighty a work for any single power to accomplish; but our exertions have at length, as it strikes me—and this is an important feature of the times—awakened almost the universal attention of the world. While we are in this great metropolis, the seat of science, of commerce, of politeness, of the best system of government that ever existed upon this earth; while we are in this mighty metropolis, the great centre of almost everything that is Christian and that is wise; and while I stand here in my poor way debating the salvation of men, it is a fact that at our antipodes in New Zealand the same question is this day debating in their savage eloquence. While our friends in Ireland—oh, how I love to think on the Irish name and the Irish character, and upon that mighty, that glorious reformation which is taking place in Ireland!—while our friends there, with polemical skill which does them the utmost credit, are raising the public mind to questions about the Scriptures, and the right of private judgment, and national renovation, and social happiness, the Hottentots and Caffres are sitting in their wild regions and debating the same question. And while North America is measuring her strength against the superstition and wickedness of the world, South America is studying the best means of receiving the Scriptures and education in the most useful form. All along the Mediterranean shores the same is going on: and if you have not yet many converts in Spain you have as-

certained that a spirit of inquiry is excited in that benighted country. In Greece there is the same spirit of inquiry. Though degraded they feel that degradation: and while fighting the battle of liberty they are inquiring for missionaries and the Word of God. I have nothing to do with the politics of that country or of any other: but we ought to watch the progress of events, and while the thunderbolts of heaven are ploughing up the soil, it is for you and this great assembly to go and sow the seed of eternal life. I see nothing to discourage the Christian, but everything to rejoice him, in seeing the world awakened to life and to action. We have at least done this; we have proved the practicability of our exertions; and the dissemination of knowledge, a proper object, we have proved to be a possible object. But I must grant that, in one at least of the productions of the day, the missionaries have been charged with being very ignorant and besotted men. That is to say, that Dr. Carey is a very ignorant man; that Dr. Marshman is a very ignorant man; that Dr. Morrison is a most ignorant man; and that our own Clough, and others of our excellent brethren, are most egregiously ignorant. But I should like to know who were the persons who first set themselves down among savage tribes to teach them an alphabet, to collect their words, and give them a written form? Who are the persons preparing spelling-books for children in languages till now unknown to the learned world? Who are the translators of the Scriptures, and the bearers of knowledge

of every description to illuminate a dark world? Are they the great personages to whom I have referred, and who charge other men with ignorance? If they were ever to hold such a meeting as this, I should like to attend it. Have they ever instituted such an undertaking as ours for the sole purpose of disseminating their own eloquent productions? Have they sent missionaries into dark countries to establish their own profound philosophy, and to illuminate the world? —

“But the missionaries are accused of being idle men as well as ignorant. That is to say, that our valued brother, Barnabas Shaw, is a very idle man; he who first introduced the plough amidst the wilds of Africa, and who has seen successive harvests wave beneath the breezes of heaven there, is an idle man. He who has built houses and cottages for houseless savages, and not only laid the foundations of a spiritual church in the deserts of Africa, but has raised the walls of a material church for the public worship of God, is for all that a very idle man. Now I should like to see these gentry, who so well give the missionaries a character, come and put their hands to the work, and take the plough and the anvil, and the mattock and the spade, and go into the wilderness to teach the poor, wretched savages the habits of civilisation, and then they should return and tell me that Mr. Barnabas Shaw was an idle man. We have had the pleasure of seeing Hottentots and Caffres and other savages rising into civilisation, and possessing the social

comforts of human life: but after all our object is not secular; it is not to civilise mankind, it is to convert men to God; and what is best of all, God is with us, not only to render this high attainment practicable, but to give us the blessing of witnessing it. Sir, the conversion of one negro slave proves that all negro slaves can be converted; the conversion of one Caffre proves that all Caffres can be converted: and so of every other being of the human race. But I would conclude by asking this meeting whether we shall proceed in our work, or whether we shall retire. There is, if I do not mistake, in the character of Englishmen something terribly obstinate when a retreat is sounded. Have we not pledged ourselves to one another, to the Christian Church at large, to the Divine Redeemer, to the adorable and eternal God, that we will be faithful to the task we have undertaken? and I ask, Shall we, or shall we not retire? Shall I sound a retreat? Shall I propose that we never have another meeting in this place; that you shall all retire from your respective offices, and our brethren the preachers never preach another missionary sermon; that our missionary associations shall be broken up, and that our young people shall give up their collecting and their sympathisings with a ruined world? If I did so, sir, in reality, I am sure I should be hooted off this platform; for the missionary cause has so associated itself with our pleasures, as well as with our judgment and our consciences, that I am quite sure the British

mind in this nation holds it with too firm a grasp ever to give it up. Onward then is the word: and onward we will go, till we are hailed by the hallelujahs of a converted world, and our Saviour be all in all."

The delivery of this remarkable address constituted in some respects a turning-point in Mr. Dixon's career. It made a great impression, and the present writer has heard that some of the expressions used, and the tone and manner of the speaker, never faded from the recollection of many who heard it. It was felt that a most powerful orator had arisen in Methodism; and at the end of his engagement at Wakefield, which terminated a few months afterwards, he was invited to London. The apostrophe to the silent Watson—the second founder of the Wesleyan Missionary Society,—was one of the boldest and most successful pieces of impromptu eloquence that was ever heard on a Methodist platform, and was certainly much more striking than it appears in the otherwise excellent report from which it has been quoted. Among those who heard it was Miss Watson, the only daughter of Mr. Watson. As the present writer has heard the scene described, this young lady was sitting with a young female friend in the gallery of the chapel, and happened to have her attention momentarily drawn from the business of the meeting, when she was recalled by her friend pulling her violently by the arm and pointing to the platform. She looked, and saw her father bowed together and hiding his face

between his hands, while the unknown speaker was pointing to him with one hand, the other hand flung out towards the audience, and, amidst enthusiastic cheers, pouring forth one of the most passionate eulogiums that ever one man pronounced upon another.

CHAPTER VI.

1828-37.

Appointed to Southwark Circuit—Agitation of Societies—Marriage—Missionary Anniversary of 1831—Anti-Slavery Question—Death of Mr. Watson—Appointment to Liverpool—Renewed Agitation in Methodism—Missionary Anniversary of 1835—Conference of that year—Sermon on the Death of Rev. D. McNicoll—Conference of 1836—Missionary Anniversary of 1837—Conference of that year.

By the Conference of 1828, which was held in London, Mr. Dixon was appointed to the Southwark or South London Circuit; and from henceforth his ministerial life was passed in the great cities and towns of the kingdom—London, Liverpool, Sheffield, Manchester, and others. His reputation as a preacher grew rapidly until it attained its utmost height: and it was fully maintained in all those great centres of population for an extraordinary number of years. In addition to his ordinary ministry, he was continually engaged in every part of the country in advocating the various institutions connected with Methodism, especially the Missionary Society; and few of the ministers have travelled and laboured

more extensively in this sort of work than he. He also became known as one of the most fearless and powerful of the Anti-Slavery orators, among those who succeeded to Wilberforce, Clarkson, and the other leaders of the great movement of emancipation; and he embraced every opportunity of identifying himself with the great Evangelical party (both inside and outside the National Church), which was then in its fullest vitality, and was the prevailing religious party of the age. To that party (to say no more) England owes the greater number of her present charitable institutions.

Mr. Dixon's undeviating attachment and fidelity to that party may be explained by other reasons besides religious belief. He saw in it the staunchest and wisest friends of constitutional liberty and of benevolence to the human race. So far as it came within his range as a religious man, it was his aim to be actively engaged in the battle of liberty and philanthropy. If he had lived in a former age of English history, in which the cause of civil liberty was mixed up inseparably with that of religious liberty, he would certainly have been more engaged in the general struggle than he was; but in his age the battle of liberty was won, except a few points, and on these he eagerly engaged. He has not gained any general reputation proportioned to his services as an Abolitionist and philanthropist; but those services were important, and he rendered them equally as an evangelical and a lover of the constitution and of liberty.

But to return. When Mr. Dixon was appointed to the South London Circuit a storm was blowing there which, if it had not been laid, might have put an end to Methodism altogether as a Connexion of "United Societies," as Wesley called them. It began in Leeds, about an organ which the Conference had authorised the trustees of one of the chapels to set up, but which some leaders and local preachers of the place, many of whom belonged to other chapels, violently opposed. If these malcontents had been allowed to set at nought the legal trustees and the central authority of the Connexion, the Methodist system would have been at once reduced to the level of Independency. Uniformity of doctrine, no less than of discipline and worship, would have been at an end; and, as among the Independents, anything that the majority preferred might have been preached, from Calvinism to Socinianism. Mr. Dixon had been engaged in combating this dangerous position in Yorkshire, where he sat in the Special District Meeting which was summoned to deliberate on the question. It had occupied a great deal of the attention of the Conference, and now it broke out again in the South London Circuit, and the agitation ran very high. Mr. Watson took part in the controversy by publishing his "Affectionate Address to the Trustees, Stewards, Local Preachers, and Leaders of the South London Circuit," in which the whole question was ably argued; and this pamphlet had a great share in stopping a numerous secession. (Compare Jackson's Life of Watson, p. 471, seq.)

Mr. Dixon's share in the controversy was arduous enough. As one of the ministers of the agitated circuit he had to meet the heads of the opposition in innumerable meetings, and fight the battle of the constitution at close quarters. He had particular difficulty with one gentleman, for whom in his large-hearted way he contracted a sort of amused affection: and in after years he described to the writer how he used to go down from his house in the Albany Road, Camberwell, to the Southwark chapel, wondering what new turn would be given to the controversy by this indefatigable radical. In the end his exertions, and those of his fellow preachers, succeeded in keeping the Society together in that circuit, and the storm died out. —

His colleagues for the first year were Richard Treffry, senior, and R. Treffry, junior, both of whom are still remembered in Methodism. The next year the South London Circuit was divided, and he was put in the newly formed Circuit of Lambeth, where he was associated with Mr. McNicoll and Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Etheridge, both men of congenial temperament, both of highly poetic nature, both numbered among his choicest friends. But his intercourse with the former was to be short-lived. He was soon called upon to pronounce the funeral oration over his deceased friend. The latter was the celebrated Oriental scholar to whom the world owes the translations of the Syriac Gospels, the Targums of the Pentateuch, with many other valuable works. Mr. Dixon remained in Lambeth two years.

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REV. JAMES DIXON.

Engraved by T. A. DEAN, from a Painting left unfinished by the late J. JACKSON, Esq. R.A.

In August, 1830, he married Mary the only daughter of the Rev. Richard Watson, a young lady of great personal attractions and high accomplishments. Miss Watson was an excellent Latin and Greek scholar, a perfect French and a sufficient Italian linguist, and an exquisite musician. Her mind was equal to the elaborate education which she had received, being capacious, generous, and ardent, intellectually very powerful, but also of the highest nervous excitability. She was formed to attract and dazzle in society; a nature so tremulously susceptible of praise or distinction has seldom been formed; and it seems difficult to understand how such a nature should have been drawn to share the lot of one who owned no accomplishments, who had no hope or desire of the distinctions which the world at large offers, and whose only aim was to excel in his own vocation. But the early letters which she wrote give the explanation. They show that she was won by the greatness of the character with which she was brought into contact: and they give evidence of the most affecting desire to enter into his life and work, and to be upheld by the grave majesty of his nature.

In 1831 Mr. Dixon was appointed to the First London Circuit, where he had among his colleagues his father-in-law, Mr. Watson, and Mr. Thomas Galland, who became one of his most intimate friends. Mr. Watson, however, having been already two years in the circuit, only remained his colleague for one year, at the end of which he was

compelled by ill-health to give up the Itinerant Ministry. He removed from the City Road to Myddelton Square, as one of the Resident Secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society; and there he died a few months after.

At this time the great question which agitated the religious world was Slavery. The Wesleyan body was united in the determination to do its part in abolishing that horrible institution, and the Conferences in those years gave forth the most explicit declarations to that effect. Perhaps the most actively employed of the body in this work—the last great public service in which he was engaged—was Mr. Watson. An infinity of resolutions, proposals, and letters proceeded from his pen almost to the day of his death; and all his efforts were ably seconded by Mr. Dixon. The latter took part in some very stormy meetings, in which the John Bulls on the other side proceeded to every kind of opposition short of personal violence,—breaking benches, shouting and hooting, invading the platform, etc.

Mr. Dixon is named among the chief speakers at the Wesleyan Missionary Anniversary of 1831, which was held, for the first time, in the newly erected structure of Exeter Hall. This was one of the first meetings ever held in that celebrated place. Among those who spoke was James Montgomery, the poet, who delivered a beautiful address. Mr. Dixon's speech, which was most telling and powerful, contained the following passage:—

“ One of the features of West Indian slavery is its

intolerance : not common intolerance, but intolerance resting on the peculiarity of the system. You have intolerance in Italy, in Spain, in Portugal ; intolerance not in the people, but in the church of those nations. In those places it is but the tyranny of one opinion over another, whereas in slavery it is the despotism of an unreasoning system, a brute prohibition against the entertainment of all opinion whatever, an insensate fettering of the human mind, a forcible locking-up of the human understanding. This intolerance is in the system of slavery, and it consists in saying that these slaves of ours are not men : that they are chattels, identified with the fields they till, the sugar they cultivate, with all they have to do."

After weighing on one side the argument, "Sugar is in danger," and on the other the rigour of the system, the thousands deprived of their natural and civil rights, and bowed down to a premature grave, he ended by saying :—

"If William the Fourth shall ever sign an Act of Parliament making the negro slaves free, it will be the best, the brightest act of his life. The best act that ever his revered father, George the Third, did was when he passed that Act of Parliament which made it criminal for the slave trade any longer to exist. If George the Third had done no more than this it would make his name imperishable ; and if William the Fourth shall sign an Act for the Abolition of Slavery, his name will be handed down to posterity with the most glorious recollections. God

grant he may soon do so; and let all the people say, Amen."

The following extract from a letter written by Mrs. Dixon to her husband, who was at Bath on public business, in May, 1832, giving an account of one of those great Anti-Slavery meetings—the like of which the country has scarcely witnessed since—at which Buxton, O'Connell, and others spoke, will probably not be unacceptable to the reader.

"We did not return from the meeting till six o'clock. Lord Sheffield moved the first resolution; it is sufficient to say he spoke like a *lord*, so long and so bunglingly as to be coughed down. I regretted this, as I believe him to be a thoroughly sincere friend to the Society. Mr. Buxton then delivered a most noble, decided, eloquent, and statesmanlike speech, which did the highest credit to his heart and intellect. I had provided myself with pencil and paper to take notes, but unfortunately Thomas [her brother] took charge of them, and we got separated, so that I must trust to my poor memory and your indulgence. Mr. B. contended most strenuously for total abolition; he had been driven to this: he had formerly pleaded for amelioration and gradual emancipation, but the violence of the planters had driven him to see that nothing short of a *total extinction* of the system would do; and with nothing short would he rest satisfied. He regretted that he could not feel this year so sanguine as last, when there appeared a

greater probability of the speedy settlement of this question. The prospect was not so bright now as then. He would ask them what they had gained since the last meeting; they had asked for abolition, and they had got a Committee of the House of Lords. And for what was that Committee appointed? For delay: for more—for stoppage! A Committee composed of whom? With the exception of Lord Sheffield, of slave proprietors! A Committee, the formation of which gave the greatest joy to the West Indian party. A Committee, not to take into consideration the time when and the means by which slavery should be extinguished, but whether it was or was not right to flog women! And so on. He was continually met with this objection: 'the slaves are not yet fit for liberty; why not wait until the mild and gentle influences of Christianity have prepared them?' Yes, but the West Indians dread the mild and gentle influences of Christianity far more than the fierce tornado; and they are determined to get rid of the mild and gentle influences of Christianity by persecuting Christianity from the islands. He then adverted to the insurrection and the persecutions. 'Where are those excellent missionaries whom you sent out? In jail! I hope they are. I hope they are in jail, or ere this they have most probably fallen victims to the popular fury. Where are the chapels which your money helped to build? Levelled with the ground! Where are the converts? Drenched in blood, or expiating the crime

of worshipping their God on the gallows! Where were the magistrates? I will do them justice: they were on the spot and active. But *how*? Aiding and abetting the demolition of the chapels! And what do you suppose the '*reaction*' (satirically)—a word very much used in a certain quarter of late—what is the reaction of all this? (vehemently) the formation of a Church Union; having for its object nothing less than the demolition of all chapels, the destruction or banishment of all the missionaries, and the extinction of religion. He called upon the Societies whose missionaries had suffered, to withdraw them, or to demand justice; he called upon that meeting and the public to express loudly their feelings on the question to Government; and pledged himself to direct his efforts to the utter extirpation, root and branch, of the accursed system of slavery. He received thunders of applause.

"I think he was followed by Cunningham of Harrow, and he made an ingenious, witty kind of speech. He set out with a good topic, but did not pursue it as he might: the incompatibility of slavery and Christianity. —

"Dr. Lushington was energetic as usual, but there was nothing new in what he said. He related some recent instances of cruelty with great feeling and indignation; eulogised the labours of our missionaries in the West Indies, in comparison of which he admitted, though a churchman, the Church had done nothing, and declared that he

would be the last to wrest the palm of victory from our missionaries, and place it on the head of those who came in at the eleventh hour. Adam Smith followed him.

“ But the interest of the meeting seemed now to centre upon O'Connell, who had made his appearance a short time before, and received the most enthusiastic and oft-repeated acclamations. All was restlessness and anxiety till he came forward; and never did I hear so beautiful, so touching, so powerful, so inspiring a flow of eloquence. There is a wonderful charm about that man: the gracefulness, ease, and plausibility of his manner; his high, free, and independent look and bearing, and his commanding eloquence, so completely fascinate and enthrall you, that till the spell is broken you are listening to an angel of light; and till his honied accents cease to flow you completely forget all the prejudice which his political transgressions have created in your mind, and your only feeling is that of unmingled admiration. In speaking of the Committee he said: ‘I need not tell you what I think of the House of Lords (great laughter), or what importance I attach to that Committee. I care not for them nor for their verdict. It is a Committee composed of slave-holders; they have put a sprinkling of honesty and virtue (turning to Lord Sheffield) into the fœtid mess to give some feasibility to the scheme, but they cannot stem the tide of popular feeling. I shall believe that they can when I see one of the peers come to London, and stretching

one of his white palms to the river, say, 'Roll back to Oxford!' and it shall retire; but till I have witnessed this miracle I scorn the attempt to retard the measure.' He said the insurrection had been a godsend to the planters; but for his part he thought it proved the necessity of entire abolition. It was nonsense to say the slaves could not bear freedom: they bore the cartwhip; they bore oppression; they bore torture; and surely they could bear freedom. He then showed the inconsistencies of the Americans, who boasted of their own liberty while keeping in bondage their fellow-men, etc.

"I admired the prudence which O'Connell as well as the rest of the speakers displayed in not referring to the present political posture of affairs, so as not to arouse any very particular demonstration, though it was evident that any slap at the Lords was quite congenial with the feeling of the audience.

"When O'Connell had finished his speech, a little fat, fiery, pious, peppery, and pugnacious man made a most ungentlemanly and unchristian attack upon him; but to give you a correct idea of the thing it must be acted as well as told, so I reserve it until you return. Suffice it to say he was like a Lilliputian in the hands of Brobdignag, who coolly gave him a grip between his finger and thumb, painfully convincing the little reverendissimo of his smallness. I wish I could have given you a better account of the proceedings."

In his answer Mr. Dixon gives a picture of the agitated state of the country at the time. The

people who met the coach on the road, as he went down, appeared everywhere to expect to hear the tidings that London was in a state of complete revolt, and even set on fire, and nothing could exceed the disappointment in their countenances to be assured that all things were quiet.

“Politics and public affairs are the topic in every company. All men are now statesmen, and prepared, if not with substantial information, sound judgment, and sober views, yet with a plentiful effusion of hatred against those whom they conceive the enemies of the country, and of praise for their friends. I seem to stand alone; no earthly being seems to speak the language of my old friends the Tories. Let it be so; to them belongs the honour of having saved the country from the mania of the first French Revolution; and if they cannot save us from the second, they may perhaps have it in their power to break the force of the dashing and foaming waters let loose upon the country by men who ought to have had the sense and manliness to have stemmed the torrent, rather than given it increased force and agitation.”

The death of Mr. Watson took place in January, 1833, in his fifty-second year. He was assiduously attended to the last by his daughter and his son-in-law; each of whom contributed an interesting notice of his last days and general character to the life written by Mr. Jackson. This notice was the first thing that Mr. Dixon ever wrote for publication. It is of course brief, but lucid and appreci-

ative; full of feeling, and yet uncoloured and unexaggerated. But long afterwards—towards the end of his life—he wrote a much more extensive review of the general character and career of his distinguished relative, which appeared in the *London Quarterly Review* in 1854, and was almost the last of his published writings. It is one of the finest pieces of criticism imaginable—a master writing on a master. However, we shall come to that in due time.

In taking leave of Mr. Watson, it seems natural to say something respecting those ministerial gifts which by general consent made him first even in that great company of preachers to which he belonged; and to take the occasion of putting him for a moment in comparison with the subject of this biography.

The present writer has endeavoured to form a conception of Mr. Watson's preaching, and has made inquiry of several who heard him, wherein his great power lay. So far as he can gather, the most prevalent character of his preaching was solemnity—a solemnity that awed and bore down the hearer. The tone of Mr. Watson's mind was very severe; and to this severity, chastened as it was by religion, and relieved by a sweet, playful humour which belonged to his character, were added great intellectual gifts, grandeur of thought, logical precision, and refined taste. All these qualities together produced the overawing solemnity of which we speak. The hearer's mind was carried forward, sometimes through a succession of equal and subtle

argument; sometimes in a lofty and superb flight of thought: the attention was caught, worked upon, strongly exercised, and subdued by the mastery manifested over the subject. The intellect was appealed to, was attacked and overpowered; and when this was done the whole soul lay open to the preacher, like a city whose defences have been carried. This address to the intellect was managed in various ways; sometimes, as we say, by a succession of even arguments; sometimes by a lofty flight; sometimes by the display of the most elaborate mechanism of division (few sermons are so happy as those of Watson in division); sometimes, though much more rarely, by holding the subject together as one great whole. But whatever the method, the usual effect was the same—spell-bound attention, breathless awe, the deepest impression of solemnity: and this was heightened by the striking figure of the speaker, his lofty and upright carriage, his intellectual face, and his deliberate utterance.

The preaching of Mr. Dixon was essentially different from this. It would be very difficult to select any single word to describe the prevalent effect which it produced. Perhaps the word exaltation would be the nearest, while the words impassioned grandeur might describe the general character of the preaching itself. It was not so intensely intellectual as that of Mr. Watson, but there was great thought in it, which was however fused, or, as it were, held in solution by passion and feeling. Hence the hearer was affected in a different way;

not perhaps so profoundly and awfully impressed, but yet powerfully impressed, and carried forward with great force. The hearer was not so passive perhaps as Mr. Watson made him, but seemed to have a sort of share in the whole affair; could watch the preacher travelling forward to get at his thoughts; could accompany and aid the effort, and therefrom experience the general effect which we try to describe by the word exaltation. The same word would do, whether the preacher bent his efforts to uplift the mind of his audience, to quicken their faith, and confirm their hopes, by expatiating on the glories of the covenant of grace; or to bow them down by his pathos into penitential mourning. It was always something in which his own experience led the way, and in which they participated because that experience drew them to itself and embraced them. From this it followed that there was a sense of inexhaustibility in his preaching—a subject never seemed to be drawn dry, but on the contrary to grow larger under his handling; whereas in the exquisite analysis of Watson a subject seemed completely displayed. The latter also seems to the present writer very often to reach the ultimate ideas of the evangelical theology—namely, judgment and mercy and the balance between the two; whereas ultimate ideas were never reached by Mr. Dixon—he never got to the residuum.

To compare these eminent men further would be presumptuous in the present writer. Both had gained the last perfection that can be given by

ardent devotion to an art—the power of expressing their whole nature in their art, of pouring forth their whole souls in the pulpit and on the platform. Mr. Watson attained the higher fame; he was perhaps the intellectually loftier, though he could hardly be called the greater spirit: and Mr. Dixon was no unworthy successor to him. They were alike in singleness of aim, in rectitude, and in simplicity of life.

‡ The difference in the great and singular power which each of them exercised in his ministry is admirably set forth in the following communication from the Rev. S. W. Christophers, who had the rare opportunity of hearing them both in one day:—

“The character of no Methodist minister I have ever been associated with has left on my mind and heart such an impression of grandeur combined with humbleness as that of Dr. Dixon. I remember when, as a boy, I sat in Truro chapel, charmed with his fine classical face, and wondering at the power of his influence over that packed congregation, while he preached on Christian Patriotism, from ‘He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue.’ Richard Watson had held the warm-hearted religious multitude entranced for an hour and more, while he discoursed on the ‘Cherubim of Glory shadowing the Mercy-seat,’ and then came James Dixon and produced a kind of heaving and fluctuation, like that of corn waving in the wind.”

Nothing could better depict the two different

effects — the one was entrancement, the other heaving and fluctuation.

The Conference of 1833—the year of Mr. Watson's death—was held in Manchester. The following extract from a letter, written to Mrs. Dixon from the Conference chapel by Mr. Dixon, will not be uninteresting to those who remember the final settlement of Mr. Watson's public affairs by the Wesleyan Connexion.

“Your father's manuscripts and copyrights engaged the attention of Conference for a long time. The matter was fully and fairly debated. Great good arose out of it. The vote of approval was unanimous, with the exception of two or three, who opposed from factious motives. The speeches in support of the case, and the honourable and affectionate reference to your father's memory, were very gratifying. Mr. Bunting behaved like himself,—most nobly, and yet fairly to all parties. He is a most extraordinary man in business.”

We get another authentic glimpse of Mr. Dixon about this time from a communication which has been kindly made by the Rev. W. B. Arthy, formerly a Wesleyan minister, now incumbent of a church in Macclesfield.

“The first time I ever spoke to Dr. Dixon was at a district meeting held in the Morning Chapel, City Road, in the year 1834. I was present there as a candidate for admission to the Wesleyan ministry. We chanced to leave the chapel together, when he laid his hand on my shoulder and said: ‘You have

answered very well this morning; let us have a minute's talk.' We walked up and down the chapel yard, and after asking me several questions and giving me some good advice, he ended in this manner: 'So you have been brought up in the Church? I am glad of it, for Church training is good when the clergyman is a man of God; but a Methodist preacher has many advantages over a clergyman; he understands the work of saving souls better, and has more helpers; he is not so occupied by rubrics and customs; he may do anything which will tend to the furtherance of his work: and with us it is the useful man who is sure of promotion—that is, such promotion as we have to give. In the Church a man may be both good and useful, but if he has no patronage or influential friends he will get nothing: but with us the most useful man gets the best circuits.'

"I met him a second time in the summer of the same year, when he came to Colchester, where I then lived, to attend a missionary meeting. The meeting being held in the daytime the attendance was not very large, but he spoke, as he always did, with energy and effect. The greater part of that speech I have forgotten, but one passage I distinctly remember, which contained a powerful appeal to young men contemplating entrance into the ministry to consider the claims which the mission work had upon them. There were three young men at that meeting who subsequently became travelling preachers; I believe that that appeal had great

weight with one of them: at all events he became a missionary, and one of the most laborious and successful of modern times."

By the Conference of 1834 Mr. Dixon was appointed to the Liverpool South Circuit, one of the most important in the country: and here he remained for three years, exercising a most powerful ministry, and receiving several very pleasing tokens of esteem. It was, however, a period considerably darkened by domestic affliction, especially the death of an infant daughter.

The great Methodist event of the following year was the agitation caused by Dr. Warren, and his expulsion from the Connexion. Far be it from the present writer to attempt to enter particularly into that painful affair! But in substance it appears to have been an attempt to set at nought the power of the Conference itself by an appeal to the civil courts. Mr. Dixon sided entirely with what Dr. Warren called "the high Conference party" on this question, and displayed considerable activity in the affair. He wrote an address to his brethren, in which, as "one who judged he had no just ground to distrust the scriptural excellency of Methodism," he sought to invite their attention "not so much to the *ex parte* statements of one side or other, as to the general principles and order of the Connexion"; and not only this, but the law of God. "In disputes respecting particular cases of discipline, and a perpetual appeal to the rules of the Connexion, we are

in great danger of losing sight of the fact that there is another and a greater law to which we are all bound to conform—the law of God. For the sake of order, peace, and harmonious proceeding in a community of Christians it is necessary to frame rules for the government of the whole, but these can only be considered as subordinate to the higher law of Christ. Consequently in times of searching agitation, and in questions of doubtful disputation, it is impossible to arrive at a right and sober conclusion without taking in the Christian law. Both parties may dwell on technicalities, and, according to their respective views of a specific rule, affirm and deny for ever: and because the rules in question were framed by fallible men they may feel at perfect liberty to do so; but there are plain principles and precepts of the Word of God from which there can be no appeal.”

He then proceeds to show the agreement of the action taken in this case with the law of Methodism, and of this with the Christian law in general. The juridical weight and clearness of this paper is very remarkable.

While Mr. Dixon was thus engaged in fighting the battle of Constitutional Methodism in Liverpool, he was called to London as one of the three preachers who were usually selected from the provinces to attend the great anniversary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, his fellows being Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Newton, and the famous Independent minister, Mr. Jay of Bath. The first of the

three annual sermons before the society was preached by Mr. Dixon in City Road chapel, on Thursday evening, April 30; the text was, "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone : for if this counsel or this work be of men it will come to nought, but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts v. 38). On the Sunday following he again preached twice on behalf of the Society. He received their cordial thanks.

On Monday, May 4, the annual meeting was held in Exeter Hall. This was the largest meeting ever held up to that time by the Society; hundreds of people were unable to obtain admission into the crowded hall. Among the speakers were many eminent men from all parts of the world, and of every denomination, including the Church of England: among them Tholuck, the German biblical scholar. Mr. Dixon, on coming forward to speak, was received with great cheering, and had to thank the meeting for his reception. He delivered one of his most powerful speeches, and raised the audience to a pitch of almost tumultuous excitement. There were several special things to call him out. Slavery had fallen since he last stood on that platform, and of slavery he was known, to the Methodist world at least, to have been one of the boldest and most fearless opponents. But above even this, the enormous meeting was felt to be a demonstration in favour of Constitutional Methodism, which was passing through a great crisis. Mr. Dixon had come from one

of the scenes of the hottest conflict, and would go back to it as one of the firmest champions of the cause of order. All these things were powerfully handled by this great speaker, who never forgot a point; but we shall only give one specimen of this speech, where he alluded to the work and character of his fellow representative, the great Robert Newton, who came even from a hotter part of the field—Manchester itself, the head-quarters of the agitation—and shared with him and with Dr. Bunting the honours of the meeting. After raising the question whether Methodism had strength to bear up against the pressure of the weight put upon it, he said:—

“ Man, sir, is sometimes a mighty creature. When did Wellington and Napoleon appear greatest? In the battle-field, in the presence of the enemy and amid the roar of cannon. Then came forth genius, fine calculation, the flash of the enlightened and bold eye, the dauntless courage never to yield. And when did my friend Mr. Newton appear what he is? (Loud and repeated cheers.) I am not to be hindered, sir, by a squeamish delicacy. There are times when it is fitting and proper for a man to speak out, and it is now time for me to speak out. Sir, no one man in our Connexion, it is probable, has done so much in the way of incessant travelling and other exertions to increase the funds of the Wesleyan missions; no one man deserves so much of the parent society, deserves so much from every auxiliary, deserves so much of a perishing world, or of the Christian churches we have planted, as my most excellent

friend (repeated cheers); and if grace, and if kindness, and if frankness, and if honesty, could have saved any man from the pelting of a mob, it must have been the character of Mr. Newton. (Immense cheering.) How has he borne the brunt? How has he met the battle? Has he turned from it? He has not; and he is here to-day alive and well, and I heartily rejoice to meet him. We have fought a few battles, if not together and side by side, yet near each other."

Mr. Newton in his speech, acknowledging this compliment, said that there had been a sea-fight at Liverpool and a land-fight at Manchester, but the victory remained with them in both encounters; and added, "My friend Dixon spoke of being somewhat timid; I am sure no one would have thought him so at Liverpool."

The painful case of Dr. Warren was settled a few months later in the Conference. The following, from a letter to Mrs. Dixon, written in the Conference chapel, gives a vivid picture of the scene.

"I had written the last word when poor Dr. Warren made his appearance to receive his sentence, and he is now at this moment standing near my right hand, and the President (the Rev. Richard Reece) is now passing sentence upon him. It is most affecting to hear his remarks, and to see the poor man standing as a culprit. The most affecting topics are being touched upon, but he stands perfectly unmoved and apparently untouched. O God, preserve us from sin! He is now standing up to

reply to the President's address. He is telling us that if Methodism were now what it was when he entered it, this would have occasioned great regret. He is saying he rejoices that his circumstances are not disgraceful—that he can cast himself upon the merciful providence of God.—that the circumstances are an unscriptural assumption of power, oppressive, etc. He charges us with injustice—states that he is unjustly expelled from his paternal inheritance; by God's blessing he will attempt to recover it, that we may meet again next Conference, and hopes it may be under more favourable auspices. You will see by this his intention to apply again to law. This ends the business for the present.

“I got through my preaching (before the Conference) last night in tolerable freedom. We had a very grand congregation of preachers and people.”

In another letter, a few days later, he says:—

“I have been engaged for the past two days in writing the Annual Address to the Societies. I have made it very strong on the subject of our disputes, and know not how it will be received by the Conference. I tried my Conference sermon on Sunday morning, and the Conference unanimously voted on Monday morning that it should be printed. I must, I suppose, comply, and turn my attention to it when I get home. The business is so pressing that I know not when we shall close. I have just been asking permission to return home on Saturday, but met with a flat refusal. The whole of the new legislation has to be gone into. I am on a Committee to

prepare some scheme for Conference, and I suppose my now being one of the hundred will oblige me to stop to the end. For this I am extremely sorry. I want to get home to see you, and again enjoy the peace and quiet of domestic life. I suppose the radicals will be outrageous: their brick house is broken. The preachers are in a state of unexampled union—resolved to stand by Methodism, and support it as it is.”

The sermon preached before this memorable Conference was not published, and the Annual Address to the Societies, if it were first written by Mr. Dixon, must have been very much altered before it assumed the form which it now bears in the Minutes of the Conference. The present writer can detect scarcely any traces of the style of Mr. Dixon in the production as it now stands. This was to be expected in a composition of the kind, which appeared in the name of the whole Conference, and would no doubt be subject to great alterations. In general it may be observed that the published writings of Mr. Dixon have suffered a great deal from injudicious alterations by other people. He was so humble-minded when his own compositions were concerned, so unduly sensible of the want of early education, that he was easily persuaded to submit his manuscripts, and add, alter, and correct on the suggestion of persons who often really possessed not a tithe of his power and capacity as a writer. His own natural style was singularly forcible, rich and original, and not the worse, rather the better, for

being free from the gingerly exactness and craning elegance that may be acquired by any ordinary literary person. He never wanted the real eloquence which is the first expression of a noble nature; but from his unfortunate readiness to submit to everybody's emendations he has suffered in his literary character more than most writers of power.

In the year 1836 the Rev. David McNicoll, the old friend and colleague of Mr. Dixon in the Lambeth Circuit, died in a very sudden though not unexpected manner. He had followed Mr. Dixon to Liverpool, having been appointed to the north circuit there, as Mr. Dixon to the south; and their old intercourse was renewed. Mr. Dixon was now called to the painful duty of preaching his funeral sermon: which he performed in Pitt Street chapel, on Monday evening, June 13. The sermon was afterwards published under the title of "Ministerial Fidelity and Joy in Death." Mr. Dixon was peculiarly happy on such an occasion as this. His intense sympathy of nature, and the peculiar power which he possessed of entering into a character which attracted his regard, and delineating it, were then seen to perfection; there was a tenderness and delicacy in his touch which raised him very high as the biographer and eulogist of departed worth. The class of minds to which through life he was most attracted were those in which the poetical elements predominated; in which sensibility, sweetness, and fire were combined. Such was the case with most of those who shared his warmest affections—as the

Revs. W. E. Miller, Joseph Sutcliffe, W. M. Bunting, and others who might be named ; and such was the case with David McNicoll. To the sermon itself, which is full of solemn and tender beauty, was subjoined a sketch of the character of the poetical, ardent, dreamy, and exemplary man with whom he had walked and talked so often. This sketch was afterwards enlarged into a memoir, and prefixed to the collected edition of the Remains of Mr. McNicoll.

But it is to the sermon itself that attention is now invited, as an exposition of the author's views of the ministerial character—a subject which had occupied him all his life. It was his first separate publication ; and fitly so, since it was the aim and study of his whole existence to be himself an able minister of the New Testament. It is in style laboured, solemn, extensive, with an even quality diffused through the whole, and this quality spirituality. The ministry described is the preaching of the Gospel, and the ministerial character depicted is that of a preacher of the Gospel, and nothing else. The ministry of the Gospel, in his view, must be coincident with the Gospel itself ; and the Gospel must be apprehended by the minister through faith and knowledge, which are the gifts of the Holy Ghost. “ Few, it is to be feared, from the apostolic ages down to the times of the last great revival of religion, have attained to an adequate perception of and confidence in the designs of God. The Gospel has rather been considered as the basis of a theory or of a creed,

and the means of personal salvation, than the weighty and all-efficient instrument of the renovation of the world. The minister who takes 'up the Christian scheme as the mere dogmas of a sect, or the instrument of a limited operation, has not been inducted into the true knowledge of the evangelical system: his mind has not taken its mould; his exertions do not move on its dimensions; and he has mistaken the emotions of a personal or merely relative piety for that faith which, comprehending the whole scheme and design of God in the establishment of His kingdom and the gift of His Son, puts itself, in conjunction with the whole Church, to carry forward the sublime and benevolent plan."

Again, as to the vital efficacy of the ordinance of preaching, and the powers entrusted to the preacher:—

"His doctrine must not only flow in perfect harmony and concord with the truths generally taught in the Holy Scriptures, but, subordinately, he is invested with power to dispense the great and inestimable blessings of which the doctrine is the type. He is not only called to discourse on the Divine counsels respecting the repentance, pardon, and regeneration of men, but, as a 'worker together with God,' to call the wicked to repentance, offer pardon to the guilty, and, by preaching the 'truth of the Gospel,' in connection with a belief of which the regenerating Spirit is never withheld, instrumentally to produce that great work. It is not simply by declamation, exposition, and description

that he is to exhibit the provisions of the covenant of grace, but he must also found on this the free and unlimited offer of all its blessings to those who choose by faith to embrace them. His office is not merely to take his stand beneath the shadow of the cross, and expatiate on its mystery, its mercy, its merit, its tragic sufferings, but to lead the lost to behold the Lamb of God, that believing they may obtain life through His name. And because 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God'; and justification, adoption, purity, victory over the world, and an intimate intercourse with God, are suspended on faith; so, in a subordinate sense, he may be said to administer this salvation, when he proclaims that word which is the instrumental cause leading to this state of grace."

If we were considering the history of the founder of a religious sect, or that of a great dogmatic theologian, we should be called upon to remark the development of opinions and convictions, and the progress of the mind from one point to another, as this was displayed in successive declarations and publications. But, in considering the character now before us, we have no such work to perform. The opinions of Mr. Dixon had been unalterably fixed from the beginning of his public career; no new perception of any one truth, changing the colour of his thoughts, causing modification of old opinions or the adoption of new ones, is to be traced in the occasional publications which from this time we shall have to notice. But we may discern in all of

them, as in this, something at least equally necessary to the good of the Church. They are expositions of truths long familiar to him, of principles on which his whole life was formed; of which his ordinary ministry was one continuous exhibition; and which were constantly renovated and kept in their first freshness by going to the fountain head, from which they were first drawn, by prayer and meditation. They are to be regarded as means by which we may discover the purposes and designs of his ordinary ministry, rather than as efforts to rise from it into another region. What those designs were may be well judged from the characteristic extracts given above. They were to combine stability with life, fixedness of doctrine with freedom and activity of emotion; and to prevent the minds of the people from becoming hide-bound receptacles of familiar things. This he conceived could only be done by presenting the truths of the Gospel as parts of a great and living whole; and while the terms under which the provisions of grace are presented in the New Testament—justification, adoption, regeneration, and the rest—were constantly on his lips, and in his experience represented various distinct operations of the Holy Spirit, yet they were always so presented by him as to be associated directly with the one great economy of which they were parts, and with the one great centre of life and love according to whose will they were administered. It will be seen how vast a field was opened by a ministry in which every term and phrase employed denoted a living

truth actually within the capacity and reach of every one who heard.

The Conference of 1836 was held in Birmingham. The following extract from a letter to Mrs. Dixon gives an interesting description of the remarkable scene which took place on the election of Dr. Bunting to be President; he was the pilot of Methodism in the late difficulties.

“I arrived in this place in safety on Tuesday morning. Yesterday was an anxious head-achy day. I suffered much from the thought of preaching; but as usual the thing came, and now it is gone. It succeeded tolerably well, and I have met with warm thanks from several of the brethren. Dr. Bunting was elected President by the largest number of votes ever given for any President before. Indeed there was no rival properly in the field. But what is most remarkable is the extraordinary religious influence which evidently rested on the appointment. When he took possession of the chair, it seemed as if God gave His signet to the appointment in almost a visible and miraculous manner. I certainly never witnessed anything like it before. It seemed like one of those extraordinary effusions which produce revivals of religion. We all wept, rejoiced, prayed, and not a person present could be indifferent. It was a season of grace. Mr. Newton is Secretary, and things now go on in their usual course. I am very well off in my lodgings, companions, etc. I have a room to myself. Friend

Galland is in fine health and spirits, as is Mr. Atherton. In the midst of these events I feel great anxiety for your health and comfort."

The answer which Mrs. Dixon sent to this contains so just an estimate of Mr. Dixon's preaching, and so beautiful a passage of domestic affection, that it must not be omitted. Mr. Dixon, after preaching once before the Conference, had the same most formidable ordeal again in view.

"If I may venture to dictate, I would say, preach the next time as *simply* as possible—make no effort—let it be one of your sweet, little, tender, pious effusions, such as *The bruised reed* suggested. I always think you are greatest when you are least. . . . My darling jewels are sparkling and beautiful as ever. My last—though you do not see it—is a perfect diamond; and though my cares increase my loves abound. How delightful is love! and to have such loveable objects! If my strength of body be but equal to the strong feeling of love which burns with increasing ardour in my heart, I shall indeed be a happy mother."

None tenderer ever lived.

In the same letter Mrs. Dixon inquired whether any notice had been taken at the Conference of the sermon on McNicoll—Mr. Dixon's first publication. As if it were likely there would be!

He says in reply: "You seem to apprehend that I may be elevated 'beyond measure' by the favourable criticisms of the brethren. Alas, alas! I fear my authorship is likely to meet with the fate most

provoking to ambition. It is taken no notice of either one way or another. Conference is by no means a favourable time to gain the attention of the preachers. They are so fully employed in the business of the Connexion that they cannot, if they would, pay attention to such matters. I expect no favour. It has been my lot to have to force my way. Men engaged in similar things scarcely ever encourage one another. All usefulness in the line of authorship, as in other things, must be gained amongst the people. When that point is gained, the preachers, like Lord Chesterfield, will extend their praise and patronage. I know not whether your fears will be realized. God, I hope, will use me as He pleases. I felt very low yesterday morning when I went to preach, but as soon as I got into the pulpit I felt such an influence, I hope from God, as set me completely free, and I never preached with greater liberty. It has been sufficiently praised, and I hope good was done. Dr. Bunting preached one of his glorious Gospel sermons last night."

At the London anniversary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1837, special circumstances made it desirable that a stronger force than usual should represent the provinces; and Mr. Dixon and Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Newton were chosen for this important duty, along with Messrs. Atherton and Crowther, and Dr. Harris, the Independent minister, author of *Mammon*, etc. The letter in which the invitation was conveyed was written by Dr. Bunt-

ing; and contains a tribute of praise which, from such a man, is too valuable to be lost. He says, after communicating the request:—

“Allow me, my dear sir, to express my own most anxious desire, in concurrence with that of the whole Committee, that you should not suffer *any difficulty whatever* to stand in the way of your kind compliance. We fully anticipate a good and pleasant anniversary: but there are peculiar circumstances which make it essential that we should this year present to our friends and the public a strong and influential array on the platform. To you we look with especial solicitude, yet with confidence, founded on your past important services to our cause, for help on this occasion. I do hope and pray that you will not disappoint us. We are even of opinion that every other local or provincial engagement should yield to this application from the parent society.”

In consequence of this Mr. Dixon took part in the anniversary sermons and meeting of 1837. At the meeting in Exeter Hall he delivered a very long and animated address, in which he took a general view of the mission work all over the world, and especially claimed for it the glory of having carried the great measure of emancipation. The feelings of the audience were roused to an extraordinary pitch when, after speaking for a long time, he touched on the question of American slavery. Considered in the light of the terrible events which have since taken place in that country,

his words, and the manner in which he brought the subject before an English audience, cannot but be thought remarkable.

“ You have quenched the fires of a volcano which caused dread in every Englishman’s mind ; and I trust our good brethren in the south of North America will take the hint. I dare not enter upon this topic. I dislike it exceedingly. (Cries of ‘ Go on.’) Well, what do you propose by my going on ? Have you any definite object ? Have you something to submit to the meeting ? Will you second the motion, if I move as an amendment to the resolution I have to second, that we all meekly, gently, peacefully, and Christianly, give this advice to our brethren in North America—that as soon as ever it is convenient, and Christian, and godly, and agrees with American republicanism and patriotism, they give liberty to their slaves ? (Tremendous and long protracted applause.) Oh, that is a noble burst ! Yes, I see Englishmen are Englishmen still. I see British constitutionalism is a great deal better thing than American republicanism. Are those men free who can hold others in chains ? Are those states free that can receive the message of Van Buren ? What would the English public say if, from the throne of his Majesty of these realms, a document of that description were to issue, binding the nation, the throne, the diadem he wears, the sceptre he wields, and everything that is glorious in our national history—binding himself and binding everything around him, that the nation should

not touch the subject of slavery? Sir, such a document has issued there: thank God, it has not issued here!”

