SUSANNA WESLEY

ELIZA CLARKE

W. H. ALLEN & Co.

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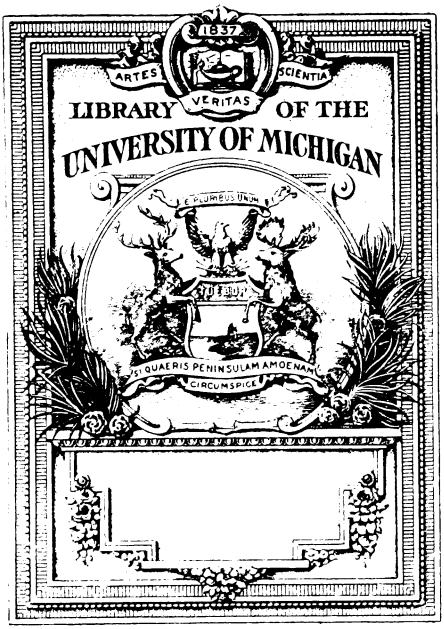
EMINENT WOMEN SERIES



Eminent Women Series

EDITED BY JOHN H. INGRAM

SUSANNA WESLEY

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BY

Mrs. ELIZA CLARKE

LONDON:
W. H. ALLEN & CO., 13 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

1886.

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PRINTED BY W. H. ALLEN AND CO., 13 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

PREFACE.

THIS life of Susanna Wesley, the mother of John Wesley the founder, and of Charles Wesley the poet, of Methodism, differs from previous ones in not being written from a sectarian nor even from an eminently religious point of view. Having been much associated with those who had been in familiar intercourse with Charles Wesley's widow and children, and having heard Susanna Wesley continually spoken of as a woman "who underwent and overcame" more difficulties than most, the ideal of her life early aroused my imagination. I was delighted with the opportunity of writing her memoir, and have done so with the sympathetic admiration natural to one in whose veins runs some of her blood, however much diluted.

I have done my best to reconcile dates, and give events and letters in their proper order; but it has been a somewhat difficult task, partly because the Old and New Styles have evidently been used indiscriminately, and partly on account of the habit of the family of making rough drafts as well as fair copies

of what they wrote, and the dates given being sometimes those of the actual documents, and sometimes those of the copies. More of general interest about Mrs. Wesley ought to have been preserved; but, unfortunately, she and her family have been regarded solely in connection with Methodism. She was nothing if not religious; but she was a lady of ancient lineage, a woman of intellect, a keen politician, and, had her ordinary correspondence been preserved, it would have given us an insight into the life of the period which would have been full of deep and world-wide interest.

In the preparation of this work I have been greatly indebted to the Rev. J. G. Stevenson, not only for the use of his valuable *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, which have been collected from every possible source, but for the kind and patient manner in which he has answered endless questions, consulted authorities, supplied me with quotations, and lent me books and pamphlets. Mr. John Wesley also took an interest in my work, and repeatedly proffered me all the assistance in his power.

ELIZA CLARKE.

CONTENTS.

LIST OF AUTHORITIES.

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SUSANNA WESLEY.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND ANCESTRY.

THE armies of the Church Militant throughout the world were never commanded by a better general than John Wesley. The military instinct was strong in every fibre of his keen mind and wiry body, and his genius for organizing has probably had far more to do with keeping the hosts of Methodism in vigorous marching order for the last hundred and fifty years, than any of the tenets he inculcated. He had, moreover, the gift of an eloquence that was magnetic, that drew men after him as the multitudes followed Peter the Hermit, and that compelled self-surrender as did the teaching of Ignatius Loyola. He was a born leader of men, who went straight to his point, and carried it by force of personal superiority. He made a very effectual lieutenant of his brother Charles, who, had it not been for John, would probably have lived a peaceful, pious life, and been a diligently decorous parish priest

with a spice of scholarly erudition like his father before him. Men like John are not born in every generation, and, when they do arise, are usually the outcome of a race which has shown talent in isolated instances, but has never before concentrated all its strength in one scion.

In the records of such a race there are sure to be certain foreshadowings of the coming prophet, priest or seer, and consequently the lives of his progenitors are full of the deepest interest. Boys usually reproduce vividly the characteristics of their mothers, so in the person of Susanna Wesley we should seek the hidden springs of the boundless energy and grasp of mind that made her son stand out so prominently as a man of mark among his fellows. Had it not been for him it is probable that her memory would have perished, for, as far as outsiders saw, she was only the struggling wife of a poor country parson, with the proverbial quiverful of children, a narrow income, and an indomitable fund of what is termed proper pride. She was the twenty-fifth and youngest child of her father, Dr. Samuel Annesley, by his second wife, and was born in Spital Yard on the 20th of January 1669. On both sides of the house she was of gentle birth. Her mother's father, John White, born at Higlan in Pembrokeshire, like so many other Welshmen, graduated at Jesus College, Oxford; he afterwards studied at the Middle Temple and became a bencher. He was probably a sound lawyer and a prosperous man, for we find that he had a goodly number of Puritan clients, and in 1640 was elected M.P. for Southwark. In the House he was known as an active and stirring member of the party opposed to the King, Charles I., and in the proceedings that led to the death of that

ill-fated monarch he seems to have taken some considerable share. He was by no means silent or passive when Episcopacy was under discussion, and would fain have seen the offices of deacons, priests, and bishops abolished. He was chairman of the Committee for Religion, and in that capacity had to consider the cases of one hundred clergymen who lived scandalous lives. These cases he published in a quarto volume of fifty-seven pages, a copy of which, under the title of *The First Century of Scandalous and Malignant Priests*, may be seen in the British Museum. Mr. White was, moreover, a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines; and what with the excitement and unrest of the times, his natural zeal, and the heat of party spirit, he wore himself out at the comparatively early age of fifty-four, and was buried with a considerable amount of ceremony in the Temple Church on the 29th of January 1644. Over his grave was placed a marble tablet with this inscription :—

