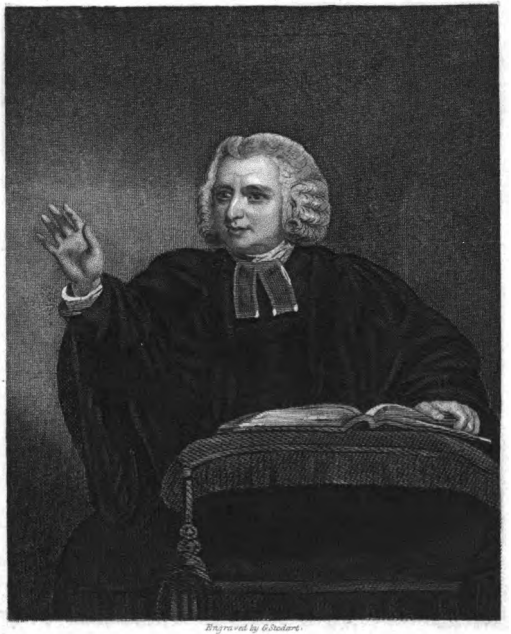
CHARLES WESLEY

CHARLES WESLEY,
THE POET OF METHODISM.



REV^D CHARLES WESLEY M.A.

CHARLES WESLEY,

THE POET OF METHODISM:

A Lecture.

BY

THE REV. JOHN KIRK.

"Among those to whose compositions millions of souls owe inestimable benefits, CHARLES WESLEY stands, if not foremost, yet inferior to few."—ISAAC TAYLOR.

"His *least* praise was, his talent for Poetry."—JOHN WESLEY.

Third Thousand.

LONDON:

HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO., PATERNOSTER ROW

AND SOLD BY JOHN MASON, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1860.

"Their sweet singer translated into the language of earth, snatches of orisons unutterable, till his plastic felicity embodied them in immortal verse."
—Dr. James Hamilton.

PREFACE.

THE following pages must not be regarded either as an Essay or a Treatise. They make no pretensions to the elegance and nicety of criticism implied in the one, nor to the exhaustive completeness proper to the other. They were originally prepared, and have been occasionally delivered, as a Popular Lecture; and in revising and transcribing them for the press, though a few slight additions have been made, I have not felt disposed to recast the material into any new form. The spoken style has been preserved throughout, and this will account for its greater freedom, and for the introduction of a few things somewhat below the dignity of an exact critical taste. This explanation, I hope, will prevent the composition being judged by a standard which it does not profess to reach.

It will be observed that several of the stanzas quoted in the Lecture, differ in expression from the form in which they appear in the Wesleyan Hymn Book. The reason is that I have preferred to follow the originals, in order that Charles Wesley might appear in his own phraseology, free from the emendations,—not *always* the happiest,—of his brother John.

Convinced that the Bard of Methodism has never yet received his full meed of attention and honour as a Christian Hymnist, I commit the Lecture to the press in the earnest hope that it may provoke some competent pen to undertake the task of doing justice to one to whom the entire Christian world is so largely indebted.

J. K.

SHEFFIELD,
October 25th, 1859.

CONTENTS.

CHARLES WESLEY,

THE POET OF METHODISM.

THE year 1708 witnessed many events deeply interesting to our own country. The death of Prince George of Denmark left the sceptre in the widowed hand of Queen Anne; the first British Parliament elected after the union with Scotland, held its primary session; court faction and intrigue were plied with wondrous dexterity and varied success; hostilities between Whig and Tory reached their highest point; a general uneasiness quivered among our home population; North Britain was doing her best to embroil us with foreign powers; and the laurels of Marlborough and his warriors wore their greenest hue.

In that year, also, occurred another event, too common to be observed or chronicled at the time, except in the parish register; but, in the purpose of Him who ordereth all things, destined to exert a greater influence upon England and the world than any of those marvellous movements which, in such rapid succession, covered the nation with mourning, or startled the people into expressions of frantic delight. On the

eighteenth of December, the old thatched Parsonage at Epworth, Lincolnshire, was gladdened by the birth of a boy, "one born out of due time," the youngest son and EIGHTEENTH child of his venerable sire. For many weeks the new-born babe gave no other sign of life than an almost imperceptible breathing, and many were the doubts as to whether it would ever spring into conscious life. That little child was,

CHARLES WESLEY, THE POET OF METHODISM,

whose personal history and godly verse we are now to trace and review.

Infancy passed away without any noteworthy occurrence, except his narrow escape from death by the burning of the Parsonage, when he was only thirteen months old. At the age of five, his mother,—that queen of mothers for educating and training children,—put the dreaded old "Horn-book" into his hand, and commanded him to learn the alphabet correctly in a single day. This task accomplished, the "Reading made easy" was soon mastered; and at the early age of eight, he was sent to Westminster School, to encounter the able teaching and stern discipline of his brother Samuel, then one of the ushers of that establishment.

Here he threw himself at once among his fellows; was lively, rollicking, and mischievous; gloried in a good earnest fight; got into many scrapes; was passionately fond of the drama; became a great favourite with the boys; and finally rose to be captain of the school.

While under this academic roof, Mr. Garret Wesley, an Irish gentleman of large landed estates, desired to

adopt him as his heir and remove him to the sister isle. But the boy, left to his own unbiased choice, refused the tempting offer. Foiled here, the man of broad acres adopted Richard Colly, an Irish relative, who took the name of Wesley, and became the grandfather of the Marquis of Wellesley and the illustrious "Old" Duke of Wellington.

John Wesley calls this "a fair escape;" and Southey says, "had Charles made a different choice, there might have been no Methodists!" But surely this is "presuming a great deal and jumping to a conclusion." The religious convictions and conduct of John Wesley at that very time, clearly indicated existent materials out of which Methodism might have been educed. Other consequences, however, are quite within the range of possibility. Had this boy willed to become an heir, — as most boys would, — his incomparable Hymns might never have been written, and Wellesley and Wellington, under the less aristocratic name of Colly, might have spent their lives as humble dwellers upon a scant Irish homestead. Happily, under the guidance, as we believe, of an all-disposing Providence, neither the one consequence nor the other resulted. After a hundred and thirty years, you can now rejoice in your Methodism, sing Charles Wesley's noble Hymns, boast of the statesman whose legislative wisdom consolidated British power in the East, and glory in the warrior who crushed Napoleon on the plains of Waterloo.

Charles's career at Westminster was eminently successful. Under his brother's able tutorship, he rapidly advanced in learning, gained a King's Scholarship in five years, and, at the age of eighteen, was

elected a Scholar of Christ's Church, Oxford. His first year at college, he says, was lost in harmless diversions; but the second he gave himself to study. And his subsequent attainments in the learned languages and general scholarship were worthy his advantages as a pupil of Westminster, and a member of the University of Oxford. At twenty-one, he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts, and prepared to settle down as a hard-working College Tutor.

But this sedentary purpose was soon broken. General Oglethorpe, Governor of the new-formed colony of Georgia, was about to sail with a number of emigrants. He was anxious that the settlers should have the means of religion within their reach, and proposals were made to some of the Oxford Methodists to go out as clergymen. John Wesley consented, and Charles, resolving to seek ordination and accompany him, ultimately arranged to go in the double capacity of clergyman and private secretary to the Governor. In October, 1735, one hundred and twenty-four souls embarked on board the "Simmonds," and reached the American shores, March the 9th, 1736. Here Charles soon found himself in a burning fiery furnace of slander, persecution, suspicion, and deep personal affliction. Happily, at the end of five weary months, he was ordered home with some important despatches, and after a perilous voyage in an unseaworthy ship, under a captain whom he calls "a lewd, drunken, querulous fool, praying and swearing alternately, altogether the most beastly man he had ever met with;" he landed in England, just fourteen months after leaving her hospitable shores.

This is an appropriate place for a glance at his reli-

gious life. Neither before leaving home, nor during his residence at Westminster, did he manifest anything like marked religious seriousness. When he arrived at Oxford, he led a "regular, harmless life," but was averse to religious conversation. "If I spoke to him about religion," says his brother, "he would warmly answer, 'What, would you have me become a saint all at once?' and would hear no more." This careless spirit, however, soon passed away, and the time of serious reflection came. In accounting for this change, he writes to his brother: "It is owing, in a great measure, to somebody's prayers,—my mother's, most likely,—that I am come to think as I do; for I cannot tell myself how or when I awoke out of my lethargy, only that it was not long after you went away." He now read the Bible more devoutly, and prayed with greater earnestness. He attended the Lord's Supper with greater frequency, and was soon joined by two or three kindred minds.

This religious strictness woke up the sneers of all the godless wits in the University; every brain was tortured to invent names sufficiently ludicrous and abusive for the "new lights." The "Holy Club," "Bible Moths," "Bible Bigots," and "Sacramentarians," were the epithets, neither elegant nor scholarly, by which Oxford described an earnest religious life. But no one of these racy titles stood out as a term of common and permanent reproach. At last, as is often the case, accident supplied the lack of invention and gave them a settled name. A young student of Christ's Church observing their regular method of life, said, "We have a new set of Methodists sprung up here!" The allusion was to an ancient sect of physicians who

believed that regularity and method were a specific for all diseases. The name, new and quaint, at once "stuck," and has become a by-word for "Christianity in earnest" wherever found, and the adopted designation of one of the mightiest evangelical organizations the world has ever known.

But the religious experience of this interesting little company was far from satisfactory. They were ignorant of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and sought forgiveness by a mixture of faith and works. Theirs was a religion of fastings, and sacrifices, and toils, while there was a felt want of inward holiness and joy. They were going about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God. Charles Wesley continued in this state until his return from Georgia. He consulted the celebrated mystic William Law, who treated him with abrupt harshness, and proved an unfeeling, miserable comforter. Under the instructions of some of the leading Moravians, and especially from the conversations of an unlettered mechanic, James Bray, a brazier, in Little Britain, he saw the way of salvation more clearly, and at length the day of redemption dawned.

On a bright May morning in 1738, he woke, worn, and wearied, and sick at heart, but in high expectation of the coming blessing. He lay on his bed "full of tossings to and fro," crying out, "O Jesus, thou hast said, 'I will come unto you:' thou hast said, 'I will send the Comforter unto you:' thou hast said, 'my Father and I will come unto you, and make our abode with you:' thou art God who canst not lie, I wholly rely upon thy most true promise, accomplish it in thy

time and manner!" A poor woman, Mrs. Turner, heard his groaning, and, constrained by an impulse never felt before, put her head into his room and gently said, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thine infirmities." He listened, and then exclaimed, "O that Christ would but speak thus to me!" He enquired who it was that had whispered in his ear these life-giving words. A great struggle agitated his whole man, and in another moment he exclaimed, "I believe! I believe!" He had rested on Jesus as his atonement, and had found redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. His own words, penned on the first anniversary-day of his spiritual birth, are the best exposition of the great and glorious change which he then experienced:

Glory to GOD, and praise, and love,
Be ever, ever given;
By saints below, and saints above,
The Church in earth and heaven.

On this glad day the glorious Sun
Of Righteousness arose,
On my benighted soul He shone,
And fill'd it with repose.

Sudden expired the legal strife,
'Twas then I ceased to grieve,
My second, real, living life
I then began to live.

Then with my *heart* I first believed,
Believed with faith Divine,
Power with the Holy Ghost received,
To call the Saviour *mine*.

I felt my LORD's atoning blood
Close to *my* soul applied;
Me, *me* He loved—the Son of GOD
For *me*, for *me* He died.

I found and own'd his promise true,
Ascertained of *my* part;
My pardon pass'd in heaven I *knew*
When written on my heart.

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My dear Redeemer's praise!
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace.*

This great change was the turning point of Charles Wesley's whole life. He now bounded along his course of duty as a giant refreshed with new wine, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. His poetry, losing its mystic touch and gloomy shade, became thoroughly evangelical; greater power attended his preaching, and his whole life vindicated the Pentecostal Sabbath of May the 21st, 1738, as the day of his conversion. Now and then a cloud threw its shadow over his religious experience; but generally it was "as the light of the morning, as a morning without clouds, as the clear shining after rain."