He concluded by adverting to missionary work as the great preservative of catholicity in the Methodist societies—a suggestion which might well be laid to heart by other religious bodies.

“If we abandon the Missionary cause in any degree, we abandon the principles of our Founder—the principles of our best fathers; we not only abandon their principles, but we abandon that work which they themselves in the midst of great and gigantic labours have effected. We return to the littleness of a sect; and I hate the littleness of a sect. I do not dislike my Wesleyan Methodism—not at all. I love it extremely, and have not the least antipathy, God knows, against any system of Christianity which teaches true religion and makes men holy. But my greatest delight in my Methodism is that it is not sectarian, that it is universal, that it contemplates the conversion of the whole world; and I should be extremely sorry to see the day arrive when Wesleyan Methodism existed simply as united societies. We may exist as united societies, but with the noble purpose of extending beyond our frontier the Christianity we own. We were formed for this very purpose; and if we abandon our principles, I do think God will abandon us. I have caught the atmosphere of this meeting; and I feel it to be warm, glowing, Christian, patriotic, and catholic; and I am quite sure

that when I bespeak the continued zeal, diligence, and exertion of all around me, I shall have the echo of every heart."

To return home to Liverpool. The following letter from Mrs. Dixon, July 25, 1837, may perhaps appear, as it gives some view of the desperate fray which attended the election of Lord Sandon, the Tory candidate for that borough. Mr. Dixon was away at the Conference.

"We have gained a glorious triumph, but I fear at the cost of many lives. Lord Sandon had a majority of 502, Creswell 372! Is it not wonderful? The town has been a horrible scene of riot and bloodshed. The whole Irish population has been up, and awful the confusion. The soldiery have been called in from Preston, and somewhere else, and the Riot Act read. In our quiet spot I have been greatly excited, and ventured out as far as the market, but was glad to take refuge in a druggist's shop, to escape a mob of the most infuriated, hellish wretches, belabouring one another with great clubs. I ran home as fast as I could, and have kept all within doors. A large crowd of Sandonites came down our street with drums and colours, so I made little R—— hold out of the window a piece of scarlet ribbon and shout "Sandon for ever!" which he did most manfully; and they stopped and gave us three hearty cheers. I was determined that his first shout should be for Toryism. How I have wished for you to enjoy the triumph, and to hear your enthusiastic huzza!"

The few hundreds of voters here quoted contrast strikingly with the fifty thousand who now constitute Liverpool.

Mr. Dixon preached at the time of the Conference this year in Leeds, and wrote to his wife: "I got through my task on Sunday pretty well. The congregation was immense; numbers of preachers were present—they have offered their good-natured jokes, and tell me how metaphysical, etc., etc., it was. I am appointed to write the Address to the Societies, and shall be greatly engaged for a few days."

This annual Address to the Societies is remarkable for spirituality in the first place, and for catholicity in the next. The writer points out that personal religion is the real reason of the existence of Methodism; that it is by this that the prosperity of the Methodist institutions is to be gauged. If the spirit of true religion and piety, faithfulness to God, and the love of the country, were preserved, then all was well; but "one of the great dangers of the present period is the substitution of a mechanical, bustling, outward religion, in the place of the work of God in the heart." He went on to guard the Wesleyans in general from "a hasty judgment and a false position" in public affairs; and the passage in which he did so is so admirable that it may be quoted.

"Whilst our predecessors maintained their independence, they were always distinguished by patriotism and a catholic spirit. Mere party politics,

as such, have been avoided in the public acts of the body ; and when circumstances have imperatively demanded an expression of opinion or the exercise of a constitutional right, loyalty to the throne, homage to the laws, and respect towards the civil and ecclesiastical institutions of the country, have invariably characterised this flow of feeling and avowal of principle. We are persuaded that no interest of Methodism, any more than its genius and spirit, can make it necessary or desirable that we should assume an anti-national attitude. We do not exist for sectarian purposes, and ought to guard against a bigoted spirit. The object of our Connexional union has not been to assault and break down other evangelical churches, but to maintain a fraternal fellowship with them, and diffuse amongst them a measure of that reviving influence which it pleased God first, in these latter ages, to impart to our venerable founder and his coadjutors. It would ill become us, after professing for nearly a century that we have existed for purely religious purposes, that we have been animated by a truly catholic spirit, and that we have been guided by the most friendly feelings towards the Church of England, now, for party and political objects, to place ourselves in a hostile attitude. Methodism allows perfect freedom of sentiment and opinion in its own communion; but we entreat you to use your liberty with a constant reference to the authority of the Word of God, the pure and holy principles of Christianity, your own religious character and profession,

the position which has been chosen and occupied by our Connexion in relation to the national institutions, the avowals of sentiment which have been so often made, and the prospect of general usefulness in the world."

CHAPTER VII.

1837-40.

Appointment to Sheffield—Success of his Ministry there—Character of his Preaching—Visit to Ireland—Question of National Education—Sermon on Religious Knowledge—Lecture on Popery—Letters on the Duties of Protestants—Toryism and Sagacity of the Writer—Funeral Sermon on the Rev. W. E. Miller—Missionary Anniversary of 1840—Great Meeting for the Extinction of the Slave Trade—Conference.

FROM Liverpool Mr. Dixon was moved, in 1837, to Sheffield, as Superintendent of the West Circuit. He remained there for three years, during which he took a considerable part in public affairs, besides exercising a powerful ministry, and became one of the leading men in the place. The years passed in Sheffield were among the most successful in his career.

As Superintendent of the circuit he succeeded in maintaining among his brethren and throughout the society a healthful and cheerful tone of feeling. He was so far above all littleness and bitterness, that those feelings seemed incapable of manifesting themselves within the circle of his influence: his character

invited the confidence and drew forth the minds of his colleagues : and the meetings of the preachers at his house, instead of being mere assemblies for the despatch of business, were hours of religious communion and hearty good-fellowship. The men came to those meetings, not armed with reserve and on their guard against one another ; but open, frank, genial, disposed to freedom, and at times to good-natured banter, and rejoicing in the presence of their official superior. Among those who were most familiar with him during this period were the Revs. Timothy Ingle ; Benjamin Clough, a returned missionary, author of a Singhalese dictionary ; Joseph Roberts, another returned missionary ; John Burton, who possessed a fine metaphysical mind, and was one of the most spiritual preachers in the Connexion ; and John McLean, the Governor of the Wesleyan Proprietary School, an impetuous and warm-hearted Scotsman. Besides these there was sometimes seen at these meetings the venerable figure of the Rev. William Edward Miller, of whom more anon.

The ministry of Mr. Dixon is still remembered in Sheffield. Some of the older members of the society there consider that in his time the prosperity of the circuit reached a height unequalled before or after. There was more spirituality, a more present sense of the reality of religion, of being carried forward by a great religious force, of being embraced in an economy actively administered by the power of God, than is usually attained. Mr. Samuel Hill Smith, an old and respected inhabitant of the place,

who has attended at Carver Street chapel from the time when it was opened to the present day, has no hesitation in pointing to those three years as the period in which the Society was in its best state. In a communication which he has sent, this gentleman says very truly that no one unacquainted with the ordinary preaching of Mr. Dixon can have any knowledge of the charm and force of his ministry. Some ministers are only great on great occasions, and in their regular course fall far below the standard to which they rise when a special effort is demanded of them. This is a sure sign of an intellect either exhaustible or not in harmony with its work. Others never rise beyond a certain standard, nor sink below it. Mr. Dixon, on the contrary, was equal to the greatest occasions, and yet maintained a standard equally high in his ordinary ministry. Indeed, the excellence and efficiency of his ordinary ministry were so remarkable that he may claim to be judged by that as an extraordinary man. "I shall never forget," says Mr. Smith, "how one Sunday evening the universal love of God was set forth in discussing the text, 'For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him'—nor the overwhelming appeal to accept at once the offered grace, which was made in Ebenezer Chapel to a crowded audience. Nor can I lose the impression of brief week-day sermons, remembered only as seasons of

genial influence, like refreshing dews or light divine. On these occasions the leading object was presented at once, and by compression the discourse was often more complete and effective than those of a more comprehensive character; and indeed nothing could be more pleasing and edifying than these sermons. One effect of such preaching was to increase the disposition and capacity of devout hearers to study and understand the truth; and this influence was felt by all who had heart and mind for it, whether of the educated or the untaught.

“One of Mr. Dixon’s most interested hearers was a woman of the rudest exterior, of masculine size and strength, who, whilst engaged in colliery work near Wakefield, heard him preach, was awakened, sought and found mercy, afterwards came to Sheffield, was a useful class-leader, and died in the Lord. One of the labouring class expressed to the writer a wish that the preachers were so and so. The reply was, ‘You mean, then, like Mr. Dixon?’ ‘Yes, that’s it,—we can understand him,’ was the rejoinder.”

He was indeed, as a preacher, remarkably popular with the poor. The reason was that he never condescended to them; never let it be perceived that he was trying to preach down to the level of their capacities, and make himself understood by their ignorance. A greater mistake than this sort of class preaching cannot be committed. How should it be the business of the preacher of a salvation needed by rich and poor alike to alter his tone

and style to suit assumed incapacity in one part of his audience, thereby flattering the other? Nothing can more tend to foster the most fatal habit that can creep into a congregation—that of coming to hear for others and not for themselves. Nothing can be more offensive, nor in fact more foolish. Let the preacher trust, as Mr. Dixon always did, to the force of general simplicity, thought, feeling, to penetrate everywhere; and, depend upon it, when the substance of Divine truth is apprehended by his own mind, it will communicate its impression without respect of persons.

One of the most interesting means of instruction which Mr. Dixon ever devised was a course of lectures on “The Providential Government of God as exhibited in the History of the Patriarchs,” which he volunteered to give during his residence in Sheffield. These lectures have never been forgotten by those who listened to them; the present writer has heard them mentioned by several as among the most beautiful and edifying ministrations which they ever attended. “The place of meeting,” says Mr. Smith, “was the large schoolroom in Carver Street chapel, the time eleven on Thursday morning—an inconvenient hour for men of business, but many of these made all give way for this service: and punctual to a moment the room was filled. A few verses were sung, a short prayer offered, the passage to be considered was read, and in the calmest manner the great principles of the subject were impressively brought out. As twelve o’clock

struck the audience broke up ; men hastened away to business, the ladies retired home.

“What gave the peculiar charm to Mr. Dixon’s speaking I cannot say. His appearance in the pulpit was favourable to his influence ; he was a fit instrument to utter Gospel truth. When excited, his countenance beamed with intelligence and love, and he assuredly knew the things of which he spoke.”

That was the great secret of the matter—he spoke what he felt and knew ; his preaching was himself.

In the month of April, 1838, Mr. Dixon was invited to take part in a missionary tour in the north of Ireland. In several letters which he wrote to Mrs. Dixon he gives some interesting descriptions of what he saw there, and his impressions of the state of the country at the time. / Writing from Belfast, he says: “The civil and worldly state of the country is not so bad as I apprehended, but Popery is even much worse. It hangs like a millstone on the neck of the poor people, and is, I should think, the most unmitigated system of oppression, tyranny, and evil that ever existed in the world. How it is to be broken I know not, but it will have more of my hatred than ever. Methodism is an inexpressibly poor thing in some places ; the people dispersed, hidden, hated, persecuted, and held in contempt ; but God has raised up a few witnesses—they are truly pious, and are the means of keeping alive the cause of piety in the land. This is a most important, beautiful, and thriving town, and our cause here is very respectable and good. It is indeed the Liver-

pool of Ireland. My collection on Sunday was £84, and all the services have been very interesting."

Writing from Portadown—the great centre of Methodism—he describes his toils. As he was ordinarily one of the most silent of men, the Irish loquacity seems to have rather oppressed him.

"My vagabond kind of life does not suit me at all. The kindness and attention of the people are quite Irish. I have to talk or listen to talk from morning to night. This takes place in our movements from place to place, as well as when we are at anchor in the port of some friendly house. You know the effect this will have on my nerves and spirits. I am kept within a very limited sphere of labour, called the Yorkshire of Ireland: Methodism has done great things for it, and the place in which I now write possesses perhaps more Methodists than can be found in the same population in any part of England. Few natural curiosities have fallen within my notice, but I have seen two objects of interest. The one is the Bay of Belfast, a fine indentation of the sea, extending a dozen or more miles. I travelled along its shores on Tuesday, and was much pleased with the beauty of the sea views, as well as the somewhat highly cultivated shore. From the place where we held our meeting that evening Scotland and the Isle of Man were plainly seen. About four miles from Belfast we visited what is called the Giant's Ring, a circular piece of ground of considerable extent, surrounded by a mound of earth several yards high, and in the

centre a Druidical altar, or whatever else it may be, after the manner of Stonehenge. In the neighbourhood of this place is a large lake, which I have seen in the distance. It is remarkable for being the exact size and form of the Isle of Man, and a tradition exists that at some period they changed places. With these exceptions the country through which I have passed presents nothing singular to the eye. I have given as much attention as possible to the state of society. The towns, the roads, the farms, the trade, even the huts are much better than I expected. Indeed, all the towns marked on my plan are equal to any places of the same population in England. I have seen three or four fairs or large markets, and the people looked as civil, orderly, well-clad, and comfortable as our country people. One difference, however, is observable: it is the immense number of pigs they bring to market. Before my window at this moment the market is going on, and I have counted upwards of twenty large cartloads of dead pigs.

“On the day I wrote to you from Dublin I visited nearly every part of the city. It is a beautiful place, yet in the midst of all it wears an air of desertion. We passed through many most spacious and beautiful streets without seeing a single carriage or meeting any large number of people; and in passing from Dublin to Dundalk, a distance of forty or fifty miles, I saw just one gig, one gentleman's carriage, and one respectable car. Such are the effects of absenteeism.”

In another letter he says, concerning the meetings in which he took part: "We have less excitement than in England. The people are English and Scotch in these quarters, sobered by the spread of a grave Presbyterianism. They listen with profound attention, but manifest little or no emotion. I shall return full of admiration of the Irish character. I believe a better set of men do not exist on earth than the Irish Methodist preachers."

Mr. Dixon revisited Ireland in the spring of the following year, 1839, which was the centenary year of the Wesleyan Connexion; and immediately afterwards he attended the Missionary Anniversary in London, at which he spoke. In a letter to Mrs. Dixon he says of this: "Yesterday was a grand meeting; Tory up to my point, and almost beyond it. Ireland the principal topic. A melancholy feeling has rested on my mind ever since I have been here. I have thought much of your father, and longed to hear him in the midst of the puny efforts of living men."

About this time he began to take an active part in the great question of education, which was beginning to agitate the country. National education, or rather, as he himself termed it in one of his speeches, "anti-scriptural education under the name of national education," was already the gathering cry of the party hostile to the established order of things; against this Mr. Dixon directed his efforts on the platform, and also wrote some powerful letters in the Sheffield newspapers. He con-

voked the friends of religious education to a meeting held in the large room attached to Carver Street chapel, where he submitted a scheme for consolidating the system of day, evening, infant, and Sunday schools "on the well-known and recognized principles of Wesleyan Methodism." A series of resolutions drawn up by him was carried through the meeting; and some of these are worth recording in the present state of the education question.

The primary object sought was the religious instruction of the children of Wesleyan parents; their instruction in the Bible, "as explained in the writings of the late Rev. John Wesley, and in the catechisms of the Connexion." For this purpose a society was to be established under the name of the "Sheffield Wesleyan Methodist District School Society"; and this was to be worked through the existing organism of the district; the Chairman of the district being president, and the governing committee composed of the preachers, trustees, and other office-bearers, and all subscribers of a guinea a year. One hour a day at least was to be devoted to religious instruction, and school was to be opened with singing and prayer. This scheme was in agreement with the recommendation of the Conference, but the opposition to it was so strong that it came to nothing. Denominational education—to use the current phrase—at this time engaged the attention of the Conference, but did not finally take shape beyond a general recommendation. The ministers and laymen of Sheffield held frequent meetings on

the subject, but came to no conclusion. The scheme proposed by Mr. Dixon seems well adapted to have checked the outcry about national or secular education, by increasing the efficiency of the existing denominational system.

His views on the subject of religious education were fully expressed about this time, in a sermon preached at the opening of Wesley College Chapel in Sheffield, in the year 1840, and published under the title, "Religion Essential to the Completeness and Utility of Knowledge." In these amazing days, when, after a thousand years of Christianity, men are seen gravely meeting together to defraud one another's children of religious instruction, though every one of those men, if he were asked, would say that he preferred his own children to get as much of it as they could; in these days peculiar pleasure is felt in drawing attention to this powerful and admirable argument for religious teaching. It would be difficult to find a piece of the same length in which religion is displayed as the greatest subject of human knowledge with equal force of reasoning, and an equal flow of sober and noble eloquence. It is one of the best of the author's writings. \From the text, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 2), it is argued that the treasures of wisdom and knowledge residing in Christ are poured forth in the existing state of Christianity; that the glorious system of religion revealed in the Word of God is "the brightest field that we are permitted

to enter," and, instead of being a confused and unintelligible jargon, is a great, composed, and magnificent design. "The justification and salvation of man are propounded on specific grounds; the amount of privilege, holiness, and joy is entirely grounded on covenant promises; the duties of piety are enforced with the exactness of law; and 'life and immortality are brought to light,' and thrown in their full lustre on the dark regions of time." In the Word of God and, as planted on earth, in the Church, Christianity is a wonderful system, laid open to the study of man. But its existence and continuance among men depend on the constant exertion of the power of God. Existing in the Son of God as its primary cause, it is worked as a dispensation on earth from His exalted throne. "Instead of being discoverable in the midst of the lumber of the world, or to be found imbedded like a layer of earth amongst the common soils; instead of being seen interwoven as an attenuated network through the whole contexture of things material, or detected as a latent and natural congeries of subtleties in the common thinkings and sentiments of the human mind, this holy religion is a light constantly beaming from God, a power held in His hand, a mercy in ever-living exercise, a spiritual influence ever poured forth, and a class of privileges conferred on believing men by His grace alone." What then is to be thought of schemes for excluding or, at least, hampering religious instruction in schools, on the part of Christian men,

for fear lest particular doctrines should be learned along with the knowledge of God Himself, and the children should grow up to belong to one denomination rather than another!

It is impossible to pursue this elaborate discourse through the arguments drawn from the imperfection of our knowledge of nature without the light of Divine truth, the arguments concerning the moral government of God, those connected with the questions between science and religion, and those connected with religion as the basis of the social state. These arguments are not new in themselves—how should they or need they be? They have never been answered yet. But they are original in the sense of being thought out by the author from end to end, original in the way in which they are disposed and stated, and in the eloquence with which they are enforced. Some of the expressions are extremely neat and antithetical, as the following: “By those who discard the authority of revelation, or neglect its instructions, nature is considered providence, and providence nature.” Or take as a piece of eloquence the following: “In the material philosophy, the sun rises and sets; harvests ripen and are reaped; animals live, labour, and die; generations of men are born, take their places in society, perform their modicum of toil, enjoy their pastime and pleasure, occupy their several ranks, offices, and honours; and then are pushed off the stage of life, only to make room for new-comers. Those great

combinations of men called states rise, coalesce, carry on a combined commerce, oppress their neighbours by the struggles of war, and are in their turn assaulted: when they have lived their round of glory and disgrace, they sink into anarchy and ruin; and, like old materials thrown into a furnace to be melted anew, pass through the ordeal of some revolutionary process, till a new kingdom stands tottering on the ashes of the old, to be lost in turn in the oblivion of time. This scene is changed by the doctrine of Christian providence. In the light of this truth, the earth does not exist for itself; it is not an isolated globe, environed by impassable barriers, solitary in its own waxing and waning glories, living and dying amid its own unheeded agonies and moans; training up its vast family of varied beings for no other purpose than to show themselves, flutter their wings in the summer's sun, taste the food provided, drink at the fountain-head of life, and then to mingle with dust again. Other and higher lessons are taught by the Word of God." —

In the last part of the sermon the preacher speaks of religion as affording the best and purest objects for the taste and intellect. Here he is perfectly original in his way of carrying out the argument; and this part is biographically interesting, since it gives his opinion of some of the great Christian orators and other writers whom he was constantly studying. One more extract shall be given:

“In our own language the written discourses of

Bishops Hall and Taylor, Isaac Barrow, John Howe, Robert Hall, Edward Irving, and another,—will bear a comparison with any of the productions of secular orators, and far transcend the greater number. Indeed, the genius, fire, command of imagery, rich sentiment, and flowing diction of Jeremy Taylor leave the tinselled eloquence of the world far in the rear. The profundity, richness, and calm and lucid beauty of Isaac Barrow are like a deep and mighty river, carrying gladness and fertility on its course. John Howe assimilates with some heavenly nature, incorporated with the human. His movements all seem to be in a purely spiritual region: and his thoughts, being culled in heaven, all bear the impress of the greatness, the holiness, and the love of heaven. Many of us have lived to listen to the other venerated men referred to, as well as to read the remains of their sanctified genius. Some of the written discourses of Robert Hall are inimitable in beauty, lofty and grand in sentiment, thrilling and moving in spirit, with deep, tender, touching pathos: but what is all this compared with his living power? His illuminated countenance, his blazing eye, his vehement gesture, and the deep emotion of his mighty mind, all giving effect to the utterance of such sentiments as we find published in his sermons, produced an indescribable impression. Poor Edward Irving, too, in the sanity of his days, possessed wonderful power; and that other one, whom I name not, who gave his light to our own Connexion, combined, in happy harmony, the

loftiest conceptions and soaring sublimity with the most perfect reason, glowing imagination, and intense and hallowed feeling. A sermon from his lips was a perfect creation, and shone forth like the illuminated pillar in the wilderness."

It need hardly be said to whom the last reference is made.

Another subject which greatly occupied his attention was the spread of Popery. He held Popery to be the danger of England: and this was a conviction which nothing could shake. He hated that system as a constitutionalist hates despotism, as a religious republican hates a hierarchy, as a man of spiritual discernment hates superstition. He was a thorough Brunswicker, and shared to the full the alarm of his party at the great measure of the Relief Bill. He saw with dismay the rapid and indeed astonishing development of Roman Catholic institutions which immediately followed thereupon, and the bold enunciation of principles, which, if carried out, would at once put an end to the English State, ecclesiastical and civil. And he dreaded Popery not only as an evil in itself, but as a leaven, allowed freely to work in the midst of the mass of society until it might come to pass that the whole was leavened. At this time the great Oxford movement was in its first vigour. Mr. Dixon studied that movement closely, and became familiar with the writings of its great leaders. Not all the excellence of those writings, the spiritual-mindedness, the earnest devotion manifested in them, nor the resemblance

which in some respects the movement bore to Methodism in the beginning, could blind him to the fact that it all rested on the narrow foundation of what he called "exclusive church principles," involving claims and admitting appeals which might any day bring on a collision with the constitution of the realm. Can it be said that he was wrong?

He became from this time one of the most powerful, popular, and active anti-popish lecturers and speakers in the kingdom. A lecture which he delivered in 1839, first in Sheffield, and afterwards in York, Barnsley, and Manchester, was published and widely circulated under the title of "The present position and aspects of Popery, and the duty of exposing the errors of Papal Rome." He also wrote in the same year a series of "Letters on the duties of Protestants with regard to Popery," in several of the provincial newspapers: these were afterwards collected and republished.

Of course a considerable part of these publications is now out of date; but there is much that still maintains its interest, and much that is important to our present purpose, as throwing light upon the mind of the writer. The lecture contains passages of eloquence, and shows great mastery of the subject. It is particularly able in exhibiting the different policy of Rome in the Middle Ages and in modern times. Formerly Rome appealed to the great and powerful, and above all strove to work herself into the frame of the constitutions of the

several states of Europe; and according to the success of these in resisting her corrupting influence, was the degree in which they succeeded in maintaining their national life. But now Rome was openly unconstitutional: in every case she now set the State at defiance, and appealed not to the authorities but to the people—to the people as distinct from the nation: and aimed to excite in them feelings and associations beyond the control of the State. What most forcibly struck this lover of spiritual freedom and joy, to whom religion was happiness, was the universal terror, the superstitious gloom, through which this appeal to the people was made. “One thing,” he says, “must have struck the attention of every one who has visited Roman Catholic countries; it is, that in the midst of the employment of poetry, painting, music, sculpture, and scenic preparations of every kind, even to profusion, the emotions of happiness are scarcely ever appealed to. We find no imagery of joy. The tones of their organs, the structure of their melody, the sonorous voices of their priesthood, are all struck in a deeply pensive and melancholy key. The ceremony of high mass is only calculated to inspire awe towards the priesthood, reverence and fear for some abstract, hidden, and mystic power connected with the service, and to win over the trembling homage of the people to the system. In the performances of the mitred high priest, and his retinue of dependents; the blazing light of innumerable candles; the incense and perfume of the

censer; the utterances of hymns and prayers in an unknown tongue; and the elevation of the host: everything seems constructed to inspire dread. There is, even in the highest service of the church, nothing to call forth the sentiments of confidence and joy. The pictures which adorn their churches, and the images which they either adore, or at least look upon in order to excite their devotion, are all calculated to awaken emotions of fear and dread. Relics of the cross, of dead men's bones, and innumerable other imaginary remains of ancient and departed piety, carefully preserved and exhibited in their shrines, are intended to awaken sombre feelings. The very household gods, so to speak, of these people all serve to inspire terror. I have seen myself, very often, in one of the most perfectly Popish countries of modern times, lighted candles stuck in human skulls, placed in the corners of the streets of a large town, kept constantly burning: while pictures of purgatory, popes, priests, and devils were so intermingled as to teach the efficacy of the system, while they struck the mind with awe. Oh no, there is no joy in this religion—how should there be? Superstition only dwells with the horrible, never with the happy. She throws a midnight darkness over the territory she occupies, and then calls up the furies of her pandæmonium to perform their evolutions of mimic power, to silence any murmurs which may arise, and fascinate her deluded followers through the impulse of their fears.”

The same feeling of incumbent gloom and horror—as the present writer happens lately to have observed—is powerfully set forth in the least known of Charles Dickens' works, the "Pictures from Italy"—one of the few books of travel which convey a general and real impression.

The "Letters on the Duties of Protestants" would still be of great use to one who wished to understand the state of parties in those important years which immediately followed the Roman Catholic Relief Bill. They indicate a very intimate acquaintance with everything bearing on the subject; and they breathe the boldest spirit of Conservatism. Above all, they are written in a strain of such impulsive and noble eloquence that, unknown as they are, they deserve some place in the polemic literature of the country. The author endeavours to show, in the first place, that the moral state of the Popish Church was such that no dependence could be placed on the sincerity of her members in questions involving the interests of Protestantism; then that no implicit reliance is to be placed in mere worldly politicians: he then considers minutely the progress of legislation in favour of Romanism, showing how the Conservative party conceded emancipation professedly on motives of expediency and against their principles and judgment; how the Grey Ministry went further, establishing in Ireland a system of national education on the principle of excluding the Holy Scriptures; and how the then present Government proceeded to the direct support

and endowment of the Church of Rome. He then seeks for principles on which the divided Protestant world might be united in opposition to Liberals and Papists; and suggests three such principles—the maintenance of the Constitution and Monarchy, of freedom of opinion, and the integrity of the Holy Scriptures. But above all he sought to arouse a moral feeling suitable to the emergency.

Great sagacity is shown in this pamphlet. The general course which religious legislation has since followed is indicated with considerable foresight: but it is to the powerful argumentative eloquence that we wish most to call attention.

For example, of the Conservatives passing the Relief Bill he says: "That which astounded and even petrified the nation at the time, and now hangs like the shadow of night on a great and influential party in the state, is that they passed this Act against their most cherished principles and convictions. No apology can be offered for this; no extenuating circumstances can be put in plea; nothing remains to the warmest friends and admirers of those great men but mourning over the frailties and weakness of human nature. The danger might be urgent, the pressure great, the case inevitable, but they ought not to have assisted in consummating an event which they persisted in representing as an evil.

"It is in vain to affirm, as an apology for them, that these disabilities were either unnecessary or unjust. Adopting the opinions of the Whigs of

1688 (from whom many who bear their name in modern times have completely departed), they considered these safeguards as essential to the integrity of the Constitution, the purity and stability of the Protestant Church, and also the freedom of the subject. Then on this showing, as patriots, they ought to have resisted the assaults of the enemy as long as they had the slightest prospect of success, and only when they had been deserted by the British nation ought they to have surrendered the citadel to the invading foe.

“Their fault, in all probability, was the temptation of their position. The temporal and political view of the subject . . . overpowered in their minds the religious aspect of the case. This is the danger in which all legislative bodies are placed: and indeed it is difficult accurately to define the point where human expediency ought to end and unbending religious principle begin. One thing, however, is most certain: that all men, and especially public men, ought to act in religious matters on the honest conviction of their own minds. Surely Christianity is too sacred to be put on and off, or have its form and fashion changed, as caprice or even convenience may dictate.”

Again, what he says of the legislation on the Bible exhibits what may be called the fundamental principle of his own mind.

“On the ground of their divinity, the sacred writings are above all human authority. They are the free gift of God to all mankind, the charter of

our privileges, and the covenant of our salvation. To determine by Act of Parliament that they shall be read or not read, mutilated or uncut, by the community, is to subject them to the condition of a code amenable to human authority, which is of itself an invasion of the prerogative of the Supreme Divinity. Christianity is antecedent to and above all earthly power or law. It stands on a level with the natural, or rather, the divine rights of the human race. The right to life, or freedom, in case neither be forfeited by crime, is not more perfect and indefeasible than the right to the Bible."

"The Bible is excluded from the children of a whole people by Act of Parliament. The British nation are parties with the Pope of Rome in depriving these people of a right and privilege which belongs to them on an immutable, because a divine, tenure. They have as perfect a right to the Scriptures, and with them to the blessings of Christianity, as they have to life itself; and a state would be no more sinning in principle against the rights of mankind in passing an Act of Parliament to take away life, than in taking away the Bible. Neither is in the keeping of human legislation. The one is the gift of God as the Creator, the other is the gift of God as the Redeemer. Life and religion stand on an equal footing, because they are equally divine."

Once more. How far the following predictions have turned out right or wrong it is left to the reader to determine.

"To talk of the struggle of principle now going

on as that of Toryism and Whiggery is a perfect delusion. This was the case in ages gone by, but a third party has entered the field, and completely turned the tide of battle. The antagonistic forces in the presence of each other are Protestantism and Popery. In this, as in other things, England has been assimilated to Ireland. No one ever hears the party names employed in this country in the neighbouring island. The Protestants and the Roman Catholics are the terms employed to denote the party divisions existing in that country. These two mighty interests absorb everything else. So it must be in this country ere long. To this point we are rapidly verging. Under the new cognomen and array of Conservatism, or some other to be selected for the purpose, Protestantism will collect her mighty energies, whilst Popery, either in her own unveiled character, or some one assumed for the purpose, will marshal her opposing hosts. Indeed, we have nearly arrived at this already. There may be some loose and light enthusiasts who are dreaming of utopian schemes of republican freedom, but it must be evident to everybody but themselves that the millions of Papists on the one hand, headed by their priesthood, and the millions of Protestants on the other, led on by their chiefs, must decide the momentous contest. The few persons amongst us of no creed, no principles, no fixed opinions, unless attachment to their own crude negations can be so considered, will be crushed or driven before these two mighty forces, as the air-bubbles of a lake

before the confluence of two mighty rivers struggling on her bosom for the mastery of the channel."

These letters were very successful in creating a local interest in the Protestant cause, and were favourably reviewed in the leading Wesleyan newspaper, *The Watchman*, which said: "Our Wesleyan readers will not need to be told who James Dixon is; it may be proper to inform others that Mr. Dixon is a very leading Wesleyan minister, as distinguished by rare oratorical endowments as he is a most powerful writer. We set such a value on this performance that we wish every Methodist in the kingdom would furnish himself with a copy. . . . This is no dry scholastic disquisition on the dogmas of Popery, but the fresh effusion of the philosophical inferences of a first-rate mind operating on facts with which, as disjoined from the grand conclusions insisted upon by Mr. Dixon, we are all familiar. The pamphlet is one which even our legislators may read with high advantage."

At this time, and indeed from the time of Roman Catholic emancipation in 1829, there was a feeling that the Church was in danger, from the junction of Romanists with political Dissenters under the Liberal flag. Many Protestant meetings were got up in Sheffield by the Church party and the Methodists, the Dissenters keeping aloof. At one of these meetings the Romanists and some of their allies made a great uproar, and very much annoyed the clergy on the platform. Mr. Dixon rose, and,

being very pale from excitement, was greeted by cries of "Hamlet's Ghost:" but he succeeded in quieting the row, and gaining a hearing both for himself and the clergy.

Soon after this occurrence, Dr. Sutton, the Vicar of Sheffield, proposed, as a mark of appreciation on the part of the clergy of Mr. Dixon's services to the Protestant cause, that he should take the chair at a lecture to be given by a clergyman whose name is here suppressed. That Protestant advocate, however, refused to give the lecture with Mr. Dixon in the chair: and so, to the great annoyance of Dr. Sutton and the other clergy, the latter had no course open but to leave the meeting and go home. It is difficult to gain an understanding of the possibility of the existence of the sort of mind of which this kind of behaviour is the natural outcome and sweetest efflorescence: but "things must be as they may," as Corporal Nym said.

Mr. Dixon preached two remarkable funeral sermons during the time that he was in Sheffield. The first was in 1838, on the death of the Rev. John Ward, a supernumerary preacher: in the course of which he plainly told the people that he thought the supernumeraries were very much neglected by them, adding that he had been at many of their social gatherings, "but never met good John Ward there." The other was on the Rev. William Edward Miller, one of those exquisite and angelic characters which had the greatest attraction

for his own mind. Mr. Miller died in November, 1839, and the sermon which Mr. Dixon delivered on the occasion of his death was an overwhelming outburst of pathos, oratory, and ecstatic fervour. It has indeed been described to the writer as having been such an effort as the greatest orator could only make once in a life. Mr. Dixon was entrusted with the task of writing the life of the gifted and extraordinary person whom he celebrated on this occasion,—a task which he executed in due time. Of the sermon no trace remains.

In 1840 Mr. Dixon was called to London to preach one of the three sermons before the Wesleyan Missionary Society at the May anniversary. His discourse was delivered on May 1st in Great Queen Street Chapel, and called forth an especial tribute in the Missionary Notices. It was “delivered with great energy, eloquence, and power.” It was on “The signs of the times” (Matt. xvi. 3). In a letter home Mr. Dixon, who seldom mentioned his own performances, wrote: “The sermon this morning went gloriously. I have received many expressions of approval; amongst others, Dr. Bunting said, ‘A better sermon has never been preached on the occasion.’ This is testimony of some consequence. To God be all the praise.” He afterwards attended the Annual Meeting in Exeter Hall, and as usual carried all before him by the address which he delivered.

A month later he was called to London again, as one of the representatives of Methodism at the

great meeting for the extinction of the slave-trade, which was held in Exeter Hall on June 1, when the late Prince Consort took the chair,—the first of the Prince's public appearances. In a letter home the next day he says: "We had a grand meeting, unexampled in the history of such assemblies as to rank and numbers. The circumstances which distinguished the meeting were: the presence of the Prince,—he is a fine young man, and was deeply interested in the best parts of the meeting; the appearance and speech of Sir Robert Peel,—he was received with more enthusiasm than I ever witnessed, the shouting and waving of hats was tremendous. His speech gave me such an idea of the perfection of oratory as I never possessed before. . . . The advent of O'Connell on the field of action, and his complete discomfiture, was the next glorious incident."

O'Connell appeared in the hall, and attempted to speak, but was refused by the meeting.

"I met with a very hearty reception at the Protestant Association."

At the Conference of this year, held in Newcastle, Mr. Dixon was unexpectedly selected to preach the official sermon, in place of the ex-President, the Rev. Theophilus Lessey, who was incapacitated by illness. This seems to have occasioned him much nervous distress. In a letter home, dated July 27th, he says: "Since I wrote last a most serious duty has been imposed on me—that of preaching the Conference sermon. I know not how I shall get

through; it is a subject of constant distress and agitation to me by night and day. God I trust will help me in this, as He has done before; if not I sink and fall." In another, a day or two later: "I am full of misery respecting my duty on Monday. I know the black-coats too well to expect anything but sarcasm from them." However he thought differently in a while, for he again writes: "I want you to share my joy and triumph at the goodness of God. The thing went off gloriously. The Conference immediately passed a unanimous resolution to the effect that the sermon should be printed. I have also met with many private expressions of approval. To God be all the glory."

This sermon was founded on 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6; "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit," etc. It was spoken of in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine as "replete with vigorous argument and elegant and diversified illustrations, and ever and anon enlivened with bursts of overpowering eloquence."

By this Conference Mr. Dixon was appointed to Manchester.

CHAPTER VIII.

1840-43.

Appointment to Manchester—Recollections and Anecdotes—
 Chosen as the Methodist Representative to speak on the
 Maynooth Question at the Freemasons' Hall—Wesleyan
 Centenary—Elected President of the Conference, 1841
 —Events in his Presidency, and Tenor of his Policy—
 Missionary Anniversary of 1842—Published Memoirs
 of Rev. W. E. Miller—Criticism of the same—Sermon
 on Methodism in its Origin, Economy, and Present
 Position—Review of the same—Charge to Young Minis-
 ters, delivered by him as ex-President—Funeral Sermon
 on the death of the Rev. T. Galland—Degree—Recol-
 lections and Anecdotes.

MR. DIXON was appointed in 1840 to the Third
 Manchester, or Grosvenor Street Circuit, as second
 preacher. In his second and third year he was
 superintendent of the circuit. Among his col-
 leagues were the Rev. John Lomas and Dr. Osborn.

The Rev. W. R. Arthy, to whose communication
 reference has been made already, furnishes some
 interesting particulars of Mr. Dixon's first year in
 Manchester.

“ In the year 1840 I became his colleague in what

was then called the Manchester Third Circuit,—that is to say, I was ‘the young preacher.’ There were great men in that circuit in those days, and I love to remember their names,—James Wood, George Chappell, John Fernley, the Messrs. Westhead, John Mayson, and many others whose names will long live in the annals of Methodism. I often met Mr. Dixon at social parties given at the houses of these gentlemen; and I never met any Methodist preacher so capable of turning these meetings to good purpose. When he was present the evening was never spent frivolously: he had very considerable powers of conversation; and although Methodist topics, as was natural, had the preference, his intelligence and extensive reading enabled him to take a much wider range. We talked of trade and commerce, free trade being a great subject then. We talked politics, Mr. Dixon always leaning to the Conservative side, for which he quoted Deut. xxxii. 7: “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee, thy elders and they will tell thee”—a text from which he liked to preach. We talked controversial divinity—a practice more common in those days than now; and he thoroughly enjoyed a friendly controversy. But all argument was conducted by him in the spirit of a gentleman. I well remember the rebuke he gave to a person who introduced an unseasonable subject. ‘You ought to know better than to introduce a subject which you know must be unpleasant to some persons here.’ . . . Thirty

years ago geology was not so generally understood as it is now, and therefore a good man might be pardoned for offering it as his opinion that all geologists were atheists and infidels. 'Oh! I hope that is not the case,' said Mr. Dixon, 'for I am a little bit of a geologist myself; I have just been reading Dr. Pye Smith's book on Geology and Revelation, and I think he proves clearly enough that the two can easily be reconciled.' 'Oh!' replied the gentleman, 'that is impossible, for geologists do not believe in a Creator at all; they do not believe that God made the world, but that it grew up gradually, through an inconceivable period of hundreds of millions of years.' 'And suppose it did,' was the reply, 'suppose that God only created, at some time past—a time to which our imagination cannot reach—just the elements of things, and out of those elements produced a gradual development of the world, till it became just what we read of in the first chapter of Genesis, is not God then the Maker of all just as much as if He had created everything in six days, and in the form in which we see them now?—and is not our conception of His almighty power greatly enhanced by the thought that He should have made just one thing, and out of that produced all other things? Remember what Paley says about one watch making another.' A minister who attained to considerable eminence in the Connexion, but whose views on many subjects frequently differed from those of his brethren, happened to be a guest at dinner. Mr. Dixon by

several friendly arguments sought to dissuade him from proceeding with a subject evidently distasteful to the Conference. 'My conscience,' said this preacher, 'compels me to do what I am doing.' 'Your conscience!' was the reply: 'why, your conscience is nothing but your judgment, and that will vary as you are well or ill informed. A man takes a prejudice, and then talks about his conscience, when all that he really wants is more information.'

"A few preachers formed a little clerical party one evening at Mr. Dixon's house; the conversation soon turned upon preaching, and the different styles in which preachers of note excelled. Mr. Dixon said that he was satisfied that what was called the expository style was best for preachers in general; the exposition of a passage of Scripture and the deduction therefrom of the argument it suggested would always save a man from becoming commonplace, and was in compliance with St. Paul's charge, 'Preach the word.' 'Only,' he added, 'if your discourses are to be rich in evangelical truth, you must strive to bring out the drift of the entire passage. How often the main points of one of St. Paul's most magnificent passages has been missed: "Who being in the form of God," etc. (Phil. ii. 6, 7.) How is that introduced? By the words "Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of another. Let this mind," *i.e.*, the mind of looking on the things of others, "be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

"The Superintendent of the circuit was one of

the best men that Methodism ever produced, but rather a rigid disciplinarian. Of course Mr. Dixon had many invitations to preach sermons and attend meetings in various parts of the kingdom, and the Superintendent, though recognizing the propriety of his rendering these public services to the Connexion, was watchfully jealous lest what he considered the prior claims of his own circuit should be infringed. One morning Mr. Dixon sent for me, and told me that he was engaged to preach that day at the opening of a small chapel somewhere in Cheshire; 'but,' said he, 'I am not well, and I want you to go for me.' I replied that it would be unpleasant for me to appear in his place, but that I was willing to go, only of course the Superintendent must give his consent, as I had an appointment myself that evening. To our surprise the Superintendent declined to approve the arrangement. 'Mr. Arthy must take his own appointment at Chorlton,' he said. 'But I will get Chorlton well supplied,' said Mr. Dixon. 'Mr. Arthy must keep his own appointment,' was the inexorable rejoinder. Without saying a word more Mr. Dixon took up his hat, went home, and, time being far advanced, hurried to the railway, and I went to Chorlton. He returned the worse for his journey, and instead of taking Sunday duty was obliged to keep his bed. 'I am sorry—very sorry indeed,' said the Superintendent to me, 'but I did not think that he was really ill. I will go to him, and ask his forgiveness.' Afterwards Mr. Dixon said to me, 'Mr. T—— has

made it all right, but he was born a Spartan.' 'I suppose,' I said, 'that Mr. Wesley might have done the same thing.' 'Oh no,' was the reply, 'he would not; the man who wrote "Primitive Physic" could have told whether a man was really ill or not.'"

In March, 1841, Mr. Dixon received the honour of being selected as one of the three clerical representatives of the Protestantism of the country at a great meeting of the Protestant Association, held in Freemasons' Hall, in support of Mr. Colquhoun's Bill concerning the Endowment of Maynooth, at which Lord Teignmouth took the chair. The representative of the Church of England was Canon Champneys, now Dean of Lichfield; of the Presbyterians Dr. Cumming; of Methodism Mr. Dixon. The request was conveyed by Dr. Sandwith and Mr. Seeley—author of *Essay on the Church*, a still valuable book—in very eulogistic terms. The meeting was held on the 31st of March, and was not the last occasion on which Mr. Dixon appeared as the representative of Methodism on the Maynooth question.

It may be necessary to remind the reader that at that time there was an annual vote in Parliament for endowing the Roman Catholic College of Maynooth. This was a constant source of excitement; and Colquhoun's Bill was to alter and amend the Acts of the Irish Parliament on the question, as a preliminary measure to putting a stop to the voting of public money for this purpose. The question was finally settled by the permanent endowment of Maynooth by Sir Robert Peel in 1845.

. Mr. Dixon's speech fully justified the confidence placed in him by the Methodist body. It was delivered with his fullest power and animation, and in substance was a masterly and statesmanlike production. It might still be read as an exposition of the views held by the Protestants of the day. On the one hand he set Popery, tyranny, and irreligion together; on the other Protestantism, freedom, and Scriptural Christianity. He gave an able account of the whole matter of Maynooth from the first grant by Pitt, arguing that the condition of things was totally changed from the time when Popery was a humble suppliant at the foot of the British throne and the doors of the legislature, and that the reasons which might have justified Pitt in making the first grant had now disappeared. He gave a picture of the strength, the numbers, and admirable organisation to which Popery had attained since the Relief Bill; and then alluded to the famous speech of O'Connell about putting his hands in his pockets in case of a foreign war. "The man," he said, "who talks about putting his hands in his pockets when the safety of his country is concerned, is either a blockhead or a traitor."

He then went on to argue the whole question politically, much in the way of his *Letters on the Duties of Protestants*. He saw in Popery a principle antagonistic to the constitution of the realm; and he was unquestionably right in this: the antagonism of Popery to the constitution of the realm was the real cause of the English Reformation, not

less than it was the cause of the Protestant Settlement. But the case of England and Ireland is very different as to the Roman Catholic religion. In Ireland, as Macaulay points out in his history, the line of demarcation between Protestant and Papist corresponds almost exactly with the difference between the Teutonic and the Celtic race. In England Roman Catholics and Protestants all alike belong to the same race. However, the speech was a splendid effort of platform oratory and of honest patriotism—agitated, impassioned, and alarmed, and reflecting with wonderful power the public emotion which called it into being.

At the end of April, 1841, Mr. Dixon was in London on the occasion of the opening of the Wesleyan Centenary Hall and Mission House in Bishopsgate Street Within; and preached one of the annual sermons on behalf of the Missions in Spitalfields chapel. The following is from a letter which he wrote home at the time.

“I must tell you the history of yesterday. I heard Mr. (Dr.) Candlish in the morning. He is a man of good feeling, evangelical, eloquent on a moderate scale, but not a sublime and commanding genius. After getting some dinner, William and Percy Bunting, Scott, McLean, Chubb, and myself sallied out to the great places of public interest about the Houses of Parliament. We were just in time to see the peers—Melbourne, Normanby, etc.—make their appearance, and we let them pass without a groan. In a moment or two ‘the Duke’ was

announced. He came forth, and I obtained a perfect view of the greatest, the most intellectual-looking and beautifully-formed old man from head to foot that ever was seen. But—O sad fate of human nature!—he bends both in walking and riding beneath the weight of seventy-two this very day (May 1). We approached as near as we could, doffed our hats and shouted; and what do you think the brave old man said? *‘Let me get upon my horse, and then you may make as much noise as you like.’* This was one of the most characteristic effusions imaginable. The effect was irresistible. I laughed outright, and believe the whole party did the same. I followed his noble figure as long as I could see it, not only with reverence but with deep affection: I suppose to behold him no more.” Yes, often.