> Here lyeth a John, a burning, shining light,
> Whose name, life, actions all were White.

It was no doubt to his maternal great-grandfather that Charles Wesley alluded many years after, when his daughter Sally refused to believe that kings reigned by Divine right; and in his anger at her contumacy exclaimed, "I protest, the rebel blood of some of her ancestors runs in her veins!"

Dr. Annesley was himself of aristocratic lineage, and looked it every inch. His father and the Earl of Anglesey of that date were first cousins, their fathers being brothers. Samuel Annesley was an only child, and received the Christian name that has been transmitted to so many of his descendants, at the request of

a saintly grandmother who was called to her rest before his birth. He was born in 1620 at Haseley in Warwickshire, and inherited a considerable amount of property. He had the misfortune to lose his father when only four years old, and was brought up by his mother, who seems to have been an eminently pious woman. Religion, it must be remembered, was the burning question of the day, and Puritanism was at its height; though there were many godly and exemplary people in the opposite, or what we should now call the High Church party. Young Annesley entered at Queen's College, Oxford, at the age of fifteen, acquitted himself well there, and in due course took his M.A. degree. When he was twenty-four years of age and had deliberately chosen the Church as his profession, the affairs of the nation had reached a crisis. Charles I. had declared war against the Parliament, and his queen had sailed from Dover with the crown jewels, hoping to sell them, and thereby procure munitions of war for the husband to whom she was so deeply attached. The Royalist party withdrew from their seats in the House of Commons, whereupon the remaining members drew closer together, enrolled the militia, and appointed the Earl of Warwick Admiral of the Fleet. He it was who, having a kindness for his young county neighbour, and receiving a certificate of his ordination signed by seven clergymen, procured for him his diploma as LL.D. and appointed him chaplain to a man-of-war called the *Globe*. This post, however, did not suit Samuel Annesley, and we speedily find that he quitted it and accepted the living of Cliffe in Kent, worth about four hundred pounds a year. This cure had been left vacant by the sequestration of the previous vicar for immorality, so that his appointment probably marks

his acquaintance with John White, whose daughter he married in after years. But before settling at Cliffe he had espoused a young wife, who bore him a son, named Samuel after his father. She died, and was buried in the chancel of the church where her husband officiated, and her little boy survived her only four years, and was buried there in 1653. Dr. Annesley was much opposed when he first went to Cliffe, for the people were tarred with the same brush as their previous vicar, and received the new one with spits, pitchforks, and stones. Nothing daunted by this, he assured them that he was the last man to be frightened away from his post, and he should stay at Cliffe till they were prepared by his means for the ministry of someone better. He was as good as his word, and had the pleasure of seeing great improvement among them before he was called elsewhere.

In 1648 a solemn national fast day was proclaimed, and Dr. Annesley sent for to preach a sermon before the House of Commons. His sermon won him much favour and was printed by command: it contained a passage very acceptable to the Parliament in its then temper, but which gave great offence to the Royalists, who justly regarded it as a reflection on the King, who was at that moment imprisoned at Carisbrooke Castle. According to the young divine's own account, which is still to be found in the State Paper Office, when the King was executed the following year he publicly asserted his conviction that it was a "horrid murder," spoke against Cromwell as "the arrantest hypocrite that ever the Church of Christ was pestered with," and said other disrespectful things of the ruling powers, which, being repeated, led to his leaving Cliffe, or

possibly being turned out of it, to the great regret and sorrow of his parishioners, who had learned to love and trust him.

The inhabitants of the parish of St. John the Evangelist, Friday Street, Cheapside, unanimously chose him as their minister in 1652; and though he speaks of it as the smallest in London, it is evident that he remained there six or seven years. He must have married Miss White on his first settlement in the metropolis. That he would gladly have gone elsewhere is rendered probable by his declaration that Cromwell twice refused to present him to a living worth four hundred pounds a year, though he was the nominee of the patron. In July 1657 the Protector, however, gave Annesley the Lord's Day evening lecture at St. Paul's, which brought him one hundred and twenty pounds a year; and twelve months after, through the favour of Richard Cromwell, he was made vicar of St. Giles', Cripplegate, against the wish of some of the inhabitants, who at the Restoration petitioned Charles II. for his removal. That monarch, however, confirmed him in his living—possibly because he did not wish to make too rapid or sweeping changes.

