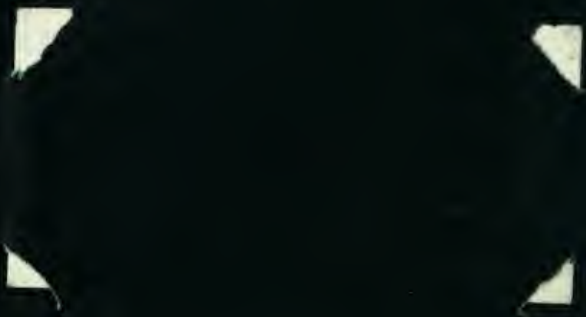
MEN WORTH REMEMBERING

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

JOHN STOUGHTON D.D.



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CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS.

KINGSTON-UPON-HULL may be justly proud of its famous men. From Sir William de la Pole—one of its early native merchant princes, at a time when the port supplied several large ships for wars with France—there sprung the ducal family of Suffolk. Sir John Lawson, the Commonwealth Admiral, who so often beat the armaments of Holland, is reckoned amongst the free-born denizens of the town. But more illustrious than either of these is the name of Andrew Marvell, whose father was master of the grammar school, and who in the corrupt reign of Charles II. distinguished himself by his incorruptible patriotism even more than by his political satire. A fourth, whose name is more familiar now than any of the previous three, was in the last century added to those of earlier worthies: and whilst inferior to the first with regard to rank, unlike the second in point of valour, and destitute of the peculiar literary genius ascribed to the third, he surpassed them all by the charms of his

eloquence, the achievements of his statesmanship, the virtues of his life, and the manifold benefits which he conferred upon mankind.

William Wilberforce was grandson of a namesake who twice served as Mayor of Hull. In 1771, after being alderman for nearly half a century, he desired, on the ground of old age, to "resign his gown, that he might pass the remainder of his days in a relaxation from all public business." The son of that alderman was named Robert, a prosperous merchant who lived in High Street. The house is still pointed out, though greatly altered in appearance from what it was. It is described, in a history of Hull, as a quaint red brick Dutch-looking structure, with a tower in front of the building, the panelled rooms with ornamental ceilings having been converted into offices, whilst the massive staircase remained in its original state. We learn that since then, a fine old mantel-piece was removed by Bishop Wilberforce to adorn his own residence as a relic of his ancestors.

William Wilberforce the philanthropist, son of that Robert, was born in his father's house on St. Bartholomew's day, August 24, 1759, the last year but one of the reign of George II. Only two or three weeks before, news had reached home of the taking of Quebec and the death of General Wolfe—when, it is said of the English people, "they despaired, they triumphed, and they wept." The child was weak and puny, and after he had become a man he used to say, if he had been born in less civilised times, it would have been thought impossible for him to live. Yet the vital force, hidden within so delicate a frame,

triumphed over physical debility, as it did through a long life; and, as a boy, he was known amongst his playmates for extraordinary sprightliness, and amongst his schoolfellows for quickness in learning and power of elocution.

About 1766 he attended the grammar school of Hull —a venerable institution, whose Elizabethan architecture still adorns the town, where, more than a century earlier, Marvell, the head master, had drilled his own son in the rudiments of Latin. Joseph Milner, the historian of the Christian Church, soon after Wilberforce's admission as a pupil, succeeded to the mastership, and, being a friend of the family, must have taken an interest in his education.

Robert Wilberforce, the father, died in 1768, and the boy was left to the care of an uncle William, living at Wimbledon in Surrey, an aristocratic neighbourhood, with remains of Roman barrows on the common—destined to be known as a place for fighting duels before it attained its present celebrity for volunteer encampments. Besides Wimbledon Park, the seat of the Duke of Somerset, several mansions skirted the furze-covered heath, and in one of them resided Wilberforce's uncle, where the boy, then about nine years old, would enjoy fresh air and pleasant scenery, and would improve his health and raise his spirits. Mrs. William Wilberforce was a lady who had come under the power of the Whitefield movement, which had wonderfully revived Evangelical religion in this country; and it would appear that this aunt of his was disposed to strict sectarianism, for Wilberforce long afterwards said, that "if he had stayed with his uncle he should probably have been a despised, bigoted Metho-

dist." Looking at the remark in the light of his own religious character, we see that it must have been pointed at his aunt's ecclesiastical exclusiveness, not at her deep Evangelical convictions. And indeed, he says, sometime afterwards in connexion with this very remark, "Yet to come to what I am, through so many years of folly as those which elapsed between my last year at school and 1785, is very wonderful." What made 1785 a marked year in his history we shall see further on. Whitefield did not die till 1770, and therefore it is probable, whilst William was living under her roof, this aunt sometimes drove over to Tottenham Court Road or the Tabernacle to hear the celebrated preacher; and if the family sometimes went to Wimbledon church, whose chancel goes back to the time of Edward IV., the observant little lad would scarcely fail to notice the black marble altar tomb of Sir Edward Cecil, who served King James and King Charles in foreign wars, "and after so many travels," as the epitaph touchingly expresses it, "returned to this patient and humble mother-earth from whence he came, with assured hope in his Saviour Christ to rise again to glory everlasting." There was a good sermon for young William in these quaint and beautiful words; and, at any rate, it appears that he felt very much the influence of his aunt's religious views, and began to imbibe those truths, which afterwards laid such a strong hold upon his faith, and so decidedly fashioned his course of life. It is said that he was placed at a mean school near the village as parlour boarder. It seems he did not learn much there, except such elements of education

as a quick, impressible lad would be sure to pick up wherever he might be placed. Mrs. Wilberforce the mother had no sympathy with Mrs. Wilberforce the aunt, and therefore at the end of two years she secured his removal from Wimbledon. She took him home to Hull, and with special pains diverted his mind from what she considered to be a state of religious melancholy. There was plenty of gaiety in the town—plays and balls were all the fashion; gay parties were frequent, and to dissipation of such kinds, Mrs. Wilberforce added "sumptuous suppers" in her own house: thus on the whole training up her son in a very surprising way for one of whom he said, "she was what I should call an Archbishop Tillotson Christian"—a rather unfair designation I conceive. She sent him shortly afterwards to Pocklington, sixteen miles from York, where he entered a grammar school under the care of the Rev. K. Baskett, a man of easy and polished manners, and an elegant though not profound scholar. Things were managed there differently from what they had been at the school near Wimbledon, and the youth "greatly excelled all the other boys in his compositions, though he seldom began them till the eleventh hour." So precocious was he, that when only fourteen he wrote a letter to a York newspaper *in condemnation of the odious traffic in human flesh,* a remarkable anticipatory effort, when regarded in connexion with his grand anti-slavery career. But pleasure seems to have been largely mingled with his studies even at school. The once "parlour boarder" at Wimbledon is now seen visiting amongst fashionable families round about

the little Yorkshire town, delighting them with his charming voice, and singing songs to perfection at their evening parties. The impressions received from his aunt faded away amidst the entertainments encouraged by his mother; but in the parish church of Pocklington, as in the parish church at Wimbledon, might be found in the monuments food for serious thought. "*O vita, misero longa, felici brevis!*" an inscription to the memory of an old inhabitant, could be turned to good account. Yet whether this or the former epitaph arrested his attention one cannot say.

Andrew Marvell had been educated at Cambridge, and thither, too, young Wilberforce, destined to resemble him in some other respects, followed in his eighteenth year—only that the latter was entered at St. John's, whereas the former had been sent to Trinity College. Cambridge had a bad character in those days. On the first night of his arrival he found himself amongst "as licentious a set of men as can well be conceived." Horror-stricken at their conduct, he shook off all connexion with them, and mixed more with the fellows of his own college; but they, instead of stimulating him to improvement, discouraged application to study, asking, "Why in the world should a man of your fortune trouble yourself with fagging?" Some of his companions attended lectures and read hard, but he preferred going to card parties; and, to increase the mischief, the tutors of the college would say, so as to be overheard, "they are mere saps, but Wilberforce does all by sheer talent." His conversational powers, his cheerfulness, and his wit made him an immense favourite, and

hospitality gave a further recommendation to his social excellence. "There was," reports the Rev. Thomas Gisborne, afterwards one of his Evangelical friends, "always a great Yorkshire pie in his room, and all were welcome to partake of it." "You might see him in the streets encircled by a set of young men of talent, among whom he was *facile princeps*. He spent most of his time in visiting, and when he returned late in the evening to his rooms he would summon me to join him by the music of his poker and tongs, our chimney-pieces being back to back, or by the melodious challenge of his voice. When I did go in to him he was so winning and amusing that I often sat up half the night with him, much to the detriment of my attendance at lectures next day." But, it should be added, that whatever might be his hilarity, and fondness for company, and neglect of work, he declared in later life that he was far from what the world calls licentious, and was complimented on being much better than most young men.

His companions at Cambridge, we see, had addressed him as a man of fortune, and so he was. Through the death of his grandfather and uncle he came early into the possession of very large property, and this no sooner happened than he made a very free use of his resources. After he left college we find him plunging into the fashionable society of London, being elected member of no less than five clubs at the same time. Club life then was different from club life now; each club vied with the rest in gambling and expensive entertainments. Boodle's dinners were the delight of country gentlemen, and the

card table there drew round it people of the highest rank and the greatest riches. Wilberforce was a member, and the first time he went he sat down with the Duke of Norfolk and won twenty-five guineas. At Brooks's, where his name had been enrolled, he played at a Faro table, where the celebrated George Selwyn kept the bank. "What, Wilberforce, is that you?" asked a friend who saw him on the way to ruin. "Oh, sir, don't interrupt Mr. Wilberforce," answered the accomplished gamester; "he could not be better employed." Fox, Sheridan, Fitzpatrick were amongst the politicians and wits with whom he became acquainted; but the Goose-tree Club, once Almack's, then at the very top of fashionable society, was his more favourite resort; and here, besides several of the nobility, two men of distinguished intellect might be often seen—Pitt and Windham—with the former of whom the rich young Yorkshireman speedily became an intimate friend. They had been contemporaries at Cambridge, and their slight acquaintance there paved the way to a closer fellowship. Pitt was present every night, and Wilberforce says, "He was the wittiest man I ever knew, and, what was quite peculiar to himself, had at all times his wit under entire control." At the Boar's Head, Eastcheap, a party of celebrities spent an evening in memory of Shakespere, and there Pitt formed the life of the company, surpassing all by the brilliancy of his humour and the felicity of his allusions. He was also clever at play, and displayed intense earnestness in games of chance; but "he perceived their increasing fascination, and soon after sud-

denly abandoned them for ever." Wilberforce followed his friend's example, and, after some measure of what was called good luck, cured himself of a taste which was beginning to get the mastery over him.

He had no mansion on his Yorkshire estate, but the house of his uncle at Wimbledon fell to his share; and this residence, containing several spare bed-rooms, enabled him to invite his friends, of whom Pitt was his most frequent guest. Indeed, he would ride down late at night and sleep there, even when the master was not at home. The fresh air of the common, and the rural scenery on the road, far different from what it is now, gave charms to the suburban villa, equally appreciated by Wilberforce and his fascinating companion. Greatly did they enjoy together, "before curfew, an early meal of peas and strawberries;" but the popularity of both was so rapidly on the increase, that large and fashionable parties absorbed most of their spare time and attention; and not only noblemen, but members of the royal family were drawn into the ever-swelling stream of Wilberforce's admirers. After meeting the Prince of Wales at Devonshire House in 1782, he received this piece of flattery: "He must have you again. The Prince says he will come at any time to hear you sing." Wilberforce's mimicry was as much extolled as his musical voice, but of this he was cured by Lord Camden. "It is but a vulgar accomplishment," said his lordship. This Wilberforce overheard, and he never forgot it.

Visits to Westmoreland varied his general habits. He rented a house at Rayrigg, on the lake of Windermere,

and carried down with him plenty of books—classical, parliamentary, and historical; but whatever became of his studies, he had plenty of pleasure with his mother, his sister, and different college friends; boating, riding, and continual parties at his own house and at Sir Michael de Fleming's fully taking up his time. But a more distant expedition ere long drew him from his suburban home. A journey to Paris was in those days indeed an expedition, and a week was often spent over a journey now despatched in ten hours. Crossing from Dover to Calais in a packet boat, and travelling thence in a diligence or a private carriage, then amounted to something like real enterprises; and what they lacked in speed and comfort was made up for by novelty and adventure. Wilberforce agreed with Pitt and their friend Eliot to start for the French metropolis in September, 1783, as events began to foreshadow the Revolution at hand. Before they started the two friends went down to Dorsetshire, on a visit to Mr. Banks, and there occurred an incident which, in after years, Wilberforce thus related: "Ah, it was at Banks's that I was near shooting Pitt, poor fellow. At least, it was a standing joke amongst our mutual friends to lay this to my charge. He was passing through a hedge, and I, not knowing it, fired in that direction; but he was not in any real danger, for none of the shot passed near him. It is now forty-three years ago."

When the day for starting drew near, Pitt wrote to his friend from Burton Pynsent: "I am very sorry for the state of your eyes, but I am quite of opinion

that the air of Rheims is exactly the thing for you. I hope to find it equally sovereign for toothaches and swelled faces, which have persecuted me ever since I have been here, as if it was the middle of a session. We shall agree excellently as invalids, and particularly in making the robust Eliot fag for us, and ride bodkin, and letting him enjoy all the other pleasures of health."

It is amusing to be told the reason why it was arranged to go to Rheims—it was "to gain some knowledge of the language before they went to Paris." More amusing still is the incident which occurred at this halting-place. Through an oversight they were ill provided with introductions, having only a letter from some merchant to a correspondent of his house living in the town. When they reached Rheims they were surprised to find their correspondent a certain M. Coustier "behind a counter, distributing figs and raisins." Writing on the subject in a playful style, Wilberforce said, that as he had heard it was usual for continental gentlemen to divert themselves by playing at some trade, he imagined that this individual's "taste was in the fig way," and that he admirably sustained his part; but it appeared M. Coustier was a *véritable épicier*, and by no means eminent in his profession. The travellers spent nine or ten days at an hotel in the city, without making any progress in their studies. How could they, when they spoke to nobody but each other and their Irish courier? They prevailed on the grocer to put on "a bag and sword," and carry them to the Intendant of Police, who introduced them to the Archbishop. He

invited them to dinner, and treated them handsomely, and they also made acquaintance with an Abbé de Lageard, a "fellow of infinite humour, and of such extraordinary humanity, that," Wilberforce says, "to prevent our time hanging heavy on our hands, he would sometimes make us visits of five or six hours at a stretch."

One evening, as the two friends were supping at a house, where the table exhibited an abundance of delicacies, they observed a large vacant place, evidently reserved for some lordly dish; and presently the door flew open, when two servants entered with a huge joint of beef. It proved raw, and neither of them could touch it, much to the mortification of the host, who fancied they would not indulge in their national taste in the presence of strangers.

What they did in Paris does not appear; but we learn that by special invitation they joined the Court at Fontainbleau, then in all its splendour, under Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette: and there the beautiful and light-hearted queen, having heard the story about Rheims, rallied her visitors, and asked Wilberforce "whether he had lately heard from his friend the *épicier?*" Dr. Franklin was then in France, and he received the young Englishman with much interest, as the latter had already expressed his disapproval of war with America. With La Fayette, too, Wilberforce came in contact, and found him assuming republican habits. "When the fine ladies of the Court would attempt to drag him to the card-table, he shrugged his shoulders, with an affected contempt for the customs and amusements of the whole régime."

In the following year, 1784, Wilberforce visited the continent a second time, not now with Mr. Pitt, but with Isaac Milner, a Cambridge Senior Wrangler, brother to the head master of Hull grammar school, and this visit proved to be of great consequence to our young traveller. He was accompanied by his mother and sister, as well as his Cambridge friend, and he describes their voyage down the Rhone, on the way to Avignon, in that jotting, abrupt, and disjointed style, which runs through the whole of his diary. I give it as an example of his mode of description:—

"*Afternoon, Sunday*, 14.—Got to Avignon. . . . The salt for the Lyonnois, and many other provinces, goes up the Rhone in great boats, drawn by horses, from Arles, where it is made. . . . The place sweetly situated, but a most dirty hole: particularly our inn, The St. Omer's. A crew of fellows to receive us at landing, and drag our carriage to the inn, more like our countrymen in the brutality of their manners than the generality of supple Frenchmen, who always make you a bow where an Englishman would give you an oath. Laura's tomb is not worth seeing: nothing but a flat stone, under which, they say, she is laid."

From Avignon they travelled to Marseilles, Antibes, and Nice; and in this last place they took up their residence "in a house separated from the Mediterranean only by a grove of orange-trees." The natives he describes as a wretched set, whilst visitors held nightly card parties, with a great deal of gambling, but the conversations he held with Milner were preparing for a radical

change in his heart and life. At the time his companion was not much more decidedly religious than himself. "He appeared," says Wilberforce, "in all respects like an ordinary man of the world, mixing, like myself, in all companies, and joining as readily as others in the prevalent Sunday parties." But underneath this exterior, powerful Evangelical impulses were at work, and, to his great surprise, Wilberforce before he started discovered the fact. "Had I known at first what his opinions were it would have decided me against making him the offer: so true is it that a gracious hand leads us in ways that we know not, and blesses us not only without, but even against our plans and inclinations." Just before starting, Wilberforce had lighted on Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion," and had asked Milner what he thought of it. He answered, "It is one of the best books ever written; let us take it with us, and read it on our journey." They did read together, and, as the first consequence, Wilberforce determined to examine the Scriptures for himself on the momentous points to which the work relates. Another continental journey followed, this time to Switzerland, and then to Italy Milner was again his companion; and now they studied the Greek Testament, discussing with each other the great truths which came before them. They came back by way of Spa, where they spent almost six weeks in a curious assemblage of people from all parts of Europe; and there his change in certain things began to attract attention. Mrs. Crewe, mother to Lord Crewe, was amongst the fashionables present, and she, when she heard it,

could not believe that he thought it wrong to go to the play, and equally wondered that halting on a Sunday was *his* wish, and not his mother's. Still he laughed and sang, and was seemingly gay and happy, though all the while sentiments of the most agitating kind were at work within his breast. "As soon as I reflected seriously on these subjects," he solemnly records, "the deep guilt and black ingratitude of my past life forced itself upon me in the strongest colours, and I condemned myself for having wasted my precious time, and opportunities, and talents. It was not so much the fear of punishment by which I was affected, as a sense of my great sinfulness in having so long neglected the unspeakable mercies of my God and Saviour; and such was the effect which this thought produced, that for months I was in a state of the deepest depression from strong conviction of my guilt. Indeed, nothing which I have ever read in the accounts of others exceeded what I then felt." He studied Butler's "Analogy," and Pascal's "Thoughts," and above all, the Bible, and so was gradually led out of darkness into light. A decidedly Evangelical turn was taken. Good seed sown of old at Wimbledon, but choked by thorns, now, together with good seed newly sown, sprung up and began to bear fruit abundantly. "What infinite love that Christ should die to save such a sinner, and how necessary is it He should save us altogether, that we may appear before God with nothing of our own. God grant I may not deceive myself in thinking I feel the beginning of gospel comfort. Began this night constant family prayer, and resolved to have it every morning and even-

ing, and to read a chapter when time." This entry, dated November 28, 1785, had in it what many would deem "a Methodist ring," far removed from his mother's notions, and from his own experience a year or two before; and before the end of the year we find him writing to John Newton, dining at his aunt Wilberforce's, meeting Mr. Thornton, an eminently religious London merchant, going to hear William Romaine, and evincing in other ways full sympathy with the Evangelical leaders of that day. Doddridge's book he repeatedly refers to, and at this period it seems to have been a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawned and the day-star arose in his heart.

CHAPTER II.

POLITICAL CAREER.

POSSESSED of ample fortune, with no taste for mercantile pursuits or country sports, at the same time conscious of a gift for speaking, as well as other qualifications for public usefulness, Wilberforce, as soon as he came of age, determined to enter Parliament. Andrew Marvell had represented his native town, and in this respect we find our young friend walking in the steps of the seventeenth century patriot. He determined to stand for Kingston-upon-Hull. In the month of August, 1780, he completed his twenty-first year, an event celebrated by the roasting of an ox in one of his fields; and the very next month he engaged in a contest with Lord Robert Manners and Mr. Hartley, when he won by a large majority—but it was at the expense of between eight and nine thousand pounds; for every resident elector received a present of two guineas, and every freeman travelling from London cost about five times as much.

When he took his seat, the House of Commons could boast of some of the greatest orators England has ever had. There was Edmund Burke, the philosophical poli-

tician, who dived beneath the surface of subjects, and never stopped short of fundamental principles. His speeches were profound essays, comprehensive in thought, elegant in diction, but much more intellectual than they were popular. There was Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the wit, the favourite of fashion, the man who, by his reckless extravagance, sunk into the lowest poverty, and then raised himself again by expedients as daring as they were ingenious; but who could cover all his eccentricities and follies and vices by a burning eloquence, which inspired his hearers, so that when he made his famous speech on the trial of Warren Hastings, reporters threw down their pens in despair. There was Charles James Fox, whose robust thoughts, earnest logic, sweeping declamation, and pointed language are preserved to us in print; whose burly figure, awkward gait, and uplifted fist are made visible to us in old portraits; but whose power as an orator, it is said, can never be understood but by those who were privileged to listen to his voice. There was William Pitt, Wilberforce's friend, then almost as young as himself, with a formal kind of rhetoric—"a State paper style" it was called — a commanding order of intellect, and a firm grasp of political questions, the heir of his father's genius for debate, and with all his faults and drawbacks the heir of his father's patriotism. These, not to mention others, were leaders—even the last, though so young and inexperienced—when Wilberforce entered Parliament; but soon he made his mark upon the discussions which arose, and by his sprightly manner, easy elocution, silvery voice, and intelligent apprehension,

without which the other qualities would not have availed, gained the ear of the House, and speedily raised himself to eminence and renown.

Those whom I have now named were party leaders. They believed that great measures could not be carried, that their country could not be properly ruled, except through the medium of party opinion, feeling, and organisation. No doubt much can be pleaded on that behalf, and at all events the system of party action has practically long ruled in English politics, and will in all probability long continue to rule; but, to say the least, there is also a place in these same politics for independent action, for the exercise of calm unbiassed judgment lifted above the atmosphere of prejudice and passion. Thus extremes can be avoided, extravagant tendencies on either side can be checked, the heats of controversy can be moderated, and harmonies existing between minds in honest conflict can be elicited and established. Wilberforce believed this, and therefore entered the doors of St. Stephen unshackled by party ties, and entirely unambitious of official position and emolument. Others professed to be in accord with him in this respect, and to the number of about forty they constituted themselves a club styled "Independents;" yet when thus banded together and formed into a distinct third party, they soon showed that they were exposed to the evils they had undertaken to avoid. Nor did their assertions of disinterestedness stand the proof, for all of them except two—Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Banks—accepted either place or peerage or pension. At a late period, James Stephen, in writing to

Wilberforce touching the character of Henry Thornton, after quoting his words, "My intimacy with Wilberforce has had an influence on many important events of my life," remarks: "To explain and justify his general line of conduct as 'one of the party of no party men,' would in effect be like stating and defending your own." Wilberforce, after all, could hardly be said to belong to "the party of no party men," for he was as free from party ties of every sort as any man could be; but to maintain perfect consistency in all respects under such circumstances is no easy thing, and the political course pursued by this excellent person at one time, notwithstanding his conscientiousness, it would be rather difficult to reconcile with the political course he pursued at another.

The Hull member made his first speech on the 17th of May, 1781, touching the injustice of the revenue laws, having presented a petition against them entrusted to him by his constituents. Lord North was then Prime Minister, but Lord Shelburne soon succeeded him, when Pitt joined the Cabinet, and Wilberforce seconded the address on the King's Speech in February, 1783. It was not carried, and Shelburne's Administration fell as soon as it was formed. The Coalition Ministry of Lord North and Mr. Fox was also short-lived. It lasted from April to December, 1783; and in the opposition which brought about that event Wilberforce took a very decided part, and distinguished himself by his eloquence at a great county meeting of Yorkshire electors. He mounted a table amidst gusts of windy weather which seemed enough to carry away his slender frame. "I saw," said Boswell, who was present,

"a mere shrimp mount upon the table, and as I listened he grew and grew until the shrimp became a whale."

The reins of government having fallen out of the hands of the coalition were, at the King's earnest request, taken up by the boy statesman, William Pitt. And when that happened, it might have been supposed, but for the perfect sincerity of Wilberforce's resolution, that he would have joined his friend's Cabinet. But he was proof against all solicitations, being determined to maintain a thoroughly independent position. Parliament was dissolved in March, 1784, and the young orator, who had made a deep impression on his Yorkshire audience, determined to come forward as candidate for the county. But beforehand he made sure of his seat for Hull; and being chaired according to the then common custom, when the procession came opposite to his mother's house, he sprung upstairs and presented himself at the window of a room which had been his nursery, and there addressed the populace with amazing effect. He had not so many votes as on the former occasion, but he had double the number given to the candidate who stood third at the poll. The same evening he drove to York—a brisk canvass was carried on, meetings were held all over the shire, and enthusiasm on his behalf reached the utmost pitch. The opponents retired, and the victory is recorded in terms like the classical *veni, vidi, vici:* "Up early, breakfasted at tavern, rode frisky horse to Castle; elected, chaired, dined York Tavern." Mr. Duncan, his colleague, shared in the triumph.

The benches of St. Stephen exhibited a far different spectacle when the new Parliament met in May from

what it had done before the dissolution in March. The coalition lost a hundred and sixty members, and Mr. Pitt could reckon upon a good majority; yet of course he remained unpopular with the supporters of Lord North and Mr. Fox, and the echo of election songs and squibs might still be heard lampooning "the virtuous youth, who was taught by his dad on a stool." But the much-abused minister at the opening of the session in 1786, could, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, proudly write to his friend Wilberforce, "The produce of our revenues is glorious; and I am half mad with a project which will give our supplies the effect almost of magic in the reduction of debt." The famous sinking fund scheme had then begun to float in the Premier's brain. Yet Pitt no doubt occupied an awkward position. He had opposed a coalition under North and Fox, now he led a party in which the element of coalition widely obtained. He had commenced as a Whig, and now appeared as a Tory, balanced, however, in this respect on the opposite side, for Fox, first something of a Tory, was now a Whig.

Wilberforce, looking at government measures, could vote for them beyond what he expected; and he says, "Though I had told Pitt I could not promise him unqualified support, I was surprised to find how generally we agreed." But one important question which Pitt dropped interested Wilberforce as much as ever, and he took an early opportunity of discussing it in the new Parliament. Pitt had advocated Reform in the representation of the country, and in the state of Election Laws: in the spring of 1786 Wilberforce introduced anew

the same subject. What he had learned from experience at Hull and at York no doubt gave an additional impetus to his reforming zeal. Yet the abuses witnessed there were surpassed by what obtained in other places. The condition of England in this respect, at that time and long afterwards, was scandalous in the extreme. Nomination boroughs were numerous, and seats were bought and sold like articles of commerce, or leased like farms. Advertisements for the sale of such property appeared in newspapers, and the general price in 1768 was about doubled. Dr. Franklin, who was in England that year, writing to a friend, remarked, "Four thousand pounds is now the market price for a borough. In short, this whole venal nation is now at market, will be sold for about two millions, and might be bought out of the hands of the present bidder (if he would offer half a million more) by the very devil himself." One borough fetched £9,000. Bribery prevailed, and was encouraged by the crown, the ministry, the nobility, and the landholders; and George III. told Lord North, in the year just specified, "As to the immense expense of the general election, it quite surprised me: the sum is at least double of what was expended on any other general election since I came to the throne." Even within my own remembrance, during the first quarter of the present century, not only were guineas piled upon the table of a committee-room to which electors were conducted, that they might count out their bribe, and say afterwards nobody had paid them anything; but another practice obtained, which went by the name of *cooping*—that is,

one party would lay hold of certain freemen, or forty-shilling freeholders, on the other side, and carry him off to a public-house in the country, and *coop* him there in riotous living until they could triumphantly convey him to the polling-booth after the close of the poll, when it was too late for him to vote at all. Such a state of things moved a man of high principle with the strongest indignation; and though Wilberforce could not go as far in the way of reform as he wished, he did go as far as he could. He left the sale of boroughs untouched—indeed, Pitt had excused it as so old a practice, that to endeavour to remove it would be to endanger the fabric of the constitution, and to take out such a large stone might damage the whole wall; so he modestly proposed to purify county elections by providing a general registration of freeholders, and opening the poll at different places at the same time. In fact, he first thought of applying this remedy to Yorkshire alone, but afterwards extended it. Even this tiny bit of improvement, however, could not be effected, and it was defeated, Wilberforce tells us, by a coalition of the King's friends and the Whig aristocracy. It was only a short distance which he was prepared to go in the pathway of reform. When Mr., afterwards Lord, Grey, the leader of the advance guard in 1832, proposed his scheme forty years earlier, Wilberforce opposed him. He treated it as too sweeping by far, and by him then what was accomplished in our time would have been deemed quite revolutionary. Pitt, though he had before advocated a considerable change, resisted Grey in 1792, adopting as the key-note of his speech,

"This is not the time to make hazardous experiments." France terrified the great statesman, and Wilberforce shared in the terror, harping upon the same string, "This is not the time." Notes of a speech, probably made about this period, are preserved, and they contain such key-words as these: "Grey's plan is too bold." "Changes should be made with infinite caution." "Guard against being misled to ascribe to frame of government what arises from personal depravity." A good thought, by the way, often absent from the minds of political reformers. "True policy of this country to conciliate the honest. Moderate reform would not strengthen democrats' hands, but never hope to win the democrats." "Grey wrong both as to the nature of our national malady and its cure." "The same reason which makes me condemn Grey's makes me love moderate reform. Grey's would enable democrats to carry their point: moderation would prevent them." We can imagine how the speaker would clothe these dry bones with flesh and blood, and present to the minds of cautious Whigs, as well as moderate Tories, a political idea calculated to evoke their loud applause.

Another Bill occupied his attention—one by which the judges, who had already power to order executed murderers to be given up for surgical dissection, might have authority for extending the practice to other executed felons. The object was to provide means for carrying on scientific inquiries respecting the human frame, with a view to the advancement of the healing art; and this measure, like the former, seems to have

been defeated in an underhand way, through the influence of Lord Loughborough, who described it as the project of an inexperienced youth unacquainted with law, although the Bill had been drawn up by the Solicitor-General, and corrected by the Attorney-General. The truth was, his lordship disliked the ministerial lawyers, and did what he could to damage their character.