After his conversion he remained in London for some time, holding religious meetings among his former friends, and warmly vindicating "the new doctrine" against their sneers and arguments. He preached wherever he could find an open door, and crowds gathered to hear the words of life from his earnest lips. But every door was soon shut; and then came the question, "What shall we do? We

* The rest of this poem, except two verses, may be seen in the first hymn in the Wesleyan Methodist Hymn-book.

cannot remain silent, and yet the churches are closed against us!" Providence soon solved their difficulty. The bold and burning Whitefield rushed into the open air, and the Wesleys instantly followed. Thus the men who, a few months before, almost thought it a sin to preach outside consecrated walls, stood forth amidst the London rabble, and, beneath the burnished roof of God's own heavens, preached the Gospel to the poor.

But London, large as it was, soon became too strait for the world-wide sympathies of these apostolic men; and suddenly their ministry burst like a summer shower,—copious, bright, refreshing,—upon every part of the United Kingdom. For where is the large town, or the considerable village, ay, or even the scant hamlet, which has not its cherished traditions of the preaching visits of these true successors of the Apostles? The old horse-block, where the farmer mounted his steed; the spreading sycamore, under whose shade the rustic urchins gambolled, while the thrush sang among the branches; the market-cross, where many a hard bargain had been driven; the village stocks, so unpopular with every honest mind; and the flat tombstone, surrounded by a thousand grassy mounds, still perpetuate the memory of those blessed times. With what honest pride are you sometimes even now pointed to one of these honoured spots, and told, "There, sir, Mr. Wesley preached; my grandfather heard him, and became a Christian and a Methodist from that day."

Up to the time of his marriage, in 1749, Charles Wesley fully shared these hallowed and self-denying toils. After that happy event he had a permanent home in London or Bristol, where he mostly resided,

expounding every morning at five, preaching in the "rooms" and in the open air, meeting the classes and the bands, giving unceasing attention to the sick and the careless, and visiting condemned malefactors. The "children appointed to die," as he was wont to call these poor criminals, largely shared his earnest attention and sympathy. Often did he spend whole nights in their cells, singing hymns composed for their special case, and offering fervent supplication on their behalf. When the day of execution came, he frequently rode with them to the gallows on the old convict cart, singing and exhorting as they passed through the crowded streets, and receiving from men with the fatal rope round their necks the warmest thanks that he had been the means of saving their souls from death and hiding a multitude of sins.*

Nor was this the full measure of his evangelic labours. Once or twice a year he started to the north, or the west, or Ireland, to preach wherever he came, to examine the societies, check aspiring "assistants," and put into their proper places incompetent or refractory class-leaders. The comforts of home, and the company of a delicate and afflicted wife and family, who deeply needed his presence, were cheerfully sacrificed for many months in the year, for no other object than promoting the spread of religion and the welfare of men.

---

* There is a remarkable record of his labours for these poor prisoners in his Journal, Vol. I., 121—123, which he closes with the following remark, "That hour under the gallows was the most blessed hour of my life!" And it is interesting to know that his last publication, three years before his death, bears the impressive title, "Prayers for Condemned Malefactors."

In these itinerating journeys his pulpit efforts were very unequal, and his preparations mostly careless and desultory. He often adopted the censurable practice of opening his Bible, and taking the first text that met his eye. This frequently ensured failure, and one or two other passages would be selected in the same way, without any better success. Any preacher who happened to be present was then called up to give out a hymn, while he retired to the vestry, leaving the hapless occupant of the pulpit in some doubt as to his return: but just as the last lines were being sung, he would re-ascend the pulpit, and, without any text at all, utter two or three words, such as "believe, love, obey!" upon which he would make a few pointed remarks, and then suddenly close.*

At other times, however, and that more generally, there were large outgoings of heart and terrible earnestness. The sermon, like that on "Awake thou that sleepest," was one compact, thrilling, overwhelming appeal to the conscience, which swayed his hearers with a power little inferior to that of Whitefield himself. In the stone quarries of Portland and the far-famed Gwennap Pit; on Kennington Common and Kingswood Hill, thousands of sturdy souls were moved by his word, as the trees of the forest are moved by the wind. The strongest emotions were stirred to their depths, and there was such a determined wrestling with conscience and heart, that cries for mercy frequently ran through the mighty mass of weeping men.

* This statement is based on the authority of Dr. Clarke; I have a strong impression, however, that in their fullest extent, as given by the Doctor, such scenes were extremely few.

His good preaching awakened thousands of sinners, and comforted untold numbers of believers; while his poor preaching was sometimes very encouraging to his less gifted and more timid brethren. Dr. Clarke,—who, by the way, had no special liking for Charles Wesley,—tells us of a young man who had persuaded himself that he had not "ability for our work," and ran away from his circuit. In his desperate imitation of Jonah, he had to pass through one of the northern towns where Charles Wesley was announced to preach. The young minister went to hear him, and it happened to be one of the preacher's least successful efforts. As the service closed, the fleer from duty thought within himself, "Well, bad as I am, I never stammered, hesitated, and floundered through a sermon like that! I will take courage, go back to my circuit, and try again." And back he went, and lived and died a Methodist preacher.

As a METHODIST, when compared with his brother, Charles Wesley does not shine. While devoutly attached to the great work which Methodism had originated, and resisting many tempting offers to abandon it, he had an unconquerable dislike to all separation from the Established Church. And though many of his own movements, and, indeed, almost his entire life, were those of a thorough practical separatist, he often complained in no measured terms about his brother's ecclesiastical arrangements. He called the preachers "Melchisedeckians," and often provoked their dislike and opposition by unwarrantable and sarcastic observations. In these respects he sometimes harassed and hampered his brother, and endangered the cordiality between him and his "Helpers." Fidelity

demands that we indicate these points of sincere, though mistaken conduct, and gratitude equally demands that we should cast over them the broadest mantle of a Divine and large-hearted charity.*

* Since these pages were committed to the printer, the second volume of Dr. Stevens' valuable "History of Methodism" has come to hand; and I have much pleasure in extracting the following estimate of the Poet of Methodism. I need hardly say that I by no means adopt every statement which it contains; to some of its views I should certainly demur, but its general correctness and manifest ability, give it a claim to insertion. "Methodism owes so much to him, that it can well excuse the honest eccentricities of his genius. He was the first member of the 'Holy Club' at Oxford; the first to receive the name of Methodist; the first of the two brothers who received regeneration; and the first to administer the sacraments in Methodist societies apart from the Church. Like his brother, he was short of stature; and when they both, assisted by Dr. Coke, administered the Eucharist at City Road Chapel, it was matter of remark that the three men who were exerting the largest religious influence of their day, were each so small in person, while so great in spirit. Charles Wesley was desultory in his habits, being exact only in the neatness of his handwriting and in keeping his accounts. He was abrupt in his manners, but without affectation; he was self-contradictory, but tenacious in his opinions; a staunch Churchman, but the first and for many years the chief man to conduct Methodist worship in church-hours, which he did to the last in the London chapels. He detested democracy, and satirized Fox and Burke alike with Wilkes and the lowest of the liberal demagogues. He was a thorough scholar in classical and Biblical literature. Horace and Virgil were his most familiar classics; the 'Æneid' he had largely in his memory, and would quote it volubly, as a check to his resentment, when under provocation. The termagant wife of John Wesley once shut him and his brother in a room beyond escape, and poured forth her complaints against them in a strain which could not be interrupted; the poet invoked the help of his Mantuan brother, and repeated the classic Latin so vehemently, as to subdue the shrew and obtain his liberation. His

A very few sentences must now suffice us for his latter days and death. His constitution, owing probably to a premature birth, and especially to hard study and abstemiousness at college, was weak and sickly; and the last ten years of his life were full of infirmities. Early in 1788, he was almost entirely confined to the house, and the time drew near that he must die. He had no joyous transports; but solid hope and unshaken confidence in Jesus kept him in perfect peace. Only two days before his death, after an interval of silence, and when he could scarcely articulate, he dictated the following lines—his last contribution to that rich heritage of sacred song which he bequeathed to the Church and the world:

In age and feebleness extreme
Who shall a sinful worm redeem?
Jesus, my only hope Thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;
O, could I catch one smile from Thee,
And drop into eternity!

And on March the 29th, 1788, at the age of seventy-nine years and three months,

"The wheels of weary life at last stood still."*

---

friendships were ardent and inviolable. An air of sadness, deepening often into despondency, hung about him. He was the best hymnologist, one of the best preachers, and, with a few pardonable weaknesses, one of the best men of his age. Hundreds of thousands of dying Methodists have blessed his memory, as they have sung or gasped the lyrics in which he has taught them to triumph over death."

* The full beauty of this noble line can only be seen when quoted in its proper connexion. It occurs in Dryden's description of the death of Polybus, King of Corinth:

The old churchyard of St. Marylebone is the honoured repository of his dust, till the great Easter-morn of the world shall wake it up to a resurrection of eternal life. A plain flat stone * marks his resting-place; in addition to his name and age, it bears the following epitaph, written by himself on the death of the Rev. Mr. Latrobe, Moravian minister, London:

With poverty of spirit blest,
Rest, happy saint, in Jesus rest;
A sinner saved, through grace forgiven,
Redeem'd from earth to reign in heaven!

Thy labours of unwearied love,
By thee forgot, are crown'd above;
Crown'd, through the mercy of thy Lord,
With a free, full, immense reward.

"Of no distemper, of no blast he died,
But fell like autumn-fruit that mellowed long;
Even wondered at, because he dropt no sooner.
Fate seemed to wind him up for fourscore years;
Yet freshly ran he on ten minutes more:
Till, *like a clock worn out with eating time,*
The wheels of weary life at last stood still."

The line was a great favourite with Mr. John Wesley. He employs it as descriptive of his brother's death, and frequently quotes it on the departure of his aged friends. But it is very remarkable that, with his general accuracy, he invariably gives the line incorrectly—

"The weary wheels of life stood still at last."

This is very far below the noble stateliness of the original: it cannot be supposed that Mr. Wesley proposed it as an improvement, and must, therefore, be attributed to the line having got fixed in the memory in an incorrect form.

* This stone, fretted and dilapidated, has been recently removed, and a beautiful obelisk erected in its stead, at the sole expence of the Wesleyan Methodist Book Committee.

And now, having given you this rapid sketch of his personal history, we must hasten to contemplate him in his own favoured walk as a Christian Hymnist.

And here, I observe, that there are few things on which the public impression is more at fault than on the QUANTITY of poetry written by Charles Wesley. How common the belief, that the six hundred and twenty-six beautiful hymns which form so large a part of our unrivalled Hymn-book, are the only compositions of his pen! Yet these, which, had he written none other, would have stamped him as the first Hymnist the world ever saw, are not a tenth of his entire compositions. His published pieces amount to about four thousand six hundred, and his manuscripts would supply about two thousand more, making nearly SEVEN THOUSAND psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, consecrated to the service of religion during his busy, anxious life.

This, I believe, forms an amount of sacred verse far greater than any other man ever wrote. You may take all the poetry of Watts, and Cowper, and Pope, and the hymnic compositions of many others who have a well-earned name as sacred poets, and they are all outnumbered by the single, prolific pen of the Poet of Methodism.