Dr. Annesley had been a prominent man among the Puritan divines, whether he approved of the execution of the "martyred King" or no, for he had been one of the commissioners appointed by the Act of Parliament for the approbation and admission of ministers of the Gospel after the Presbyterian manner. No doubt he would have liked to have retained his living and won the favour of the King, for his ancestral instincts were likely to make him Royalist rather than Roundhead. But when it came to a question of conscience he was firm to his principles, and in 1662, when the

Act of Uniformity was passed, he refused to subscribe to it, and, like Howe and Baxter, and two thousand of the best and most prominent clergy of the time, was ejected on St. Bartholomew's Day. The Earl of Anglesey strove hard to persuade his kinsman to conform, and promised him preferment; but it was impossible to move him, and he frequently preached in private, though ten years elapsed before the Declaration of Indulgence made it safe for him to get the Meeting House in Little St. Helen's licensed, where he officiated to a large and affectionate congregation till his death. He was a remarkably handsome man, tall and dignified, and of a very robust constitution, and several of his children resembled him in personal beauty. Comparison of his portraits with those of living types, show that his aquiline nose, short upper lip, wavy brown hair, and peculiarly strong and durable sight, have been largely transmitted to his descendants. Few of them, however, have been tall, although the majority have been strong and hardy.

He was devotedly fond of his wife, and their family increased annually and even oftener. There were two boys, Samuel who died in India, and Benjamin who was executor to his father's will, but most of the children were girls. Judith was a very handsome and strong-minded woman, whose portrait was painted by Sir Peter Lely; Anne was a wit as well as a beauty, and married a rich man; Elizabeth, who married Dunton, the eccentric bookseller, was very pretty, sweet-natured, and perhaps as near perfection as any mortal can be. There was also a Sarah and three others, of whom all we know is that they grew up to womanhood and married. Susanna was slim and very pretty, and retained her good looks and symmetry

of figure to old age, although she was the mother of nineteen children.

There is a well-known anecdote of the Rev. Thomas Manton, who, after christening Susanna, was asked by a friend how many olive branches Dr. Annesley had; he replied that it was either a couple of dozen or a quarter of a hundred. It is probable, however, that out of this large number several died in infancy. Still, the quiver was very full indeed, though, the parents not being by any means poor, all who survived were well cared for and solidly educated.

CHAPTER II.

YOUTH AND MARRIAGE.

WHATEVER accomplishments Susanna Annesley may have lacked, she was perfect mistress of English undefiled, had a ready flow of words, an abundance of common sense, and that gift of letter-writing which is supposed to have vanished out of the world at the introduction of the Penny Post. She probably had sufficient acquaintance with the French language to enable her to read easy authors; but at an age when a girl of her years and capacity ought to have been reading literature, she appears to have been studying the religious questions of the day. It is true that they were uppermost in all minds, but it is equally true that her father, Dr. Annesley, had laid controversy aside and did not add a single pamphlet to the vast army of them which invaded the world at that epoch. He was a liberal and a large-minded man, and no stronger proof of it can be adduced than that his youngest daughter, before she was thirteen, was allowed so much liberty of conscience, that she deliberately chose and preferred attaching herself to the Church of England rather than remaining among the Nonconformists, with whom her father had cast in his lot.

Perhaps he sympathised with her, at all events he neither reproached nor hindered her; to the end of his life she remained his favourite child, and it was to her care that he committed the family papers, which, unfortunately, were destroyed in the fire that many years after wrecked the parsonage at Epworth. Among the many visitors to the hospitable house in Spital Yard was Samuel Wesley, the descendant of a long line of "gentlemen and scholars," as they were termed by one of his grandsons. He was an inmate of the Rev. Edward Veal's dissenting academy at Stepney, and was a promising student with a ready pen. The pedigree of his family was traceable to the days of Athelstan, when they were people of some repute, probably the remnants of a good old decayed stock. They were connected with the counties of Devon and Somerset, always intermarrying with the best families; some of them fought in Ireland and acquired property there. It need only be added that Lord Mornington, the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Ker Porter and his sisters, the famous novelists, were among their kith and kin, to show that many and rare talents and a vast amount of energy were hereditary gifts. Samuel Wesley was the son of the Rev. John Wesley, sometime vicar of Winterborn, Whitchurch, in Dorsetshire, one of the ejected clergy, and a grandson of the Rev. Bartholomew Wesley, who married Ann Colley of Castle Carbery, Ireland, and was the third son of Sir Herbert Wesley, by his wife and cousin Elizabeth Wesley of Dangan Castle, Ireland. These few facts will probably make clear to most minds the main points respecting the family connections and their proclivities.

Samuel Wesley had been from his youth a hard

worker, and as the course of his education did not for many years take the direction he desired, he contrived to earn for himself the University training essential to a scholar. The foundation of a liberal education was laid at the Free School, Dorchester, where he remained till nearly sixteen, when his father died, leaving a widow and family in very poor circumstances. The Dissenting friends of both parents then came forward and obtained for the promising eldest son an exhibition of thirty pounds a year, raised among themselves, and sent him to London, to Mr. Veal's at Stepney, where he remained for a couple of years.