But if Wilberforce did not succeed in his measure, his reputation and influence were increasing more and more, and in fashionable society, as well as in the House of Commons, he was becoming a tower of strength. Burke sometimes dined with him, and to what once occurred between that statesman and himself, the latter thus refers: "Parr ill-naturedly endeavoured to revive a difference which had existed between Burke and myself in 1787. It was during the period of his violent attacks on Pitt. He had delivered a most intemperate invective against the French Navigation Treaty—a measure which was particularly welcome to many of my Yorkshire constituents. In reply to him, I said, 'We can make allowance for the honourable gentleman, because we remember him in better days.' The sarcasm, though not unkindly meant, and called for, as Pitt declared in the debate, by Burke's outrageous violence, yet so exactly described the truth that it greatly nettled him. But it soon passed over, and I had particular pleasure in his dinners with me, as an evidence of our perfect harmony. He was a great man, and I could never understand how he grew to be at one time so entirely neglected. In part, undoubtedly, it was that, like Mackintosh afterwards,

he was above his audience. He had come late in Parliament, and had time to lay in vast stores of knowledge. The field from which he drew his illustrations was magnificent. Like the fabled object of the fairy's favours, whenever he opened his mouth pearls and diamonds dropped from him."

Wilberforce, in the session of 1787, supported Pitt in his treaties with France and Portugal, and delivered an effective speech upon Warren Hastings' impeachment. To these efforts far more important and laborious ones were added, as we shall show hereafter; and the result of overstrained nerves and physical powers, never robust, appeared in 1788, when he was seized with a very severe illness. "There is Wilberforce," said a friend, "he cannot last three weeks." Physicians told his family, "he had not stamina to last a fortnight." So he was sent down to Bath to see what the waters, then in high repute, would do for the wasted invalid. "Behold," he wrote from the city of the waters, "a banished man from London and business. It is no more than I can expect, if my constituents vote my seat abdicated, and proceed to the election of another representative; however, I trust I shall yet be enabled by God's blessing to do the public and them some service." He gradually recovered, and took his place again in Parliament. His health before long once more appeared uncertain; then by rest and care he rallied, and went on with his work as hard as ever.

He helped Pitt in his troubles attendant on the mental derangement of George III., when Fox and his party

strove hard to upset the Ministry. At all events, Pitt so impressed his friend, that the latter wrote to a clergyman: "In the midst of all these disgusting circumstances my friend is every day matter of fresh and growing admiration. I wish you were as constantly as I am, witness to that simple and earnest regard for the public welfare by which he is so uniformly actuated; great as I know is your attachment to him, you would love him more and more."

In 1790 a fresh application was made to Parliament for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts—acts justly condemned over and over again by enlightened members of the Legislature, who had no sympathy with any of the Nonconformist bodies in their ecclesiastical views. They only contended for equal civil rights as the proper heritage of all religious classes. Wilberforce, unhappily, at that time was not disposed to concede this claim of justice. As a Churchman he was afraid of injuring the Church, and as a Christian he really fancied he might damage Christianity by supporting the measure. He certainly took trouble in the examination of the subject, and consulted friends of different shades of opinion. Fox, in advocating the cause of what is called religious liberty—but what was in this case really the cause of civil freedom—alluded to the opposition of the member for Yorkshire; and the member for Yorkshire found himself at the time involved in a serious collision with his Dissenting constituents. By a fallacious kind of reasoning he persuaded himself that the Test Act was essential to the preservation of orthodoxy, a prejudice

which happily evaporated long ago. He said, in writing to a clerical friend years afterwards, "I can imagine few things more likely to call forth the bitter and, I must add, mischievous sneer of some future Hume or Gibbon, than that those who are in possession of the dignities of the Church should be seen endeavouring to escape from the unfashionable opinions with which the acceptance of its honours and emoluments was associated in primitive times. It reminds me invincibly of a reply of Mr. Fox to the Feather Tavern application for release from subscription to the Articles. 'They have,' he said, with an exordium which I will not repeat, 'they have the meat, they shall have the sauce too.'" This was written a quarter of a century after Wilberforce had opposed the repeal of the Test Act, and is adduced by his biographers in support of his resistance, though what it has to do with the subject it is difficult to see. Whatever its force in reference to clerical subscription, it can have no bearing on the exclusion of Nonconformists from office, most of whom were more orthodox than some who were ministers in the Establishment. The repeal was rejected by 294 to 105, and it is but justice to add that Wilberforce records, "The satisfaction I receive from this decision is by no means unalloyed; but I will not enter into particulars, the field would be too large at present." And further, it may be noticed here, though it occurred at a somewhat later period, that in 1800 he opposed what he deemed an infringement of the Toleration Act. At that time he wrote, "I dread lest God have given our Government over to a spirit of delusion, that they should

think of attacking the Dissenters and Methodists; I fear the worst." There is no doubt that ignorance could be found amongst some Dissenting teachers; and Wilberforce quotes Mr. Jay of Bath as an authority for saying, "A number of raw ignorant lads went out in preaching parties every Sunday"—though, oddly enough, Mr. Jay himself when a mere boy began to preach, and would have been pronounced then by many a clergyman "as a raw ignorant lad." But it was obviously most mischievous to abridge the scope of the Toleration Act in order to prevent such a state of things, nor indeed would it have checked the evil. Wilberforce saw this. "I am persuaded," he writes, "that restraints would quicken the zeal of the Methodists and Dissenters to break through them, that prosecutions would be incessant, and that the prevalence of the persecuted opinions and the popularity of the persecuted teachers would be the sure result." At a subsequent period he wrote, in reference to the proposal: "The precise nature of the regulations I cannot recollect with certainty; but I am positively sure that they tended materially to restrict the freedom hitherto enjoyed by Protestant Dissenters, and a fine for the first offence, and imprisonment for the second, were the sanctions by which they were to be enforced." Prettyman Tomline, Bishop of Lincoln, advocated the restrictions, and Wilberforce adds, "I well remember stating to him my firm persuasion that a few weeks after the passing of the intended law several of the Dissenting ministers throughout the kingdom, most distinguished for talents and popularity, would be in prison; and I urged on him

that, even supposing them not to be actuated by a sense of duty, for which I myself gave them credit, or to be cheered by the idea of suffering for righteousness' sake, they would be more than compensated for all the evils of imprisonment by their augmented popularity." The scheme failed: it never even came before Parliament, and Wilberforce winds up his account of it in these words: "I must say, considering everything, I have always been extremely thankful for any share I had in preventing the introduction of this scheme." Though Burke long acted with the Whigs, he was all through life a Conservative at bottom. Though Wilberforce often appeared in concert with Tories, was it not really the case that from first to last he was a reformer and a friend to progress? A love of liberty and a love of justice, a desire for education and a desire for the removal of parliamentary corruption, lay at the root of the main political labours of his whole lifetime.

In 1793 war broke out with France, and Wilberforce thought that "the Ministry had not taken due pains to prevent its breaking out." Hence arose one of his most serious differences with the Prime Minister. He declared his conviction that the true policy of the country was to stand on the defensive, neither to commence nor provoke hostilities, but if possible prevent them; when, however, they actually commenced, he supported the Government as far as possible. In 1794 he resolved to move for peace, though in doing so he knew how much he would displease his friend. He spoke and voted with the Opposition in a spirit of perfect independence; and it is

said there were but two events which disturbed Pitt's sleep—the mutiny at the Nore, and the first open opposition of Wilberforce. On his side the distress was equally great. "No one who has not seen a good deal of public life, and felt how difficult and painful it is to differ widely from those with whom you wish to agree, can judge at what an expense of feeling such duties are performed."

The course Wilberforce now pursued displeased others as well as Pitt. There was a considerable class, especially among the aristocracy, who seemed mad about this war. France was counted the demon of revolution, and war with France the only way to preserve social order. "Your friend Mr. Wilberforce," said Mr. Windham to Lady Spencer, "will be very happy any morning to hand your ladyship to the guillotine." To such lengths will prejudice and passion lead men, who, in some respects, may remain as wise as ever. Friends expostulated with him. Dean Milner hoped he would not prove the dupe of a dishonest opposition. He was by many denounced as a Jacobin, and charged with apostasy. The ladies of Yorkshire would scarcely speak to him. But amidst this strife of tongues, and this storm of uncharitableness, it is beautiful to see how the good man stayed his soul on God, and found peace through faith and prayer; also, to the credit of his two friends it should be added, that the estrangement was but temporary, and that before long they were personally reconciled. It is a great pity that in what followed, Pitt found too earnest a supporter in his friend.

Undoubtedly they were troublous times, and a large number of people were in sympathy with the French Revolutionists. Inflammatory speeches were made against the Government and the King. Disgraceful pictures of his Majesty were exhibited. I have been told by one who witnessed it, that a secret meeting was held in London where men sat on each side of a long table, with foaming tankards, and as the foam on the top was struck off they drank to the toast "So let all —— perish," leaving the blank to be supplied by the word "tyrants" or "kings." But experience has taught that such censurable excitements ought to be prudently dealt with, else injustice will be done, and unwise measures of repression will only increase the lamented evils. Mr. Pitt's policy was most severe. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended; the trials and treatment of political offenders in Scotland in 1793 and 1794 were most unjust, and defeated their end; agitators were crushed only to be canonized; the men who fell under the violence of these rulers rose as martyrs in public estimation; most excellent persons, and ministers of religion of unimpeachable character, were made offenders for a word, or were arraigned as criminals without any word proved against them at all. The prosecution of William Winterbotham, a Baptist minister, for passages alleged to have fallen from his lips in the pulpit, affords a case in point. The circumstances of the trial of Hardy Tooke and Thelwall are well known. Pitt's measures in 1795 ran on very terrible lines and roused even moderate Liberals. Pitt's "Treasonable Attempts" Bill

extended the provisions of the statutes of Edward III., as to compassing and imagining the death of the king, to any publication or writing believed to be of that *tendency*. Treating opinions—or rather the *supposed tendencies* of such opinions—as overt acts, is one of those violations of social justice which would not be tolerated now. It was not only tolerated but upheld then. Public meetings were forbidden, except under most offensive restrictions; and if twelve people remained together after being told to disperse, they were to be adjudged felons without benefit of clergy. Pitt and Fox were now daggers drawn. The latter imprudently said that if the measure were carried, obedience would be no longer a question of duty, but only of prudence. The former said, if he were to resign, his head would be off in six months. The Bill passed, and Wilberforce supported it, with the qualification that the right of petitioning should be retained. "Poor Pitt!" he exclaimed; "I, too, am much an object of popular odium. Riot is expected from the Westminster meeting. The people, I hear, are much exasperated against me. The printers are all angry at the Sedition Bills. How fleeting is public favour."

Much excitement appeared in Yorkshire. Many Liberals regarded the Constitution as in peril. They determined on a public meeting, contrary to the opinion of the High Sheriff. A stirring appeal was issued, and scattered all over the county: "Come forth, then, from your looms, ye honest and industrious clothiers; quit the labours of your fields for one day, ye stout and independent yeomen; come forth in the spirit of your ancestors, and

show your desire to be free." Wilberforce heard of the meeting, and determined to attend. He started on a Sunday. His own carriage could not be got ready in time. "By half-past two," he says, "I was off in Pitt's carriage, and travelled to Alconbury Hill; four horses in all. I was off early on the Monday morning, and got at night to Ferry Bridge; employed myself all the way in preparing for the meeting." He had outriders preceding him on the journey. On Monday he was "almost up to the knees in papers." If he employed speed and energy, those on the other side did the same. On Monday there went through Halton turnpike three thousand horsemen. Many rode a distance of sixty miles, spending a night on the road. As soon as the gates of the Guildhall were opened the party rushed in. Then an adjournment to the Castle-yard was proposed by those who called themselves the friends of order. Wilberforce reached York in his carriage and four, "amidst the acclamations of thousands. The city resounded with shouts that filled the air." "What a row," he said thirty-two years afterwards, "did I make when I turned this corner in 1795. It seemed as if the whole place must come down together." Besides those who had before taken up the cause, numbers were now carried away by enthusiasm for the man. He was in favour of the Castle-yard, and there boldly confronted his opponents. It was stormy weather. Squalls of wind blew hail and sleet in peoples' faces. The crowd became unmanageable. In the midst of the confusion the member for Hull rose up before the High Sheriff's chair, "a singular figure, so slim that it seems to move to

and fro with the gusts of the blast." He carried the day. Eloquence such as his produced a wonderful effect, and all unprejudiced people felt that he was at least honest in his intentions and had no design to deprive his countrymen of their just rights. "It rejoiced my heart," said one admirer to him, "to see you at York, much more to hear you. Your appearance, but most of all your very eloquent philippic, was wonderfully beneficial to the cause, the country, and yourself. Many who to my personal knowledge were hostile to the Bills were induced, in hearing your speech, to sign the addresses and petitions. You have gained over almost every man in the five great commercial towns of the West Riding." The fascination of his speech was acknowledged by another. "I never felt the power of eloquence until that day. You made my blood tingle with delight. The contrast of your address and the mellow tone of your voice, of which not one single word was lost to the hearers, with the bellowing, screaming attempts at speaking in some others, was most wonderful. You breathed energy and vigour into the desponding souls of timid loyalists, and sent us home with joy and delight." The eulogist was in sympathy with the measures beforehand, but his testimony to the charming qualities of the speaker indicates how he must have swayed the feelings and acts of his audience. But whatever the effect of his arguments and appeals might be, backed by the immense force of his name and character, few persons now looking back upon the occurrence would attempt to justify the coercive policy of Pitt, which for years maintained a reign of terror in England that

could not have existed but for the reign of terror in France. Nor should it here be passed over without notice, that the power of Wilberforce's oratory and the effect of his popularity in support of a real unrighteous measure, clearly show how much that is merely adventitious has to do with the decisions of political controversies, and how necessary it is for thoughtful and honest men to break below the surface of what is merely personal and circumstantial, and penetrate into the deepest grounds and reasons of every question in debate.

We find Wilberforce employed very differently the next year, 1796. Quakers had applied for relief from laws which had inflicted on them very great hardship. Vexatious methods of enforcing tithes had brought seven of them that year to York Castle, without hope of deliverance. Serjeant Adair proposed a bill for the recovery of tithes without the infliction of imprisonment. Wilberforce supported it, and it passed the Commons; but the Archbishop of Canterbury opposed it in the Lords, on the ground that there was not time for its proper consideration, though most readers would think it required no long time to make up one's mind on such a measure. It was consequently thrown out. In another direction, the next year, the member for Yorkshire advocated the redress of social wrongs. Roman Catholics and Dissenters were excluded from the militia, which, though a relief to some individuals, branded these denominations with a mark of indignity. He proposed a Bill for the admission of Roman Catholics to military services, but as the debates on the question are not found in the

parliamentary history, we do not know exactly what course he took. His biographers remark that in his own county Catholics were strictly loyal men, who ought not, he thought, to be excluded from joining in the national defence. Pitt sanctioned the measure, but members of the Cabinet who sat in the Upper House supported it feebly. The Bishop of Rochester made a violent speech against it, and the Bill was thrown out.

The February of 1797 saw the commercial world in a frightful panic because the Bank of England stopped payment, and Parliament "assembled amidst a state of things most unpromising." Wilberforce did not approve of such a step as the stoppage of the Bank, but in this, as in some other things, he made the best of a bad business, and sat upon a Parliamentary Committee to inquire into the Bank's solvency. Two months afterwards we have in his life glimpses of a touching scene. He found Burke lying on a sofa, much emaciated, with Windham, Lawrence, and others round him. "The attention shown to Burke by all that party was just like the treatment of Ahithophel of old—'It was as if one went to inquire of the Lord.'" The subject under discussion was the Portsmouth mutiny, which threw the nation into another alarm; but what gives pathos to the interview of the two statesmen, who agreed with each other on certain points, is that it was the last time they met in this world.

In the new session of the same year, 1797, Wilberforce thought it was his duty as a loyal subject to strengthen the hands of the Government in reference to France. Once he had been ready to relinquish all

which the French and their allies had won from England; now, after the effrontery of the French ruler, he would not consent to peace without reserving Ceylon or the Cape. But he was not satisfied with the state of affairs, and lamented it in private, though he endeavoured to make the best of the case in Parliament; for he trembled at the increase of the expenditure, and thought it would break the back of popular patience. He urged on the Prime Minister the reform of abuses and the adoption of economy, with the hope of conciliating the national good will, but all in vain. Still he vindicated his friend's character, and eulogised his patriotism; and when Pitt and Tierney fought a duel, and Wilberforce felt anxious to make a motion to prevent such encounters on the part of His Majesty's Ministers, he dealt tenderly with Pitt himself and dropped the question, partly from want of support and partly to relieve the minister's mind. Again we find him supporting Pitt's policy. The Habeas Corpus Suspension Act had been passed in 1794: it was continued until 1800. Wilberforce opposed its suspension in 1798, and answered Courtenay's attacks upon the treatment of State prisoners in a style which greatly amused the House. Courtenay complained of the treatment of State prisoners in Cold Bath Fields Prison, and invoked the sympathies of Wilberforce. The latter, who happened to be acquainted with the place from charitable visits which he had paid, started up with a reply. "The honourable gentleman tells us the prisoners are starved. But what says the visiting magistrate, who lately sent me the result of his own observation? With the permission of

the House I will read his very words: 'I saw their dinner; better I would not wish on my own table—it was roast beef and plum pudding.' Aye, sir, and my friend is a Doctor of Divinity. Why this difference of statement reminds me of Parson Adams' bewilderment, when one passenger assured him, as the stage drove by a mansion, that its owner was the best husband and father in the whole world, whilst another woke up at the moment with the exclamation—'What a fine estate! what a pity it belongs to such a rascal!' The simplicity of Parson Adams led him to conclude that they must be speaking of two different persons. Now, sir, though I do not mean to charge the honourable gentleman with being a Parson Adams in simplicity, yet surely when he hears these dissimilar accounts he may well doubt whether they describe the same place." "How long is it, Wilberforce," Pitt asked, as he leaned over the Treasury bench in old St. Stephen, to his sprightly friend as he sat down, "since you read 'Joseph Andrews'?" Wilberforce's allusion was very clever, and exhibits a singular exercise of memory; but it was a great pity that such ready humour should have been employed, indirectly at least, on the side of suspending the Habeas Corpus Acts and maintaining what was really an English reign of terror. In 1817 he is seen pursuing a similar course, when Sir Samuel Romilly remarked, "The honourable and religious member could hardly vote for any measure more thoroughly opposed to vital Christianity:" in 1819 he appears advocating the second reading of a Seditions Bill.

In 1797 the Irish Union was a parliamentary subject, and though objecting to it at first, Wilberforce gradually fell in with the Premier's scheme, praising him as "more fair and open and well-intentioned, and even well-principled, than any other of his class." Again, in 1800 we find him reluctantly supporting the administration in its foreign and coercive policy, yet at the same time mourning over the condition of the country, and when famine was beginning to cast its shadows over the land, he was "much grieved at Pitt's languor about the scarcity."

Wilberforce's journal for 1801 opens with a note of sorrow, yet of faith. "What tempests rage around, and how are we urged to seek for that peaceful haven which alone can ensure real security and happiness." The King and the Cabinet quarrelled about Roman Catholic emancipation. The King was against it, Pitt was for it, and in this respect had the sympathy of his friend. To the cause of Roman Catholic emancipation that friend remained firm till death, though he was thought to waver a little in 1807. As late as 1821 he spoke in the House of Commons on the subject, and in reference to the subject Mr. Buxton remarked, "It was a most able exposition of his views, and the passage in which he said that though we had delivered the Roman Catholics from prison we insisted on their wearing the gaol dress, was much admired." Mr. Addington succeeded Mr. Pitt as Prime Minister, and Wilberforce yielded him support as a minister of peace. The popularity of the peace gave firmness to the Government, and Wilberforce rejoiced that Pitt, though out of office, supported it magnani-

mously. Besides other speeches on different subjects, the member for Yorkshire, in 1802, manfully crossed swords with Windham, and pithily notes in his journal, "Bull-baiting Bill lost— 64 against 51."

A general election followed in July, 1802, when he was returned for his native county without opposition. According to a byestander, "It was an august and interesting scene, not one hand was lifted up against him, and the surrounding countenances were expressive of the greatest delight and esteem towards him."

A speech which he delivered at the opening of the session in November, 1802, on the impolicy of engaging in Continental alliances as principals, seems to have secured a more than usual amount of applause; and in March, 1803, amidst threatenings of invasion, he deplored the disappointment which he felt at Mr. Addington's policy, whom he had looked to for correcting abuses; but in vain had he endeavoured to spirit him up when he was convinced they really existed. "Just now, when I expected I should hear of the members of a particular board that they were about to be hanged, or (as I am writing to a sober matter-of-fact man) more literally, that they were turned out with disgrace, I have heard that they are going to have £200 each added to their salaries." In May war loomed on the horizon. Wilberforce, anxious to prevent its coming, spoke late one night against it, but the House was impatient, being of a different opinion. In reply to Pitt, who had talked of national pride, honour, and the like, he published a speech which he delivered on the peace of Amiens, showing its advantages, and

contending, "Surely if we are forced into war again, our people will engage in it with more spirit because they see their rulers unwilling to submit them to its evils." At that juncture, Napoleon Buonaparte so alarmed this country by the strides of his ambition that there was only too great a readiness to unsheath the sword again, unmindful of consequences except as they related to victory; but Wilberforce, with his pacific turn of mind, could not but realise the horrors of the battlefield, and would therefore stay an entrance on the strife until it became inevitable. Windham declared defensive war would be ruin, and he and others, expecting an invasion, urged that England should be beforehand with the foe, and meet him on the other side of the water. Amidst this plausible reasoning it is a relief to light on the following passage:

"I trust, my dear sir, that though I am writing to a sea officer (Captain Bedford, R.N.), I must honestly avow that I pant for peace. Alas, that the bad passions of men should produce such a state of things that the two most enlightened nations on earth—possessing more than any others the means of enjoying and diffusing happiness, should be respectively straining every nerve to aggravate each others' sufferings and accomplish each others' destruction. Oh for that blessed state when the reign of peace and love shall be complete and universal! With these sentiments of feeling you may be sure that I shall lose no opportunity of promoting the restoration of peace with France. It is much to be regretted that, from pride and other similar passions, nations are

always forward to rush into wars, though the bulk of a people soon begin to repent of them and to wish for the termination of hostilities. Ministers of State, on the contrary, are really less prone to get into wars; but when a country is once plunged into them, they are drawn forward by their own schemes; they flatter themselves that they shall by this measure and that weaken the power of the enemy, and forgetting the expenditure of blood and treasure that is always going on, they are seldom disposed to leave off till they are forced to it; often also they are afraid that a less honourable peace than the sanguine expectations of men led them to hope might be obtained, should disgrace their character and fix on them an imputation of pusillanimity or weakness."

Whatever may be thought of the beginning of the sentence, there is no doubt that at the end of it Wilberforce hits the right nail on the head. When wars have been unjustly begun, simply because they are begun, statesmen are resolved to persevere in them from a motive grossly misnamed honour and patriotism; but to continue what was *wrong at the beginning*, really from selfishness and pride, is a course of proceeding reprobated alike by reason, conscience, and religion.

In 1804 Pitt went into opposition; then Wilberforce, with his amiable instincts, felt himself in a difficulty between the minister and his opponent, and he expresses his feeling in this sentence of his journal: "I cannot help regretting that Addington's temperance and conciliation should not be connected with more vigour. Poor Addington, with all his faults I feel for him; but

what a lesson does he read me. Had he really acted up to his principles, he might probably have been above his present difficulties." Wilberforce lamented the former premier's alienation from his successor, and hoped for their reunion. After the occurrence of party intrigues, Pitt was persuaded by the King to resume office, on condition that he would never advocate Catholic Emancipation or the repeal of the Test Act, a stipulation utterly indefensible. Addington having resigned, Pitt laid his hand once more on the helm of affairs, and not long afterwards friendly relations were established between the two statesmen. Of course Wilberforce did what he could to support Pitt in his renewed position; but the days of the latter were numbered. Before, however, the great statesman ended his career, Wilberforce gave a proof of his independence. The ministerial integrity of Lord Melville being impeached, Pitt stood by his colleague, saying he had not pocketed public money, although he had acted like a fool. Wilberforce took a graver view. Sitting upon the continuation of the Treasury bench, he rose to address the Speaker, glancing at Pitt, who watched anxiously the drift of the speech—feeling at the moment, "the fascination of that eye from which Lord Erskine was always thought to shrink." There was no mistaking the line pursued. Alluding to the base decision of the judges in the case of levying ship-money, he said, "The damage and mischief cannot be expressed that the Crown and State sustained by the deserved reproach and infamy that attended the judges. We is who are now truly on our trial before the moral

sense of England, and, if we shrink from it, deeply shall we hereafter repent our conduct." An even division followed, the Speaker gave a casting-vote against Government, and Wilberforce did not reach home till half-past five in the morning, after which he wrote in his diary, "Could not get cool in body or mind." His honourable conduct inflicted a blow on the Ministry which Pitt could not fail to feel, for the impeachment of Melville followed, and then Wilberforce stayed his hand. "When the sentence of the law is passed is not that sufficient? Am I to join in the execution of it? Is it to be expected of me, that I am to stifle the natural feelings of the heart, and not even to shed a tear over the very sentence I am pronouncing? I know not what Spartan virtue or Stoical pride might require, but I know that I am taught a different, aye and a better, lesson, by a greater than Lycurgus or Zeno." Melville, however, was acquitted. Perhaps no act in the whole political life of Wilberforce displayed so much firmness of principle and so much moral courage as the part he took in the memorable debate respecting Lord Melville, because here he had to overcome predilections arising out of a strong personal attachment. To get up in Parliament, and to say from a sense of duty what is known will cut to the heart the loved companion of one's youth, is of all brave ventures the bravest. In his anti-slavery warfare, he had Pitt with him in principle, in feeling at any rate. But here he had Pitt against him, or rather he avowed himself against Pitt. Party ties never gave him much trouble, but the tie almost fraternal must terribly have done so on this

occasion. The man who can rise above the allurements of friendship, where truth and justice are involved, establishes a character for the most courageous honesty.

The French victory at Austerlitz stabbed Pitt with a mortal wound, and he died in January, 1806, broken-hearted. "Pitt killed by the enemy as much as Nelson," are Wilberforce's words; and writing to Lord Muncaster he said, "There is something peculiarly affecting in the time and circumstances of Pitt's death. I own I have a thousand times (aye, times without number) wished and hoped that a quiet interval would be afforded him, perhaps in the evening of life, in which he and I might confer freely on the most important of all subjects. But the scene is closed for ever."

Pitt's death occasioned the appointment of a new Ministry under Lord Grenville, including Fox, Windham, and Addington (now Lord Sidmouth); and the appointment of a new Ministry, led to a general election. Two Ministries, two dissolutions, two general elections occurred within the space of two years, — a circumstance which brought Wilberforce twice before his Yorkshire constituents in the same brief space. In 1806 he was returned without going to the poll; in 1807 he had to endure a contest of tremendous severity. "Nothing since the days of the Revolution," so we read in a York newspaper, "has ever presented to the world such a scene as this county for fifteen days and nights. Repose or rest have been unknown in it, except it was seen in a messenger asleep on his post horse, or in his carriage. Every day the roads in every direction to and from every remote corner of the county,

have been covered with vehicles loaded with voters; and barouches, curricles, gigs, flying waggons, and military cars with eight horses, crowded sometimes with forty voters, have been scouring the county, leaving not the slightest chance for the quiet traveller to urge his humble journey, or find a chair in an inn to sit down upon." Within little more than a week nearly £65,000 had been subscribed towards Wilberforce's expenses, but the whole charge amounting only to £28,600, forty-six per cent. of the former sum was returned to the subscribers. The money spent by his opponents amounted to £200,000. Yet a poor clergyman refused to accept his travelling expenses, and when urged, ended by adding what he received to the subscription list. "How did you come up?" a farmer from Rotherham was asked, who plumped for the popular candidate. "Sure enow I cam all'd-way ahint Lord Milton's carriage." The final numbers were for Wilberforce, 11,806; Milton, 11,177; Lascelles, 10,989.

Fox died in October, 1806, and Grenville's Ministry resigned in March, 1807, not because it was defeated in Parliament, but because George III. again demanded an unconstitutional pledge respecting Catholic emancipation. The Duke of Portland became Premier with a decidedly Tory Cabinet. This embarrassed Wilberforce, as throughout his independent career he wished to support the existing Government as far as possible. This principle of his laid him open to the charge of inconsistency and vacillation. The Whigs sometimes regarded him as a Tory, the Tories sometimes called him a Whig, both parties all the while counting him in their hearts a truly

honest man. As to Catholic emancipation, though he had supported it, yet he did not like to identify himself with the party who had lost office through their refusal to pledge themselves against it; and with regard to the abolition of the slave trade, hereafter to be described, though the retired Ministry had secured his success in that enterprise, he could not on that account see his way clear to a union with the Whig party. He felt his obligation to them. "Yet on the other hand," he said, "I feel deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of not embarking in a Roman Catholic bottom, if I may so term it, the interest and well being of our Protestant empire." He seems to have allowed his Protestant zeal, and the persuasion of his Protestant friends, to obscure his judgment, and to prevent his clear discernment of the distinction between supporting Roman Catholic emancipation and supporting the Roman Catholic Church. The one was a question of civil justice, the other of religious faith. In his opposition to the endowment of Popery he was wise and consistent. "The College of Maynooth," he writes in April, 1807, "—a vote for the doubling the foundation of which passed a few weeks ago, so as to send out four hundred Roman Catholic priests every four years; the most pernicious measure, in my judgment, which has been assented to for many years—the College of Maynooth alone will, if not checked, increase beyond measure the Roman Catholic body."

In 1809 Wilberforce was much distressed by the business in the House relative to the Duke of York and Mrs. Clarke. "We are alive to the political offence, but

to the moral crime we seem utterly insensible, and the reception which every *double entendre* meets in the House must injure our characters greatly with all religious minds." "What scenes have we been unveiling to the peaceful villagers of Cumberland and Westmoreland. If we believe the Bible, we must believe that the vices of the great, both directly and consequentially, call down the judgment of the Almighty; and I must say that I am strongly influenced by the persuasion that by marking such shameful debauchery thus publicly disclosed, with the stigma of the House of Commons, we should be acting in a manner that would be pleasing to God, and directly beneficial to the morals of the community. On one day the House of Lords were employed on five Divorce Bills, and we in examining Mrs. Clarke. I was reading this morning Isaiah xv., 'Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?' This still saddens my heart; yet there are many righteous, I trust, among us." In these private utterances the pious statesman will win the sympathy of those who believe that righteousness exalteth a nation and that sin is a disgrace to a people, but it is to be feared he had not a large number of fellow members who shared in his sentiments. "People," wrote Sir Arthur Wellesley, "are outrageous in the country on account of the immorality of his life [the Duke of York] *which makes no impression in town.*" Thus much good however followed—the Duke of York resigned, but the Duke of Cumberland told Thornton that the King "and all of them" were very angry with Wilberforce.