In this mass of sacred compositions, spread over nearly fifty separate publications, you have many paraphrases of Holy Scripture, and to these a very high place must be assigned. Of course, there is a version of the Psalms; for every man who has a fancy for paraphrasing must try "to do into" metrical English the sublime Lyrics of the Son of Jesse. Intellects royal and intellects rude, from King James the

First down to the drawling village clerk, have wearied themselves in this ambitious task. During the last three centuries a metrical version, in whole or in part, has appeared on an average once in every two years. It is no part of my plan to review or estimate any of these various efforts; but of many of them we may say, as old Thomas Fuller says of Sternhold and Hopkins, "many verses have such poor rhyme, that two hammers on a smith's anvil would make better music." The Poet of Methodism essayed the lofty enterprise with a success beyond many of his fellows. His version is not complete, it lacks literality, and is sometimes hymnic rather than paraphrastic; but for vigour of expression, deep pathos, and rich evangelical unction, it is unsurpassed if not unrivalled.* As a fair specimen, I will quote the paraphrase of the following passage from the nineteenth Psalm:

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament sheweth His handywork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language,
Where their voice is not heard.
Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun,
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

* One half of these paraphrases is scattered through his various publications, and the rest were left in manuscript. Some years ago, the Rev. Henry Fish, A.M., obtained a volume in which these published and manuscript pieces were done up together. The volume is now printed, with an able Preface from Mr. Fish's pen. I am also informed, on good authority, that there is in existence a still more complete version *entirely in manuscript.*

His going forth is from the end of the heaven,
And his circuit unto the ends of it:
And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Our souls the book of nature draws
To adore the First Eternal Cause:
The heavens articulately shine,
And speak their Architect Divine;
And all their orbs proclaim aloud
The wisdom and the power of God.

See, in yon glorious azure height,
The Sovereign Uncreated Light!
The vast expanse of liquid air
Doth His immensity declare;
And every influence from above,
His bounteous, universal love.

The sure succeeding night and day
His providential care display;
Who bad them to their bounds retire,
And stand, as choir to answer choir,
His knowledge infinite to tell,
And show the Great Invisible.

Kindreds, and tongues, and nations hear
His all-informing messenger:
Stretching to earth's remotest bound,
The heavens their Maker's praise resound,
And speak the power by which they shine,
And gospelize the Love Divine.

God in that spacious firmament
Hath pitch'd the solar planet's tent;
Forth from his chamber in the east,
The sun, in flaming yellow drest,
Comes, as a bridegroom blithe and gay,
To cheer the world and bring the day.

With giant strength he comes from far,
Exulting on his rapid car;
And, starting from his heavenly goal,
Holds on his course from pole to pole;
Earth's inmost stores his rays admit,
And all things feel the genial heat.

In a paraphrase like this, which suffers nothing by comparison with Addison's much-admired one on the same Psalm, you discern the real "poetry of the heavens," and hear the true "music of the spheres."

My limits will not allow me to dwell upon the many beautiful paraphrases of various prophetic visions, where

"Rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire"

is again kindled by a live coal from the altar, and the scenes outspread before the gaze of ancient seers, are sung in strains bold, rapturing, and confident. I hasten to call your attention to the HYMNS ON SELECT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE. These embrace texts from all the Biblical Books, and are numbered by thousands. They are somewhat unequal in point of merit, but each one is a poetic gem, glowing with the brightness of heaven-kindled thoughts. Sentences which most readers would pass without observation, brighten beneath the rays of his genius and whisper solemn instruction to the soul. Take two or three illustrations.

"There is death in the pot," exclaimed the sons of the prophets, as they tasted the pottage unwittingly poisoned by the wild gourds:

Death in the pot! 'tis always there,
The bane of all our food,
When we partake it without fear,
Without an eye to God:

Unless He sanctify the meat,
And bless us from the sky,
Unless we to His glory eat,
Our souls by eating die.

"I have made my bed," says Job, in reference to his preparedness for death:

Ready for my earthen bed,
Let me rest my fainting head;
Welcome life's expected close,
Sink in permanent repose:
Jesu's blood, to which I fly,
Doth my conscience purify;
Signs my weary soul's release,
Bids me now depart in peace.

Thus do I my bed prepare;
O how soft when Christ is there!
There my breathless Saviour laid
Turns it to a spicy bed:
Resting in His power to save,
Looking now beyond the grave,
Calm I lay this body down,
Rise to an immortal crown.

"And parted them both asunder," is the affecting record which announces the final separation of Elijah and his successor; and how touching are the following lines founded upon it:

That chariot, in my life's short day,
I oft have seen descend,
To tear my other self away,
To part me from my friend:
But, lo, it comes my soul t' unite
With those that went before,
It whirls me to my friends in light,
Where we shall part no more.

And, not to multiply examples, how chaste and hallowed is the following introduction to the Canticles, founded on "The Song of songs, which is Solomon's."

Hence ye profane! far off remove
Ye strangers to redeeming love;
Sinners, who JESUS never knew,
The Song of songs is not for you!
Away ye worldly goats and swine,
Who trample on this pearl Divine,
Which only wisdom's sons esteem,
While fools and infidels blaspheme.

With deepest shame, with humblest fear,
I to Thine oracle draw near,
To meet Thee in the holiest place,
To learn the secret of Thy grace.
Now, LORD, explain the mystery,
Display Thy precious Self to me,
And when Thou dost the vail remove,
My heart shall sing the song of love.

Thou heavenly SOLOMON Divine,
To teach the Song of songs is Thine,
Thy Spirit alone the depths reveals,
Opens the book, and breaks the seals:
O might I find the bar removed,
And love my LORD as I am loved,
This moment gain my heart's desire,
The next within Thine arms expire!

Were the Song of songs always read with feelings and invocations like these, it would no longer be "a fountain sealed," but a flowing spring of pure thoughts and hallowed devotion.

The doctrines, ordinances, and duties of Christianity are also largely sung by this incomparable poet. "It may be safely affirmed," says Isaac Taylor, a perfectly

impartial witness in this case, "that there is no principal element of Christianity, no main article of belief, as professed by Protestant Churches, no height or depth of feeling proper to the spiritual life, that does not find itself emphatically, and pointedly, and clearly conveyed in some stanza of Charles Wesley's Hymns." All the doctrines relating to the Divine nature and manifestations; the Person, work, and glory of the Son of God and the Eternal Spirit; man's original condition, fall, and recovery; the blessed attainments of the Christian life, and the fadeless glories of the final heaven,—in one word, all the great verities of revealed theology and religion are expounded and pressed home upon the conscience with a precision, fulness, and energy which nothing can surpass.

And as if endued with prophetic prescience, he has anticipated and met all the wants which a Christian Church can possibly have. Many institutions now so vigorously employed by the churches, had no existence in his day; and yet, whatever new organisations you create,—whether Missionary Societies, Training Colleges, Theological Institutions, Female Charities, Strangers'-Friend Societies, Ragged Schools, Public Tea-meetings, or Evangelical Alliances,—all are provided for by Charles Wesley's able and versatile pen. The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the various aspects and duties of the Christian Ministry, the public worship of the Sanctuary and the more social means of grace, the great festivals commemorative of the sacred epochs in the redeeming work of Christ, and all the practical duties of a holy life, are sung with a beauty, variety, and tenderness, which leave nothing to be desired. With his

compositions in our hands, the "service of song in the house of the Lord" may be made perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

The heart of Charles Wesley was thoroughly domestic and fatherly; and hence you have many hymns eminently suited to the family circle. Most of the compositions of this class were suggested by events which transpired under his own roof. The entire circle of family circumstances is traversed, and the way in which his genius elevates and throws its charm over the little and ever-repeating incidents of domestic life, is most enchanting. In the large pamphlet entitled "Hymns for the use of Families," you have hymns for masters, mistresses, and servants; for morning and evening, Sunday and week-day; for the first cry of a new-born babe, and the last gasp of a lovely boy; for quitting an old habitation and going to a new one; for weddings, christenings, and select parties; for receiving and dismissing your friends; for a child suffering from measles, small-pox, cutting its teeth, and other infant ailments; for a child going to boarding-school, or returning from it; and the father's heart kindles, glows, and gushes in them all. How beautiful are the following stanzas from a little hymn on sending his daughter to face the dangers of a boarding-school! What parents in similar circumstances will not echo the prayer?

---

* The hymns of this class, of which I cannot well quote examples, are found chiefly in the volumes of "Hymns and Sacred Poems;" "Hymns on the Great Festivals;" on the "Lord's Supper," on "God's Everlasting Love;" on "The Trinity," &c., &c.

Not without Thy direction,
From us our child we send,
And to Thy sure protection
Her innocence commend;
Jesus, Thou Friend and Lover
Of hapless infancy;
With wings of mercy cover
A soul beloved by Thee!
Let no affections, foolish
Or vain, her spirit soil;
Let no instructions polish
Her nature into guile:
No low dissimulation
Place in her bosom find;
No worldly art or fashion
Corrupt her simple mind.

But if any man would claim the honour of a Family Poet, he must supply Hymns for Children. Who can estimate the immense amount of good seed cast into the infant mind of the last three generations, by the "Songs, Divine and Moral," of good Dr. Watts? And yet this "Bard of the young" has a worthy successor, if not equal, in the Poet of Methodism. His choice little volume of "Hymns for Children and for those of riper years," contains many pieces equal in simplicity and adaptiveness to the infant mind, to any that Dr. Watts ever wrote. The well-known hymn beginning,—

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to Thee,—

so often erroneously ascribed to Dr. Watts, is but a fair specimen of the whole. At the same time, the "Hymns for Children" are generally of a higher order of thought than the "Songs, Divine

and Moral," though the language is singularly easy and terse.*

It is a good old-fashioned practice in religious families to "say grace" before and after meals, and I wish it were more generally and devoutly observed. These "Graces" are not generally very poetic, but cold, formal, and short. Yet there are many poetic graces in existence. Nearly two-hundred years ago, an old man—a strange compound of oddity and avarice, who was never known to dine a friend, or relieve a beggar—resolved to invite his good Rector and a few of the village grandees to dinner. The repast ended, the host called upon the Rector to "say grace," and the following strains fell from the reverend old man's lips,—

"Thanks for this feast, for 'tis no less
Than eating manna in the wilderness;
Here meagre famine bears controlless sway,
And ever drives each fainting wretch away;
Yet here (O how beyond a Saint's belief),
We've seen the glories of a chine of beef;
Here chimneys smoke which never smoked before,
And we have dined where we shall dine no more!"†

* In a characteristic preface to a new edition of this little volume in 1790, John Wesley observes, "There are two ways of writing or speaking to children: the one is, to let ourselves down to them; the other to lift them up to us. Dr. Watts has wrote on the former way, and has succeeded admirably well, speaking to children as children, and leaving them as he found them. The following Hymns are written on the other plan: they contain strong and manly sense; yet expressed in such plain and easy language, as even children may understand. But when they do understand them they will be children no longer, only in years and stature." I may add, that I know of no better manual for the devout mother to have at hand when endeavouring to sow in the heart of her children the "seeds of eternal life."

† See note, p. 72.

That venerable Rector was Charles Wesley's Father; and who can wonder that the son of such a sire had a turn for poetic graces! In hope that the Methodists would "sing" as well as "say" grace, he wrote some long hymns and many little pieces suited for that pious exercise. The following are fair examples of this class of his compositions:—

GRACE BEFORE MEAT.

Father of earth and heaven,
Thy hungry children feed,
Thy grace be to our spirits given,
The true immortal bread.
Grant us and all our race,
In Jesus Christ to prove
The sweetness of Thy pardoning grace,
The manna of Thy love.

GRACE AFTER MEAT.

And can we forbear, in tasting our food,
The grace to declare and goodness of God!
Our Father in heaven, with joy we partake
The gifts Thou hast given for Jesus' sake.
In Thee do we live: Thy daily supplies
As manna receive, dropt down from the skies;
In thanks we endeavour Thy gifts to restore,
And praise Thee for ever when time is no more!

In the course of his ministerial duties, Charles Wesley was often called to the bedside of the sick and dying, where he saw many in their last hour, overwhelmed with confusion and horror, and many more exulting in the prospect of a speedy entrance into rest. These scenes deeply impressed his sensitive mind, and much of his sweetest verse flows in this peculiar channel. His Hymns on "Preparation for

Death"* are exceedingly solemn, and comprehend every variety of condition in which dying humanity can be found. And his "Funeral Hymns,"† commemorative of loved ones gathered home to God, and many of them written "while their souls were in departing," are singularly touching and beautiful. They possess a grandeur, pathos, and sublimity far beyond most compositions of their kind, and form the brightest gem even in *his* poetical cabinet. Here, if anywhere, the Poet "dips his pen in his heart." The three well-known Hymns beginning,

> "And let this feeble body fail,"
> "How happy every child of grace,"
> "Come let us join our friends above,"—

had he never written another line, would vindicate his claim as a Hymnist of the highest order.