There are two things almost inseparable from a tincture of Irish blood—at all events in the upper and cultivated classes—a wonderful facility for scribbling and a hot-headed love of engaging in small controversies. Both of them speedily came to light in Samuel Wesley, for he at once became a dabbler in rhyme and faction, and so far pleased his patrons that they printed a good many of his *jeux d'esprit*. Some words of sound advice were given him by Dr. Owen, who was, perhaps, afraid that the intoxication of seeing himself in print might lead to neglect of severer studies. He counselled the youth to apply himself to critical learning, and gilded the pill by a bonus of ten pounds a year as a reward for good conduct and progress. In consequence of continual magisterial prosecutions, Mr. Veal was obliged to give up his establishment, and his clever young pupil was transferred to that of Mr. Charles Morton, M.A., of Newington Green, which then stood foremost among Dissenting places of education. Samuel Wesley's mother and a maiden aunt appear to have migrated to London, and with them he made his home. Literary work and remuneration opened before him,

for he was engaged to translate some of the works of John Biddle, regarded as the father of English Unitarians; but it is said that as he could not conscientiously approve of their tendency, he threw up the affair.

The passion of writing lampoons, however, remained strong, and was further fanned by his meeting at Dr. Annesley's with John Dunton, the bookseller, who was then wooing Elizabeth Annesley. The two became firm friends, as is not unusual when a wealthy publisher meets with a young man of literary ability, whose peculiar line of talent runs parallel with the taste of the times. From that hour his literary earnings went far towards his support, and he needed them, for he was becoming discontented with the Dissenters and beginning to find fault with their doctrines. Dr. Owen wished him and some others to graduate at one of the English universities, with the notion that the tide might soon turn, and that Dissenters might be allowed to take the ordinary degrees; but the idea that any of them would prove recreant to Nonconformist principles does not appear to have entered the good man's head. It also appears that a "reverend and worthy" member of the Wesley family came to London from a great distance, and held serious converse with his young kinsman against the "Dissenting schism"; so it is probable that several influences combined to induce Samuel, at the age of one-and-twenty, to quit his non-conforming friends and join the Church of England. He had, moreover, made up his mind to go to Oxford, and, as a young man of spirit, could surely not have wished to be hampered and baulked in his University career by entering that abode of learning without belonging to the Established Church. It was the reaction of the frame of mind in which he had

written squibs and lampoons on the opposite side of the question, and the scars of persecution and controversy were still too recent to enable the friends who had hitherto watched his career, to reflect that "our little systems have their day" and ultimately "cease to be."

Hearts are the same in all centuries, and, considering that Susanna Wesley was some years younger than her future husband, one cannot help thinking that Cupid had something to do with the change of views she avowed so early in her teens, and that her kind and warm-hearted father had some suspicion of the truth, and no objection to it.

Samuel Wesley did not care to encounter home opposition; consequently, he rose before dawn one August morning in 1683, and with forty-five shillings in his pocket walked down to Oxford, where he entered himself as a servitor at Exeter College. Here he maintained himself by teaching, by writing exercises, &c. that wealthy undergraduates were too idle to do for themselves (a practice he ought not to have countenanced), by whatever literary employment Dunton could put into his hands, and by collecting and publishing his various scattered rhymes and poems in a volume, which appears to have rather more than paid its own expenses. He passed his various examinations creditably, and in June 1688 took his B.A. degree. The fact that he was the only student of Exeter who obtained that very moderate distinction in that year, does not say much for the abilities or industry of his companions as a body.

Samuel Wesley left Oxford just at the time when James II. had issued his fresh Declaration of Indulgence, which the clergy for the most part refused to

read in their churches, while Archbishop Sancroft and six of his suffragans protested, and were in consequence imprisoned in the Tower. Thus it came to pass that, in the enforced absence of the Bishop of London, Samuel Wesley received deacon's orders at the hands of Dr. Sprat, Bishop of Rochester. The curacy that gave him a title was worth only twenty-eight pounds a year; but he did not remain in it more than twelve months, when he was ordained priest by Dr. Compton, Bishop of London, at St. Andrew's, Holborn, on the 24th of February 1689, exactly twelve days after William and Mary had been declared sovereigns of Great Britain. It is said that he wrote and printed the first pamphlet that appeared in support of the new government. It is possible that this procured for him the appointment of chaplain on board a man-of-war, where he was comparatively rich with seventy pounds a year, and had leisure for a good deal of writing, most of which he employed in the composition of a curious poem on the Life of Christ.

He was most likely anxious to be in London, for he soon resigned the chaplaincy, and became again a curate in the metropolis, with an income of thirty pounds, which he doubled by his pen. Money was worth much more then than now, yet it was hardly prudent to marry on so small a pittance; but lovers have so much faith in one another, that he and Susanna Annesley seem to have had no misgivings, but plighted their troth in the spring of 1689. It is not known in what church they were married, nor who married them, but it is believed that the bride's new home was in apartments near Holborn.

CHAPTER III.

EARLY MARRIED LIFE.