In 1810 he voted against the Administration in an

inquiry relative to the miserable Walcheren Expedition, and the same year voted for a reprimand of Sir Francis Burdett when the House of Commons sent him to the Tower, and also urged the rejection of the Middlesex petition. Lord Sidmouth's Bill in 1811, for the serious curtailment of religious liberty in reference to Dissenters, met with Wilberforce's decided opposition, and soon after this he retired from the representation of Yorkshire, alleging as reasons—the state of his family which required more attention than he had been able to give, and the state of his health which required release from the cares connected with a large constituency. The announcement of his resignation in 1812, though approved by intimate friends, produced deep regret in the minds of electors who had so staunchly supported him in so many contests. He now accepted the representation of Bramber in Sussex, boasting of a fortress in Saxon times, but at the beginning of the century one of the rotten boroughs of England. At an election in 1768, it is said the sum of £1,000 was offered for a single vote and refused; and it is further related, that when the new member was driving through the village, consisting of a few tumble-down houses, occupied by the thirty voters who lived in the little street under the shadow of the ruined castle, he called to the post-boy inquiring the name of the place. "Bramber, sir." "Bramber, why that is the place I am member for." He was dissatisfied with the Government in 1814, but did not offer any direct opposition. He supported the Corn Law Bill the next year, which exposed him to inconveniencies thus described in a letter to his son:

"Were you to enter the dining-room at family prayer time, without having received some explanation of our appearance, you would probably think that we were expecting a visit from the ex-Emperor and his followers at Kensington Gore, and had prepared a military force to repel his assault. For you would see four soldiers and a servant, together with another stranger (Bushel, the peace officer), who, as far as bodily strength would go, would play his part as well as any of them. The fact is that we had some reason to apprehend mischief for our house, in consequence of the part which I judged it my duty to take on the Corn Bill; and as your mother, etc., was advised to evacuate the place, I preferred the expedient which had been adopted by Mr. Banks and several other of my friends, that of having four or five soldiers in my house—the very knowledge of their being there rendering an attack improbable. But it was a curious instance of the rapid circulation of intelligence, that at Covent Garden market early on Saturday morning, John Shannan who sells garden stuff, being there to purchase for the supply of his shop, was hooted after with, 'So your old master has spoken for the Corn Bill' (I had spoken only the night before); 'but his house shall pay for it.' All however is hitherto quiet, and I trust will continue so."

I am old enough to recollect perfectly well the extraordinary excitement which existed amongst the lower classes in the year 1815: how the Corn Bill was a subject of execration in all their mouths; how every one who voted for it, however liberal and in other respects popular he might have been, was the object of popular fury;

and how, in a provincial city in an agricultural district, a multitude of people marched through the streets, vowing vengeance on farmers and millers, and determined to seize on sacks of wheat and flour that they might fling them into the river. No doubt their resentment rose to madness. Destruction as a remedy for the injustice of laws is certainly the height of absurdity, but the bitter disappointment of the working classes at not obtaining the plenty they were led to dream of after the return of peace, as well as the injustice and foolishness of legislation at the time, must be remembered, not in justification, but to to some extent in palliation of conduct on the part of thousands who were clamouring for bread.

What Wilberforce did in reference to the abolition of slavery during following years will presently appear; in the meantime it is enough to say, that in 1819 he supported a petition from the Quakers in reference to the severity of the penal code, and also supported Mackintosh in his measure as to capital punishments. The agitation in the country after the accession of George IV., produced by the arrival of Queen Caroline and the proceedings against her, occupied the most serious thoughts of Wilberforce; and though by no means what would be considered a supporter of her cause—when English people were almost divided into two classes, the Queen's friends and the Queen's enemies—he aimed at a settlement of the dispute, and carried by a large majority an address to her Majesty, intended to serve as a basis of peace, if not reconciliation. In 1824 he supported a Bill for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and made his last speech in the House of

Commons—it was on the subject of slavery; then in 1825 he wrote his last frank for a letter to his two sons at Oxford.

"My Dear Boys,—When Charles the First was on the very point of exchanging, as I trust, a temporal for an eternal crown, he was forced to be short, so he said but one word; and now I have but a moment in which to use my pen, and therefore, my dear boys, I also will adopt his language and add as he did—Remember. You can fill up the chasm. I will only add that with constant wishes and prayers for your usefulness, comfort, and honour here, and for glory, honour, and immortality for you hereafter, I remain, ever your most affectionate Father,

"W. Wilberforce.

"I am not clear that this letter will pass free, and therefore I make it single."

Before I close this account of Wilberforce's political career, a fact ought to be stated which will surprise many. With his reputation for eloquence, one would expect that his speeches would be carefully reported, but this was not the case. Some of his constituents lamented that such short abstracts should be given of such a representative of such a constituency. And he himself complained: "Often when I have taken a material share in any discussion, and a long report is made of the speeches of other members, especially of those who are favourites with the newspaper editors and reporters, all that I have said is entirely omitted, or at best very little indeed inserted. But this is not the worst; sentiments are often ascribed to

me, not only different from those which I have expressed, but directly opposed to them. All this arises in part, I doubt not, from inadvertency; but I own that, after seeing how systematical this treatment of me is, I cannot but impute it to the circumstance of my not belonging to any party, on which account I am obnoxious to both and to their writers, who are commonly among the most violent of their partisans." Whether Wilberforce's conjecture was right or wrong, the fact is to be lamented now for the sake of history, inasmuch as owing to it, in the absence of speeches published by himself, except one on the slave trade and the substance of some on the East India Bill, we are without adequate means of judging for ourselves the weight of those arguments, the force of those appeals, and the manner of that expression, which produced such wonderful effects year after year upon the men who sat on the benches of the old chapel of St. Stephen.

Nor can we quit this portion of Wilberforce's history without noticing how he strove to bring his political movements under the influence of religious principle. Speaking of Sir Robert Inglis, Sir Walter Scott said in 1828, "He may be considered now as the head of the religious party in the House of Commons—a powerful body which Wilberforce long commanded. It is a difficult situation; for the adaptation of religious motives to earthly is apt, among the infinite delusions of the human heart, to be a snare." Doubtless the infinite delusions thus referred to are a snare in political as in every other department of human life; but how the application of religion itself, which is, when truly understood, the highest

form of morality, can be reckoned a snare I do not understand. Personal prejudice, party passion, and sinister ends may seek to varnish over their deformity with coatings of religious pretension; but that is the very opposite of an honest application of Scripture precepts and principles to the conduct of a statesman. Such an application will effectually deliver him from the "infinite delusions" of human nature, and guide the conscience amidst the perplexities of public affairs and passing conflicts. That Wilberforce sincerely endeavoured to make Christianity the guide of his parliamentary career, most readers of his memoirs will admit, however they may differ from him in political opinions.

CHAPTER III.

ANTI-SLAVERY CRUSADE.

IT is a curious fact that negro slavery in the West Indies rose out of a benevolent purpose. The Spanish Las Casas, pitying the feeble aborigines of St. Domingo, who worked in the mines at the cost of their lives, interceded for the employment of African negroes as a race more fitted to perform such labour. Out of that mistaken charity sprung an enormous amount of injustice and suffering. And another fact is to be coupled with this. Englishmen within the last twenty years of the seventeenth century transported 300,000 unhappy beings from their native shores to the Western plantations; and between 1700 and 1786 carried in slave-ships no less than 610,000 of the same class to the island of Jamaica: then, towards the close of the eighteenth century other Englishmen rose up indignant at the inhuman traffic, and proceeded to take measures for putting a stop to this flagrant iniquity.

Members of the Society of Friends in America were the first to protest against it, and in this country they took a leading part in the earliest united efforts for its overthrow. The first person who publicly appeared in

England as a worker in this philanthropic cause was Thomas Clarkson, a gentleman educated at Cambridge, who gained a prize for writing a Latin essay on the question, "Is it right to make slaves of others against their will?" Riding to London after his literary achievement, the young man got off his horse, and sitting down by the road-side, asked another question, "If the contents of this essay be true, is not the time come for some one to see these calamities to their end?" An inspiration came over him. He felt that Providence was calling on him to put his hand to the enterprise. Giving up the idea of being a clergyman, for which he only entered into deacon's orders, he devoted his life to the welfare of slaves, and acted as a pioneer in the new path by translating his essay into English, adding a number of additional illustrative facts. He afterwards, with prodigious energy, collected evidence on the subject of the trade, and even searched fifty vessels to find a single sailor who could bear witness to the seizure of an African village of men, women, and children, as cargo for the slave merchant.

Whilst Clarkson was pursuing his line of action William Wilberforce was being prepared for his share in the vast undertaking. We have seen that as a lad his thoughts had being turned to the subject, and, to use his own language, somewhat worthy of attention as indicative of the providential impulses by which men are led into particular lines of conduct, as early as 1780, "I had been strongly interested for the West Indian slaves, and in a letter, asking my friend Gordon to go to Antigua to

collect information for me, I expressed my determination, or at least my hope, that at some time or other I should redress the wrongs of those wretched and degraded beings." Another gentleman, Mr. Ramsey, had been collecting information on the subject, and in 1783 was preparing a work with the hope of moving the British public to take up the cause, when Wilberforce came into contact with him, and conversed on the subject which excited such interest in the minds of both. The year before, 1782, the Society of Friends had petitioned Parliament for the abolition of the traffic, and these influences would have an effect on him who was destined to be its great parliamentary advocate.

Ramsey continued fighting his battle in 1784 and 1785, and then, in 1786, Mr. Clarkson published a pamphlet containing the result of his researches up to that time, and by this publication did much to call the attention of the country to the evils of the system. A copy of his work he presented to Wilberforce, and in the interview on that occasion began those united efforts which were carried on year after year with zeal and cordiality. Wilberforce also on his own account made inquiries of African merchants throughout the year 1786. "I found them," he observes, "at this time ready to give me information freely, the trade not yet having become the subject of alarming discussion; but their accounts were full of prejudice and error. I got also together at my house from time to time such persons as knew anything about the matter. Several of us met at breakfast at Sir Charles Middleton's. I think also at Mr. Bennet

Langton's, and I am sure at my own house." When the triumph came after years of warfare, all who had contributed anything to the ultimate result would be remembered and enrolled in the list of benefactors; and so an accumulation of knowledge would arise, leading to differences of opinion, and, indeed, to a considerable amount of controversy touching the chronological order and the relative proportions of such efforts as helped to advance the cause. This is certain, that Clarkson took the lead in collecting evidence for the information of the country, and that Wilberforce took the lead in parliamentary campaigns.

In May, 1787, a committee was formed in London, of which Granville Sharp was elected chairman, and in which Thomas Clarkson played a conspicuous part. Wilberforce did not join it at first from prudential reasons, thinking that his exertions might be more effective if he acted alone; but the committee acted with great energy, collecting and publishing a large amount of exciting information, and so preparing for the battle to be fought on the floor of the House of Commons. There friends were rising up to advocate the cause of the slave. Even so early as 1780, Mr. Burke had drawn up a code of regulations for immediately mitigating and ultimately extinguishing the flagrant evil. With Pitt and Grenville, in 1787, Wilberforce talked the matter over, and public sympathy being aroused, Wilberforce undertook to introduce the question before the House.

There can be no doubt that the religious change which had taken place just before in his character and habits,

came in aid of his present undertaking. Not merely from impulses of humanity, but from a strong sense of duty towards God, did he pledge himself "to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free," to "break every yoke."

But difficulties thickened and darkened as the day drew near for the commencement of the controversy—signs of formidable opposition made appearance. The administration was unfavourable to Wilberforce's measures, although Pitt sympathised with him. The latter issued a summons to the Privy Council to examine into the state of our trade with Africa; but this served to create delay, and so far to favour the West Indian merchants, who wished to stave off the business. Strange to say, witnesses came forward to aver that the trade was not only a necessity but also really humane; yet a hundred petitions were poured in from the country praying that the question might be taken up immediately. Wilberforce was at this time very unwell, and unable to take his place in Parliament, whereupon Pitt himself, in May, 1788, moved a resolution binding the House to consider the state of the slave trade early the next session. A warm debate ensued. Burke advocated abolition. Fox almost made up his mind to immediate abolition, member after member rose to express approval. Lamentations were made over Wilberforce's absence, who had already come to be regarded as leading counsel in this suit of charity. But the West Indians were not silent, and, amidst so much promise and hope, the clouds of a violent resistance were visible enough. However, a resolution passed that

enormities related should be tolerated no longer, and a Bill brought in by Sir William Dolben, limiting the number of slaves and taking precautions against their cruel treatment, was carried by a large majority. It also was carried through the House of Lords.

In 1789, on the one hand, Privy Council examinations were continued; but, on the other hand, public meetings were held by planters and their friends, and newspapers and pamphlets were employed on the same side, contending that the abolition of the trade would ruin the colonies. Wilberforce, as Coryphæus of the benevolent party, was denounced in the most violent manner, and his friend Gisborne playfully told him, "I shall expect to read in the newspapers of your being carbonadoed by West Indian planters, barbecued by African merchants, and eaten by Guinea captains; but do not be daunted, for I will write your epitaph."

On the 12th of May, 1789, Wilberforce made his first great speech on the subject.

Wilberforce's opponents succeeded in resisting his series of resolutions, and in getting a decision deferred until counsel had been heard at the bar of the House. Witnesses were summoned, the examination dragged on, and all that could be done by the Abolitionists was to re-enact a Bill for mitigating the horrors of slave treatment during the middle passage between their native country and the land of bondage.

As an illustration of the champion's efforts just after this may be cited a passage from a friend's letter, written from Yoxall Lodge, the seat of the Rev. Thomas Gis-

borne, saying, "Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Babington have never appeared downstairs since we came, except to take a hasty dinner and for half an hour after we have supped —the slave trade now occupies them nine hours daily." Thus preparations were made for future campaigns; but all the while it was the policy of the other side to put a drag upon the wheels of the Abolition cause, and, if total defeat could not be obtained, at least to secure some years delay. Political events helped them. The unsettled state of affairs on the Continent, the advance of the French Revolution, and the espousal of the cause of Abolition by the leaders of that alarming event, were pleaded as reasons against any change just then. All sorts of troubles were prognosticated as the result of Abolition. But in February, 1791, Wilberforce received much encouragement in a letter from the founder of Methodism, written on his death-bed:

"*February* 24, 1791.

"My Dear Sir,—Unless the Divine power has raised you up to be as Athanasius, *contra mundum*, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for the very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils; but if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh be not weary of well-doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest

that ever saw the sun, shall vanish before it. That He, who has guided you from your birth up, may continue to strengthen you in this and all things is the prayer of, dear sir, your affectionate servant,

"JOHN WESLEY."

Tuesday, April 19, found Wilberforce in his place, addressing the Speaker once more on behalf of the poor negroes. Pitt and Fox both supported him; so did William Smith, Member for Norwich, a zealous Abolitionist; but the debate, described as "a war of the pigmies against the giants," ended in a majority for the pigmies. There were 163 pigmies against 88 giants. Fresh appeals now had to be made to the country, and Clarkson, the great outside Abolitionist, renewed his journeys for the enlightenment of England in reference to the merits of this momentous controversy.

As an appendix to the Abolition business, the formation of the Sierra Leone Company here comes within sight — a project, not for mercantile profits, but with a view to African civilisation and the general improvement of the African race in their native country. Wilberforce joined the Company, and promoted its interest as far as possible; but Abolition business continued the main object of his life, and to assist his parliamentary efforts he made what he called an appeal to the moral sense of the country. The prospects just now were not so bright as they were at first. There was a good deal to discourage; progress was succeeded by reaction. The toil resembled that of Sisyphus: one hour the stone was

rolled up, the next it rolled down. The strong hands of the people were needed for strengthening the legislature. Wilberforce truly apprehended the nature of the case. "I wish you, and all other country labourers," he wrote to Mr. Hey, "to consider yourselves not as having concluded, but as only *beginning* your work: it is on the general impression and feeling of the nation that we must rely, rather than on the political conscience of the House of Commons. So let the flame be fanned continually, and may it please God, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, to bless our endeavours." Meetings and petitions multiplied accordingly. "The clergy to a man are favourable to the cause," it was said; and also that "the people have taken up the matter in the view of duty and religion, and do not inquire what any man or any set of men think of it. From London to Inverness Mr. Pitt's sincerity is questioned, and, unless he can convince the nation of his cordiality in our cause, his popularity must suffer greatly." Then followed wearisome delays. Business was put off from time to time. Politics absorbed public attention. Startling events in Paris diverted peoples' thoughts from other things. Gentler attacks on the old system were attempted. A Bill to suppress the foreign trade was laid before the House and carried, only to be abandoned and rejected by the Lords. Wilberforce's biography marks the period between 1792 and 1794 as one indicating the retrogression of the Abolition cause. Next came a long lull. The year 1799 found him again at work. Upon the 1st of March he moved for immediate abolition. Canning

then appeared on the field, and relieved the weariness of long discussions by flashes of wit. Wilberforce's speeches continued to sustain equally his reputation for eloquence and for benevolence. He insisted upon the evils inflicted on Africa, where along a coast-line of four thousand miles were perpetrated deeds of injustice, of barbarism, and of blood. The mischief penetrated the interior of the continent. "The storm on the surface," he said, "stirs slightly even the still depths of the ocean." He warned the House not to provoke the wrath of Heaven by hardened continuance in acknowledged guilt. "I do not mean," he remarked, "that we must expect to see the avenging hand of Providence laid bare in hurricanes and earthquakes; but there is an established order in God's government, a sure connection between vice and misery, which, through the operation of natural causes, works out His will and vindicates His moral government."

Brighter days did not at once dawn at the opening of the present century. After further delays and partial successes, Wilberforce, in 1804, could record in his journal, June 25: "Pitt, warming in his speech, moved against hearing counsel as well as evidence, and carried it without a division;" and two days afterwards he tells of his Bill as read for the third time—his majority 99 to 33. But what follows is vexatious: "I carried up my Bill to the Lords. Pitt told me that a meeting had been held of the Cabinet, in which it was agreed that the subject be hung up till next year, on the ground that the examination of evidence was indispensable, that they could make no progress this year, and that there-

fore it was better not to bring it on. I own it quite lowers my spirits to see all my hopes for this year blasted, yet I can't help myself." Again, February 6, 1805, we find jotted down, "Beat, alas! 70 to 77. Sad work! Though I thought we might be hard run, from the face of the House, I could not expect the defeat, and all expressed astonishment."

But after Pitt's death, and the accession of the new Ministry, things took a decided turn. Though Wilberforce's political opinions on many points were not in harmony with those of the Government, he found in Lord Grenville, Mr. Fox, and Mr. Windham decided friends to the Abolition cause. The Foreign Slave Bill passed in 1806. Resolutions also were proposed by Fox, declaring that the slave trade was contrary to the principles of justice, humanity, and sound policy, and that the House would proceed to abolish it. These resolutions were adopted.

The year of victory and triumph was 1807. Lord Grenville introduced an Abolition Bill in the House of Lords, which was carried. It came down from the Lords to the Commons. What occurred there on the 23rd of February is thus recorded in Wilberforce's journal: "Slave trade debate. Lord Howick opened, embarrassed and not at ease, but argued ably. Astonishing eagerness of House, six or eight starting up to speak at once, and asserting high principles of rectitude. Lord Milton very well. Fawkes finished, but too much studied and cut and dried. Solicitor-General excellent; and at length contrasted my feelings—returning to my private roof, and

receiving the congratulations of my friends and laying my head on my pillow — with Buonaparte's, encircled with kings, his relatives. It quite overcame me." In this exquisitely simple style the hero records the moment of victory. At the allusion to a contrast between the English philanthropist and the great French warrior, "the whole House, surprised into a forgetfulness of its ordinary habits, burst forth into acclamations of applause." "Is it true," he was once asked, "that the House gave you three cheers upon the conclusion of the Solicitor-General's speech? And if so, was not this an unprecedented effusion of approbation?" "To the question you ask me," he replied, "I can only say, that I was so completely overpowered by my feelings when he touched so beautifully on my domestic reception (which had been precisely realised a few evenings before on my return from the House of Lords) that I was insensible to all that was passing around me."

An incident occurred just after the victory too interesting to be passed over. A group of friends gathered round the pacific conqueror in his house, Palace Yard, discussing the debate and its results. Two hundred and eighty-three had voted for the Bill, sixteen against it. "Let us make out the names of the miscreants," exclaimed one of his zealous supporters. "Never mind the miserable sixteen, let us think of our glorious two hundred and eighty," was Wilberforce's reply; adding, "Well, what shall we abolish next?" Reginald Heber was present. As a Churchman he was prejudiced against Wilberforce's comprehensive fellowships and sympathies,

and as a quiet rector he thought such a life as his too bustling, restless, and enthusiastic; but he left his house that day remarking, "An hour's conversation can dissolve the prejudice of years."

The abolition of the slave trade was the grand act of Wilberforce's life, but still slavery continued. To steal negroes to carry them over to our colonies became illegal and punishable, but negroes still worked as slaves in our West India plantations, and were bought and sold as beasts of burden. For many years only mitigations of this appalling misery could be accomplished, and in such works of mercy the man who had been foremost for so many years in the parliamentary struggle earnestly took part. In various quiet ways he endeavoured to advance the work of extinguishing the slave trade and promoting liberation; for instance, writing to his trusty friend Zachary Macaulay one Sunday night, he suggested that it might probably be useful to get the Pope to condemn the traffic because his authority would impress Spain and Portugal; that it would be right to persuade the Roman Catholic nobility and gentry to apply to his Holiness; and that a private letter from Mr. Butler, the new Roman Catholic author, might also be advisable. "There is no saying," he remarks, "what influence might be obtained over the Spanish and Portuguese ecclesiastics, and through them over the courts, if we could gain the Pope." He certainly gave the Holy Father credit for a great deal more influence over Roman Catholic governments than that personage possesses now-a-days. When the Allied Sovereigns visited this country, Wilberforce availed himself of the event for

advancing his object, nor did he lose sight of it when the Congress of Vienna was held. The Russian Emperor, the Prussian King, Talleyrand, and Wellington—each in turn came under the spell of his benevolent influence.

Failing health and growing infirmities compelled, in 1822, a partial retirement from the House of Commons before the relinquishment of his seat in 1825. Still the completion of his great work in a full measure of emancipation enlisted his sympathies and inspired his hopes, though laborious efforts necessary for its accomplishment had to be undertaken by others. But in 1823 he was engaged in a manifesto intended to hasten on the consummation, and, after reading it, a West Indian proprietor told him: "It has so affected me that should it cost me my whole property I surrender it willingly, that my poor negroes may be brought not only to the liberty of Europeans, but especially to the liberty of Christians." On the 19th of March, Wilberforce presented a petition to the House for the abolition of slavery; and on the 15th of May, Thomas Fowell Buxton, on whose shoulders the mantle of Wilberforce fell, moved a resolution declaring slavery repugnant to Christianity and the Constitution.

I distinctly remember some of the proceedings which ensued in different parts of the country for the accomplishment of the object so dear to Wilberforce and to Buxton. Large meetings were held, and speeches were delivered full of information, argument, and appeal; petitions were prepared and numerously signed, and presented to Parliament; deputations waited upon

Government; conferences of delegates from all parts of the kingdom were held in London; religious bodies of all denominations took an active part in what was going on; indeed, but for the stimulus supplied by Christian principles, the benevolent agitation never could have reached its successful issue. Nothing is plainer than that from first to last faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which proclaims liberty to the captive and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound, was the mainspring of the philanthropic movement. No considerations were so effectual as those which appealed to the Christian consciences of Englishmen.

In 1830 a large anti-slavery meeting was held in the Freemasons' Tavern on the 15th of May. At one o'clock Mr. Clarkson addressed the meeting in these words: "Ladies and gentlemen, I rise to make a proposition which I am sure will be agreeable to you all; it is that my old friend and fellow-labourer, Mr. Wilberforce, be called to the chair. I may say that this chair is his natural and proper right in this assembly. He is entitled to it, the great leader in our cause, as one who has always been foremost in its support. I hope he may live to fill it again and again, should a protracted continuance of our exertions be necessary, and that under his auspices we may carry it to a speedy and happy issue." Mr. Wilberforce, having taken the chair amid loud acclamations, proceeded to address the meeting: "Ladies and gentlemen, I shall only now remark upon what you have just decided, that I could have been called to this chair by no person more dear to me than by my

valued friend and fellow-labourer, for I wish to be known by no other name in this great cause. The purpose for which we are met is great, it is urgent, and when I see those by whom I am surrounded, when I again meet my esteemed friend, Mr. Clarkson, in this cause, I cannot but look back to those happy days when we began our labours together, or rather when we worked together, for he began before me." Nothing is more beautiful than to see these two good men, who had borne the burden and heat of the day, thus in the eventide of life and of the work which was about to bear richer fruit than ever in the Emancipation Act of 1833, united on the same platform as in a field where they were to gather up the sheaves, and nothing could be more graceful than the terms in which they recognised one another's toils.

One more public appearance deserves record. On the 12th of April, 1833, he proposed at a public meeting in Maidstone a petition against slavery. "It was an affecting sight to see the old man who had been so long the champion of the cause come forth once more from his retirement, and with an unquenched spirit, though with a weakened voice and failing body, maintain for the last time the cause of truth and justice."

On the principle of compensation his judgment was clear and firm. He hailed the proposal to atone for the past by a grant of twenty millions. "I say, and say honestly and fearlessly," were his words at Maidstone, "that the same Being who commands us to love mercy, says also, do justice; and therefore I have no objection to grant the colonists the relief that may be due to them

for any real injuries which they may ultimately prove themselves to have sustained. I have no objection, either, to make every possible sacrifice which may be necessary to secure the complete accomplishment of the object which we have in view; but let not the inquiry into this matter be made a plea for perpetuating wrongs for which no pecuniary offer can compensate. I trust," he concluded, "that we now approach the very end of our career;" and as a gleam of sunshine broke into the hall, he exclaimed, "The object is bright before us, the light of Heaven beams on it, and is an earnest of success!" The Abolition Bill passed in July, 1833.

To use an illustration employed by his coadjutor Mr. Smith, "With the interest with which a mainspring, although somewhat less elastic than when first encased, might be supposed to take in the going of a watch, so did the veteran sympathise with the last movements of the anti-slavery struggle; and when it was mentioned at dinner-time, 'probably at this moment the debate on slavery is commencing,' he sprung from his chair, exclaiming, 'Hear, hear, hear!' in tones like those which had welcomed his own speeches in the House of Commons."

There was another parliamentary subject germane to that of the well-being of the negro, in which Wilberforce took a deep interest, namely, the well-being of our Indian Empire. In early life he had contributed to measures in that direction. Just before the establishment of the organization now so well known under the name of the London Missionary Society, two men of

heroic spirit, Robert Haldane and David Bogue, contemplated a mission to India for the propagation of the gospel amongst the natives. But there were difficulties in the way arising from the prejudice of the Government and the East India Company against all such efforts. Under these circumstances the assistance of Wilberforce was solicited, and the two energetic men, by the statements they made, aroused his warmest sympathy. A characteristic scene occurred as they entered his room. He apologised for not rising, as he was suffering from gout, and his feet were wrapped in flannel; but he so strongly approved of what they said, and "became so much animated and elated as Mr. Haldane unfolded his designs, that forgetting his gout in his admiration of the grandeur of the design, the philanthropist kindling into positive enthusiasm, jumped up, and to the entertainment of his guests, skipped about the room entirely free from pain." He seems to have thought that some circumstances connected with the project had injured the cause with Secretary Dundas, but he did what he could to bring the minister into a more favourable state of mind. Breakfasts with him on mission business, and consultations with other persons prolonged through the whole evening, are mentioned in his diary under date December, 1796. It may be mentioned that the plans of Haldane and Bogue were superseded by the Missionary Society, of which the latter was one of the fathers and founders.

In later life we find Wilberforce, from time to time, engaged in matters connected with the East India Com-

pany's Charter. He hoped, amidst struggles carried on with different views in looking forward to the expiration of the Charter in 1814, "to obtain some special advantage for Hindostan." In 1812 he wrote a letter to Mr. Butterworth, an eminent Wesleyan Methodist, showing his own great care and caution, and his jealousy for the honour of the Church of England, where the generous rivalry of dissenting zeal came into play, and at the same time proving his sincere desire to advance the spiritual welfare of his fellow creatures. "I am not without hopes of prevailing on a considerable party in the Church of England to interest themselves on the occasion; but I own I fear that if the Dissenters and Methodists come into action before our force from the Establishment has stirred, a great part of the latter will either desert our ranks or be cold and reluctant followers. Now, if I mistake not, the organization of the Dissenters, and still more of the Methodist body, is so complete, that any impulse may be speedily conveyed throughout the whole frame. It appears, therefore, that it would be expedient for the Dissenters and Methodist bodies not to show themselves till the members of the Church have actually committed themselves (according to our parliamentary phrase), or till it be seen that they cannot be prevailed on to come forward." But if care and caution be manifest in this advice it involved a poor compliment to his Church friends, who were thus represented as an armed detachment in a good cause, so jealous of fellow soldiers that there was fear it would abandon the field if more daring comrades ventured to advance beyond them.

He was exceedingly anxious to introduce Christian light into India, at that period not only darkened by Paganism, but jealously watched by many Englishmen, especially those in high places, who from mistaken motives were averse to openings through which the rays of the Sun of righteousness could enter. "We must secure," he said, "the entrance of missionaries. To whom can any discretionary power of granting or refusing leave to go, be trusted?" A fear obtained, lest the attempt to Christianize India by awakening Hindoo and Mussulman opposition might imperil the Colonial Empire; and the question was complicated by the desire of Churchmen to extend their own establishment over our Eastern possessions, and the very different policy of Evangelical Nonconformists, who while at that time surpassing on the whole their Episcopalian brethren in missionary zeal, yet naturally looked with jealousy at some of their proceedings, and were anxious for the spread of the gospel in every part of the world on the principle of free and voluntary effort. In 1813 Wilberforce, together with Mr. Stephen, loudly exclaimed against the proposed system of barring out all moral and religious light from the East Indies, and declared that they were "confident the friends of religious morality and humanity throughout the kingdom would petition on the subject." "The Methodists and Dissenters," he said, "will, I doubt not, petition; but let it not be said that they only take an interest in the happiness of mankind, and that the members of our Church are not as zealous when there is a real cause for such exertions." Earnestly did he pro-

mote the getting up of petitions, and when they were presented he exclaimed, "Let no man think that the petitions which have loaded our tables have been produced by a burst of momentary enthusiasm! No, it will be found steady as the light of heaven." "Blessed be God," he wrote from the House of Commons, on Wednesday, the 23rd of June, "we carried our question triumphantly about three or later this morning. As it happened, I do not believe that we lost anything from its not coming on till between ten and eleven, as we were spared many long speeches of our opponents, and I was able, thank God, to speak at length. I was quite surprised that my voice held out so well, as I must have spoken above two hours, and I do not find it worse this morning. I slept well, and am as well as usual to-day."