True, some have objected to the exultant and confident strain which pervades this class of his compositions; and they are indeed "one long rapture, the prancing of the mighty ones." But this is their glory and beauty. Are they not in the very spirit of St. Paul's advice? "I would not have you ignorant brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." He entered not

> "The chamber where the good man meets his fate"

as a place of unmitigated sorrow, but of chastened, elevated joy. He went not down into the gloomy

* He wrote eighty Hymns under this title, only forty of which were published; the other forty are in manuscript, the property of the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room.

† He published two separate pamphlets with this impressive title.

valley, looking into Jordan with morbid sentimentality, until he shivered at the sight of the stream. It was his,

> "With the deep-transported mind, to soar
> Above the wheeling poles, and at heaven's door
> Look in."

He climbed Pisgah's height and saw his friends cross "the dark-flowing river" beneath the light of heaven, the "shining ones" coming to meet them. He watched them "enter in through the gates into the city" and, in devout adoration, "fling down their crowns of amaranth and gold upon the jasper pavement" before the throne of God and of the Lamb; and "when he saw them, he wished himself among them." Confident in the realisation of these glorious prospects, he bent over the couch of saintly friends whose "warfare was accomplished," and sang in their closing ears the noble "Dismission,"

> Happy soul, thy days are ended,
> All thy mourning days below;
> Go, by angel guards attended,
> To the sight of JESUS go!
>
> Waiting to receive thy spirit,
> Lo! the Saviour stands above:
> Shows the purchase of His merit,
> Reaches out the crown of love.
>
> Struggle through thy latest passion
> To thy dear Redeemer's breast,
> To His uttermost salvation,
> To His everlasting rest.
>
> For the joy He sets before thee,
> Bear a momentary pain;
> Die, to live the life of glory,
> Suffer, with thy Lord to reign.

In addition to these "Funeral Hymns," he also occasionally exercised himself in the composition of

"Elegies" and "Epitaphs" on his departed friends, in which the character, career, and religious influence of the subjects of his muse are traced with comprehensive minuteness and in strains of pensive affection. The Elegies on the death of Robert Jones, Esq., of Fonmon Castle, and of the Rev. George Whitefield, are compositions of great length and beauty, extending to more than five hundred lines in each case. Mr. Jones was a Welsh magistrate, who was a fellow-collegian of Charles Wesley, and was brought to God under his ministry during one of his visits to the Principality. In a few short months after his conversion he was removed to an early rest. The Elegy is written with great spirit, and "describes Mr. Jones' early life, conversion, subsequent piety, exemplary conduct as a husband and a father, his attachment to the Church of England, his catholic spirit, fidelity to his Christian profession, and triumphant death." How melancholy is the following description of the state of religion and of the ministry in connection with the Established Church at that period; it may be somewhat too strong, but, certainly, if history is to be believed, it is far from destitute of truth:

He marked the city of our God laid low,
And wept in deep distress for Sion's woe:
It pitied him to see her in the dust,
Her lamp extinguished, and her Gospel lost;
Lost to the rich, and great, and wise, and good,
Poor guilty enemies to Jesu's blood,
Who quench the last faint spark of piety,
Yet cry, "The temple of the Lord are we!"
Pleaders for order, they who all confound,
Pillars who bear our Sion—to the ground;
Her doctrines and her purity disclaim,
Our Church's ruin, and our nation's shame;

Leaders who turn the lame out of the way;
Shepherds who watch to make the sheep their prey;
Preachers who dare their own report deny,
Patrons of Arius' or Socinius' lie:
Who scoff the Gospel truths as idle tales,
Heathenish Priests and mitred Infidels!*

Mr. Jones' attachment to the Church, notwithstanding the melancholy condition of her ministry, is beautifully sketched in the following lines:—

This duteous son his piety retained,
Nor left his Mother by her children stained:
Dishonoured by her base degenerate sons,
The pure and apostolic Church he owns;
Her sacred truths in righteousness he held,
Her Articles and Creeds *not yet* repealed.
Her Homilies, replete with truth Divine,
Where pure religion flows in every line:
Those heavenly truths while two or three maintained,
By them he vowed in life and death to stand:
By them in life and death he nobly stood;
Tenacious of the faith and obstinately good
He never left the ship by tempest tossed,
Or said, "She now is dashed against the coast;"
To save a few he spent his pious pains,
Stayed by the wreck, and gathered her remains.

---

* Forty-three years afterwards, when the two brothers were disputing about the relation of Methodism to the Establishment, this closing line was brought into considerable prominence. "For these forty years," writes Mr. John Wesley to his brother, "I have been in doubt concerning the question, what obedience is due to

'Heathenish Priests, and mitred Infidels."

To which Charles replies, "That juvenile line of mine,

'Heathenish Priests, and mitred Infidels,'

I disown, renounce, and with shame recant. I never knew of more than one 'mitred infidel,' and for him I took Mr. Law's word."

The Elegy on the death of Whitefield, "every line of which appears to have flowed from his inmost soul," contains the following eloquent and truthful description of that "flaming Evangelist's" wondrous preaching:

Soon as he thus lifts up his trumpet-voice
Attentive thousands tremble or rejoice:
Who faithfully the welcome truth receive,
Rejoice, and closer to their Saviour cleave:
Poor Christless sinners, wounded by the word,
(Lively and sharper than a two-edged sword,
Spirit and soul almighty to divide,)
Drop, like autumnal leaves, on every side,
Lamenting after Him they crucified!
While God inspires the comfort or the dread,
Wider and wider still the cry is spread,
Till all perceive the influence from above,
O'erwhelmed with grief or swallowed up in love.

What multitudes repent and then believe,
When God doth utterance to the Preacher give,—
Whether he speaks the words of sober sense,
Or pour a flood of artless eloquence;
Ransacks the foul apostate creature's breast,
Or warmly pleads his dear Redeemer's cause,
Or pity on the poor and needy draws:
"The Deist scarce from offering can withhold,
And misers wonder they should part with gold:"
Opposers, struck, the powerful word admire
In speechless awe, the hammer and the fire,
While WHITEFIELD melts the stubborn rocks, or breaks,
In consolation, or in thunder speaks.
From strength to strength the young Apostle goes,
Pours like a torrent, and the land o'erflows,
Resistless wins his way with rapid zeal,
Turns the world upside down, and shakes the gates of hell.

To these Elegies you must add a considerable number of "Epitaphs." And what is an Epitaph? "A

strongly condensed abridgement of the life of the deceased," answers Dr. Clarke; "and if a pious person be the subject, the Epitaph should be a pointed exhibition of the grace that was in him, and his faithfulness to that grace; and all this so recommended that the living man may lay it to heart, and be excited to a practical emulation." This prosy definition is certainly sufficiently severe, and if what it insists upon be really required in an Epitaph, we may conclude that this species of composition is among the most difficult of the poet's art. Judged by this rule, Charles Wesley's Epitaphs would not be entitled to a foremost rank. They are generally bold and tender, descriptive without exhortation, and pious without cant. The following, on his Mother, is justly entitled to quotation:

In sure and certain hope to rise,
And claim her mansion in the skies,
A Christian here her flesh laid down,
The Cross exchanging for a crown.
True daughter of affliction, she,
Inured to pain and misery,
Mourned a long night of grief and fears,
A legal night of seventy years.

The Father then revealed His Son,
Him in the broken bread made known;
She knew and felt her sins forgiven,
And found the earnest of her heaven;
Meet for the fellowship above,
She heard the call, "Arise, my love!"
"I come," her dying looks replied,
And, lamb-like, as her Lord, she died.*

* This Epitaph has been violently censured by Mr. Southey and Dr. Clarke, as doing an injustice to Mrs. Wesley's religious character during the greater part of her life. But the following just observations of Mr. Jackson, place the matter in its proper

I must now pass to another and final class of his compositions. Like every enlightened Christian man, Charles Wesley was a patriot as well as a poet. He took a deep religious interest in every movement affecting the weal or woe of his country; and hence his poetry embraces various public occurrences which transpired during his life. In this respect he was indeed the Poet Laureate of his times.

In 1744, the nation was at war with France and Spain; a general uneasiness prevailed at home; and ferocious mobs, at Wednesbury and other places, hunted the poor Methodists, "as the partridge upon the mountains," abusing their persons, haling them before unjust magistrates, and spoiling their goods. In these circumstances, Charles Wesley wailed his country's crimes, and prayed for her peace and prosperity in "Hymns for Times of Trouble and Persecution." The intense violence of the persecutions which the loyal and peaceable Methodists had to endure, seems to have excited in his mind the conviction that life would have to be sacrificed for the testimony which they so nobly

light. "Her's was rather a religion of fear than of joyous love. It was legal night, and not the bright shining of evangelic day. But when her two sons, being justified by faith, had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and began to preach this great truth of apostolic Christianity, she fully entered into their views, and waited upon God in the earnest expectation of receiving the same blessing. It was done to her according to her faith. While her son-in-law, Mr. Hall, was presenting to her the sacramental cup, and pronouncing the words, 'The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life,' she was filled with peace and joy in believing, and was assured, beyond all painful doubt, of the pardoning mercy of God to her soul."—*Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. i. 322.

held; and the pamphlet contains an exquisite hymn under the significant title, "A Prayer for the First Martyr." I can only quote the latter part:

Give him, when now the day draws near,
His utter helplessness to see;
Give him the self-mistrusting fear,
The humble awe that cleaves to Thee.

Give him, before he bows his head,
The sight to fervent Stephen given,
The everlasting doors displayed,
The glories of a wide-spread Heaven.

Show him Thyself at God's right hand:
Thou on the faithful soul look down,
Thou by Thy dying champion stand,
And reach him out the starry crown.

Inspire him with Thy tender care
For those who nail'd Thee to the wood;
And give to his expiring prayer
The men that drive his soul to God.

Two years later, on April the 16th, 1746, the decisive victory of Culloden crushed the last hopes of every Pretender of the line of the Stuarts to the throne of Protestant England, and, amidst the general joy, Wesley's note of gratitude was heard, loud, devout, and strong, in "Hymns for the Public Thanksgiving Day, October the 9th:"

Britons, rejoice, the Lord is King,
The Lord of Hosts and Nations sing,
Whose Arm hath now your foes o'erthrown,
Ascribe your praise to God alone;
The Giver of success proclaim,
And shout your thanks in JESU'S name.

'Twas not a feeble arm of ours
Which chased the fierce contending powers,
JEHOVAH turn'd the scale of fight,
JEHOVAH quell'd their boasted might,
And knapped their spears and broke their swords,
And showed—the battle is the Lord's.

On the 8th of March, 1750, England was shaken by an earthquake;* consternation seized the people of London, who hurried away to find a camping-ground on Blackheath and elsewhere; and in opposition to this general terror he proclaims his own cheerful confidence in "Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake":

Kept by Him we scorn to fear,
In danger's blackest day,
Starting at destruction near
Though nature faint away;
Though the stormy oceans roar,
Though the maddening billows rise,
Rage, and foam, and lash the shore,
And mingle earth and skies:
Let earth's inmost centre quake,
And shattered nature mourn,
Let the unwieldly mountains shake
And fall, by storms up-torn,
Fall with all their trembling load
Far into the ocean hurled,
Lo, we stand secure in God
Amidst a ruined world.

---

* "This morning, a quarter after five," says Charles Wesley in a letter to his brother, "we had another shock of an earthquake, far more violent than that of February 8th. I was just repeating my text, when it shook the Foundry so violently that we expected it to fall upon our heads. A great cry followed from the women and children. I immediately cried out—'Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and the hills be carried into the

In 1756, a terrible murrain swept off the cattle by thousands, Lisbon was just swallowed up by an earthquake, serious quarrels had arisen between the French and English colonies in America, and France again assumed a hostile attitude; and in "Hymns for the year 1756, particularly for the Fast Day, Feb. 6th," Charles Wesley laboured to promote sentiment proper for the portentous crisis. How exquisitely does he describe all these terrible movements in their connection with an overruling Providence, and as presages of the final coming of the Son of Man!