This year—1841—Mr. Dixon received the highest honour that can be bestowed upon a Wesleyan minister, in being elected President of the Conference.

The Conference was held in Manchester; and he was elected by a large majority. At the same time, according to custom, he was appointed President of the next Irish Conference, which was to be held in June, 1842. On this occasion, however, a deviation was made from the usual form, which may deserve to be noticed. From the year 1814 to the year 1840 the appointment of the English President to be Irish President was so expressed as to allow him to name a substitute, “if unavoidably prevented”

from taking the office himself. But this year no substitution was allowed; and Mr. Dixon became *ipso facto* President of the Irish Conference through being President of the English Conference. And the English President of one year continued to be the Irish President of the next, without power to nominate a substitute, until Dr. Osborn was made President in 1863, when the alternative was restored. Why this change was made in Mr. Dixon's year of presidency is not known to the present writer.

Thus, after thirty years of indefatigable labour in the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion, Mr. Dixon attained the height of a pure and disinterested ambition: to be *primus inter pares*, the temporary leader of a band of freemen bound together by the voluntary obligation of serving religion. It must be repeated that his fundamental conception of the Connexion was that it was a republic, not a hierarchy, and that when he rose to the head of the Connexion he regarded himself as the President of a spiritual republic. His administration was marked by a conservative tendency to maintain Methodism in its position, to move backwards, in case of changes, on the lines of the original traditions of the body, and prevent the assumption of a pronounced attitude of dissent. In how many ways he did this, in the innumerable committees on which as President he was engaged, will never be known; but it may be said that the main end and purpose which he held in view was spirituality

—the maintenance of spirituality in the midst of the complexities of a great organism; and the danger which he set himself to avert was the decline of religious life and energy under the mechanical working of a system. He was, it may be remarked, the first President of the second century of Methodism; and the choice of one so conservative might be regarded as a good augury for the maintenance of the principles of the Connexion. His year of office was not distinguished by any great crisis, and what events there were may be recounted very briefly.

As to education. Measures were taken for the first time by this Conference to form a general outline of the course to be pursued in the Wesleyan schools. In this outline, which may be read in the Minutes, there is much to remind us of the scheme which Mr. Dixon drew up in Sheffield. The Bible and the Connexional Catechisms were to form the basis of the religious teaching: and there was a general recommendation to avoid both a latitudinarian character and a sectarian exclusiveness. But the system was to be worked more through a central committee than through the local districts, as he proposed in the Sheffield scheme. Yet, on the other hand, this central or general Committee of Education was already in existence, and was not created under his presidency.

As to points of disagreement, there was the "Gown Question," a thing of no great moment, on which the Connexion decided very sensibly: and

the matter of the "Wesleyan Takings," a series of anonymous sketches of several of the ministers, often very libellous; which the Conference condemned. There was a great deal of unpleasant feeling in connection with this.

One measure was adopted in which we cannot see the hand of Mr. Dixon: that was a resolution that the "Morning Liturgical Service" should be read in the chapel in which the Conference assembled, at least when the Official Sermons of the President and ex-President were delivered.

The present writer well remembers being taken to the Conference chapel on the morning that the ex-President, the celebrated Dr. Newton, preached his official sermon; and seeing the President seated in the chair on a platform under the pulpit, in front of a table covered with green baize. He can still see the half musing, half attentive smile upon his face; and recall his sudden rising to look round in recognition of those whom he loved. To manage such an assembly is a task requiring no ordinary tact and ability: clerical assemblies of every kind being usually most unruly.

One or two reminiscences of his presidency have been gathered from various sources.

Mr. Arthy—already quoted—says: "There is one amusing incident in the history of that Conference which I may record. In the course of one morning's sitting three subjects engaged its attention: first, there was an address presented from the Total Abstinence Society; next, an address on Free

Trade ; and lastly, the Revs. William M. Bunting and S. D. Waddy had during the year appeared in the pulpit wearing a black preaching gown ; and this was duly discussed. Dr. Bunting having delivered a very decided speech in condemnation of the gown, the Rev. W. Bunting, his son, rose and said : ‘ Drink, bread, and dress have occupied the whole time of the Conference this morning. I submit to you, Mr. President, to decide how we are obeying the injunction, “ Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed.” The effect was that, after some asperity introduced into the debate, the Conference broke up in good humour.’

From a communication sent by the Rev. E. Walker, it is possible to obtain a glimpse or two of what Mr. Dixon was as President, and at the same time Superintendent of the circuit in which he resided : Mr. Walker came to be his colleague after being Superintendent of another circuit. Mr. Dixon immediately put all the routine work of the Superintendent upon him. “ As you have been a Superintendent, and come to live in my (late) Superintendent’s house, you must look after the preachers’ plans, ticket plans, and all the rest.” He could manage business matters well—none better—but always sought to escape them. Mr. Walker called on him one day about something of the sort, and “ when I had got my business done I rose to depart, but he said, ‘ Don’t go yet—stay with me awhile.’ I was surprised, for I had always thought

him not easy to be approached: but I was soon undeceived. Mrs. Dixon was away from home at the time, and the children were ill, and he was very nervously excited about them. I stayed for some time, and when I rose to go a second time he said, 'You must pray with me before you go.' For a moment I felt some consternation, but the whole matter was done with such a fascinating simplicity that I complied without difficulty."

At the weekly Preachers' Meeting the President, he says, used to make each of the preachers pray in turn, both at the opening and close of the meeting. At one of these meetings the question was proposed whether a gentleman who had left the ministry should be re-admitted. This person had taken a leading part as a latitudinarian on the subject of Wesleyan education, and left the body on that question. The preachers were mostly in favour of putting him on an extraordinary length of trial; but the President ruled that he should be re-admitted after the ordinary course: and the subsequent conduct of the person in question justified this leniency. Mr. Dixon was indeed one of the most merciful of men, yet not from weakness, but discernment. He could be a strong disciplinarian, as was proved about this time in another case, when he moved and carried the severe sentence of expulsion.

The President visited Cornwall in April, 1842, on a ministerial tour. An idea of the work which this involved may be got from one extract from his letters home. "We had two meetings yesterday,

and I had to preach in the afternoon. To-day I have to preach again at the same heathenish hour, and attend a meeting at night: and so on to the end. The strength of our cause is prodigious. The chapels, though very large, are crowded to suffocation every night and in every place. The character of the people is singular. If a speaker happen to adventure on a joke or a pun, not a muscle of a single countenance is ever seen to change. The men sit on one side and the women on the other; and the men's side appears like rows of human heads packed immoveably together at certain and regular distances. Sense and piety seem to be the elements of their character, mixed with a sufficient amount of firmness."

In May he preached one of the annual sermons for the Wesleyan Missions, in the City Road chapel, and attended the great meeting of the society in Exeter Hall. The speech which he made was worthy of his reputation and office; but only one or two characteristic points may be noticed. The Society was in debt, and the financial report was read first instead of last. This he noted as a deviation from the old course, and declared that it was as dismal to him as the sound of a railway whistle—that "melancholy, oppressive, and dismal" sound, which was then beginning to infest the country. These observations brought on one or two friendly passages of arms with Dr. Bunting. The President went on to say: "I take the liberty, which I think my office warrants me in taking—that of suggesting

a word of caution to my Methodist friends. While we defend our position as a branch of the true Church of Christ, do let us keep to our great work—that of labouring for the justification, the sanctification, the conversion and salvation of men. Carry out your itinerant principles, go everywhere; keep to your noble missionary enterprises, let nothing divert you. And in short, do not talk of sending out fewer missionaries.”

One great reason which attracted him to the mission work was, that he thought the original features of Methodism were preserved there.

In the course of the summer he visited Scotland and Wales in the discharge of his presidential duties.

This year he published his beautiful and characteristic memoir of the Rev. William Edward Miller, of Sheffield, which he found time to write in the midst of the pressing engagements with which he was occupied. It was a labour of love. Mr. Miller was one of the most singularly simple, lovely and gifted character that ever adorned the world. The son of Dr. Miller, a celebrated organist and composer of church music, he was one of the most wonderful musicians of his age; and as a violinist stood next to Paganini. He was distinguished by an open, frank, and ardent disposition: in person he was strikingly handsome, in manner fascinating. He was courted by the great and noble; and became the intimate companion of some of the most reckless of the young aristocracy. A splendid musical and fashionable

career was opening before him, when suddenly this gifted and courted youth became struck with the deepest religious impressions, broke his violin, the irreparable and priceless idol of his heart, gave up his profession, entered the Methodist community, and lived and died a Methodist preacher.

There was something in this singular history not altogether unlike that of Mr. Dixon himself: and his sympathies were powerfully attracted by it. In the power of retaining through life a religious emotion, as well as in honesty and simplicity of nature, and devotion to the Divine work, the biographer and subject were at one. In fidelity also to the original purpose of Methodism—religion, the spread of the Gospel—they were one. Both were revivalists in theory, and they were logically right in being such: for if Methodism be not revivalism it is nothing. But Mr. Miller was a revivalist not only in theory but in fact. He was an extraordinary preacher in the effects wrought among the people by his ministry. Great religious movements followed him wherever he went; and none such followed the preaching of Mr. Dixon. Yet the nature of the latter was as high-strung and impassioned; his religious experience, or we may say, his religious existence, not less real. Whence then the difference in the result? The question cannot be wholly answered; but all depends upon the purpose of God: and in general it may be said that the success of a ministry in this respect bears no relation whatever to the mental endowments of

ministers. There have been many most highly gifted ministers who have been the means of communicating spiritual life only in single instances; ministers who accepted the supernatural in Christianity with the deepest belief of their minds, and have longed to see great general movements follow their ministry, but who have never witnessed anything of the kind. So in the cases we are considering. There could be no comparison in compass of mind between Mr. Miller and Mr. Dixon. The nature of Mr. Miller was that of a bright enthusiast; sweet, well-tuned, exquisitely graceful. Mr. Dixon was an enthusiast also, but of a different order—impassioned, melancholy, with sympathies drawn from everything, far-reaching, far-feeling, filled with smouldering fire, knowing despondency, knowing despair. His moral nature immensely great: and like all mighty moral natures, touching evil at every point, and drawing a far-pervading tincture from the contact. Hence melancholy, dread of sin, profound sentiments of horror, as in the greatest men. The saddle and the bridle which he obeyed so nobly, and the angel rider, sat often upon a quivering war-horse.

He had watched Mr. Miller in his tremulous and beautiful old age. It was he who with overpowering majesty pronounced the funeral oration over him when he died. His sympathy with him was perfect, and the spring of that sympathy was the religion which they held in common. He saw in him one who, like himself, had given up all other life for religion, and had attained happiness and

consistency of character from religion. It was this seclusion in religion which drew forth his love and veneration. He marked him as a father, as a blessed saint, as one happier than himself, but drawing from the same fountain of happiness, the same well of salvation. And this is the key for understanding the beautiful biography which he produced. It is touching to record that the last literary work which he carried out in his own extreme age was a much-revised edition of the "Life of Miller."

In this work he enters somewhat at large into his own views upon many subjects connected with religion and spiritual life—such as the "ministerial call and duties, the peculiarities of the itinerant system, revivals of religion, and the Methodist doctrine of entire sanctification." This is his own enumeration of the principal topics: some of the reflections and meditations suggested by them are beautiful, and deeply philosophical, while the manner in which the character of the subject of the biography is brought out is extremely graphic. The chapter entitled "Pastoral Advice" is especially interesting.

At the close of his year of office it devolved upon Mr. Dixon, in accordance with the not ungraceful usage of the Connexion, to preach an official sermon, as ex-President, before the Conference, which in 1842 met in London, in the City Road chapel. On this occasion he for once read his sermon, which was a long and elaborate exposition of the origin,

economy, and present position of Methodism. It took a very long time to deliver this, and at last the preacher paused, with his manuscript about half read, and said, "If I must stop, this is the place I should like to stop at." But the interest of his audience was so excited that he was met with a universal shout of "Go on." He proceeded, and did not finish before the afternoon was pretty far advanced.

This sermon was published by order of the Conference. As re-cast for publication it forms a long treatise, divided into three parts, and bearing the title, "Methodism in its Origin, Economy, and Present Position." It was published in the following year, 1843, and is now very scarce.

This treatise is the most important of Mr. Dixon's published writings. To understand its general tone we must remember that at the time when it was written the High Church movement in the Church of England, which was daily becoming greater and wider, was taking a form very hostile to Methodism. The principles of the leaders of that movement compelled them to denounce some of the doctrines held by the Methodists as heresy, their views of religious happiness as fanatical, and, more than all, their church-fellowship as schism. Mr. Dixon saw, or thought he saw, the National Church passing under the domination of a party of exclusive principles, while the great evangelical party, with which the intercourse of Methodism had been on the whole friendly, was losing its influence.

It is to be regretted that at the momentous crisis of the second revival of the Church of England, the points of difference between these two great religious movements were alone observed, and the many points of similarity were lost to sight. Both appealed to the people; both strove to break through a system of routine; both were spiritual movements. They were twin in many things. If Mr. Dixon could have foreseen the later development of the High Church movement, and heard the unqualified admiration expressed by many of its leaders for the founders of Methodism, much that he now wrote would have been modified. As it was, he saw the system to which he had given his life denounced as schism, and its adherents treated with a haughty exclusiveness. It was about this time, for instance, that the question began to be revived by some excellent persons, "Why do not the Methodists join the Church?" This question actually found its way into the Canterbury Convocation some years later, and nothing could be more repellent than the way in which all overtures for an accommodation were met in the Upper House by the leading bishop of the High Church party.

This, then, was the state of things which gave form to the treatise of Mr. Dixon.

Many men of sense and conscience have a tendency to isolate, and as we may say, to mast-head themselves: to cling with all their might to some opinion or principle, to refuse whatever they cannot see from one elevation and in one position. This

has been one of the evils to which religion has been liable in all ages. It used to be bad in the old days; in these days of inexpensive martyrdom it is very bad. And it is believed that this has been somewhat the case in the misunderstandings between the Methodists and the High Church party. Both parties have segregated themselves too much. The Methodists have withdrawn to their platform of faith; the High Church party to their platform of sacramental grace. Be it far from the present writer to say a word in diminution of those great principles: but with regard to the first of them, we know on pretty good authority that charity is greater than faith; and with regard to the other, we have no bad authority for holding that charity is above all rubrics, and it might be added, that charity is above all sacraments. But much of the exacerbation that was felt awhile ago has passed away: there is always hope of conscientious men; it is of men who stickle on points of imagined personal dignity that there is no hope. Let each of these great parties look candidly and kindly at the other: and let both of them remember that about mast-heading themselves.

We shall prefer to regard this treatise simply as a delineation of Methodism by one of the most sagacious and comprehensive minds that Methodism ever inspired. In this aspect it is a truly admirable performance. It would be difficult to find another work in which all that is essential in the character and history of a religious movement has been as

thoroughly grasped and as powerfully displayed. As might be expected from the author, the primary character of Methodism is at the outset defined to be its "purely religious spirit." Religion is the re-establishment of God's kingdom on earth, the erection of God's temple, and the opening of its gates for worship; the Gospel comprehends, promulgates, and brings into actual operation the means of salvation, and that means of salvation is the "faith which is in Christ Jesus." So it was in the days of the Apostles: and the author earnestly contends that it has always been so in the course of Methodism,—that the doctrines and ordinances of Methodism were always in agreement with the primitive model. Methodism originated in the adoption of experimental faith, as a principle of action, by its founders at a distinct period in their lives—a period subsequent to the beginning of their ministry in the Church of England. Salvation by faith only was adopted as the basis of operations by the united ministry at the first Conference. This basis has been held most steadfastly, and the whole work of Methodism has progressed by the steady operation of this fundamental truth. The validity of this principle is shown by the beneficial effects which it has wrought upon the nation and the national church.

Then comes the examination of the distinctive forms of Methodism. The principle is laid down of the perfection of the Gospel in itself; and it is assumed that Methodism, holding the funda-

mental truth of faith in Christ, is in possession of the perfect Gospel. All the ordinances of Methodism, therefore, are very ably defended on this ground: they are means of increasing faith: they radiate from the central truth of Christianity, and maintain their connection therewith. It is, however, never forgotten that Methodism was a spirit before it became a system. It sought to raise again to pre-eminence that doctrine of experimental faith without which, it is truly said by the author, Christianity itself has more than once appeared to become little more than "one enormous heresy." While engaged in this great work, Methodism was at first without a polity, and sought for ordinances where they were to be found already in existence.

"The Methodist leaders," says the author, "sought no change, no reform of the system of the Church, no purgation of the Liturgy, and no alteration of the governing power. All they desired was a practical provision for their spiritual good, in accordance with the doctrines and discipline of the existing creeds. The Church refused to accede to this, and the Methodist Societies could not give up their fellowship." Time and events gradually wrought Methodism into an organic system: but many of its ordinances—as ordination and the administration of the Sacrament,—were added to it very gradually. These, however, are strongly defended on the ground of edification and the increase of faith. The universality of Methodism, the breadth of its basis, the simplicity of its aim, and the importance of the movement in

the history of the Christian world, are displayed in a noble strain of argument and eloquence.

“Not only,” says the author, “the wants of our own country, but those of the world, demanded at the time the enlarged development of Christian truth which our economy proposed and accomplished. . . . Our system denies no man his civil rights, freedom of opinion, or a proper standing in society. But it has ever denied *itself* the practice of employing its religious organisation for worldly purposes. Like a noble vessel, it has sought for itself an open sea and deep water, lest it should be stranded on some of those numerous rocks of earthly association and policy on which others have been wrecked. Freedom of action can only be secured by this.”

But the best summary of this remarkable essay is to be given in the words which end it: “The times going over us, the state of the general Church, the position of our own body, the clashing contention around us, the necessities of distant countries, and the aspects of the Divine administration, demand for the guidance of our work the highest wisdom; and that wisdom is found in religion itself.”

At the same Conference the duty devolved upon Mr. Dixon, as ex-President, of delivering the Charge to the newly admitted ministers; a kind of occasion on which he was sure to shine. All the best affections and most tender recollections of his own mind were excited by the sight of young men prepared to

run the race which he himself was pursuing; and many of his addresses to them, whether on such an occasion as this or on other occasions, were among the most beautiful effusions that were drawn from him. He took for his subject the Apostle's address to Timothy (1 Tim. iv. 16), which he observed referred first to personal conduct: "Take heed to thyself"; then to the doctrines which he ought to preach—"and to the doctrine"; and then that these admonitions were urged on a particular ground,—for that by continuing therein "thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." This is surely a very happy division. He said: "We hold it as a principle never to be questioned, never to be deviated from on any account whatever, that a Gospel ministry must be a converted one. Unholy hands have no right to touch the sacred ark; they cannot touch it without communicating the impress of their own impurity. Inward religion stands intimately connected with the right discharge of the highest duties of the ministerial office. I instance the study of the truth, and the right apprehension of its meaning. The dispensation of the Lord Jesus Christ is a spiritual dispensation, and can only be understood by the spiritual mind. You may fill sermons with matter which may be deemed learned and interesting, but you will not take into these sermons the meaning of the Spirit unless you yourselves dwell, live, and move in the Spirit of God and the Spirit of His Son. You will find yourselves unhappy, distressed, not at home in the

work of God, unless you keep up a state of deep religious feeling, and that state of religious feeling produces in your minds a sympathetic feeling towards the objects of your ministry. I recommend you, my dear young brethren, to fix attention pre-eminently on this object—the conversion of the unconverted. Study, pray, compose your sermons, preach, with a view to the conversion of men.

“Your office is twofold: the edification of the church, and the conversion of sinners. But you will not be able to attend to this, you *will* not attend to this, unless you have a deep sense of religion in your own souls. How should you? You will sleep on, read poets, orators, and philosophers, and enjoy yourselves in frenzied mental pleasures; you will care nothing about the salvation of sinners, unless you feel the power of religion in your own breasts. Then, as to extra labours, you will not be urged to these, but by the prompting and impetus of the grace of God within the soul. You will content yourselves with so many sermons on the Lord’s day and on week-days, taking your plan, and filling it up, but you will do nothing beyond; you will think this duty enough, and will evade as much of it as you can. A young man in our Connexion is worth nothing, and is likely ultimately to be worth less than nothing, unless there is that exuberance about his feelings that he will not content himself with the discharge of his set duty, but will go beyond

the tenor of that, and endeavour to seek the good of mankind in an extra way. If you have not a little life, warmth, enthusiasm, devotion, above the common ordinary track of things in youth, when its freshness and vigour are upon you, what can be expected when you become old? While then God gives you strength, health, life, go about doing good. Some hardly think of doing good except by the pulpit, through the means of sermons; and hardly think of going out of a sermon to save a soul. If you can get into the habit of talking with every one, of communicating truth to all you meet with, it will edify your own soul and lead many to salvation. A mere *ex-officio* ministry is a thing which we never yet absolutely cultivated; we never yet thought ourselves called to act upon a certain rule in the communication of truth and the salvation of man. We have been deemed *irregular*. I trust we shall always continue so, and that Methodist ministers will consider it their duty whenever and wherever they can to save a soul."

This Charge contains so many touches illustrative of his own character, that we must give a little more of it. Some of the young men might be inclined to look coldly on the missionary work, and say, "We cannot make missionary speeches." Mr. Dixon replies, "Anybody can speak with a warm heart; and if our lips are sealed, be sure there is something wrong with us." He advises them to cultivate lofty thought, purity, and magnanimity, as the essence of the ministerial character.

“ Be constantly conversant with the great things of God, let your minds dwell upon them incessantly; get the habit of abstraction from the world, and its littlenesses and pleasures, and endeavour to hold intercourse with sacred things. I am prepared to say that our Connexion really does want elevated talent. Mind, I don't mean abstract intellect, but talent founded upon the basis of religion—that is the highest and greatest. As a community of Christians at this day we must have our pulpits occupied by men of this calibre, or we shall in some degree sink down; and don't be afraid that your simplicity will be frittered away by seeking after these high qualifications as to the best things of religion. The best men in our Connexion, the holiest, have been the greatest. Look at your leader and founder, John Wesley. Here is simplicity; and let me say in that simplicity is the element of all greatness. Nothing is either great or beautiful but what is simple. And when I advocate an elevated mind, a mind moving on a lofty platform, I do not mean the cultivation of what the world calls talent; I mean deep, lofty converse with the deep things of the blessed God. And let me tell you there is an intimate connection between real eloquence and real religion. What is eloquence? Impassioned reasoning; truth fused in a burning soul. You may express deep feeling and overflowing passion in strong, in vigorous, and even poetical language—only let it be genuine; don't pluck it from something else—from poets, orators, and

writers lying on your shelves. I should not like to see young promising men, who ought to do, and might do, better, fall into the habit of writing pretty little sermons, and filling them with pretty little things from poets, orators, and others. The flowers in such sermons do not grow from within, but are collected from without. The man who does this never will, and never can, excel, just because he lays aside his own capacity, his own mind, and puts himself under the tuition of another. Use your own gifts, your own intellect, be it what it may, and let the world see and hear you as yourselves. The topics of religion are such as ought to make every one eloquent. Who can dwell upon God, point to the cross of the Saviour, speak of man dying in his sins, and exhibit the glorious privileges and blessings of religion aright, without speaking of these things warmly? and if he speak of them warmly he will speak of them eloquently. Then again I say that the religion of the heart stands intimately connected with the efficiency of the pulpit."

The Charge concluded as follows:—

"Be it your great concern to be faithful ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Go, my dear young friends, and grow up from youthful vigour to ripened years in ministerial usefulness, honour, and grace. Aim at high attainments, high duties, great success. You will never accomplish great things in the service of God unless you place great things before you. Don't be content with a little, shrivelled

ministry, but make the world feel the impress of your presence, the weight of your doctrine, and the excellency of your character, wherever you go. Go, and be faithful : keep your hand to that plough to which you are on this occasion put, remembering the word of your Master, that he who looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God. In some sense Methodism is deposited with you, and with men of your age. These beloved, venerable men around me will soon be gone, and the men of my own class will soon be gone also. Our deposit, our holy, sacred deposit, my young brethren, is with you."

Nearly all that has been reported of this exhortation has been given here, for nothing that casts light on character is to be neglected. Here we have one of the most typical or representative ministers that Evangelical Christianity has in modern times produced, describing the means and principles by which in fact he rose to excellence himself. These were simplicity of purpose, loftiness of aim, reality of life. Life to be great must be one thing ; and it belongs to the great mind, to genius, to be able to accept itself for what it is, and to foster its own growth. The mind of a great man is susceptible of growth rather than of change ; just as the noblest creatures of the animal kingdom are produced what they continue to be, and grow without changing their state of existence. It is the insect that passes from the pupa to the chrysalid, and from this to the fly : that may be the inhabitant in turn of earth, water, and air ; and short-lived in all.

In 1843 Mr. Dixon performed the melancholy office of preaching the funeral sermon on the occasion of the death of one of his dearest friends, the Rev. Thomas Galland. This gentleman was a graduate of Cambridge University, and a man of learning; he was converted by the preaching of Mr. Miller of Sheffield, and became a leading Methodist minister, but was cut off at the early age of forty-nine. The sermon was delivered in Kingston chapel, Hull, May 19th, before a large congregation, and was published with the title of "The Faithful Servant." It is a solemn and beautiful meditation, cast in the form of the delineation of a character of no ordinary strength and completeness; and it contains a full exposition of the profound views entertained by the author concerning the operation of Divine grace upon the mind. Everything which God has done for man is to be found in the individual man. "The whole benefit and grace of Christianity are incorporated in him; he is the shrine of the truth, the subject of the life of God, a partaker of the Divine love; the image of the Deity is engraven on his heart, and a spiritual service, such as other men never think of, and are incompetent to offer, is presented from an altar within, the fire of which never goes out."

Few could take upon themselves to write in this way of experimental religion, of individual salvation; and after all that has been written in contempt of this view of the work of Christianity, is it not the true one? The Duke of Wellington ascribed

the wonderful efficiency of the whole Peninsular army to the pains taken with the equipment of every single soldier: to this he attributed the exploits and victories of the whole body; and the same remark might be applied to modern evangelical religion. The men who overthrew the slave trade, and carried the conquests of Christian civilisation into the fastnesses of heathenism, were men who watched with jealous scrutiny the life of God in their own hearts, and fashioned their minds by the discipline of holiness.

In July, 1843, Mr. Dixon received from the University of Pennsylvania the degree of Doctor of Divinity. It is needless to say that this honour was unsolicited; but it seems probable that the attention of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was drawn to him at this time by some remarkable observations which he had made concerning it in his "Methodism in its Origin." He said that he believed the American Church to bear more distinctly the impress of the hand of the great founder of Methodism than even the English Societies: and this is an opinion to which we shall have to refer again.

From this time we must call him by the name by which he became known and beloved by thousands—Dr. Dixon.

Some pleasing recollections of Dr. Dixon have been contributed by the Rev. David Hay, who became his colleague this year in Manchester, as the young preacher of the circuit.

"I regard it," says this gentleman, "as one of the

most felicitous circumstances of my life that I was early associated with Dr. Dixon as a colleague in the ministry. Before being thus connected I had a profound regard for his public character, and held his talents in high admiration. I had frequent opportunities of hearing him in the pulpit and on the platform, both in the country and in London; and was present at Exeter Hall in 1835, when he spoke with overwhelming power, reassuring and comforting the dismayed and troubled heart of the Methodist Connexion. I had also often had the privilege of meeting him in the social circle, with friends with whom he was perfectly at home, and had heard him talk in those grand oracular utterances which I regret that I did not at the time record, but which are familiar to all who knew him.

“But it was not until admitted as a colleague to a most kind and friendly intercourse, in which I saw his constant ministerial walk, and observed the spirit in which he met and endured domestic suffering and trial, that I was made fully aware of the Christian greatness of the man. It was really touching to see the cheerful readiness with which he laid aside his much-loved books, and suspended the studies in which he was profoundly occupied, to watch over a suffering child, which he did with a tenderness that was all but maternal. Those who only regarded him as the abstracted student, and great pulpit and platform orator, could form no idea of the almost feminine tenderness of his heart in the domestic circle.

“As a colleague the company of Dr. Dixon was nowhere more enjoyable to me than in the weekly meeting of ministers. Never, perhaps, before had he been associated at the same time with two such colleagues as John Lomas and George Osborn. The conversations on those occasions often took a wider range than the affairs of the circuit, or even of Methodism. The times were full of strange portents, especially to such minds. The ‘Tracts for the Times’ were in the course of publication, and were attracting universal attention. A select book society supplied us with the principal publications which both sides were pouring from the press, and these in turn were the subject of discussion at our meetings. With three such minds in argument these discussions could not but be deeply interesting. For myself, then young in the ministry, these occasions constituted a rare opportunity, and conferred upon me a great benefit. And though the three men greatly differed in their mental character, training, and endowments, each one was a master in his own line, and the disposition to yield a point was not strongly characteristic of any of them. I considered that Dr. Dixon was generally fair in argument, and that he was most thoroughly in earnest was clearly apparent. And it is no disparagement to those keen intellects which he there encountered, if I add that the Doctor was generally able to hold his own, though the attack was sometimes directed at the same moment from different points: and if at any time

he felt himself fairly worsted he did not hesitate to acknowledge it. Occasionally the Doctor was undoubtedly more dogmatic than argumentative, and uttered what seemed unguarded and extravagant language, but his speech even at such times was always that of a great man. The parlour in the Grosvenor Street House, where these conversations occurred, is brought vividly back to my memory while I write, and the deep and eloquent tones of Dr. Dixon are still sounding in my ears; as for example, when he had advanced an argument which he deemed unanswerable, he would defiantly say to his opponent, 'Now, sir, how will you answer that?' Nearly thirty years have passed since those days, and they are fresh and precious to my memory still." (The writer of this book remembers something of those meetings; he remembers the house ringing with the silvery laughter of Mr. Lomas. No description is needed to bring Mr. Lomas, still happily surviving, to the mind of every Methodist.)

"At one of our ministers' meetings the conversation turned on the subject of revivals. Dr. Dixon referred to the great revivals which took place in Sheffield when he was stationed in that town, and added, in his own peculiar tone of voice, 'I don't know how it is, but I am no preacher for the revivalists. I noticed in Sheffield that some of the most active of our men in this work used to go to sleep when I preached. I suppose the fact of the case is, I can't shout, and they don't believe a man is in earnest unless he shouts.' I mention this incident

for the sake of another. Not many weeks after this conversation there was a revival at New Islington, where the service was then held in a schoolroom. Before this our cause there was very low, and the week-night congregation seldom above a score. During this revival Dr. Dixon went to preach there in the fulfilment of his ordinary appointments. On his last visit to the place his congregation had been discouragingly small, but on the occasion of which I am writing he was surprised to see nearly a hundred persons present. The whole aspect of the place was changed, and instead of the former dullness which had reigned, all was animation and life. Having no public duty that evening, I was delighted to avail myself of the privilege of hearing him. The congregation was wholly of the artisan and mill-working class, most of them very poor, and a goodly portion of them women with babies on their laps. His first prayer called forth an unusual number of responses. There were many earnest 'Amens,' and many equally earnest expressions of praise to God. He read out for his text, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us' (1 John iv. 10). The impression made upon my mind was that he chose the text after entering the pulpit, and that it was suggested by the new circumstances in which he found himself. His sermon also appeared to me to be quite extemporaneous, but it was the sermon of a full mind and an overflowing heart. In language it was beautifully simple, and equally simple in the method in

which the subject was treated. It abounded with descriptions of personal religious experience, which he applied most effectively to the hearts of his hearers. As he spoke of the love of God to man, his own heart seemed all aglow, and the rising flame soon evidenced itself in his congregation. The feelings of the people, however, were not audibly expressed until he began to point out how the love of God had been personally manifested to them. He set forth the sorrows of penitence, the sense of the pardon of sins, and the pardoning mercy by which they had been visited, closing his description by this appeal, 'And did not God love you then?' At this point the pent-up feelings of his hearers could no longer be restrained, and there was a general burst of praise to God. And many times afterwards, when describing different manifestations of Divine love, he renewed the appeal, 'Did not He love you then?' which was followed in every instance by ascriptions of praise to God. As he proceeded, not only did the preacher's voice become louder and louder, but it was frequently tremulous with emotion, which imparted tenderness to its loudest tones. I had heard Dr. Dixon frequently before, and under a variety of circumstances, and on some of the greatest occasions of his public life, when he swayed the minds of vast audiences with a power which I never witnessed in any other preacher, but I confess there was something in that New Islington service which was unique and singularly impressive to my mind. It presented him

to my view under a comparatively new aspect. The spirit and manner of his preaching on that occasion showed how thoroughly he could enter into the sorrows of the penitent and the joys of the new-born soul, and adapt himself to their condition. On my going up to him after the congregation had retired, he expressed great surprise at seeing me, and asked whether I had been present during the service, as he had not seen me. He was not only much less moody and taciturn than he frequently appeared after preaching, but unusually cheerful and happy. As we walked together we spoke about the congregation and service, and I ventured to refer to the singular energy with which he had preached, and said, 'Well, after this I hope we shall hear no more of your inability to shout, for certainly we have had it in perfection to-night.' He replied, 'Yes, I know I shouted to-night, but did you not hear how the people shouted?' He would indeed have been a drowsy revivalist who could have slept under that sermon. The whole was full of animation and interest, and is ineffaceably impressed upon my memory and heart.

"I will just insist upon one other remark which he made at one of our ministers' meetings. It was at the end of the quarter, and we were reviewing the state of the societies as indicated at the visitation for the renewal of tickets. One of us happened to say that the visitation had been personally profitable and encouraging, as it furnished proof that the members were profiting by the preaching of the

Word of God. Dr. Dixon exclaimed, 'Encouraging? Yes, I always get my soul lifted out of a fog when I am meeting the classes.' It may be worth while to record in these cold sentimental times, when so many are disposed to depreciate this form of Christian fellowship, that a mind like Dr. Dixon's found light and comfort in the class-meetings. He proved the advantage of thus holding communion with saints."

CHAPTER IX.

1843-49.

Appointment to the Third London Circuit—To the Sixth London—Speech in Covent Garden Theatre on the Maynooth Question—Successful Ministry—Letters—Appointment to Birmingham—Chosen Representative of the British Conference to the American Episcopal Church—And President of the Canadian Conference—Letters from America—Publication of “Methodism in America.”

By the Conference of 1843 Dr. Dixon was appointed to the Third London, or Spitalfields Circuit: in which he only remained one year. His residence was in Poplar, and the climate ill suited the health of his young family. All of them suffered: and the serious illness of one member cast a gloom over the whole time spent there.

By the next Conference Dr. Dixon was removed to the South London, or Hinde Street Circuit, where he passed three of the most important years of his ministry. His residence was in Milton Street, near Dorset Square (a street now fallen squalid, but at that time bright and neat), close to Regent's Park.

The present writer remembers that as the time in which he began to have some understanding of the character and mind in the presence of which he lived. It was an ennobling influence; but there was always an awe and a reserve which no tenderness and no intimacy ever overcame.

Among his colleagues in this circuit were his old friend Atherton; the Rev. William M. Bunting, with whose refined, beautiful, and sympathetic mind he was thoroughly congenial; the Rev. James Methley, a fine and truly original character; and the Rev. Luke Wiseman, a younger man, who has since risen to eminence in the Wesleyan body. With all these and some others his intercourse was unrestrained and delightful: but the chief among them in his regards was Mr. Bunting, with whom he maintained a lifelong friendship.

The name of Dr. Dixon may be traced through a great number of committees, deputations, and other public connexional affairs at this period: and he took, as usual, his full share of that sort of work, in addition to his ordinary duties. This work he discharged conscientiously, but it was against the grain. He disliked committees intensely; thought them multiplied unnecessarily in Methodism; and preferred either open debate in full Conference, or individual action. But the spirit of the age in Methodism, as out of it, was now set in favour of committees, and has continued so to be. This is a committee-ridden age.

In September, 1844, Dr. Dixon spoke at the

Jubilee of the London Missionary Society, along with Dr. Vaughan, Dr. Leifchild, Dr. Bunting, the Rev. E. Bickersteth, J. A. James, and others.

In 1845 he was again chosen the Methodist representative on the Maynooth question, at the great meeting which was held in Covent Garden Theatre, April 14. There were five other speakers of different denominations,—Dr. Croly, Sir Culling Eardley, and the Rev. Messrs. Blackburn, Sherman, and W. Chalmers. It was the time when the permanent endowment of Maynooth, instead of the annual grant, was brought forward in the Commons by Peel. In the interval between the first and second readings of the Bill, petitions numerously signed were sent to both Houses of Parliament, and the Protestant feeling of the country was strongly excited.

The speech of Dr. Dixon on this occasion was one of his greatest, perhaps his greatest effort on the platform. The vast space of the theatre, including the stage, was crowded with a waving and tumultuous mass, not only of Protestants, but of Roman Catholics who had come to interrupt the meeting. Dr. Dixon, coming forward with the declaration, "I am a Methodist preacher, and I represent the opinions of something like a million and a half of her Majesty's subjects," held the meeting long profoundly interested with the declaratory argument which he poured forth before them, until something which he said caused a burst of interruption. Then he began to struggle with

the audience, to sway them as few orators could, and finally, overcoming opposition, and amid deafening plaudits, pealed forth the words, "Englishmen will never consent that Queen Victoria should lay her royal diadem at the feet of the Pope." This was followed by "cheers, three times three, waving of hats and handkerchiefs long continued" (*Watchman* report): and the speaker went on with his argument.

He was also present at the meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, held in Exeter Hall, May 7, 1845; and at an aggregate Wesleyan meeting held in City Road chapel, June 9th, the same year; and delivered speeches against the Maynooth endowment. ¶ To prevent misconception, it may be well to say that throughout his life Dr. Dixon never received one penny for any speech or lecture that he delivered on any subject, or for any of his extraordinary services to Methodism and Protestantism. ¶ If any pecuniary reward had been offered, he would most certainly have rejected it. In this he did not stand alone, but shared the feelings and adhered to the usages of his brethren; but it is proper to mention this for the sake of those who may, from want of knowledge, imagine that it was otherwise.

These meetings and speeches against Maynooth were among the expiring efforts of Protestantism of that high head which carried England forward from the English Revolution to the French Revolution, and was identified in the public mind with constitutional liberty. It had had a wonderful

history for good and evil, but now it was no longer preponderant; it was beginning to be broken up by the force of other great movements and public convictions. Still it struggled; and though it has not regained the political ascendancy which it lost in this part of the century, it is so far from being extinct that no efforts have been able, or seem likely to be able, to shake its hold on the general mind of England: and we doubt not that, if occasion called, it would rise up as strong as ever, and resume its former ascendancy. Of all the religious organisations in the kingdom Methodism, as a whole, has been the most faithful to the political creed of Protestantism: and to have been the chosen champion of Methodism on these important occasions is sufficient to show the position which Dr. Dixon occupied in the Methodist community and before the Protestant world.

But the present writer better loves to turn from these extraordinary efforts to dwell upon the excellence which the ordinary ministry of Dr. Dixon continued through this period to display. His peculiar style was now at its full ripeness and perfection; and week by week—nay, almost day by day—he continued to produce sermons marked by many of the highest qualities that can enter into pulpit eloquence. The fecundity of his mind was indeed astonishing. He scarcely ever preached the same sermon twice; he very seldom preached twice from the same text; yet he maintained his high reputation as often as he was called into the pulpit.

All those sermons have perished, or only exist in the barest skeletons, of which nothing can be made; but they live in the memory of those who heard them, many of whom learned to regard the preacher with feelings even of veneration. The cause of this was that his pulpit exercises were simply the expression of his whole life, and that he led a life not only of religion, but of deep religious apprehension. It is possible to live a religious life in a mechanical manner: it is possible for a minister of religion to do this, drawing upon old stores, turning to fixed formularies, and content with a commonplace state of feeling. To Dr. Dixon it belonged to unite the firmest orthodoxy with the boldest and freest mental life. In his constant apprehension the universe was the emanation of the Divine Being, and the theatre of His action and moral government: no part of the universe was without law, and law had no foundation but the Divinity. To unfold the laws of the Divine working, as exhibited in Revelation, he held to be the great office of a preacher; and from this view arose the breadth and variety of his preaching, its grasp of essential truth, and its harmony as a whole. There was a deep philosophy, as well as enthusiastic power, in his mind.

And briefly also must the writer allude to the traits of his domestic character, as they unfolded themselves to himself and the rest of the family in the years of childhood. There was melancholy, reserve, and silence, and strong individuality im-

pressing itself involuntarily upon all around : but beneath this such tenderness and affection as are inconceivable and inexpressible. The majesty of his character impressed and indeed awed all who were in immediate contact with him ; but at the same time the deepest affection was mingled with the veneration produced.

One or two letters belonging to this period remain to throw their light upon the region of elevated feeling and domestic affection in which he moved.

Toward the end of his residence in London Dr. Dixon, being out of health, passed some time in Richmond, where his mother-in-law, Mrs. Watson, had a cottage. From that place he wrote in the following strain to Mrs. Dixon.

“ I see in my rambles in the park, in looking at the oaks, that they begin to decay neither at the top nor at the bottom, at one end or the other— that there is nothing regular in the process ; but a blight strikes in here or there in the trunk of the tree, as by chance ; produces decay and rottenness around ; and then, from the edge of the decayed part, life, as if contending with the progress of death, asserts its rights, and sends forth little stunted branches, totally unlike the development of the original tree. These snatches of life, attempts at growth, I see become more and more feeble according to the age of the tree, till nothing more can be done ; and time or some storm finishes the business, and the noblest tree of the forest falls. You will know how to apply this. But that something

which never dies, this is the man. O may we live so as to ensure its immortal happiness !”

The present biographer shared some of those walks in Richmond Park, and then left for a visit in a distant part of the country. A few days afterwards he received the following letter. It was just before the family quitted London.

“RICHMOND, *Sept. 1st, 1847.*

“MY VERY DEAR RICHARD,—

I have been at this lovely spot since Monday, and have now taken my last ramble. By a strange and mysterious power I have found *you* connected with everything, and I could not move anywhere or do anything but I saw, I heard, I felt your presence. On essaying my first walk on Monday night, when I got to the park gate I hesitated as to the way I should take, till I thought that the last time I was there you were with me, and we went together through the beautiful avenue of trees, in the midst of fern and deer, to the house once occupied by Lord Sidmouth. This recollection determined me to take the same line of road by myself. I seemed with melancholy pleasure to live and talk over again the sweet and interesting walk. I thought of our conversation about the Duke of York—Nelson—War—Genius—and felt distressed at the idea that I should never take the same walk with you again. I have been to-day along the other path, that is, along the terrace, Lord John Russell’s, through the gate into Ham Common, down

the road where we looked at two beautiful cottages with roses and flowers in full bloom in front, and offered some useless wishes for such an abode for ourselves; then past the good tailor's where you bought the buttons, and so on up the road below the Star and Garter, and found my way home for dinner.—But yesterday I went with Sally and James up the river-side, above Pope's Villa, Eel Pie Island, Ham House, and all the beautiful places on that enchanted ground. It is now growing dusk, and I have finished, most likely for ever, my connection with this beautiful place. The walks have ended, and these associations are broken up. I shall see you no more at this lovely spot—and I, and you too, must hasten to plunge into new and untried scenes. May God prepare and be with us!

“I have been reminded of another thing respecting you, my dear Richard. In reading Channing's ‘Review of Milton’ I was strongly reminded of your deep interest in ‘Paradise Lost,’ your ready quotations, and opinions of the poetry and sentiment, when you were at Poplar. I thought perhaps you had lost some of your relish for this sublime and glorious poem, now that you are in better health, and can associate more with the world. I hope, if it should be so, you will return to the region of poetry and religion, as the most pure and ennobling. What are all external things compared with the spiritual, the holy, the invisible, the eternal? You had a strong impression of the supremacy and glory of such things, I am per-

suaded, at the time in question, and such feelings and impressions should never be lost. To converse with God, with the heavenly world, with all the divine and mighty influences and agencies which are abroad in the universe, with the angelical and spiritual world, with Jesus Christ, His apostles, martyrs, confessors, and followers ; with the great truths and designs of the Gospel and kingdom of God—to think on these things, and fill the mind with noble sentiments and feelings from these great fountains of truth and purity, is much more elevating than anything else can be. Keep to Milton, and the spirit and grandeur of poetry.

“ I am, my dear Richard,

“ Your most affectionate Father.”

By the Conference of 1847 Dr. Dixon was appointed to Birmingham ; he remained six years in that important town, three in the West, or Cherry Street Circuit, and three in the East, or Belmont Row Circuit. His first residence was in Hunter’s Lane, on the Handsworth side of the town. —

At this Conference signs became apparent of that storm of agitation which was destined in a year or two to shake the Methodist communities throughout the land. A considerable decrease in numbers and deficiency of funds was reported. In a letter written at the time, Dr. Dixon, after announcing this, observes : “ This is our kind of progression. I am thoroughly convinced that, till some great

change takes place, this will be our course. Itinerancy is destroying itself." The conduct pursued by Dr. Dixon during the disturbances which soon broke out will have to be described in general; but it shall be touched as lightly as possible, out of regard to the feelings of many persons still living. It may here be said that no truer adherent of Methodism ever lived; and also that many of the measures advocated by him have since those days been adopted with advantage.

In another letter, written some months previously, he moralises in general terms as follows: "I should feel no regret at the thought of nevermore entering a committee, or, in fact, any assembly, except for the purpose of worshipping God. Everything is a mystery, but man the greatest. Leave him to himself, without rubbing and chafing him, and he rots in idleness and corruption; agitate him by bringing him into collision with his fellow-men for a common object, whether of business or religion, and he at once evinces ambition, cunning, duplicity, while he mixes himself with the object professedly pursued. The thing called talent is the faculty to gloss over truth, to bewilder common sense and honesty of purpose, and to lead fools by the nose to serve the interests of a party, which, if examined to the bottom, will always be found to be the interests of some aspiring spirit."