SUSANNA WESLEY must have been an economical woman and a good housekeeper, for she and her husband lived for two years in London lodgings, during which time their eldest son Samuel was born, and managed to pay their way and keep perfectly free from debt on their small income. The young husband now entered into a literary project, which he hoped would add considerably to his resources. He joined Mr. Dunton and a few others in establishing the *Athenian Gazette*, a weekly publication, that lived for some years. The meetings of the coadjutors were held at stated periods at Smith's Coffee-house in George Yard, now George Street, near the Mansion House. It is calculated that during the existence of this periodical Mr. Wesley contributed about two hundred articles to its pages, and it is from the pen of one of his fellow-workers, Charles Gildon—who afterwards wrote a history of the "Athenian Society"—that we have the best sketch of what manner of man Susanna's husband was in his early prime.

"He was a man of profound knowledge, not only of the Holy Scriptures, of the Councils, and of the

Fathers, but also of every other art that comes within those called liberal. His zeal and ability in giving spiritual directions were great. With invincible power he confirmed the wavering and confuted heretics. Beneath the genial warmth of his wit the most barren subject became fertile and divertive. His style was sweet and manly, soft without satiety, and learned without pedantry. His temper and conversation were affable. His compassion for the sufferings of his fellow-creatures was as great as his learning and his parts. Were it possible for any man to act the part of a universal priest, he would certainly deem it his duty to take care of the spiritual good of all mankind. In all his writings and actions he evinced a deep concern for all that bear the glorious image of their Maker, and was so apostolical in his spirit, that pains, labours, watchings, and prayers were far more delightful to him than honours to the ambitious, wealth to the miser, or pleasure to the voluptuous."

Looking back at this distance of time on Samuel Wesley's literary work, it is evident that he was a learned theologian, and had the gift of fluent versification. His mind and style were narrowed by being continually bent on controversial theology, and he wrote so much and so rapidly in one groove, in order to earn the wherewithal to bring up his large family, that he never attained the high standard of which his youth gave such fair promise. But he was a good man, and a faithful pastor of souls in the obscure corner of Lincolnshire where his lot was afterwards cast; although, had he remained in London, it is probable that he would have come more to the front, and have become one of the shining intellectual lights of his day.

The Marquis of Normanby had in some way heard of the young divine and his straitened circumstances, and, in 1690, when the little parish of South Ormsby became vacant by the death of the rector, he mentioned Mr. Wesley to the Massingberds, who then, as now, were lords of the manor and patrons of the living. Their offer of it was at once made and readily accepted, and regarded as a step in advance. The stipend was fifty pounds a year; there was a house to live in, though a very poor one, and, as the pastoral work was by no means onerous, there was the prospect of abundant leisure for writing. The new incumbent was just eight-and-twenty, his wife was in her twenty-second year, and their babe only four months old, when they left London for the country place that was to be their future home, and with which their memories are indelibly connected. The monotony of country life and the utter absence of the excitement to which Mr. Wesley had been accustomed must very soon have chafed his spirit, though he tried to be thankful, as may be seen from his own description:—

"In a mean cot, composed of reeds and clay,
Wasting in sighs the uncomfortable day:
Near where the inhospitable Humber roars,
Devouring by degrees the neighbouring shores.
Let earth go where it will, I 'll not repine,
Nor can unhappy be, while Heaven is mine."

There were only thirty-six houses and about two hundred and sixty inhabitants in the parish, wherein the ancient church of St. Leonard stood on rising ground just above the parsonage. The young couple arrived in June, and got settled before the winter came. As the months passed, and little Samuel began to walk,

his mother was distressed to observe that, though healthy and extremely intelligent, he showed no sign of talking. This made her very anxious, and the care of a child who she feared was dumb, as well as the very natural tenderness for a first-born son, caused "Sammy," as they called him, to be her favourite, a predilection which she, as well as others, fully recognised. In 1691 a little girl was born, and named after her mother, and in January of the following year Emilia made her appearance. In April 1693 the infant Susanna died, making the first break in the circle. In 1694 twin boys, Annesley and Jedediah, were born, but died in infancy, and a few months after their death came another girl, who was also named Susanna, and lived to a ripe old age. Mary, the last born at South Ormsby, through a fall became deformed and sickly; so that it is evident that Mrs. Wesley's hands were always full and her strength sorely tried.

It might have been imagined that in this remote village no social difficulties were likely to arise; but it was not so. The Marquis of Normanby, like many others of his time, was a man of sadly loose morals, and kept a "lady" at a house in South Ormsby. She took a great fancy to the Rector's pretty wife, and would fain have been very intimate with her. Mrs. Wesley, secure in her own position as a happy wife and mother, does not seem to have harshly discouraged her fallen sister; but her hot-tempered and high-handed husband was not going to endure it, and, it is averred, coming in one day when the peccant woman was sitting with his wife, he handed her out of the house in a sufficiently peremptory manner. John Wesley says that this conduct gave such offence to the

Marquis as to necessitate his father's resignation of the living; but this statement is not borne out by facts. If the story were absolutely correct, the Marquis must have recognised the natural indignation of a gentleman, and have respected him accordingly, for Mr. Wesley did not cease to be his private chaplain, nor to dedicate books to him and the Marchioness, nor did the nobleman forget to mention the Rector of South Ormsby at Court. The actual *rencontre* may very possibly have been with some woman connected with Lord Castleton, who rented the Hall and lived a very dissolute life there. It all happened long before John Wesley was born, so he may easily have been mistaken as to the facts.