Fire, vapour, and storm accomplish His word,
And earthquakes perform the charge of the Lord:
The pride of the nations He terribly spurns,
Earth's steadfast foundations and cities o'erturns.
Outstretching His hand o'er mountains and seas,
He shakes the dry land and wat'ry abyss!
A marvellous motion through Nature is spread,
And peaceable ocean starts out of his bed!

Like thunder confined in caverns he roars,
And raised without wind, looks down on the shores;
Hangs horribly over the children of woe,
Expanded to cover the nations below.
Come, Saviour, arrayed with glory and power,
The world Thou hast made destroy and restore;
That all the new heaven and earth may proclaim,
"The kingdom is given to Jesus the Lamb!"

In 1758, France made certain demonstrations supposed to threaten an invasion of England, and in the following year the expectation was general that some attempt would be made upon our shores. Charles

---

midst of the sea: for the Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge!' He filled my heart with faith, and my mouth with words, shaking their souls as well as their bodies."

Wesley's pen was again wielded in his country's cause, in "Hymns on the Expected Invasion." How bold was the faith that could look across the channel upon the gathering hosts and sing:

Come then, ye hostile bands,
For one short moment come:
The Man in white shall bind your hands,
Ye murderers of Rome:*
If suffered from on high
To reach our threatened shore,
With bridles in your mouths draw nigh,
And show your bounded power.

Your power to God submits;
He keeps our faithful souls;
Above the water-floods He sits,
And earth and hell controls.
In dangers, deaths, and snares,
He lays the sacred line;
Nor can ye touch a man that bears
His Saviour's bloody sign!

On November the 20th, 1759, Admiral Hawke gained a glorious victory over the French fleet, taking and destroying many of their ships, and crushing for a time their naval power. England was thrilled with joy, a day of Thanksgiving was appointed, and the Poet of Methodism aided the national gratitude by "Hymns to be used on the Public Thanksgiving Day." There is a poem in this pamphlet of great length and spirit, called "The Song of Moses, sung by Great Britain and Ireland, for the Victory given them over the French Fleet," Nov. 20th, 1759." The threatened invasion was again supposed to be patronised and sanctified by

* The expected invasion was supposed to be instigated and encouraged by the agents of Popery.

the Pope, and this will account for some of the expressions in the following stanzas:

In vain the proud invader swore,
"I will lay waste their isle,
Pursue them on their native shore,
And seize and part the spoil;
Will on the *heretics* abhorred
My lust of vengeance cloy,
And draw my *consecrated* sword,
And young and old destroy!"

For great in majesty divine
Thy wrathful Spirit blew,
Blasted their arrogant design,
And all their host o'erthrew:
Into the depths they sunk as lead
Who Thee and Thine opposed;
They sunk at once, and o'er their head
The mighty waters closed.

In 1779, an Act passed the Legislature relieving the Roman Catholics from many of the severe disabilities under which they then laboured. This gave great offence to many thousands of the people, and an association was formed to insist upon the repeal of the obnoxious statute. Under the leadership of Lord George Gordon, an immense petition was carried to the House of Commons, followed by fifty thousand people. A terrible riot ensued, many members of Parliament were maltreated, and for two days lawless mobs paraded the streets of London, burning every species of property belonging to the Papists, and threatening vengeance against all who refused to shout "No Popery!" or to join in their godless enterprise. In the midst of all this confusion, Charles Wesley published two poetic pamphlets; the first is called,

"Hymns Written in the Time of the Tumults." The rioters appear to have sent him notice that, as he refused to join them, they should pay him a visit at his own house; and this no doubt was the occasion of the following little Hymn "Upon Notice sent one that his House was Marked":

In vain doth the assassin dark,
This house for desolation mark,
Protected by the scarlet sign,
Already *marked* with blood Divine;
His idle threatenings I defy,
For the destroyer *must* pass by.

The LORD most HIGH is our defence,
Our trust is in Omnipotence;
His name our adamantine tower,
Jehovah's wisdom, truth, and power;
JESUS, beneath Thy shade we dwell,
And laugh at all the powers of hell.

At the same time he published a satirical poem, in several cantos, on "The Protestant Association," in which he gives the following ludicrous description of the composition and doings of that august body:

An army of associators,
Of rebels, regicides, and traitors,
With here and there a warm Dissenter,
Geneva Jack and John the Painter;
Of real or pretended zealots,
Of Scots, sworn enemies to Prelates;
Of patriots a countless throng
Their banners rear and pour along;
Russians and Frenchmen in disguise,
Americans, their sworn allies,
And all the friends of congress meet,
To make the infernal host complete.*

* It must not be supposed that we endorse every strong expression in this extract.

See where the *Protestant* crusade,
With Masaniello at their head,
March from the fields with mild intent,
To address and purge the Parliament!
With loud huzzahs their friends they greet,
And safe escort them through the street;
But woe to those they can't confide in!
Unfit their carriages to ride in,
They drag 'em out, and thrust and bruise 'em,
And most *Papistically* use 'em.
Commons and Lords alike they shake,
Compell'd the Covenant to take;
Judges and Ministers of State,
On these they wreak their keenest hate;
Or roll, with *Oliverian* sport,
Their Legislators in the dirt,
Or Bishops o'er the houses fright,
Right glad to save their lives by flight.*

From this miserable rabble the Wesleys and their people stood aloof. This gave great offence to the sovereign mob, who circulated the report that the

* The following lively description of these outrageous scenes was sent by Charles Wesley to his brother; it will illustrate several points in the above extract:—"You read a very small part of the mischief done in the papers. Brother Thackwray was an eye-witness. He saw them drag the Bishop of Lincoln out of his coach, and force him to kneel down. They treated him unmercifully; began to pull the house down to which he fled for shelter; were scarcely persuaded by the owner to let him escape at eleven at night. Another Bishop wisely cried out 'Huzza! No Popery!' and was dismissed with shoutings. Lord Mansfield would have reasoned with them; but they would not hear him, and handled him almost as roughly as the Bishop of Lincoln. They arrested several of the members [of Parliament], particularly Sir George Saville, broke his wheels in pieces, and forced him to sit in his carriage on the ground. He durst not stir out of it. They pulled off the Archbishop's wig."

Wesleys were Papists in disguise, and threatened vengeance accordingly. Hence Charles puts into the mouth of the mob the following racy lines, as indicating their kindly intentions:

> Old Wesley, too, to Papists kind,
> Who wrote against them* for a blind,
> Himself a Papist still at heart,
> He and his followers shall smart;
> Not one of his fraternity
> We here beneath our standard see.

And finally, in 1782, when England was at war with her rebellious colonies, now the United States of America—and may she never be at war with them any more!—Charles Wesley wrote "Hymns for the Nation in 1782," in which he prays for the King, for the American Royalists, for the conversion of France, and dilates upon many other topics of deep interest to the country in that momentous crisis. Thirteen years before the outbreak of these hostilities, the foundations of the Methodist Churches had been laid on the continent of the new world, and glorious had been the success of the "wise master-builders" who had been employed. Amidst the din of war, and the "distress of nations with perplexity," the walls of Jerusalem were built up in "troublous times:" and "Thanksgiving for the Success of the Gospel in America" draws forth the following exulting strain:

> Glory to our redeeming Lord,
> Whose kingdom over all presides,
> While in the chariot of the Word,
> And on the whirlwind's wings He rides.

* The allusion is to a newspaper controversy which Mr. John Wesley had recently had with Father O'Leary, a Romish Priest.

Nothing His rapid course can stay,
Or stop His government's increase;
Earthquakes and plagues prepare His way,
Wars usher in the Prince of Peace.

Rebellions, massacres, and blood,—
On every side as water shed,—
Are suffered by a righteous God,
That happier days may then succeed.
Even now His word doth swiftly run,
And saving knowledge multiplies,
And still His gracious work goes on,
And still His temple walls arise.

The Church is built in troublous times
(Jehovah the commission gave),
And God from all their sins and crimes
Would all the sons of Adam save.
Loving to the whole ransomed race,
He fits the creatures for His use,
In every age and every place
One uniform design pursues.

In love He doth His sons chastise,
His desolating judgments send,—
Judgments are mercies in disguise,
And all in man's salvation end.
Wherefore beneath Thy hand we bow,
And bless each salutary blow;
If what Thou dost we know not now,
We shall, O Lord, hereafter know:

Shall see Thy footsteps in the abyss,
Unwind the providential maze,
And own, amidst the general bliss,
Mercy and truth are all Thy ways.
With grateful joy we comprehend
The meaning of the Eternal Mind;
Accept, Thou universal Friend,
The ceaseless praise of all mankind.

And now, however scant and imperfect this sketch of his varied works may be, I am sure my readers will say that such an amount and variety of poetry argues GREAT FACILITY OF COMPOSITION.

The inspiration of the muse is often coy and fitful, and the moments of afflatus few and distant. Even Milton, the Prince of epic Poets, oft lay awake whole nights unable to construct a single stanza; then his inspirations rushed upon him with whirlwind swiftness, and he dictated forty lines in a few seconds. With full knowledge of this fact, instead of attempting to force the muse against her will, Charles Wesley waited dutifully at her shrine, refusing to move till he felt her kindling fervours. When the saintly Fletcher, whom he loved as his own soul, passed away to heaven, John Wesley desired his brother to write an Elegy to accompany his own brief memoir of that extraordinary man, and Charles solemnly nodded assent. But weeks and months passed away and no Elegy came. When asked if he had received it, John replied, "No, I suppose my Brother is *waiting for a thought*." Alas the "thought" never came; for while his tuneful numbers sweetly rolled over the earthy beds of many humblest members of the Methodist Society, the virtues of the devout and gifted Fletcher remained unsung. But if the torch was not always touching the smouldering embers and kindling the generous fires, no man lived more generally under the warm glow of the poetic flame.

The time when he first felt the inspiration stirring within him cannot now be ascertained. If he could not say with Pope,

"I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came,"

or with Watts, "I was a maker of verses from fifteen to fifty," we know that "while yet young," he espoused the muse, and was

"Married to immortal verse."

His earliest composition now extant is a remarkable and fiery satire upon the marriage of one of his sisters, and was written in his twenty-seventh year. But long ere that the passion had seized, and, sometimes inconveniently for others, revelled in, his soul. During his student-life at Oxford, his brother John often dreaded to see him enter his study. Mentally absorbed in the manufacture of his glowing lines, and the "fine phrenzy" rolling at its flood, he sometimes upset the table and scattered its contents on the floor. Anon he would ask half a dozen questions without waiting for a single reply, repeat a few lines which he had just made, and finally hurry away to write down what he had composed during these eccentric movements, leaving the study in a state of great confusion.

The same impulse was upon him during the heyday of life, and gave birth to appropriate hymns on the suddenest emergency. Tradition tells, that in one of our seaports, he was interrupted in the public service by a company of half-drunken sailors. Just as he commenced singing the hymn for an out-door preaching, the jolly tars struck up one of their lewd songs called "Nancy Dawson." The tune, voices, and sentiments were of course very different, and a great discord was the result. His quick ear, however, soon mastered the tune and metre of their song; a hymn was instantly composed, and at the very next service,

when his blue-jacket friends were ready to repeat their coarse opposition, he gave out,—

Listed into the the cause of sin,
Why should a good be evil?
Music, alas! too long has been
Prest to obey the devil.
Drunken, or lewd, or light the lay,
Flowed to the soul's undoing,
Widened, and strewed with flowers the way
Down to eternal ruin.

Who on the part of God will rise,
Innocent sound recover,
Fly on the prey and take the prize,
Plunder the carnal lover,—
Strip him of every moving strain,
Every melting measure,
Music in virtue's cause retain,
Rescue the holy pleasure?

Come let us try if JESU's love
Will not as well inspire us;
This is the theme of those above,
This upon earth shall fire us.
Say, if your hearts are tuned to sing,
Is there a subject greater?
Harmony all its strains may bring
JESUS's Name is sweeter.

JESUS the soul of music is,
His is the noblest passion;
JESUS's Name is joy and peace,
Happiness and salvation;
JESUS's Name the dead can raise,
Show us our sins forgiven,
Fill us with all the life of grace,
Carry us up to heaven.