This is sufficient to show his deep and prescient feeling of uneasiness; but we are not yet come to the things which he feared.

honour of being appointed representative of the English Conference to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States. At the same time he was nominated President of the Canadian Conference for the next year.

The Conference of Upper Canada had been in union with the British Conference since 1834, and, like the Irish Conference, accepted a President from the nomination of the latter. But this union, or affiliation, had been broken in 1840, through differences of opinion on colonial questions. A re-union was effected on the old terms in 1847, and Dr. Dixon, in pursuance of the request of the Canadians themselves, was nominated by the English Conference to be the Canadian President for the next year. Many important questions remained to be settled, for which a man of sagacity and largeness of mind was needed.*

The position of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, on the other hand, has been from the beginning independent of the British Conference. The Societies in England and the States form the two great families of Methodism, just as the nations

In 1847 Dr. Dixon received the high official

* It is a somewhat curious fact that the late Rev. William Lord, who was the first President of the Canadian Conference after the Union in 1834, and Dr. Dixon, the first President after the Re-Union, both lived close together in the same town, in extreme old age, at the end of their active ministry; and that the former was the only Supernumerary Minister present at the funeral of the latter.

in which they exist form the two great families of the English race. But there had always been an interchange of letters and salutations between the two. When Dr. Dixon was appointed English Representative, a crisis had just arisen in the American branch of the family: the Church had been split into the two divisions of North and South by the question of slavery. On this question the opinions of the English Methodists had been very plainly given in some of the messages sent to the Americans: and had been met with some remonstrances and complaints of lack of sympathy by the latter. Now that the schism had come, and all was agitation, something out of the common way was looked for by the Northern part of the Church from the visit of Dr. Dixon. He was known as one of the men who had helped to put down slavery in the British empire; he was known at the same time to have much knowledge of American Methodism, and to have expressed officially the greatest admiration of it as a system. He regarded it indeed as one of the most remarkable religious developments in modern history; as having retained the original Wesleyan stamp more faithfully than the parent Connexion itself. All this gave rise to high expectations from his visit; and they were not disappointed. He could not of course heal such a breach as was made by slavery; but he succeeded in giving some consolation, in abating some bitterness, and in renewing the friendly feeling between the Metho-

dism of his own country and that of the great Republic.

He sailed for America on the 8th April, 1848, and landed back in England on the 8th July, having been away no more than three months, including the two voyages. In this short time, however, he visited most of the older States, taking the line from Boston to Washington, from Washington to Pittsburg, and from Pittsburg along the Ohio to Cincinnati, and all the chief cities of Upper Canada. Throughout this tour he was incessantly engaged in public services—preaching sermons, speaking at meetings, meeting deputations, and at last presiding over the Canadian General Conference.

His best known work, "Methodism in America," was the fruit of this expedition. Considering the circumstances—the rapidity and shortness of his visit, the fact that at the time he had no intention of writing a book, and had taken very few notes—this must be considered a remarkable work. It was written almost as rapidly as the journeys were undergone which gave rise to it; and is a volume of five hundred pages; the scenes and incidents which it records were mostly drawn from memory; yet it is remarkably accurate, and displays a wonderful power of grasping things, and a most generous and kindly spirit. In addition to the personal narrative, it contains a history of Methodism in America from the beginning, a complete account of the institutions and territorial progress of the

American Methodist Church, and of the state of the question of slavery at the time.

This work went through two editions in England, and was extensively circulated in America. Mr. Harper, of the great publishing firm of New York, wrote in a letter to the author: "Your book is universally liked, and is considered by those who have seen it to be the best on this country ever produced. Extracts from the London papers have been eagerly copied by all the leading journals throughout our country, accompanied by critical praises. Its circulation will not by any means be confined to our Church, but will be general."

It is unnecessary to offer any extracts from this work. It is the duty of the biographer only to add from letters and other documents a few things which may be characteristic of Dr. Dixon, or which his modesty prevented him from making public.

It appears, then, that, even before the re-union of the Canadian and British Conferences, at the beginning of 1846, Dr. Dixon received an official invitation to visit Canada. The Canadian Conference wrote that "knowing the high character of the Rev. Dr. Dixon of the Wesleyan Conference in England, his piety and deep and varied knowledge, his views of Wesleyan Connexional relations, as well as of the general principles of theological and moral science; and having heard of the lively interest which he has long felt on the painful partitions of the different sections of the Wesleyan family in Upper Canada," they cordially invited him to make

a visit to the Province, in order that he might acquaint himself fully with the state of affairs, "and make such a representation of them to the English Conference as might lead to a termination of the unhappy differences between the English and Canadian Conferences, and to the schisms which disgraced and impaired the energies of Wesleyan Methodism in Upper Canada." This request was conveyed through the Canadian President, Dr. Stinson, who afterwards became his travelling companion in Canada.

The character of a true peacemaker is rare. It is interesting to see men of more ordinary mould, however able, submitting themselves on emergencies to one in whom they feel the mysterious power of wider and more generous motives than they find in one another. When Dr. Dixon saw the Canadian Conference in which the re-union came into operation, and presided at it, he was much struck with the willingness of that large assembly to submit to whatever exercise of authority he thought right and proper.

In his "Personal Narrative" (chap. v.), in describing his introduction to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Pittsburgh, Dr. Dixon has not said that for the address which he then delivered he received the thanks of the Conference; but only that he was invited to take a seat among them, and take part in their deliberations. He afterwards preached before the Conference; and in his book he only mentions the fact that he did so. Yet he

preached with such effect that the Methodist bishops who heard him were affected to tears; thanks of the Conference were voted to him; and he was requested to prepare the substance of his sermon for publication, "and write out his last proposition, of which he only presented us with the outline." It was not uncommon with him to enlarge so much upon the first part of a sermon as to have no time left to finish the whole.

The day after preaching this sermon (May 12) he wrote home a letter from Pittsburgh, which gives a lively picture of the scenes in the midst of which he found himself.

"I am located in a large hotel engaged for me before I came. I am much pleased with this arrangement, inasmuch as it gives me a little rest, and more liberty than I should expect to enjoy in a private family. I have also an opportunity of seeing more of the American character. We take our meals in common at a *table d'hôte*, and often number a hundred and fifty or two hundred. An American meal is certainly the most curious thing I have seen in the country. We complain of each other in England on account of our taciturnity, but we are perfectly loquacious compared with these people. You hardly hear the sound of the human voice, and the people, men and women, sit down and set to work in such a matter-of-fact manner as is perfectly amusing. Knives and forks begin to clatter, like the din of a great mill; negroes run about to supply the demands of the party, like

sailors in a storm; and in about ten minutes the whole affair is over. But you are not to understand that it has lasted this length of time with all the party. They get up and go out as they satisfy the wants of nature; and I speak the truth when I say that some of them, especially at tea, are not more than three or five minutes in gulping their food. There is one peculiarity—I have not seen a single person, man or woman, take anything but water to their meals, so completely has the temperance cause prevailed.

“I do not know whether I am placed in this hotel to afford the brethren and others the opportunity of access to me, but this is the effect, and I am visited every day by great numbers, who come to pay their respects to the old country and the old Connexion in my person. Indeed, this week my apartment has been constantly thronged, and I have to hold a sort of levée. How I manage this affair you must form your own opinion. I think pretty well.”

The book abounds with powerful descriptions of natural scenery; and among the rest there is one of the Falls of Niagara, which is among the best of the many which have been written, remarkable for the unity of the impression which it conveys. The effect produced on his mind by that stupendous object, Dr. Dixon says, was not an impression of sublimity, but of beauty—transcendent, dazzling, overwhelming beauty. This, which is not according to general opinion, he held to be the true impres-

sion to be produced by that great wonder of nature. But powerfully as this is brought out in the book, it is brought out better in the following letter written on the spot to Mrs. Dixon (May 25) :—

“Since I wrote last I have travelled a thousand miles by land and water. I arrived at this celebrated place this forenoon, in company with John Ryerson. You will expect some account of the wonderful scenery around me; as to description, that is simply impossible. My first impression was somewhat different from my anticipation. The Falls are much more natural and simple than I had expected. There is less at once to strike one with awe and terror than I had supposed. I had imagined gigantic rocks hanging in precipitous or in towering grandeur high above one’s head: instead of which the waters fall from nearly a level surface above into the gulph below, so that the first impression is less vivid than might be imagined. It consequently requires time and attention to get a true idea of the amazing character of the phenomena. —

“For a considerable time I could form no notion and get no definite impression of the characteristics of these stupendous works of God. All in me was confusion and surprise, and I knew not what to make of the scene. The thing was different to my anticipations, and did not seem so full of awe, horror, and majesty as I had expected. By and by I sat on the root of a tree which commanded a side view of the smaller Fall, and all at once I perceived a peculiar *beauty* in the convolution of the water.

Having obtained this idea of the beautiful, I began to use it as a short-sighted man employs his spy-glass, and soon obtained the most satisfactory results. The true idea respecting these Falls is, according to my feelings and impressions, the *Beautiful*. The sun shone brightly on the whole scene ; and without his presence and bright beams no doubt everything would be gloomy and awful. Through the effulgent glory, shining on the water as it fell from the top of the rock to the gulph below, its entire character must have been changed. Above it was of a brownish yellow colour, but in passing over the precipice it became the purest white that can possibly be imagined ; this purely white flood was broken in its fall into separate though united streams, so that it had the appearance of the purest drapery flowing in folds from the shoulders of the mountain. But the most remarkable effect of this fall of waters was to break the whole into particles, so that the streams of flowing, descending white looked like crystals, pearls, diamonds of the purest transparency. The whole effect upon my mind was to produce the idea of a mighty giant with robes of purest white flowing from his shoulders to his feet, and covering his herculean frame in unsullied but festooned and variegated drapery. The prevailing appearance is, as we see, unsullied white, but other colours intermingle. In the Lesser Fall the mixture is seen, but still distinct, as if kept apart from sullyng the beautiful garments of 'the god' ; we have the appearance of brown and yellow, still,

however, fading away into the predominant colour. But in the Great Fall a beautiful green flows from the stream below, and retains its hue for a good way down the fall. When these rolling torrents reach the bottom the confusion is complete. The waters roll and dash and foam; and, as if making a futile attempt at retaliation, they rear up their infuriated crest and dash back again against the descending stream. For some distance the waters are as white as the purest snow, and the spray, vapour, and foam have the same appearance. I was fortunate enough to see the rainbow reflected from this cloud of white spray last night. It was very lovely, and, being so near, the colours were obvious and vivid.

“ You will see that the prevalent idea in my mind respecting the whole scene agrees with the beautiful rather than the sublime. I have not up to this moment obtained an impression of the sublime, though I came full of the expectation of nothing else. My impressions are of course liable to error, and yet I am fully persuaded of their truth. I write now from the room of an inn, the window of which commands a perfect view of the Great Fall. There it is just before me, the sun shining, the mist rising as white as snow, the waters rolling over the precipice in festooned white and green, with all the gracefulness of Queen Victoria's robes upon her wedding-day or at her coronation. At this distance I cannot see the peculiarity I mentioned, viz., the breaking up of this mass of fluid into millions and

millions of sparkling crystals ; and yet I know it to be there."

Not far from Niagara is the battle-field of Lundy Lane, where one of the most desperate actions ever fought in modern times took place in our last American war. Dr. Dixon has given an account of this in his book, but again it is interesting to compare a letter written on the spot.

"A most sanguinary conflict took place on a field just by, called Lundy Lane. The people have erected two or three observatories on the spot, from which they point out all the particulars of the bloody contest. It took place in the last American war ; the English commander was General Drummond, and the American, General Brown. The forces were about 5,000 men on each side. The battle began about four o'clock in the afternoon, and ended at twelve o'clock at night. The armies were all this time within a very short distance of one another, so that the firing must have told most dreadfully. In the course of the battle the Americans charged and took the British artillery, which was placed in a peaceful burying-place belonging to a little Presbyterian meeting-house. The English in turn assaulted the Americans, in order to recover their artillery. This movement brought a portion of the two armies into immediate personal conflict, and what is called in war 'crossing the bayonet.' There are only two other instances of this on record, one of the parties always giving way before they meet each other in this deadly strife. But on this occasion British

blood ran alike in the veins of both, and they actually met and struggled together in the use of this deadly weapon. Many fell on both sides, pierced by the murderous weapon. At length the Americans gave way, and the British recovered their lost guns. But this did not end the strife; the parties continued to fight by the light of a soft and brilliant moon, till, as if God interposed, a dark cloud came across the skies, and the combatants, by reason that they could no longer see one another, were obliged to desist. The English remained on the ground, and the Americans retreated the next morning. The loss was enormous for the number—twice or three times as many as were killed at Waterloo. Each side lost 1,000 men; the British lost eighteen officers, and the Americans nineteen; the first and second generals in command on each side were severely wounded, one of whom was the present General Scott, the commander of the American forces in Mexico. The officers of both armies were buried in the little graveyard above mentioned, peacefully by the side of each other, and the bodies of the poor men were buried on spots of ground which are pointed out. When this contest took place the country was open, only a farmhouse or two being near; now a smiling village, named after the English General, Drummondville, has been built on the site, and looks very pretty. May these contests of brothers never occur again!"

The rest of this letter is interesting and characteristic, and may be given.

“From the Falls we went to a town called St. Catherine’s, where I preached; and from thence to Hamilton, at the head of Lake Ontario. This Hamilton is a new city, in a beautiful situation, and is becoming a very prosperous place of business. I preached once in this place, and once in a neighbouring town called Dundas, on Sunday last. After remaining over Monday at Hamilton, I set out by Lake Ontario for this place (Toronto) on Tuesday, and arrived before noon. Here I met Dr. Ryerson, who hailed me with much kindness and affection. I am stopping at his house, and now sit at his desk and write this letter in his study. This city used to be the capital of the province, when Upper and Lower Canada were divided. It stands on Lake Ontario, and although, like all places in America, it has the appearance of an unfinished town, yet on the whole it is a fine place. King Street, the principal business street, is the finest I have seen in America. But everything here, as in England, is greatly depressed. Our foolish government and parliament, by their free-trade schemes and policy, are ruining all the colonies, as well as the home country. If England had constructed some beautiful inclined plane railroad, or some other thing, to pour all her wealth and trade into the United States for the benefit of the latter, and her own effectual relief from the burden of preserving it, her policy could not possibly be more insane than it is at present. All the wealth, commerce, and manufacturing power are gradually flowing into America from

Free-trade.

England, and the same is the case with regard to Canada. But these are things in which you have no concern."

Dr. Dixon was never a free-trader; never could see the beauties of free-trade: he saw only that it took work out of the country in enormous quantity; that it heaped up money in the hands of the few; that it tended to destroy what was characteristic in the work produced in the country, and bring all things to a dead level, except money. But this by the way.

From Belleville, where he met the General Conference of Canada, and assumed the functions of President, he thus wrote (June 12):—

"We are getting on with our Conference affairs pretty well. Some smouldering embers of the old state of things continue in a slight degree, but nothing to alarm us. We shall get through our affairs pretty agreeably, and, I trust, to the good of the work of God. The men are good men, but the old state of things necessarily produced disorders amongst them which have to be remedied. They treat me with great affection and respect, and readily allow me to exercise all the authority and power which I consider to be legitimate and proper. We last night admitted the young men into Full Connexion, and I had to deliver the usual address to them. To-morrow morning I have to preach an ordination sermon, and to ordain them."

Dr. Dixon hastened home from Canada in order to be in time for the British Conference, to make

his official report, and deliver the address from the Canadian Conference with which he was charged. A somewhat untoward incident is now to be related, which occasioned to him great pain of mind. He arrived in good time at the British Conference, which was held in Hull in 1848, and attended day after day for a fortnight, in expectation of being called upon to make his communication. At last, two days before the Conference closed, happening to meet the ex-President and another leading minister at dinner, he told them that his mind was made up—that he should leave immediately without making his report. After entreating him in vain to alter his resolution, they hurried to the Conference chapel, and presently two other ministers were sent to invite him to appear and deliver his message. But his heart was full, he declined the invitation, went home, and instead of making his report wrote his book. †

This was an unfortunate occurrence. No terms could be higher than those under which Dr. Dixon was sent forth as the accredited representative of the British Conference, and was nominated by them to be President of Canada. “We have by a cordial and unanimous vote appointed him,” they say; “we are persuaded that you will thankfully and joyfully hail this arrangement. We have long learned to appreciate his services. His Christian simplicity, the meekness of his spirit, his manly and effective eloquence in preaching Christ, as well as the ability and fidelity with which he has maintained our ecclesiastical polity,

have pointed him out as a minister well qualified for this important office. We have the utmost confidence in his integrity and ability." And it may certainly be affirmed that, had it been a mere question of personal dignity, no such withdrawal would have taken place on the part of Dr. Dixon. But he thought that those whom he represented were neglected in his person; and his keen feeling as a public servant was touched.

The writer of this biography perceives, in examining the Minutes of the Methodist Conferences in England, that the addresses from Canada appear, and are answered, a year after date; and this may be the explanation of the matter. At all events, in the Minutes of the Conference for the next year, 1849, there is an answer of the British Conference to the Canadian Conference concerning the address which was brought over by Dr. Dixon in 1848, and from that answer it would seem that the address *was* received from Dr. Dixon by the British Conference at some time or other. But he never made his report; and this address was not printed in the Minutes, as the Canadian addresses usually are; and it is not known to have been printed anywhere else. It remains in the possession of Dr. Dixon's family. The passages in it which relate to Dr. Dixon are therefore given here.

"We thank you with all our hearts for your appointment of the Rev. Dr. Dixon as your representative and President of our Conference; and we know no language adequately to express our deep and

grateful sense of the value of his ministrations and labours.

“ We have been no less delighted and instructed by his powerful and hallowed ministrations in the pulpit than we have been edified and assisted by his diversified and important advices in Conference. Under his Presidency and direction we have satisfactorily and harmoniously gone through the various business of our Conference in an unusually short time, and never shall we forget, and we hope through life to profit by, his apostolic and manifestly anointed instructions, and his personal courtesy and kindness. His memory will ever be precious to us, and our devout prayer is that he may be restored safely to the bosom of his family and brethren, and long continue to be, as he long has been, one of the brightest lights of the Christian Church.

“ We have requested Dr. Dixon to act as our representative to your Conference, and we refer you to him for every information respecting our affairs.”

To conclude this matter : the British Conference, in their answer to this address, spoke of Dr. Dixon in terms which fully showed their understanding of the value of his services, ending thus : “ We praise God for the grace which rested on our beloved brother in this his important mission, and have welcomed him among us on his return with increasing feelings of obligation, respect, and love.”

An address from the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States,

which is printed among the English Minutes for 1849, also bears full testimony to Dr. Dixon's successful discharge of his other office—that of Representative of the English Conference. Among other things it was particularly noticed that in his public prayers he mingled petitions for the welfare of the Queen of England and the English Government and nation, with those which he offered for the American Government and nation. In fact, he always persisted in praying first for the Queen of England, and then for the President of the United States. This it appears did not escape the notice of the Yankees: but with very good feeling they allowed it at the time.

There is more than the language of official compliment in these addresses. The mission of Dr. Dixon to the United States and Canada was completely successful. In the former he maintained the high ground taken by English Methodism on the slavery question; but at the same time his kindness and ready understanding of the difficulties of the question did away with the feeling that there was a want of sympathy in England for those who were hampered and perplexed with that terrible problem. The genuine admiration which he expressed for the unquestionable marvels effected by American ingenuity and energy delighted all with whom he came in contact; and the breadth, richness, and power of his eloquence forcibly struck even that nation of speakers.

In Canada he succeeded in strengthening and

rendering permanent the re-union. The disaffection and difficulties which still remained at the time of his arrival disappeared under his genial and skilful management; and the Methodist body in that country were left in a state of vigour, union, and spiritual elevation.

An interesting testimony of this was received by him in the last year of his life from Dr. Ryerson, the Canadian leader of Methodism, who wrote (March, 1871): "Your visit to Canada was the seed-sowing, from which a glorious harvest has been gathered year after year, from that time to this, in the perfect peace and prosperity of our church."

In fact, as a ruler or president the qualities of Dr. Dixon were great and unusual. He had his share of tact and diplomatic skill: at least, he could always assume enough of this to do whatever was wanted; but in this quality he might easily have been matched or excelled. It was when matters rose out of the level of ordinary business, when great resolutions were to be made, great measures taken, great sentiments inspired, that he was found to be possessed of qualities beyond the talents of an official or routine nature, even when these were of the highest order. He could by his presence and looks, not less than his words, appeal to whatever was best and noblest in men; he could kindle the feelings of elevation, generosity, and devotion to the public good; and it was so evident that no small or mean motive could sway him, he so evidently sought the interests, the highest interests of all,

—that an enthusiastic confidence in him was excited.

When in a great crisis a man of this rare mould can be found and brought forward, it is well : when something extraordinary is required, when old rules and lines of action want breaking through, because they have become hard, fast, and oppressive ; then a man of this mould alone will be found to possess the spring and steadiness to do the thing required. Ordinary talent and tact will fail in such circumstances ; and will only make things worse the more they exert themselves, for they can only reiterate their old formulas and beat their old boundaries again and again, and bind where they should loose. But the misfortune of the world is, that ordinary talent occupies employments, and is the only sort of ability that is sure to make itself known. It does ordinary work better than genius could do it, and there is much ordinary work to do : and the higher order of men sit apart, melancholy and watching : or are only set to ordinary work. The crisis comes, and ordinary talent is in possession of the field : it alone has made itself known. Genius is excluded : and calamities ensue. How few are the great occasions in history in which the high and heaven-born leader has appeared at first ! Happy indeed if he can appear at last, and stay the course of calamitous events ! And throughout human society, on the small scale as on the great, emergencies are continually arising which need the control of the noblest powers of the human mind and soul ; but they can find it seldom.

CHAPTER X.

1849-53.

Missionary Anniversary of 1849—Remarkable Sermon and Speech—The Great Agitation—The Fly Sheets—Course pursued by Dr. Dixon—Letters—The Birmingham East Circuit—Sermon on the Growth of the Word of God—Lectures on Wesley and Whitefield.

IN 1849 Dr. Dixon was once more, and for the last time, one of the three select preachers for the preliminary services connected with the anniversary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. He preached, on Wednesday evening, April 25, the sermon at the City Road chapel. He was now in his full maturity: his every appearance in the pulpit in those years was a memorable thing: but his sermon on this occasion seems to have been extraordinary even for him. His text was, "By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small;" and his subject the limited boundaries and future enlargement of the Church. "Such a theme," says the Missionary Report, "gave full scope to Dr. Dixon's peculiar powers; his very able discourse exhibited a far-reaching extent of view, with great force of

argument and illustration ; and was eminently practical, stimulant, and encouraging."

But we are enabled to view the preacher himself on this occasion through the eyes of a very competent observer. The Rev. Joshua Mason, who became in after years the warm admirer and friend of Dr. Dixon, heard him on this occasion for the first time; and committed to paper his recollections of the sermon and impressions of the scene. "I never," wrote Mr. Mason, "had the pleasure of hearing or seeing Dr. Dixon before. He seems a man somewhat above the middle stature, not lusty but very muscular ; his countenance is very open ; his eyes flash with the light of thought ; his forehead is canopied by long grey hair, and indicates the mental grasp for which he is so distinguished. In his voice there is considerable strength and volume, and he manages it with great ease. In action he is untrammelled ; its two distinguishing features are, the bending forward of the whole body, which takes place at the end of any very emphatic sentence ; and a rapid movement of the right hand, when thoughts rushing from his own mind seem impatient to fix themselves in the minds of those to whom he ministers. His language is strong and plain. He seems about sixty years of age. [Just sixty.]

"In the course of the sermon the following passage occurred: 'The cross of Christ is the confluence of two eternities, the one leading forward to it, the other beginning from it. Religion, like its Author, is unchanged and unchangeable; the dew that fell

this morning is the same that bathed the feet of man when he left the garden of Eden ; the sun that rose to-day is the same that lighted and cheered the first wanderer in the wilderness. So is Christianity unalterable, and supplies the power by which Jacob is to arise. The cross is the throne of the universe ; the Hand that was nailed there sways the sceptre over all the worlds.' On the last part of the subject he said : 'By whom shall Jacob arise ? Not by one sect or denomination, not by another, but by all—that is, instrumentally, by the universal Church. Faith is in them all, and makes them one ; faith is indivisible, it is a unit like its object, and that is God. The only thing we have to do is to bear testimony, to show that faith is in us by our works.'"

This was evidently one of his great missionary sermons. Mr. Mason believes, and with good reason, that the saying that the Hand that was nailed on the cross now sways the sceptre of the worlds (which has been often repeated in the pulpit since) was then uttered for the first time. He happened to sit near one of the most celebrated speakers of Methodism, and saw him start with excitement under the powerful strokes of the preacher.

On the following Sunday Dr. Dixon again preached on behalf of the Society at Islington : and next day attended the annual meeting in Exeter Hall, when he was greeted with great applause. His speech was very characteristic. Referring to

the lugubrious tone of the financial report, he said that the true working power of the Society was not money but religion: the question was “whether you have real preaching; whether you have men of God, commissioned by Him, imbued with His Spirit, tenderly feeling for the happiness and salvation of the world, and adapted to go everywhere preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. Our work is preaching. That is what we have to do—to proclaim the Gospel.” He liked independence with unity and stability, but he liked “a good revolution” sometimes. “But when I say I like a good revolution, I do not mean a revolution in England—I do not mean a revolution that should overthrow the throne of our beloved Queen (loud applause); neither do I desire a revolution to overthrow the two houses of parliament. Let them keep in their proper position. *Let them remain as independent as two legislative bodies can possibly be while they work by the side of each other.* That is my theory. But I do declare that I like a revolution in Rome You are just upon the edge of Italy proper. Do just set a missionary or two to work to watch the progress of events, and if he can get in, let him go there. Who knows but that some of you young people may see Rome a station in our Minutes? Events as extraordinary as this have taken place in our time. It is a delightful anticipation. It will be a glorious thing for a simple Methodist Preacher to take his stand on the seven-hilled city for the purpose of preaching

justification by faith. That one truth of itself, if only generally taught and received, would revolutionize and overthrow the entire Papacy." This anticipation he himself lived to see brought to pass.

But while there was apparently peace, prosperity, and extension in Methodism, a storm had been rising which now began to agitate the Connexion. For several years a series of anonymous papers had been in circulation under the name of "Fly Sheets," reflecting in the severest manner on the principles and policy which then prevailed in Methodism, and assailing with great virulence the ministerial character of those preachers who were carrying out the same. These papers appeared from time to time without the name either of printer or publisher; and though it seemed evident that they were written by one or more of the body of ministers, yet the authors long baffled inquiry and remained unknown. At length some of them were suspected and interrogated before district meetings; and the findings of these meetings furnished a case of discipline for the Conference of 1849.

There can only be one opinion of the conduct of the authors of these papers. Shooting and stabbing at public men in the dark is a cowardly and treacherous thing, and those who do this are guilty of a criminal action. Men who have a fault to find, and are afraid to put their names to their complaints, ought to be silent altogether. But you rarely take up a provincial newspaper, or a religious newspaper,

without finding that you hold in your hand a nest of insects. Anonymous criticism, in general, has done incalculably more harm than good. It is the bane of genius: it is the mark and proof of the prevalence of society over the individual. The only resource of persons who are exposed to it is to regard it as in a manner non-existent: to consider the whole mass of it that appears daily, weekly, monthly, as a something that is not authorship at all. The old roughness and scurrility with which controversialists used to meet one another, and knock one another down with their naked fists, is infinitely preferable to the gloved buffeting and mobbing of the modern reviews.

The writers of the Fly Sheets, then, were criminal agitators. It was intolerable that men should be stabbed in the dark by their own brethren. The Conference of 1849 went to the heavy work of discipline; it confirmed the suspensions and pronounced the reprimands found by the District Meetings. It acted almost as one man. Nothing could be more dignified than the attitude it assumed. It inclined to mercy, and at first added nothing to the findings of the Districts. Those of the offending parties who submitted to the authority of the Connexion received no greater punishment than a reprimand, and a temporary suspension, not of their ministry, but of the power of being superintendents of circuits. But there were of them those who refused to submit to this authority, or even to appear before the committees appointed to question them. What

was left in such cases but to pronounce the sentence of expulsion? Several were expelled by the all but unanimous vote of the Conference.

Dr. Dixon's personal share in these painful proceedings may be indicated in a few words. He seconded the motion for a reprimand and suspension in the first case of discipline that came on for inquiry. He voted with his brethren. He signed one of two declarations of abhorrence which were sent round, but not the other.

From this Conference began an agitation which convulsed the Methodist Connexion for several succeeding years, and drew upon it for a time the general attention of the country. The expelled ministers and their adherents went everywhere: immense meetings were held in the large towns: desperate fighting took place in the Circuit and District Meetings: and not only in the towns, but in almost every hamlet where Methodism was known, there was bitterness and division. Many laymen were expelled from church membership, and drew off their followers in large numbers. Some of these rejoined the Church of England. Others formed themselves into a separate society, which still exists under the name of the United Methodist Free Church, and this (unless the writer be mistaken) amalgamated itself with the Methodist Association, a body which formerly grew out of the troubles of Dr. Warren in 1835. Meanwhile the Conference held its ground, and year after year proceeded to fresh acts of discipline. It was not before

a hundred thousand members had been lost to Methodism that the agitation ceased to rage.

And what was all this about? Whence came the bitterness which vented itself in the unwarrantable manner that has been described? It must be answered that although the agitation assumed at last the appearance of a struggle between ministers and laymen, it first arose out of a difference in opinions and sentiments among the ministers themselves. The Fly Sheets only assailed those ministers who upheld a certain line of ecclesiastical policy, and were an irregular and foolish mode of enforcing questions which should have been urged in a constitutional manner.

Dr. Dixon was known to have long entertained independent opinions. He had long been in a state of deep doubt as to some parts of the policy of the leading minds of Methodism. He dreaded centralisation. He watched with apprehension the increase of organism, the multiplication of bureaux and committees. He feared lest the old spirituality and simplicity should be dissipated in the machinery of the system. The old ardour which aimed at universal diffusion, at the conversion of the world, seemed to him to be abating; and what was Methodism doing but consolidating and intrenching itself on the fields already won, by institutions? To these feelings, which had breathed through his public addresses for years, he had lately given definite, though cautious, expression in his book on America. "That which has distin-

guished Methodism in all places is, among other things, its uniform and universal attempt to institute means for the consolidation and progress of its work. It never reckons on anything permanently useful unless, with the preaching of the Gospel, it can establish its polity. This, it must be confessed, is wise, and in perfect agreement with the primitive practice of the Church, as well as with the analogies furnished from other quarters. But it is one of the conditions of our state that things in themselves good, proper, and even divine, by excess become mischievous. The Church has invariably in all ages ruined itself; and the ruin has generally approached through an excess of tinkering in its polity. Institutions, in the beginning both Christian and necessary, have become in the hands of thoughtless, often of designing, occupants, snug, tight, circumscribed things; the centres of power instead of light; the means of oppression instead of blessing; the machinery of depression, of suppression, and of immoderate and universal control, instead of expansion and progress" (page 286).

These opinions, together with his eminence in the Connexion, pointed him out to the imagination of the malcontents as their destined leader. A strong pressure was put upon him both in public and in private. The *Wesleyan Times*, the chief organ of the malcontents, published every week for some time a series of articles headed "To Dr. Dixon," urging every motive which might have induced an ambitious and vain-glorious man to join

them. And undoubtedly it would have been free to him to have headed a constitutional opposition, and yet to have preserved the fullest loyalty to Methodism. But the folly of the Fly Sheets had made the whole thing a personal and embittered quarrel. Redress for grievances, or fancied grievances, had been sought not constitutionally, but by attempting to subvert that admirable constitution which was the idol of his life. Honour and loyalty required him to stand by his slandered brethren; and by them, it has been seen, he stood. The appeals addressed to him gained no response. He was to be forced into no public action. But moderate men gathered round him; and with them he advised. In this state of things, when one of the finest spirits in the Connexion—one who was among his choicest friends—felt himself compelled voluntarily to resign his ministry, he kept his post; and it is the strongest proof that could be offered of his real skill and generosity in the management of men that, being in this disastrous year the Superintendent of the Birmingham West Circuit, where, if anywhere, the storm might have been expected to burst with the greatest fury, he was able to keep the people committed to him in comparative quiet, while all was agitation on every side. His circuit showed no decrease in the number of members at the end of the year, but a slight increase. —

It will relieve the narrative of this painful part of his public life to insert the following pleasing recollections of him, which have been kindly com-

municated by the well-known author, the Rev. Dr. Rule, who was his colleague at this time.

“We were stationed together at Birmingham just one year. Dr. Dixon set it down as certain that he was ‘not fit to be a superintendent,’ and used to compliment me on being equally incapable. As for himself, I can quite well understand that he could not have dealt very successfully with artful or insincere colleagues. He was too simple-minded, too generous, and his soul too high to stoop to contention about things mean or trifling. To us who were associated with him he was really a good superintendent, and our Ministers’ Meetings were of the happiest. He conducted them with good order and faithfulness, and he saw to it that we did our duty.

“That was the year after the sadly memorable Conference in Manchester—the painful crisis of a disastrous agitation. Dr. Dixon’s views differed considerably from ours, and in conducting the affairs of the circuit we, in common with all our brethren, had much to test our fidelity. But our harmony with him was not disturbed, and however much his views might sometimes differ from ours, I believe that at heart our principles were not at all discordant. After many debates, both in public and in private, we were, I doubt not, all entirely convinced of his pure Christian honesty. Now and then he said or did something that a more politic man would have avoided; but never, so far as I remember, did he say or do anything of which he

or we had reason to be ashamed. When the storms were over, Dr. Dixon came forth untarnished; after passions had subsided, all paid him reverence; and to the end of his days he was encircled with the unanimous tribute of Christian respect. —

“As for his private character, it was lovely. We have known the passing word of a little child who caught his hand on a Sunday morning, on his way to the house of God, to lighten up his imagination, and suggest a train of unpremeditated eloquence. We remember how once a blind lady went to his house to beg him to visit her father on his sick bed, that her father ‘might know him in heaven,’ and with what readiness he accompanied his visitor to her father’s chamber, conversed and prayed, and then, proceeding to the pulpit, discoursed, like one who had had an insight into the unseen world, about the mutual recognition of the blessed.” —

From the Conference of the next year, 1850, the following characteristic letter was received by the present writer.

“GRAVESEND, July 27th, 1850.

“I came to this place yesterday, to escape London, Conference Committees, and a most miserable attack of dyspepsia. But I have had a shocking night—scarcely any sleep, and that which should have been sleep, something like a material substance—which you cannot understand, and no one else but a person who has been similarly tormented. But it is like running a certain course of whimsical

Mutual recognition of the blessed

adventures, always ending in a fight with some dog, cat, or devil. In my first sleep of this sort, which happened after daylight, I was concerned in a quarrel between a great dog and a little dog. The great dog cruelly, and as I thought, unfairly, killed the little dog, and so, to make justice even, I set on and killed the great dog, and finishing the exploit suddenly started up. Many similar adventures followed, till weary and unrefreshed I turned out.

“John Brogden brought me to this place, and lodged me as his guest at the inn where I now sit and write. My room faces the river; all is life and bustle,—ships passing up and down with their cargoes of human happiness or misery; and it is a thoroughly English day—raining, misty, melancholy. But there is something in being on the banks of a river, and looking upon the scene which is the greatest highway in the world: more ships, more merchandise, more ill and good fortune, more broken hearts and hearts elate with hope, pass up and down the spot where I now write than in any other portion of our globe. I have been thinking ‘The Thames’ would be a grand subject for a sort of historical novel—not a novel properly, but historical events, with philosophy, morals, reflections on life, manners, the progress of navigation, naval wars, adventures, the progress of commerce, the hulks, and Tilbury Fort just opposite. A famous theme this would be for a man of genius. The world is full of interest, but how fleeting to the man!

I am much pleased with your reflections on what you saw at Warwick. "You are probably right in what you say on Strafford. He was led to embrace a *side* in a great struggle. He did so firmly and heroically, and determined to abide the issue. Neither party were very scrupulous about the means they employed, as is always the case in party struggles. Great men are never cruel, never ferocious. Their cruelty is policy. Having an end to serve, they look to the end, and when men and interests stand in their way they push them aside. The act is often unjust, but the cause is not cruelty of nature, but the idea of state necessity. History is full of these facts. Strafford's was a case of this sort. He embarked his existence in the same ship with poor Charles, absolutely determining to sink or swim with the unfortunate monarch. They sank together, and it was well they did. But he was a great man. His end made him doubly so. There is sublimity in him—his very visage, his catastrophe. But there is a Providence in all things. I have been thinking a good deal this day or two on this—that *when God is resolved upon allowing certain lines of policy to prevail, He kills those who stand in the way of the decreed policy.* I could refer you to many instances. Probably Strafford's case is one. He stood in the way, and was removed. Sir Robert Peel lived so long as he lent his support to the policy of the age—for it is the policy of the age—but when he made a single speech against it, in twelve hours

he received his death wound. It may be said that others did the same: but Sir Robert alone could have turned the scale, and having once begun he would probably have gone on to something else. But no! he is stopped—he is no more—and the predominant policy will go on, have its turn, till something else is sent. A certain policy was beginning to predominate in our body. I *know* your Grandfather did not approve of it; it was painful to him. Though cautious, he had taken some steps in an opposite direction. All men were eagerly looking to him—their hopes, desires, and affections were centred in him—when lo! he is snatched away in the midst of his days and power. The obstruction was removed, the policy has gone on. Oh how mysterious are the ways of God! My dear boy, look beyond all visible things; there is a God, a Providence, a Law, a Power, a living Omnipotence. Nothing can resist it. You will be just what God makes you, in life, in position, in usefulness. Do what is right before God, and guard against placing yourself in a position in which you cannot do this. Study truth, rectitude, honour, purity, simplicity; study all this in Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Let your aim be high, but your means legitimate. Rather lose a crown than do a shabby trick.”—

In the melancholy and foreboding tone of this letter we see the events in the midst of which he was placed casting themselves into the mould of the imagination, and even the dreams of the night.

We see the mind struggling for expansion and flight in the pure air, amidst the perplexities and miseries and confined atmosphere of party strife. Reduced to inaction by the necessities of the case, he watched with sadness, yet with involuntary admiration, the course of a policy which he could neither approve nor oppose; which, however, led to victory under the wonderful leadership of one of the greatest of administrative geniuses—Dr. Bunting; “the old Doctor:” who was the greatest manager, the greatest debater, the greatest financier, that Methodism ever saw. He knew that there could be only one issue of the struggle, since the opposite party had thrown themselves out of the pale of the Methodist constitution, and were falling under the strokes of discipline. All this he saw and knew; but he also knew and mourned over the cost at which the victory was won. Besides the general agitation and division, he saw several of the most gifted and sensitive of his own brethren—men like himself of moderation and enlarged views—some resigning their ministry, and writing books and pamphlets, others waging a purposeless war within the Conference. He did neither the one nor the other, though such a pressure was put on him as would have driven a less well-balanced mind into violent action; and it is submitted to those who know the circumstances, whether the general softening of parties towards one another, which followed in a few years, was not due in no inconsiderable degree to the resolute moderation of Dr. Dixon.

An authentic glance or two at that great and terrible Conference may be obtained from other letters. To Mrs. Dixon he wrote (July 31):—

“The election for the President is just over. Dr. Beecham is chosen by a large majority over Fowler. This election is just what I expected, and is fully indicative of the predominant policy. Dr. Hannah is also this moment elected as the Secretary. Nothing of interest has occurred. I dined at Owen’s last night, and went afterwards to Dr. Beaumont’s.

“I know not what is to come. Nothing, I expect. Nothing is to be expected. I shall try to be calm. The sight is perfectly imposing. More than six hundred preachers are either present or are expected. The new President has just made his speech. It was a good one on the whole. The thanks of the Conference are now being proposed by Dr. Bunting.” —

Dr. Dixon used in after years to describe the appearance of Dr. Bunting at the time of this great crisis—how he would sit in the midst of a raging sea of debate, turning from one speaker to another, his hand placed behind his ear (he was slightly deaf), and now and then darting a fiery glance along the line of sound; and then at the end, when everybody had spoken, how he would rise and deal with all the arguments that had been brought forward without omitting or displacing any, and bring the whole conflicting mass into harmony. He considered Dr. Bunting the greatest master of debate that ever lived.

Another letter is to his daughter Annie Maria (Aug. 1):—

“I am glad to hear that you are all well, and enjoying yourselves. Kenilworth Castle must be a very interesting ruin. All human glory, my dear Anny, like human beauty, dies away. The world is a strange thing. Some things are always dying, others springing into life; some waning away like the setting sun, and others coming forth like the rising morning. My sun is setting; yours and your brother’s and sister’s rising, if you attend carefully to the will of God. Let me recommend and urge upon you the necessity of devoting yourself fully to God; to pray much; to read the Bible; to cultivate knowledge; to avoid all sin; to cherish every pure, honourable, and noble sentiment.

“*Young ladies* should not intermeddle in church matters. They belong to our calling and duties, and I may say our miseries under some circumstances, but our happiness and glory in other circumstances. You children are happily exempt from these things. Press on, my dear Anny, in the pursuit of all the female graces, duties, attainments, and God will bless you.”

In 1850 Dr. Dixon was moved from the West to the East Birmingham Circuit: where he remained the next three years, living in Dark Lane, on the Coventry Road.

At the end of the next year, 1851, he lost his mother, to whom he was most tenderly attached,

and whom, as we have seen, he much resembled in mind. Mrs. Dixon died at the great age of eighty-seven, in the little white cottage in King's Mills, where she lived nearly all her life. The following account of her last days was written by her son to his daughter Hannah :—

“BIRMINGHAM, Dec. 17th, 1851.

“MY VERY DEAR HANNAH,—

“Your dear grandmother did not die, but ceased to live. Her departure was the most gentle and happy which can be imagined. No change of any consequence took place in her up to the last day. She remained up till nine o'clock talking most cheerfully to all about her. Fanny, who looked after her, discovered, she thought, some little change in her as the night advanced, and got her a cup of tea once or twice. She also read and prayed with her, asking her more than once the state of her mind. Her replies were most satisfactory. She stated two or three times over that she had no doubt, had perfect peace, and was very happy; and the last words she uttered were, ‘I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me.’ Fanny had no idea that her end was near, and she continued to talk till within a few minutes of her death. She breathed a little and a little slower, till she ceased to breathe at all. She had no pain, no struggle, no disease; she simply ceased to live. I never knew or heard of so tranquil and happy a departure out of the world. Her faculties were perfect to the last;

not a cloud seemed to overshadow her mind, or even to confuse her memory. The last time or two that I visited her I thought her acuteness of intellect greater than I had ever known it; and what I thought remarkable in so aged a person, the depth and intensity of her affection towards me were greater than I had ever before witnessed. The last time I saw her, only about five or six weeks ago, I had the utmost difficulty to disentangle myself from her warm and affectionate embrace. She seemed as if she could not let me go. Yes, my dear Hannah, she was no doubt kind to you. She was indeed kind to all, but she always talked about you, whenever I saw her, in the most affectionate manner. Her soul was love; her spirit seriously cheerful; her life tranquil as the evening of a summer's day; and her death was just like the sun retiring out of sight. We buried her this day week in the midst of the graves of our kindred, peacefully to sleep till the morning of the resurrection.

“I am your affectionate father,

“JAS. DIXON.”

The Rev. John Bedford, who was associated with Dr. Dixon in one capacity or another during almost the whole of his six years in Birmingham, has furnished several interesting observations about him.

For the first three of those years Dr. Dixon was Chairman of the Birmingham and Shrewsbury District, and Mr. Bedford was Secretary. “As

chairman," says Mr. Bedford, "he was not remarkably familiar with some departments of business, and his mind was not of an order to take pleasure in attending to them. While strongly attached to the great outlines of our organization, and ever ready to maintain its essential framework, he would occasionally have a tilt against some particular details of the system, or the uniformity of their application. On such occasions he would usually announce some great principle, which he expected would draw everything needful within its attraction, but which minds of an inferior but more practical class would soon show to be unworkable. The same tendency was occasionally observable in his Conference speeches; and I do not think he relished the office of district representative, and the fagging work of settling the stations, etc., though he always desired in that office to serve both his brethren and the circuits as well as he could."

When he went into the Birmingham East Circuit Mr. Bedford was Superintendent, and continued so to be, at Dr. Dixon's expressed desire. They laboured together in mutual confidence during a most trying period, the circuit being torn in pieces by the agitation. Many unpleasant reflections were cast upon Mr. Bedford, on the score of his holding the superintendency, though a much younger man, and with respect to his relations in general with Dr. Dixon. Without entering into details, it is proper to say that these reflections were wholly unjust,

and that Dr. Dixon always maintained a warm friendship and esteem for his colleague. "We spent," says the latter, "two dreary years, from 1850 to 1852, in trying to counteract the effects of agitation, in gathering up the wreck of societies scattered by it, and in strengthening the hands of such of the people as remained faithful. Many anxious hours did we and our excellent colleague, Mr. Hartley, spend in consultation and prayer; and some who, through Divine mercy, discovered their error, we had the pleasure of welcoming again to Christian fellowship." Mr. Bedford adds very truly that "there was in him much of an emotional nature; many who did not intimately know him supposed him to be of a calm and philosophic temperament, but they were mistaken."

From these scenes of desolation it is pleasant to turn to a letter written in the spring of the following year, 1853, to Mrs. Dixon, who was on a visit to Castle Donington. It contains some recollections of the Hall, which was once the residence of Lady Huntingdon, and to which John Wesley paid several visits.

"April 19th.

"I am afraid that the stillness and solitude of the park will not long suit you. To so silent and sombre a person as I am all this is very well, but to lively persons it is not very congenial. However you will have fresh air, beautiful scenery, and fine walks, all of which you must endeavour to im-

prove. The old oaks will be an exhaustless subject of admiration. I know them all. They are fresh in my memory. I used to play around them, climb up many of them in search of jackdaws' nests, and have at different times hazarded my neck in these exploits. The trees remain, but where are the men, the companions of those days? They are gone. Not one remains. When I visit the place I feel this. It inspires profound melancholy. There have been times when my feelings have perfectly overpowered me. When a volunteer, I presented arms to George the Fourth in front of the hall, and was commanded in that act of military homage by the old lord (Moir), one of the finest men who ever lived. He is long since gone, and I know of none of the men now alive, except my poor brother George. Such is the world. The longer we live the more dreary it appears. I doubt not but you deeply feel this at the present time. What is there then left us but to prepare for better scenes?"