When Samuel was between four and five years old his parents were relieved of all anxiety about his speech. He was very fond of the cat, and would carry it about and often get away with it into quiet corners, where we may presume that the other little ones did not follow to molest either pussy or her juvenile master. One day he was so long out of sight that his mother grew uneasy. She hunted all over the house and garden, and at length, while calling his name, she heard a voice saying, "Here am I, mother!" It came from under the table, and, stooping down, she saw Sammy and his cat. From this time forth he spoke as well as other children: Mrs. Wesley's thankfulness may be imagined.

It was in 1693 that Mr. Wesley published his heroic poem in ten books, entitled *The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, and dedicated it to Queen Mary. It was not published by the friendly brother-in-law, Dunton, but "printed for Charles Harper, at the Flower-de-Luce, over against

St. Dunstan's Church, in Fleet Street; and Benjamin Motte, Aldersgate Street." In truth, Dunton did not think it would improve its author's reputation, and denounced it as "intolerably dull," an opinion shared by Pope. The present generation would certainly endorse their views; yet it went through a second edition in 1697, and was reprinted in a revised and abridged form a century later. The most interesting passage, and the only one it is desirable to quote here, is Mr. Wesley's sweet and appreciative portrait of the wife to whom he had then been married about four years :—

"She graced my humble roof and blest my life,
Blest me by a far greater name than wife;
Yet still I bore an undisputed sway,
Nor was 't her task, but pleasure to obey:
Scarce thought, much less could act, what I denied.
In our low house there was no room for pride;
Nor need I e'er direct what still was right,
She studied my convenience and delight.
Nor did I for her care ungrateful prove,
But only used my power to show my love:
Whate'er she asked I gave without reproach or grudge,
For still she reason asked, and I was judge.
All my commands requests at her fair hands,
And her requests to me were all commands.
To other thresholds rarely she 'd incline:
Her house her pleasure was, and she was mine;
Rarely abroad, or never but with me,
Or when [illegible] pity called, or charity."

In 1694 the Marquis of Normanby did his best both with the Queen and Archbishop Tillotson to recommend Mr. Wesley for the Bishopric of an Irish

diocese, two of which were then vacant. Considering how much Irish blood ran in the veins of the Wesleys, and also that their connections were people of position in the Emerald Isle, he would probably have been well placed in such a see, and the difference it would have made to his family would have been incalculable. Possibly neither Queen Mary nor the Archbishop knew of these circumstances, but simply thought that a clergyman at thirty-two years of age was too young, and the pastor of two hundred and fifty country people too inexperienced, for such a post. The Queen, however, did not forget him, and it is said that it was in consequence of a wish expressed shortly before her last illness that the living of Epworth was offered to him.

It was just before leaving South Ormsby that Mrs. Wesley had the grief of losing her father, Dr. Annesley, who died, after five months' illness, on the last day of 1696. The news, of course, did not travel very quickly, nor was it unexpected; but it was none the less keenly felt. She was then twenty-seven, and expecting her eighth child, only one of her family having been seen by its grandfather. She was a strong believer in communion between the spirits of the departed and those dear to them who are still in the body, and throughout the remainder of her life loved to think that her father was far nearer to her than while she was in Lincolnshire and he in the flesh in Spital Yard.

CHAPTER IV.

LATER MARRIED LIFE.

It was early in 1697 that the Wesleys removed to Epworth, on the opposite side of the county of Lincoln, which, though only a small market town with about 2,000 inhabitants, was the principal place in the Isle of Axholme, a district ten miles long by four broad, enclosed by the rivers Trent, Don, and Idle. The church is an ancient structure, dedicated to St. Andrew, and the rectory was at that time a palace in comparison with the "mud hut" at South Ormsby. It was not a brick or stone-built house, but a three-storied and five-gabled timber and plaster building, thatched with straw, and containing "a kitchinge, a hall, a parlour, a buttery, and three large upper rooms and some others for common use; and, also, a little garden;" together with a large barn, a dove-cote, and a hemp kiln. The children had ample space now to roam about in as well as for ease and comfort indoors; but there were fees to be paid on entrance into the living, furniture to be bought for the larger house, and, as the new rector determined to farm his own glebe, implements and cattle for that worse than amateur farming, for which a bookish man brought up in town

was eminently unfit. Mr. Wesley, who was already in debt, borrowed a hundred pounds from the Bishop of Salisbury, which proving insufficient, before he was fairly installed he had to borrow another fifty pounds. The interest on and repayment of these sums hung like a millstone round his neck for the remainder of his life.

The family could have been only just settled at Epworth when Mehetabel, the fifth daughter, was born, and just about the same time Mrs. Wesley heard of the death of her sweet elder sister Elizabeth, the wife of John Dunton. The Duntons had continued lovers up to the day of the wife's death, and the bereaved husband declared that during the fifteen years of their union not an angry look had passed between them. She had been his book and cash keeper, and always took an active part in his business, and, in spite of cares and worries, he never once went home and found her out of temper. She nursed him devotedly in sickness, and when there seemed some possibility of their migrating to America and settling there in business, acquiesced in the voyage, cheerfully assuring her "most endeared heart" that she would joyfully go over to him, adding, "I do assure you, my dear, yourself alone is all the riches I desire; and if ever I am so happy as to have your company again, I will travel to the farthest part of the world rather than part with you any more. . . . I had rather have your company with bread and water than enjoy without you the riches of both Indies." In another she says, "Prithee, my dear, show thy love for me by taking care of thyself. Get thee warm clothes, woollen waistcoats, and buy a cloak. Be cheerful; want for nothing; doubt not that God will provide for us." She seems to have been proverbials

in her own generation, for the natural goodness and amiability which unfortunately do not always go hand in hand with the sincerest piety.