Who hath a right like us to sing,
Us whom His mercy raises?
Merry our hearts, for CHRIST is King,
Cheerful are all our faces:

Who of His love doth once partake
He evermore rejoices;
Melody in our hearts we make,
Melody with our voices.

He that a sprinkled conscience hath,
He that in God is merry,
Let him sing Psalms, the Spirit saith,
Joyful, and never weary;
Offer the sacrifice of praise,
Hearty and never ceasing,
Spiritual songs and anthems raise,
Honour, and thanks, and blessing.

Then let us in His praises join,
Triumph in His salvation,
Glory ascribe to love Divine,
Worship and adoration:
Heaven already is begun,
Opened in each believer;
Only believe, and still sing on,
Heaven is ours for ever.

The tune for "Nancy Dawson" was instantly set to these cheery and telling lines; and the poor mariners, finding "all the wind taken out of their sails," gave up the contest as hopeless, and allowed him to finish the service in peace.

And as old life drew her curtains and flung her infirmities over his physical nature, this wondrous facility of composition lived in unabated force. When he had neared his "fourscore years," he rode about London on a little pony, his pocket stuffed with many small cards cut to a certain size; as the old gray jogged along, the poetic feet were soon set in motion; out came the card and pencil, and down went the shorthand jottings. Arrived at the City-road House, he dismounted, left his galloway in front, and hurried in,

calling for "pen and ink" that he might write the hymn in full.*

And were the history of his several pieces fully disclosed, it would reveal to you, not the wan-faced student hammering out his laboured lines, and wasting his life under the flicker of the midnight lamp; but the busy minister moving among his people, visiting sick rooms, walking London's crowded streets, or taking long horseback journeys into the provinces; and in all, the fount welling forth its perennial stream of silvery verse. The *saddle* was evidently a favourite place of study. "Near Ripley," he writes in his journal, "my horse threw and fell upon me"—(an accident which has happened to many other Methodist preachers, for the quality of *circuit* steeds, and the horsemanship of "the Brethren," are proverbially bad). "My companion thought I had broke my neck; but my leg only was bruised, my hand sprained, and my head stunned, which *spoiled my making hymns* till the next day." As he rode from Cork to Bandon, he wrote a hymn of eighty-eight lines for the conversion of the Irish Roman Catholics. I will quote one remarkable example of the hymns composed on these journeys. In the year 1754, he accompanied his brother to Norwich, where the Society had been completely scattered by the conduct of a faithless preacher. As they journey by the way, the following Scripture comes to

* "When this was done," says the Rev. Henry Moore, "he would look round on those present, and salute them with much kindness, ask after their health, give out a short hymn, and thus put all in mind of eternity." His favourite stanza on these occasions was the one beginning :—

"There all the ship's company meet."

his mind,—"And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Gallilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Confident that the promise and commission are for him and his companion, he sings in the following heroic strains:

In the name of the Lord,
In the strength of His word,
A fishing we go:
This our only delight and employment below.

As fishers of men,
Our labour again
With joy we repeat,
And again, till we catch the whole race in our net.

With the blessing Divine
On our net and our line,
We labour for souls;
And at Jesus' command we shall take them in shoals.

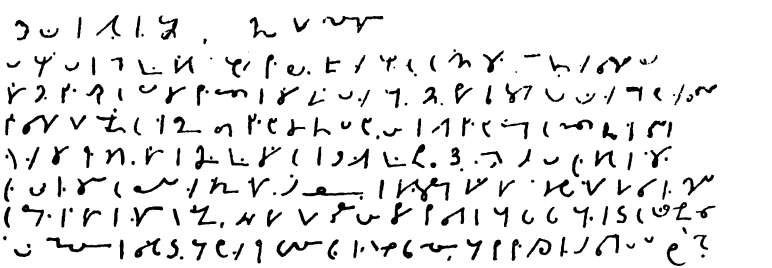
On the right we shall cast,
And catch them at last,
If our toil He approve,
With the hook of His power and the bait of His love.

O Saviour, be nigh,
Thy word to apply,
Thy Gospel to bless,
And crown our attempts with abundant success!

The profligate poor
With a pardon allure,
Their Lord to embrace;
And captivate all with the offers of grace.

With favour look on,
While we let the net down,
Down into the deep,
And enclose such a number as sinks the old ship.

NOTE.—This hymn, published in the "Wesleyan Magazine" for 1853, was translated from the short-hand, by the Rev. Dr. Hoole, who has kindly favoured me with a copy of the original. The following is a *fac-simile*:



Nor shall our hearts shrink,
Though the vessel should sink;
Nor will we repine,
To be lost in an ocean of mercy Divine.*

Now it is to this marvellous facility of composition that we owe so many hymns and poems commemorative of particular events. The crowds who gathered to hear him preach; the emotions which stirred their hearts; the differences which sprung up in the Societies; the thousand incidents in his own personal and domestic history, and the leading events of his times, are caught and photographed as they flitted across the sunbeam of his genius, and handed down to coming generations, circled by a halo of religious sentiment and association. When he is about to preach in the little Isle of Portland, the sound of the quarryman's hammer breaking stone from the rock reminds him of the heart of adamant and the hammer of truth; and 'ere he lifts his arm to wield a single blow, he devoutly prays,

Come, O Thou all victorious Lord,
Thy power to us make known;
Strike with the hammer of Thy word,
And break these hearts of stone! †

As he stands on the "narrow neck" of ground at the Land's End, where two seas all but meet, he thinks of the hand-breadth bridge of Time, thrown up for man's brief probationary step between the boundless oceans

* See note on opposite page.

† This was on June the 9th, 1746, when he writes in his Journal:—"Now the power and blessing came. My mouth and their hearts were opened. *The rocks were broken in pieces*, and melted into tears on every side."

of eternity past and eternity to come; he instantly realises his solemn position, and sings in strains weighty and thrilling,

Lo, on a narrow neck of land,
'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand,
Secure, insensible;
A point of life, a moment's space
Removes me to that heavenly place,
Or shuts me up in hell.*

Again, "after preaching to the Newcastle colliers," the blazing fires which gleamed upon him from every quarter, remind him of a Diviner flame, and seizing upon the appropriate imagery, he exclaims,

---

* The Rev. Dr. Hannah has favoured me with the following note:—"I am inclined to think that the sublime stanza which begins,

"Lo, on a narrow neck of land,"

is a magnificent paraphrase of a thought which occurs in different writers not unknown to Charles Wesley. I give two instances:—'Many witty authors compare the present time to an isthmus, or narrow neck of land, that rises in the midst of an ocean, immeasureably diffused on either side of it.' (*Spectator*, No. 590.)—'We are here in a state of probation, situated, as it were, upon a neck of land with the two infinite oceans of a miserable and happy eternity on either hand of us.' (*Horbery's Sermons*, IV., Part II., on Acts iv. 12.—Horbery was born 1707, died 1773.)"

The coincidence is certainly very remarkable, and the stanza *may* have been so suggested. Charles Wesley was in the habit, as the reader will find in a subsequent part of the Lecture, of paraphrasing other men's thoughts after this fashion. But I cling to the old Tradition, which was in existence during the Poet's life-time,—that the Land's End suggested the imagery. The Hymn, which is called "*An Hymn for Seriousness*," was written and published very soon after Charles Wesley's first visit to that remarkable spot.

See how great a flame aspires,
Kindled by a spark of grace!
Jesu's love the nations fires,
Sets the kingdoms on a blaze:
To bring fire on earth He came;
Kindled in some hearts it is:
O that all might catch the flame,
All partake the glorious bliss!

Truly, when the Divine afflatus was upon him, "or ever he was aware his soul made him like the chariots of Ammi-nadib" for swiftness. His "heart indited a good matter," and when he "spake of the things touching the King," his tongue was as the pen of a ready writer." Hence his lines are not like "petrefactions, glittering, and hard, and cold, formed by a slow but certain process in the laboratory of abstract thought," but "like flowers, springing spontaneously from a kindly soil, fresh and fragrant, and blooming in open day."

Yet you would do Charles Wesley a serious injustice if you supposed that, because he could so fluently pour forth streams of "unpremeditated verse," he was in any way a careless poet; like one of Dryden's heroes,

> "Who faggoted his notions as they fell,
> And if they rhymed and rattled all was well."

His "fatal facility" of composition never allowed him to be content without the MOST THOROUGH AND PAINSTAKING REVISION. At the close of his "Hymns on the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles,"* (a work in manuscript, extending to five quarto volumes), the fol-

* These volumes are the property of the Methodist Book Room. When will compositions, on which so much labour was bestowed be in the hands of the public? O that the day were come!

lowing beautiful record, in his own hand, tells you that during a period of twenty-two years it had been carefully revised no less than *eight* times:

Finished, April 24, 1765.

Δ Θ

The revisal finished, April 24, 1774.

Δ Θ

Another revisal finished, Jan. 28, 1779.

Δ Θ

A third revisal finished, Feb. 29, 1780.

Δ Θ

A fifth revisal finished, Aug. 6, 1783.

Δ Θ

A sixth finished, Oct. 29, 1784.

Δ Θ

The seventh, if not the last, Jan. 11, 1786.

GLORIA TRI-UNI DEO!

Δ Θ

The last finished, May 11, 1787.

HALLELUJAH!

This one fact clearly shows that when these easy-flowing compositions had once been "daintily dribbled" on paper, the most careful revision commenced, and was prosecuted with indomitable perseverance. He regarded his poetic powers as a precious gift of God, for whose cultivation and use he must one day give account, and therefore he would not offer either to God or to His Church, "that which cost him nothing."

I must now call your thoughts to A FEW OF THE LEADING CHARACTERISTICS of Charles Wesley's Poetry.

And here I would name *the general completeness and*

perfection of his rhyme. "The great canon of English Lyrics," says an eminent authority, "is, that every line shall have a corresponding rhyme." If so, the rule is violated by nearly all our best and most popular Hymnists. Even Cowper, Doddridge, and Watts, are frequent transgressors. But in the thousands of verses from Charles Wesley's pen, I do not remember a single instance of this defect. There is occasionally a slight dissonance of sound, as when "sins" is made to rhyme with "convince," "pit" with "yet;" and "flatter" with "nature." But these instances are very rare, and generally so trifling as to be allowed by the laws of versification.

The observant reader will also be struck with the *rich variety* of his rhyme. In many hymnists you have a tedious and everlasting sameness of terminal words and sounds. "Name" and "flame," "light" and "bright," "grace" and "face," "creator" and "nature" are constantly occurring, and a slight inspection proves that their rhyming vocabulary is meagre in the extreme. There are stanzas of Dr. Watts', where, within the compass of eight lines, you have the same sound four times, and the same word twice at the end of the lines. Charles Wesley never rings the changes on a few favourite expressions. A rich and endless variety flows in his terminal words, and there is hardly a single repetition of sound in any of his pieces of ordinary length.

The Poet of Methodism also far exceeds and excels every other hymn-writer in our language in *the number and variety of his metres.* With only two exceptions, Dr. Watts's three hundred and sixty-five hymns are compressed into "long," "common," and "short;"

and he traverses the entire circle of the hundred and fifty psalms, with all their diversified and opposite emotions, in only *eight* different metres. This creates a monotonousness which wearies you if you read many of his compositions in succession. A few other hymnists are superior to Watts in this respect, but Charles Wesley stands forth as the greatest master of

"Various-measured verse"

in the English tongue. He has poured forth his golden thoughts in more than *thirty* different metres, and many of these such as none but a master-hand could touch. This variety of measures flings around his verse a fascination which few kindred compositions possess. Like Nature's grand panorama, they are ever shifting; or like the best musical compositions, the variations are so appropriate and beautiful that you are charmed and lured on by incessant change.* Some of his metres are slow and grave as the measured military tread; others are light and jaunty as the bounding run of

"The playful children, just let loose from school;"

or, to use the words of a transatlantic writer, "They march at times like lengthened processions with solemn grandeur; they sweep at other times like chariots of fire through the heavens; they are broken like sobs of grief at the grave-side, play like joyful affections of childhood at the hearth, or shout like victors in the fray of the battle-field,"† and all are beautifully adapted to the sentiments and feelings they are intended to express.