When the debates about religion as connected with the term of the East India charter were over, Wilberforce contemplated with thankfulness what he and others had done for the spiritual welfare of the millions of India. Petitions, he believed, carried the question for opening the East to free gospel ministrations; but in all that, he devoutly recognised the hand of God. "We were mercifully favoured by Providence," he said, "in our parliamentary contest; and when I consider what was the state of the House of Commons twenty-five years ago, and how it would not then have borne with patience what it heard not only with patience but acceptance during the late discussions, I cannot but draw a favourable augury for the welfare of our country."

Here I close what I have to say respecting Wilber-

force's whole parliamentary career, and it is worth while at this point to recall to mind what recently appeared in the *Times* newspaper. "The son used to mention with just pride, as a proof of the fascination in which his father held the House of Commons, that though he had there hot and bitter opponents ready to avail themselves of any help to their arguments or their rhetoric, there never appeared in the reports the slightest allusion to his stunted and contorted figure. It might be likened to the letter S, and to one that would not lie flat on the paper. Done in marble in Westminster Abbey, it is not a pleasing object; but his figure is as near an approach to the normal human posture as Mr. Wilberforce was ever able to make sitting or standing. That he should arrest instantly the attention of a large and critical assembly, and secure it for hours, shows how little figure and action are necessary, when the voice can do its proper work, and no voice was ever heard in our Parliament like Mr. Wilberforce's." I may add that perhaps in any case none but very coarse and vulgar partisans would think of alluding to the physical defects of an antagonist; and that in addition to the charm of Wilberforce's voice, "which in his youth procured for him the title of the nightingale of the House of Commons," there was the charm of his countenance, his bright eyes and winning smiles, which those who remember the man can never forget.

CHAPTER IV.

GENERAL BENEFICENCE.

BESIDES the great labour of his life there were many forms of benevolent activity in which Wilberforce engaged. No man could more deeply feel than he did, after he came under the power of religion, that the love of Christ constrains its faithful disciples to "live not unto themselves." Self-indulgence may be seen in the story of Wilberforce's earlier days. He was a "lover of pleasure;" he plunged into the gaieties of the world; his time was spent in a round of varied amusements. No great moral purpose filled his soul and animated his actions; but in these respects the the tenor of his ways totally changed after his "conversion." Christianity made him a new man.

One of the first religious enterprises into which his energies were thrown was designed to check the immorality of the age. As early as the close of the seventeenth century a band of earnest spirits had been organized to watch the conduct of the vicious and profane; to bring to bear on them the laws of the land in relation to their offences, to check the breach of the

Sabbath, to punish outbreaks of blasphemy and profanation, and by sermons and tracts to promote the cause of piety and virtue. The name adopted was "The Society for the Reformation of Manners," and it began its work about the year 1691. Episcopal clergymen advocated the cause from the pulpit of Bow Church, Cheapside, and Nonconformist ministers from the pulpit of Salter's Hall. Meetings were held once a quarter. Ramifications of the movement extended into the country. The old city of Chester became headquarters for a crusade in the North, where Stratford the Bishop, Fog the Dean, and Matthew Henry the Dissenter aided the effort. Wilberforce aimed at something of the same kind, but modestly confessed in reference to the object of promoting spiritual edification amongst the members, which was included in that early association, "I am conscious that ours is an infinitely inferior aim, yet surely it is of the utmost consequence and worthy of the labours of a whole life. I know that by regulating the external conduct we do not at first change the hearts of men, but even they are ultimately to be wrought upon by these means, and we should at least so far remove the obtrusiveness of the temptation that it may not provoke the appetite which might otherwise be dormant and inactive." Blasphemous and indecent publications and other incentives to licentiousness were especially marked out as evils to be detected and repressed; and in aid of the general object Wilberforce obtained a royal proclamation against vice and immorality, a very frail breakwater indeed for resisting the floods of sin

which were deluging England at the time. It is significant of the tone of Wilberforce's religious habits, and of the state of aristocratic society at that period, when he tells a friend, to whom he wrote on the subject, "What think you of my having myself received a formal invitation to cards for Sunday evening, from a person high in the King's service?" On the one hand, a royal proclamation could have little effect in a case like that; and, on the other hand, a case like that was likely to take off the edge of royal proclamations. The good man was delighted to find how warmly the Archbishop of Canterbury expressed himself on behalf of the Society, and as the most distinguished patronage was desired, he states with some exultation, "I have no doubt of the Duke of Montagu's accepting the office of president, and have reason to believe that the Archbishop will give his name, in which case the rest of the bench will follow his example." It is curious to find, when the movement was inaugurated in 1781, a document entitled, "Prospectus of the Society *for enforcing the King's proclamation*," the preamble of which refers to "His Majesty's tender and watchful concern for the happiness of his people manifested in his late royal proclamation," as the very basis of this new effort. The object contemplated is described as being an agreement "for the purpose of carrying His Majesty's gracious recommendation into effect;" and the bond of union amongst the members is thus described: "With this view we will be ourselves, and will countenance and encourage others in being vigilant in the effectual prosecution and punishment of

such criminal and disorderly practices as are within the reach of law. We will endeavour to afford the magistracy such assistance in the discharge of their duty as the nature of the case may require." Then follows a list of distinguished names, including nineteen bishops, seventeen noblemen, twelve lay gentlemen, and one Doctor of Divinity. So earnest was Wilberforce in the cause of this Society, that he visited one Episcopal palace after another to gain the signatures of prelates to this paper; and fearful lest his plans should be frustrated, his sons inform us, that he "set off from London without communicating to any one the purpose of his journey." A strange incident happened during his endeavours. "So you wish, young man," said a nobleman whose house he visited; "you wish to be a reformer of men's morals. Look then, and see there what is the end of such reformers," pointing as he spoke to a picture of the crucifixion. If the nobleman meant this as a scoff at religion it was very shocking, and he laid himself open to the charge of profaneness; otherwise truth lay at the bottom of the reference, and the young disciple was reminded, that if in this world we work for Christ, we must expect to suffer with Christ. Many great people received his words kindly and sympathised in his sentiments, and his early friend, Mr. Eliot, who, chastened by affliction, had sought comfort in the gospel, cheered him in his untiring efforts. Much good could hardly be expected from a society framed on so narrow a basis, and using a royal proclamation as the chief weapon in a warfare against immorality; but the

intention of the founder was most commendable, and we are informed that the association continued under Lord Bathurst and Bishop Porteous to conduct its operations; and, before its dissolution, we learn on the authority of the biographer of that metropolitan prelate, that "it had obtained many valuable Acts of Parliament, and greatly checked the spread of blasphemous and indecent publications."

A very different society indeed as to its basis and purpose originated at the commencement of the present century, and amongst its supporters, from the beginning, the name of Wilberforce is enrolled. The circulation of the Scriptures had been promoted by the "Christian Knowledge" and "Propagation" Societies. In the seventeenth century "Lord Wharton's Trust," and in the eighteenth century the "Coward Trust," had given copies of the English Bible to poor people; and in 1779, there arose an effort which has not secured the notice it deserves. An unknown Quaker, named John Davis, wrote to another Quaker, George Cussons, proposing to distribute small pocket Bibles among the regular and militia troops. The well-known John Thornton entered into the idea, and in the same year it took shape as a "Bible Society," since known as the "Naval and Military Bible Society." At the time of the Gordon Riots, in 1780, the soldiers encamped in Hyde Park were furnished with Bibles, and soon after the Society is found steadily at work. John Newton, Rowland Hill, Bishop Horne, and William Wilberforce promoted its objects, and in later days the Duke of Wellington appears as president. This

organization provided for a particular class; the world at large needed the same kind of effort on a comprehensive scale. The story of Charles of Bala and the little Welsh girl who "could not get to read the Bible," and of his interview with Joseph Hughes—when he proposed a Bible Society for Wales, and was met with the suggestion, "Why not for the empire, and the world?"—is now a legend current throughout Christendom, and has given a key-note to countless speakers on Bible platforms. It was at a committee meeting of the Religious Tract Society that the interview between Charles of Bala and Hughes of Battersea occurred, and in its earliest minute-book are recorded the steps which led to the inauguration of its noble associate in Christian philanthropy. Many well-known names occur in connection with its earliest proceedings, and amongst them that of Wilberforce occupies a conspicuous place. At an early period his diary records small parties at his house on "Bible Society formation." "Hughes, Reyner, and Grant breakfasted with me;" and the brief entry suggests a picture of earnest conversation on the subject between the Baptist minister, Hughes its first Nonconformist secretary, and his Episcopalian friends,—when, as Owen, the clerical colleague of Hughes has remarked, "The scene was new, nothing analogous to it had perhaps been exhibited before the public; some Christians had begun to organize amongst each other the strife of separation, and to carry into their own camp that war which they ought to have waged in concert against the common enemy." There was an excellent merchant of the city of London in those days,

Mr. Hardcastle, who had a counting-house on the banks of the Thames at a place called "Swan Stairs," where people used once to land to avoid the risk of running the bridge, above which stood this landing-place. In reference to that locality, it has been thought worth while to notice that Boswell and Johnson landed at the Old Swan, and walked to Billingsgate where they took oars. Another, and, to many, a more interesting association occurs in Wilberforce's diary of 1803: "A few of us met together at Mr. Hardcastle's counting-house, at a later hour than suited city habits, out of regard to my convenience, and yet, on so dark a morning, that we discussed by candlelight, while we resolved upon the establishment of the Bible Society." Wilberforce's sons cautiously remark, "This is not a place to scrutinize its constitution. The good that it has effected has been great beyond the utmost expectation of its founders, both in the circulation of the Word of God and in awakening the zeal of a careless generation. The evil which has waited on this good has been incidental in its character, and confined, perhaps, almost entirely to the public meetings. Nor should those who view it in its consequences forget the different position of its founders. Mr. Wilberforce saw no danger to the Church from the co-operation of Dissenters, who at that time professed an affectionate regard for the national Establishment." This apologetic style of noticing a work by their father—superior in nature to that of the abolition of the slave trade, and only inferior in its degree to the share which he took in that enterprise—might provoke a smile, were it not for the sorrow produced by such see-

tarian narrowness. The biographers unhappily had no sympathy with their venerable parent in the catholicity of temper which he manifested in connection with his Bible efforts, and hence the sparing notice they take of his long and numerous labours in that direction. Mr. Wilberforce had no need to fear that the Church of England would be injured by the Bible Society, any more than Nonconformists had to fear that their Churches would be damaged by the same institution; and surely nobody can pay a worse compliment to his own denomination than to regard a Society for circulating the Bible as antagonistic to its interests. In reference to the Bible anniversary on the 3rd of May, 1809, his sons remark, "His views in joining the Bible Society have been explained already; and *giving others credit for that pure spirit* with which he was animated, he saw in its anniversary 'a grand' and pleasing spectacle, 'five or six hundred people of all sects and parties, with one heart and face and tongue.'" What other than the "pure spirit of catholicity" and love for the Bible—for which Wilberforce gave the "five or six hundred people" credit—could have influenced the immense majority of them to assemble, it is hard to say; and it is equally hard to tell what room there is for the exercise and display of sentiments antagonistic to the Church of England in the two or three thousand people who now annually assemble in Exeter Hall to promote the circulation of the Scriptures.

Provincial as well metropolitan Bible meetings he was wont to attend, and in the year 1815, he left the deathbed of the beloved Mr. Henry Thornton to attend the

anniversary at Brighton, where, as "he entered the room, he seemed so pale and fatigued that his friends feared he would scarcely be able to speak. But he no sooner entered on his subject than his countenance was lighted up, and he became animated and impressive."

During Wilberforce's residence in Kensington Gore, he took a lively interest in the Auxiliary established there, which for many years included a large district now divided into several branches. The meetings used to be held in the Haymarket, and the Dukes of Kent and Sussex at times favoured them with their presence; but the most welcome appearance on the platform was the diminutive figure of the member for Yorkshire or Bramber, who full of life and energy would rouse to animation the dullest audience, and carry away his hearers with him by the sacred fascination of his eloquence. He visited Norwich sometimes, paying a visit to Joseph John Gurney at Earlham Hall, or to Bishop Bathurst at the palace, and attending the annual meeting of the Auxiliary in the grand old St. Andrew's Hall of Gothic architecture, hung with the portraits of county worthies and city aldermen; whilst on the stone pavement sat hundreds of the friends attached to the cause listening to the silvery voice of the much admired advocate. And with personal reminiscences of one of those scenes there blends in my mind another. It was when Wilberforce was reaching the close of his days, and the infirmities of age bowed down his originally weak constitution. The annual meetings of the parent society used then to be held at Freemasons' Tavern, for Exeter Hall was not yet built. There round the large

room hung portraits of the masters of the craft from which the place took its name, the signs of the zodiac and other emblazonments were very conspicuous; and at the upper end stood a capacious platform with the president's chair, leading up to which was a long narrow passage by the side of the wall, partitioned off from the rest of the floor, in order to allow easy access to the speakers as they came in one after another. I remember the pleasant, amiable-looking Lord Bexley, president of the Society; and Dr. Ryder, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, with his curious Episcopal wig and his apron of due dimensions; and a distinguished Nonconformist minister from Cork, John Burnet, whose peculiar flowing witty rhetoric not only swayed "the rude democracy," but moved nobles and prelates sitting around him; nobody, however, was regarded with more interest than the friend of the negro, whose white hairs and bent figure seen gliding along the passage elicited enthusiastic cheers, which rose into "thunders of applause" as he took his place on the platform.

Before the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society a Missionary Institution came into existence, and Wilberforce is to be regarded as one of its fathers and founders. He was anxious to promote missionary operations beyond the sphere occupied by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and on different principles from those which it maintained; he deplored the neglect of the East India Company in reference to the natives under their control, and moved a resolution in the House of Commons, that it was a bounden duty,

by all just and prudent means, to promote the religious improvement of the native Indians; but the Company, alarmed at his proposal, succeeded in striking this clause out of the India Bill of 1793. This left no course open but to establish a voluntary society for spreading Christianity in the East, and such a society found an eloquent advocate in our illustrious philanthropist. Other circumstances at the time favoured the project. A sum of £4,000 had been left by a gentleman of the name of Jane, to be expended "for the best advantage of the interests of religion." A few Evangelical clergymen in the country met and decided that the bequest could not be better applied than to the sending out of missionaries. The Eclectic Society of London, comprehending ministers of the Evangelical type with a sprinkling of Dissenters, discussed the question but with a different result. Only two or three agreed with Mr. Simeon in his view, which accorded with that of the country brethren. But a renewed discussion in 1799 led to a more favourable opinion, and by an interesting coincidence the "Castle and Falcon" in Aldersgate Street, which had been the cradle of the London Missionary Society, witnessed the birth of its younger sister. Sixteen clergymen and nine laymen pledged themselves to support the new enterprise. Without manifesting any antagonism to the Societies for Promoting Christian Knowledge and for the Propagation of the Gospel, it fixed itself upon a different foundation; and without recognizing any control on the part of the Episcopal rulers of the Church, it simply made an annual contribution the ground of

membership, vesting the power of administration in the hands of seven governors and a treasurer chosen by the members, together with a committee of twenty-five elected in the same way. It was subject at first to no Episcopal authority. It was "rather a Society *within* the Church of England than a Society *of* the Church of England." Its earliest agents were not espiscopally ordained, they were Lutherans or members of some other Reformed Church on the Continent. Its practice of late years had been quite different. Its missionaries are now all of the Episcopalian order. Designed originally for the East and for Africa, it has long since enlarged the field of its operations, carrying with it the sympathies and the support of a much larger number of Churchmen than at first espoused its interests.

Wilberforce paid much attention to the organizing of this new Society, and from his letters it would appear that its intended proceedings were misunderstood. Writing to his friend, the Rev. Thomas Gisborne, in December, 1799, he assures him, "It was not intended that the catechists should ordinarily baptize, but only in cases of necessity. This seems to take away the force of the Bishop of Durham's objection to the use made of Hooker's authority. Surely there might be some special appointment or designation for persons intended for teaching the barbarous heathen. For the service requires qualifications very different from that of a minister in an enlightened, polished country like this, where the truths of Christianity are already known and professed." Dr. Barrington at that time filled the throne of Prince Bishop

of the county palatine, and it appears that he was at least jealous of the invasion on clerical order which he apprehended from the sanction of baptisms by lay catechists. Other Bishops and Episcopalian friends looked still more decidedly askance upon the new project, and feared it might introduce a number of ecclesiastical irregularities. Indeed, it met with a good deal of Church opposition, which is not to be wondered at considering its earlier proceedings and the predominant temper of clerical dignitaries at that time. But nothing of this kind could make Wilberforce swerve from his purpose to advance the circulation of Evangelical truth at home and abroad. In a letter to one of his sons, dated July 21, 1817, he refers to a 'Church Missionary meeting, where he pleaded "the cause of the Antipodes or nearly so," and he speaks of the native population of New Zealand as a fine race of men, both in body and natural character, who have been treated often with the most savage and wanton cruelty by the South Sea whalers, as the ships are termed. "It is really gratifying to reflect that we are thus contributing to save multitudes of unoffending beings from the grossest outrages, and still more, that we are taking measures for preserving from destruction several missionaries and families which may be termed semi-missionaries, who would be likely to fall victims to the wars and affrays which the outrages of the ships might produce; for a prejudice being conceived against the Europeans, the innocent may suffer along with the guilty."

Associations for the better observance of the Sabbath

day were included in the plans of this religious philanthropist; so also was the establishment and support of schools in which he was careful to introduce Christian knowledge, but he dreaded the influence of emulation. "William Allen and Joseph Fox," he says, "came about Lancaster's schools to tell me all about them, and press me to be a vice-president. Heard Fox's most interesting account; but," he says, "a fortnight afterwards, I wrote to William Allen to decline being a committee man, though it gave me great pain to refuse him; but emulation and vanity are the vital breath of the system." No doubt emulation may be turned to the worst of purpose. It is encouraging vanity in a most vicious form when we promote the desire to excel for the purpose of excelling others, when we regard with satisfaction the boy whose great pleasure is to look over his own shoulder to the schoolfellow behind him, saying, "I am superior to you;" but it is encouraging virtue to inspire the young with an aspiration after excellence by means of *provoking* one another in this department, as in others, to love and to do good works. From emulation of some kind no schools can be free. It obtains, and is encouraged at Eton, Westminster, Harrow, and Winchester, and it cannot be excluded in some plebeian form, in National any more than in British or Board Schools.

The advocacy of Evangelical truth Wilberforce aimed at promoting in numerous ways; and besides others here and elsewhere particularly noticed, I may advert to assistance given by him in the erection of chapels-of-ease, where Evangelical clergymen were to be incumbents. The

exercise of Church patronage largely occupied his thoughts, and to throw light on the theological convictions which guided him in the selection of clergymen I may cite the following passage: "It is my fixed opinion, formed on much reading, consideration, and experience, that there has been for many years among the majority of our clergy a fatal and melancholy departure from the pure principles of Christianity and of the Church of England; from those principles which prevail through her articles, her liturgy, the writings of her venerable martyrs, and of many of her brightest ornaments. I am not speaking of speculative matter; this declension, or, if I would give it its true name, this heresy, is important because its practical effects are in the highest degree mischievous." "In selecting a minister for any living, it is not enough to know that he is diligent and exemplary in his conduct, nor yet that his talents, knowledge, and manner of officiating are everything that one could wish, but I must ask what are his doctrines? I have said enough to put you in possession of my principles, and I hope I can add, that I have acted on them uniformly and without deviation for many years. In the case of those who have been nearest and dearest to me I have adhered to them."

In furtherance of the advocacy of Evangelical principles he aided in the establishment of the *Christian Observer*.

We are told by his biographers that almost every charitable institution of the metropolis, of Yorkshire, and of many other parts, extending in some instances as far

as Edinburgh, is included in his list of annual subscriptions. Large sums were expended upon particular objects. "I have talked to Henry Thornton," he remarked, "concerning the Somersetshire operations, and we have agreed that £400 per annum should be allotted by us to that service. Mrs. Bouverie's money in Henry Thornton's hands is to furnish £200, and he and I £100 each.' This item of expenditure occurs in his accounts, and it relates, no doubt, to the operations of Charles of Bala, the originator of the British and Foreign Bible Society: "Mr. Charles and schools in Wales, £21." Before his marriage at least one-fourth of his income was dispensed in charity, and in one year an incomplete record of his gifts amounts to upwards of £2,000.

He was not a person who confined charity to public societies, or even religious objects. He helped individuals struggling with difficulties. No less than between £500 and £600 he expended in this way in a single year. He had regular annuitants—"not a few, who afterwards acquired independence and wealth, were indebted to his support for carrying them through their early struggles." Two who rose to the Judicial Bench are in one year mentioned as receiving from him £300. He said to his secretary once: "Mr. Ashley, I have an application from an officer of the navy who is imprisoned for debt. I do not like to send Burgess (the almoner he generally employed) to him, and I have not time to go myself, would you inquire into the circumstances?" "That very day I went," adds Mr. Ashley, "and found an officer in gaol for £80. He had a family dependent

on him, with no prospect of paying his debt, and as a last hope, at the Governor's suggestion, had made this application." "The officer," continues Mr. Ashley, "had referred Mr. Wilberforce to Sir Sidney Smith, to whom he wrote immediately. I was in the room when Sir Sidney Smith called on the following morning. 'I know the poor man well,' he said; 'we were opposed to one another in the Baltic—he in the Russian, I in the Swedish service; he is a brave fellow, and I would do anything I could for him; but, you know, Wilberforce, we officers are pinched sometimes, and my charity purse is not full.' 'Leave that to me, Sir Sidney,' was Wilberforce's answer. Mr. Wilberforce paid his debt, fitted him out, and got him a command. He met an enemy's ship, captured her, and was promoted; and within a year I saw him coming to call in Palace Yard (where Wilberforce then lived) in the uniform of a post-captain."

Another instance of his private generosity is related in the biography of my old friend and predecessor in the pastorate at Kensington, the Rev. Dr. Leifchild. Dr. Leifchild took an interest in a gentleman dwelling in that neighbourhood, who had been plunged from affluence into poverty. He had been on the Stock Exchange, and returned one day to dinner looking exceedingly sad. His wife asked what was the matter. "Pretty well, my love, for a ruined man!" His rosy face, and a flower conspicuously fastened into a button-hole of his coat, made him a noticeable person, and when he experienced such a reverse, the case excited a good deal of sympathy. Dr. Leifchild called some people together and proposed

a plan of relief. All approved, but few assisted. However he persevered, and ventured to lay the case before his illustrious neighbour and friend in Kensington Gore, who had shown him much kindness. Mr. Wilberforce promised one hundred guineas, adding, "Get a Quaker, Mr. Leifchild; get a Quaker down for a good sum, and you will have a number of them afterwards." Quakers were applied to, and they generously responded. Mr. Wilberforce also added his influence with friends to his own liberal donation.

"My dear Sir," he wrote to the Dissenting minister, January 18, 1823, "I have this day heard from Lord Calthorpe, and I heard three or four days since from Lord Rocksavage. The latter cannot contribute. I really believe he is unable. The former offers £20. I have had, however, the promise of £100 from the Marquis of Bute, who was applied to by the Bishop of Bristol. I heartily wish you may have been more successful, and yet I own frankly respecting and loving you (I say it sincerely) for your generous zeal, I dare not, nor have I been able to flatter myself with the hope of your plan answering." Then after further expressing his doubts, he adds, "What I am chiefly afraid of is using up to no purpose resources which, properly applied, might prove seed-corn and produce (D.V.) an abundant or, at least, a sufficient harvest; but these resources we may never be able to get again. Of course you will tell me when to pay in my hundred guineas. My dear sir, once for all, never in any case use ceremony with me. It is useful only to

keep people off to whom we do not like to approximate. But the closer I get to you the better."

The broken-down gentleman was abundantly relieved, at least for the time, by all this benevolence, and in after years, when his coat was indifferent, he would appear still with a flower in his button-hole at the door of the dwelling, or in a pew before the pulpit of the benevolent minister, who by being a friend in need had been a friend indeed; and in this act of beneficence Wilberforce took a large share.

He sometimes even pressed his assistance upon those who were likely to be wise almoners of his bounty. "I am sometimes uneasy," he wrote to a friend distinguished by benevolent activity, "lest in these hard times (1801), you should not be easy as to money matters, and should not speak freely. I beg you so to do, and to believe that it is a real pleasure to me to contribute in any way to your comfort. You certainly possess the secret of economy in charity; but remember, your being in a Yorkshire town is a sound reason for my helping you to the supplies, were there no connection between us."

We have all heard stories told of people careful about their cinders being sifted and as to other trifling savings, who gained a character for meanness which their munificent charities, when discovered, abundantly atoned for, and it was seen that economy was one of the sources whence their charities were derived. Wilberforce had no stinginess, no miserly habits, by which he amassed wealth; but a letter in his correspondence shows that he did not like to

see money wasted, and he could playfully rebuke needless expenditure when incurred through the thoughtlessness of such a man as Zachary Macaulay: "While I must call you an extravagant fellow for employing the coach instead of the waggon, which latter (the flying waggon as it is humorously termed) is but three days on the way; yet I am bound to thank you for your kind attention to my commission" [to procure a copy of the last edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica"]. "It is observed by some writer, that there is in every man a certain vein or thread of shabbiness, which will sometimes show itself in opposition to the general strain of character. Will you say that I furnish an illustration of this principle when I am thus jealous of coach-hire? Be it as it may, the odd shillings may be better employed than in clogging the wheels, and increasing the load of the mail coach — call it feeling for the horses, and so dignify my economy. However, I am sure you will not require any apology. I am interrupted and must break off."

CHAPTER V.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND SYMPATHY.

THE form which religion takes in a man's life and character depends very much upon circumstances. Where genuine, a Divine element beyond all question lies at the basis. Divine Truth and the Divine Spirit are the sources of its pure and hallowed inspirations; but the manner in which they are breathed forth amidst the daily affairs of human history, their particular tones, their loftiest outbursts, and their softest cadences, are the result of second causes sometimes overlooked. The natural constitution of the mind, that which we understand by the word *temperament*, early education, the books we read, and friends with whom we are intimate, obviously have much to do with the development of our spiritual experience.

In the case of William Wilberforce we have not far to go in search of what determined the specific shape of his religious course. No one can doubt that he was "born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, of the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever;" but it is equally plain that subordinate influences impressed

upon him the outer image by which he was known in the religious world. The activity of his intellect and the liveliness of his disposition gave an intelligence and cheerfulness to his piety, very useful in his endeavours to do good, very winning in all his intercourse with society. The effect of the early training he received at Wimbledon was not lost. After his conversion, there were reminiscences blended with passing experiences, which one might compare to Platonic glimpses of a pre-existent condition. The Evangelical convictions instilled by his devout aunt, and by those with whom he associated under her roof, did not die out, or if they did for awhile, they rose again from the dead. When the doctrines of Evangelical divines were presented to him, he did not come upon them as things new and strange, but rather as old friends, reappearing after temporary absence. Books not like "The Whole Duty of Man," or even Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," but "Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," gave the first new impulse to his mind and heart, and led him to "seek those things which are above." Not teachers of theology like Horsley or Tomline, but clergymen of a very different class, men with whom those distinguished prelates had no sympathy, were the advisers and guides of the young inquirer. The consequences attendant on these causes are apparent on all the pages of his after life.

If there was any person who was to Wilberforce what Evangelist or the Interpreter was to Christian, or what Mr. Greatheart was to Christiana and her family, that person is to be found in John Newton. Indeed he was to the

new disciple Evangelist, Interpreter, and Greatheart all in one. He had left Olney, and the daily companionship of Cowper, and the frequent intercourse of his neighbour William Bull; and had become incumbent of St. Mary's, Woolnoth, in the heart of the city of London, fixing his abode in the unromantic suburb of Hoxton. As a preacher his influence and fame were extraordinary, not arising from genius or eloquence, but from a profound knowledge of Scripture and the human heart, and from that intense sincerity and absorption in the fulfilment of a Divine mission, which produce a wonderful effect on every listener. Added to this, he had a depth of sympathy in his nature, a power of discerning human character, an aptness of quaint illustration, and the mastery of an easy, attractive style, which gave him pre-eminence in the employment of Christian conversation and correspondence. Good people went to him as a sort of Protestant confessor, a spiritual father devoid of all priestly pretension; good people wrote to him for spiritual advice, and watched for answers as they who watch for the morning. No sooner had Wilberforce begun to feel those anxieties, which had been inspired by Doddridge's famous book, and by his talks with Milner when on their foreign tour, than he bethought himself of the Evangelical sage who lived at Hoxton. "I thought seriously," he says, in his journal, November 30, 1785, "of going to converse with Mr. Newton; waked in the night; obliged to compel myself to think of God."—*December 2nd.* "Resolved again about Mr. Newton. It may do good, he will pray for me, his experience may enable him to direct

me to new grounds of humiliation, and it is that only which I can perceive God's Spirit employs to any effect. It can do no harm, for that is a scandalous objection which keeps occurring to me, that if ever my sentiments change I shall be ashamed of having done it ; it can only humble, and whatever is the right way, if truth be right, I ought to be humbled—but sentiments change! Kept debating in that unsettled way, to which I have used myself, whether to go to London or not, and then how. Wishing to save expense, I hope with a good motive, went at large in the stage to town, inquired for old Newton, but found he lived too far off for me to see him." As the biographers have printed this, and so many other secret thoughts recorded in the journal, we seem to be overhearing the honest man as he thus talks to himself; and we are tempted to listen though it seems almost indelicate, as if we were prying into matters which he never thought would be published to the world. The wish to save expense, but with the hope of a good motive, and the confession of these inward debates about calling on a certain clergyman,—whatever we may think of them in some respect, carry with them the charm of an exquisite simplicity. And when we turn over another leaf, we find a "good deal of debate" going on "about seeing Newton." At length he determines to write, soliciting an interview, but under a solemn seal of secrecy. "I am sure you will hold yourself bound to let no one living know of this application or of my visit till I release you from the obligation." Some may smile, many may wonder at this, but we must remember the conspicuous place

which the writer held in the world of politics and fashion. He carried the letter upon Sunday, December 4th, into the city, and delivered it himself, "to old Newton at his church." The following Wednesday was fixed, when, as he records, "after walking about the square once or twice before I could persuade myself, I called upon old Newton, was much affected in conversing with him, something very pleasing and unaffected in him." Newton had before heard of this inquirer from their common friend John Thornton, and this encouraged him; "and though," he says, "I got nothing new from him, as how could I, except" (a good hint that he never found it answer to dispute) "that it was as well not to make visits that one disliked over agreeable." The old prophet seems to have talked very prudently, but it was not so much what he said as what *he was*—"the old African blasphemer," as he used to call himself, now become truly a saint of the living God—that did good to the young member of Parliament in this stolen interview. "When I came away I found my mind in a calm, tranquil state, more humbled, and looking more devoutly up to God." "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." That was the beginning of a life-long attachment. Many an hour's conversation followed. Many a letter was written on both sides. Many a sermon was heard by the one from the lips of the other; and Newton till his death remained spiritually Wilberforce's guide and counsellor and friend. There were other clergymen with whom Wilberforce became intimately acquainted, and from whom he derived knowledge and encouragement.