Mrs. Wesley had been very happy in the brotherly friendship which existed between her own husband and her sister and Mr. Dunton, and felt the bereavement deeply. Mr. Wesley wrote the epitaph which was engraved on Mrs. Dunton's tomb in Bunhill Fields, and, though it was the fashion of the day to attribute every virtue under the sun to those who had epitaphs written for them, it was acknowledged by general consent that every word of it was true:—

"Sacred urn! with whom we trust
This dear pile of buried dust,
Know thy charge, and safely guard,
Till death's brazen gate 's unbarred;
Till the angel bids it rise,
And removes to Paradise
A wife obliging, tender, wise;
A friend to comfort and advise;
Virtue mild as Zephyr's breath;
Piety, which smiled in death;
Such a wife and such a friend
All lament and all commend.
Most, with eating cares opprest,
He who knew, and loved her best;
Who her loyal heart did share,
He who reigned unrivalled there,
And no truce to sighs will give
Till he die, with her to live.
Or, if more he would comprise,
Here interred Eliza lies.

The two sisters were considered very much alike both in person and character, so that anything recorded of

Mrs. Dunton throws a side light on Mrs. Wesley's own personality.

Mr. Wesley had been present at the wedding of the Duntons, and then presented them with an "Epithalamium" which was all doves and loves, and Cupids and Hymens. He evidently had a shrewd suspicion that the widowed bookseller was not made to live alone, for in the letter enclosing the epitaph he slily remarks that he hopes it may arrive before another Epithalamium is wanted. Mr. Dunton did marry again, within six months, and Mr. Wesley dropped his acquaintance as precipitately as Dr. Primrose might have done under the same circumstances. He was never tried in the same way himself, as Mrs. Wesley survived him, but, judging from what we know of his character, it is more than probable that he would not have lived long without a wife had he had the misfortune to lose his faithful partner.

Most likely it was when Mrs. Wesley was first installed at Epworth that she faced the problem of education for her children. Had she not done so, her daughters would have grown up ignorant, for funds wherewith to send them to school would never have been forthcoming. Strenuous efforts would naturally have been made for the boys; for education, and that at a public school, was regarded as a *sine quâ non* by the father, and he would have moved heaven and earth to procure it for them. Mrs. Wesley was a quietly practical woman, who, having much to do, found time to do everything, by dint of unflagging energy and industry and a methodical habit of mind. It was, of course, impossible to teach her eldest boy till he was able to speak, but as soon as he began to talk she began to instruct him.

It was a rapid and pleasant process, for she wrote that "he had such a prodigious memory that I do not remember to have told him the same word twice. What was more strange, any word he had learned in his lesson he knew wherever he saw it, either in his Bible or any other book, by which means he learned very soon to read an English author well." For two years or so, Samuel was her only pupil, and from her experience with him she never attempted to teach any of her children the alphabet till they were turned five, although the youngest of all, Kezia, picked up her letters before that age. Her mother regretted this, and said it was none of her doing, but reading must have been in the atmosphere. Mrs. Wesley's ninth child was born at Epworth in 1698, but, the parish registers having been destroyed by fire, it is not known whether it was a boy or girl. This child speedily died, and the next addition to the family was a John who was followed the next year by a Benjamin, both of whom died in infancy.

It appears that during the earlier part of the time at Epworth, Mr. Wesley's aged mother lived with him, and was, probably, a valuable assistance to the young wife, who always had a baby coming, and was frequently confined to her room and couch for six months at a time, though, as she rarely had more than one maidservant for all purposes, she must have managed the children even in her moments of greatest weakness, and it was this perpetual strain of mind and body that added so much to her feebleness.

On the 16th of May 1701, husband and wife took counsel together. Money was terribly scarce and coals were wanted, for, though it was almost summer, it would not have done to be without firing when

another child was hourly expected. Every penny was collected together, but they could only muster six shillings between them. The coals were sent for, but the pockets were empty. On Thursday morning there was a joyful surprise. Kind Archbishop Sharpe, who knew how poverty pinched the family at Epworth, and all about the debts, and how hard the rector worked in hammering rhyme and prose out of his brains for London publishers, spoke to several of the nobility about him, and even appealed to the House of Lords in his behalf. The Countess of Northampton, moved by the tale of privation, gave twenty pounds for the Archbishop's *protégés*, ten of which, at Mr. Wesley's desire, were left in his Lordship's hands for old Mrs. Wesley, and the other ten were sent by hand to the Rector, arriving on the morning that found him penniless. The money was not an hour too soon, for that very evening twins, a boy and girl, were born. In announcing the event to the Archbishop, Mr. Wesley wrote:—

"Last night my wife brought me a *few* children. There are but *two* yet, a boy and a girl, and I think they are all at present; we have had four in two years and a day, three of which are living."