* Jackson's "Life of Charles Wesley," vol. ii. p. 478.

† Stevens' "History of Methodism," vol. ii. p. 497.

Another quality of his poetry is its *energy*, both of thought and expression. His diction, chiefly of Saxon origin, is singularly pure and nervous; full of varied terms; and rich in rare comparisons, alike attractive and striking, and often wrought out with great elegance and beauty. His ear was too delicate and well attuned to allow an uncouth ruggedness; and many of his compositions rival the most tuneful of his brethren in the liquid softness of their numbers. The hymns beginning,—

"Jesu, Lover of my soul,"
"Thou Shepherd of Israel, and mine,"
"All glory to God in the sky,"

and many others, are as smooth and flowing as the most silvery stanzas of Watts, or Addison, or Pope. But his primary object was *impression*; to rouse and stimulate; to awaken spiritual thought and feeling in the depths of the soul, and bring it back to a living confidence in God. Hence he aimed more at *energy* than *smoothness*. His strong emotional nature, intensified by deep religious feeling, hurried him into impassioned strains and impassioned words, until his verse literally throbs and palpitates with energy. Throw yourself upon the current of his lines, and you find it no "soft-flowing Kedron," but the rapid-rushing Jordan, carrying you away with resistless force. What can exceed the rush in the following description of a lawless mob, written in "the time of the tumults," June 1780:

See where the impetuous waster comes,
Like legion rushing from the tombs;
Like stormy seas, that toss and roar,
And foam and lash the trembling shore.

Havock! the infernal leader cries;
Havock! the associate host replies;
The rabble shouts, the torrent pours,
The city sinks, the flame devours.
Arm of the Lord awake, put on
Thy strength, and cast Apollyon down;
Jesus, against the murderers rise,
And blast them with Thy flaming eyes.

His poetry also exhibits *a nervous vein of argumentative power*. Many of his stanzas describe and defend some vital doctrine with great conciseness and force; and some of his pamphlets are extensive controversial treatises. His "Hymns on God's Everlasting Love," are a powerful consecutive argument, closely and compactly reasoned, on the entire Calvinistic and Arminian controversy. The "Five Points" are reviewed with great acuteness, and the teachings of Holy Scripture fairly elicited and confirmed.* And in his "Scripture Hymns" particular interpretations are often argued for with great ingenuity, if not with invariable conclusiveness. "To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me," said the mantled Prophet to the desponding king in the wizard's cave at Endor. This Charles Wesley understands as a promise of future blessedness to Saul and Jonathan, and the interpretation is thus sustained:

---

* When Dr. Gill published his "Cause of God and Truth," on the Calvinistic controversy, John Wesley reprinted one of the poems on "God's Everlasting Love," with the following characteristic heading, "A full answer to all that Dr. Gill has printed on the Final Perseverance of the Saints." This shows his opinion of the argumentative power of his brother's poetry.

What do these solemn words portend?
A gleam of hope when life shall end:
Thou and thy sons,—though slain,—shall be
To-morrow in repose with me!
Not in a state of hellish pain,
If *Saul* with *Samuel* doth remain;
Not in a state of damn'd despair,
If loving *Jonathan* be there.

The poetry of Charles Wesley is *thoroughly orthodox and evangelical.* Now and then you may find in a Socinian Hymn Book one of his earlier hymns on the works or providence of God, written ere his own heart had so blessedly felt the vital power of truth; but heterodox congregations and pantheistic infidels cannot adopt his compositions generally, with little or no alteration of language or sentiment. In almost every case there is such a thorough interweaving of evangelical truth with the entire production, that to alter it you must tear it into shreds. No Socinian rack can torture it into the confession of a heterodox creed. And this transparent out-spokenness on the cardinal verities of the Gospel, has been one of the mightiest means of preserving the doctrinal soundness of the Methodist churches. I would not disparage the clear, simple, pointed teaching of John Wesley's "Four Volumes of Sermons." We are deeply indebted to them as expository standards of doctrine. But I believe that the hymns of his brother Charles have exerted a far greater influence upon the masses of "the People called Methodists." Are not the sermons of the preachers, the advices of the class-leaders, the experience of the members, the teachings of the family and of the Sunday-school, and the prayers of the entire Methodist community deeply tinged and seasoned with the

theology of the Hymn Book? And what if our hymnary, entering so largely into all our exercises of worship and acts of Christian service, had been heterodox, or even defective in vital teaching? What if it had been crowded with sentimental addresses to green fields, and running streams, and opening flowers, and spreading trees, and rapturing landscapes, and glowing stars, and golden sunsets; while the Person, and glory, and salvation of Jesus, and the work and Divinity of the Holy Ghost were entirely ignored! Or what, if it had even been the cold orthodoxy of Watts and Doddridge, destitute of the living energy which it now breathes into all our services, making it a chariot of fire in which our devotions of psalmody are carried with seraphic ardour to the throne of God! Let no man rob us of our glorying in the living, evangelical soundness of our noble and inspiring hymns!

These compositions also present *surprising tact and felicity in the use and adornment of other men's thoughts;* and in many cases regions most unpromising are explored for the germs of his goodliest plants. As you look upon good old "Matthew Henry's Commentary," with its crowded page and homilitic cast, you say, "This is all very well for a sermon; but who would come here for thoughts and words poetic?" Yet, in that apparently unpromising mine, Charles Wesley finds the precious gem, flashes upon it the light of his poetic genius, brings out its latent beauties, and sets it in his own tasteful framework, where it sparkles like "an apple of gold in a picture of silver." Here, a whole paragraph assumes a rythmical form by little more than a rearrangement of a few words, and anon,

the thought of a single line expands into a goodly stanza.

On the creation of woman, for instance, the old Nonconformist observes: "The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head, to top him; not out of his feet, to be trampled upon by him: but out of his side, to be equal with him; under his arm, to be protected; and near his heart, to be beloved." Now hear the Methodist poet:

Not from his head was woman took,
As made her husband to o'erlook;
Not from his feet, as one design'd
The footstool of the stronger kind;
But fashion'd for himself,—a bride;
An equal, taken from his side:
Her place intended to maintain,
The mate and glory of the man;
To rest, as still beneath his arm
Protected by her lord from harm,—
And never from his heart removed,
As only less than God beloved.

His eye also discovers poetic numbers in this choice old commentator. On the words, "Abundant in goodness" (Exodus xxxiv. 6), Henry observes: "The springs of mercy are always full, the streams of mercy are always flowing; there is mercy enough in God—enough for all, enough for each, enough for ever." Now the following verse not only preserves the leading idea of this quotation, but by the simple addition of a monosyllable, makes a couplet of great strength and beauty:

Its streams the whole creation reach,
So plenteous is the store;
Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough for evermore.*

* The reader must not suppose that these are undesigned coincidences of expression. They are much too close for that; and

Charles Wesley was well read in the best English poets. He greatly admired the compositions of Milton, Pope, and Young; and into these gardens also he sometimes went down to gather lilies. The language which Milton puts into the mouth of Eve to express her absorbing joy while in converse with Adam,—

> "With thee conversing, I forget all time,
> All seasons and their change; all please alike,"—

is applied to the loftier joy of a saint's converse with God:

> With Thee conversing, I forget
> All time, and toil, and care;
> Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
> If Thou my God art here.

The line in which Pope describes the confession of Eloisa to Abelard,—

> "Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heaven,"—

is consecrated as a description of true penitence for sin:

> The tears that tell your sins forgiven,
> The sighs that waft your souls to heaven.

But perhaps the most remarkable example is the following from Young's "Night Thoughts." Toward the close of Night Sixth, the Doctor thus sings of man's immortality:

---

moreover, in the preface to the work from which the lines are quoted, Charles Wesley says, "Many of the thoughts are borrowed from Mr. Henry's comment, Dr. Gell on the Pentateuch, and Bengelius on the New Testament." I may also add, that in his "Hymns on the Lord's Supper" he largely uses the thoughts in Dr. Brevint's "Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice;" and in the "Hymns for Children" he paraphrases several sections of Mr. John Wesley's "Instructions for Children."

"Of man immortal! Hear the lofty style:
If so decreed, th' Almighty will be done.
Let earth dissolve, yon ponderous orbs descend
And grind us into dust! The soul is safe,—
The man emerges; mounts above the wreck,
As towering flame from Nature's funeral pyre;
O'er devastation, as a gainer smiles."

Now compare this with the following lines, written in 1756, a year of impending gloom and disaster:

Stand th' Omnipotent decree;
Jehovah's will be done!
Nature's end we wait to see,
And hear her final groan:
Let this earth dissolve, and blend
In death the wicked and the just;
Let those ponderous orbs descend,
And grind us into dust.

Rests secure the righteous man!
At his Redeemer's beck
Sure t' emerge and rise again,
And mount above the wreck;
Lo! the heavenly spirit towers
Like flame, o'er Nature's funeral pyre,
Triumphs in immortal powers,
And claps his wings of fire!

Nothing hath the just to lose,
By worlds on worlds destroy'd:
Far beneath his feet he views,
With smiles, the flaming void:
Sees the universe renew'd,
The grand millennial reign begun;
Shouts, with all the sons of God,
Around th' eternal throne! *

* If, from these and other examples which might be given, it should be argued that Charles Wesley was a plagiarist, and destitute of originality, I would just observe that, on the same grounds,

A careful reader will not fail to discover a thousand beautiful and recondite classic allusions in Charles Wesley's verse. One illustration must suffice. You have all heard of the Gordian Knot—the knot with which Gordius fastened his dedicated chariot in the Acropolis of Gordium. It was so intricate that the oracle promised the sovereignty of Asia to the man who should untie it. Alexander heard of the prediction, and hastened to examine the wonderful knot. It baffled all his skill, and he cut it in two with his sword, declaring if it were only undone, whether cut or untied, the condition of the oracle would be fulfilled. Now you can understand how this originated the proverb about "cutting the knot," as descriptive of the man determined to gain his end by means desperate rather than be foiled. But who would draw from this uncouth incident a nice and beautiful distinction of Christian doctrine which concerns the very depths of religious experience? Listen to the following stanza:

> One only way the erring mind
> Of man, short-sighted man, can find,
> From inbred sin to fly;
> Stronger than love, I fondly thought,
> Death, only death, can cut the knot,
> Which love cannot untie.*

a like charge might be equally sustained against even Milton and Pope. If the Poet of Methodism sometimes rose on the wing of another, a thousand original pieces show that his own well-plumed pinion could conduct him to still higher soarings, and sustain him in still nobler flights.

* The contrast is between his earlier and later views. In his early religious experience he looked to death as the only complete deliverer from sin; but now he has learned that the hand of love —the love of God shed abroad in the heart—unties the knot which he formerly thought the sword of death alone could cut.

Now and then you also find a sacred tradition touched with great delicacy and beauty. You read that "Moses died on the top of Pisgah, according to the word of the Lord;" and upon this statement, which they rendered "at, or upon the mouth of the Lord," the Jewish Rabbis founded the popular tradition that the Lord gently extracted the soul of Moses from his body with a kiss. And how beautifully is the thought reproduced in a verse written on our poet's thirty-third birthday!—

Then, when the work is done,
The work of faith with power,
Receive thy favoured son,
In death's triumphant hour;
Like Moses to Thyself convey,
And kiss my raptured soul away! *

But, after all, the crowning glory of Charles Wesley's poetry is its *thorough religiousness*. Possessing the purest Attic wit, and a terrible power of sarcasm, which could rival many of the keenest satires in our language, he might have made himself famous in those times of party politics and national turmoil. His lines on the marriage of one of his sisters, his satirical cantos on the Protestant Association (already quoted from), and his description of a "modern man of fashion," written only four years before his death, show how

* The same thought appears again in a Funeral Hymn for Mrs. Mary Anne Wigginton:

Like Moses on the mountain laid,
With longing looks and wishful eyes,
She sees the Saviour's arms displayed,
She sees His open face and dies!
Drops at His kiss the mortal clod,
And plunges in the depths of God.

severely he could wield his poetic whip in chastising folly. Take the last of these pieces, "The Man of Fashion:"

What is a modern man of fashion?
A man of taste and dissipation;
A busy man without employment;
A happy man without enjoyment;
Who squanders all his time and treasures
In empty joys and tasteless pleasures;
Visits, attendance, and attention,
And courtly acts too low to mention.
In sleep, and dress, and sport, and play,
He throws his worthless life away;
Has no opinions of his own,
But takes from leading beaux his ton:
Born to be flatter'd and to flatter;
The most important thing in nature;
Wrapt up in self-sufficient pride,
With his own virtues satisfied;
With a disdainful smile or frown
He on the riffraff crowd looks down;
The world polite,—his friends and he,—
And all the rest are—nobody.
Taught by the great his smiles to sell,
And how to write, and how to spell
The great his oracles he makes,
Copies their vices and mistakes;
Custom pursues,—his only rule,—
And lives an ape, and dies a fool!