In May, 1853, Dr. Dixon preached before the Birmingham and Shrewsbury District Meeting, in Cherry Street chapel, Birmingham, a sermon, the substance of which was published at their request in the "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," with the title of "The Growth of the Word of God." (Acts xii. 24.) This discourse is full of philosophic loftiness and grandeur, setting forth the glories of the Christian doctrines, their unity, their indissoluble

connection with one another, both in the word which teaches and the mind which receives them; and their universal divinity. These were the topics on which he delighted to dwell in his ministry, pointing out the living action of the Word of God, insisting upon it as still in operation, still capable of doing for man all that it had ever done; every part of it being a drop of the one great river of the water of life—still fresh, pure, fraught with healing; and not a crystal, bright and sparkling, to be admired perhaps, but no longer circulating through the living world. He never doubted that the true Gospel would produce its effects in the renewal of the soul of man; and he was as certain that nothing else besides the Gospel would produce those effects. Good advice, practical lessons, moral sentiments, are well enough in their place, but they are not the first, nor the second, nor the third thing in the pulpit. They are not what the people want and have a right to expect. For them let us go to the lecture-room, or open the treatise.*

In the sermon of which we are speaking Dr. Dixon gives some of his own views of preaching; and in

* The present writer has been mournfully struck with the change which has in late years come over many pulpits, from which the Gospel used to be preached in its power and efficacy as the Word of God unto salvation. There is a lecturing tone adopted. In one place where he was, the preacher gave a long discourse about the duty of getting on in life, illustrated by many anecdotes; and he had even got the professional lecturer's form of introducing these anecdotes, by the words, "You remember."

so doing necessarily describes his own procedure, and the sources from which he derived his wonderful freshness and vigour. The sum of what he says is, *Give the truth, and avoid deadness.* Of course he is very strong on the first point. "The Gospel is the only instrument of the salvation of mankind; and it is a cruel mockery of God and man for professed preachers of this Gospel to substitute anything else in its place. All men know this. Counterfeit ministers delude nobody but themselves. While sincere, earnest, plain-spoken men are followed and appreciated even by the world, those who simulate, adulterate, and lower the blessed Gospel are always both neglected and despised."

But if the Gospel is to be preached with effect, there is one thing which is of importance above all others, and that is, the diligent perusal of the Word of God for this express purpose. "Can an elaborate dissertation, oration, argument, got up on the rules of secular eloquence, committed to memory and repeated year after year, answer to the idea of preaching the Word of God? Must not that which in any good sense may be considered His word be constantly drawn from the fountain of living waters? We do not mean by this that every sermon must in substance be a new one, or that the preacher must be constantly occupied in laying the foundations of a structure; but that every sermon should be studied afresh in the light of Holy Scripture, that it may be fused with increasing warmth; be made more

clear, bright, radiant; be more impregnated with the richest gold of the mine of sacred truth; and that a spirit fresh and lively may be kept up in the delivery. We cannot conceive that preaching the Word of God admits of stereotype—those compositions never amplified, never improved; no new thoughts, illustrations, or richer doctrinal infusion being brought in. Surely the constant study of the Holy Scriptures would furnish something additional to the old outline. . . . The *essay* system of preaching can hardly be considered preaching the Word of God. The ornate, eloquent, metaphysical, or philosophical productions of our pulpit orators may be, and often are, very beautiful productions of genius; but the efforts and productions of human genius seem at once, and of necessity, to set aside the sacred oracles and substitute the elaborations of the mind. We are speaking here of the ordinary ministry.”

Sermon-reading he did not consider to be preaching at all; nor is it, unless the occasion be extraordinary and of a kind to make it more natural and easy to write a sermon and read it than to bear it all in mind. For the ordinary ministry sermon-reading is bad. It is at once laborious and slothful: laborious because of the time taken in writing, and slothful because it avoids the mental effort, the strain and responsibility of the hour of delivery. Dr. Dixon was almost equally unfavourable to *memoriter* preaching, or what he called “the essay system”; and certainly if this be carried strictly out,

if the preacher commit every word to memory, no bondage can be more horrible. He is timid, overtaxed, unequal to emergencies, liable to be put out by the least thing, and at any time to break down altogether; constrained in delivery, and apt to be hard and monotonous. However this sort of speaking may have suited other kinds of oratory, it is not, as a rule, suitable to the pulpit. The free proclamation of Christian truth requires no such painful and miserable ordeal as this; it requires not this, nor anything like it: it requires much more, yet what is altogether different. Dr. Dixon held that the mind of the preacher must be filled with the substance of the truth—that he must feel that he is there to declare the vital blessings of experimental religion, and that these must have entered his own mental constitution and become part of himself. In that case he held that—with proper preparation, thought, and reflection—words would not fail, but a glow would be produced which would give birth to a truer eloquence than all that could be effected by cold-blooded elaboration. “In a mind well furnished and disciplined, the deep emotions of the soul will lead to the finest perceptions and the clearest logic; to an instant combination of truths, facts, principles, with a ready and appropriate choice of words.” —

He was himself an extraordinary example of perfection in extemporary preaching and speaking. All his sermons were purely extemporary as to the words; he never dreamed of committing even par-

ticular passages to memory. Indeed, it is evident from the sermon under consideration that he regarded extemporaneous preaching as an act of religious faith; and that the preacher was to confide in the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Few in an age can hope to attain to the freedom and force of diction that was acquired by him; but it is beyond doubt that many excellent and pious ministers, if they could once confide, leave their manuscripts at home, and put an end for once to their repetition exercises, would find themselves free for ever. They would find at once the enormous difference between reading and speaking; or, if they were *memoriter* preachers, the vast increase of real effective power which their boldness gave them. Only, the mind must be fully charged, aware of the importance of the work, and fired with eagerness to deliver its message.

We have dwelt upon this subject of preaching because this was the work for which Dr. Dixon lived; without which he was, as a public man, almost nothing. His whole public life, all that he wrote, the causes which he advocated on the platform, were more or less directly connected with the preaching of the Gospel. Such an example of unfaltering devotion to one work is rare in the case of so comprehensive a mind. He was not by any means what is called "a man of one book," but he was a man of one work. He had no patience with ministers of religion who took up and played with one subject after another, gaining a superficial

knowledge of many things which had no reference to their proper calling, destroying the simplicity of the Gospel, and making it a compound by the intermixture of other ingredients not belonging to it. Of one of them who was very popular he said, "He is not a preacher, he is a quack."

He was fond of dwelling in conversation upon the remarkable successes of the first race of the Methodist preachers, which he attributed to their simplicity and directness in the Gospel. In this sermon he says, "We are sometimes in our thoughtlessness astonished that our ancestors in the ministry did so much good, and that many men with much greater qualifications now do so little. The fact is that these superior 'qualifications' are the true cause of the difference. Many of our fathers knew little but the Gospel, but this they knew thoroughly; and they knew it, not merely in the letter, but lived in its spirit, enjoyed its power, and saw fully its importance and value. Hence, knowing nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, their word had free course and was glorified. Next to the force of the truth itself, and the energizing influence of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Gospel, in their hands, was in its simplicity. No one ever heard one of the primitive stock of our preachers without hearing plainly, forcibly, and energetically the way of salvation." —

It was not meant by this that the preacher is bound in every one of his sermons to present in

regular, systematic order the whole of what is often termed the plan or scheme of salvation. This notion, which has not unfrequently been acted upon, is the mere mechanical perversion of a true and right feeling, that the essential truths of the Gospel should be in every sermon. What was meant was, that whatever the subject, it should be so treated as to be felt to be in harmony with the whole Gospel; the essence of the whole Gospel should be in it, just as the essence of the whole tree is in every leaf and berry.

It may be asked, What, after all, is the great good of preaching, that the difference between one sort of sermon and another should be curiously inquired into? The class of people who are most attracted by preaching are neither the most admirable nor the most interesting in the community. They are neither the highest nor the lowest; they are not the men of genius, intelligence, or learning; they are not the poor. They are rather those in the middle class, among whom are to be found the worst tyrants of the poor: featherers of their own nests: who show no traces of liberality or beneficence or public spirit for all the Sunday exercises they may go through. Now there is no doubt that in all denominations there are shocking congregational evils, of a sort that can hardly be known to any but a minister of religion: which creep in unobserved, but are not the less distressing and discreditable. In the Established Church there are proprietary congregations made up almost en-

tirely of rich men, whose chief business in coming to church is to see whether the Gospel be preached to the poor—not to themselves, but to the poor. In other religious bodies there are congregations which come together to decide, Sunday after Sunday, whether the unhappy minister combines a copious flow of genteel verbiage with an orthodoxy that would put a difference between two pins out of the same paper. The minister has to plead his own cause, as well as the cause of God, before them. They too will often be found very anxious that a word in season should be spoken to the poor: on the principle, it may be, of making them a present of the world to come, on condition of their behaving well in the world that is. They will condemn a sermon that is faultlessly fluent, copiously figurative or florid, and orthodox beyond their power to question; they will condemn it when, according to their own standard, they can find no other fault with it, on the ground that it is not adapted to the understanding of the poor. And there are other curiosities belonging to congregational worship which it would be long to mention.

All this is true: but it is the firm belief of the present writer that these evils are found in Methodism less (to say the least) than in any other voluntary religious association. The ministers of Methodism have a position of freedom, in comparison of the position of most other voluntary ministers. The Methodist congregations in towns, but especially in the country, by no means consist exclusively

of the middle classes. They continue to include, as they always have included, a very large proportion of the true poor. And even if it were otherwise, how would this affect the question of preaching? If the Methodists, or any other denomination, were chiefly of the middle class—well-to-do men of business, hard-handed traders and money-makers—would this make the quality of the sermons which these men come to hear week after week of no consequence? Is it no matter whether they hear lectures on success in life, frugality, industry, and decision of character, that is to say, indirect eulogiums on themselves; or they hear Divine truths, to raise them beyond themselves, to sink them below themselves, to carry them out of themselves, to make them one with each other, to soften the heart, to break down the barriers which pride and exclusion raise between class and class? Whether they listen to fluent, figurative, illustrative orations, composed to suit their social grade, and conveying the impression that there is one Gospel for the rich and another for the poor: or to appeals and arguments of universal range, which they are made to feel would have been delivered exactly the same before a congregation of colliers or an assembly of peers? Dr. Dixon's preaching was not the sort to make money-rakes rattle, but to sound the souls of all, the money-rakes not excepted: it was scarce possible for the most hide-bound and surface-frozen to listen to him without some emotion, some answering of the deep within to the deep which called; true

voices were awakened by it; the inmost spirit was often struck, and rung.

To understand his opinions about the primitive age of Methodism, to which he was ever fondly recurring, it will be well to look at the lecture which he gave in Liverpool, at about the same time in this year, 1853, in connection with the Liverpool Sunday School Institute, on "Wesley and Whitefield." It was published, along with the others delivered in the same course by various ministers, in a volume entitled "Lectures on Protestant Nonconformists." Dr. Dixon was not responsible, it may be observed, for the title given to the whole course, and would have been the last man to have sanctioned the notion that Wesley (or Whitefield) was a Nonconformist in the now accepted sense of the word. He was not a Nonconformist out of the Church of England, but in the Church; a Nonconformist in the sense in which Cartwright and the rest of the early Puritans were Nonconformists; that is, so far as he was a Nonconformist at all.

However, of the lecture itself. It is an able account of the work of the two illustrious originators of the great religious movement of modern England; of their personal characteristics, of what they had in common, and what was peculiar to each of them. The first question attempted to be met with regard to them is concerning the difference between the faith which they unquestionably had before that conversion which set open

their path as evangelists, and the faith which they professed after the same event. Much has been written on this. It has been argued that those youths of Oxford could not have been more holy, self-denying, zealous, after what they called their conversion than they were before it; that they could not therefore have been more fit and able ministers of the Gospel. And yet, though their holiness of life, zeal, and self-denial before conversion is unquestioned, they themselves held that they had no true principle of evangelical action then; but that all their usefulness, all their acceptance before God came from the change which they underwent in conversion. Dr. Dixon's solution of this difficulty—insoluble to very many—seems to be at least very clear. That the faith was the same, as regarded the men, but that it was altered in direction: it was directed to Christ as the personal Saviour: He drew it to Himself. It became a true faith by apprehending the true object of faith. Hence it gave birth to the knowledge and enjoyment of the Gospel which both declared themselves to have received.

The history of the great evangelical impulse thus received is then related. How in Whitefield it connected itself with the Calvinism of the Dissenting movements of the previous century, enabling him to pour some fresh life into the stagnant waters of Dissent; how in the case of Wesley it became Arminianism, such as the Church avowed, but with the difference that evangelical views remain the very

foundation of it. Evangelical views—justification by faith and the rest—except in a few cases, as in that of John Goodwin—had in this country rarely been found otherwise than in connection with those Calvinistic doctrines which Wesley refused to adopt in their rigour. Hence he was in agreement with none of the religious parties then in existence, and gained little countenance from them. His Arminianism availed him little with the Church; his evangelical views availed him less with the Dissenters. But he was in possession of truths which, though the essential and necessary distinctions of the Christian system, were fallen out of sight to such a degree that they seemed new: and these gave him overwhelming power in the face of the nation itself. To the nation he made his appeal; he found his hearers outside of all the churches, out of the track of all religion. He was not an orator in the usual sense of the word; he was a lucid and logical expounder of truth; yet he moved vast crowds, twenty or thirty thousand in number sometimes, as perhaps no orator ever did, by reason of these peculiar circumstances.

All this is described by Dr. Dixon with the hand of a master. No man was ever more qualified than he to deal with the subject of the rise of Methodism. His own spiritual-mindedness gave him the key of the whole; his English learning and his power of delineating character were fully equal to the subject. He often meditated writing something more at large on it; and might have done so but

for the calamity which took away the use of his pen for many years before the close of life. As it is, he has left, in different parts of his writings, sketches of the character of John Wesley, from which it is the opinion of the present writer that a clearer and better idea of the mind, the power, and the work of that great man may be obtained than from anything else that has been written on him. If these sketches were all put together they would form a beautiful and consistent whole.

CHAPTER XI.

1853-62.

Appointment to Liverpool—Establishment of the *London Quarterly Review*—Articles contributed by Dr. Dixon—Sermon on the Death of Dr. Beaumont—Failure of Sight—Great Domestic Afflictions—Appointment to Manchester—Sermon on the Indian Crisis—Last Appearance in Exeter Hall—Funeral Sermon on the Death of a Young Lady—Appointment to Bradford; His Last Circuit—Retirement from Full Ministry—Testimonies.

IN 1853 Dr. Dixon was appointed to his old circuit of Liverpool South; where he remained for the next three years. He was now sixty-five years of age, but his physical force seemed unabated, his health as firm as ever, and his preaching maintained its high tone and much of its early vigour. There were perhaps fewer of those bursts of overwhelming pathos, of swelling spiritual exultation, which we have striven to convey the idea of; but there was, if possible, a broader and more equal grandeur, a gentler, more essential sweetness, and a more perfect faith and knowledge. This, however, must be marked as the time of the beginning of the

long decline of the life of this eminent servant of religion. The infirmity soon began to manifest itself, which, though it did not put an end to his ministry at once, darkened his closing years. And in several other respects this residence in Liverpool was most afflictive. Nearly twenty years of life lay yet before him; about half of which were to be passed in the full ministry, energetically kept up in the midst of the distress occasioned by the increasing failure of sight; but fifteen were to be spent in darkness. Thus we see the noble vessel which but now rose proudly on the billows of the deep sea, beginning to be tossed and shaken by the chopping waves outside the bar, before she can enter the peaceful haven. A haven of some calm was in reserve for his latest years, but between the mid sea and the last moorings came the surf and the breaker.

But we are not come to that just yet. In the summer of this year he made a tour through the English Lake district, in company with the late John Brogden, Esq., junior, and two of his brothers, and the present writer. All his companions were young men, yet he went through the work as well as the best of them. The writer remembers one day especially, when it was proposed to ascend Fairfield with a guide. The guide, on seeing Dr. Dixon, expressed, to the rest of the party, some hesitation about taking him, but was assured that he was as fit a man as any there, and was soon convinced for himself, for the Doctor took the lead for

twenty miles up and down the hills. The guide at last exclaimed, in astonishment, "That old gentleman must be going on to order dinner." This tour lasted a fortnight. On the last day, after dinner, John Brogden, for whom he had a very great affection, said, "Now, Doctor, give us a toast to finish up with." The Doctor filled his glass and proposed, "Success, happiness, health, and glory to the young." On the part of the only elder man present, this was felt to be very graceful.

In the middle of the same year a quarterly periodical was established, under the name of *The London Quarterly Review*, as the organ of the moderate constitutional party in Methodism. Dr. Dixon was not one of those who projected this, but he approved of it, and was among the original contributors. It had been felt for some years that there was wanted an organ of culture—one which might also express the views of the large moderate party. But in the main, this was merely a general literary and theological periodical from the first, and as such it still exists and flourishes. Under its present management it is equal to any of the Quarterlies. The first editor was the late Mr. Thomas McNicoll, the son of Dr. Dixon's early friend, the Rev. David McNicoll, who has been mentioned before in this book. This gentleman was an elegant writer, and a man of the most refined taste; the author of a volume entitled "Essays on English Literature," in which the classical, the severe, and simple style in poetry is very well advocated. He was a friend of

the present writer, who is glad to pay this passing tribute to his memory.

Dr. Dixon contributed several political articles to this review. One of these, on the war with Russia, contains descriptions of the battles in the Crimea, composed in a very good style of history. They are vivid, strong, and impressive battle pieces, and are free from the crashing hardness of review writing. But of all his contributions the most interesting one was on Richard Watson, which appeared in the third number of the *Review*, March, 1854. Nothing that has been written on the character and preaching of that eminent person will bear any comparison with this article; few great men have ever received so noble and discriminating a tribute to their memory. His admiration of Watson may perhaps have been somewhat excessive; as, indeed, in other instances admiration certainly carried him beyond his judgment. He once pinned his faith ever so long upon a very poor preacher in the Established Church, who was always preaching against Popery: and he once maintained that a volume of letters on Europe, written by a Yankee revivalist, was as good as aught that was ever written by Walter Scott. But then moderate admiration—discreet admiration—admiration that knows the day of its death (never living very long)—is so beautiful a thing itself that it may pardon its own excess; and so common a thing that, if all who are capable of it and of no more will pardon him, his condonation will be pretty complete. It

is certain, however, that it is excessive admiration which has given birth to the most perfect portraits of greatness which the world possesses. Those who admire most are found after all to be those who know best; and from them, not from colder critics, the world receives its opinion of the great.

The beautiful and graphic description of the person of Mr. Watson, and of his manner in the pulpit, must not be given here. But there are one or two incidental sketches of other luminaries, with whom he is compared, which are valuable as from the hand of so great a master of Christian eloquence. He claims for him an equal throne by the side of his great contemporaries, Chalmers and Hall.

“Mr. Watson belonged to the class of gifted and first-rate men, as much as these two lights of their age; but he was distinguished from both by characteristics of his own. He did not possess the vehemence of Chalmers—that internal mental force which drove him along the line of his argument as an express train is driven by the superior power of its fire and mechanism. An argument of Dr. Chalmers’ is very much like a journey by one of these trains; he neither gives himself nor his auditors time to look about; for the time being we have nothing but the argument, and from the earnestness with which it is impelled forward upon the attention of the listener, there might be no other in the universe than the one embodied in this specific theme. A sermon of Dr. Chalmers’ is like Paganini’s playing of the fiddle on one string. His was no

doubt a magnificent piece of catgut, and the touch of the artist exquisitely fine. He could make his one string utter many sounds, but still it was but one string. The eloquence of a one-stringed instrument excites you—indeed, drives you mad for the time ; but, when sober reflection returns, you discover that in your eager following of your guide you have left much more behind you than you have gained in the chase.”

“Hall was different from Chalmers, and, as we think, superior in mental power, in pathos, and in the balance of the faculties ; and yet he was less effective ; and he was probably so because of the harmonious blending of one excellence with another ; it being found in experience that the mind, like a fortress, soonest yields to the assaults of a battery which plays upon it a succession of shot and shell in the same direction ; by this process striking the soul at the same point till a breach is effected, and an entrance prepared for the admission of the principle enforced. Robert Hall did not possess this power as Chalmers did, and hence, though his productions are among the most philosophical, broad, and beautiful of the human intellect, yet because they strike not one sense alone, but every sense,—gratify not one taste in particular, but every taste,—administer not merely to one moral sentiment, but to all,—lift up not one faculty only to the ethereal regions of pure and heavenly light, but carry forward the whole nature alike ; the same effect is not perceived as when one of Chalmers’ powerful bat-

teries is playing upon one point. Through nature the principle of equilibrium is always at work; and as the heavens resume their serenity after a tempest by the force of this law, so after being agitated by one of the mental explosions of Chalmers, we are delighted to repose in the sunshine of Hall."

Of Owen, an orator of the Established Church, celebrated in his day, he says:—

"Owen, of the Bible Society, was one of the most eloquent men we ever listened to, and yet we are not aware that he had much fame beyond the platform. He was an extemporaneous preacher, and must have been an eminently accomplished one, Bishop Porteus saying, as we heard at the time, that Owen was the only man in his diocese fit to preach extemporaneously. And yet we hear nothing of his pulpit performances. What can be the reason of this? Is it because that in the Church pulpit eloquence is held cheaper than amongst others? Is it because the people are more advanced in intelligence, and thus less influenced by talent? We can understand that it may be essential for an Oxford or Cambridge man to possess very extraordinary attainments in order to his excelling amongst his fellows, but the people are not of this class, and consequently remain open to the effects of popular oratory. They seem, however, not to be so much affected by it as the people on the outside of the Church, and the problem must remain unsolved. How it came to pass that in the period of great preachers among the Dissenting bodies, no one rose to the distinction

of Hall, Chalmers, and others, we know not. It argues well, however, that, as a rule, distinctions in the Church arise from piety, simplicity, laborious exertions. Men possessing these requisites are invariably popular."

Many other reasons might be given for the neglect of preaching in the Church; but in the twenty years which have passed since the above was written a great reformation has come about in this. In comparing Watson with these great preachers he says:—

"He had not the earnestness and force of Chalmers, but he possessed much more thought, philosophy, calm ratiocination, and harmonious fulness. He had not perhaps the metaphysical subtlety and rapid combination, the burning affections and elegant diction of Hall; but he possessed as keen a reason, a more lofty imagination, an equal or superior power of painting, and, as we think, a much more vivid perception of the spiritual world, and a richer leaven of evangelical sentiment. Owen's oratory seemed to be more flowing, spontaneous, and impassioned than that of Watson; but the latter exceeded Owen in stretch of thought, sublimity, beautiful imagery, and deep and touching pathos." On the whole, he adds, "It was our good fortune to hear all the celebrities of the pulpit of the period in which he lived; and we certainly never heard his equal."

At the beginning of 1855 Dr. Dixon preached the funeral sermon on the death of the Rev. Dr.

Beaumont, an eminent Wesleyan Minister, and his fellow-countryman, being a native of Castle Donington. The text was, "An eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures." Dr. Beaumont was a man of great boldness and independence, of high attainments, and a celebrated leader of the opposition in Methodist politics. In the pulpit he manifested the genius of an orator, being capable of swaying large audiences by the extraordinary impetuosity of his delivery, and repeated bursts of impassioned declamation. This was chosen by his friend Dr. Dixon as the culminating point of all that was distinctive in his character—that he was an eloquent man: and the sermon—which made a great impression—seems to have been framed on the plan of first describing the eloquence of Dr. Beaumont in a general way, and then inquiring what, in Christianity and the Scriptures, was capable of producing, stimulating, and directing that eloquence. The sermon was not published: nothing remains of it but the skeleton; but this happens to be so much more fully articulated than usual, that it is possible to form from it some idea of what was acknowledged to have been a very powerful discourse.

The first proposition is, that the influence of the Word of God upon the soul is calculated to open the fountains of true eloquence; the truths of the Word relate to the higher interests of the soul, to the aspiration for immortality, to the communion of the soul with God and the spiritual world. The en-

trance of these truths into the soul creates power; this power springs from certainty and assurance; the affections are quickened; they are a flame, a fire, heated and refined at the same time. Deep and intense religious feeling, sensibility, and emotion were the very soul of Dr. Beaumont's eloquence: the truth of God opened that fountain.

The next thing advanced is, That the objective truth presented to the mind gives the material of true eloquence. We have God exhibited in Christianity, as exercising grace. He is seen enthroned not only in sovereign glory, but in love: He appears not only to reign in heaven and through the universe, but to listen to the prayers of His creatures; not only in rectitude and holiness, but in the pardon of sin, and the diffusion of His Spirit. All the objects brought to view by the Gospel are profoundly moving and exciting.

There are two other divisions. That the Scriptures place us in the midst of human nature in all its phases; and, That the Word of God opens to us the dispensations of God in earth and heaven, and thus naturally inspires eloquence. But, as was too often the case with his sermons, these latter divisions are only indicated, not explained. The remains of this sermon are given as a fair example of the way in which spiritual truth arranged itself in his mind. A great deal has been omitted, because there is a great deal of repetition in the sketch itself—as there is in the writings of all great spiritual teachers; delighted retracings

of the subject, restatements of the argument under different forms. A great spiritual teacher has more to do than show that he has ability to divide with clearness, and go with dexterity from point to point. He has to dwell on the truth exhibited, to show his own delight therein, to make it evident that he lives in it and is possessed by it. The most clear, precise, and logical of sermons may be none of the best; we do not want to see the cutting of the intellect in the pulpit, but the experience of the soul in the things of God.

It was about this time that failure of sight began to be manifested. Dr. Dixon had been aware of it for at least a year before, but concealed it from his family. The present writer remembers feeling surprise in the course of the year 1855 at the frequent requests to members of the family to "come and read." The letters from the Crimea in the *Times* were read aloud daily through these requests; but the only thought of the family was that this was because of the public interest attached to them, in which the Doctor was desirous that all should share. But as the year went on the sad truth became apparent. He began to be seen in the evening sitting unoccupied, who used to be continually engaged with books and papers. The failure of sight, the weakening of the visual nerve, grew gradually worse, until in three or four years, his eyes, though clear to outward view of blemish or spot, forgot their art of seeing, and were quenched in total night.

The year 1856 was also one of the most terrible

domestic calamity. On the 12th of April his daughter Sarah Drake expired, after a long and very painful illness, at the age of twenty. She was a young lady of the brightest mental character, exquisite sensibility and sweetness. On the day on which her form was carried to the grave, Mrs. Dixon died suddenly. Her health had long been in an uncertain state ; but her last illness was only a few days in duration, and the fatal termination was a dreadful shock. Mother and daughter were laid in one grave. These events were so dreadful to those concerned with them that the briefest record of them must suffice.

In 1856 Dr. Dixon was appointed to the First Manchester Circuit, in which he had formerly travelled, and took up his residence in Heywood Street, Cheetham Hill Road. Before he left Liverpool his sight became so bad that he was no longer able to read even by daylight ; and he left unfinished the perusal of Prescott's History of Philip II., the last book which he attempted to read. Henceforth he was dependent on others for the supply of food for a mind which continued as strong, active, and eager after knowledge as ever.

Now began that peculiar course of daily life which was continued year after year to the last. Immediately after family prayers in the morning the *Times* was unfolded and read aloud in regular order : first the summary, then the leading articles, then the Foreign Intelligence, then the debates in time of parliamentary session, and so on, until the

whole was exhausted. This occupied the whole morning, and often a part of the afternoon. The members of the family relieved one another at this work, which was heavy enough, but still heavier would it have been to see him sitting in darkness unoccupied. The evening was again taken up by reading, generally some work of history or biography. The doctor sat listening with the closest attention: and often when the reader's mind had long ago wandered from the meaning of the words which he mechanically pronounced, as in the course of some dreary debate or statistical matter it often would, he or she would be startled by some observation which showed how lively an interest was being taken by the listener. This daily routine went on from year to year; it is certain that the *Times* had no such thorough reader in the three kingdoms: it was his world; and yet he never allowed it to influence his opinions, and disagreed with half the articles which were read to him. Many men have their opinions both made and altered by the newspaper which they read.

The loss of sight was borne, as might be expected, with manly fortitude: but the deep depression and melancholy to which he was always constitutionally subject were increased by recent events, and were at times very distressing. He continued, however, to take his full share of circuit work, and, strange to say, still accepted the extraordinary calls that were made upon him, even though they required long journeys. His native

boldness of disposition suffered no diminution ; and for years even after he was totally blind he would travel long distances by rail, often alone. His preaching was for some years as vigorous as ever, and as long as he remained in full work he maintained his great reputation. It is the most extraordinary mental phenomenon that ever fell under the observation of the writer, that he could go on year after year, under these circumstances, making new sermons from texts which he had never used before, and preaching, if not with the fire of former years, yet always impressively, and often with great power. He had been used, when he could see, to draw encouragement and animation from the attentive looks of his hearers, and often said that if he had been told that he could preach without seeing the people, he would not have believed it possible. It was possible, because his preaching from first to last was in reality the communing of his own soul with God and spiritual truth.

Another painful parting happened in the first year of his last Manchester appointment. Two of his sons, Mr. James and Mr. William Bunting Dixon, sailed for Australia. He had no expectation of seeing them again, and in the case of the first-named this was verified. Things of this sort caused to him an agony of feeling which more ordinary natures cannot understand. On this occasion he insisted on going to Liverpool to examine the ship in which his sons were to sail, and chose their berths himself, going up and down the ship's side

with as much boldness as if he had been able to see, and had been a younger man.

In 1857, the year of the Indian mutiny, he preached a sermon in the Stocks Chapel, Manchester, which was published by request, with the title of "The Sword of the Lord in the Indian Crisis." This sermon is devoted to the religious aspect of the Indian question, and displays so much knowledge of the history of the English in India, the establishment and progress of missions, and the nature of the difficulties with which they have to contend, that a returned Anglo-Indian of great intelligence, who happened to meet with it, was led to make particular inquiries after the author, and found it difficult to believe that he had never been in India. It is written in a tone of moderation and piety very different from some of the heated and furious effusions which were called forth by the great struggle which was then proceeding. The English occupation of India has been a terrible affair from first to last.

In 1858 he made his last appearance as a speaker in Exeter Hall, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, Monday, May the 3rd. The hall was crowded to excess, Lord Panmure in the chair. On the appearance of Dr. Dixon on the scene of his old glories, he met with such a reception as was perhaps never given before in that place. He was greatly moved by this overwhelming reception. When he spoke, it was at first in broken observations, but as he went on,

much of his former power seemed to return to him, and he poured forth a harangue on the mission work, especially in India, which was not unworthy of his old days. The concluding sentences were these: "The very greatest measure of enthusiasm that ever glowed within my heart, and if I have ever had any very tender, and very direct, and very ardent friendships,—they have all stood connected with the missionary work. It is the glory of the age.¹ It is the glory of the world. It is great in itself. The interests are profound and mighty. There are things which contain in themselves the elements of general truth, and your missionary societies are of that sort; they are a blessing of themselves, and they contain the elements of all truth and all happiness for mankind."

On Sunday morning, April 10th, 1859, he delivered a sermon on the occasion of the death of an amiable young lady, which was published by request, with the title of "The Pain of the Present, and the Happiness of the Future Life." Singular to say, this discourse, which was printed from dictation, is about the most perfect of all his writings in form and expression. It is a profound and beautiful meditation on death and sin, on life and immortality, abounding in the softest touches and the most tender pathos. It is easy to see here the reflection of his own sorrows, as when he pictures "the robust and self-possessed father," in the midst of scenes of domestic affliction, "feeling within his heart strange emotions of conflict, distress, and

affection, such as the stern and stormy duties of life seemed to have shut up for ever." The breaking-up of life, the advance of age, the letting down of the once busy human creature to nothing, is pictured under the following image. "The past is not only barren and sad, but full of bitter recollections, while the future presents a yawning gulf, dark and desolate. The present at best has but little expanse, and this constantly narrowing—that is, narrowing to a point, a moment, when all is left behind, and the unknown future entered upon. In this state of uncertainty we are like travellers pressing towards a narrow promontory, where beyond is ocean, with the certainty that an irresistible power behind us must ere long plunge us over into the mysterious abyss below."

In 1859 he entered upon his last circuit, the Bradford West Circuit, taking up his residence in Southfield Square. Here he remained the usual term of three years, and then finally retired from the full ministry. His last superintendent was his son-in-law, the Rev. William Jackson, and for three years of his residence in Bradford he was cheered by the presence of that gentleman and of his daughter, Mrs. Jackson. When he became a supernumerary he still remained in Bradford, in another house, which he occupied for ten years to the end of life. The Yorkshire people were kind and genial to him; all that the affection of friends could supply was done to soothe his last years: and a deep debt

of gratitude is felt to many whom it would be invidious to name when all were anxious to lighten the last burden of a beloved father in God. He became indeed the pride of the place, his name and character being known to most who lived there.

On the evening of the 11th of March, 1862, Dr. Dixon delivered a lecture in the Stock Exchange of Leeds, in connection with the Young Men's Christian Institute, which was published under the name of "Recollections of Dr. Adam Clarke." It was somewhat imperfectly reported, or at least it was published without any revision, but it contains some anecdotes and other things which cannot be found elsewhere, and so is of value, considering the eminent character delineated. It also contains several beautiful passages.

"Mothers, when they look upon the face of their infants as they lie upon their laps, do not know very well which will be the most beautiful. After the lapse of years the ugly one may grow up to be very beautiful, and the little rose may fade."

This is in allusion to the homeliness said to have belonged to Dr. Clarke in youth. The lecturer went on to say, "I heard our old friend Henry Moore, one of the greatest Methodist preachers that we ever had, preach Dr. Clarke's funeral sermon. He was describing his first sight of Dr. Clarke, when he came over to this country. The old gentleman could hardly help smiling as he said that he was not like anything in heaven above or in the earth beneath. He was tall, lank, and awkward in his

appearance ; and as to his dress, the old gentleman remarked that it did not belong to any fashion or age.”

In middle life, however, the appearance of that ornament of Methodism and the nation was very different. | “He became one of the finest men that you could imagine. Somewhat tall—about five feet ten—athletic, robust, broad-chested, and having one of the most magnificent heads that any one can imagine. | A forehead broad, lofty, and expansive, with an expression of intelligence and wisdom that could not be mistaken. His figure, his majestic walk, his noble bearing, would have arrested attention even in a crowd.”

Of his industry he says: “Of all the Methodist preachers I ever knew or heard of he was certainly the most hard-working man. When I was in the West of England I used to hear, when he was in the Bristol Circuit, of his riding from such places as Dursley, about twenty miles, to preach, and returning at night, that he might be ready for his work early in the morning ; and however late his duties detained him you always found him very early, from four or five o’clock, in his study, at his great task, writing with untiring energy through the day.”

There is in this lecture a curious anecdote of a young man in the south of Wales, who was actually baptized by the name of John the Baptist, his father having at first desired him to be called by a yet more sacred name. This young man had been per-

sonally known to Dr. Dixon in his own youth. He believed that he had a vocation to preach. "Accordingly he got up into a pulpit, gave out his text, and tried to open his mouth; but it would not open; and John the Baptist skulked down into the pulpit to hide himself from the people."

The description of Dr. Clarke as a preacher is very interesting. The first part of his sermons was usually a long and close argument, the last part an impassioned appeal. Once, when Dr. Dixon heard him, after finishing the argumentative part, he said: "I hang this argument upon one of the grey hairs of my head, and defy anybody to sever it." The last part of his sermons was always the most powerful. "He seemed to concentrate the truth he had been uttering into one focus. His declamation in the latter part of his sermons was overwhelming. I have seen a congregation in one of our large chapels literally subdued by the power and force of his declamation. Some were weeping, some smiling, and some shouting for joy; all in commotion. He had a great heart, and when his heart began to work it stirred his intellect."

After referring to the doctrinal points in which Dr. Clarke at one time differed from the Wesleyan standard, and expressing his belief that he was wrong, he speaks of the unhappy controversy between Clarke and Watson, denying indignantly that there was any personal animosity between them, and concludes thus:—

"These two men, glorious in their day—equally,

I had almost said—now lie just by the side of each other in the quietness of the grave. There is room enough betwixt them to plant the olive, the emblem of peace. I plant it there, and pray that it may grow into a beautiful tree, distilling the fragrance of peace and love among all Christians.”

At the Conference of 1862, Dr. Dixon retired from the full ministry, and became a supernumerary. He had completed exactly fifty years of active service, of uninterrupted circuit work, during which he scarcely had a holiday. Such a career has been seldom accomplished by any even of the noble body of ministers to which he belonged. A few may have exceeded the number of years in which he was in active service; but it may be doubted whether any have been engaged the same length of time entirely in the itinerancy, in down-right circuit work, without pause or respite. He never held an office which stood in the way of the work to which he devoted himself—the preaching of the Gospel as an itinerant. His life was one uniform service; crowned by a jubilee of rest. And when we add the consideration of the numerous occasions on which he was called upon for the utmost efforts of vital energy—a call which he never failed to meet—it must be concluded that few men have ever finished such a course.

His retirement was noticed by the leading Wesleyan journals in very fitting terms. As a sample

the following able criticism may be quoted from the *Methodist Recorder*, of August 8, 1862 :—

“The retirement of the Rev. Dr. Dixon from the full duties of the ministry is an event which has not come upon us unexpectedly. For several years past he has withdrawn more and more from those public services in which he was accustomed in years gone by to take so prominent a part. They who recollect him in his prime, some thirty years ago, are alone able to form an adequate conception of that fervid and lofty eloquence by which, beyond almost any other man of his time, he moved and swayed vast audiences with a power which has never been surpassed. Some of his great Protestant speeches must ever live in the memory of those who heard them. We have noble orators in our own time, but it may be questioned whether any living celebrity could produce effects greater than were produced by Mr. Dixon at City Road and at Great Queen Street, in the early period of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, when the majestic countenance of Richard Watson might have been seen convulsed with emotion, at the same moment when the multitude were carried beyond themselves. Who that was present can forget the scene at Covent Garden Theatre, or the indescribable tumult of applause which followed his declaration that Englishmen would never consent that Victoria should place her diadem at the feet of the Pope of Rome ?

“It is true that as a speaker Dr. Dixon was somewhat uncertain. To elaborate verbal preparation

he was unaccustomed; and it often happened that the slowness and hesitancy of the commencement of his address increased by contrast the overwhelming force and majesty of the close.

“Dr. Dixon’s writings, like those of most men who have attained celebrity as orators, have been far less effective than his oral addresses. His treatise on the constitution of Methodism, though an excellent work, has not been widely read; yet when the substance of it was delivered as an official sermon before the Conference, we remember that he proposed to desist after speaking for nearly two hours, when, so intense had the interest become, the ministers present shouted with one voice, “Go on,” and the preacher continued his discourse to its intended conclusion. He would often make political, and especially military, allusions with surprising effect. He was no hothouse orator, but a noble, commanding, manly speaker. He never repeated himself; and in the feebleness of old age—blind and in heaviness through afflictions—his sermons have possessed a mellowed charm, more touching, if less forcible, than the overpowering, torrent-like fervour of his prime.”

In the December of the year of his retirement a testimonial was presented to Dr. Dixon in the Kirk-gate Morning chapel, by Mr. Henry Mitchell of Bradford, who spoke in the name of the subscribers. Some of the remarks which fell from the Doctor in reply—as reported in the *Bradford Observer*—

rose beyond personal interest, and deserve to be recorded. /“How solemn and impressive,” he said, “were first and last things! \ This was the last thing in his history. There were first things also, which were deeply interesting to himself. He then went at some length into the processes of thought which led to his conversion, and his perplexities about entering the ministry. He long hesitated; yet he could not but remember that, long before religion had entered into his thoughts, when he was a little boy, he used to indulge in preaching to his companions, and was addicted to scribbling sermons; and whenever he was asked what he meant to be, he always used to answer that he meant to be a preacher. But when it came to the point, he felt that being a minister was a solemn charge, and that it would be a dreadful thing if he entered into that work uncalled. He used to think and pray over it constantly. And though urged and entreated by his friends, he would not begin before he was satisfied that he was taking the proper step. He asked God in prayer to give him a sign; and if He had called him to preach the Gospel to intimate the matter to one of the preachers. He thought that a suitable sort of thing. Well, the preachers’ house faced the chapel, and as he was going to the Sunday-school the minister of the day was standing at the door, and asked him to go in, and, when he had got in, he asked him if he had ever thought of preaching. Of course he was confounded, but could not deny it, and said, ‘Yes, I have.’ The good man

gave him counsel and advice. He then determined to try to begin on the very first call; and this call was on the very next Sunday to a village some distance away; and so timid was he, that to escape the gaze of the people he walked fully a mile out of his road. He had often had great difficulties and trials to contend with: he had by night, often on the road-side and in the fields, earnestly besought God to deliver him from them, but he had never had a thought of surrendering the ministry. By clinging to that he had been borne along to the present time; and to his dear young brethren he wished to say that preaching had been the great business of his life, and he had stuck to it.

“As to the difference between old and new Methodism, he said that he thought modern Methodism was both better and worse than old Methodism. There was a great difference as to the preachers. The finest and most noble Christian men he had ever known were the old Methodist preachers; and if they thought him a connecting link with them, they did him great honour, for they were a most noble race. He did not wish to be understood to say that there were no great men among them now. Many of them were great men, but they were much more bigoted than they used to be, and the peculiarities of the old preachers were outdone by the conventionalism of these days. Men used to develop their own minds more in times past than now. There were exceptions to the rule, but, as a general thing, the young preachers of the present day

trusted to their memory too much ; he never liked recitations. In his opinion a man would never be worth anything as a preacher unless he gave play to his passions and the pathetic emotions of his heart ; and they could never do that if they were perpetually reciting what they had previously written. However, he would grant that there was no coming at a scientific conclusion respecting preaching ; everyone must do the best he could—only let them be themselves, and not somebody else.

“As to the destinies of Methodism, he himself had been disappointed. He used to regard it as the Church of the latter days, and think that all the world would eventually become Methodists. He had been disappointed, but not discouraged. If they would only keep faithful to their doctrine—the purest and most Scriptural in the world—together with their religious experience—for the glory of Methodism was experience—he had the deliberate conviction that all would be right in the end. He urged them never to quarrel, either individually or collectively, as a society. / Let them mind their own business, and the time would come, after he had passed away, when they would realize the benefit of such a course. Let them mind their own work, their own classes, and, above all, their own souls.”

CHAPTER XII.

1862-69.

Life in Retirement—The Leeds Jubilee—Letters and Incidents—The “Jottings of the Rev. Joshua Mason”—Anecdotes and Recollections.

ON retiring from the full ministry Dr. Dixon removed to a small house in Lumb Lane, not far from his former residence in Southfield Square; and here he resided to the end of his days.

He did not even yet, however, retire altogether from public life, but for several years continued regularly to take one service on Sunday in one or other of the chapels in the circuit, and occasionally travelled to distant places in fulfilment of invitations to preach or speak. So far was he from being forgotten by the Methodists of England, that they seemed more desirous to hear him the nearer the time came when he should be no more heard.

The daily course pursued during the ten years which still remained was such as has been indicated. The Doctor was generally down about eight in the morning; the long family prayers followed breakfast,—his prayers being always very

beautiful and touching: and then all was ready for the *Times*, the reading of which occupied the greater part of the morning. If the day was at all fine, a walk was taken about midday, and the venerable figure, on appearing in the public streets, seemed known to everybody, was observed with respectful curiosity, and often affectionately greeted. The evening was spent in reading or the converse of friends: for the house soon became a sort of rendezvous, where those who wanted a little political or social talk were made welcome. There was an air of freedom about the place which attracted many. There were several friends who kindly devoted one or two evenings in the week to reading aloud to the Doctor, thus in some degree lightening the somewhat heavy task of the inmates of the house. It may be questioned whether any man ever had so much read aloud to him.

During the greater part of this period of retirement his youngest son, Mr. Joseph Dixon, lived with him. He was greatly cheered and comforted for some time by the presence of his son-in-law, the Rev. William Jackson, who was appointed to the Bradford Circuit, and his daughter, Mrs. Jackson. His last years were soothed by the indefatigable care and attention of his housekeeper, Miss Story, to whom no words can express the obligation of the family.

Soon after his retirement the present writer received the following letter from him (Jan. 7, 1863):—

“I write without having anything to write about. The incidents of my life are very few and meagre, and I find being a gentleman a very monotonous affair. One day is as like another as it is possible to conceive. I sleep as well as I can, get up, eat, drink, and then sleep again; without doing anything, seeing anybody very often, or having any mental exercise, except from the little reading I obtain. The only exception to this daily routine is one Sunday service, which I take when able, and find some pleasure and profit in my old work of preaching the Gospel of the blessed God. In the midst of much confusion and unprofitable thought, some gleams of brighter and better things sometimes come to my mind, and if I could afford to keep an amanuensis, I imagine I could strike off some sermons and other things which might be of some use; but, as the matter now stands, the good and the bad sink together into the same limbo of oblivion. I am, indeed, too much interested in the American struggle, and often hear a voice saying to me, ‘What is that to thee? follow thou me.’ I seem to want to know a variety of things about you. Do you take kindly to your work, or do you chafe and fret like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke? I know of no means by which you can be happy and satisfied except the constant notion and desire of being useful. Happiness comes only in doing whatever Providence appoints us to do with all our heart, and to the glory of His name.”

In October this year (1863) the Jubilee, or fiftieth

year, of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, was celebrated in various parts of the kingdom. It was not forgotten that Dr. Dixon had been as powerful an advocate as that society had ever had, and he was called from his retirement to take part in the proceedings. He preached and spoke at the meetings held in Leeds, Manchester, and Liverpool; then preached at Bollington, and then immediately went up to London—a remarkable achievement for one in his condition.