Discourses by Thomas Scott are noticed in Wilberforce's journal, and from his letters it appears that he highly valued his pulpit instructions, despite his unattractive and even disagreeable delivery. Afterwards Richard Cecil won his confidence, both as a friend and a pastor, and he might often be seen at the old Presbyterian-like chapel, St. John's, Bedford Row, listening with admiration to the original remarks and the penetrating appeals of that Evangelical preacher.

He had no taste for Anglo-Catholic theology on the one hand, or for what is termed Rationalism on the other; nor could he be fairly denominated a Puritan, either in his distinctive faith or in his characteristic habits of conduct. He was removed the furthest possible from everything like Antinomianism, neither did he, in the slightest degree, approximate to Pelagianism. As in politics, so in theology, he avoided extremes. He was no more a party man in one respect than the other. He was orthodox without being intolerant; liberal, but free from heresy. He believed in Jesus Christ as the image of the invisible God; he believed that we are saved by grace; he believed in justification by faith; he believed in the work of the Holy Spirit; he believed in the world to come. These beliefs with all their practical consequences and applications were as dear to him as his life.

And here it may be observed, that Wilberforce was less identified with the *contemporary* Evangelical school than is generally supposed. His spiritual sympathy with its leading disciples was very strong, they were also chosen friends and associates; with them he cordially

co-operated in Christian work, but in opinion and taste he differed from many of them. He was not a Calvinist. Romaine was one of a most pronounced type; Newton held moderate views on the question; and Scott, more of a theologian than either, and possessed of some metaphysical acumen, sought to reconcile the principle of God's sovereignty with the fact of man's free agency and responsibility. Wilberforce was very different from Romaine, and did not go so far in the Calvinistic direction as Newton or Scott. Indeed, he is stated to have been an Arminian — an Arminian however of a decidedly Evangelical cast—and hence the *Practical View* did not come up to the mark of some of his friends, whilst it went beyond that of others. He never professed any skill in scholastic divinity, and his acquaintance with theological learning was limited—his views, as the bulk of his book testifies, were *practical;* at the same time he was more friendly to the union of general literary culture, of a refined and elevated taste, and of wide intellectual sympathy with the maintenance and inculcation of spiritual religion than were some of his Evangelical compeers.

As soon as he had taken a decided step in religious life, even before he had called upon "old Newton," there were two persons to whom he was anxious to break the news, but it caused him much agitation. The first was Pitt, the second his mother. "I told him," Wilberforce records in his diary, "that though I should ever feel a strong affection for him, and had every reason to believe that I should be in general able to support him, yet that

I could no more be so much a party man as I had been before." He received an answer which much affected him. Unfortunately the letter is given neither in "the Life," nor in "the Correspondence." But the next morning they met. The meeting was "full of kindness. Nothing I had told him, he said, could affect our friendship, and that he wished me always to act as I thought right. I had said that I thought when we met we had better not discuss the topics of my letter. 'Why not discuss them?' was his answer. 'Let me come to Wimbledon to-morrow, to talk them over with you.' He thought that I was out of spirits, and that company and conversation would be the best way of dissipating my impressions." The statesman went over to Wimbledon accordingly, and there the two seem to have freely discussed the subject. "I had prayed to God," Wilberforce goes on to say, "I hope with some sincerity, not to lead me into disputing for my own exaltation, but for His glory. I conversed with Pitt nearly two hours, and opened myself completely to him. I admitted that as far as I could conform to the world, with a perfect regard to my duty to God, myself, and my fellow creatures, I was bound to do it; that no inward feelings ought to be taken as demonstrations of the Spirit being in any man, but only the change of disposition and conduct. He tried to reason me out of my convictions, but soon found himself unable to combat their correctness, if Christianity were true. The fact is, he was so absorbed in politics that he had never given himself time for due reflection on religion."

Many would like to know more of what passed in the

course of conversation between Wilberforce and his friend; but it is pleasant to see that the religious change in the one produced no prejudice or alienation in the other. Pitt manifested no abatement of confidence and respect, but honoured Wilberforce for his honest convictions and manly avowal of them.

Probably Wilberforce felt a greater difficulty in writing to his mother than in writing to his friend, for he knew her prejudices against the religious opinions he had embraced, and he was aware that already she felt alarmed at the rumours she had heard respecting him. "It is not, believe me, to my own imagination, or to any system formed in my closet, that I look for my principles; it is to the very source to which you refer me, the Scriptures. . . . All that I contend for is, that we should really make this book the criterion of our opinions and actions, and not read it and then think that we do so of course. But if we do this, we must reckon on not finding ourselves able to comply with all those customs of the world, in which many who call themselves Christians are too apt to indulge without reflection; . . . we must of course [therefore] be subject to the charge of excess and singularity. But in what will this singularity consist? Not merely in indifferent things; no, in these our Saviour always conformed, and took occasion to check an unnecessary strictness into which He saw men were led by overstraining a good principle. In what then will these peculiarities appear? Take our great Master's own words, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all

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

enable me to serve Him more steadily, and my fellow creatures more assiduously; and I trust that my prayers will be granted, through the intercession of that Saviour 'by whom' only 'we have access with confidence into this grace wherein we stand;' and who has promised that He will lead on His people from strength to strength, and gradually form them to a more complete resemblance of their Divine original."

It is pleasant to find that his demeanour, always full of filial affection, and now more exemplary than ever, impressed the lady more favourably. "His habitual cheerfulness, and the patient forbearance of a temper naturally quick, could not escape her notice; and her friend, Mrs. Sykes, who had shared in her suspicions, remarked shrewdly when they parted company at Scarborough, 'If this is madness, I hope he will bite us all.'"

There was yet another to whom he unbosomed his feelings—it was a beloved sister, and the letter in which he did so contains a beautiful passage indicative of his intelligent apprehension of Christian piety as an ever advancing progress. He had no notion of its being made up of fitful spasms. "Watch and pray," he wrote earnestly to his sister; "read the Word of God, imploring that true wisdom which may enable you to comprehend and fix it in your heart, that it may gradually produce its effect, under the operation of the Holy Spirit, in renewing the mind and purifying the conduct. This it will do more and more, the longer we live under its influences; and it is to the honour of religion, that those who when they first began to run the Christian course were in ex-

tremes: . . . enthusiastical perhaps or rigidly severe . . . will often by degrees lose their several imperfections, which, though by the world laid unfairly to the account of their religion, were yet undoubtedly so many disparagements to it, . . . like some of our Westmoreland evenings, when though in the course of the day the skies have been obscured by clouds and vapours, yet towards its close the sun beams forth with unsullied lustre, and descends below the horizon in the full display of all his glories. Shall I pursue the metaphor, just to suggest, that this is the earnest of a joyful rising, which will not be disappointed? The great thing we have to do is to be perpetually reminding ourselves that we are but strangers and pilgrims, having no abiding city, but looking for a city which hath foundations; and by the power of habit, which God has been graciously pleased to bestow upon us, our work will every day become easier, if we accustom ourselves to cast our care on Him, and labour in a persuasion of His co-operation. The true Christian will desire to have constant communion with his Saviour. The Eastern nations had their talismans, which were to advertise them of every danger and guard them from every mischief. Be the love of Christ our talisman."

He had for some time before he became decidedly religious kept a diary, in which he recorded the passing events of almost every day. Of this his biographers have made much use; but it is often provoking to find the entries are so brief and fragmentary, often crushed into two or three words, that they excite rather than gratify curiosity. Take, for example, a day during his French

tour in 1783, when he seems to have figured in scenes of extraordinary brilliancy.

"*October 16th.* Breakfasted at home, dressed by eleven, and went with ambassador. Introduced to King, Queen, Monsieur, Madame, Compte and Comptesse D'Artois, and two aunts. Dined Mons. de Castries, Minister of the Marine Department. Saw there Vicomte de Noailles, pleasant fellow, and Marquis de la Fayette, Chaillière, Castries's son and his wife. Marmontel there. After dinner went to Vergenne's, and then to Madame Polignac's to visit the Queen; she chatted easily. Then Salle des Ambassadeurs, and opera: words by Marmontel, music by Piccini; both good, Didon. Then supped at Count Donson's. Round table, all English but Donson, Noailles, Dupont. Queen came after supper. Cards, trictrac, and backgammon, which Artois, Lauzun, and Chartres played extremely well. Home at one."

What a contrast to turn from such notices to a passage like this.

"Hope I was more attentive at church than usual, but serious thoughts vanished the moment I went out of it, and very insensible and cold in the evening service: some very strong feelings when I went to bed. God turn them to account, and in any way bring me to Himself. I have been thinking I have been doing well by living alone, and reading, generally on religious subjects; I must awake to my dangerous state, and never be at rest till I have made my peace with God. My heart is so hard, my blindness so great, that I cannot get a due hatred of sin, though I see I am all corrupt and blinded to the perception of spiritual things."

"At church I wander more than ever," he says, another time, "and can scarce keep awake: my thoughts are always straying. Do Thou, O God, set my affections on purer pleasure. Christ should be a Christian's delight and glory. I will endeavour, by God's help, to excite in myself an anxiety and longing for the joys of heaven, and for deliverance from this scene of ingratitude and sin; yet, mistake not impatience under the fatigues of the combat for a lawful and, indeed, an enjoined earnestness for, and anticipation of, the crown of victory. I say solemnly, in the presence of God this day, that were I to die, I know not what would be my eternal portion. If I live in some degree under the habitual impression of God's presence, yet I cannot, or rather I will not, keep true to Him; and every night I have to look back on a day misemployed, or not improved with fervency and diligence. O God, do Thou enable me to live more to Thee, to look to Jesus with a single eye, and by degrees to have the renewed nature implanted in me, and the heart of stone removed." And again, a fortnight later, he says, "I see plainly the sad way in which I am going on. Of myself I have not power to change it. Do Thou, O Thou Saviour of sinners, have mercy on me, and let me not be an instance of one who, having month after month despised Thy goodness and long-suffering, has treasured up to himself wrath against the day of wrath. The sense of God's presence seldom stays on my mind when I am in company; and at times I even have doubts and difficulties about the truth of the great doctrines of Christianity." Yet in spite of difficulties he

was resolved to persevere. "With God," he reasons with himself, "nothing is impossible. Work out, then, thy own salvation. Purify thy heart, thou double-minded —labour to enter into that rest. The way is narrow; the enemies are many—to thee particularly: rich, great, etc.; but then we have God and Christ on our side: we have heavenly armour; the crown is everlasting life, and the struggle how short, compared with the eternity which follows it! Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

"Alas," he writes upon the 31st of January, "with how little profit has my time passed away since I came to town! I have been almost always in company, and they think me like them rather than become like me. I have lived too little like one of God's peculiar people. Hence come waste of time, forgetfulness of God, neglect of opportunities of usefulness, mistaken impressions of my character. Oh, may I be more restrained by my rules for the future; and in the trying week upon which I am now entering, when I shall be so much in company, and give so many entertainments; may I labour doubly, by a greater cultivation of a religious frame, by prayer, and by all due temperance, to get it well over."

Again he says, "It pleased God to give me an affecting sense of my own sinfulness, and a determination to live henceforth, by His grace, more to His glory." "Cold at first, yet moved afterwards by a sense of heavenly things, and determined to go to the important work of self-examination, and to set about a thorough change. Henceforth I purpose, by God's grace, to employ my faculties

and powers more to His glory; to live a godly, diligent, useful, self-denying life. I know my own weakness, and I trust to God alone for strength."

Once more he writes, "I will watch and pray, or God may punish my carelessness by suffering me to fall a prey to sin. Christ says, through His apostle, 'Be not conformed to this world.' Do Thou teach me, Lord, the true limits of conformity. I have been hearing a most excellent sermon from Mr. Scott on procrastination. I was very cold and sluggish in spiritual affections both yesterday and this morning, but I hope this discourse has roused me; may I be enabled to put in practice these most important admonitions. I have much cause for humiliation in the past week; yet I think I go on better in my own house than in Henry Thornton's, from having more quiet; and I humbly resolve to press forward, and apply diligently to the throne of grace, that Christ may be made to me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Extracts of this kind might be largely increased, for the five volumes of his life abound in matter of this devout description. Whereas in the record of fashionable visits and employments he had been exceedingly brief, he became specific, particular, and even diffuse in the statement of his spiritual feelings, so that from day to day the secrets of his soul are opened before the eyes of the reader. We can mark distinctly the changes which took place in his thoughts and feelings, as at one time he was plunged into the depths of self-humiliation, and at another exalted to the loftiest heights of faith and hope

and love. Many will think this part of his biography overdone, and different opinions will be entertained by devout people as to the wisdom and usefulness of religious diaries. In the case of Wilberforce there seems to have been an unusual amount of self-introspection. He used a microscope as he looked into his heart, searching for signs indicative of moral health or of moral disease. No one could more conscientiously obey the apostolic injunction, according to the view he took of its meaning, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." As such means are furnished for judging his character, no one can rightly study his life who does not study them for that purpose. He himself attached immense importance to these inward lights, ever burning in the chambers of his soul. He felt conscious that they, after all, afforded the illumination amidst which he pursued his daily walk of doing good. Not simply to humane dispositions, not at all to a benevolence based on the general expediency principle, but to an inner life did he attribute the inspiration of that career which made him the friend of the slave and of mankind at large; and it is not a little remarkable that the two great philanthropists of which England boasts, John Howard and William Wilberforce, were alike in this respect — they kept diaries overflowing with Christian sentiments. They seem to vie with each other in the intensity with which they cherished, and the force with which they expressed, their religious ideas and feelings; and both of them expressly attribute what they achieved to the operation of those principles which they so perseveringly maintained.

It will edify the reader to bring together extracts from Wilberforce's diary relative to his receiving the Holy Communion and his study of the sacred Scriptures.

He writes, just after his twenty-seventh birthday, "I am just returned from receiving the sacrament. I was enabled to be earnest in prayer, and to be contrite and humble under a sense of my unworthiness, and of the infinite mercy of God in Christ. I hope that I desire from my heart to lead henceforth a life more worthy of the Christian profession. May it be my meat and drink to do the will of God my Father. May He daily renew me by His Holy Spirit, and may I walk before Him in a frame made up of fear and gratitude and humble trust, and assurance of His fatherly kindness and constant concern for me." On the 19th of September, 1802, he remarks: "I fear that I have not studied the Scriptures enough. Surely in the summer recess I ought to read Scripture an hour or two every day, besides prayer, devotional reading, and meditation. God will prosper me better if I wait on Him." He then alludes to the description of Dr. Doddridge's, Colonel Gardiner's, and Bonnel's devotions, asking afterwards: "Is it that my devotions are too much hurried, that I do not read Scripture enough, or how is it that I leave with reluctance the mere chit-chat of Boswell's "Johnson" for what ought to be the grateful offices of prayer and praise? I feel it difficult to adjust the due degree of time to be allotted to prayer, Scripture reading, and other religious exercises. God loves mercy better than sacrifice, and there is a danger of a superstitious spirit of being led to

depend on the forms of religion. Yet the experience and example of good men seem a fair guide. At all events, however, some way or other my affections must be set on things above."

He called the Sabbath "a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable." "It is a season of rest," he remarks, "in which we may be allowed to unbend the mind and give a complete loose to those emotions of gratitude and admiration, which a contemplation of the works, and a consideration of the goodness, of God cannot fail to excite in a mind of the smallest sensibility." "May every Sabbath be to me, and to those I love, a renewal of these feelings, of which the small tastes we have in this life should make us look forward to that eternal rest which awaits the people of God, when the whole will be a never-ending enjoyment of those feelings of love and joy and admiration and gratitude which are, even in the limited degree we here experience them, the truest sources of comfort; when these, I say, will dictate perpetual songs of thanksgiving without fear and without satiety." Again, on a Sunday in 1789, he jots down these words: "Scott excellent on St. James v. 7, 8. Much affected with the discourse. Oh, blessed be God, who hath appointed the Sabbath, and interposes these seasons of serious recollection. May they be effectual to their purpose; may my errors be corrected, my desires sanctified, and my whole soul quickened and animated in the Christian course."

As soon as Wilberforce had resolved to lead a religious life he addicted himself to the salutary practice of family

prayer. On the 29th of November, 1785, he records, as noticed already, how he began family prayer, and resolved to have it morning and evening, and to read a chapter when there was time. The next day, he says, "I bless God I enjoyed comfort in prayer this evening;" and on the 30th he adds, at the end of an entry, this parenthesis: "I forgot to set down that when my servants came in the first time to family prayer I felt ashamed." No doubt there were many comments made in the servants' hall on this new and strange occurrence. As to the way in which Wilberforce conducted family worship, witness is borne by William Jay, of Bath: "I refer not only to its existence and regularity, but to the manner in which he discharged it. What a solemn importance seemed always attached to it. What a freedom from formality. What a simplicity in the performance. What a seriousness and degree of impression and of effort!"

The effect which religion had upon the mind of Wilberforce, in the way of self-control, is a very noticeable circumstance connected with his spiritual history. He is said to have been of a quick and excitable temperament; but, at a particular period, after he had entered upon his anti-slavery career, and he and Mr. Clarkson had for awhile been working together to promote the object dear to both, an incident occurred in their intercourse which must have been exceedingly trying; yet, with regard to it, Wilberforce at first, and Clarkson afterwards, exhibited a most praiseworthy abstinence from all resentment. A controversy, much to be lamented, arose between Clarkson and the bio-

graphers of his friend. They cannot be said to have done justice in the references they made to Clarkson and his work on the "Abolition of the Slave Trade."

With that controversy, however, I have nothing to do. Clarkson had a brother, a lieutenant in the navy, who desired and deserved promotion. Wilberforce knew him, and in one of his friendly letters to the young naval officer he told him that if he had any opportunity of serving him in the line of his profession he should be very happy to embrace it, as he would for his own brother. Thomas Clarkson, probably aware of this communication, applied to Wilberforce in favour of his brother, and naturally felt very anxious to promote his interests. Disappointed at the result, he wrote to his friend a letter, in which the following passages occurred: "My opinion is, that my Lord Chatham has behaved to my brother in a very scandalous manner, and that your own timidity has been the occasion of his miscarrying in his promotion." "After all, my opinion is, that my brother's miscarriage is to be attributed to your own want of firmness. I can have no doubt but you have frequently written to my Lord Chatham, and this with singular zeal and warmth on the subject; but you have not, I apprehend, waited on him often, or insisted on his promotion in strong language. Will you tell me that, if you went to my Lord Chatham and insisted upon it, it would not be done?" This sharp tone of address indicates the close intimacy there must have been between the two, and also the perfect independence of the applicant in relation to his friend. But no one can

help seeing that the letter was calculated to inspire irritation by the irritation which it expressed; but the meek answer which it elicited is very beautiful. Wilberforce told his friend he was used to such remonstrances; and that a man must arm himself against such language, if he would maintain his independence. He attributed Clarkson's warmth to tender solicitude for a beloved brother; and then appealed to him on the ground that he had himself said, he did not like to ask for any favour on behalf of a relative, lest it should seem, if granted, to have been a reward for disinterested labours. In reference to such commendable feeling, Wilberforce asked, "Considering all the peculiarities of my condition and fortunes, is not this general duty of a public man more urgent in mine than almost in any possible instance? and how criminal should I be if I were to truck and barter away any personal influence I may possess with some of the members of administration, which ought to be preserved entire for opportunities of public service." He then thanked Clarkson for his freedom, and added, "I have, as you confess, your brother's promotion sincerely at heart, and I will exert myself for him as much as I think I ought; but I must neither be seduced nor piqued into doing more." "We have long acted together in the greatest cause which ever engaged the efforts of public men, and so I trust we shall continue to act with one heart and one hand, relieving our labours, as hitherto, with the comforts of social intercourse." Different opinions will be formed as to the delicacy or wisdom of publishing this correspondence while one of the parties

on whom it might inflict pain was still living; but now that they are both gone, and the letters cannot fall into oblivion, every reader must feel that the tone in which Wilberforce wrote to Clarkson was most conciliatory, and well adapted to extinguish resentment. The letters did not interrupt the flow of affection between these two men of kindred spirit; no offence was intended, no offence was taken; Christian principle carried them through a trial of temper, and for forty years after this they continued to love and honour each other. In days when plain speaking is applauded such an example is worth being remembered.

There is another feature in Wilberforce's private character which is well illustrated in his correspondence; namely, his strong sympathy with those who were entering upon a religious course of life, and who needed spiritual counsel. He had passed through much perplexity himself; not so much, perhaps, in reference to the truth and authority of Scripture, or the fundamental principles of the Christian faith, as in relation to questions touching his own interest in the blessings and privileges of the gospel, and his duty under the particular duties and temptations of human life. On such points he was well qualified to give advice, and how he did so will appear from the following extracts from his correspondence in the year 1787, when he had but recently made a profession of religion. His own sentiments relative to anxieties and difficulties such as beset most young Christians, and especially relative to certain cases of moral casuistry, distinctly appear; and whilst they illus-

trate the writer's character, they may prove serviceable to the reader of these pages, as they probably did to the persons originally addressed :

"Indeed, my dear ——; I trust you do 'wish to be right,' and on that ground you may justly be congratulated; so long as you preserve this frame of mind all will be well. This is the perfectness and simplicity of heart mentioned in Scripture with expressions of peculiar approbation; and that tenderness of conscience, that humility and watchfulness which accompany it, admirably dispose us to walk through this scene of temptations as pilgrims and strangers, who are seeking a better country in constant dependence on God's grace through Christ, and looking for the guidance of that good Shepherd who kindly promises that He will carry the lambs in His bosom and gently lead them that are with young. These are figurative expressions, but they are not unmeaning ones: we should translate them into common language, and carry them about with us as the Eastern nations do their amulets and charms. Be not discouraged if you do not find your doubts so thoroughly eradicated as you flatter yourself they are. Many good men, though in the main and unshakenly convinced of the truth of Christianity, have been grievously harassed by them, and I believe they are often the suggestions of the tempter, which neither reason nor Scripture give us any rule to distinguish from the suggestions of our own imaginations. These objections are often not particular, or directed to any one specific point, but it is rather a general sort of stupid doubting whether the whole be not a delusion. Perhaps

the best way of combating the enemy is to fly from him in speculation and fight him practically. I mean, when our reason on a fair inquiry has been once convinced, let us determine to act as if these things were true, and (such is the constitution of the human mind) we shall gradually find these incredulities dissipate, and obtain a more settled and deep-rooted satisfaction that they are not idle fables. Never forget that Jesus Christ is to be made unto His people wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. Were we ever to bear this in view and act on it, how much more wise and upright and holy should we be. It is pride and self-dependence that ruin us; whereas were we to look with stedfast eye to the Author and Finisher of our faith, we should learn to despise both the pleasures and the griefs of this life, and long for that blessed day which, disencumbering the people of God from their fleshly impediments, shall introduce them into that state of glory of which Christ died to purchase for them the everlasting possession. When you have anything to say, write; I know you will give me credit for thinking of you, though you do not hear from me, and therefore I shall be silent or not as suits my convenience."

In another letter Wilberforce remarks: "It gives me pleasure to observe that, though you chide me for not letting you hear from me, you allow me credit for such a sincere concern for your welfare as not to impute my silence to forgetfulness. Indeed, you do me no more than justice in this acquittal; for whether I tell you so or not, you are daily in my thoughts and prayers.

"The precise question which you put to me is of great nicety; and if it had been put to me by almost any one else, I believe I should have declined answering it in any other than those general terms which you forbid me the use of. 'How far you may indulge in amusements without danger?' With respect to these same amusements, I conceive no rule can be prescribed of universal application and use—none that will solve to every one the several cases that occur in life, under the very different circumstances of different men; and yet, unless we lay down for ourselves beforehand some determinate principle of action, when the time for decision comes we shall be at a loss how to proceed, and, judging hastily and under an improper bias, our conclusion will most likely be erroneous. What then is to be done? What but that every one read his Bible with simplicity of heart; that he there observe the temper and conduct our Saviour prescribes to His disciples; and then, looking into and weighing the particulars of his own state, discover how he may best acquire the one and practice the other? Where anything is directly contrary to the laws of God there we ought to resist as stubbornly as possible. . . . Now the playhouse seems to me to fall under this description; and in order to possess you with my sentiments on this subject, I will enclose you a little essay which contains almost all I think, and will spare me the trouble of a recital; . . . but there are other diversions of a more dubious nature — balls, concerts, cards, etc. It is impossible here to judge for another — in certain situations it may be expedient to partake of them, rather than offend those

with whom we may be living, etc.; but not as amusements to be enjoyed, but temptations to be undergone. It is easy to see that the whole current of Scripture sets against that disposition to seek for our comfort in the vanities of life and the enjoyments of sense, which is too natural to us all: it directs us to pleasures of a more exalted kind, to joys of a superior nature; and therefore that systematic balling and concerting and carding is really averse to the spirit of Christianity—observe, I say systematic, for it is reduced to a system; it is not an occasional, but a constant and habitual, misapplication of time and, money, and what is worse than all, of affections. But then we are not to abstain from these indulgences in which the world allows itself, and value ourselves on our abstemiousness, for that will bring on a proud and a morose spirit: the true way is, to endeavour to supplant the fondness for them by the love of better things, 'to let our rejoicing be the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world,' to learn to delight in the consciousness of His protection whose favour is better than life, and in the anticipation of those pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore. Could we arrive at this blessed temper, what mankind terms amusements and diversions would be to us either tedious or disgusting; and though on some occasions we might deem it expedient to conform, yet we should do it for the sake of others, not for our own. Of all others it is perhaps the most dangerous practice for us to draw a line, and, as it were, *pale in* some of the common amusements in which

we may judge that we ought to participate from such prudential motives as I am alluding to, and then to go on in the constant use of them in unsuspicious security. The habit of mind this brings on is very destructive indeed of the vital spirit of religion, and should be guarded against with all care. Now, were I to say, 'You may safely play at cards or go to the assembly,' etc., would there not be a danger in that; set at ease as it were by my permission, you would look on these, if I may say so, as fair game? I have said enough to make you understand me: the Christian's motto should be, 'Watch always, for you know not in what hour the Son of man will come.' In proportion as you find yourself compelled to engage in diversions you may not thoroughly approve, examine yourself with more diligence, be more constant in your devotions, act like one who, fearing that poison might lurk in his daily food, guarded against its effects by the daily use of antidotes. Remember that it is the great business of religion to purify our hearts, and inspire us with a more entire longing for those perfections which are to constitute the glories and happiness of our future being."

CHAPTER VI.

AUTHORSHIP.

THE kind of theology known by the name of Evangelical, and which flourished in the Puritan age of the seventeenth century, did not expire in the Church of England after the Restoration, but it certainly declined. Few traces of it, comparatively, could be found in the sermons and religious writings of the English clergy whilst Anne and the first two Georges sat on the throne. James Harvey of Weston Favel, Samuel Walker of Truro, Thomas Adams of Winteringham, and William Grimshaw of Haworth, were the principal Evangelical lights of the second generation of the last century. A little later came Fletcher of Madely, who, like Grimshaw, though active in the Methodist movement under John Wesley, retained an incumbency in the Established Church; and afterwards Henry Venn, William Romaine, John Newton, Thomas Scott, and Richard Cecil appeared as distinguished leaders of a revival which advanced after their time, but did not attain to full power and effect until a later period. It was very unpopular when Wilberforce began his religious life. In very few churches was "the

Gospel" preached, according to the view of the men just enumerated. Nor was much accomplished by the press for their propagation in this country. Romaine's works on "Faith" were perhaps the most popular of that kind; and yet they do not seem to have passed through several editions until years afterwards. John Newton's "Cardiphonia" only gradually rose into notice, and his "Discourses on the Messiah" never commanded much attention. Scott's "Essays" and "Force of Truth" were prized in later years; but it is doubtful whether at first they attracted a large circle of readers. The clerical scholars of the day at our universities, and in cathedral cities, or rural rectories, if they turned over the pages of such new volumes, it would chiefly be to criticise them as Methodistical, or to put them altogether aside as unworthy of an acknowledged place in English literature. The educated laity of the Church did not trouble the printers with "Evangelical" books. In the early part of the century Robert Nelson published works pervaded by the tone of thought prevalent in the Anglo-Catholic school; and William Law's "Serious Call," stamped with a different character, won from Dr. Johnson the praise of being "the finest hortatory theology in any language;" but it was left for Hannah More to appear first amongst unclerical authors as an accomplished and popular teacher of religious truth in the Evangelical view. Her thoughts on "The Importance of the Manners of the Great," published in 1788, ran through seven editions in a few months. Her "Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World," published in 1790, reached a fifth

edition in three years — a measure of popularity far beyond anything achieved at that time by the other sex, until William Wilberforce made his appearance on the stage of religious authorship.

Whether or not he was animated by the example of Hannah More, it is certain that he felt it necessary that some one like himself should boldly take up his pen in the interests of Evangelical religion, as connected especially with the spiritual wants of the higher classes. That moral courage was needed for the purpose, in one circumstanced like himself, is plain enough from what has just been indicated relative to the state of religious literature. Even with the encouragement of Mrs. More's success, he could not but feel that he was likely to awaken a good deal of opposition, by stepping forward in the ranks of fashionable life, to lift up his voice in behalf of spiritual Christianity. The enterprise, in that respect, should be estimated, not by the actual result which ensued, but by the probabilities of the case, as they would appear at the moment to a calm and unprejudiced observer. How the thought of publication shaped itself in his own mind is seen from memoranda published in his "Life." It may be said he seemed as if he would, and yet he could not. He weighed the *pros* and *cons* with great care, and after reckoning up many items struck the balance in favour of delay. The memoranda were written as early as 1789. He enumerated these points: that some were alarmed for the credit of his name; that he felt a difficulty in being sufficiently explicit; that well-disposed persons already knew the difference between being almost and being

altogether Christians; that he could speak to his friends in private; that appearing over-righteous he might deter people from political co-operation; that his influence with Pitt would be lessened—so he resolved to delay printing, but at his leisure he determined to prepare a work with an injunction to publish it after his death. He began to write at an early period. The frame of mind in which he did so, and the influence which swayed him at that juncture, will appear from the following extracts in his diary.