But seldom did he desecrate his lyre or secularise his strain.

"Smit with the love of *sacred* song,"

he never moved gracefully out of the consecrated groves of piety. If once or twice he climbed over the stile and roamed into "by-path meadow," as if conscious that he should feel the unwelcome grip of old "Giant

Despair," and find a lodging in "Doubting Castle," he soon retraced his steps to the "King's Highway." Out of the vast mass of his poetry, you cannot gather more than half a dozen pieces not deeply imbued with a religious spirit, and consecrated to the service of piety. No man was ever made worse by a single line of his verse, but thousands upon thousands have been made better by his hallowed strains. Christian experience, to quote Montgomery in substance, from the depths of affliction, through all the gradations of doubt, fear, desire, faith, and hope,—to all the transports of perfect love in the very beams of the Beatific Vision; Christian experience furnishes him with everlasting and inexhaustible themes, which he has illustrated with an affluence of diction and splendour of colouring rarely if ever surpassed. He has invested them with a power of truth and pathos, which endears them to the imagination and affection, which makes feeling conviction, and carries the understanding captive by the decisions of the heart.* Like the Psalter, that inspired Hymn Book of the Church for all ages, his hymns describe every spiritual vicissitude, speak to every class of mind, and command every natural emotion; and it is this thorough religiousness which makes them to devout souls a "Land of Beulah," where "the sun shineth night and day;" where "their ears are filled with heavenly noises, and their eyes delighted with celestial visions."

At the same time, it must be confessed, that, as he sees with open eye, and grasps with giant hand the hidden realities of our faith, there is an occasional

* "Christian Psalmist," by James Montgomery.

daring of imagery and expression which we should not like to justify :

> I cannot see Thy face, and live !
> Then let me see Thy face and die !
> Now, Lord, my gasping spirit receive,
> Give me on eagle's wings to fly ;
> With eagle's eyes on Thee to gaze,
> And plunge into the glorious blaze.

Now that is poetry of the highest order, a flight of more than common daring ; but I doubt whether, as an expression of human desire, any man is justified in its use. Generally, however, a clear and solid judgment, rapt fervour of spirit, great logical accuracy, the playful sportings of fancy, or the bolder flights of imagination, the homely and the refined, the historic and the allegorical, all find their chosen province, and each has its appropriate use.

Seventy years have passed away since his heart, "overflowing with sacred verse" to the last pulsation, ceased to beat ; but, "like the fabled flying courser, whose foot-print opened the well-spring of Helicon, Charles Wesley's mounting genius struck open a warm fountain of happy thoughts in a wintry age ; and now that he

> 'Claps his wings of fire'

in a more ecstatic world, he has left in this one the monument of his joyous sojourn, that geyser of gratitude which started beneath his ascending foot, and whose pleasant stream is marked by the glad verdure on either brink in its course through many lands ; the psalms, the thankful praising hymns which have now become a distinctive of Wesleyan Methodism, but have told benignly on the Church at large." *

* Dr. James Hamilton's "Sermon on Thankfulness."

"He being dead, yet speaketh." The moment cometh not when his voice is not heard. The swell of his tuneful numbers, travelling with the solar light in its diurnal course, circles the earth with a girdle of melody. In "broad Australia and far distant Ind;" in superstitious China and cannibal New Zealand and Fiji; on Alpine heights and Waldensian valleys; in the father-land of the Reformation, and poor, uneasy, distracted France; on Afric's blood-stained continent and Antilles' sunburnt isles; in Young America and earnest Old England; in cold, metaphysical Scotland and once disturbed and priest-ridden, but now prosperous and spiritually-revived Ireland,—his verses have "tamed the rudeness of untaught minds, and gained a listening ear for the harmonies of heaven." At this moment they are firing the souls of earnest ministers, kissing the lips of lisping infancy, fanning flames of piety in a million godly hearts, smoothing the pillows of the dying, perfuming the chambers of solitary saints, and uniting into one song of praise the voices of thousands of spiritual worshippers. Their ever-advancing floods of triumphant melody swell farther and farther over the world every year, and the moral and intellectual influence which they exert, thelong ages of eternity alone can disclose.

Still they are fresh, and young, and powerful as ever, preparing for even mightier triumphs "in the ages to come." In distant times and new-discovered lands, their sound shall startle devil-gods in their hidingplaces, strike the death-knell of superstition, and wake up the echoes of praise and the stirrings of love. And yet many more missionary martyrs, far from country and home, wasted by climate and disease

and surrounded by swarthy forms of men, and hoary temples of vice, shall feel the inspiration of these numbers, and "in the words of this song" nerve themselves for a final closure with the world's gigantic foe. Their mission to the nations shall have no end until "there is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them," and "their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world."

Has this man's poetry, then, no faults, no blemishes, no drawbacks? Yea, doubtless. Here and there, in his earlier compositions, you may trace the influence of a vague and bewildering mysticism: now and then you have a line rugged as a mountain torrent, though not seriously inharmonious withal, and a rhyme not quite perfect. But what is a lone thistle or solitary thorn in a garden so thickly studded with "the rose of Sharon" and "the lily of the valley?" He of whom John Wesley deliberately wrote, "His *least* praise was his talent for Poetry," was no ordinary man; and he of whom the generous-minded Dr. Watts did not scruple to say, "that single poem, Wrestling Jacob, is worth all the verses which I have ever written," was no mean poet. Of the muse and of the man we may say with far greater truthfulness than Savage said of Pope,—

> "Profound as reason, and as justice clear,
> Soft as persuasion, and as truth severe,
> As bounty copious, as persuasion sweet,
> Like nature various, and like art complete;
> So pure her morals, so sublime her views,
> His life is almost equalled by his muse."

Were I now asked, in this age of memorial commemorations to great men, "What is the most

fitting monument which can be reared to the memory of such a man?" I would name no marble bust, even in the "Poet's Corner;" no bronze statue or stately obelisk, however fair and beautiful, in one of your public squares: I would simply say, "He has built up his own best monument. Let us have a good, cheap, well-edited edition of his Poetry, and let his own works praise him in the gates of our churches and the families of our Zion!"* And had I now to trace the names of our sweetest Hymnists upon some monumental pillar, I would write George Herbert, and Thomas Ken, and Isaac Watts, and Philip Doddridge, and John Wesley, and William Cowper, and Reginald Heber, and James Montgomery, and many others; but largest, brightest, loftiest, on its very crowning bust I would deeply and reverently inscribe,

CHARLES WESLEY.

* The Publication of an Edition of Charles Wesley's Poetry is now under the consideration of the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room. Would they were so flooded with applications, that they could feel themselves justified in entering at once upon this noble enterprise.

LIST OF THE POETICAL PUBLICATIONS OF JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY.

The following list of the Poetical Publications of the Revs. John and Charles Wesley is taken from Dr. George Smith's able "History of Wesleyan Methodism;" it has been compiled with great care, and is the most exact and complete catalogue I have yet seen. I have not thought it necessary to give the number of volumes or pages of each separate work, nor the date of its publication:

1. A Collection of Psalms and Hymns.
2. Hymns and Sacred Poems.
3. Hymns and Sacred Poems.
4. Hymns and Sacred Poems.
5. Hymns and Sacred Poems.
6. Hymns on God's Everlasting Love.
7. A Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems from the most celebrated English Authors.
8. Hymns for the Watch-night.
9. An Elegy on the Death of Robert Jones, Esq.
10. Hymns on the Lord's Supper.
11. Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord.
12. Hymns for Our Lord's Resurrection.
13. Hymns for Ascension Day.
14. Hymns of Petition and Thanksgiving for the Promise of the Father.
15. Gloria Patri.
16. Hymns for the Public Thanksgiving Day, October the 9th, 1746.

17. A Collection of Psalms and Hymns.
18. Hymns and Sacred Poems.
19. An Epistle to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley.
20. Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, March 8th, 1750.
21. Hymns for the year 1756.
22. Hymns for Times of Trouble and Persecution.
23. Hymns for Times of Trouble.
24. Hymns of Intercession for all Mankind.
25. Hymns for the Expected Invasion, 1759.
26. Hymns for those to whom Christ is All in all.
27. Short Hymns on Select passages of the Holy Scriptures.
28. Graces before and after Meat.
29. An Extract from Milton's "Paradise Lost."
30. Select Hymns; with Tunes annexed.
31. Hymns for New-year's Day.
32. Hymns for the use of Families.
33. Hymns for Children.
34. Hymns on the Trinity.
35. Funeral Hymns.
36. Hymns for those that Seek, and those that have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ.
37. Funeral Hymns.
38. An Elegy on the late Rev. George Whitefield.
39. An Extract from Dr. Young's "Night Thoughts."
40. Preparation for Death in several Hymns.
41. Select Parts of Mr. Herbert's "Sacred Poems."
42. Hymns and Spiritual Songs.
43. A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists.
44. Hymns written in the Time of the Tumults, June, 1780.

45. Hymns for the Fast Day.
46. The Protestant Association.
47. Hymns for the Nation in 1782.
48. Prayers for Condemned Malefactors.
49. A Pocket Hymn Book for the use of Christians of all Denominations.
50. A Pocket Hymn Book for the use of Christians of all Denominations.
51. A Small Pocket Hymn Book for Children.

The above list contains several publications which are selections, partly from other authors, and partly from works previously published by the Wesleys. The joint names of the Brothers appear on several of the Title-pages; but it is evident that the great mass of all the original compositions came from the pen of Mr. Charles Wesley.

NOTE TO PAGE 25.

A different version of these witty lines is given in Dr. Clarke's "Memoirs of the Wesley Family," vol. I., p. 356:—

"Behold a miracle! for 'tis no less
Than eating manna in the wilderness.
Here some have starved, where we have found relief,
And seen the wonders of a chine of beef.
Here chimnies smoke, which never smoked before;
And we have dined where we shall dine no more."

Here, in addition to the verbal variations, two whole lines are entirely omitted. I have quoted the "Grace" as it appears in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1802, prefaced by the following note:—

"The authenticity of the following extempore grace, by the Rev. Samuel Wesley (father of the Rev. Charles Wesley), formerly Rector of Epworth, may be relied on. It is given on the authority of William Barnard, Esq., of Gainsborough, whose father, the preserver of John from the fire of 1707, was present at the time it was spoken, at Temple Belwood, after dinner. Mr. P——, at whose house they dined, was a strange compound of avarice, and oddity; many of his singularities are still remembered."

A. P. SHAW, PRINTER, 10, BOLT COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON.

Head of thy Church conflic
With all the powers of
Still on our Israel's sin
And with thy faithful
The gathered Flock of Ev
From hungry grievou
The little Flock redeem
Redeem, and love the

2. All we like sheep, hav
By sin, the world, a
Turnd every one to his
And downward rush
But now we have rete
Our Bishop great, o
One in thy Spirit's we
Washd, & protected by

2

iding here
earth and hell,
e appear
people dwell:
gland's fold
wolves defend.
id of old
m to the end:

e gone astray,
d Satan led,
own way,
with desperate speed:
ed to Thee,
r Shepherd good:
by
Thy blood.