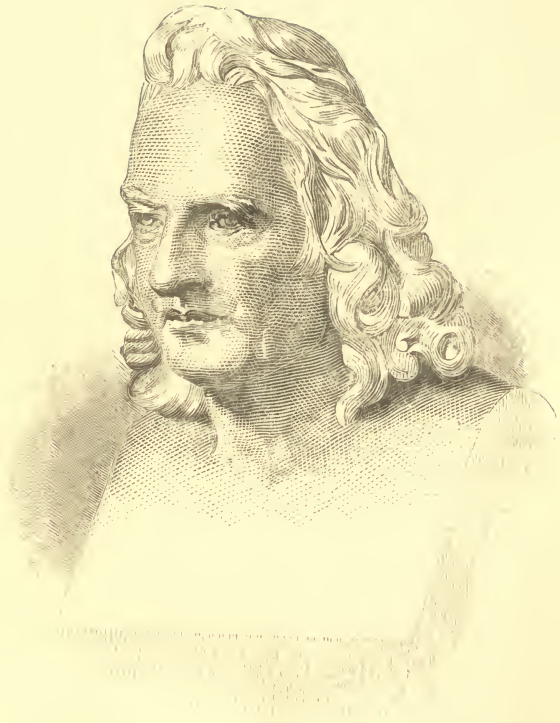
As this Jubilee was the last great public thing in which Dr. Dixon was concerned, it will be proper to give some account of the part he bore in it. Leeds, the cradle of the Missionary Society, was the place where the Jubilee was kept with most solemnity. Sermons were preached by the leading ministers of the day; but the greatest interest was attached to the venerable men who remained as representatives of the society in its foundation and first growth—Mr. Naylor, Mr. Jackson, and Dr. Dixon. The last-named preached in Hanover Chapel on the morning of Sunday, October 4. Of his appearance the following account is from the *Watchman* :—

“Punctually at half-past ten, led by the Rev. Wm. Arthur, Dr. Dixon ascended the pulpit of Hanover Chapel amid the reverent gaze of a loving and intelligent audience. His noble head, white flowing locks, fine features, and somewhat pensive expression, were very striking; and as he felt his way—for ‘those that look out of the window are

darkened'—many a tear started to the eye, and many a heart instinctively exclaimed, 'God bless him!'"

His text was, "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29). The sermon was indirectly meant as a confutation of Isaac Taylor's theory that Methodism was only designed by God to be temporary; and the leading thought was the permanent nature of everything that is Divine. It seems to have been a very characteristic discourse, sometimes solemn, sometimes touched with humour, or that raciness which was peculiar to him; as usual, insisting upon religion, inward spiritual life, as the great requirement, and warning the Methodist people against trusting too much in organism and secondary means. One or two sentences may be quoted. "The history of the Hebrews was the history of God, rather than of a people." "The religion following John Wesley was Christian, it was joyous; a man must be joyous when pardoned; where there was happiness there was excitement, hymns, poetry, hosannas, such as used to be heard in Leeds. People have as much right to give utterance to their joy as melancholy people have to their sorrow."

At the great meeting four days after, he was received "with tumultuous applause, long continued," and made a speech, going back to the beginning of things fifty years before, when a few men with little money, with "straight coats and straight hair," proposed to themselves no less an "object than the conversion of the world." He



pointed out the results which their wonderful faith had achieved; and, looking forward to what might be expected in another fifty years, if the same progress were made, ended thus: "If you take your standing to-day, compared with the standing of our fathers fifty years ago, and make this the basis of your work and operations, I should think you would do a great deal towards the evangelization of all nations in the next fifty years; and at least you have a right to expect great things. But bear this in mind, that when the pear begins to get ripe it rots and falls. Mind that you do not begin to decay. Take care that you do not trust in your money. Take care that you do not trust in your organization and machinery; and take care that you do not trust in your numbers and extended operations. Do not trust in these exterior things. Let us go back to God and our glorious Christian principles, and throw ourselves upon the work of God, as our fathers did, and in that spirit you will assuredly go on and prosper." (Tremendous cheering.) —

In a letter to Mrs. Jackson this same month (29 Oct.) he says: "I have heard Howard Hinton preach a most glorious sermon; towards the end, in a state of great excitement, in reference to the voluntary on the organ after the morning service, he exclaimed that 'the devil had touched the keys, and after his own strenuous efforts to lead the people to God, the effect of this satanic power was to drive away all good.' In a low voice, yet so as to be heard by the people about me, I cried out 'Hear, hear!' Yes,

what with organ, and what with our conventionalities, we shall manage to drive all religion away. P——— preached on Tuesday night, and was followed by a grand musical entertainment with a hundred choral singers. It is said that as many thousands went away as could get into the chapel, where various faintings and uproar of different kinds occurred. O shade of John Wesley!"

This no doubt refers to the practice of some organists of striking up a loud shattering blare at the end of a service, by which the most solemn and pathetic appeals from the pulpit have often been dissipated and nullified.

In November, 1864, a marble bust of Dr. Dixon, executed at the cost of Mrs. Farmer by Mr. Adams Acton, the well-known and gifted sculptor, was presented to the Wesleyan Theological Institution, Didsbury, after being exhibited in the Royal Academy. An engraving, after a drawing made from this beautiful work of art, adorns the present volume. The resolution of the Institution Committee in accepting it was as follows: "That the respectful and most cordial thanks of the Committee be presented to Mrs. Farmer for her munificent gift, and that arrangements be made for placing the bust in such a position in the Institution building as shall best befit a monument which the Committee value alike as a noble and elegant work of art, as a striking and impressive image of their esteemed and honoured friend, and as a graceful and permanent expression of the love of the revered

donor for Wesleyan Methodism, for the Theological Institution, and for the simple, dignified, and mighty preaching of the Gospel, which Dr. Dixon's ministry represents and commends."

The bust now stands in the library of the Wesleyan Institution at Didsbury.

Among the greatest pleasures of his closing years was the occasional visit which he made to his daughter, Mrs. Kendrick, near Wolverhampton. There was a large garden there, and in Bradford he had none. In a letter to the present writer Mrs. Kendrick says: "I look back upon our dear Father's visits here with the greatest pleasure—he always seemed so happy. I often picture him to myself walking in the garden with me or little Harry, enjoying the songs of the birds and the fresh air; or sitting in an easy-chair after dinner with his pipe (Harry playing about his knees), listening to all the amusing little incidents gathered together in my cranium for the occasion, his face lighted up with that beautiful expression of pleasure which I never saw in any other face. It was very affecting to see him feel Harry's head and face each time he came, and little Missy: he said, 'They say she is very pretty, but I shall never see her.' When here our dear father always attended the Church service, and partook of the Sacrament when administered. He was visited by most of the clergy in the neighbourhood. The last time I saw him in Bradford he said it used to be one of his greatest pleasures to visit us."

But in the end of 1864 this happiness was broken in upon by the death of the younger of his grandchildren—"little Missy"—an exquisitely beautiful child. On this occasion he wrote to his daughter (Dec. 29):—

“MY DEAREST ANNIE,—

“I write without having anything to say, except that the deepest and tenderest sympathies of my soul are with you and dear James (Kendrick) in this dreadful hour of trial. It is hardly necessary to say that you must have recourse to God in humble prayer and faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord of life. Dear baby! she will be gathered home like a beautiful flower, to fade no more by the blights of sin or the sufferings of disease. This thought must be your comfort. I know all that you are passing through, having had to endure the same several times, as you know; and I seem to be passing through it again in this instance. If my prayers, or anything else, could have snatched the dear sufferer from the hand of the destroyer, it would have been saved to you. But God is sovereign, and we must submit to His will, seeking grace that we may do it in a Christian spirit. Dear James! I would if I could assuage the agony of his soul, which I know must be inexpressibly great. I beg my most tender and ardent love to you all, and am, my dear and precious Annie,

“Your loving father,

“JAMES DIXON.”

Over the long and beautiful evening of this great man's life a light has been spread by the friendship and veneration of one man, to whom, in conjunction with the rest of his family, the present writer would express his obligation. The Rev. Joshua Mason, at present of Carlisle, was appointed to Bradford in 1864, and from the time of his appointment was a regular and frequent visitor at Dr. Dixon's, acquired his confidence, and made notes or "jottings" of his conversations. These "Jottings about Dr. Dixon," which fill three volumes of manuscript, have been placed unreservedly in the hands of the present writer; and the selections from them, which are now to be made, will be found to constitute a very valuable part of this volume.

"Ever since I have been a Methodist preacher," says Mr. Mason, "I have earnestly wished to be in a circuit with this great man. On being appointed to Bradford West, one of the first things which led me to accept was Dr. Dixon being there. I love and revere great and good men, and certainly I think Dr. Dixon one of the greatest men I ever knew, and one of the best.

We now give a selection from the "Jottings" (quotation marks abolished).

Sept. 3, 1864.—I got to Bradford yesterday, and this evening about seven o'clock called on the Doctor. He was in his easy-chair, wearing a brown slouched sort of wide-awake. After introduction the Doctor began talking. It was a most interest-

ing picture to see the old man stroking his left eyebrow with his finger, as we read to him the account of Gilmore and Jaques visiting Jeff. Davis.

Sept. 12.—I saw the Doctor, still wearing his brown hat. He began discussing *memoriter* preaching. He said, “Richard Watson was always sermonizing; whatever he was writing—making books or doing reviews—he always had some text on hand, and was ready to chat about how it might be treated.”

Sept. 15.—After preaching to-night I went by his own request and had supper with him. It was very affecting to see him at table. He said of Steward’s “Mediatorial Sovereignty” that it was the greatest book of this century; there are most beautiful expositions in it.

Sept. 20.—The Doctor came down to Kirkgate this morning to attend the special meeting to consider the work of God. In speaking he said: “There is no need of despondency as to the work of God, for this reason—that it is His work. God only can save a soul; men are nothing more than the instruments. Wesley’s Journals are next in importance to the Acts of the Apostles. In them we have the history of the great work of God in a condensed form. If you read the Journals you will find that John and Charles Wesley, and many of their fellow-labourers, were as outwardly moral before as they were after their conversion. But when they exercised saving faith in Christ, and experienced the inner change, then they were use-

ful in saving others. The old Methodist preachers were careful about their own experience. It was their deep, heart-felt religion which gave them such power over their fellows. It was the secret of their eloquence. Now, as this experimental religion was at the foundation of Methodism, so it must be the secret of its continuance and progress. A mere official religion will not do. It is often asked, Have we as much power as our predecessors? By power, I suppose, is meant deep emotion. Do you think you can have this with *memoriter* sermons? They leave no room for God to work. If you saw a vessel wrecked, and were about to try and save the drowning people, would you bring out your boat, and give instructions to those drowning from a written document? Why, you dare not venture on a blunder. Do have freedom, and dash out and grapple with the consciences of the people. Power in the pulpit will ever turn upon the preacher's experience. Our modern sermons are often good pieces of composition and very beautiful. I doubt whether we have views so high as they ought to be on the dignity of the ministerial office. The office of a Methodist Superintendent is the most honourable in the world, but it is not what it used to be. What is secular in Methodism is stunning and crushing the spirit. I believe in individualism. When God has a work to do He puts it in the hands of a man, not of a committee. The world must be converted not in a mass, but as individuals, and we must aim at this. I have said that our work rests on experi-

mental religion. I have referred to our forefathers. We get our doctrines from the Word of God. John Wesley never expected any good to be done without preaching at six o'clock in the morning, and preaching Christian perfection."

Oct. 5.—I went in after returning from Girlington. The subject which came up was power in preaching. He observed, "I have lately heard some sermons with power enough in them to convert all the sinners in the chapel, and perhaps there was not one converted, because men would resist; and God would not coerce the human will." —

Then came on talk about speakers, preachers, and books. Burke was but a second-rate speaker, but he was the most splendid speech-writer in the English language. Gladstone's speeches were hazy and full of paradoxes. He described going to hear John Foster. A poor congregation, but the thought of his sermon excited him almost more than anything he ever heard in his life. He also heard Robert Hall; a good, but not one of his great sermons—the congregation miserable. So when he first went to hear Richard Watson. I then mentioned John Howe. "He," said the Doctor, "is the greatest Christian man I ever read." I observed, "There is something so majestic in the gait of John Howe, as he leads one through the fields of truth." The Doctor rejoined, "That is not my figure of him, but rather an angel in the midst of heaven preaching the everlasting Gospel." —

Nov. 15.—I spent several hours with the Doctor

this evening. He was poorly last week, but is much better; indeed, I never found him so fresh and free. I referred to the late F. W. Robertson, of Brighton. The Doctor said, "I was once staying at Brighton a few days with Sir John Ratcliffe, and went to hear Robertson. Some dry stick read part of the prayers, but at length a voice sounded forth from within the communion rails, which startled me and held my attention. There was not much said of him then, but I remarked on reaching home, 'That man is a Christian Socialist.'" I observed that some had put him in the same class with Robert Hall, John Foster, and Archer Butler. He replied, "He was unlike any of them." His son William made some observation about Christians not being always happy. The Doctor rejoined, "My mother wrote to me some time after I was ordained, and said, 'I cannot be happy without the love of Christ; with the love of Christ I cannot be miserable.' Let this, Will," he added, "be fixed in your mind as an aphorism, that nothing can give you happiness except Christ's love. It all comes to this, 'Ye must be born again.'" He spoke again of the narrowness of systems, and said, "There ought to be great landmarks, but the spaces need not be filled up with detail."

Dec. 29.—I called upon the Doctor this evening. He recommended me to begin meeting the children on a Saturday afternoon, and added that he used to do it when younger in the ministry. I spoke of the bust of himself which Mrs. Farmer had just

presented to Didsbury Institution. This led him into the history of Gibson the sculptor. The parents of Gibson had resolved to emigrate to America. They went to Liverpool, where his mother had a dream, and told her husband in the morning that they must not go to America. He got work. They apprenticed their son to a joiner. His genius showed itself. Mr. Francis, Richard Watson, and Mr. Kaye (editor of the *Liverpool Courier*), bought his indentures; they started him in life, and now he is at the head of his profession.

Jan. 25, 1865.—In his talk this evening he said, “There is a priesthood in science, a priesthood in physic, a priesthood in the ministry, and a priesthood in everything; and hence so much jealousy of everybody who is not in the priesthood, no matter what may be his sense and goodness.”

April 14, Good Friday.—I went in between five and six. I said that I felt very low-spirited, and that I envied those who preserved an even state of soul. He replied, “Yes, but such men are commonplace in all their feelings, and never have much joy.” Mr. Hurt came in. Appealing, to me, the Doctor said: “On Sunday morning I walked to Low Moor, and spring was everywhere showing its loveliness, and when the church bells began to ring a merry peal, instead of rejoicing, I could not help weeping. Can you explain that?” I said, “The lines of different emotions run very near together, and association may have much to do with it.”

Mr. Hurt then mentioned Kingsley's having observed that when far out at sea he heard the bells of his native village church. The Doctor said, "Oh, his soul heard that. I once had a servant, the honestest creature who ever lived. She was married from our house to her cousin. He was a plain, quiet, meditative man, full of poetry and goodness. He died awhile ago, and she told me that one afternoon she was beside the fire getting tea, when she heard the most beautiful and unearthly music, and her thought was that John had come back—and no doubt he had: this music lasted for more than twenty minutes. She was a woman with no particle of imagination or fancy—one of the most truthful of creatures."

April 16, Easter Sunday.—This has been a high day. I called upon the Doctor to take him to dine at Mr. M. Rhodes'. There was a large party. The first topic at dinner was the American question. The Doctor said: "I never saw such a shameful exhibition as when the other week the House of Commons went down on its marrow-bones to America. You will soon be hanging upon the tail of America, and Jonathan will use you any way he likes. You are fast getting like the Dutch. They were a noble people once, but what are they now? All they think about is growing tulips, and getting money. There was once a balance of power in England: the Commons and the Lords—the estates of the realm. But the estates of the realm are gone now. Then your manhood suffrage is coming up,

and in a short time your power will be indivisible, and then ruin will come. There is no safe indivisible power but one, and that is God."

At the public meeting at Kirkgate he was very happy. There was great sweetness and power in all he said. The laying of the foundation-stone of Annesley chapel was the subject. He said: "The Puritans called such places meeting-houses; we at first called them preaching-houses. In America they were sometimes called houses of worship. But such places have now for years been called chapels, in imitation of the Church of England. And now you are getting spires, and in a short time you will call them churches. If the Methodist people had money enough they would build a place to rival York Minster." He then sketched the growth of Bradford. It was a mistake to think that trade led to peace; it led to war. "You will make people buy your stuffs."

May 6.—I went in this evening. I mentioned his having preached a sermon awhile since at Kirkgate, which goes in the circuit by the name of the Plank sermon, which other places wanted him to preach again. He said, "I cannot recall it, but the people liked the sermon because they like figures."

I referred to the Conference. He said: "They talk about young men being forward. Why, the first time I went to Conference there was Jabez Bunting of seventeen years' standing as secretary, and Edward Hare about fourteen, assistant secretary."

June 30.—The Doctor said of newspapers, “They are the lying prophets of our times.”

July 7.—He remarked, as he pulled off his slouched hat to take supper, “The three words which grate most on my ears and soul are Machinery, Free Trade, and Reform.” He then gave a picture of what havoc machinery had made in the old English homesteads, and put that side of the question very strongly. I mentioned Richard Winter Hamilton. He said, “Did I ever tell you about meeting him at Hull, and travelling to Leeds with him? He (Hamilton) began talking of style, and I mentioned that I had never given myself much trouble about it, my chief care being to have right thoughts, and leaving words to come of themselves. I said to him, ‘I heard you preach at Wakefield a sort of devil’s sermon, and in it you spoke of Popery, which was then rather in low water, and you said you would not strike even Popery when it was down. Now it is high enough, why don’t you have a tilt at it?’ He laughed and returned, ‘The last time I heard you was in Manchester, when you were giving your lectures on Popery. Some time after your people wrote to ask me to preach in the same chapel. In my answer I said, ‘The last time I was in your chapel I heard Dixon preach; when he had been preaching two hours I had to leave, and for anything I know he is preaching there now.’”

*Free
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Sept. 4.—He spoke of Edward Irving; he had once attended one of Irving’s early morning prayer-

meetings. He said it was the most awful and sacred meeting he was ever in. He described the wonderful figure of Irving entering and kneeling in prayer. The subject of his prayer, and of all the rest, was holiness—they all prayed for the increase of holiness. He had sometimes thought of writing an account of that prayer-meeting. Four of them went; they did not speak for a long time after leaving. The Doctor was the first who broke the silence, "If those people had our Methodist Class Meetings and Love Feasts, and our doctrine of Perfect Love, they would be saved from all extravagance." Mr. Watson said of Irving that he was a far greater man than Chalmers.

He heard Irving make such an appeal to sinners, in one of his sermons, as he never heard from any other man. The last time he saw Irving in the street, opposite the Angel, Islington, his majestic person seemed shattered, he was become an old broken man, and his stature seemed to have shrunk many inches.

Nov. 24.—He had been reading Dr. Steadman's Life; but had left off reading the lives of dissenting ministers. They made him miserable. They left their mark upon some place, but he had left no mark anywhere. No Methodist preacher had left a mark on Bradford West, although it has had some of our greatest men. "But," said he, "I owe my all to Methodism by the grace of God. A Methodist preacher cannot be anything else." He spoke of Joseph Benson's power in preaching. He gave him

the idea of St. Paul more than any man. He had a weak voice, and when excited used to hiss and squeak. "But O what glorious preaching it was!" Charles Wesley, Henry Moore told him, was sometimes very dull and commonplace in the pulpit, but when he was inspired he was sublime. Henry Moore also said that John Fletcher was a tall bony Swiss, and never lost the French accent. Jabez Bunting in his palmy days was powerful, but he often seemed in his application to get into a passion—hence there was not tenderness enough. Robert Young was a powerful preacher. He could manage men.

Dec. 26.—In chatting after the quarter-day dinner, he said: "There can be no right views of human nature which do not centre in the fall of man; no right views of redemption which do not centre in atonement by the blood of Christ; no right views of Christian experience which do not centre in faith; no right views of holiness which do not centre in regeneration."

Feb. 2, 1866.—He was full of good talk. A business man was there, who observed: "The money market is very uncertain; we shall have a panic ere long." The Doctor replied, "I know you will laugh at me, but I tell you Free Trade will ruin this country; it will lead to overdoing things so that ruin must follow." Speaking about the meeting of Parliament he proceeded: "I am beginning to hate parliamentary government. I want a king of men. In America yonder there is Johnson carrying on

a most righteous policy in the reconstruction of the South, and in other ways, with a majority of the House against him. My friend Bismarck is doing the same in Prussia. And the Emperor of the French snaps his fingers at his government. But our Parliament is the tool of a parcel of Whigs. This has been the case pretty much since 1688, except during the reign of good old George the Third, and he fought against it. These Whigs talk about enfranchising the working classes. They care nothing about the working classes. All they want and wish is to keep in power. I am come to this,—that in the choice of evils, and to break up this unprincipled Whiggery, I am inclined to say, Let us have Universal Suffrage. As to John Bright, he is king of England; and he has his three Brightites in the Government,—Goschen, Gibson, and Gladstone.”

March 31.—He was very cheerful. He had been to church on the Fast Day. We were in one mind as to the tediousness of the service, and also as to the incalculable good which that service had done in this country. Speaking of the use of the Church Service in our chapels, he said that he had an argument in favour of it. In the Warrenite times we had five chapels in Liverpool. In two of them the prayers were used, in three not. The former remained faithful, the latter were rent to pieces.

May 22.—The death of George Steward had affected him. In some respects, he said, he was the greatest man he ever knew. His powers had not

been cramped or trammelled, and he was constantly adding to his stores of knowledge. His mind was marked by growth. He had a loving heart.

June 5.—Talking to him about some of our people being involved in bank failures, he said, “ I think the Lord has not quite given us up ; He is knocking our rich men about like ninepins.” In speaking of the Scottish members of parliament he remarked that they were always after the baubees. Pitt brought Henry Dundas to the Board of Control about 1780, and that gave to the Scotsmen the Indian appointments. The Scots were then Tories to a man. Harris took care to fill every station in India with his countrymen, if he could ; and since then India had been a sort of Scots’ colony. Now all the Scots M.P.s were Liberals to a man.

June 18.—Speaking of the Reform Bill, he remarked, in his own way: “ It is contemptible, in the presence of what is now taking place in Europe, to see men tinkering at our Constitution. One would feel otherwise about it if great men had the thing in hand, but it is abominable to see it nibbled to bits by rats.”

Sept. 22.—Speaking of a Church minister of his acquaintance, who lived near Liverpool, he observed : “ He once said to me, ‘ You Methodists are in danger of getting wrong as to your ministry. The great question with you used to be the spiritual, and you attracted to yourselves not only good but often great men, from your peculiarity and excellence in that. But now you go for learning ; and in this you can-

not compete with other churches, which have aimed at this all along, and you will fail; while with this will be the still greater failure of lowering your spiritual standard.” He then spoke of the Hohenzollern family as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of families. “God is using them to scourge Romanism in the west and east of Europe.”

Oct. 4.—Of Archbishop Manning’s pastoral as to the temporal power of the Pope, he said it was one of the most fearless, candid, able documents ever issued, and would have filled England with excitement twenty-five years ago, but there was no earnestness now.

Oct. 15.—We had our District Meeting at Manningham. After the reading of the Conference address the Doctor was called upon to speak. He was most happy. “As to some point in the address concerning what is needed, I think our great need is more of the grace of God. The danger is, when there is something wrong in a church, to begin to improve it by more human appliances. This has been the bane of the Church in all ages. If I have done wrong, grieved God, what am I to do? Wrap myself in swaddling-clothes? No; I must seek pardon and grace through the blood of Jesus. And this is what a church should do. No doubt you have a fine organization—perhaps the finest in the world. If you trust to it you will have it fall to pieces in your hand. If we go to God in earnest prayer He will give us His presence, His power, His blessing. I doubt very much we have the world

among us. The Methodist people are the most talking set in the world. The special service that we need is, that every Methodist should hold his tongue for a week, and give himself to prayer, to reading, and communion with God. He would be a better and wiser man for it. Silence leads to stability and growth. Let us work and pray. Some of you may say, What can I do? Why, speak a word to your neighbour about Christ, and you may save a soul." It was a grand sight to see him, with his fine face, flowing hair, and stick in hand, talking as to his children.

Oct. 27.—I spoke to him of some one having told me that he had been converted under the ministry of Dr. Dixon. He remarked: "One does hear of these cases from time to time. Some one sent me an American paper awhile since. It contained the obituary of a woman in Cincinnati, who was converted in the year after my ordination, when I was in Cardiff. A very interesting case of this kind occurred when I was in Manchester. I preached in Irwell Street one morning, and a man, his wife, and a number of children waited for me in the aisle. The man took me by the hand and said, 'I was converted when you were at Gibraltar.' His wife said, 'You were the first Protestant minister I ever heard. I had been a Catholic. You were the means of my conversion. We got married, and these children are ours.'" He spoke of the waste of time in so many of the preachers going to the same meetings. "It is always a principle with me to

apply as much strength to a thing as is needed, and no more."

Oct. 28. *Lord's Day*.—Heard the Doctor at Manningham. He prayed with great fervour and feeling. He seemed languid and poorly, but improved as he went on. His subject was the death of Stephen. "There are two points for consideration; first, the circumstances of the death of Stephen; secondly, the death itself: the circumstances of Stephen's death are three—he saw the heavens opened; he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God: and, thirdly, the transforming effect of these things upon Stephen. He saw the heavens opened. The great objects of knowledge, of worship, of love, are hidden from us. God cannot be seen. The incarnate Son of God is no longer visible. The Spirit is hidden from mortal view; so are the angels. Our sainted friends are not with us now. We hear not their voices. The spiritual world is concealed. The spiritual world seems to me an emanation from God, as the day, with its warmth and light, is an emanation from the bosom of the sun—a corollary of the Deity. Eternal life is also an emanation from God, who has eternal life in Himself, of which the eternal life of the saints is an emanation. A dark veil separates all these things from us—a thick incrustation of sense. But Stephen saw heaven opened. In a kind of vision, yet a vision of what was real, a pictorial representation was granted to him. Is there anything analogous to this permitted

to us? Yes, for faith is the evidence of things not seen. We can by faith see, hear, apprehend. Second, he saw the glory of God. No form of similitude, but glory. The *Shekinah*, or symbol of the Divine presence, was seen of Moses in the burning bush, in the cloudy pillar; it was seen over the mercy-seat by Isaiah, by Ezekiel, and Daniel. In the New Testament do we ever read of that glory? I humbly think that the star, as it was called, which guided the wise men to Bethlehem, was the *Shekinah*. It afterwards was connected with the person of Jesus, as in the transfiguration. Stephen saw this glory when he saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God. A good woman, when dying, said to her husband, 'When I think of God I am bewildered, and so when I think of heaven; but when I think of Jesus I am at rest, and on getting to heaven I will go to His feet, and fall down, and worship Him.' Third, the effect of this was transfiguring. He was filled with the Holy Ghost; his face shone like the face of an angel—perhaps as the face of Moses shone. Now is there anything of this sort produced upon the soul in these days by the contemplation of the great truths of the Gospel? I do not say that the features will be altered; but in some cases they may. When a physiognomist said that the face of Socrates was bad, the philosopher said that his opinion was right, but that philosophy had changed his soul. Certainly religion changes the soul, and proofs of this will be seen, if not in the features, yet in the life. Then as to the

death of Stephen. It was a death of calmness. They gnashed their teeth at him. The stones were hurled thick and fast. He was sublimely calm. It was a death of prayer. What love was there in that spirit! He is said to have fallen asleep. Stephen sleeps on. The seasons have changed, empires have risen and fallen, but Stephen sleeps on. A little while longer, and I shall sleep, and you also will sleep—sleep till the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised.”

Nov. 10, Saturday night.—I never knew the Doctor finer in head and heart. Talking of the Pope he said: “It seems to me not unlikely for him to come to England; and it may be that you will want him, or somebody else, to represent any faith at all. As to his temporal power ceasing, when it does he will be all the mightier spiritually.”

Nov. 16, Friday.—I accompanied the Doctor to the opening of Annesley chapel. He was exceedingly nervous and excited. The sermon he preached was for comprehensiveness perhaps the very greatest I ever heard. It took him an hour and forty minutes, and the latter part of his subject he barely sketched. This for a man hastening towards eighty years of age! The sermon was founded on Acts v. 24, “They doubted of them whereunto this would grow”: the subject, the growth of Christianity through the continual presence of God. One passage was as follows: “We are often in doubt and trepidation about outward things. Let us look above. Look to your King! Atheism may blaspheme.”

Polytheism may multiply its lords and gods. These things cannot shake the throne of God. The waves and billows spend themselves upon the sands, or break harmlessly against the everlasting rocks. So these things must spend themselves in vain at the foot of the throne of our Redeemer."

Nov. 22.—I had an hour with the good Doctor. He said, "There is a mistake about the covenants of God, as if they were matters of mutual agreement, as between men. God's covenants are gifts. God gave the earth to Noah." —

Dec. 15.—I paid my weekly visit to the Doctor this evening. He fell to talking in his best style. "You talk about the objective and subjective in religion. Well, Methodism used to be distinguished for both these. George Whitefield was an objective preacher. He made everything he spoke about move, breathe, speak, in the presence of his hearers. John Wesley was a subjective preacher. He got into the souls of his hearers, and he had the power of multiplying himself in some way, and putting himself into twenty thousand people at once. You have something of the same represented in William Dawson and Jabez Bunting. The latter was the mightiest subjective preacher I ever heard. He used to make me miserable at times. Methodism used to have a great deal more of the objective than it has now; hence its frequent revivals and raptures. When a few people met together they were always singing. It is not so now; and there has been a corresponding decrease in the intensity of the sub-

jective. Each of Wesley's standard sermons is a perfect instrument, part answering to part, to be used for a given purpose, and exactly answering the end. They are perfect specimens of religious logic."

Dec. 28.—I called to see him this evening. He took fire when I mentioned Ricasoli's Letter to the Romish bishops. "The Papists will jump at it. Only let the Romish Church be free to do as she likes independently of the State, and it does not take much sagacity to see that, she being the stronger, the weaker, that is the State, will go to the wall. If the sects opposed to Popery in Italy were numerous, there might be some hope; but they are not, and she will have it pretty much her own way."

Mr. Mason's recollections of Dr. Dixon go on over the year 1867, to the time when he himself left Bradford. It will be seen moreover that he returned to Bradford afterwards once or twice, and saw the Doctor. He also went to Castle Donington, King's Mills, and Kegworth, the scenes of Dr. Dixon's early life, and gathered some interesting information, part of which has been used in this work; but one or two particulars may be added in their place here. The writer will then conclude this chapter with a few anecdotes gathered from others; and in the next go on to relate the closing scenes of the life of his Father.

MR. MASON'S JOTTINGS CONTINUED.

Feb. 2, 1867.—I spoke of Mr. Coate having died amid visions of angels. He said: "I wonder whether such things are real. At times I have something of the sort, not in dreams but in visions, and I find myself talking with Thomas Jackson and William Bunting and others. And the other night I heard the most beautiful music, and it seemed to come from the skies, and yet was all around me." Something was said about vows. He proceeded: "I never make vows; I try to follow the Divine leadings, and endeavour to act without vowing to do so. Many people vow as a kind of sop for a troubled conscience, but nothing comes of it but sin." He then turned to speak on politics. "Disraeli, taking him in what he was and is, I regard as one of the most remarkable men of any age. . . . When I was a youth of fourteen I used to get to see a paper in which the parliamentary debates were reported, and I read them with great interest, and so was made a politician. Pitt has ever been my great model man as a statesman. England never had his equal. They talk about his having left us the national debt; England would not have had an existence without him."

Just as I was leaving, in a drenching rain, S— came to the door, without shirt or stockings, and everything he had on not worth sixpence. He was once a Home Missionary Minister here, and used to visit the Doctor every Wednesday. I never saw

any one so fallen—fallen by pride and drink. The Doctor spoke to the poor fallen fellow in a way that moved him and all of us to tears, exhorting him, pleading with him to give up drink, to abandon all sin, and turn to Christ. If S—— tried to fence and divert him, the Doctor still kept appealing to him, and closed in something like these words: “I beseech you to give up your bad ways, or worse must come of it very soon. I *command* you in the name of the Lord to seek salvation.” Overcome himself, he then shook hands with the poor creature and left the room. I shall never forget that scene as long as I live.

Feb. 23.—I said, “Doctor, don’t you think the Methodist pulpit gives as certain a sound as ever it did?” He replied, “The distinctive teaching of our doctrines is not so marked as it was. Years ago, when people of other churches wanted to get special good to their souls, they would seek out a Methodist chapel; they do no such thing now.” The Reform question came up; he said, “Democracy is the most universal and sweeping form of despotism. We have been reading an account of the Long Parliament, and even that shows what despotism there is in democracy. What is now doing in America is another proof.”

March 16.—I read him an anti-papal letter from the *Daily Telegraph*. He said, “Protestantism as it exists in words is not to be argued down; but as it exists in fact, what can be made of it? It is in these days only a rope of sand, without

consistency or strength. Popery is consistent and strong, and nationally we are at this moment more Popish than Protestant. When I used to preach and lecture against Popery, I always urged that the right means and the only means to be used against it were spiritual and moral; and I think so still."

"There is no church organization suited to all races. The Gospel is narrowed by organization." He was in rather a low key.

"I sit here in my blindness, and as they read parts of the Bible to me, the words seem to me as if they were raised and luminous. . . .

"Dwelling much as I do alone, I have been enabled to obtain views of God such as I never before had: God in His unity, in His fulness of Divine perfection; God in the Trinity of Persons, in the relation of the Persons to Each Other, and also in Their relation to the world and to me in the mediatorial scheme. Then as to original sin, I never saw its extent and loathsomeness as I have done in this arm-chair. And these two extreme points—the holy God and the fallen state of man—have prepared me to see the redemption wrought out by Christ, and to realize it in its imputative aspects. And here I trust. On this ground alone I look for the mercy of God and hope to enter heaven."

May 25.—He said: "I never was in France, and I never wanted to go, nor should I now if I were able. The people are not of my sort. We have been reading about the Haldanes. They were good

men, but so narrow! They never make any reference to us: and they assume that they originated itinerancy, whereas we had been doing that work in Scotland forty years before they started.

“I have been musing about the Evangelical party in the Church of England. They had the Milners, the Newtons, the Cecils, the Simeons, the Scotts, and others: those were strong men. But now they are weak, and only weak. And the Church is torn with semi-infidelity and Anglican Popery, and what the end will be I cannot tell.”

June 15.—(A conversation on Methodism, among other things.) “When I first went to London the Preachers’ Breakfast Meetings did not require men to review what was going on in each of their circuits, but when I went the second time this was established. It was Jabez Bunting who brought that in, and he thus became Superintendent of all London. The more I think of that man, and the further I get from him, the more I am impressed with his greatness. The Methodist Conference has not been a debating place. The men gave ‘deliverances,’ as Mr. Percival Bunting calls them: and Dr. Bunting began to do it early, as all men must do, who are to make anything out. Dr. Bunting combined a twofold talent to such an extent as I never saw in any other man,—the analytic and synthetic. He would hear all that could be said on a question, and then get up and put together all the points of agreement, and discord became harmony. I never saw him to more advantage than at the pre-

paratory committees held before we entered on our day-school movement. He was always on his guard.

June 22.—Saturday night. I saw the Doctor. He went on Wednesday to Sheffield to preach at the opening of a chapel, fell down a staircase, and sprained his wrist. He took the service nevertheless.

He began talking politics. "As certain as this is a nation our downfall is coming. The Irish Church will go first; the English Church will follow. After that the House of Lords; and the Crown will go next." His arm being in a sling he could not help himself, and seemed put out. He said, "I have been always used to do everything for myself, and now I cannot do it. Oh, that the Lord would save me, and prepare me to enter upon the greater ages!" He afterwards became more cheerful.

[The accident of which Mr. Mason speaks turned out a long and painful affair. The following account of the way in which it happened is given by Mr. Smith of Sheffield, in whose house he was staying at the time. "Our last opportunity of hearing Dr. Dixon was an affecting one. It was the opening of the Wesley chapel, Fullwood Road. An hour before the service the venerable doctor ventured, against admonition, to descend unassisted from his room, and, losing his balance, slipped down, and was found at the bottom of a short flight of stairs helpless, having suffered a severe

sprain. Notwithstanding this painful occurrence, Dr. Dixon was seen at the appointed hour being gently led along the aisle of Wesley chapel. He was in pain and exhaustion. Intense sympathy was evinced by a large congregation, whose profound attention enabled them to hear a sermon delivered in extreme feebleness of voice, but which was as clear and powerful in stating the grounds of faith in the Divine inspiration of Holy Scripture as any sermon I ever heard.”]

June 29.—He was somewhat better. He said: “The young men cram themselves for these examinations, and when they are done what are they good for? The mind ought to open in the presence of truth like a rose under the sunbeams. As to these reading preachers, they are not preachers at all. The source of preaching lies in a man’s soul, and reading dries it up. I have long observed that a man may denounce sin as he likes in a congregation, and it will be taken patiently, till he begins to show them the remedy and insist on reformation; then the opposition comes out.”

Under date of September, 1869, two years later, Mr. Mason thus writes: “I have seen Dr. Dixon several times since I left Bradford. I saw him the first time after his paralytic seizure in the spring of the year. I was deeply affected. He had to be carried upstairs and down. Still he seemed as thoughtful and keen of intellect as ever. There was great mellowness of soul in him. On coming from Newcastle to Nottingham I called on

him on Sunday evening, August the 29th. He was anxious to hear all about the Conference. He said, "You are a parcel of Radicals. There is no leader amongst you. You do want the old doctor (Bunting) back again; he would put you right."

I spoke of the trial it was for me to change circuits, and he said: "It cannot be a greater trial to you than it was to me. When I was appointed to Wakefield Mr. Atherton was already there, and he went with me to the first band meeting. When it was my turn to speak I said, 'I feel that changing circuits is a sore trial; I cannot feel at home in the midst of strangers, and I have all manner of fears about men and things.' My speech was on that subject, and when I sat down, up got a Yorkshire woman, and at the top of her voice she shouted, 'Glory be to God, I never was afraid of the face of man, and never will be. I was born shouting, and I hope to *dee* shouting.' And so she did." —

Sept. 19, 1870.—Being, on a visit to Bradford, I spent the evening with the Doctor. He chatted freely about various matters, and then turning to the war, he said: "We have passing before our eyes the most wonderful example of the providence of God that has been witnessed for centuries. France will never overshadow Germany again."

April 21, 1871.—I called to bid him good-bye. His heart was full of love to everybody and everything. I can never forget his blessing me in the name of the Lord. He said, "Most likely I shall never see you again on earth, but I may be permitted

to look at you when I am safe at home. We shall meet in heaven."

Mr. Mason spent much time and trouble in making inquiries about the family and early friends of Dr. Dixon. Among his excursions, the following account of a visit to Mr. Joseph Morley, of Kegworth, the first religious correspondent of Dr. Dixon, who still survives, will be read with interest.

May 24, 1871.—I paid a longer visit to Kegworth. On reaching the station we were met by Mr. Joseph Morley, dear Dr. Dixon's first and firmest friend. Joseph Morley was born May 20, 1787, and so is Dr. Dixon's senior by more than a year; about the Doctor's height, and resembling him in looks, but with not so much strength of face. I felt to love him all at once. So calm, thoughtful, good, appearing not more than sixty. We could see Kingston where John Berridge was born, and where James Dixon preached, for Joseph Morley to hear for the first time, on "The captive exile," etc.

June 5, 1871.—I came to Bradford to preach yesterday. I spent this evening with the dear Doctor. I was glad to find him hale and fresh in head and heart. I told him of his old friends in Kegworth, etc. He was in a most happy mood. He spoke of Tyerman's "Life of Wesley," and said, "He makes out that while John Wesley preached entire sanctification he did not enjoy it himself, but I have no doubt he enjoyed it."

Referring to Methodism, he said: "If you go to France, you will find it there. You will find it in

Sweden, in Germany, in Switzerland, in Italy, in Spain, on the coasts of Africa, in Ceylon and continental India, in China, in Australia, in New Zealand, in the chief islands of the Pacific, in the States of America; it counts millions upon millions in Canada and the other British possessions in those quarters;—and all this is the expression of John Wesley's love, of his belief in a universal atonement, and of his zeal to extend the universal Gospel. It seems to me as if there would be no end to the spread of Methodism abroad, but my fears are for Methodism at home, from the strong efforts now made to sunder it entirely from the Church of England, and make it a mere sect, and so destroy its mediatorial position. When the crisis comes, as it will, the best of you will go over to the Church of England, and the rest will turn out Dissenters; and you will gain nothing as a people, but lose everything, by doing that."

Mr. Mason received several letters from Dr. Dixon when at Nottingham, after leaving Bradford. In one, dated Sept. 28, 1869, we find:—

"I have a great interest in Nottingham, as I used to visit it when a young man, walking to it through Clifton Grove, and heard Bramwell, Taylor, and others in the old Halifax Place chapel.

"It is interesting to me, because it was in the Nottingham District Meeting that I was examined before coming out. I heard a sermon by Cuthbert Whiteside, on the text, 'Our sufficiency is of God,' which to this day I consider one of the greatest sermons I ever heard.

“I was then young, vigorous, and very bashful, and stood aghast at what lay before me; but having obtained help of God, I continue to this day. Your town and its environs are about the most beautiful in this country, and its scenery is quite fresh in my mind.”

In March, 1871, he wrote:—

“Having a desire to commune with you this morning, I follow the impulse and direct a line to you. I have been picturing to my fancy the beauties of the scenery around you; old Trent still flowing on softly and gently. Have you been to Donington again? I should like to hear anything that you have met with there, as I still feel a great interest in my old home. If you can go there, give my love to anybody who remembers me; but I suppose nobody remembers the time when I was at home, except my brother John, and James Hardy and his wife, if they are alive.”

Mr. Mason ends his recollections with this observation:—

“For many years Dr. Dixon seems to me not to have studied so much as he meditated. When we study we learn; when we meditate we realize. The blessed Bible was not to him a book of *texts*, and its great truths were not to him a stock-in-trade. The Bible was the Word of God, and its truths were spirit and life to him. He was no pirate of God’s words. In his faith and feeling they became his own. The truths of the Gospel in some men’s hands are like sea-weeds. You see them

swinging and extending, and graceful in every movement, and shot through with most lovely colours; but when taken out of their native element, and hung up to dry, what harsh and common things they seem! Dr. Dixon always kept them in their native element."

Many anecdotes of Dr. Dixon have got about in the world to which he belonged; and some of these may be exaggerated in passing from mouth to mouth. But most of them remain true to the main features of his character, which by this time the reader will have apprehended. The few anecdotes given here are true and unexaggerated.

He knew in Liverpool a gentleman of large property, a famous amateur organist, and a man of princely generosity. Years after this gentleman lost all his money, and went to Australia. Before his departure Dr. Dixon sought him out in Liverpool, and found him sitting alone in a poor lodging. After some conversation Dr. Dixon suddenly took out all the money he had, laid it down, and said, "Now, you are a proud man, and I am a proud man; take this as I give it—proudly." The other long refused, though in dire distress, exclaiming, "I cannot, I cannot. Take it back, Doctor, and my heart thanks you just the same." Dr. Dixon prevailed with him at last, and then rushed from the room, unable to control his own feelings. —

Another gentleman whom he knew in Liverpool was a man of many fine qualities, but somewhat

eccentric; of great impetuosity of temper, and in danger of becoming fatally addicted to the bottle. Dr. Dixon was the only man who had any influence with him, and he ventured to say to him, "You are working the machine at too high a pressure." Those simple words, which would have been endured from no one else, produced an entire change in this gentleman's mode of life. The same day he poured the whole of his splendid cellar, bottle after bottle, down the sink, became a total abstainer, and so remained for about thirty years, when he died. —

A gentleman, in conversation, was maintaining the superiority of women over men. Dr. Dixon replied, "You never hear of a great man without a great mother, and the great man is always greater than his mother in the same qualities." —

In Birmingham, having to baptize a child, the mother privately asked him to say something to her husband, who took very little notice of his children so long as they were little. Dr. Dixon said nothing at the time, but, after baptizing the child, instead of returning it to the mother he took it towards the father, and said, "Here, Brother B——, take this child, and nurse it for the Lord." Away went the mother and the rest of the party into the vestry, leaving the father to carry the child after them.

Talking once with the Rev. John Lomas, his valued friend, he asked, "Do you ever have the headache, Mr. Lomas?" "No," was the reply; "my ideas are light and trivial, and pass over my brain without impressing it; yours are weighty and mas-

sive, and as they go they cause your head to ache." "No," answered the other; "your ideas are smooth, polished, and beautiful; they cause no distress; but mine are rough, angular, unpolished; and as they go over my brain they scrub it."

"He never," says a correspondent, "spoke contemptuously of a younger man's ideas, but put himself on our level for exchange of thought. He could soon prick a wind-bag, but earnestness was sure of sympathy. If you approached him with a sort of awe, you left him with love and regard."

A preacher was once grumbling terribly to him about the loss of time which he suffered in visiting places and staying out at nights in a country circuit. "Why," replied the Doctor, "you carry your brains with you, and I suppose, if you carried a bag, you might take other people's brains with you also."

"The last time I saw him," writes a good-humoured correspondent, "was at a missionary meeting, where he spoke immediately after me. In his own brusque, good-tempered, semi-reproachful way he began by saying, 'What a noise that brother H—— makes!' adding, 'I cannot see him, but he used to be a spare young fellow with a weak voice.' Then he paused long—and witty wickedness seemed to play on his glorious countenance; something else seemed coming; but he passed it see into a bit of a compliment, and spared me. I see his grand head and face just now, and know that I shall never see their like again. Formerly

I knew him something intimately, and it is one of the honours of my life to have known him at all."

Another correspondent, the Rev. Benjamin B. Waddy, says: "That which impressed me most in Dr. Dixon's character was the wonderful combination of manliness and tenderness. He thoroughly enjoyed the society of young people, and loved to draw them out on theological subjects, or on the topics of the day, and to hit them hard for their defective information or crude notions. But he did it in a manner so peculiarly his own that it was impossible to feel hurt by what he said; nay, it was impossible not thoroughly to enjoy and be bettered by it. As a hearer of young ministers he was without his equal in forbearance and charity. When I was associated with him in the ministry, his presence in the congregation was a distress to me at first. But his subsequent words of counsel and encouragement so touched my heart from time to time that fear gave place to love.