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

1793. "*Saturday*, *August* 3. I laid the first timbers of my Tract." Soon afterwards we find him "reading Butler, Barrow, Soame Jenyns, and the Scriptures, and going on with the Tract," which he discussed with Cecil,

who strongly recommended it. In the autumn of the same year he was principally occupied with preparing the materials for his "Practical Christianity"; and we are told that the entries in his journal mark that season of comparative leisure with an altered tone, showing "in striking colours the increasing power of religion over his character." After a lapse of nearly four years he is seen at Bath engaged on his book; and in the spring of 1797 he records, that "he had seen Cadell, and agreed to begin printing." He corrected the proofs "when business flagged in the Committee Room of the House of Commons, and "the index and errata were the work of midnight hours when the debate was over." He corresponded with Hannah More, and told her when the work was "one-third printed," and when it came out there were not wanting Cassandra predictions as to its fate. Dr. Milner had dissuaded the attempt; another friend said, "A person who stands so high for talent must risk much, in point of form at least, by publishing on a subject on which there have been the greatest exertions of the greatest genius." Even the publisher felt some apprehension, for there was little demand for religious publications, and, says the author, "he evidently regarded me as an amiable enthusiast." "You mean to put your name to the work?" inquired Mr. Cadell. And on receiving a reply in the affirmative he rejoined, "Then I think *we may venture upon five hundred copies*."

The title, according to the fashion of the day, was no enigma, as is now sometimes the case, but a full explanation of the contents. "*A Practical View of the Prevail-*

ing Religious Systems of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country, contrasted with Real Christianity."

In this work, a favourite at Court, a leading member of Parliament, and a friend of William Pitt, whose conversion had been the subject of fashionable talk, laid open the springs of that great change in his life which seemed to some a perplexing riddle. He expounded to the world the truths of the gospel with the confidence that what had transformed him could transform others. He wrote, not for literary fame, but for religious usefulness. The work is open to criticism, yet criticism is disarmed by its tone and temper. Devotional rather than argumentative, it is not so much designed to convince the sceptic as to contrast defective views of religion with what the author apprehended to be real Christianity. In short, it is a lay sermon on Evangelical piety, in which the social position of the preacher commands the widest audience, and his unprofessional character gives additional weight to his appeals. He dwells upon the corruption of human nature, upon inadequate views with regard to our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, upon the terms of acceptance with God, and the nature of practical Christianity. Defects in this respect he seeks to supply according to his own convictions. He deeply laments that Christianity has been reduced to a system of ethics, which he describes as a reaction against the extremes of Puritanical theology; whilst he praises Owen, Howe, and Flavel, and mentions that "most useful book, 'The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul,' by Dr. Doddridge,"

to which he was greatly indebted for his own spiritual change. He deplores the scepticism of contemporary literary men, and refutes the allegation that the world could not go on if his system of religion prevailed. A mild genial tone pervades the treatise, with little or nothing to offend, although he insists that the time in which he lived was no time for half measures. The steel glove the writer wore was covered as well as lined with velvet : for he did not follow the fashion of previous religious reformers. The style was as different from Evangelical works in general, as the tone was different from the polished productions of literary divines. It did not please all Evangelicals ; while some afterwards called him a "a man of rigid Calvinism," others detected in his book something of a "legal" tinge.

The literary merits of the work have perhaps been overrated, especially by those who sympathised with him in his religious views. They looked at the composition through the medium of their own admiration of his Evangelical piety, and of his moral courage in the expression of his convictions. Wilberforce, as indicated already, could not, and did not, pretend to be a theologian, in the proper sense of the term ; he wrote simply as a Christian man who had studied his Bible, together with the habits of society, and the secrets of the heart. There is no attempt at a keen analysis of abstract opinions, or a vigorous grasp of comprehensive principles, or a judicial settlement of doctrinal questions, or a thorough grappling with intellectual difficulties. The author aims at the heart and life, and is far more practical

than theoretical, urging homely lessons rather than explaining theological dogmas. Diffuseness of style, which it is so difficult for an orator to overcome when the pen is taken into his hand, is too obvious throughout to need any remark. Condensation would have greatly improved the volume; so would a more vigorous working out of salient points, together with the introduction of some supplementary discussions. The latter the author saw would be desirable, and indicated, as we shall presently see, how he thought of supplying the defect. As to his idea of the way in which it was to be done, there will probably be a difference of judgment. Prognostications of a limited demand for this new book were signally belied. Within a few days it was out of print, and within a year and a half five editions, in all 7,500 copies, were called for.

Friends welcomed the work with the warmest admiration. "I heartily thank you for it," wrote Lord Munster; "as a friend I thank you for it, as a man, I doubly thank you; but as a member of the Christian world, I render you all gratitude and acknowledgment. I thought I knew you well, but I know you better now, my dearest, excellent Wilber." "The bishops, in general," remarked Henry Thornton, "much approve of it; though some more warmly, some more coolly. Many of his gay and political friends admire and approve of it; though some do but dip into it—several have recognised the likeness of themselves. The better part of the religious world, and more especially the Church of England, prize it most highly, and consider it as producing an era in the

history of the Church. The Dissenters, many of them, call it legal, and point at particular parts." "I am thankful," said Bishop Porteous, writing to the author, "that a work of this nature has made its appearance at this tremendous moment. I shall offer up my fervent prayer to God that it may have a powerful and extensive influence on the hearts of men, and in the first place on my own, which is already humbled, and will, I trust, in time be sufficiently awakened by it." The old veteran, John Newton, his early religious adviser, joined in the chorus of praise—"I deem it the most valuable and important publication of the present age." "I am filled with wonder and with hope. I accept it as a token for good; yea, as the highest token as I can discern in this dark and perilous day." Robert Hall spoke of it as "an inestimable work, which has perhaps done more than any other to rouse the insensibility and augment the piety of the age." Better than all praise are the following facts. "Burke spent much of the last two days of his life in reading Wilberforce's book, and said that he derived much comfort from it, and that if he lived he should thank Wilberforce for having sent such a book into the world"—so says Mrs. Crewe, who was with Burke at the time. Henry Thornton told this to Hannah More. To the perusal of the volume, it is well known that Legh Richmond, author of the "Dairyman's Daughter" and the "Young Cottager," owed his conversion; and therefore through those wonderfully popular little stories the spiritual influence of Wilberforce was more widely circulated. An account of the impression made on Rich-

mond may best be given in his own words. It occurs in connection with a reference he makes to one of his beloved children :—

Speaking of his son Wilberforce, he remarks: "He was baptized by the name of Wilberforce in consequence of my personal friendship with that individual, whose name has long been, and ever will be, allied to all that is able, amiable, and truly Christian. That gentleman had already accepted the office of sponsor to one of my daughters; but the subsequent birth of this boy afforded me the additional satisfaction of more familiarly associating his name with that of my family. But it was not the tie of ordinary friendship, nor the veneration which, in common with multitudes, I felt for the name of Wilberforce, which induced me to give that name to my child: there had for many years past subsisted a tie between myself and that much-loved friend of a higher and more sacred character than any other which earth can afford. I feel it to be a debt of gratitude, which I owe to God and to man, to take this affecting opportunity of stating that to the unsought and unexpected introduction of Mr. Wilberforce's book on 'Practical Christianity' I owe, through God's mercy, the first sacred impression which I ever received as to the spiritual nature of the gospel system, the vital character of personal religion, the corruption of the human heart, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. As a young minister, recently ordained, and just entrusted with the charge of two parishes in the Isle of Wight, I had commenced my labours too much in the spirit of the world,

and founded my public instructions on the erroneous notions that prevailed amongst my academical and literary associates. The scriptural principles stated in the 'Practical View' convinced me of my error; led me to the study of the Scriptures with an earnestness to which I had hitherto been a stranger; humbled my heart, and brought me to seek the love and blessing of that Saviour who alone can afford a peace which the world cannot give. Through the study of this book I was induced to examine the writings of the British and foreign reformers. I saw the coincidence of their doctrines with those of the Scriptures, and those which the Word of God taught me to be essential to the welfare of myself and my flock. I know too well what has passed within my heart, for now a long period of time, not to feel and confess that to this incident I was indebted originally for those solid views of Christianity on which I rest my hope for time and eternity. May I not, then, call the honoured author of that book my spiritual father? and if my spiritual father, therefore my best earthly friend?"

The book met with adverse criticism from Unitarian authors. Gilbert Wakefield, in 1797, wrote "A Letter to William Wilberforce, Esq., on the subject of his late Publication." Thomas Belsham also, in 1798, issued "A Review" of Mr. Wilberforce's work, and in it he rejected as utterly inconsistent with truth and Scripture, the doctrines which were insisted upon in the "Practical Christianity" as fundamental; namely, the corrupted condition of human nature, the Atonement of our Lord, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. To Bel-

sham's "Review," Dr. Magee, Archbishop of Dublin, wrote a reply, printed in an appendix to his "Discourses and Dissertations on the Scripture Doctrines of Atonement and Sacrifice."

The popularity of Wilberforce's work continued for a long time. In 1807 Henry Martyn wrote: "In India Wilberforce is eagerly read." In 1818 the work had reached the thirteenth edition; and there is a copy of it before me with his autograph, "To the Athenæum, this Book is respectfully presented by W. Wilberforce;"—a presentation which showed his desire to promote the circulation of the volume among literary men. In 1826 fifteen editions had issued from the press in England. In America it has been frequently republished, and it has been translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and German; and one reader after another has confirmed the truth of a remark made by Sir James Stephen in the *Edinburgh Review:* "It is the expostulation of a brother. Unwelcome truth is delivered with scrupulous fidelity, and yet with a tenderness which demonstrates that the monitor feels the pain which he reluctantly inflicts. It is this tone of human sympathy breathing in every page which constitutes the essential charm of this book." No material alterations or additions were made in successive issues of the work by the author; but it appears, from what his biographers have supplied, that he thought of adding some supplementary chapters, if he did not entertain the purpose of a new work on some points connected with the original subject. From the notes preserved and printed, it is evident that he

revolved in his mind the bearing of his main theme on the question of Establishments. He thought that much nominal Christianity might be expected in a country where religion was established, though he was fully prepared to vindicate the Establishment principle. He remarked that if, "by a conventional courtesy, whenever the exterior conduct and manners are not contrary to the Christian model, or where by a moral balancing of accounts by which a positive amount of any Christian grace is to be set against a defect in another particular, the character may pass muster—the interior is to be presumed to be all complete, or, at least, if not complete in degree, to be right in kind; and by a too natural self-deception, men are led into granting to themselves the same indulgent measure which candour requires them to mete out to others." He further noticed that this habit led to the idea that the real existence of "the interior" of religion formed an extraordinary attainment, and that much short of it might suffice, whereas there must be no such allowed deficiency, for Christ commands, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Then he touched upon a plain fact, that a man eminent in his profession, a public benefactor, one universally esteemed and admired, finds it hard "to feel himself a lost, guilty, and helpless sinner, a slave to sin and Satan; to feel himself such sufficiently to dispose him to come as a weary and heavy-laden sinner to the Cross of Christ." He then adverted to the case of a person who finds it too late to change his principles and habits. "To use an every-day phrase,

he is in for it, and the idea of beginning, as it were, to live his life over again appears to him utterly inadmissible. He has been in the habit of taking his religious opinions on trust, . . . has little acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, . . . and the consequence is that he remains ignorant of the gracious offers that are made to him. . . . He knows not the infinite mercy and inexhaustible love of his God and Saviour." Such characters he intended to address, and to urge them, on every ground of prudence or folly, of misery or happiness, to attend to the Divine call.

Besides the "Practical View," Wilberforce published his speech in the House of Commons on the abolition of the slave trade, 1789. Also "An Apology for the Christian Sabbath," in 1799. A letter from his pen, "On the Abolition of the Slave Trade," addressed to the freeholders and other inhabitants of Yorkshire, appeared in January, 1807; and the same year he wrote "Letters to the Gentlemen and Freeholders of the County of York, occasioned by the last Election." He published also the substance of his speeches on the East India Bill, July, 1813; and an "Appeal to the Religion, Justice, and Humanity of the inhabitants of the British Empire, on behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies, 1823." These, so far as I can gather, are all the publications which he issued or sanctioned during his lifetime; but, since his death, two volumes of correspondence have been printed under the editorship of his sons, and they may be properly ranked amongst his works.

Some of these letters have already appeared in the pre-

sent volume as illustrative of his spiritual life and sympathy, other extracts will follow in the next chapters; but it will not be out of place here to introduce a few passages as illustrative of the literary merits of these compositions.

"I have been running over Gibbon's 'Decline.' He is an extraordinary man. Coxcomb all over, but of great learning, as well as very great show of it. He has the merit also of never declining a difficulty. But his style is abominably affected, and perfectly corresponds with Lord Sheffield's account of his mode of composition; and then his paganism is vastly more than that of Tully, or any other of the old school. I did look at the French constitution, and saw the same cause for admiration as in a former instance: I mean admiration of the genius of the deviser, who could create so many orders and give so much apparatus, and yet part with so little power. Yet experience proves that, if ever so minute a germ of political power be bestowed on any order who are likely to have personal weight and influence to throw into the scale, liberty, and a division of popular power in the constitution, may in time be the result."

"I have been reading Dr. Paley's 'Natural Theology,' and never was more delighted than I have been with his mathematical demonstration and elucidation of that cheering comfort—the goodness of the Almighty. Whilst I was at lectures at Cambridge, I was completely tired of 'the high *priori* road;' but now in the country, when I am in the low 'primrose path,' I think that I walk surely. His writings have always charmed me with their perspicuity and strict argument, and I feel my faith confirmed

by 'Evidences,' and particularly by that nice and accurate summing up of all the circumstantial evidence in his 'Horæ Paulinæ;' my reason wonderfully assisted and comforted by his 'Natural Theology;' and every duty and every exertion encouraged by his 'Philosophy.' I never read any part of his works, that afterwards I do not feel (*absit superbia dicto*) a better man."

"He is assuredly a charming writer, unequalled in perspicuity, and that I doubt not from superior clearness and precision in his conceptions. His language is as forcible as the great Dr.'s, without its turgid sesquipedality, if I may describe that Johnsonian style by a Johnsonian epithet. Above all, his illustrations are inimitably happy, nor can I deny that we owe him the highest obligations for his masterly explication of the various evidences of Christianity, on all of which he has shed a light, and, by bringing them to meet in one point, accumulated an amount of force, speaking philosophically, which to a fair mind seems irresistible. It gives me pain not to stop here, but must go on; and after all this and much more which might be said (and no one could with more pleasure pour forth Dr. Paley's copious eulogy), yet—must I say it?—he appears to me a most dangerous writer, likely to lead his readers into errors concerning the essential nature, genius, and design of Christianity. I cannot now go at large into this important discussion, but we will take it *ad referendum* when we can have a little quiet domestic chat, to which, by the way, I assure you I look forward." The letter is written to Ralph Creyke, Esq.

"Our debates" (speaking of the House of Commons

in 1820, addressing the same person) "are not what they once were. I am myself, indeed, arrived at such a period, at least of parliamentary life, very near forty years, as to have become—

> 'Laudator temporis acti
> Se puero.'

But without any such prejudice, we contend in a lower region than when Pitt and Fox, or North and Fox and Burke, were the combatants; not but that Canning displays as much talent, and with one exception is as finished an orator as I ever heard. But yet, when he is at his best, I am always admiring Canning; when Pitt and Fox were in full song, they were themselves forgotten, and the hearer was hurried along by the torrent, without having leisure to ask by what name it was distinguished, or to estimate the height, or the swell, or the rapidity of the current."

Writing to his daughter in 1822, with reference to his eldest grandson, he says: "It may happen that this dear boy may hereafter in the senate, watch over the matured growth of some institutions of which a certain grandfather, long ago laid in the grave, had superintended the tender and infant shoots; planting also, in his turn, some young saplings which his grandchild may hereafter behold in their full beauty of foliage and exuberance of fruit: or possibly, what I should much rather covet, he may hereafter enforce from the pulpit those blessed truths which both his paternal and maternal grandfather had inculcated in their day; and oh, may it be added, which his own father and mother had so happily exemplified.

You may remember that in China, the stream of honour flows in the opposite direction to that which it takes in our European countries—I mean men ennoble backwards. They reflect their honour on their progenitors. Both modes have in them something mature, and while to be the child of a distinguished parent cannot but be a credit to any one, so to be the parent of a distinguished child, every father's and, much more, every mother's feelings will pronounce to be at once an honour and a delight; one of the greatest, as it is surely one of the purest, delights that our nature can enjoy in this world of sin and sorrow."

As these are letters addressed to friends, we cannot expect to find in them any depth of thought; yet they indicate critical discrimination in reading, a sagacious perception of merits or demerits in political organisations, a penetrating judgment of real oratory, liveliness of fancy, and felicity of diction. Such elements of literary merit may be found scattered through a correspondence comprising many hundred letters, some of which run into too great diffuseness of expression; but all are written in a pleasant, easy style, leading the reader on from page to page without weariness. They belong to a period when epistolary composition occupied much more time and thought than at present, now that our wonderful postal and telegraphic system affords irresistible temptations to brevity; not to mention the enormous demands made on our energies in a thousand ways, which interfere with the calm enjoyment of letter writing and letter reading. Letters written in the last quarter of this century will, we

fear, make a poor show compared with those of fifty or eighty years ago. The earlier stage of Wilberforce's life was in the very *age of correspondence*, contemporary with two eminent masters of the art, Cowper and Newton. The charm of Cowper's letters—their perfect ease, their "light and sweetness," and their play of humour, like a succession of rainbows, after the dark storms which had passed over the author's soul—are acknowledged by every reader: and the wisdom combined with sprightliness, the happy mode of illustrating points of Christian experience by familiar incidents—which so strikingly mark the letters of the vicar of Olney and the rector of St. Mary, Woolnoth—can never fail to be appreciated by devout Christians. With neither of these writers, in some respects, is Wilberforce to be placed on a level: certainly one misses in his letters the indescribable sort of charm which invests those of his contemporaries, but in other respects—such as knowledge of the world, large experience gathered from varied intercourse, a comprehensive and many-sided sympathy, and a peculiar habit of rapidly passing from one subject to another, as graceful as it is characteristic of his extraordinary versatility—Wilberforce is superior to either of his contemporaries.

CHAPTER VII.

DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL LIFE.

WILBERFORCE presents a remarkable consistency of character in the different relationships of life. The public and private habits of many people are so opposite, that it would be a great mistake to infer from their conduct in one respect, what they will do in another. Philanthropy and self-sacrifice gush forth in platform speeches, without finding any counterpart in an unwatched retirement. In too many instances there can be no greater satire upon professions made before admiring crowds than that which appears when the applauded orator is seen at home, untouched by the spur of habitual ambition. Peevishness, discontent, and jealousy there take the place previously occupied by opposite semblances. Nothing of this sort can be detected in the case of Wilberforce. He was the same beneficent, loveable man in his own drawing-room, and under the roof of intimate associates, as he appeared on the floor of the Commons, or the electioneering hustings, or when occupying the chair at a religious meeting.

He did not marry till he was nearly thirty-eight. Then he had long made his mark as a religious man, as a pro-

minent politician, and as the Negroes' friend. The lady of his choice was Barbara Anne, eldest daughter of Isaac Spooner, Esq., of Elindon Hall, in the county of Warwick. "*Facta est alea*," are words he wrote on her acceptance of his offer. "I believe her to be a real Christian, affectionate, sensible, rational in habits, moderate in desires and pursuits, capable of bearing prosperity without intoxication, and adversity without repining." Their wedded happiness for many years justified the augury of his affection at the commencement of their union, and his state of mind at the time, as revealed in his diary, shows how thoroughly he was imbued with that faith which watches for, and devoutly recognises, a Divine providence in all the changes of human life.

Wilberforce had several children: William, who recently died at the age of eighty; Robert Isaac, who became Archdeacon of the East Riding of Yorkshire; Samuel, who rose to the bench as Bishop of Oxford and then of Winchester; and Henry William, who is said to have greatly resembled his father in appearance, and who for some time held the living at Walmer. Robert Isaac and Henry William, as is well known, entered the Church of Rome, and died in that communion. There were two daughters.

They formed altogether a family to which, as they grew up, the father became more and more a blessing and a joy. His parliamentary duties, his numerous benevolent enterprises, his wide social connections, and his irrepressible tendency to move from place to place, must, in their

earlier years, when they lived in the nursery and only saw his genial face at brilliant intervals, have affected his intercourse with his sons and daughters; but when they reached a riper age, his animated and abundant conversation must have had for them an irresistible charm; and whilst the outside world admired the orator, their hearts would be drawn out towards the father and the man. At one season of the day above others, from the time they could appreciate what he was doing, they were taught to enter into the holiest fellowship with him, as he entered into the holiest fellowship with his Maker; for it was his wont at half-past nine to meet his family and household for worship—"always a great thing in his esteem. At this he read a portion of the Scriptures, generally of the New Testament, in course, and explained and enforced it, often with a natural and glowing eloquence, always with affectionate earnestness, and an extraordinary knowledge of God's Word." Afterwards, when in one of his rural residences, "he never failed to sally forth for a few minutes—

'To take the air, and hear the thrushes sing.'"

These walks he enjoyed exceedingly as he saw the "abundant dewdrops sparkling in the sunbeams on the green." As his children grew up, he watched them with a holy solicitude, and we are told in the life of his son, that he preserved not less than six hundred of his father's letters full of loving counsels. "William Wilberforce was by no means a young man when these letters began (about fifty-seven years of age): he was not a man of leisure. Samuel

was not an only, or even an eldest son, that his father could concentrate on him the whole, or even the major, part of his solicitude. He was in the full tide of London life and parliamentary occupation, he had three other sons to care for, and besides all this his health was weak, and his eye-sight failing, so that, in many instances, he had to mention that he was writing with closed eyes."

Scenes of domestic enjoyment were sometimes overclouded with sad trials. Two distressing bereavements are recorded.

In the winter of 1821 his eldest daughter died. The circumstances of her departure were very affecting, and the parent was assiduous in spiritual attentions to his beloved child. Her piety was exceedingly beautiful. "Sustained by a humble hope of the mercies of God through her Redeemer and Intercessor, she was enabled to bear her sufferings with patience and resignation, and to preserve a composure which surprised even herself. On the very morning of the last day of her life, she had desired a female attendant to ask her physician whether or not there was any hope of her recovery; but 'if not,' she added, 'all is well.'" "The day before she expired," says her father, "she sent all out but her mother and me, and concluded some declarations of her humble hope in the mercies of God through Christ with a beautiful prayer addressed to her Saviour. And she had remarked to her mother, that she never had before understood the meaning and value of Christ's intercession." "When the hearse and our kind friends were gone, after a short time I came into my little room at the top of the stairs,

where I am now writing, and engaged a while in prayer, blessing God for His astonishing goodness to me, and lamenting my extreme unworthiness."

Another daughter was taken from him in the spring of 1831, and in reference to this circumstance he makes a striking remark: "I was much impressed yesterday with the similarity in some respects of my own situation to that of her dear little innocent, who was undergoing the operation of vaccination. The infant gave up its little arm to the operator without suspicion or fear. But when it felt the puncture, which must have been sharp, no words can express the astonishment and grief that followed. What an illustration is this, thought I, of the impatient feelings we are often apt to experience and sometimes even to express, when suffering from the dispensations of a Being whose wisdom we profess to believe to be unerring, whose kindness we know to be unfailing, whose truth also is sure, and who has declared to us that all things shall work together for good to those who love Him. I have often heard," it is added, "that sailors on a voyage will drink 'friends astern,' till they are half way over, then 'friends ahead.' With me it has been friends ahead this long time."

In turning over the pages of his "Life and Correspondence," it amuses me to find how he passed from one residence to another, and how almost incessantly he was roving about in different parts of the kingdom.

For a time, as we have seen, after he became his own master, he kept up an establishment at Wimbledon. Rayrigg in Westmoreland is a spot often mentioned in

his letters and diary, as a favourite resort when tired with the bustle of London life. His sons tell us, "that for many years he made Yoxhall Lodge or Rothley Temple his ordinary summer residence." Yoxhall was the seat of his friend the Rev. Thomas Gisborne, where "he enjoyed uninterrupted privacy combined with the domestic comforts of his friend's family." There, "day after day," he pursued "his investigations on the slave-trade, and in composing his invaluable work upon practical Christianity." One day, in 1790, he left Yoxhall Lodge, Mr. Gisborne and Mr. Babington—who helped him in his anti-slavery toils, and was the owner of Rothley Temple—accompanying him as far as Tamworth. The next day he reached London, and plunging at once into a dinner circle, he says, "how did I regret the innocent and edifying hilarity of the Lodge." Two days after he jots down in his journal, "Went to Wimbledon. Dundas, Lord Chatham, Pitt, Grenville, Ryder. Much talk about Burke's book." It has been often noticed how tantalising it is in reading these rough, crude entries to find little more than names and dates, when one thirsts to know what was said and done at such remarkable interviews, or rather interviews with such remarkable men; though, perhaps after all, they did not amount to much more than one often witnesses when receiving visits from obscure individuals. Presently afterwards, he writes, "It is most likely, indeed, I shall myself return to Clapham or some such rural fastness." Again, "I left Clapham and came to stay in London; had much to do, many letters;"—they used to come in trays full—"saw much

company as usual in Palace Yard"—another of his abodes. "I cannot invite you here," he tells a friend about to visit London, "for during the sitting of Parliament my house is a mere hotel." His breakfast-table was thronged with all sorts of people, friends, acquaintances, strangers—some coming to ask for advice, others for money. Presently we read, "Behold me now on my road to Bath, with Henry Thornton for my agreeable companion. We are snug and comfortable, but we would willingly increase our duet to a trio to admit your honour" —Mr. Babington. "Now do not suppose that, being half-choked and smoked and roasted in town, I am about to finish in Bath. To have grass up to my door after so long a parching of my heels on the pavement of London is not a luxury, but necessary for me. I have therefore leased a country house within reach of the Pump Room, and so shall enjoy the comforts of a beautiful country residence, whilst with the salubrious waters of King Bladud, I am washing away the *sordes* contracted in the course of a long session." The place was called Perry Mead. "And then I hear you say, 'Where is Perry Mead?' It is situated in a country which, except in the article of water, comes not far behind Cumberland and Westmoreland themselves, close to Prior Park, and about three-quarters of a mile from the Pump Room." And when writing this, he adds, "Independently of my regard for the inhabitants, I have an affection for the country of Westmoreland and Cumberland, which makes me always hail the sight of them, and quit them with reluctance." When Henry Thornton heard

of the purchase, he said: "I a little lament it on the ground of the bad economy of it; for he is a man who, were he in Norway or Siberia, would find himself infested with company, since he would even produce a population for the sake of society in the regions of the earth where it is the least. His heart, also, is so large that he never will be able to refrain from inviting people to his house. The quiet and solitude he looks for will, I conceive, be impossible, and the Bath house will be troubled with exactly the same heap of fellows as the Battersea Rise one." All this relates to his bachelor days.

After his marriage his head-quarters were in Palace Yard, and for an occasional retreat he rented of a friend his house on Clapham Common—the same place as is elsewhere called Broomfield. But he still frequented the neighbourhood of Bath, and writing from Hull soon after his wedding, he speaks of going there, saying, "My plan of life is everywhere the same. The morning I spend in some sort of reading and writing, taking Mrs. Wilberforce along with me as much as I can in my studies and employments. We carry our business out of doors, and muse or read whilst taking the air and exercise. Dinner and supper are the seasons when I enjoy the company of my friends; and though I do not push about the bottle, I can willingly prolong the dinner conversation till it sometimes almost meets the beginning of our supper conversazione." In the May of 1804 we notice him at Broomfield again, enjoying "the first greetings of summer—the nightingales abundant." And writ-

ing from Lyme in Dorsetshire, another resort which suited him mightily—"a bold coast, a fine sea view, the clouds often shrouding the tops of the cliffs, a very varied surface of ground, a mild climate, and either fresh air or sheltered walks"—he informs Hannah More in September, 1804: "I am now come with my whole family to a place where I hope to enjoy something of (to me) the greatest of all luxuries as well as the best of all medicines—quiet. Already I have had one or two delectable strolls with a Testament, a Psalter, or a Cowper in my pocket (you won't resent my classification); and after I shall have fought through a host of letters—which are drawn up in array against me, but over which I have resolved to assign you the precedence, and have completed another task, which as being connected with Abolition naturally devolves on me—I hope to enjoy many a delightful walk along the hoarse resounding shore, meditating on better things than poor blind Homer knew or sung of."

In 1808 he meets us at Eastbourne, where he settled with his family for summer quarters, and on the way he carried his whole household to Barham Court. The crowd of visitors who dogged him at Broomfield gave him no peace, and to "associate fully with his wife and children" he had to escape from Clapham. On his return from Eastbourne he took possession of a new house in Kensington Gore, which he had just bought on a twenty-five years' lease. He describes it as having about three acres of pleasure-ground and several old trees, walnut and mulberry of thick foliage, where he could sit and

read under the shade as if two hundred miles from the great city. He gave up Broomfield at Clapham with great regret, and by settling within a mile of Hyde Park Corner, he hoped to be more with his family; and by exchanging the old house in Palace Yard for lodgings on the Terrace, he hoped to economise his resources and provide for his extensive charities. But the old fate pursued him still. There was little more rest for him at the Gore than at Broomfield, and in 1816 it is noted that every year multiplied the private claimants on his time, and this year they abounded from the tale of ordinary distress to the Duke of Kent, who more than once "called on him for two hours about his affairs, and why going abroad—hardly used."

The same year Wilberforce went down to Lowestoft with his family, and thence made an excursion to the seat of Joseph John Gurney, at Earlham near Norwich. "One of our great astronomers," he remarks to his family, "has stated it as probable that there may be stars whose light has been travelling to us from the creation and has not yet reached our little planet, and thus some have accounted for new stars first observed by more recent astronomers. In this Earlham family a new constellation has broken upon us, for which you must invent a name, as you are fond of star-gazing; and if it indicate a little monstrosity, as they are apt to give the collection of stars the names of strange creatures—dragons, bears, etc.—the various parts of which the Earlham assemblage is made up, may justify some name indicative of queer combinations; only let it include also all that is to be esteemed

and loved, and respected too, and coveted." Amongst the large party at dinner Wilberforce mentions the Bishop of Norwich (Dr. Bathurst), Colonel B—— and Lady Emily, Mr. Buxton, Mr. Cunningham, and Mr. Hudson Gurney.

In 1820 he sold the lease at Kensington, and settled first at Marden Park, in Surrey. Five years later, 1825, when he resigned his seat in Parliament, he resolved to leave the metropolis altogether. He engaged a temporary place of retirement near Uxbridge, and in the autumn he appears again at Bath to complain afresh of interruptions. "You are required to second the influence of the waters before, between, and after the glasses by a liberal quantity of air and exercise; and if, in despite of the doctors, you go to your desk, you cannot write for five minutes without a rat-tat-tat by the knocker, reminding you that you are in a large city, in which it is the practice to carry on most diligently an incessant system of calling and carding, against which both payer and receiver inveigh." After a sojourn at Bath "he occupied, until spring, a house at Beckenham, which had been lent him by a friend, where he enjoyed much of the retirement he so long had coveted." He took possession in June of a freehold residence at Highwood Hill, "a pleasant spot just beyond the disk of the metropolis," where, he said, he should be a little zemindar, with 140 acres of land, and cottages all his own. But a week after he was off into Suffolk: "*22nd.* Reached Ampton, the place in the highest possible beauty, an exquisite oasis." In 1827 he made a progress through his native county, after an

absence of almost twenty years, and the journey he much enjoyed, making reflections by the way upon the oaks and horse-chestnuts, the dark holly, the flowering gorse. "A fine tree," he says, "always seems to be like a community in itself, with the countless insects that it shelters and nourishes in its roots and branches;" and no visit at this time gave him greater pleasure than one he paid to Wentworth House, when Lord Fitzwilliam, whom he had opposed in the Yorkshire election, "in defiance of his old hereditary interest, received him with a cordiality and kindness he could never forget."

It is a remarkable fact in connection with the social life of Wilberforce, that his decided profession of Evangelical convictions made little or no difference in his personal popularity with the highest fashionable circles. His companionship was sought by the most distinguished personages, and seems to have been valued all the more from the restrictions which his principles laid upon his intercourse. He felt it his duty to abstain from that free indulgence in worldly society which marked his early history: on that account people thought the more of having him present at the festal board. Of this a striking example occurs in connection with the Prince of Wales. It has been already noticed that the prince was charmed with his singing when he was a young man. Years afterwards, when "the first gentleman of Europe" displayed gorgeous and extravagant magnificence at the Brighton Pavilion, he went out of his way to invite the philanthropist to accept the royal hospitality, after a manner not common with royal personages. The circumstances are

related by the honoured guest in a letter to Hannah More, dated February 1, 1816 :

"You mention my reception at the Pavilion ; nothing could be more gracious, I should rather say, unaffectedly gentleman-like. He personally invited me to dine with him, desiring me to fix my day ; and when of course I expressed myself willing any day : 'Well, then, to-morrow. I assure you,' he added, 'you will hear at my table nothing you disapprove—I hope, indeed, at no time ; but, if ever there did anything of that kind pass, there should be nothing of it when you should be with me.' He invited, as I afterwards heard, Lord Ellenborough to meet me, and was really quite the English gentleman at the head of his table. Poor fellow ! I longed to have a private half-hour with him ; for it is sad work. Dinner comes on table at six ; at nine the dinner-party goes into the other rooms, in one of which is music, in another cards ; and others, in a long gallery 160 feet long, walking about till a quarter or half-past twelve, and then, on the prince's retiring, all of us depart. But really, it is a large part of existence, from six to half-past twelve daily, or rather nightly. The Princess Charlotte is a fine fair German-looking personage, with a sensible countenance and a commanding air. I believe, but nothing certain was known, that there is foundation for the report of her being likely to become the wife of Prince Coburg, a very handsome foreigner, of high blood, and, which is better, no dominions. By the way, I forgot the civilest part of all the prince's conduct towards me. Finding invitations to the evening-parties come pretty thick upon me, I men-

tioned one evening to Bloomfield that evening engagements broke in upon my family plans; that I was at Brighton for a quiet life, my boys at home, etc.; and that though highly honoured and gratified (really true) by His Royal Highness's kindnesses, I wished to decline frequent invitations. The prince himself was told of it; and in the handsomest way possible, begged me to suit my own convenience; he should always be happy to see me."

It is now time to turn attention to Wilberforce's private friendships, in which his social virtues appear with the brightest lustre. There must have been a great charm in his intercourse to endear him as it did to William Pitt, whose historical presence appears to us so cold and stately. But the great minister must have had a genial nature, and it received a deep impression from his intimacy with Wilberforce, who in his turn fully appreciated those lively and winning qualities, which from outside observers were often concealed by official etiquette and political reserve. When young they indulged together in rather boisterous fun. Not to refer again to the Boar's Head party in honour of Shakespeare, we may mention what are described as "the sports of the rigid Scipio, and meditative Lælius in their ungirded hours," equalled by playfulness in the garden at Wimbledon, when Pitt's overflowing spirits carried him to every height of jest. "We found one morning," writes his friend, "the fruits of Pitt's earlier rising in the careful sowing of the garden beds with the fragments of a dress hat, in which Ryder had overnight come down from the opera."

"It was," add his biographers, "in this varied and

familiar intercourse that their mutual affection was matured: an affection which Mr. Wilberforce retained through life, in spite of difference in politics and on yet more important subjects, and the remembrance of which would often cast a momentary sadness over the habitual cheerfulness of his aged countenance." Outbursts of juvenile hilarity were followed by more subdued, but not less hearty, intercourse, and neither on one side or the other did the friend become merged in the politician. The graces of an affectionate intimacy blended to the last with their mutual relations and discussions as statesmen; and intense concern for the spiritual welfare of one absorbed in the anxieties of political patriotism and ambition appears in the letters and journal of Wilberforce down to his friend's dying day.

Next to Pitt, perhaps Lord Muncaster shared most in Wilberforce's intimacy—an intimacy prolonged until the death of that nobleman, who survived Pitt for many years. To Lord Muncaster he wrote a playful letter from abroad in the year 1784, describing his journey with Milner. "A tutor of a college," he calls him, "whose wig I see excites no small astonishment in the Gallic *perruquiers:* he has equipped himself, however, with one of a smaller size, which he is to put on when we fix." Sitting in his carriage on board a boat floating down the Rhine to Avignon, he tells his friend that the surrounding scenery would suggest recollections of Eskdale, where his lordship lived, if nought else led him thither; "But this, my dear Muncaster," he goes on to say, "you will do me the justice to believe is not the case, and I assure you I have

often been looking out of your window when you have not seen me, and been endeavouring thus to live over again the pleasant days I passed with you in Cumberland. I frequently ramble in the wood, and I assure you I approve of your alteration in front, even more than I expected, for it does still better in theory than in practice." Thus he carried with him the image of his friend, with all the surroundings of his beautiful home in the Lake district, and could realise the past as present, the distant as near. And to the same Lord Muncaster, twenty-seven years afterwards, he writes in solemn words, unconsciously anticipative of what followed not very long afterwards: "Farewell, m dear Muncaster. I will not apologise for the serious strain into which I have just drifted. I know you wish me to say what is uppermost, to pour forth the effusions of the heart. Farewell once more, and may God bless you. When that is said seriously, as I say it, well may it be added, in the phrase of the Orientals—what can I say more?" The letter was written in November, 1811; in September, 1813, Lord Muncaster died, and his will was found to contain the following words: "I add these two bequests in way of legacies—one to my very early and much esteemed good friend, Henry Duncombe, of Copgrove, in the county of York; and one to my truly valued and much regarded friend, William Wilberforce, Esq., member for the said county—of 100 guineas each, as a small proof and testimony of the very sincere friendship I felt towards them during the time I walked with them in this vale of tears and sorrowing."

Between the two distant dates of the earliest and last

letter just noticed, covering the space of more than a quarter of a century, letter after letter went from Wilberforce to Muncaster, full of thoughts, sentiments, and allusions indicative of the closest friendship.

There is a remarkable passage in one written September, 1786, after adverting to a recent calamity: "Oh, my dear Muncaster, how can we go on as if present things were to last for ever, when so often reminded by accidents like this that the fashion of this world passeth away. Every day I live I see greater reason in considering this life but as a passage to another. And when summoned to the tribunal of God, to give an account of all things we have done in the body, how shall we be confounded by the recollection of those many instances, in which we have relinquished a certain, eternal for an uncertain, transitory good! You are not insensible to these things, but you think of them rather like a follower of Socrates than a disciple of Jesus. You see how frankly I deal with you; in truth, I can no otherwise so well show the interest I take in your happiness; these thoughts are uppermost in my heart, and they will come forth when I do not repress my natural emotions." How infinitely preferable is this Christian plain dealing to all the compliments of varnished veneer with which many religious people seek to adorn even their private and confidential correspondence. When Wilberforce sent his friend a copy of the "Practical View" it secured, as already noticed, that friend's highest appreciation, and probably served to guide his religious thoughts afterwards into decidedly Christian paths. A genial outburst meets us in a January letter of the first year in this

century: "Merry Christmases and Happy New Years, and all the good wishes that ever were poured forth from the fullest reservoir of benevolence within the heart of man; or rather which, like some rivers, gushed out spontaneously with a force not to be resisted; all these have inundated me, and still I remain dry and silent. Oil, we know, resists water more than anything, and if I were polished all over with the costly varnish of St. James, it might be accounted for; but that a man, who has not shown his face at Court for these eighteen months, should thus suffer his friends to have so slippery a hold of him is wonderful indeed—not to be accounted for on the ordinary principles of human depravity. Yet though so long silent, I have not been unfeeling, and, though I have kept my emotions to myself, I have been warmed with cordial good wishes for the happiness of you and yours. And now, though somewhat of the latest, accept my hearty prayers for your welfare here and hereafter." Over and over again there rise to the surface complaints of the want of quiet and rest, which the natural habits of the writer, no less than his circumstances, rendered it extremely difficult of attainment; and he amusingly describes his unrestful sensations by saying: "There is certainly a *something* which is very peculiar, even stout people feel it: with a blazing sun there is a rawness which is not dulcified, just as you sometimes find an acid which no sugar will overpower." In felicitous phraseology he recognises a harmony between Lord Muncaster's sentiments and his own: "We exactly agree—I repeat it—'tis as if your country, which always, you know, abounded in echoes, had echoed back to me

the feelings which with a loud voice I had poured forth to my friend in Eskdale." He never misses a fair opportunity of pressing on his noble friend the immense importance of inspired truths. "Happy they," he says in May, 1804, "who pursue those paths which even here are alone paths of peace, though pleasantness may sometimes (precarious pleasantness) be found in other ways, and which alone will at length conduct us to permanent and solid happiness. Oh, my dear Muncaster, press forward in these ways. The Scriptures, prayer, with humble reliance on our Redeemer and Intercessor and on the aids of His promised Spirit—these are the sure means of progress." Presents of field spoil, obtained by chase or gun, seem to have laden in those days—when game was not bought or sold as now—the waggons or coaches, which plied between Muncaster Castle and the metropolis; for Wilberforce, in the sporting season of 1807, writes: "I am tired of thanking you for game, though you are never tired of sending it." Two years afterwards there turns up a letter beginning, "'And where is Wilber?' I hear you saying. Near Newport Pagnell. Out comes Cary and the inventive genius and geographical knowledge, and the young ones are set to work. But I defy you all. The truth is, I had been long looking round for a ready-furnished house." Hunting after houses, furnished or unfurnished, seems to have been one of the master joys of our philanthropist's life, and he candidly says: "I must own that from my earliest days—at least, my earliest travelling days—I never passed a parsonage in at all a pretty village without my mouth watering to reside in it. And this longing has

been still more powerful since the only objection, that of solitude, has been removed by my bringing my own society along with me. The best of this place is, that though the immediate neighbourhood has no other beauties than those of peaceful rural scenery, yet we are near the scene of Cowper's rambles; and devoted as I am to Cowper, the idea of treading in his track is not a little delightful. It is quite classic ground to me, and I shall read both his prose and his verse here with a double relish. I have once already (but the day was bad, and I mean to do it again) carried some cold meat to a venerable old oak to which he was strongly attached"—the oak at Yardley, Hastings. I must wind up these glances at a pleasant correspondence, running over years of faithful friendship, with the urgent invitation contained in one of his later letters: "Though you have stayed till all around you is so beautiful that you can scarcely persuade yourself to quit the loves of the Castle, yet come you must, or I shall send the sergeant-at-arms to disturb your privacy; and what is more, you must bring your daughters with you, or they also shall be summoned, on some pretence or other, to give evidence concerning the practicability of a tunnel through Scawfell to facilitate your communication with Windermere. We abound with projects this session, and there are some little less than extraordinary."

Another of Wilberforce's early and intimate friends was Dr. Milner, the well-read scholar—"a burly man, with a Johnsonian manner and loud, peremptory voice." Mr. Colquhoun thus paints the two friends: "So when they seat themselves for conference and the subject interests them,

and the humble-minded statesman would learn the views of the Dean, sure as fate interruptions come. A new book appears, or the latest number of the Review, and Wilberforce must just open it and cut a few pages, and take a peep; or a kitten creeps along the verandah and he must catch it; listening of course all the while, but with a divided and dubious air. Then the gruff voice of the old Don breaks out: 'Now, Wilberforce, listen, for no power will make me repeat what I am going to say.' And the gentle philanthropist, all excuses and smiles, sits down again and promises attention; when, alas for human purposes, one of his boys, or the child of a friend, bursts in, claps his hands in glee, and sues for a kiss—all the good intentions are forgotten; and while he pursues the enchanters, the vexed Dean disappears."

Milner seems to have looked with some suspicion on his friend's proceedings, especially on his intercourse with all sorts of people; though at the same time he thought him misrepresented. A stupid story went the round, of Wilberforce having a prayer-book in the Bath Pump Room and saying his prayers there. "It really amounts to downright hatred and persecution," says the Doctor; "nor have I the least doubt that the person who writes in this manner would do you personal injury if he could with impunity. I have no question that he is some violent democratic dissenter, and perhaps if you could unkennel him some private anecdotes between you and him would turn up." The spirit of the allusion to some "violent democratic dissenter," and the meaning of the reference to "private anecdotes," are unmistakeable. Milner supported the repressive policy

of Pitt, and told Wilberforce he hoped he would not be a dupe to "the dishonest opposition," glad to "make use of him in hunting down" the minister. He warned him against "the artifices of Fox and Sheridan." And in all this we see the kind of influence sometimes brought to bear on our philanthropic statesman, when, restive under party bonds, he sought to take an independent position, and support what he believed to be true and right. Also, we find the same clergyman very chary about attending a Bible-meeting at Cambridge, and much afraid of doing anything which would not receive the approval of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries; yet the character given him by Wilberforce is such as to show him worthy of the friendship he enjoyed, for he speaks of "his cheerfulness, good nature, and powers of social entertainment." Milner died in his friend's house at Kensington Gore. "Never," says the survivor, "was there an easier dismission, which is the more observable because he had fears of the pain of dying: when he was told that he was in danger, he grew more composed and calm than he had been before. It is very odd, but I felt rather stunned than melted. Spent the day, after a short prayer, chiefly in writing to different friends." Wilberforce went down to Cambridge, where Milner was buried, and followed his remains to the grave, and records how Daniel Wilson in a funeral discourse "seized upon the chief constituents of his character—his ponderous sense, his tenderness and kindness, his solid and experimental piety."

James Stephen, who became brother-in-law to Wilberforce by marrying his sister, enjoyed his confidential friendship, and helped him much in his anti-slavery

labours. Wilberforce speaks of him "as one of the most upright of men," and declares that to lose Stephen as an ally in the great enterprise would be an "irremediable" loss. Stephen well understood not only Wilberforce's character but his position also; and whilst Milner and others doubted the wisdom of his friend's large hospitality and comprehensive acquaintance, Stephen thus expresses a different opinion on the subject:

"There is a peculiar and very important species of usefulness to friends and acquaintances for which Wilberforce's character and manners fit him in an extraordinary degree, and this talent can nowhere, perhaps, be traded with to greater profit than at Kensington. I think, too, that his public usefulness is promoted by having so respectable a mansion so much in the eye of the public, and within reach of all who have business with him, or to whom his attention as leader in great public causes ought to be paid. Constituted as the world is, example and influence will be the more efficacious the more personal consequence is attached to them; and personal consequence will be measured by strangers in a certain degree by external appearances. . . . In any material degree to exclude guests would not only be to impair Wilberforce's usefulness, but to change his nature. If Wilberforce were less hospitable, sure I am his children would see less of what may be most useful to them in his example. They would have less of that important and difficult lesson, how to live with the world and yet not be of the world. They would be less likely to learn how to have their conversation in heaven without

renouncing the society of man; how to be cheerful in company, and to please both friends and strangers without any sacrifice of Christian character."

Stephen, claiming the privilege of close relationship, used to take his brother-in-law to task for some of his proceedings. But the rebuked never loved the rebuker one whit the less on that account. "Go on, my dear sir, and welcome," he would say. "Believe me, I wish you not to abate anything of the force or frankness of your animadversions. Openness is the only foundation and preservative of friendship. Let me claim from you at all times your undisguised opinion." Stephen called Wilberforce, in relation to the anti-slavery cause, "the Moses of the Israelites, though a courtier of Pharaoh," thus happily hitting upon the strength and the weakness of his friend's character. And when he said this in so many words, he apologised for the presumption. If Stephen held up a true mirror sometimes to Wilberforce, Wilberforce habitually exerted a subduing influence on Stephen, who was a rather impetuous person; and he ends one of his letters to him by subscribing himself, "Yours, my dear and faithful friend, the medium of my life, ever very affectionately." And again, "You are and ever have been kind to me beyond a brother's kindness, and I think of it often with wonder as well as with humiliation and gratitude."

Stephen describes Wilberforce "as the most perfect and, at the same time, the most natural and unconscious actor who ever appeared off the stage. He had such histrionic powers when he was in his usual health and

spirits, that into whatever society he fell the eye of every person present was gradually fixed on his countenance and watching his gestures. So homely a person and so eloquent a demeanour were scarcely ever united."

The name of Henry Thornton, Member of Parliament for Southwark, son of John Thornton, the city merchant, mentioned before in these pages, often occurs in Wilberforce's biography. They were very intimate. Henry Thornton was a man of culture, and rising above the practical business of commerce, he formed large views of public affairs; and, destitute of his friend's imagination, voice, and attractive manner, he compensated for the want by his mastery of facts and his insight into principles. He commanded attention in the House of Commons, and supported Wilberforce in his great measures. He could bear with the same equanimity the reviling and the applause of the multitude at the Southwark hustings, and told his children one day after a great electioneering triumph: "I would rather have a shake of the hand from good old John Newton than the cheers of all that foolish mob, who praise one they don't know why." One thing for which they did praise him all understood; and the doggerel lines circulated amongst his constituents were true to the letter—

> "Nor place nor pension e'er got he
> For self or for connection;
> We shall not tax the treasury
> By Thornton's re-election."

And in this respect the two friends were of one heart and of one mind. Wilberforce had wonderful confidence in

Thornton's judgment. Sometimes, when puzzled about voting, he would lift up his eye-glass, and turn to the bench where sat the tall and stately representative of the Borough, and then dart to the spot like a fire-fly, and amidst divers gesticulations which amused neighbouring members, would ask for information and advice, and then return to his own place, and vote accordingly. I am indebted to Mr. Colquhoun for these particulars, and from him I draw a good description of a garden party at Clapham, when Thornton was host and Wilberforce was one of the guests.

"The sheltered garden behind, with its arbeil trees and elms and Scotch firs, as it lay so still, with its close-shaven lawn, looked gay on a May afternoon, when groups of young and old seated themselves under the shade of the trees, or were scattered over the grounds. Matrons of households were there, who had strolled in to enjoy a social meeting; and their children busied themselves in sports with a youthful glee, which was cheered, not checked, by the presence of the elders. For neighbourly hospitality and easy friendship were features of that family life. Presently, streaming from adjoining villas or crossing the common, appeared others who, like Henry Thornton, had spent an occupied day in town, and now resorted to this well-known garden to gather up their families and enjoy a pleasant hour. Hannah More is there, with her sparkling talk; and the benevolent Patty, the delight of young and old; and the long-faced, blue-eyed Scotchman, with his fixed, calm look unchanged as an aloe tree, known as the Italian Director, one of the kings of

Leadenhall Street; and the gentle Thane, Lord Teignmouth, whose easy talk flowed on, like a southern brook, with a sort of drowsy murmur; and Macaulay stands by listening, silent, with hanging eyebrows; and Babington, in blue coat, dropping weighty words with husky voice; and young listeners, starting into life, who draw round the thoughtful host, and gather up his words—the young Grants, and young Stephen, and Copley, a 'very clever young lawyer.' They handle many points, and give forth their views—themes for the academy—on science and philosophy; at times on practical policy, bullion and currency, and sinecures and reforms; grave questions of polity, the orders in Council, Napoleon's threats, the pressure on our blockaded shores, the young Chancellor of the Exchequer's first Budget speech, and the brightening hopes of the Abolition cause; the Ministry of the Talents, will they stand? Windham's crotchets, and Grey's acuteness, and Lord Granville's stately reserve. But whilst these things are talked of in the shade, and the knot of wise men draw close together, in darts the member for Yorkshire from the green fields to the south, like a sunbeam into a shady room, and the faces of the old brighten, and the children clap their hands with joy. He joins the group of the elders, catches up a thread of their talk, dashes off a bright remark, pours a ray of happy illumination, and for a few moments seems as wise, as thoughtful, and as constant as themselves. But this dream will not last, and these watchful young eyes know it. They remember that he is as restless as they are, as fond of fun and movement. So, on the first youthful

challenge, away flies the volatile statesman. A bunch of flowers, a ball is thrown in sport, and away dash, in joyous rivalry, the children and the philanthropist. Law and statesmanship forgotten, he is the gayest child of them all."

Amongst Wilberforce's numerous friends, Mr. Harford, of Blair Castle, deserves special reference, on account of his numerous and interesting "Recollections of Wilberforce during nearly Thirty Years." He describes his first interview with him at the house of Mr. Henry Thornton: "I seem at this moment to see him coming in with a smiling, animated countenance, and a lively vivacity of movement and manner, exchanging kind salutations with his friends, whose faces lighted up with pleasure at his entry." At this time, and till within a very few years of his death, he wore powder, and his dress and appearance were those of a thorough gentleman of the old school. Harford soon became intimate, spent a Sunday with him from time to time, dining at three, and going to the Lock Chapel in the evening at six, after which he occupied the bachelor's room at Kensington Gore. Describing excursions with him this friend remarks, "We were often amused at the capacities of his pockets, which carried a greater number of books than would seem, if enumerated, credible; and his local memory was such that in drawing out any author he seemed instantaneously to light on the passage which he wanted. In addition to the stores of his pockets, a large green bag full of books filled a corner of his carriage; and when we stopped at our inn in the evening, it was his delight to

have this bag in the parlour, and to spread part of its stores over the table. He kindled at the very sight of books." He also tells how he accompanied Wilberforce to Newgate, to hear Mrs. Fry read the Scriptures to the female prisoners, with a voice so clear, sweet, and impressive that it brought tears into the eyes of her hearers. He relates how once, when a sense of duty took him to a public meeting, as his child was lying ill, parental anxiety succeeded public philanthropy. On his return, in the carriage "he became all the father," and his emotion was great, until his wife called to him as he entered the house, "Wilber, our child is better!" This gossiping friend, almost at times emulating Boswell, further informs us how, at one period, Wilberforce kept open house in Palace Yard, and from seventeen to twenty guests would drop in to a light dinner about three o'clock, Lord Eldon not unfrequently being one of the party. "'It delighted us,' the host used to say, 'to see our friends in this way, especially as it gave us the opportunity of talking upon any important points of public business without any great sacrifice of time. Those who came in late put up with a mutton-chop or beefsteak. The Duke of Montrose called in one day as we were thus employed, but declined taking anything. Seeing, however, so many around him busy with the knife and fork, he said, "I cannot resist any longer," and down he sat to a mutton-chop. "Ah, Duke!" said I, "if your French cook could see you now, he would be quite affronted."' Wilberforce liked an early dinner, and throughout the whole of it his mind was actively at work.

At his own house I have often been amused to observe him carrying on a discussion while in the act of carving a large joint; often addressed by others, and often interlacing his subject with exclamations at the bluntness of the knife, or paying little attentions to his guests, and then taking up the broken thread of his subject, and pursuing it amidst the same sort of interruptions."

At Kensington Gore Harford met Sir Walter Scott, who in the course of the evening described the peace illumination at Edinburgh in a way "so spirited and picturesque" that the host and the guest agreed he must be the author of "Waverley," though at that time he wore the mask close fitting to his face. How Wilberforce delighted to talk of Pitt, his speeches, struggles, triumphs; how single-handed he coped with Fox, Burke, Sheridan, North, and others, rising "to the full level of the occasion," and soon proving "himself to be in no way inferior to his illustrious father in the finest qualities of an orator and a statesman." And respecting the early anti-slavery debates, when Pitt by common consent bore away the palm, his friend would exclaim, "Those were glorious nights in the House of Commons!" Of Canning he observed, "You see the joke sparkling in his eye before he gives it utterance. It appeared to me to furnish a sort of intellectual parallel to the natural fact that light travels quicker than sound — you behold the flash before you hear the report. So varied are Canning's qualifications, such his eloquence, wit, and humour, and so striking his figure and manner, that I really must account him, on the whole, as perfect an orator as I have ever known."

A lady once said to Wilberforce, in Mr. Harford's hearing, "How happy Mr. —— and I should be to invite, while you are with us, any friends of yours whom you would like to meet!" He took her hand, and said, smiling, "That's very kind; but I so enjoy this friendly circle—and when I meet with *Tokay* I don't wish to add water to it." The topic of conversation one day being the misery to which Cowper the poet was exposed by his extreme sensibility at a public school—"Yes," he exclaimed, "it was a sensitive plant grasped by a hand of iron." On hearing of a mammoth found entire wedged in ice, he remarked, "It has only been hanging in Nature's larder for the last five thousand years."

While "the cheerfulness of a most happy temper, which more than sixty years had only mellowed," gladdened his domestic intercourse, the family meetings witnessed by his highly favoured guest, Mr. Harford, "were enlivened by his conversation—gay, easy, and natural, yet abounding in manifold instruction drawn from books, from life, and from reflection. Though his step was less elastic than of old, he took his part in out-of-door occupation, climbing the neighbouring Downs"—he was then at Marden Park—"with the walking parties, pacing in the shade of the tall trees, or gilding with the old man's smile the innocent cheerfulness of younger pastimes."

The last visit Wilberforce paid to Blair Castle is thus described: "He was in great vigour of mind, and in most animated spirits; full of affection, and full of enjoyment. Sure I am that neither we nor our guests can ever forget the delightful conversations and intercourse

which we enjoyed together, heightened and enlivened by Christian fellowship and affection. During his stay the anniversary of our girls' school occurred, when he, together with several excellent clergymen who had breakfasted with us, accompanied Mrs. Harford and me to the schoolroom, and heard the children examined; after which, at our request, he addressed them in a most kind and impressive manner. It was interesting to observe how adroitly the veteran statesman and orator accommodated both his language and ideas to the capacities of young children; and, in concluding, he made them all laugh by saying, with reference to a set of reward bonnets and plum-cakes just about to be distributed, 'Now, my dear children, don't eat the bonnets and put the cakes on your heads.'"

But I must terminate these sketches of Wilberforce in connection with distinguished gentlemen friends—passing over, I am sorry to say, such men as Zachary Macaulay, Sir Robert Inglis, and others—to notice one of the gentler sex to whom Wilberforce was much attached.

It seems a mere matter of course that such a man as Wilberforce should be the friend of such a woman as Hannah More. There is, perhaps, no lady within the last hundred years of whom we have heard so much as this friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, and David Garrick in her earlier days; and this famous mistress of Cowslip Green and Bailey Wood and most popular authoress of a later period. How she gathered round her the choicest of society, and talked and wrote so as to charm first the fashionable, and next

the religious, circles of her time, attracting visitors without end to her pleasant, fairy-like retreat, with its well-known verandah, its blooming flower-gardens,—amidst which Patty, Betty, and Sally lost no opportunity of calling attention to the talents and virtues of their renowned sister. It is amusing to read the rather patronising way in which she alludes to Wilberforce and his cause. "This most important cause," she wrote in 1787, "has very much occupied my thoughts this summer. The young gentleman who has embarked in it with the zeal of an apostle has been much with me, and engaged all my little interest and all my affections in it." Afterwards, as the friendship ripened, we find her saying, "That young gentleman's character is one of the most extraordinary I ever knew for talents, virtue, and piety. It is difficult not to grow wiser and better every time one converses with him." This friendship, early commenced, lasted down to the lady's death. The visits they paid each other were numerous, and so were the letters that passed between them. No more beautiful illustration can be found of Wilberforce's increasing beneficence than the following account by Mrs. Martha More of the visit he paid in August, 1789: "We recommended Mr. W. not to quit the country until he had spent a day in surveying the cliffs of Cheddar. We easily prevailed upon him, and the day was fixed; but after a little reflection he changed his mind, appeared deeply engaged in some particular study, fancied time would scarcely permit, and the whole was given up. The subject of the cliffs was renewed at breakfast; we again extolled their beauties and urged the

pleasure he would receive by going. He was prevailed on, and went. I was in the parlour when he returned; with the eagerness of vanity (having recommended the pleasure) I inquired how he liked the cliffs? He replied they were very fine, but the poverty and distress of the people was dreadful. This was all that passed. He retired to his apartment and dismissed even his reader. I said to his sister and mine, I feared Mr. W. was not well. The cold chicken and wine put into the carriage for his dinner were left untouched. Mr. W. appeared at supper seemingly refreshed with a higher feast than we had sent with him. The servant at his desire was dismissed, when he began, 'Miss Hannah More, something must be done for Cheddar.' He then proceeded to a particular account of his day—of the inquiries he had made respecting the poor; there was no resident minister, no manufactory, nor did there appear any dawn of comfort, either temporal or spiritual. The method or possibility of assisting them was discussed till a late hour. It was at length decided in a few words by Mr. W.'s exclaiming, 'If you will be at the trouble I will be at the expense.' Something commonly called an impulse crossed my mind and told me it was God's work, and it would do; and though I never have, nor probably shall, recover the same emotion, yet it is my business to water it with watchfulness, and act up to its then dictates." The Cheddar schools resulted from this impression, and in after life he generally visited the neighbourhood once a year to witness their condition.