"Of his own gifts as a preacher I will not venture to say anything beyond this: that while what may be termed his great efforts were generally successful, my impression always was that they were far surpassed in his ordinary ministry. Some of his village and week-evening sermons were among the most glorious deliverances I ever listened to. I shall ever remember a few such: in the room under Ancoats chapel, at Ulverston, where I had the pleasure of spending a fortnight with him, and

at a village chapel in the Wolverhampton Circuit, where I heard him for the last time. He had a congregation of fifty or sixty people. The remembrance of that service is always a joy to me.

“He was a man by himself. I have never known another who reminded me of him. His intense Protestantism, his quiet deep attachment to Methodism and Methodist preachers, his marvellous appreciation of mission work, his mighty ministry, his most powerful speeches, his habitual use of the purest, strongest, Saxon English, his converse in private, and, as I always thought, his most beautiful and saintly face in the midst of those abundant and matchless silver locks; in these and other things he stood alone. God will, I doubt not, still give us many great and powerful men; some possibly of equal gifts with him for usefulness. But we shall never have another Dr. Dixon.”

A young minister at Bradford, Mr. Woodcock, says: “Two things struck me as the result of my visits to him. First, his profound conviction of the government and providence of God. He was ever marking the progress of changes, the wheelings and re-formation of events. It was an axiom with him, ‘The Lord reigneth.’ Both in conversation and prayer I remarked how he rested in this. Second, his intense solicitude for the welfare of Methodism, and especially for the maintenance of the old simplicity and power. In his soul he was a Methodist of the Methodists: a hater of change for the mere sake of change, and jealous to the last

degree of anything which might impair either the form of doctrine or of discipline received from the fathers.”

“Who of us,” says the same writer, “that were in the habit of dropping in upon him in that snug parlour, furnished with books, and a solid carved oaken sideboard, with a portrait of Richard Watson, his father-in-law, on the wall, can ever forget that easy-chair where the Doctor sat, his pipe lying against the mantelpiece, and the *Times* on the table, and probably also the latest volume of travels, or one of the last published works of divinity. There was the hand tenderly held out, with a gentle yet firm grasp; the inevitable inquiry for ‘news,’ as soon as the ordinary salutations were exchanged, and then the discussion of the leading questions of the day, such as only a great and wise man could pour forth.” . . . “He was young in spirit,” adds the same writer, “to the last, and in sympathy with the world to an astonishing degree. One of his last inquiries on earth was for the summary of the daily journal; and we have heard of an incident which occurred some years ago that illustrates the same trait. He had preached a funeral sermon (in 1856), and was asked to commit it to press, but on the day when the amanuensis arrived to take down the utterance from his lips news had arrived of the rebellion in India, and the Doctor said, ‘I can’t write this with India in a blaze; get me the *Times*.’”

Just about the same time Dr. Dixon sent the fol-

lowing letter to the Rev. Luke Tyerman, the biographer of Wesley, on reading his book, in which he also recalls in a pleasing manner an excursion with Mr. Tyerman in 1847, when he saw in one day some interesting memorials of several great Englishmen. He used often to refer to this as "one of the red-letter days" of his life :—

"MY DEAR BROTHER TYERMAN,—

"I have just finished reading your 'Life of John Wesley,' and earnestly thank you for so valuable a production. I have read all the previous biographies of Mr. Wesley, but yours, like Aaron's rod, swallows up all the rest.

"I had, I supposed, attained a pretty accurate notion of his personal character, but not of his gigantic labours. Your idea seems to be to give your readers an account of those stupendous personal exertions, and you have fully succeeded in the attempt. I am struck with wonder and astonishment at the amount of work accomplished by our great founder, such as is not seen in the life of any other man since apostolic times. It is only necessary to follow your narrative to see at once that your maxim—namely, that his one purpose was to preach the Gospel and bring souls to Christ—was the single object of his life.

"But what strikes me is the steadiness of this purpose : in church or out of church, in preaching-houses or in the open fields, the design was just the same ; and the pertinacity he manifested to the

very end of life shows how deeply he felt the divinity of his call to preach.

“Do you remember our spending a day together at Newton’s (Mansfield Farm) near Uxbridge, when you took me to see Gray’s churchyard and house, his monument standing in a flower-garden, with portions of his poetry on it?—at which time you also showed me the mansion of the Penns, the Admiral and William Penn, the ruins of the castle where Lord Coke lived, and especially the house of Milton, with John Bell sitting therein, at his trade of tailor, who appeared somewhat sulky and taciturn; but when his buxom wife made her appearance, a silver key opened her lips, and she showed us the rooms, few in number, where Milton wrote part of his immortal poem. You also showed me the churchyard where Fleetwood, the son-in-law of Cromwell, was buried.

“This I have always considered one of the red-letter days of my life, and ever since it has been one of my stock stories often told to my friends.

“I hope you will go on with your biographies, and am thankful that you have announced your purpose of giving us Samuel Bardsley, who admitted my grandmother into Society a hundred years ago; and it was one of the glories of her life, often told, that John Wesley gave her a kiss, which practice excited the jealousy of his wife.

“I used to think as you think up to 1849, namely, that Methodism was the most glorious development of the grace and truth of God ever known in

the world; but the horrors of that dreadful time shook my confidence—which, I am thankful to say, your book has very much revived. I hope it is the will of God that Methodism should prosper and fill the world. I have, indeed, no doubt respecting its progress in distant countries; my only fear is lest it should become flat and dead in our own country. Have you ever thought of writing the life of Francis Asbury? I reckon him the second man in Methodist history; and in the extent of his labours, and the variety of incidents connected with them, he is not the second but the first man in our community. There is a grand field for you! A life of Asbury, being almost new in this country, would I am certain be read with great avidity.

“I am, with pleasant recollection of you, and ardent desires for the success of your labours, your affectionate friend and brother,

“JAMES DIXON.”

He had an instinctive aversion to anything pretentious in the character and manner of a minister; and paid marked honour to all that was earnest, sincere, and humble. “His loving mode of doing honour to his colleagues,” says a correspondent, “was sometimes remarkable.” He once had the opportunity of hearing a somewhat celebrated and fluent orator, but preferred to go and hear a plain man who was one of his colleagues. The latter said to him afterwards, “You should not have sat to listen

to me, Doctor; I thought you would certainly have been attracted to another quarter." "I don't like crackers," was the reply; "I like the truth as it comes from lips like yours."

The Rev. Edwin Dixon, the nephew of Dr. Dixon, writes: "There is just one circumstance I will mention. In August, 1862, the year he retired from the active duties of the ministry, he spent some time at Castle Donington. One evening he asked me to take him a walk; he wished to go through some fields at the back of our house. When we got to a certain field he asked in what part we were. I told him, and he then said with deep emotion, 'It was behind that hedge, Edwin, just there,' pointing with his finger, "that I sorrowed for sin, and sought its forgiveness through faith in Christ Jesus.'"

On the first Sunday of the year 1869, almost exactly three years before his death, Dr. Dixon preached his last sermon in the White Abbey chapel, Bradford, from the text, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. xxii. 14.) Not long before, on the occasion of the Watch-night, he said, "I seem to stand like a man in a mighty valley, down which a flood has carried its catastrophe: habitations, men, familiar scenes, have been swept away. I stand almost alone, and everything around is changed, but *above* the same old stars are shining."

CHAPTER XIII.

1869-71.

Letters and Incidents of the last few years of Dr. Dixon's Life—His last Illness, Death, and Burial—Public Testimonies concerning him.

THE letters written by dictation by Dr. Dixon during the last years of his life exhibit his benevolence and sweetness of nature in the fullest maturity : his sagacity and interest in the living world unimpaired : his unalterable faith and piety passing into the calm rapture of sanctity. From these letters the following extracts are given to the reader. They will be found at times to be touched with an indescribable charm of wisdom, gentleness, and love ; and may fitly stand as the last remains of a great and holy man.

To his daughter Eliza he wrote, July, 1866 : " I am low-spirited about everything ; about Reform, about the horrible butchery that is going on upon the Continent, about the iniquitous assaults made upon the farming and landed interests of this country by the insatiable greed and ambition of the mill-owners and commercial classes, and, strange to

say, backed by many insane farmers, who are madly cutting their own throats to give their life blood to their sworn enemies. But besides all this, the Religion of this country gives me the greatest anxiety. There has grown up lately (I don't know whether you have met with it) a fashionable doctrine about the humanity of Christ. I wonder how long these humanitarians will preach the humanity of Christ unconnected with His Divinity, without denying His Divinity itself. I lately heard myself a sermon of this sort, in which we had set before us a human Saviour, a human salvation, and nothing else."

To his grandson, Harry Kendrick, a boy five or six years old, he wrote in February, 1867: "When you go with your grandpapa again to fish in the canal you must mind and bait your hook well, or else you will catch no fish; and take care you don't fall into the water. I am sorry to say that our dog Hector has not improved much in his manners, but comes jumping upon my knee without asking leave, just as if I was a part of the floor on which he runs. I had a letter from your Uncle James in Australia a little while ago, in which he says that little Jimmy, after praying for his grandpapa, said, 'I don't think grandpapa loves me very much, or he would come to see me.' What pleased me in this was that my dear little boy remembered to pray for me; and I must ask you, my dear Harry, to do the same, and pray that God would save me, and fit me for heaven. I have always prayed for

you two or three times a day, that God would make you a good child and a good man." —

To a young minister oppressed with timidity and other difficulties he wrote in 1867: "It would be an ill sign of a right state of mind if, after having been in the ministry only a year or two, you felt no deep heart-searching or embarrassment in preaching. . . . Instead of considering your state of feeling as a disparagement of your mental and spiritual life, I am led to consider it a good sign, inasmuch as it shows that you are anxious to feel the ground on which you tread. I have a thorough conviction that with the mind which God has given you, and the faith and religion that you endeavour to enjoy, this will not be secured without a considerable struggle, and perhaps for a long time to come. | But let me say that you have no ground for discouragement. —

"It seems to me that if you could keep your Divine commission always fresh in your mind, this would greatly assist you. When we are sensible that we are sent by Christ, with the simple purpose of delivering His message, together with the sense of the presence of God, our fears subside, and courage is inspired. | I am glad to hear that you are happy in your country appointment, and equally pleased with the information that you feel as if you were conversing with the people. A writer in the present number of the Magazine gives it as his opinion that this is the perfection of preaching: | and, rightly understood, I fully agree with him.

But to attain to this the mind must be filled with thoughts, ideas, and knowledge; for when the soul is full of truth, and of faith in that truth, it will be perfectly easy to bring out of this treasury things new and old. With regard to your fright in meeting your congregation I hardly know what to say, except that most of us have some bugbear or another, of which we are in constant fear. Wigs and bald heads, when I was young, used to be my bugbear. And there is another propensity of the human mind of a similar nature—namely, that of instinctively turning to a disagreeable object. Now, I will venture to say that your great congregation is always uppermost in your mind; it haunts you in your meditations, in your preparations, and when you ascend the pulpit it frightens you into embarrassment. Think of the fact that this multitude is made up of individuals, not one of whom you would hesitate for a moment to converse with. If you applied your country principle to the town, and talked to your great congregation as you talk to your country congregation, the difficulty would cease. But the truth is, you think it requisite to provide something a little more elaborate for these town sinners than you give to the farmers in the country, under the popular delusion that townfolk possess a more elevated intellect than country people. Put sharp chicanery for intellect, and this would be true; but for common sense and good information farmers are quite equal, if not superior, to your town population. But avaunt all this! You bear

a message from God to these men; and you are not to fear the multitude of faces before you, but to fear the God who is above and in you; and if you act on this principle the stout hearts will tremble before the Word of God, and each one will say to himself apart, 'I am the man: this is for me.'"

"For several years before his paralytic seizure in 1869," writes his daughter, Mrs. Jackson, "Dr. Dixon was in the habit of making frequent visits to the Wesleyan Institution, Didsbury, where his son-in-law, the Rev. William Jackson, was living. In this way he had the opportunity of renewing his intercourse with his friend Dr. Hannah; and in two or three instances the two venerable men, accompanied by one who felt proud of her charge, preached special sermons in the neighbourhood, the one taking the morning, the other the evening service. | For Mrs. Hannah during her long affliction he manifested the utmost sympathy, assuring her that she had a daily interest in his prayers. He greatly enjoyed his visits to Didsbury. Always interested in young life, he was specially so in the young candidates for that ministry in which his own life had been spent.— He delighted to hear the sound of their voices, spoke kindly and respectfully of their preaching, told them of his own early experiences, and when requested by them to preach, gave them sermons full of fatherly counsel. ^ 'I shall never see Didsbury again,' were the words he uttered in a plaintive tone some time after the attack which precluded his leaving home again;

showing how strong had been his interest in the place and its associations."

In 1867 he lost his old friend Dr. Hannah, the Theological Tutor of Didsbury, with whom he had enjoyed this affectionate intercourse. The event made a profound impression upon him. His anxiety was great as soon as he heard of the illness, and he seems to have anticipated the termination before he knew it. To his daughter, Mrs. Jackson, he wrote: "I was persuaded yesterday that the dear Doctor was gone. If you desire to know how I received this conviction I cannot tell, but for some days and nights a weight of anxiety and sympathy, coupled I hope with a spirit of prayer, rested upon my mind; and this weight, I think about noon yesterday, left me, and a persuasion grew upon my mind that our dear friend was gone home. I have always had great admiration for Dr. Hannah, but since I saw so much of him at Didsbury a very ardent love has grown up in my soul, and I seem to have lost from earth another of those dear ones around whom my affections delighted to cling."

He preached in Kirkgate chapel a sermon on the occasion of the death of Dr. Hannah, which was published by the request of the Bradford ministers. It is entitled "A Man Greatly Beloved," and contains some fine biographic strokes; but seems to have been printed from a very imperfect report, not from the dictation of the author, or with his revision.

A somewhat curious incident occurred concerning

this sermon. Just before the time of delivery Dr. Dixon found that both text and sermon had entirely slipped out of his mind, and he feared that he should not be able to preach. Of this circumstance he wrote to his daughter, Mrs. Jackson: "When I got into the vestry both the text and the sermon had entirely left me, so that though the text and context were read to me, I could not apprehend a single word of the sermon, and declared to the people around that it was not the text. Mr. Walker had engaged to give out the hymns and pray, and in this state of entire oblivion I went into the pulpit; the people in the vestry concluded that they would have no sermon. In this state I remained during the giving out of the hymn, when feeling that something must be done by God the Holy Ghost, or I must give it up, I asked Mr. Walker to let me pray, which he did, when, on sitting down after the prayer, the text and the sermon came back to me. I had a similar visitation in Birmingham the last time I was there, at the opening of the chapel, but then I lost myself in the middle of my sermon. I am afraid this is an indication of what will take place permanently, which I pray God in His mercy to prevent by taking me to Himself."

The same thing happened afterwards in Man-ningham; but these were the only occasions on which he ever showed any weakness of memory or of any other faculty.

Another painful bereavement fell to the lot of

Dr. Dixon in the course of this year. At the beginning of September his son-in-law, Mr. Coulson, of Drax Hall, near Selby, died very suddenly, and his death was followed in a few days by that of his wife Eliza, the daughter of Dr. Dixon. On hearing of the death of Mr. Coulson, Dr. Dixon addressed the following message to Eliza, through his daughter Mary, who was at her sister's side. But Eliza died on the day on which it was written, Sept. 8, and the message never reached her.

“Some events stun the soul, and make us silent before God; this is one of these events. I feel a disposition to silence, but also a feeling that I ought to express my sympathy with Eliza through you. Tell her gently, and as she is able to bear it, that she is very precious to me; that I love her, and have always loved her very dearly, and now have a share in her sufferings. Remind her that she is a child of God, for of that I have no doubt; that her Father in heaven loves her with a constant and eternal love. Tell her that Jesus, in whom she has believed, is almighty to save, and by His perfect merit and righteousness secures to her a title to eternal life, which cannot be shaken or cancelled by any calamity of life. Tell her also that the Holy Ghost, the Divine Comforter, by whose teaching she has been enlightened, and by whose energy she has been regenerated, is still with her, and in her, and will supply her with all needful grace in this time of sore conflict and trial.”

She to whom this was addressed was a lady of

great sensibility and refinement, of cultivated mind and literary ability. She adorned her profession, during a life of great suffering and many trials, before she was suddenly called away.

To his grandson, Harry Kendrick, he wrote during a time of feeble health, from which he afterwards in a measure recovered (May, 1869):—

“Your desire to see me again at Goldthorn is very kind, but I fear I shall not be able to come this summer, or perhaps at any time. If I could get to your house I could no longer walk with you in the garden or up the road, which I must reflect upon as a pleasure for ever gone.

“I am much more likely to go to join dear little Missy in the other world than I am ever again to visit you.

“I suppose by this time you can read your Bible, and I earnestly desire you to do so every day; also pray every day to God that He will bless you with His love, save you from sin, and help you to live a good life. I do not know what you desire to be, but whatever you are it will be a great advantage to you to study geography and history. By the first you will get a knowledge of the surface of the earth, of the different races of men in the world, of the kingdoms and states found in it, and also the manners and religions of the people.

“By history—and especially that of your own country—you will become acquainted with the progress of events, what is called civilization, together with the trade, the wars, and the working of the

several governments of the nations, and you will find that the constitution of your country, now being undermined and destroyed by political rascals, was the most beautiful and perfect system of government ever given by God to man.

“But above all things, my dearest Harry, be a good boy; read your Bible; pray to God for His blessing; and love and obey your parents.”

The following, to the present writer, was written during the same period of weakness (June 2, 1869):—

“Though I have nothing especial to say, yet thinking you desire to know how I am getting on, I think I ought, as far as I can, to tell you. No great change has taken place. With a stick in one hand, and Miss Story’s arm, I can take a few turns in the passage, and, when the weather permits, in the yard.

“This is the extent of my journeys; and I sit from morning to night every day in the arm-chair given me by dear Eliza, of whom I often think with pain and gratitude—pain on account of the manner of her death, and gratitude for the assurance that I feel that she is now happy with God. I have had more intelligent religious conversation with her than with any other person in the world, and she seemed to me to have a more penetrating insight into the dreadful evils and nature of sin on the one side, and the perfection and glories of the redeeming work of Christ on the other, than any other person I ever met with. She was a devout and thorough

believer in the Word of God, and of consequence in those things which are there revealed. She had, moreover, a great and somewhat philosophical notion of the powers and working of the human mind. But she is gone whither I am going, and I hope soon to meet her above.

“I have sometimes a distressing affection of the head, amounting to dizziness, and during its continuance I can scarcely stand or walk. My feelings are peculiar; in fact, I consider myself a dead man, while everything around me seems dead; the people, the nation, the churches, all seem to me working under the sentence of death; and the things which are going on, and the persons who so deeply interest the public mind, all seem to me like mountebanks, men acting on a stage, playing out their harlequin task, and then passing into oblivion.

“I am not fond of talking about my own feelings or state, but I think I may truly say I have a good hope through grace. This hope is not founded on what we call experience, or my life, or preaching, or works; I entirely repudiate all this, being persuaded that imperfection and sin have been mixed up with everything, and that I can never be saved on the basis of imperfection and sin.

“By these considerations I am driven by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, His perfect righteousness imputed to me, and His glorious redemption, expecting a deliverance from evil, from the power of the devil, and from the grave.

“This faith in Christ opens heaven and eternal

life prospectively to my mind. If I understand the Gospel at all, it teaches me that love and grace, and the redemption of Christ, together with the work of the Holy Spirit, are involved in the saving of a soul. We are reading Coleridge's 'Life of Keble,' and I find that he was very unlike most great and intellectual men—that he was a very loveable person."

By the Conference of 1869 an official expression of sympathy was conveyed to Dr. Dixon, to which he responded in the following letter (August 9):—

“MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,—

“I feel deeply grateful, and indeed powerfully affected by the very affectionate expression of sympathy with me in my infirmities, and the approval expressed of my poor and inefficient services by the Conference.

“My condition necessarily causes me to reflect much upon the past. I think with great delight on the men I have known and been connected with in trying to promote the work of God. The recollection of the character and preaching of such men as Mr. Benson, Dr. Clarke, Dr. Bunting, Dr. Newton, and Mr. Watson, with great numbers besides, all gone to their final rest, except one venerated and beloved friend, Thomas Jackson, than whom Methodism has never had a brighter moral character (broken sentence). I meditate with melancholy pleasure on the scenes through which I have

passed in conjunction with these eminent ministers of God, and feel it to be a great consolation to have lived in the time of these great and excellent men.

“To me, now a very old man, and just upon the verge of eternity, it is natural to look with some anxiety on the present and rising race of Wesleyan Methodist preachers. It is in the nature of things that men just leaving the world should feel concerned about those who now occupy, and are to occupy, the place of the departed. My impression is that the preaching of these days is too artistically good; that by reading and committing beautifully composed sermons to memory you get an elegant ministry, captivating perhaps to a few, but without adaptation to the necessities and wants of the multitude, who are as little interested in a fine-wrought essay as they would be in listening to a Latin or Greek oration. If I mistake not, our want at the present moment is that of a heart-stirring, *talking* ministry,—the sermon in the good old Saxon of our country, delivered from the soul, and not from the memory. It is the soul that God inspires, and when one soul speaks to other souls the message is felt, and saving results produced. It strikes me that the world stands in as much need of the simple and primitive doctrines of Christianity, as taught by Methodism, as it ever did, and perhaps in greater need. The distinctive characteristics of our noble standards should be firmly adhered to; the doctrines contained in them are either Divine or not; if they are Divine, then

the nineteenth century and the march of civilization, mental culture and advanced education, can have nothing to do with the question. But to adapt the exercises of the pulpit to these things will and must be a great temptation to young preachers; and as certainly as the refinement in question is adopted as a rule, the doctrines of repentance, justification by faith, the witness of the Spirit, and the perfect love of God, will be either totally abandoned, or refined away into philosophical generalization. Let the old formula of repentance, faith, and holiness be held as a sacred deposit, and the Connexion will be safe; but let it be abandoned for the fashionable modes of thought of the present time, and death must ensue.

“Permit me to remark on another subject, which I own requires delicate handling: but I have no desire to disturb anybody’s equanimity, or infringe on freedom of opinion. The case is this. At the first Conference I attended, in the year 1816 in London, a grave and very interesting discussion arose out of the consideration of Daniel Isaac’s “Ecclesiastical Claims”; in which book he sarcastically, and it was thought injuriously, reflected upon the bishops, the clergy, and the Church of England. All the leading men of the day gave deliverances on the subject, and they were great and good men, and without a dissenting voice maintained that it was our duty and interest to hold our peculiar position firmly, and maintain a friendly bearing toward the Church of England. No pledge was

required, and no resolution entered into on the subject, but that was the opinion and advice of the eminent men of that day. The conversation, which was long and interesting, made a deep impression upon my mind; and, as far as I am able to judge, formed itself into a reason for practice which has governed me all my life long. It was held that there was room enough betwixt the Church and Dissenters for Methodism to occupy a middle position of vast interest and usefulness. All my subsequent reading and reflection has confirmed me in this opinion; and I think it would be a fatal dereliction of duty for us to turn either to the right hand or to the left. But you will be in great danger in the future of diverging from this line, and sinking into a mere dissenting sect. It will be said that the Church is not the same, and that its tendencies are Romeward. This, it is true, is too much the case; and yet it strikes me that it would be a hard thing to abandon the numerous evangelical party in the Church to be crushed and overwhelmed by their enemies, without on our part any sympathy or support. I have some words to say about Ireland and Popery, but the length of this letter precludes me from saying more than that I think something should be done for the support of Methodism in that ill-fated country, now abandoned by the State to the huge establishment of the Popedom. We had one establishment, that of the State, confronting another, that is the Romish establishment, now left to work its will.

“Apologizing for the length of this letter, and begging to express my thanks to you and the Conference for your confidence and love, which I value next to the love of God, believe me, dear Mr. President, your affectionate brother,

“JAMES DIXON.”

Next year a second message was sent to him from the Conference; and it seems proper to give the letter in which he replied (August 1, 1870):—

“MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,—

“I very sincerely thank you and the Conference for the affectionate letter you have addressed to me. To enjoy the regard, to be blessed with the prayers, and supported by the sympathy of brethren to whom I am more attached than to any other men in the world, is to me a great consolation. In my own mind I feel that your good opinion must be much mitigated, and that I must be solely saved as a forgiven sinner by the merit and atonement of my blessed Saviour. I have faith and confidence in Him, and that He will bring me safely through to His eternal kingdom.

“Permit me to make one general remark. It is, that the world stands in as much need of Methodism in its doctrines, its preachings, its class-meetings, its revivalist spirit, as ever, and that nothing existing in what is called the religious world is more, or so well, adapted to meet the exigences of the times

as Methodist preaching and its concomitant services. I regret that I leave the world with the deep impression that the world is no better than when I entered it. Let those who glory in this nineteenth century, in the advancement of civilization, as it is called, and the magnificent developments of intellect, genius, and science, just go to the banks of the Rhine, and see the development of their fine theories there. No: original sin is as deeply seated and as virulent in human nature as ever, and though it may change its hues from black to red, yet the danger and ruin are just the same, showing that the new birth is just as necessary for the men of the nineteenth century as for past generations.

“When I was young I remember the preachers used to preach a great deal about the new birth and its marks and evidences. This powerfully impressed my mind, and the impression has never left me. Since I entered the ministry our temporal and ecclesiastical affairs have very much advanced, for which we have great reason to be thankful to God; but at the same time to be constant in prayer, lest we should be less self-denying, less zealous, and less spiritual than our glorious forefathers were, who had none of these things to lean upon, with only their Bible in their hand and the love of God in their heart. I am much pleased with the accounts I hear read of your proceedings in Conference, and constantly pray that the Holy Spirit may be richly poured out upon you. I am, dear Mr. President, with sincere gratitude and Chris-

tian love, your and the Conference's affectionate brother,

“JAMES DIXON.”

The history of Methodism may, in fact, be divided into two parts according to the prevalence or cessation of what may be called Universalism therein, or the belief that Methodism was destined to convert and occupy the whole world. It is astonishing to find to what an extent this belief prevailed, both at the outset of this great movement and long after. There was much to countenance it from the beginning. In these days of rapidly-checked movements, when everything is run down almost as soon as it has started, we can have little notion of the immense sweep which Methodism took through the nation; the ferment it caused; the rapidity of its growth, and the strength with which it took hold of the people. And perhaps no religious movement in the world has ever been continued with the same power and fidelity as this movement was by the successors of John Wesley for several generations. Many movements are quickly ruined by the incompetency of those who succeed to the originators, but this was not. The belief in the great destiny of Methodism was cherished among the successors of John Wesley with undying fervour; this belief gave rise to the wonderful activity of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, the most active in the world; and to the astonishing progress of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. The

belief in universality has gone far to realize itself; and the wonder is, not that Methodism is not universal, but that it has received the prodigious expansion which it has.

Dr. Dixon saw that the old doctrines were as needful to the world as ever—as much to be enforced as ever: and by whom should they be enforced with fervour and simplicity, if not by that body with whom they remained as the chief inheritance and the most sacred tradition?

In a letter to his old and dear friend and fellow-countryman, Mr. William Litherland, now of Liverpool, he says (August 31, 1870):—"In the midst of the darkness of my own state and the disorders and confusions of the world, I see one bright Object constantly before me,—the Lord Jesus, in His atonement, His righteousness, and intercession. I see, as I sit musing in this chair, that the grace of God has been purely sovereign; that nothing is owing to anything in or of myself, but everything good, from my first call to the present moment, has arisen from the free grace of God. You will say, perhaps, that this is very much like Calvinism: and without saying anything about election and the Divine Decrees, I must confess that I have an increased conviction that all things good are of God. I often think how pleased I should be to dwell under your roof; but that pleasure is now gone for ever, and I trust we shall meet in our Father's house above."

The same train of religious thought is found in a

letter written about the same time to his daughter Mary.

“Many things, some of them very unprofitable, pass through my poor brain; such, for instance, as the past generations of mankind, in their innumerable multitudes, with the question, What has become of them? And then the present, and the future, during an illimitable space of time, with the like question, What will become of them? But in the midst of these perplexing mysteries, and this impenetrable darkness, one Object of knowledge and faith brightly shines,—I mean the Lord Jesus; and the Inspired Word tells me that every knee shall bow to Him, whether they be things in heaven, or things in the earth, or things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

“I hope that I have real faith in Him, and certainly, as far as I can judge, I am looking to Him alone for salvation, and feel that if I ever get to Heaven, it must be as a pardoned sinner, through the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ. In Him I put my entire trust, and wait with tranquillity for the blessed issue. —

“With more or less success I strive to rest in God, and believe I often feel Him with me, as I sit in dear Eliza’s chair, communing with my soul and blessing me with His love.

“But I feel that I want more of that sense of Divine things which the good old Methodists used to possess, and is now enjoyed by the best amongst

us. My sensible impressions are not at all commensurate with the glories of the Gospel and of Heaven."

In a letter to the present writer, October 27, 1870, he said: "I think I have had some new and enlarged discoveries respecting the finished redemption of Christ. I see that when our Lord said upon the cross, 'It is finished,' everything for us was then purchased and made sure, so that in believing in Him we possess a present and eternal salvation. Nothing has ever been added to the merit and perfection of our Lord's work from that to the present time, and our works can add nothing to this perfect redemption; or, properly, do anything in procuring our justification, this being complete in Him, and extending to all the past, the present, and the future."

"I have been thinking lately of the power possessed by the Church and by Dissenters and ourselves, in contrast with each other. The power of the Church, I have concluded, is found in the great learning and scholarship of the clergy, developed in the press; while that of the Dissenting bodies is in the congregation; and that if your preaching was equal to your learning you would carry all before you, and Dissent would be a thing of the past.

"I know not what the Church Congresses will lead to, if anything; but some very good things are said at those meetings occasionally, especially on what they often call 'Church work.' Add good evangelical preaching to this notion of Church work,

and the Church would then be pretty complete. I entertain the idea that the Church is greatly reviving, and that the diversity of agents at work in the different schools of theology and forms of worship are conducive on the whole to the progress of religion. Uniformity must of necessity lead to deadness; when all men thought alike, if such a state of things could exist, a dead level would be the result, and a very low level.

“I feel a good deal of interest in the proceedings of the new Church body in Ireland, and often wonder what the result will be. It will evidently possess great power either for good or evil; I hope it may be for good, though I have little confidence in voluntary societies, as they almost always become little tyrannies.

“This is the ground of my approval of the union of Church and State,—the secular power of the State keeping in check the despotism of the clergy; and I presume this is the reason why a great number of the priesthood of the Church of England sigh for disestablishment, that they may have the absolute rule in their own hands.

“It is somewhat singular that out of the agitations produced by the Reformation not a single voluntary body was originated; Dissent always arising out of State churches. But enough of this; the world will go on in its old course, the different parties struggling for power; but the throne of the Son of God stands secure, and my hope is that by His truth and grace He will bring

men more and more to acknowledge His rights, as expressed in His Divine Word.

“ I feel as if I had lost a little god in the death of Lord Derby, as my mind for many years has turned towards him with a good deal of confidence in the midst of the strange vacillations that have taken place in the world. Many of our great men have tumbled topsy-turvy, but no man in England, nor, I should think, in English history, has made so many somersaults as Gladstone. He has turned on every side, and, as the Mahometan said, his religion must be the best, for he believes in the most.”

With his son James, who had settled in Melbourne, in Australia, he kept up a constant correspondence; and a number of extracts from his later letters have been received, which may now be given.

Oct. 2, 1869.—“ Some people seem to think that the conscience is a sufficient guide; but, as I apprehend, this cannot be the case, as the conscience is in a fallen state, and is just as liable to error without instruction and light from the Word and Spirit of God, as the will is liable to receive any bias from the temptations of sin and the world.

Jan. 10, 1870.—I am persuaded that the class-meeting has been both a conservative and progressive power in Methodism. Conservative, inasmuch as it has tended to the preservation of the piety and spiritual life of the people; and progressive, as it has impelled the people to efforts of usefulness. The Connexion would grow stagnant and dead were it not for this institution.

April 14.—I must say that I have a very poor opinion of things in this country. I fear we have passed the top of the hill, and are now going down on the other side. Everything seems to be struck, as if by some invisible power. The destruction of the Irish Church appears to be but one sign of the decay of Christian faith and the Christian spirit. In politics nothing can swim in the stream but the veriest radicalism, and the destruction of our old policy seems to be the aim and glory of nearly all men.

March 10.—You talk about refined preaching being necessary for these days. How are you to refine on repentance, on faith, on pardon, on holiness of life? or, on the other hand, how are you to refine on sin, its profligacies, its ruin, its danger of eternal death? I dread refined preaching more than anything, and if our cause is ever ruined, it will be by refined preaching.

Oct. 25.—On the twenty-ninth of this month, if I live, I shall be eighty-two years old, and may say, with Jacob to Pharaoh, "Few and evil have been the days of thy servant." On the part of God, indeed, days of infinite forbearance, goodness, and interposition; but on my part full of evil.

The war is going on just in the same way,—the French having much the worst of it. What is coming to the old world I cannot tell: France apparently demolished, the old Pope dispossessed of the temporal power, and Rome occupied by the King of Italy. But in the midst of all these changes and

uncertainties the Bible remains the same, our Saviour remains the same, religion in all its blessings and duties unalterable, and Heaven certain to all believers.

Dec. 18.—(Referring to Fenianism.)—There is such a thing as retributive providence exercised on nations as well as families and individuals; and if I mistake not we are suffering from this cause. You ask how? I answer that, after the Irish Church had been free and independent of Rome from the beginning of Christianity up to about 1176, at that time the Norman conquerors of this country subdued Ireland, and, in conjunction with the Pope, compelled the Irish people, against their own convictions and will, to submit to the domination of Popery as it existed in England; and, from their passionate character, from that time they became intensely Papal. From this intense Popish feeling, fostered by the priesthood, when England became Protestant, an antagonism began between the two religions and countries, which has continued to this day. It is, indeed, said that the priesthood, after having taught hatred and treason for centuries, are now against Fenianism; but only let the evil assume national dimensions, and they will soon array themselves on the side of revolt against this country.

Feb. 15, 1871.—Whether what passes in the night must be classed with dreams I cannot tell; but many strange things take place. Sometimes I am preaching, at other times composing, sometimes

travelling, and then talking with various persons on different things. All this seems to be substance, and not of the nature of a dream. ✓

The Augustan period of Methodist preaching was in the last generation, when Benson, Clarke, Watson, Bunting, and others used to proclaim the glad tidings of the Gospel. Not a single minister in our Connexion seems to make any impression. Methodism can only live by revivalism." ✓

In a letter written to his daughter, Mrs. Cooper, also settled in Melbourne, the following occurs (10th June, 1871):—

"It seems I said a good many years ago, in some speech, that I should live to see Rome the head of a Methodist circuit, and, strange to say, a Methodist preacher is now in Rome, preaching the blessed Gospel, and, I presume, raising a Methodist Society. So my prediction, which some papers have been speaking of, is come to pass." —

The reader will remember the speech in question. He will remember also the letters which were addressed by Dr. Dixon, as a young man, to Mr. Joseph Morley, of Kegworth. In this last year of his life the remembrance of his early friend was brought before him by the inquiries of the Rev. Joshua Mason (mentioned before), and he thus resumed and closed the correspondence for ever (June 12, 1871):—

"MY VERY DEAR AND OLDEST FRIEND,—

"Mr. Mason was here a few days ago, and informed me that he had seen you and held

conversation with you, amongst other things, of our ancient friendship and intercourse with each other.

“From that time to the present I have never forgotten you, and have always felt the warmest affection for you. I think now with great interest on our religious meetings, and plans of self-improvement, and attempts to do good.

“This intercourse was in fact the starting-point with me of self-culture and advancement in knowledge.

“Your life has been one steady, uniform course of happiness and usefulness. My life has had two sides: that which relates to the work of God in public has been clear; but the other side, which relates to domestic and other matters, has been afflictive.

“Amongst other things, my sight began to fail, and for many years I have not been able to distinguish light from darkness. This I find a great privation; so that I have not been able to read or write for the past fourteen or fifteen years, and have had to preach as I could for a great length of time without any assistance from books. But the Lord helped me through, till about two years and a half ago I was seized with a sort of paralytic stroke, and since that time my muscular strength has so failed that I can only walk a short distance by the aid of others.

“But all is well. I strive to believe in the Lord Jesus, who is my salvation, and in whom I trust

for eternal life. I now feel that the eternal world is fast opening before me; and, surrounded by its mysteries, I only see heaven and eternal life in all.

“We shall never meet again, my dear friend, in this world, but I trust and hope we shall meet in a better.

“Mr. Mason told me that Mrs. Morley was still living and pretty well. I remember her when she was a young person, and am thankful to God that He has spared her to you.

“Let me have one more letter from you; it will be a great comfort to me.

“Farewell, my dear friend, till we meet in a brighter world.

“I am your affectionate friend,

“JAMES DIXON.”

This letter might fitly be the last presented to the reader, as it was amongst the last written by Dr. Dixon. But there is another to his daughter Mary, the last received by her, which was written nearer the end, and a passage from which may even more fitly close the series. Reference has been already made to this passage, which relates to his conversion and early days (November 20, 1871).

“I often think, as I sit in this chair, of my early days, the sovereign call of God on Whitsunday, 1807, the sense of pardon He gave me by His blessed Spirit, the ecstatic happiness I felt for twelve months; then the wilderness into which I entered, and in which I have been walking ever since.

“Then my beginning to preach, and the gracious

condescension of God in giving me a sign on the matter, whilst praying under a hedge. My leaving home without a single sermon, and nothing but a few scraps or skeletons; and my dear mother making me a little bag to put them in; my utter ignorance of theology properly so called: but when I saw John Fletcher of Madeley's bag, just such an one as mine, this reconciled me to my mother's bag. You will be able to trace my progress—you will see how crude and limited my knowledge was. Surely I may say, 'Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.'

This brings us near to the shadow of death. The end of Dr. Dixon, though long expected, was somewhat sudden at last. He had recovered from an attack of paralysis which he had in 1869; and, with occasional ailments, seemed in his usual health and spirits, when a malady of an unexpected nature seized him, and he was summoned rapidly away.

A visitor, who saw him in his usual state less than a fortnight before he died, relates that the conversation turned on the eternal world. On being asked in what light he was specially led to regard the mode of existence in a future state; he replied, "I seem to think of it as a *mighty kingdom*, in which Christ appears, and is enthroned among His people." About this time he also often spoke of celestial music which he heard in his sleep; and at the same time his face appeared radiantly happy.

On Saturday, December 23rd, 1871, he was seized with severe pain in the chest, caused by ossification of the valves of the heart, and *angina pectoris*. He suffered dreadfully during that day, but was much better on Sunday. The day following, which was Christmas Day, the pain returned, and also on Tuesday; but on Wednesday he was again better. On Thursday, the 28th of December, he continued free from pain the first part of the day, but at five in the afternoon a dreadful attack came on, which lasted an hour. This returned at nine in the evening, and in a short time after this final seizure he expired.

The fatal termination of this rapid illness was fully expected by himself; though no particular apprehension of danger was expressed by the medical men who attended him.

To the Rev. Samuel Walker, the Superintendent of the circuit, who assiduously visited him, he said on the morning of the day on which he died that he knew that death was at hand. Mr. Walker, who had some medical skill, rallied him on his thoughts, and told him that he would be downstairs in a day or two. "No," replied Dr. Dixon, "it is death; it is death." His memory and every faculty continued unbroken to the very last.

In the course of the last day, during an interval of ease, he spoke of all his children, and made some affectionate and characteristic remark concerning each of them.

Half an hour before his death he asked to have

the summary of the day's news read to him: this was almost his last request, and his son Joseph would have read it, but that he was called out to see some one. The fit of pain then came back, and all was over in about ten minutes from the time that it returned.

Never was there a more noble and dignified end: never was there presented after death a more majestic image of repose. The rapt and blissful expression of that countenance will never be forgotten by any of those who looked upon it.

Miss Story, who attended him in his later years with the affection of a daughter, has furnished the following account of the closing scenes.

“The final illness of the late Rev. Dr. Dixon commenced on Saturday the 23rd of December.

“Feeling rather more feeble than usual he had retired to rest, but was roused by a distressing attack of pain and difficulty of breathing. A physician was immediately sent for, who administered remedies which gave him relief, and he passed a tolerably comfortable night. On Sunday he was composed and free from pain, and enjoyed hearing portions of the Scriptures and Wesley's Hymns. When asked to select something, his answer generally was, ‘Read me some of the words of our Saviour’; and the Gospels formed a large part of our daily reading, Dr. Dixon never tiring of hearing the personal teaching of Christ.

“Monday was Christmas Day. The doctor, after paying him a visit, told us that the disease was

ossification of the valves of the heart, that there was no immediate danger, and perhaps he might continue some months, but that in the end it would prove fatal.

“ Dr. Dixon’s own conviction from the commencement was that it would soon terminate in death, and he wished to know if the doctor really thought he could last a week or a fortnight, and expressed his desire to depart and to be with Christ; adding, ‘ I pray for patience to wait the Lord’s time, but I do want to go home.’ ”

“ His attitude was that of a patient watcher for the final call. Except when the peculiarity of the disease occasioned mental distress as well as bodily anguish, his mind always seemed to be engaged in communion with God, and in peaceful contemplation of the eternal state. Prayer, sometimes audible, was almost constantly on his lips, but he had little desire for conversation, preferring, when able to listen, some of the New Testament or some suitable book read to him.

“ Tuesday he was very restless and unwell until evening. Wednesday morning the doctor pronounced him better, and thought, if there was no relapse, he would be able to come downstairs by Saturday; but before midnight another attack came on, and for an hour his sufferings were very great. To one who was sitting by him he said, ‘ This is hard work.’ He frequently prayed for strength, and for faith and patience to endure to the end. Towards morning, becoming composed and free from pain

he urged his attendant to retire to rest. On reluctance being expressed to leave him awake, he said so sweetly, 'All is right, awake or asleep; either way all is well.'

"On Thursday, the last day of his life, he was, though not able to get up, free from pain, and seemed no worse than usual, till about five o'clock in the afternoon, when he had another dreadful attack of pain. The Rev. S. Walker, who had frequently visited him, and to whom he was much attached, came in, and as soon as the extreme pain had subsided endeavoured to cheer and console him by dwelling on the person and work of our Saviour. The Doctor was not able to converse much, but expressed his faith in Christ, and his confidence in the precious promises. His mind and intellect, wonderfully bright and clear, never doubted or wavered; he only seemed afraid of becoming impatient to be gone.

"His great humility, always strikingly conspicuous, seemed more so towards the close of life. His language was,—

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

During Thursday evening he spoke tenderly of all his absent children, and gave some solemn religious advice to the son sitting in the room with him. Though his family had been apprised of his illness, and were expected daily to arrive, no apprehensions were entertained that the end was near.

“ About eight o'clock he partook of some refreshment, and then requested something to be read, but an attack of pain came on which lasted about half an hour. When it was over those watching by him were just expressing the hope that he would obtain some sleep, when a sudden change passed over his features; though the doctor was sent for at once, before he arrived the summons had come for the patient watcher to his Lord's presence; and so gently did he pass away that those watching every breath scarcely perceived when the last was drawn, and his glorified spirit took its flight to be for ever with his Lord.”

The funeral of Dr. Dixon took place on Wednesday, January the 3rd, 1872, at eleven in the forenoon. It was a public funeral; and every token of honour that could be devised was paid to his memory by the people of Bradford, and by the Wesleyan Methodist body generally. Hundreds of people showed their respect by their presence, and the shops in the neighbourhood were closed. There was a double ceremony—first in the Wesleyan chapel of Manningham, and then in Shipley church, where Dr. Dixon was buried, in deference to his known wish to be buried in an English churchyard.

The procession to the chapel, which was on foot, the distance being very short, was headed by a large number of ministers belonging to the Wesleyan body: the coffin was borne by Alderman Mitchell

Mr. Manoah Rhodes, Mr. James Burnley, Mr. Litherland of Liverpool, Mr. Donkersley, and Mr. Tillotson. The body was followed by the three sons who are in this country,—the Rev. Richard Watson Dixon, Mr. William Bunting Dixon, and Mr. Joseph Drake Dixon ; also by the Rev. William Jackson, son-in-law of the deceased, and the Rev. Edwin Dixon, his nephew. Letters expressing regret at not being able to attend the funeral were received from the Revs. Dr. Osborn (the President of the Conference), J. Lomas, C. Prest, J. Bedford, J. Rattenbury, and others.

As the mourners entered the chapel Mendelssohn's chorale, "To thee, O Lord," was sung. The Rev. S. Walker gave out a hymn and read an appropriate chapter from the New Testament, and the Rev. A. McAulay offered an impressive prayer.

The Rev. John Farrar, the ex-President, then delivered a funeral address, which produced a profound impression on the crowded audience.

He began by quoting from Campbell the lines—

"He is not dead, whose glorious mind
Lifts thine on high :
To live in hearts we leave behind
Is not to die."

"Dr. Dixon's," he continued, "was a glorious mind, and lifted on high the minds of thousands. It was impossible to know him, or to hear him speak in public, without the instant impression, 'This is a man of no ordinary power of intellect.' / He had a wonderful facility of putting the large and lofty

creations of his own soul into the souls of others. He lived in the hearts of a large circle of friends. We can all call up his beautiful presence, so venerable and patriarchal. Thirty years ago it was impressive and commanding. His noble head, indicating high intelligence; his eye, alas! for many years quenched in darkness, then bright and beaming with love, and at the same time searching and piercing; his tones of voice deep, low, but musical, and often tremulous with emotion: a generation must pass away before the Methodists of Bradford will cease to call up to glad remembrance that dignified and venerable figure. . . . Before the sad calamity befel him which made him dependent on the eyes of others, his reading was extensive and varied; he kept well abreast of the times in which he lived; he was well versed in general literature, and in theology he was a master. No one could hear his public discourses without receiving the impression that he was a Christian philosopher, intimately acquainted with God's Word, and familiar with the truths which it revealed. Next to the Bible, whatever had reference to man—to human life, its experiences, its joys, its sufferings—had attractions to him beyond other things.

“It was as a preacher that he was chiefly remarkable, and in his peculiar line he had few equals. His sermons were ordinarily distinguished by profound thought, embodied in forcible and expressive language. Some of his discourses, delivered on great or special occasions, indicated a master, and

cannot soon be forgotten; when his voice became weak and almost inaudible, as the result of age and infirmity, you know how his congregations were accustomed to press as near to the pulpit as possible, and to hang upon his words with intense eagerness, lest any thought should escape. His platform speeches at one time of his life might be called *orations*. They were conspicuous for range of thought, for philosophical breadth, for singular comprehensiveness, for beauty of illustration, and occasionally for withering sarcasm. Thirty or forty years ago Christian Missions to the heathen, Popery, and Slavery were three of the principal topics which kindled up the fire of his eloquence. Many of you have heard his missionary addresses, original, instructive, and effective. He regarded Popery with intense dread and detestation, and denounced its superstitions and idolatries with holy indignation. In the anti-slavery agitation in this country he took an active part, and no one evinced a more intense satisfaction when the blot of slavery was wiped out from our escutcheon. His style was to a great extent extempore. I have no means of knowing his mode of preparing his public discourses, but one naturally received the impression that they were carefully elaborated in his mind and heart, and were then easily embodied in beautiful and appropriate language. I heard him say on one occasion that a Methodist preacher ought to be ready to preach at any time, anywhere, and on any subject. In this utterance he only spoke his own

experience and practice. He was an excellent judge of what preaching ought to be, and was always ready to commend sermons that were simple, plain, and evangelical. A candid and charitable hearer, he employed no measured terms in denouncing affectation, pedantry, and prettiness in the pulpit. He was not a preacher made by rules, and was never trammelled by the strict formality of methodical systems, or found running in any adamantine groove."

Mr. Farrar was succeeded in the pulpit by the Rev. W. B. Pope, Theological Professor, of Didsbury, one of the greatest living speakers of Methodism, who delivered a nobly eloquent address, of which the substance only has been preserved. The more characteristic portions were as follows.

He began by alluding to the mortality of great men which marked that year. When the obituary seemed complete, death had added to it one more name, and, "whatever may be the estimate of the world at large, to us, and to great numbers whom we represent, the name which will close the list,—that of James Dixon,—will be regarded not only as the last, but as the loveliest and the best."

"What riveted my own thought," the speaker proceeded to say, "when I reflected on my subject, was Dr. Dixon's remarkable completeness. Whether viewed in relation to his mental and moral character, or to his life as a man, or to his career as a minister, Dr. Dixon presents a unique and well-marked whole, the full lineaments of which appear distinct

to every observer. In his person, and in his habits, and in his course through life, there was a strong and uniform individuality.

“In the constituents of his nature, as it was originally fashioned, he was complete and entire, lacking nothing. His mind was vigorous and alert, with a creative power, almost amounting to genius, that was like an inexhaustible well within him. It was capable of deep meditative concentration, and yet extremely versatile in its movements. He had withal a fine imagination, and a yet finer fancy; and a natural humour, without which no mental constitution is complete, suffused its light over all the workings of his mind. His faculty of expression was very great; he had an inborn spring of eloquence; his sensibilities were very acute; his passions were strong; he was capable of intense hatred of all that should be hated, and intense love of all that should be loved. He had a strong will, and yet a flexible one; his spirit was resolute, and though sometimes, and to a superficial observer, harsh, was as tender as a woman’s.

“This was what in him nature gave to grace.

“Christianity renewed his nature, and gradually, surely, but not without great struggles, sanctified it. The process of his spiritual education was a long continued strife, signs of which were evident to all who knew him. His strong spirit and impetuous affections required much control. He was not free born either naturally or supernaturally, but at a great cost acquired his freedom. But spiritual free-

dom and strength he did acquire. The Word of God, which he loved, and which dwelt in him richly, gradually moulded his character to completeness. Sharp discipline, sharper than most men know, co-operated with that Word. Like most of God's people, he was led into the wilderness, tempted, and sorely tried, and made perfect through suffering.

“The result was a noble and complete character. The grace did not, as it were, spoil the nature, but sanctified and glorified it. He still retained a stamp and impress of his own: the angles, as some would say, were not all rubbed off; or rather, as we should prefer, the peculiarities of the man, the marks of his identity, were preserved to the end. But all was by grace made symmetrical and lovely to the beholder. Dr. Dixon's life and experiences were complete beyond most men's. He lived through all, or most, of the experiences known to men. Human life could scarcely have taught him more than he learned. Few joys that he did not partake, few sorrows that he did not taste. His term of years was extended much beyond the average allotment, and one calamity, unusual and much dreaded, befel him in later days. But though his sight was taken from him, the lamp of his intellect shone clearly to the last. The characteristics both of his mind and of his heart remained always the same. With the exception of a few lapses of memory, when taxed more severely than it ought to be, he carried his unabated mental energy to the end; conscious of

self, full of remembrances of the past, taking a lively interest in all around, and living out his days in the fullest sense of the word.

“ It was, however, as a Christian minister that he was ‘ known and read of all men.’ And he had most of the qualities that go to constitute an efficient preacher and pastor. He had a converted heart, a profound reverence and love for the person of his Master. He was a cordial believer in revelation, and though a sceptic in the earlier and better sense of the term, always inquiring into the grounds and reasons of things, a sceptic in the later and worse meaning he never was. He began, continued, and ended faithful to the Word of God. With a fair measure of learning he studied and brooded over that Word, and delighted in traversing regions in it too commonly unexplored. If I may be allowed in this almost impromptu manner to make so personal a reference, one of the earliest and most encouraging commendations I remember to have heard was from his lips, when he said of a young preacher that he lived and moved in the Bible. This testimony was peculiarly true of himself. He was also vehemently faithful to the doctrine of the Atonement for human sin, and the dominion of Christ as based upon that Atonement. Some of my earliest and most lasting impressions of the grandeur of these doctrines were received under his ministry. Somewhere, I know not where, and some time, I scarcely know when, I heard him discourse on these subjects in a manner that I can never forget. He

stood for many years between Christ and sinners with a majesty—if the word may be permitted—that was worthy of the Christian ambassador. As a preacher of morality he was eminent. It has been remarked that he was a fine hater of evil, and a generous lover of good. That was always evident in his enforcement of duty. He had a personal scorn of the vices which his religion required him to denounce. He affected no tolerance for the religion that neglected law. He was a faithful preacher of the whole Gospel, true to the doctrines of grace, which are also the doctrines of holiness. Of his pastoral habits it is not within my power to speak. But I know that his sympathy with his fellow-men was intense, much more sensitive and ready to show itself than was generally supposed. He was unsparing in his denunciation of offenders as a class, sometimes tremendous in invective, but the individual transgressor always found him tender, compassionate, and with the heart of a fellow-sinner in him. However reserved, and even austere, he might seem in aspect, or in the tones of his voice, he had that true kindness which suffering and a knowledge of self impart, which no sinner, and no follower of Christ, certainly no Christian pastor, ought ever to forget. This gave to his private converse a very amiable character, and was the source of much that was moving and tender and conciliatory in his long-protracted ministry.

“His ministerial career was rounded and complete. He laboured in all spheres from the lowest

to the highest. In the pulpit, on the platform, through the press, he eloquently and efficiently served his generation and his own religious community. / When most men would have shrunk from / publicity, and retired altogether within themselves, he in his pure love to his old vocation continued to preach and teach. The Gospel had his strength down to its expiring energies.

“But the time of that service which is only Waiting came at last. Dr. Dixon perfectly illustrated the Lord’s similitude, or allegory abridged, of the servant coming in at eventide. After having done the rough work of ploughing the land as a preacher, and feeding the flock as a pastor, he had to gird himself and wait patiently, before he sat down to rest in a better world. / He waited patiently still on the Lord; with the eye of his spirit intently fixed on his Master, and seeking a more full conformity to His image. I have heard it said that he demurred to that petition in the Litany which deprecates sudden death. That he so demurred I could not believe. At any rate he used the postponement and reprieve to his own great advantage. He spent the residue of his days in decently preparing and girding himself to meet the Judge, in meditating much upon his long and various past, and in seeking the last influences of effectual mercy and grace. No one on earth will ever know the secrets of his days and nights of internal communion with his own spirit and his Lord’s. He waited also for our sake: to set an example of patience, to show how

cheerful old age and peculiar infirmities might be made by grace, to hand down to us the traditions of our fathers, to preserve in our memory our obligations to a former age, to bear his testimony against violent changes in the old system that he loved. That testimony he failed not to bear in every possible way, and it will not be forgotten. Coming from one who never lagged behind as a reformer, his protest against reckless innovations in civil and religious matters should have its weight. And he thought that for this, among other final testimonies, his life was so long spared.

“Our friend and father is gone. He is lost to us, but his own gain is great. The form and features that had become so beautiful with age, and all the more beautiful because of their one deficiency, will be seen no more: never more lovely, as they say, than in death, they are already under obliteration, and passing into dust. But the spirit is with Christ, seeing Him in His beauty, encompassed with wonders, and waiting for yet more wonderful wonders to come. Mercy has already sealed the great forgiveness, which has only to be ratified at the Great Day. And he who was, while with us, like one of a few survivors of a past generation, is to be forever with the Lord, who is his, and theirs, and ours.”

At the end of the service in the chapel the coffin was conveyed to the hearse, the coaches were mounted, and the funeral proceeded to Shipley

Church, about two miles from Bradford. The burial service was most impressively read by the Rev. W. Kelly, incumbent of Shipley. A large number of people came from Bradford, and many looked down into the grave on the coffin to read the inscription:—

JAMES DIXON, D.D.,
Died December 28,
AGED 83 YEARS.

Sermons were preached on the occasion of the death of Dr. Dixon in London and many of the large towns. Among these may be mentioned first one which was preached in Manchester and Liverpool by the Rev. W. B. Pope, and afterwards published under the title of "The Law of Perfect Service." In this discourse the thoughts which had been uttered in an almost unpremeditated manner, yet most effectively, on the day of the funeral, were expanded into a complete and beautiful treatise.

In City Road chapel, the scene of many of the former glories of Dr. Dixon, and in Kirkgate chapel, Bradford, one of the scenes of his closing ministry, sermons were preached by the Rev. Charles Prest, accompanied by an excellent delineation of the character of the departed servant of Christ, which was also published.

"He attained to greatness," said Mr. Prest, "in the only true way—by the faithful discharge of each day's duties, however small, and in the ready

adaptation of himself to circumstances as they varied around him. In due time distinction was thrust upon him, and nobly did he bear the burden and fight the battles of his position. He did not disappoint expectation: he was conspicuous when in his vigour among great men. Neither in his personal religion nor in his ministry was truth with him an affair of the intellect only. By his faith he realized the truth in its power and blessedness. It was this which sustained him in the trials of his long life, and which gave that glow to his utterances as an ambassador for Christ, aroused that true eloquence—not *oratory*—which on many distinguished and well remembered occasions caused him to appear like the sun going forth in his strength. It was this soul of godliness, unknown to formal or languid religionists, which blessed his youth, qualified him for the tasks of his manhood, and surrounded him with such a halo of beauty and sanctity in his later life. His was *true preaching*, unlike too much which goes by that name, and which in its cold formality, its laboured and wearisome recitation, is not worthy to be compared with the warmth and freedom of *his* pulpit exercises. There was a majesty in his preaching, not only on those occasions when Methodism was grateful for such a son and for such a representative, but in its usual course. It welled out of the fulness of his strong and well-stored intellect, impelled by the powerful pulsations of his love to God and to man. Can those who were favoured with his pastoral

ministry fail to reflect with pleasure on his week-night sermons, when his spiritual and profound musings took shape in unpremeditated words? when the fidelity and tenderness of the pastor were seen in his sympathising and encouraging applications of truth, alike to the joyous and sorrowful, amid the incidents and changes of this mortal life? Often have I heard our godly, intelligent, and aged people speak in terms of admiration of those services, as not being the least among the glories of his ministry.

“He revelled in the enunciation and display of great principles. Here he was at home. He meddled but little—some would perhaps say too little—with details, and was ever ready to acknowledge his inaptitude for the administration of complex affairs; but he set in motion and supplied with powerful impulses the more practical men around him. His rare faculty of indicating important movements and suggesting comprehensive plans is of high value. Men who are not apt to originate large thoughts nevertheless lay hold of them, when once submitted to their attention, and pursue them with vigour and confidence by methods readily dictated by their aroused interest and practical sagacity.

“In his palmy days he was not only a foremost man in Methodism; but on many stirring public questions—such as Missions, Negro Slavery, Popery, and Education—he was a power in the country. The utterance of his large and statesmanlike views frequently produced a great effect, rousing multi-

tudes at times to enthusiasm. On the subject of Negro Emancipation his speeches, some of which have happily been preserved, will well compare with the best efforts of Buxton, Watson, and others, who in connection with that subject produced the most powerful impression on the public mind."

These sermons were accompanied by a sketch of the life of Dr. Dixon, which was written by his daughter, Mrs. Jackson; and this has been freely used in preparing the present biography. The same sketch appeared in the *Watchman* newspaper.

The *Watchman*, in an article of January 10, said: "We have never seen any man appear so grand as on occasions we have seen Dr. Dixon, in speech, in sentiment, in countenance and attitude, in his whole person, utterance, and manner. He was pre-eminently an individual, an original man. He was truly noble in spirit. To truckle, to oppress, to affect to be anything but what he was, to shine in borrowed goods, to envy or to wrong another,—all such offences as these were abhorrent to his truthful and disinterested character. Then, though a strong and individual man, he was simple, humble, teachable; though stern at times—stern against meanness or malice—and often stern in tone and seeming, he was at heart of a tender spirit. In his early youth he was slow in thought, and not seldom uncouth and ungainly in speech and manner. His visit to Gibraltar fired him with a


hatred to Popery; and on his return the fire which was pent within flamed out in strong and passionate eloquence. He became a famous missionary speaker. Henceforth he was a famous man. He became a great speaker against Slavery; a great speaker and lecturer against Popery; a great and famous preacher, sometimes, indeed, heavy and obscure, but sometimes also powerful, with an eloquence rich in close, deep thought no less than in burning declamation. He is said never to have preached the same sermon twice. Though this is perhaps an exaggeration, it is certain that he very seldom repeated his sermons even in substance, and never verbally. He deeply premeditated, and then gave out, in deliberate, deep, sonorous tones, his strong thoughts.

"In person he was singularly noble. A finer, more luminous face was never seen than his. His head was altogether massive and Jove-like; and the fine, pure white, flowing and curling locks, which festooned his noble head, were an unrivalled feature in his appearance."

In the Minutes of the Conference of 1872 the notice of his death contained the following sentences:—

"Dr. Dixon was extraordinarily effective on the platform, where his robust eloquence, inspired by such themes as the claims of the heathen world and the wrongs of the slave, and having at its command a voice of wonderful compass and delicacy, produced effects upon a far wider public than that of

his own community, which will not soon be forgotten. For a season he was, both in the pulpit and on the platform, one of the most prominent men in Methodism. By degrees he retired, however, from other spheres of public usefulness, and restricted himself to the ministry of the Word. Towards its close that ministry became more practical and tender and searching. His eloquence ceased from the swelling periods and broader effects, and became sententious, racy, and epigrammatic; to the last full of originality and fertility of conception, and rich in that quaint beauty which never fails to enchain the hearer. The pastoral outpourings of his later years were, in their own order, as memorable as the mighty appeals of his middle age."



CHAPTER XIV.

Attempted Sketch of Character.

THE most difficult part yet remains of the task which has devolved upon the present writer—to draw together the various traits of character which have been displayed at large through the preceding biography, and to try to leave upon the reader a strong final impression. This is in some respects more difficult to the writer than it could be to any other. On the one hand, he feels it to be his duty to do full justice to his own convictions—nay, his certain knowledge—of the greatness of Dr. Dixon. On the other hand, there may appear something immodest in a son speaking of his father. But he may urge two pleas to justify the situation in which he finds himself, which will scarcely be rejected by the kindly or the candid. The task of biography has not been sought by him, but has devolved upon him after being at first resigned by other and, it may be, better hands. And he is himself so altogether different and inferior to the great man whom he attempts to delineate, that he is almost able to take the attitude of an independent observer. More-

over, apart from this thing and the other, it is a public duty to say what he feels to be the truth concerning an eminent servant of God.

Let these considerations have their weight with the reader who is willing to peruse the following attempted estimate of the character of the late Dr. Dixon.

It seems necessary, in the first place, to endeavour to point out the more remarkable of the moral qualities possessed by this distinguished man. A high and large moral nature is the condition of true greatness; it is, indeed, an essential part even of great genius, and perhaps makes the difference between ordinary and great genius. It is a gift more rarely bestowed than is commonly supposed, and is perhaps as rare as genius itself. The moral nature of Dr. Dixon was both wide and lofty; his rectitude and honesty were perfect, and were proved in times of great trial; his sympathies were catholic and all-embracing; the strength of his affections and the tenderness of his heart were unbounded. The basis of these moral qualities may be designated by the word which he himself employed,—*harmlessness*. "When I was a youth," he once said to the writer, "I was very harmless." It was impossible for him to cherish resentments, or keep up enmities. He was without guile. There was no such thing as malice or envy in his disposition. But his temper was hasty and violent: he was deeply melancholy: and there was sometimes about him a considerable irritability, and even stormful-

ness, which was never entirely subdued. It was to be taken as part of the impetuous power which on many a great public occasion carried him through vehement strains of impassioned, unpremeditated eloquence, which transported thousands beyond themselves. But he was essentially harmless; all that lay within him was contained within a broad atmosphere of goodness, benevolence, tender and far-reaching sympathy. He was slow in forming his opinions, and, at least in the later part of his life, slow in adopting the opinions of others; but when once he had formed them he held them with immoveable tenacity. He was prone to trust all men, yet he sometimes manifested a kind of suspiciousness; and when his suspicions were really aroused they were laid again with difficulty. This was natural in a disposition so ingenuous as to have an instinctive feeling of its own defencelessness. When once he had felt the ground give way beneath him, he hesitated to trust it again with the full weight of his large and confiding nature. Opposition, when it involved anything of personal dislike or hostility, gave him infinite pain; to witness rough treatment or real severity was excruciating to him: it filled him with horror. Yet his moral courage enabled him to stand out upon questions on which his convictions were deeply engaged in the most unshrinking manner: and he more than once proved himself a fearless and formidable combatant. When great principles were involved, when parties rather than individuals were the objects of attack, then he took

pleasure in exercising his polemical skill; and he mingled in many of the great controversies of his age with no small share of honour and distinction. He took great delight in logomachy, or trials of argument: and it may be questioned whether he was ever fairly beaten at that. He showed surprising quickness in such trials; and occasionally treated his opponent rather roughly—with a sort of sportive sarcasm, which he was more than once greatly surprised to see warmly resented. When this was the case his eagerness for victory immediately subsided, and some gentle expression of consideration banished the grief of the wound. There were vast funds of tenderness in him, and an unspeakable delicacy. His affections settled themselves upon the objects whom nature made dear to him with an overwhelming and almost tremendous intensity.

Religion came upon the nature thus nobly formed and richly endowed. The temple built by God was consecrated to God. There can be no doubt that the great change, which led him into the ministry of the Methodist body, operated in strict and harmonious agreement with the character of his mental constitution. When he was converted, he was a youth in whom all the passions of manhood were developing themselves in their fullest measure and their greatest strength: and yet as pure-minded and modest as it was possible to be. His conversion was a definite thing. He could point to the spot and name the hour at which it occurred. It never faded from his memory. He never throughout his life hesitated to

regard it as a supernatural event, a direct communication from heaven, a call from God. It took place after a mortal agony of mind which lasted for years, in which despair and horror were heaped upon him, so that at times he could hardly endure existence, while at other times his whole mind rose in fierce revolt against the creed which he had received. From all this arose those religious qualities which afterwards distinguished him: his peculiarly profound and dejected views of the nature of original sin, of human helplessness, of the redemption of Christ; and his marvellous enlargement and pathos in treating of those great subjects. His whole mental character was henceforth developed in and by religion. His interest, indeed, in all that concerned human life—in politics, in the commonwealth—continued and grew greater, but his centre was religion. In history, which he studied with vast delight, until his knowledge of it was very great, he read the record of the providence of God; in the struggles of parties and of nations, which he watched with profound attention to the latest day of his life, he saw the unfolding of the eternal and immutable designs of Almighty power and love. It cannot be said that religion gave the first impulse to that education which circumstances placed almost wholly in his own hands—a mind so keen and active would in any case have pushed itself forward in the path of inquiry; but religion supplied him with a basis from which he moved and to which he returned in the pursuit of knowledge. It supplied him also

with an assimilative principle, which made whatever he acquired conducive to the formation of his character.

At the time when he began his ministry he may be pictured to the mind as a young man somewhat thin in face and person, but of great activity and strength: with perceptions as keen as a hawk: very bashful, and somewhat easily depressed: so extremely sensitive to opinion that the least expression of disapprobation strongly affected him, even taking away his appetite for food: anxious for companionship, and yet compelled by his religious convictions and calling to be much alone. He seems in youth to have sought the society of those older than himself: as in age he certainly preferred the society of those who were younger. He was indeed necessarily henceforth cut off from youthful associates, and his life must have been lonely for many years. Loneliness in youth is a great thing. Few can bear it. Those who can may become great. In him it lent its aid to form an outward melancholy which was inwardly full of fire,—a vast enthusiasm, a habit of expatiating in the spiritual and sublime, which found their outlet in the sermons which he constantly preached. Those utterances, which were of a depth and fulness which soon began to be remarked, were the result of long hours of lonely musing, of solitary journeys on foot or horseback, between the farms and villages where his early work was placed. They were the beginnings of the glorious ministry of his middle life and riper years.

The mythical story (known to few now living) of a luminous appearance settling round his head when he was once preaching in one of his early circuits, could not have arisen concerning an ordinary man. It expressed the truth of the case, that when he was preaching, when his soul was unbound in the pulpit, something unusual was experienced. Spiritual freedom seemed to be attained. There was a kindling and knitting of soul with soul, a sense of expansion and exaltation altogether indescribable. The keen, hard faces of the country people, among whom his work at first chiefly lay, no doubt took an eager look, as if they were feeding on the very essence of spiritual truth—a look which the present writer has often seen on the faces of his congregations in later years, but which he has never observed to be called forth by any other orator.

It became habitual to him to muse and to preach. He never really sought for any other outlet for the burden of thought with which he was charged than the pulpit. His authorship of books was a secondary and accidental thing. From first to last he was a preacher, and regarded preaching as the great work which was given him to do. For this he abandoned all the ordinary pleasures of youthful life, and lived (though he was not aware of it) in a wonderfully lofty manner. Nothing that in the least could stand between himself and the perfect performance of his work was for an instant permitted. Wherever he went he studied. It was his

habit, in visits to farms and other country houses which his early engagements made necessary, to retire to the room appointed for him, and spend most of his time there. Such minds, like mountain ranges, cannot receive a reflection but from heaven. The cloud and the light wander over them, but nothing else than the cloud and light of heaven. Such minds, born for solitude and publicity (which are the same), are in a manner inaccessible.

His joining himself to the Methodist body was a perfectly explicable thing, independently of the fact that he was of a Methodist family. The great religious movement of the eighteenth century had by no means spent its first force at the time. Two generations at least remained to it of active strength and progress before it reached its present settled condition. And beyond Methodism there was no life, no movement discernible anywhere. In the Church all was lethargy; in Dissent all was rigour and formula. The only living religion was Methodism. In the mouths of the Methodist preachers alone did it seem that the words of the New Testament concerning spiritual life, justification, the new birth, retained any real meaning. ↑ They alone, at least, were found urging continually the change which those words signify as the one essential thing in Christianity. No wonder that James Dixon, with his high-toned, enthusiastic nature, was drawn to that system, in which his own aspirations seemed to have been framed into the settled and usual order of things. It was under the

preaching of Methodist preachers that he had been struck down to the earth under the sense of sin ; it was by them that he was led into the way of peace. / In their preaching he saw these two things—a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness—urged incessantly, most directly, and in terms that could not be mistaken. These two things were the staple of the Methodist preaching—the staple, and not the mere residuum. They were not brought in at the end of a long series of illustrations, as something that was to be said, but must be got over as quickly as possible, nor among items of miscellaneous good advice ; but they were the sum and substance of the sermon, and the reason of the preacher being there at all.

To enter upon such a ministry was in truth the most arduous task which any man could propose to himself. He who would preach a death unto sin must himself be dead to sin—must have formed the resolution to renounce a great number of pleasures, which may be innocent in themselves, but must be shared, if indulged in at all, with the host of ordinary people, and which tend to take off the edge of spirituality and devotion to the work of God. To the minister of God many things cease to be innocent which are allowed to others, because they render him less fit for his work. This arises, not from sourness or narrowness of spirit, but from the nature of the case. The renunciation of these things costs a heavy struggle : the temptation to relapse into them occurs again and again : and many a young

and ardent spirit has asked himself, with a sigh, Why should I be different from others? why am I called upon to refuse what others enjoy? Religion must be a living thing within the soul; her call must be felt; her consolations must be present, if the resolution remain unbroken in such times of troubled conflict.

In the case of this eminent religious man, however, no traces of a struggle of this sort are to be found. His abandonment of the world seems to have been altogether instinctive and easy, and he reached at once a vast height of holiness without knowing it. He is seen mourning over the fall of others, without any inclination to be seduced himself by any of the pleasures of the world. Religion filled his soul from the first. His struggles and internal maladies were of a less usual and a nobler kind. Nevertheless, to enter the Methodist ministry is the most arduous undertaking, under these considerations, that can be conceived.

The Methodist ministry, indeed, seemed peculiarly ordered for the development of such a nature as we are trying to depict. It involved poverty, but not the struggles of poverty. By the admirable system of Methodism the ministers of that denomination are placed, on the one hand, beyond the temptation of the struggle for wealth and place, since there is scarce anything that can be called a prize in the career open to them, and very few permanent positions. On the other hand, they are relieved by excellent arrangements from that hopeless battle

with want and misery which, both in the Established Church and among the Dissenters, has broken many a heart. They die to the world somewhat (though with differences) as the members of the great Preaching Orders died to the world in times past : and they are not enforced by the bitter press of necessities to live to it again. The constant change of scene also, which is ensured by the itinerant system, is unquestionably most beneficial in renewing the inner life, and keeping up apostolic zeal and fervour. From the days of St. Paul to the present hour the greatest preachers of Christianity have been itinerants. How many a poor minister of the Established Church, flung down for life on some bare hillside, or in some unlettered hamlet, far from books, far from all intercourse that may tend to cheer and freshen his spiritual life, has reason to lament that something like the Methodist itinerancy is not embraced in the ecclesiastical system to which he belongs ! The Methodist minister is removed in three years at furthest from an uncongenial sphere : in three years he leaves a community, with his ministry still fresh and unexhausted : and the change from country to town, and from town to country, is always open to him. There can be no doubt that the remarkable power and efficiency of the Methodist ministry is greatly due to these causes.

When this great religious man had once cast in his lot with the Wesleyan Methodist body, his acceptance of their whole constitution, in doctrine and discipline, was absolute and unreserved. Never

did any cause gain a more unflinching and intelligent adherent. He said himself, "Methodism became my idol." His knowledge of its history and economy was great, accurate, and statesmanlike. The study of his life was to maintain that mighty movement in the position in which it was left by its great founder, or rather, the position in which it was when he himself first received it. He was a great constitutionalist, averse from centralization, jealous for the maintenance of individual freedom of action, and had an extreme dislike and distrust of departmental action, and the erection of new machinery. He wished to preserve Methodism as simple in constitution as in its object—the preaching of the Gospel. He desired to have each man as unfettered in his mode of procedure as he could be, within the bounds of the old free constitution with which Methodism was originally endowed. It would here be out of place to say more than this ; but he was a Tory to the backbone in his general politics,—and a keener politician never lived—and it was his aim to uphold in Methodism the great Tory principle of local independent action. But no one could have been a more resolute supporter of real discipline within the limits of the Methodist constitution ; and among his manuscripts have been found some examinations and statements of certain cases which fell under his own cognizance, drawn up for his own use, in which the cases are argued and weighed on constitutional grounds in a lucid and judicial manner.

His view of the nature of the relations between the Church of England and Methodism is well known, and at a recent period caused some discussion. It may be questioned whether he went so far as to regard the Methodist Societies as free societies within the Church. The facts of the case would be only too plain against such a view, and the want of wisdom with which the movement of Wesley was treated by the ecclesiastical authorities of England had unhappily long put that out of question. Moreover, he went entirely with the Methodists as regarded the sticking points of Ordination and the Administration of the Lord's Supper; and has argued for his views very powerfully in his published writings, that where there is spiritual grace and evidence of the favour of God, there every Christian ordinance may be exercised. But at least he regarded the Methodist Societies as in most friendly alliance with the Church of England. He repudiated the notion of their being a Dissenting community, and he looked with distrust on any proposition that tended to make the separation wider between the two. No greater admirer of the Church of England ever lived. He was familiar with her history, with the nature of the great movements which have agitated her in past and present times; and he regarded her as the great bulwark of religion in the country. He was a State and Church man, if it be possible, even more than he was a Methodist. The union of Church and State he held to be the cause of all that was characteris-

tically excellent in both ; and he looked with abhorrence on the design of breaking the Constitution by separating them. The English Articles he looked upon as the most tolerant and comprehensive formulary in the world ; the public prayers of the Church as the most beautiful of religious services. When he was prevented by infirmity from attending his own place of worship, he generally had them read to him on Sunday morning. He considered the works of the English divines as one of the greatest monuments of the national glory. He was profoundly versed in them—especially Jackson, Barrow, Tillotson, Beveridge, and Horsley. His chief favourite was the first-named, whose breadth of teaching and deep insight into spiritual truth had peculiar attractions for him. English theology, indeed, was his chief study ; there he found a field in which he expatiated with unbounded freedom and delight.

The Wesleyan doctrinal system (which is essentially one with that of the English Church and with Christianity itself) he accepted and adhered to without the least equivocation. His orthodoxy was not only never questioned ; it was never hidden. From first to last the great leading principles of evangelical truth formed the one subject of his ministry. They were the cause of his ever having entered upon his career : and he remained faithful to them, with an unswerving assurance of their necessity to the world and of their ultimate triumph. This is the more to be observed, and observed to his

honour, inasmuch as his adherence to these principles was by no means blind or fanatical. His mind was too keen, too wide, too well instructed, to be ignorant of any of the difficulties which attend the acceptance of the system of evangelical truth, which implies the most profound convictions of human guilt, helplessness, and misery, of the vicarious sufferings of Christ, and the free redemption thereby procured, of the application of redeeming grace to the soul by the Spirit and Word of God. All had been revolved by him, and he took his stand immovably upon the eternal truth and efficacy of these great principles. God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself was the great Object upon which his mental gaze was fixed; and to declare the way of that salvation, to expatiate upon the spiritual truths with which it is surrounded, was the aim of his whole ministry. No human soul was ever touched more deeply with the sense of the mysteries of existence, and few were better acquainted with the efforts of philosophy to penetrate and solve them; but he took the Bible as the Divine explanation of those mysteries (so far as they are explained), and considered the evangelical system, in all its parts and order, to be the majestic and glorious proclamation to man of all necessary spiritual truth: a system which is dogmatic for the very reason that it is based upon mysteries that can never be brought within human comprehension, which proceeds from the personality of God, and is constantly maintained by its own Author.

Not less certainly than in philosophy or in art, a path to the infinite is opened by religion. It was felt, in listening to the sermons of Dr. Dixon, that he was dealing directly with infinite truth. A boundless expanse seemed opened to the mind; an impression was made of vastness and grandeur. There seemed to be no limit to his power of expansion. Range upon range seemed to grow into sight, as he proceeded, in deliberate, copious, and admirably chosen language, to lay forth the spiritual truths with which his mind was filled. And yet there was nothing indefinite, or suggestive of anything but positive teaching. The exactness with which he knew his own creed, and the strength of his convictions, prevented this. All was pure Christianity and evangelical truth from first to last. In his view—to use a phrase which he often repeated—Christianity was the moral system of the universe. All that concerned man and his history he taught to be referable to Christianity as the final unfolding of the Divine counsels; here was to be sought the explanation of the wonderful difference between the moral faculties and the actual position of man on earth; here was the only remedy for the failure of man as a moral being; here was his hope of final reconciliation with the moral order and beauty of the spiritual world to which he of right belongs.

Hence he was in the highest sense an upholder of the supernatural. He held the necessity of conversion as the universal requirement of the Gospel; and he considered himself bound to proclaim this

as the message and command of Christ. In this he was faithful to the primitive tradition of Methodism; and he was in consequence a revivalist in theory. He looked, indeed, upon the great awakenings of the people which took place at the beginning of Methodism, and have been since repeated at intervals, as direct manifestations of Divine power, and not to be explained on any other hypothesis. His historical reading, moreover, caused him to know that these manifestations were not confined to Methodism, but had accompanied Christianity from the beginning, and attended the ministry of many of the greatest Christian preachers in every age and country. He therefore regarded them as proceeding from the power of Divine truth. But it never entered into his thoughts to labour to produce those remarkable effects, or to regard a ministry as unsuccessful which remained without them. No such general effects followed his own ministry, though it was instrumental in the conversion of many, and in the spiritual enlightenment and consolation of thousands. And although his own convictions and experience led him to hold the necessity of conversion to God, yet the greatness of his mind prevented him from ever insisting upon instantaneous and sensible conversion in all cases. The work of the Holy Spirit is often gradual and gentle; the Divine life begins as it were without beginning, and grows with scarcely conscious growth. It was his aim in preaching to spread forth spiritual truth, to unfold freely the provisions of the Christian economy, and

leave them to be received according to the different dispositions of the hearers. Although he was the most religious of men, he was greatly averse from speaking of religion as a matter personal to himself; the present writer scarcely ever knew him to do so; and nothing could be more affectingly simple and humble than his words and manner upon the one or two occasions on which he broke through his reserve.

Years of self-culture and devotion to his great work were required to give him that perfection of power in which he stood forth at last as one of the greatest preachers, not only of his own community, but of modern times. A long and noble maturity lay before him, during which his reputation was fully established, and his career pursued without flagging. The recollections of the writer range over that period of his greatest power,—or rather the period when his power was apparently undiminished, and yet had begun to receive the mellowness of age; and the general impression left by years of intercourse and listening is that of a great spiritual presence. To the remembrance of the writer that beloved face and form recur under many aspects: sometimes he is seen again traversing with springing strides the London parks, or the fields of the country; sometimes seated musing upon some bank or wayside resting-place; sometimes at home in the study or by the fireside. These remembrances, which rapidly obliterate one another (as must be the case in all recollections of

long-continued intimacy), are constant to the one impression which they leave of spiritual beauty, strength, and grace. Among them all, perhaps the most cherished is the remembrance of walks taken together in going to chapel or returning thence—walks which sometimes led through rural or suburban lanes and roads, sometimes along the thoroughfares of great towns, in the comparative quiet of the Sunday. These walks were sometimes conducted in silence, sometimes amid profoundly interesting conversation, in which the thoughts of a mind always employed on great subjects were set forth with exquisite felicity—thoughts concerning God, concerning life, and the mysteries of life, concerning the ways of Providence, or the actions and characters of great men. There was silence when the mind of this great minister was heavily charged with the message which he was presently to deliver; and then his sense of companionship was expressed only in casual observations, uttered in a peculiarly gentle and subdued voice. There was often silence on the other side, through astonishment at the glorious eloquence which had just been heard, as the orator returned hanging so gently on the arm of his companion. But often the fire was still unspent; and the great topics which had engaged the attention of the multitude of worshippers were revived, and again expatiated upon with fresh fertility and beauty.

Let us enter the chapel on some such occasion, and endeavour to gain some notion of a religious

service as it was conducted by this eminent minister.

When the hour for beginning the service has arrived, the door of the vestry is opened, and a noble and venerable figure (latterly led tenderly forward by friendly hands) is seen slowly ascending the pulpit stairs. A head of angelic grandeur and beauty, covered with the whitest hair, presently crowns the desk, and is bowed in silent prayer. The hymn is given out (latterly by some one of the congregation who went into the pulpit), and as the last notes are sung the figure rises to commence the prayer. The voice is low and equable—neither quick nor slow—and unaltered throughout; it is a voice that never uttered an affected tone. The prayer is such as could proceed only from one fraught with spiritual thought. It is one great petition, embracing all spiritual blessings—the renewal of the nature of man, the outpouring of redeeming grace, the hastening of the kingdom of God. It comes to an end; and is followed by the reading of the Scriptures (again done in late years by a member of the congregation), and a second hymn.

Then comes the sermon. It also is begun in a low voice, and proceeds for some time in the same tone: the head of the speaker bent downwards, as if he were collecting himself as he went along. This was really the case; for the language of his sermons was always extemporaneous, though the line of thought had always been carefully traversed,

and the substance of the sermon lay before him, to use his own expression, "in a general way." The language indeed was more purely unpremeditated than in any great extemporaneous speaker whom the writer has ever heard. Many orators have large prepared passages, which constitute the most splendid and powerful parts of their discourse, while they trust to the moment to lead them from one of these passages to another, and supply the gaps which are left: and this is a method which has been recommended by some of the greatest speakers. It has evident advantages in uniting freedom with accuracy. But it was not practised by Dr. Dixon, and it may be doubted whether he could have practised it successfully. His great outbursts of oratory, in which sentence after sentence was rolled forth without pause or hesitancy, were what they seemed to be, purely extemporaneous, so far as the words were concerned. The thoughts, indeed, were there already, and had been revolved until they had become part of the substance of his mind; in giving to them the impassioned utterance which the excitement of the moment prompted he was simply clothing in words what he familiarly knew and felt; and no verbal preparation could have improved his manner of doing this.

From the beginning of the sermon it was scarcely possible not to notice the absence of much that ordinarily goes to the making of a sermon. There was no criticism, no description, nothing circumstantial, no recital of the occasion on which the

text was originally written. Whatever the text, it was evidently regarded simply as a key to unlock the infinite treasury of Divine truth, and used as leading directly to this. It was part of the Word of God, intended, like everything else in the Divine Word, to unlock truths of universal and everlasting importance to man. If it were part of a narrative, then the narrative was used in giving an example of the general dealings of Providence, of the general experience of the people of God, or of the general development of the religious life. Some of his most beautiful and powerful discourses were founded on the histories of the patriarchs and saints of the Old Testament, thus applied; or were drawn from the religious sorrows and aspirations depicted in the Psalms. If the text were doctrinal, then an astonishing power was displayed in laying forth in wide and harmonious view the great spiritual truths of Christianity, the various parts of the covenant of grace, the kingdom of the Holy Spirit. Whatever it were, the whole was a living thing; part followed part in easy and natural succession; the expatiative mind was felt to have touched everything before it was spoken; there were no makeshift or hackneyed expressions: all was full of meaning.

As the speaker proceeded, the voice grew full and animated; the head was raised, and the face directed hither and thither (at one time casting speaking looks); the eyes were full of beautiful light, and sometimes there was a sort of flash in

them. A sort of fusion or fervour pervaded the whole person, but there was not very much of actual gesture,—only now and then an irrepressible movement of the arm, something like a blow half delivered and recalled. When he was fully wrought up, he was perhaps the most impassioned orator that ever spoke from the pulpit. At least it is hardly possible to conceive of one more impassioned. Bursts of overwhelming pathos came from him, which vanquished and bore away the hearer. Yet in the midst of all he was ever manly; he never lost his directness, his self-command, or his grandeur. His pathos was, so to speak, of an intellectual character; it sprang from the intense realization of great and affecting truths, from the contemplation of human destiny, of human misery, of the struggles of the soul; or from the deep sense of Divine love, compassion, and mercy. This intellectual pathos may be regarded as his most extraordinary gift.

It was the character of his mind to expatiate, but never to ramble. A line of thought was pursued through its various ramifications with vigour and fidelity, until they issued in the foliage and blossom of the impassioned outbursts which have been described. Then another main branch of argument, springing from the great trunk or stock of the text, was pursued in the same manner, and with the same result. The vital connection was never lost; and the structure of the sermon was in reality far more regular than it generally appeared to be. What might have been marked as separate sub-

divisions were enunciated as thoughts flowing the one out of the other, until the final point was reached. This is undoubtedly the preferable way, since it gives a sense of buoyancy, spontaneity, and vigorous life, which is apt to be lost in the formality of many divisions. The force of the preacher is checked if he keeps constantly beginning again, and the memory of the hearer is taxed to remember a mass of articulations. But it requires a master to be able to cast away the artificial aids of division; to spring boldly and freely into a sea of thoughts, without drifting hither or thither, and ending in confusion; and this power of confiding himself to the subject, while the words which he used were purely extemporaneous, was possessed by Dr. Dixon in a wonderful degree. There were scores of his sermons which left on the mind the impression of perfect vitality and finished growth, the formal divisions being only the main ones, and not more than two or three in number.

No man probably ever preached from so great a number of texts. He very seldom preached the same sermon twice. During the fifty years of his ministry he usually preached twice on Sunday and three or four times in the week, and throughout that long period he preached new sermons. These sermons were always purely original, very seldom containing any traces of specific suggestions from others, though of course their general tenor was in agreement with the Wesleyan theology; and in youth he had become familiar with the great

writers by whom that theology is represented. His sermons were always his own; every one of them had its own individual growth and character. They were of course stamped with the peculiar qualities of the mind which produced them; but they were not mere repetitions of the same thoughts in different guises. Religious emotion, religious meditation, was at the birth of each of them. Each of them had a vital structure which could not be transferred to another: as the trees in a pine forest are all different from one another, though they are all pine trees.

This shows more than fecundity of mind. It shows a mind given up and devoted to one object in chief. The soil which bore these countless trees was a mind imbued with Biblical truth, enriched by communion with God, and turning its powerful forces in one direction. The matter and the manner of those sermons were both unique: nothing the least like them has ever been seen or heard in the pulpit. But the matter and the manner were each of them a part of the other. Matter less weighty, with less of essential grace and life, or less abundant, could not have inspired the same bounding vigour and freedom of style; and a delivery equally powerful and original would have been impossible if there had been less to deliver. The one was as truly and evidently the substance of the whole man, the outcome and resultant of his spiritual nature, as the other.

We have been considering Dr. Dixon as a pulpit

orator, or rather as a preacher of the Gospel; for the preaching of the Gospel was his great work—the work to which he stood devoted. But there were other spheres besides, in which his great gifts as a speaker were displayed to the wonder and delight of thousands. As representative of the Wesleyan Methodists he appeared on the platform of some of the greatest meetings that have ever been held in this country; he was a constant speaker at Bible Society meetings and Missionary Anniversaries. The present writer may safely say that as a platform speaker he has never heard his equal. The nearest approach to him in that style—which requires very peculiar gifts—is the present venerable Dean of Carlisle, Dr. Close; who is a wonderful speaker. It is indeed curious how few there are who excel on the platform. The number of men who are good in the pulpit, and yet fail miserably on being brought face to face with an audience in this way, is remarkably great; and leaves no doubt that the platform is a severer test of oratorical power than the pulpit. Dr. Dixon was as great on the one as in the other. No meeting was dull where he was. His vivacity, his perfect confidence, his occasional playful raillery, the richness and geniality of his manner, his caressing way of turning his subject over and over, were in most effective contrast with the tremendous force of his denunciations or the impassioned fervour of his appeals. It was impossible to listen to one of his great speeches without being carried away, and feeling the influence of extraordinary power. Great

Platform

audiences have seldom been moved as they have been moved and swayed by him. "He could sway them," said one who heard him in the days of his greatest power, "as the trees of the forest are rocked by a storm."

He was frequently invited by the great religious associations of the country to lecture. Any cause which involved the great questions of civil and religious liberty, or the religious history of the nation, enlisted in him a bold and powerful advocate. He observed the signs of the times with unremitting watchfulness, and remained unswervingly faithful to his own principles. What he was in political opinion has already been indicated: there was probably no man not actively engaged in politics who had a more accurate knowledge of the state of parties and the political history of his own age. He could at a moment's notice trace the career of most of the eminent persons in the State and in the Church, the times when they took or left office, the speeches they had made, and the tone of mind which characterized them. He seemed to know them like familiar acquaintances, and would sometimes predict what they were going to do with surprising correctness. The great cause of Protestantism was in his mind very much identified with that of Constitutionalism: and he was ever ready to come forward to defend it against what he conceived to be a false and dangerous liberalism.

He had the intrepidity of the most resolute of the adherents of the great cause to which he attached

himself: much of the moral grandeur and manhood of the great champions of constitutional liberty in the seventeenth century: and if he had lived in their age he certainly would not have been the last among them. In his ardent zeal for the commonwealth, in his living as a public servant, in his perfect fearlessness and uprightness, in his general attitude of life, and, it may be added, in his solitariness, and the afflictions and sorrows which befel him, there is much to remind us of the great men of those days. But, as it was, there was no mighty national crisis to call forth the energy of his nature in that direction. He took a very bold part in advocating Negro Emancipation and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, in opposing Catholic Emancipation and the Papal Aggression; and more than once stood forth to defend the Church of England in the midst of violent opposition. But his controversial powers were chiefly exercised within the limits of Wesleyan Methodism, where the part which he took is well known.

Exclusive of his ordinary ministry, his various addresses to the young presented as favourable an example of his peculiar gifts as any that could be mentioned. His loving interest in the young was a beautiful feature in his character: and when he had to address candidates for ordination, or students of divinity, his soul seemed greatly moved and excited. Every line in his face became radiant with a glorious benignity: his words came forth with an indescribable richness of utterance, as if they were revolved

between his lips with the same enjoyment as the thoughts which they embodied were revolved in his mind. He was all enthusiasm and freedom. He would lay out in a broad and rapid sketch the glories of the spiritual world on which he was ever expatiating; the spring and grasp of his mind were apparent, the wonderful facility and grace with which he moved amongst abstractions, giving a kind of substantiality to awful and immutable dogmas; and as he ranged from subject to subject the enthusiasm of his hearers was awakened, and an eager desire was kindled in their souls to be moving at large in the same glorious fields of contemplation. There was no severity, no hardness: but a soft and ineffable sense of expansion, joy, and spiritual exaltation was diffused.

But it is time to bring to a close this imperfect attempt to describe the character and public work of a great and remarkable man. It is improbable that any other preacher will arise within or without his own communion at all resembling or recalling Dr. Dixon. Every age alters the character of the human race: and the greatest men are moulded in the fashion of their times. The condition of society at large, and of the Methodist body in particular, is no longer favourable to the development of such a character as James Dixon. As an Englishman, as a public servant, as a minister of religion, he belonged to generations which are passed away: of which his own generation was the last.

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