Whatever admiration Hannah More might have for the

beneficent young gentleman, that young gentleman returned it, as appears from a panegyric on her preserved by his sons: "I was once applied to by a Yorkshire clergyman who desired me to assist him in obtaining a dispensation for non-residence upon his cure. He had been used, he said, to live in London with the first literary circles, and now he was banished into the country far from all intellectual society. I told him that I really could not in conscience use any influence I possessed to help him; and then I mentioned to him the case of Miss Hannah More, who in like manner had lived with Johnson, Garrick, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, etc., and was so courted by them all, and who had a great taste for such society; and yet had broken away from its attractions, and shut up herself in the country to devote her talents to the instruction of a set of wretched people sunk in heathen darkness, among whom she was spending her time and fortune in schools and institutions for their benefit, going in all weathers a considerable distance to watch over them, until at last she had many villages and some thousands of children under her care. This is truly magnificent, the really sublime in character. I delight to think of it, and of the estimation in which the sacrifice she made will be held in another world."

Their correspondence with each other abounds in interest, and Wilberforce's humour and affection come out charmingly in letters written to this much-attached friend. People used to allege their fear of troubling him as a reason for not writing; no doubt she had done the same. So he administers a rebuke which it must have

been pleasant for the lady to receive: "I am seldom so much provoked by irritations of the minor orders as by my real friends, especially if they are agreeable correspondents, when they gravely allege my want of time and eyesight as the reason for their entire silence, or if not quite so bad as that, for their fobbing me off with a short letter. I beg you never to try the experiment on me again. In truth, the more numerous my letters of business or of boring are, the more do I need the cordial of an epistle from a friend. It is squeezing a cheering juice, the natural expressed produce of friendly affection, into a turbid fermenting mixture, which really at this day teems with as many nauseous ingredients as Macbeth's witches' caldron—'the hell-broth,' as Shakespeare terms it—while green bag, like the roll in the soup, floats in the midst of the mass, imparting its pungency and flavour to the whole composition. Alas, alas, my dear friend! we are in a sad state." The words "green bag" cannot awaken in younger people the associations which they do in those who have seen above seventy summers and winters. When this letter was written to Hannah More the King, and the Court, and the Parliament, and the Commonalty were mad about poor Queen Caroline's trial; and the green bag containing evidence on the question was on everybody's lips, and denounced in every form of denunciation by those who took part with the wife of George IV. against her husband. What follows in this same letter will be equally understood by young and old, and afford to all equal pleasure. "In consequence of a very civil message from the Duchess of Kent," then at Wey-

mouth, "I waited on her this morning. She received me with her *fine, animated child on the floor with her playthings, of which I soon became one.* She was very civil, but as she did not sit down, I did not think it right to stay above a quarter of an hour; and there having been a female attendant and a gentleman present, I could not well get upon any topic so as to carry on a continued discourse. She apologised for not speaking English well enough to talk it, but intimated a hope that she might talk it better and longer with me at some future time. She spoke of her situation, and her manner was quite delightful."

Joseph John Gurney, the well-known philanthropic Friend and preacher, who lived at Earlham Hall near Norwich, has been already mentioned; and the admiration he had for Wilberforce appeared in the delight with which he welcomed his visits to Earlham, and the opportunities he took of enjoying his society whenever he had the chance. In some "Reminiscences of Dr. Chalmers," printed but not published, he gives an interesting account of a visit he paid to Wilberforce at Highwood Hall, in company with the famous Scotch divine, who at that time was guest with Mr. Samuel Hoare, a relative of Joseph John Gurney's. "Our morning passed delightfully. I have seldom observed a more amusing and pleasing contrast between two great men than between Wilberforce and Chalmers. Chalmers is stout and erect with a broad countenance, Wilberforce minute and singularly twisted. Chalmers both in body and mind moves with deliberate step; Wilberforce, infirm as he is in his advanced years, flies about with astonishing activity, and while with nimble

finger he seizes on everything that adorns or diversifies his path, his mind flits from object to object with unceasing versatility. I often think that particular men bear about with them an analogy to particular animals." (This was an idea of the founder of Quakerism, George Fox.) "Chalmers is like a good-tempered lion, Wilberforce is like a bee. Chalmers can say a pleasant thing now and then, and laugh when he has said it, and he has a strong touch of humour in his countenance; but in general he is *grave*, his thoughts grow to a great size before they are uttered. Wilberforce sparkles with life and wit, and the characteristic of his mind is rapid productiveness. A man might be in Chalmers' company for an hour, especially in a party, without knowing who or what he was, though in the end he would be sure to be detected by some display of powerful originality. Wilberforce, except when fairly asleep, is never latent. Chalmers knows how to veil himself in a decent cloud, Wilberforce is always in sunshine. Seldom, I believe, has my mind been more strung to a more perpetual tune of love and praise. Yet these persons, distinguished as they are from the world at large and from each other, present some admirable points of resemblance. Both of them are broad thinkers and liberal feelers; both of them are arrayed in humility, meekness, and charity; both appear to hold self in little reputation; above all, both love the Lord Jesus Christ and reverently acknowledge Him to be their only Saviour."

Wilberforce greatly admired Robert Hall for his pulpit eloquence and colloquial power—saying of him:

"He is such a man as I could wish some of our politicians to hear, who may disrelish the same truths substantially when delivered with less depth of thought and force of diction. I really cannot place him below any of our late great men, and those, with the exception of Canning, I rate far higher than our greatest statesmen of this day; I mean for intellectual and oratorical powers." But the intercourse between the eloquent statesman and the eloquent divine seems to have been very limited. We cannot gather much from Mr. Harford on the subject in his "Life;" and it is only provoking to find Wilberforce noticing a sermon he had heard from Hall, as: "Excellent indeed; language simple; thoughts just, deep, and often elevating; excelling in experimental applications of Scripture often, with immense effect;" and after saying in an abbreviated style, "He begins calmly and simply, warms as proceeds, till vehement and energetic and impassioned," proceeding to despatch an interview with the preacher in these words: "Breakfasted at Henry Thornton's to meet Hall, Hannah More, and Patty. Hall very clever, unaffected, and pleasing in conversation." But with respect to his intercourse with another Nonconformist minister, William Jay of Bath, we have some copious details in an autobiography written by the latter; and he informs us that he heard him more than once say, "Though I am an Episcopalian by education and conviction, I yet feel such a oneness and sympathy with the cause of God at large, that nothing would be more delightful than my communing once every year with every Church that holds the Head even

Christ." Wilberforce seems to have dealt very plainly but very tenderly with the popular preacher at Bath, pointing out what he conceived to be defective in his sermons, and giving him appropriate and affectionate advice, which instead of being resented was wisely valued. Mr. Jay in 1831 dedicated to him the well-known work entitled "Evening Exercises," and he submitted the dedication to him before it was printed. He received in reply a letter saying, "I cannot be satisfied without assuring you with my own pen, that I feel honoured as well as gratified by the proof of your esteem and regard for me, which you gave by desiring me to place my name at the head of your publication. It gives me unaffected pleasure to reflect that my name will thus be associated with yours; and may this, my dear sir, with all your other labours of love be abundantly blessed." But it is quite clear that the attendance of Wilberforce at Argyll Chapel, about the beginning of the century, fell off in after years; for writing in 1826 he says: "I take the pen in my own hand to add that I cannot but sincerely regret my not having had the pleasure and profit of hearing you and joining with you in worship during this visit to Bath. Both you and I, I believe, and indeed I cannot doubt it, are much more closely bound to each other by the substance of Christian principles (besides a personal friendship which has long been, and will continue, I trust, during our lives to be a subject of mutual pleasure to both of us), than we are separated by any differences as to the outward form and mechanism of religion." During subsequent visits to Bath Wilberforce continued

the most friendly intercourse with Jay, and the latter describes an affecting interview with him on the occasion of his last sojourn there, when he was "lying upon the sofa;" and after expressing his continued interest in the Bible Society remarked, "I see what is the best way to reduce an attachment to the subordinate things in religion; it is to keep up a supreme regard to the more important one; for we shall then have little time and less inclination to engage in the strivings and strifes of bigots. I see much in the state of the world and Church I deplore, yet I am not among the croakers. I think real religion is spreading; and I am persuaded will increasingly spread, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Another Dissenting minister, Dr. Leifchild, already mentioned, has left a very lively reminiscence of his friend at the Gore. "Mr. Wilberforce," he says, "was an occasional attendant on my ministry at Kensington. He used to send for me to his home to consult with me on particular subjects. I found him a most fidgetty little man, doing several things at once: stooping down on his knees to seal a letter at the table, and talking all the while about household affairs to Mrs. Wilberforce; sending out messages to the persons waiting in the hall; then apologising to me and requesting me to remind him what he had sent to me for." Mrs. Wilberforce seems to have resembled her husband. "I know," said a friend in a letter to the Bishop of Oxford, "you have the faculty of your good mother of writing, talking, and listening all at once." "He was accustomed," Dr. Leifchild adds, "to

take laudanum medicinally. I have seen him nodding through its effects while in the chair at a Bible meeting, and once as if assenting to the remarks of the speaker who was complimenting him upon his incessant activity. Yet he would sum up the whole as if he had paid the most diligent attention to the speakers. He used to come from Bath to Bristol when I was settled there, but it was to hear Robert Hall. He wrote to me apologising for not coming to hear me, and for not going to hear Mr. Jay at Bath as he had formerly done, on account of the prejudice it would excite against him — his sons having gone into the Church."

Many remarks and even some little controversies have arisen in consequence of Wilberforce's intercourse with Nonconformists,—his biographers being anxious to conceal it, and on that account those who enjoyed his affection and confidence being desirous of placing the circumstance in a conspicuous light. There certainly are extracts given from Wilberforce's journal which do not harmonise with what he said in letters and conversation to Jay of Bath: "Asked to subscribe to Jay's velvet cushion, but refused." "I found so much use made of my going to Jay's that I have kept away;" and at a much later date, after mentioning some one—whom he does not name—as attending Jay's chapel, he adds, "where I greatly wished to go, but thought it wrong."

In writing a life of Wilberforce there are difficult points of navigation, whether we steer up or down the stream. The sympathetic as well as the critical biographer finds it difficult to form an accurate estimate of his character

under certain points of view. What was his exact ecclesiastical position is a question more easily asked than answered. He seems to have been more of a Churchman than such men as Jay supposed. Occasional attendance in early life at Dissenting chapels gave the idea of his being ecclesiastically catholic and liberal; but it is pretty certain, from a careful examination of his diary and memoirs, that he was at the beginning a very staunch adherent of the established religion, and looked upon dissent as evil and mischievous. Perhaps his strongest remark reflecting on Nonconformity is one I have not yet quoted: "Its individual benefits are no compensation for the general evils of dissent. The increase of Dissenters, which always follows from the institution of unsteepled places of worship, is highly injurious to the interests of religion in the long run." His churchmanship developed itself more decidedly still in later days, in spite of his friendly recognition of Nonconformists at Bible meetings and elsewhere; and after his sons became clergymen there can be no doubt he showed himself chary in his intercourse with Dissenters. He was evidently a man of many-sided sympathy, and in this respect somewhat resembled his son the Bishop of Winchester. Both of them were amiable and impulsive, of strong affections, and desirous of approbation; also most genial, and seeking to win over opponents by getting as near to them as possible in forms of expression. Such men are apt to have opinions attributed to them which they do not possess, and we can easily imagine that, as in the case of the son so in the case of the father, that

charmed with his conversation, people might carry away false impressions. Indeed, it was the same with him in his ecclesiastical as in his political conduct. In his endeavour to avoid all real partizanship, in his discriminating views on many public questions, and in his partial support of measures opposed by Pitt, whilst still retaining that statesman's friendship and confidence, we cannot wonder that many superficial allies and antagonists regarded him as inconsistent, vacillating, and not to be depended upon. There was, no doubt, in William Wilberforce much of the reconciling — I might call it the mediatory — sentiment of Christianity; that is to say, a spirit of conciliation, which seeks to bring together contending parties and to harmonise diverse and apparently antagonistic views. Hence, in a world like ours,—where party spirit is in the ascendant, and people are prone to rush into extremes under the idea that out-and-out expressions of opinion are alone strong, and that attempts to strike a true mean between opposing positions are always weak,—a person of the stamp now described is in danger of being incautious, and, even when most careful, of having his good evil spoken of. Before leaving the point which has suggested these remarks, it will not, I hope, be deemed impertinent to say, that I should have been glad to find Wilberforce pursuing to the end the practice he adopted at the beginning; for this would have been calculated to promote the interests of Christian union, by conciliating those who did not agree with him in some respects, whilst it would evidently, from what he says, have gratified his own kindly disposition and the

cravings of his Christian love. Happily there are those who, amidst existing exclusiveness, can rise above it; and who, consistently and without offensive qualifications, are in the habit of manifesting sympathy with religious bodies other than their own.

To return to simple facts, there is another eminent Nonconformist minister who appears amidst rather amusing circumstances in the life of Wilberforce. One day in Kensington Gore, whilst he "was endeavouring to relax the stiffness of a starched little fellow whom he was anxious not to disgust, Andrew Fuller was announced—a man of considerable power of mind, but who bore about very plainly the *vestigia ruris*. Not a moment was to be lost. So before he came in," says Wilberforce, "I said to my little friend, 'You know Andrew Fuller?' 'No! I never heard his name.' 'Oh, then you must know him; he is a very extraordinary man, whose talents have raised him from a very low situation.' This prepared the way, and Andrew Fuller did no harm, though he walked in looking the very picture of a blacksmith." Perhaps he did, but whilst "the starched little fellow" is quite forgotten, Andrew Fuller will long live among the good and great who have passed away. A very different person was Dr. Coke. "Southey," said Wilberforce, "never could have seen the Doctor. I wish I could forget his little round face and figure. Any one who wished to take off a Methodist could not have done better than exactly copy his manner and appearance. He looked a mere boy when he was turned fifty, with such a smooth, apple face and little round mouth, that if

it had been forgotten, you might have made as good a one by thrusting in your thumb. He was waiting once to see me in a room into which some accident brought Banks. The Doctor made, I suppose, some strange demonstration, for he sent Banks to Milner's room saying in amazement, 'What extraordinary people Wilberforce does get around him.'" But whatever we may think of this description, it should be remembered that, after all, Dr. Coke, though connected with Wesleyan missions, was, like Dean Milner, an ordained clergyman of the Church of England, and never lost his attachment to it. Indeed, the good man had a great wish to be consecrated as a colonial bishop, before colonial bishops were as numerous as they are now.

Here I must conclude my notices of Wilberforce's social life, and in doing so I introduce a lively sketch of him "in his house in Palace Yard, where every sort of person on every sort of errand used to go—Premiers, and Home Secretaries, and Secretaries of the Treasury, and members of the Independent party, and active leaders of Opposition, and colonists and foreigners, Churchmen and Dissenters, all with their several objects. Hard-working men from the city or the country met there to hunt up evidence; to examine witnesses; to read through Blue Books, pick out the kernels, and arrange these for the House and the country. Copper-coloured philanthropists from the West Indies; Lascars from the East; woolly-haired, mahogany-coloured negroes from Africa; Baptists and Methodists from Calcutta, Jamaica, and Sydney; long-headed merchants from the

city; beaming philanthropists from Coleman's Buildings or Lincoln's Inn Fields; broad-brimmed Quakers from Norfolk; men of broadcloth and broader dialect from Bradford and Leeds, expected or unlooked for, invited or uninvited, morning or noon, at breakfast or after breakfast—all flocked there to see the Member for Yorkshire, and to gain his ear for their special scheme. Each wanted to catch and fix the mercurial statesman. He meanwhile, darting like a sunbeam out of his room, where he had spent a morning hour engaged in reading Scripture and in prayer, came out refreshed and ready for the work of the day. His voice like music, his smile beaming cheerily, a kindly word for each, and a courteous greeting, he met and welcomed all. As soon as the slight form appeared, there was a stir and a rush. Each tried to reach him, and to put in his claim to be heard; for each had a case that was the most important in the world; so he that could, buttoned the statesman, and poured his budget into his ear—

'He cannot choose but hear.'

Not so; for though the speaker might hold him tight, it was rare that he succeeded in making 'the wedding guest stand still;' for Wilberforce moved, as Bishop Jebb said, with the look of an angel and the agility of a monkey. Both mind and body turned with quick gyrations, like the creatures that we see in a sunbeam—now here, now there, now settling, now with wings poised, now in flight; to follow them with our eye is difficult; to catch them, vain. For, though Wilberforce's mind was rapid and active both to read and observe, it was desultory. The

thoughts were so many, the perception so quick, that the instant a subject was thrown off, the mind started on the wing, seized the idea as if by intuition, and flew off in search of more. And, discovering at a glance the subjects that were connected with it, it passed on through these; perching now on one, then on another, it flitted nimbly from spray to spray, so that you might readily determine at what point of a subject he would begin, but it was hard to say where he would end. Still as each visitor came up and had his turn, he went away contented, for each poured his story into a willing ear. Tedious or brief the story, good tidings or bad, tales of virtue, tales of crime, wrongs endured, rights withheld, the tyrant's cruelty, the victim's pangs—all were laid before him; and, as the speaker looked on the changing and eager countenance of the listener, he saw reflected in it the answering sympathy. The look, the start, the gesture, and the word betrayed the feelings of the man; and before the tale was half told the emotion had risen—sorrow or joy, pity or wonder, thankfulness or regret chased each other across his face as clouds pursued by storms drift across an autumn sky. So the speaker went away satisfied that he had left an impression. And to Wilberforce it mattered not who the speaker was, and whence he came; if he had a wrong to tell, or a plan of good to offer, he was welcome there. No race so outcast that he would not give them his sympathy; no child of man fallen so low that he would not stretch to him the helping hand. So they came to him in troops, and he welcomed all."

CHAPTER VIII.

LAST DAYS.

"FOR the most part his later years were eminently bright and cheerful. Never, indeed, was he more evidently happy than in that calm old age, on which he entered with the elasticity of youth and the simplicity of childhood." Such is the comprehensive account which Wilberforce's sons give of his last days; yet his last days were darkened by heavy trials. The daughter, to whose death reference has been made in the last chapter, was removed from him at that period, and soon afterwards a serious reverse of circumstances overtook the large-hearted philanthropist. It seems a great mistake to suppose that he was reckless and extravagant in his expenditure. For we are assured by his biographers, who must have been well informed on the subject, that "his style of living had always been below his income." He had inherited a large fortune, and was therefore entitled to keep up a large establishment; but it does not appear that he indulged in luxurious habits. On the contrary, I should infer that his domestic appointments though elegant and generous were really simple. He had

from time to time a large house, which from the impulses of a large heart he loved to fill with esteemed and respected guests; but what is commonly understood by splendour and magnificence did not distinguish his hospitable abodes. The great drain on his resources consisted in his vast liberality; proofs of which have appeared again and again in this volume. He gave largely, sometimes perhaps more than his friends considered he could justly afford. Yet he told his eldest son, "I never intended to do more than not exceed my income, Providence having placed me in a situation in which my charities of various kinds were necessarily large. But, believe me, there is a special blessing in being liberal to the poor and in the families of those who have done so; and, I doubt not, my children will fare better, even in this world, for real happiness than if I had been saving £20,000 to £30,000 of what I have given away." There is a family inheritance infinitely better than what consists in broad acres and in monetary investments, even the inheritance of a name synonymous with integrity and beneficence; and such an inheritance, rarely equalled, Wilberforce bequeathed to his children. Who would not prefer that to the massive fortunes left to descendants by a selfish and grasping millionaire, with whatever names of prudence and thrift his acquisitions and accumulations may have been covered over. Wilberforce, no doubt, might have made money and have saved money, but he did neither; and that not from self-indulgence, but from self-sacrifice. After all, his reverses did not come as the result of excessive expenditure, either in housekeeping or in charity.

for the real causes seem to have been, first, the reducing of his rents, which were never high, to the extent of thirty-seven per cent., at a time when his family was most expensive; and, secondly, the loss he sustained through a large farming speculation undertaken by his son, in which Wilberforce embarked a large amount of capital. To secure the remainder of his fortune he had to sacrifice nearly the whole of that investment. But be it distinctly understood, he wronged no one. It does not appear, after all, which has been ungenerously said by some critics on this subject, that he spent or gave away one sixpence that did not belong to himself. Nobody else was a loser, whilst many were gainers. Call what he did imprudent, still it may be truly said—

> "And e'en the light that led astray
> Was light from Heaven."

His friends saw this, and volunteered to make up for his losses. No less than six persons, it is said, one of them a West Indian, made such private offers as would have repaired his fortune; but he gratefully declined all overtures of that kind. He thought it was better for him to reduce his expenditure than to continue it on its former scale from income supplied at the cost of others. The unselfishness of his life reached its highest point in this memorable incident, and nothing can be more beautiful than a letter which he wrote at the time.

"I wished that you should receive from myself, rather than from the tongues of rumour, tidings which sooner or later were sure to be conveyed to you, and which I know would give you pain. . . . The loss incurred has been so

heavy as to compel me to descend from my present level and greatly to diminish my establishment. It was not suffered to take place till all my children were educated, and nearly all of them placed out in one way or another. And by the delay Mrs. Wilberforce and I are supplied with a delightful asylum, under the roofs of two of our own children. And what better could we desire? A kind Providence has enabled me with truth to adopt the declaration of David, that goodness and mercy have followed me all my days. And now, when the cup presented to me has some bitter ingredients, yet surely no draught can be deemed distasteful which comes from such a hand, and contains such grateful infusions as those of social intercourse and the sweet endearments of filial gratitude and affection. What I shall most miss will be my books and my garden, though I own I do feel a little the not being able to ask my friends to take a dinner or a bed with me under my own roof. And as even the great apostle did not think the 'having no certain dwelling-place,' associated with his other far greater sufferings, unworthy of mention, so I may feel this also to be some, though I grant not a great, evil to one who has so many kind friends who will be happy to receive him." And in harmony with the sentiments thus touchingly expressed, he remarked, on recovering from an illness at that period: "I can scarce understand why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be as happy without a fortune as with one." What many would have deplored as the most disastrous of calamities turned out in his case to be the occasion of revealing a new trait in his charac-

ter, as attractive as any which had appeared before. To do and to suffer are very different conditions of obedience to the Divine will; some men who have excelled in the one respect have not excelled in the other. But Wilberforce excelled in both; and one great lesson of his life would have been lost but for the pecuniary circumstances of his later days.

He and Mrs. Wilberforce went to live with their sons, who had livings in Kent and the Isle of Wight, and this part of his story can best be told in his own words.

"We have now been here," he writes from one of the two pleasant parsonages, "for about six weeks. How can I but rejoice rather than lament at a pecuniary loss which has produced such a result as that of bringing us to dwell under the roofs of our dear children, and witness their enjoyment of a large share of domestic comfort, and their conscientious discharge of the duties of the most important of all professions. Have not we great cause for thankfulness in being moored in our latter days in the peaceful haven which we enjoy (after all my tossings during my long and stormy voyage in the sea of politics), under the roofs of our sons in Kent and in the Isle of Wight, relieved from all the worry of family cares, and witnessing the respectability, usefulness, and domestic happiness of those most dear to us. Had not the state of my finances rendered it absolutely necessary however, I fear I should hardly have thought myself warranted in giving up my only residence; but it is really true, speaking unaffectedly, that our heavy loss has led to the solid and great increase of our enjoyments."

Again: "How little could I expect to complete my seventy-second year. Yet it is on this day completed, and I am suffering no pain, and my complaints those which are salutary without producing great bodily suffering, like the kind suggestions of a friend tenderly watching over me, and endeavouring to obtain for me the benefits without my feeling the evils commonly attendant on providential visitations."

He had always been fond of visiting Bath, and on the 20th of April, 1833, he left East Farleigh, in Kent, for that city. The waters had been serviceable before, but now it was getting too late for the invalid to gain much advantage from their medicinal virtues. He was suddenly taken ill on the 6th of July, whilst seated at the dinner table, and was immediately conveyed to bed. On the arrival of his medical man he said, "Thank God I am not losing my faculties." "Yes," somebody remarked, "but you could not easily go through a problem in arithmetic or geometry." "I think I could through the ass's bridge," he replied. "Let me see," and he began, correcting himself if he omitted anything.

His mind was in a calm and happy state, and his conversation abounded in quotations from Scripture, and in expressions of gratitude to the Almighty for His abundant mercies.

Joseph John Gurney, his Quaker friend, happened to be passing through Bath at the same time, and called upon him. "I was introduced," he says, "to an apartment upstairs, where I found the veteran Christian reclining on a sofa, with his feet wrapped in flannel, and

his countenance bespeaking increased age since I had last seen him, as well as much delicacy. He received me with the warmest marks of affection and seemed to be delighted by the unexpected arrival of an old friend. I had scarcely taken my seat beside him before it seemed given me to remind him of the words of the Psalmist, 'Although ye have been among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with gold,' and I freely spoke to him of the good and glorious things, which, as I believed, assuredly awaited him in the kingdom of rest and peace. In the meantime the illuminated expression of his furrowed countenance, with his clasped and uplifted hands, were indicative of profound devotion and holy joy. Soon afterwards he unfolded his own experience to me in a highly interesting manner. He told me that the text on which he was then most prone to dwell, and from which he was deriving peculiar comfort, was a passage in the Epistle to the Philippians: 'Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.' While his frail nature was speaking, and his mortal tabernacle seemed ready to be dissolved, this peace was his blessed and abundant portion."

"The mention of this text immediately called forth one of his bright ideas, and led to a display, as in days of old, of his peculiar versatility of mind. 'With regard to myself,' he added, 'I have nothing whatever to urge

but the poor publican's plea, "God be merciful to me a sinner."' These words were expressed with peculiar feeling and emphasis, and have since called to my remembrance his own definition of the word *mercy*, kindness to those that deserve punishment."

To this reminiscence of him at Bath, another by a member of his family may be added relative to an interview in Cadogan Place, Sloane Street, where he arrived the 17th of July, 1833. "I arrived in London to see him and was much struck by the signs of his approaching end. His usual activity was totally suspended by a painful local disorder which prevented him from walking. The morning of Friday, July 26th, was pleasant, and I assisted before his breakfast to carry him in a chair in front of the house, that he might enjoy the air for a few moments. Here he presented a most striking appearance, looking forth with calm delight upon trees and grass, the freshness and vigour of which contrasted with his own decay. It was nearly his last view of God's works in these their lower manifestations. His manner at this time was more than usually affectionate, and he received with great cheerfulness the visits of many old associates from whom he had long been separated. On Friday afternoon I left him with the intention of preparing to receive him on the following Tuesday, not knowing that before that time he was to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

The evening of that very Friday, July 26th, an important event took place in the House of Commons—the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery was read a second time.

That Bill was the flower and crown of Wilberforce's lifelong labours. He had years before seen abolished the share his country took in the African Slave Trade; now came the Abolition of Slavery itself, so far as England was concerned. Intelligence of what was done that night in St. Stephen's Chapel was brought to the sick man's bed; when he exclaimed, "Thank God, that I should have lived to witness a day in which England is willing to give twenty millions sterling for the Abolition of Slavery."

The next morning he was better. No wonder, after the good news of the previous night. Wheeled about in his chair, he talked to an old servant with much animation. But the next day there followed a succession of fainting fits, and on Sunday night, the 28th of July, during an interval of consciousness, he said, "I am in a very distressed state." "Yes; but you have your feet on the rock," some one replied. "I do not venture," he cautiously added, "to speak so positively, but I hope I have." He died the next morning.

As soon as his decease became known one of his coadjutors in the anti-slavery cause, Henry Brougham, then Lord High Chancellor, originated a request to the family that they would allow the remains to be interred in Westminster Abbey, with the solemnity of a State funeral. A letter to that effect was signed by a member of the Royal Family, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Duke of Wellington, and other noblemen and bishops; at the same time, a similar application was made by about one hundred members of the House of Commons. He was buried on the 5th of August, and was followed to the

grave by numerous representatives of both Houses of Parliament.

"It was remarked by one of the prelates who took part in this striking scene, that considering how long he had retired from active life, and that his intellectual superiority could be known only by tradition to the generation which thus celebrated his obsequies, there was a sort of testimony to the moral sublimity of his Christian character in this unequalled mark of public approbation. For while a public funeral had been matter of customary compliment to those who died in official situations, this voluntary tribute of individual respect from the mass of the great legislative bodies of the land was an unprecedented honour. It was one, moreover, to which the general voice responded. The crowd of equipages which followed his funeral procession was unusually great. The abbey was thronged with the most respectable persons. 'You will like to know,' writes a friend, 'that as I came towards it down the Strand, every third person I met going about their ordinary business was in mourning.'"

A little more than a fortnight after the funeral, a public meeting was held under the presidency of Lord Brougham, when it was resolved that a subscription should be opened for the purpose of doing honour to the memory of Wilberforce; first, by the erection of a monument, and, secondly, by such other methods as might be calculated to promote in connection with his name the glory of God and the good of mankind. The statue in Westminster Abbey was one of the results. This work of art did not fully gratify his friends. "It gives," said Mr. Harford, "undue pro-

minence to the singularity of his figure in later years, and it fails to give expression to that amenity of feeling and that bright intelligence which often played over his countenance and charmed his friends, even in the absence of all beauty of feature." But even admitting this criticism, allowing that it does not come up to the ideal formed by admirers who knew him well; yet it has a very lifelike appearance, reminding one forcibly of the man as latterly seen by people in general, and therefore as far preferable to the classical representation of John Howard in St. Paul's Cathedral. As to its naturalness it forms a striking contrast to other sepulchral attitudes in the abbey. Instead of "the crusader of the thirteenth century with his legs crossed on his stony couch," we have "the philanthropist of the nineteenth century with his legs crossed far otherwise, as he lounges in his easy arm-chair. It will enable future generations to know a Wilberforce as he actually was, no less than a Plantagenet prince as it was supposed he ought to be." [1]

It is a curious fact that the surplus of the subscription, out of which this statue was paid for, remained unappropriated during so long a period as twenty-seven years. The balance of the fund, amounting to £2,000, invested in Three per Cent. Consolidated Bank Annuities, actually became transferred, in consequence of dividends being unclaimed, to the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt. Lord Brougham, upon his becoming aware of the strange oversight, petitioned the Court of Chancery for the appropriation of the money to some

[1] Dean Stanley.

object in harmony with the second part of the original proposal of Wilberforce's friends; and in 1860, the Court ordered that the principal and interest should be paid to the treasurer of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, to be applied by the Society in carrying out a scheme which the Lord Chancellor sanctioned. The scheme was to erect a building in Sierra Leone for specified purposes, and to provide it with a library of useful books.

Yorkshire followed speedily in the steps of the metropolis, and did honour to one of its most illustrious sons. A county meeting was held in 1833 to commemorate the virtues and labours of the philanthropist, and from it resulted an institution for the blind. At Hull a monument was erected near the Junction Dock at the end of Whitefriargate, the foundation-stone of which was laid on the 1st of August, 1834, the day when Slave Emancipation took effect, amidst the thanksgivings of millions in Great Britain and the West Indies. Nothing of the kind could be more touching than the fact that most of the coloured population in that part of the world went into mourning when they heard of his death.

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