Neither the twins nor the boy who preceded them survived many months, and in 1702 Anne was born; and the mother having now, for a wonder, only one baby in hand, while little Mehetabel, or Hetty as she was called, having attained the dignified age of five years, Mrs. Wesley began to keep regular school with her family for six hours a day, and kept it up, for twenty years, with only the few unavoidable interruptions caused by successive confinements, and a fire at the Rectory.

How patiently she taught was shown when, one day, her husband had the curiosity to sit by and count while she repeated the same thing to one child more than twenty times. "I wonder at your patience," said he; "you have told that child twenty times that same thing." "If I had satisfied myself by mentioning it only nineteen times," she answered, "I should have lost all my labour. It was the twentieth time that crowned it."

Mrs. Wesley does not seem to have thought much of her own system of education, but she could not suffer her children to run wild, and could not afford either governesses, tutors, or schools. The only way of teaching them was to do it herself, and, while they were quietly gathered round her with their tasks, she plied her needle, kept the glebe accounts, wrote her letters, and nursed her baby in far more ease and comfort than she could have done if the little crew had been racing about and getting into boisterous mischief. It was at the desire of her son John, when a man of thirty, and perhaps with his own aspirations to family life, that she wrote down the details of how she brought up and taught her children, and that record is best given in her own words.

CHAPTER V.

TEACHING AND TRAINING.

JOHN WESLEY certainly could not have remembered the beginning of his mother's educational work, as it commenced before his birth; but he must have experienced its benefits, as she, with some assistance from her husband in rudimentary classics and mathematics, prepared him to enter the Charterhouse at eleven years of age with considerable credit to himself and his teachers. He pressed her repeatedly in after life to write down full details for his information, and she was evidently somewhat loath to do it, for at the end of a letter dated February 21st, 1732, she says :—

"The writing anything about my way of education I am much averse to. It cannot, I think, be of service to anyone to know how I, who have lived such a retired life for so many years, used to employ my time and care in bringing up my children. No one can, without renouncing the world, in the most literal sense, observe my method; and there are few, if any, that would entirely devote above twenty years of the prime of life in hopes to save the souls of their children, which they think may be saved without so much ado; for that

ncipal intention, however unskilfully and
fully managed."

pily she did ultimately allow herself to be per-
ed, and wrote to her son John as follows:—

"DEAR SON, "Epworth, July 24th, 1732.

"According to your desire, I have collected the principal rules I observed in educating my family.

"The children were always put into a regular method of living, in such things as they were capable of, from their birth; as in dressing and undressing, changing their linen, &c. The first quarter commonly passes in sleep. After that they were, if possible, laid into their cradle awake, and rocked to sleep, and so they were kept rocking till it was time for them to awake. This was done to bring them to a regular course of sleeping, which at first was three hours in the morning, and three in the afternoon; afterwards two hours till they needed none at all. When turned a year old (and some before) they were taught to fear the rod and to cry softly, by which means they escaped abundance of correction which they might otherwise have had, and that most odious noise of the crying of children was rarely heard in the house, but the family usually lived in as much quietness as if there had not been a child among them.

"As soon as they were grown pretty strong they were confined to three meals a day. At dinner their little table and chairs were set by ours, where they could be overlooked; and they were suffered to eat and drink (small beer) as much as they would, but not to call for anything. If they wanted aught they used to whisper to the maid that attended them, who came and spake to me; and as soon as they could handle a knife and

fork they were set to our table. They were never suffered to choose their meat, but always made to eat such things as were provided for the family. Mornings they always had spoon meat; sometimes at nights. But whatever they had, they were never permitted at those meals to eat of more than one thing, and of that sparingly enough. Drinking or eating between meals was never allowed, unless in case of sickness, which seldom happened. Nor were they suffered to go into the kitchen to ask anything of the servants when they were at meat: if it was known they did so, they were certainly beat, and the servants severely reprimanded. At six, as soon as family prayer was over, they had their supper; at seven the maid washed them, and, beginning at the youngest, she undressed and got them all to bed by eight, at which time she left them in their several rooms awake, for there was no such thing allowed of in our house as sitting by a child till it fell asleep.

"They were so constantly used to eat and drink what was given them that when any of them was ill there was no difficulty in making them take the most unpleasant medicine; for they durst not refuse it, though some of them would presently throw it up. This I mention to show that a person may be taught to take anything, though it be never so much against his stomach.

"In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their will and bring them to an obedient temper. To inform the understanding is a work of time, and must with children proceed by slow degrees, as they are able to bear it; but the subjecting the will is a thing that must be done at once, and the sooner the better, for by neglect-

ing timely correction they will contract a stubbornness and obstinacy which are hardly ever after conquered, and never without using such severity as would be as painful to me as to the child. In the esteem of the world they pass for kind and indulgent whom I call cruel parents, who permit their children to get habits which they know must be afterwards broken. Nay, some are so stupidly fond as in sport to teach their children to do things which in a while after they have severely beaten them for doing. When a child is corrected it must be conquered, and this will be no hard matter to do, if it be not grown headstrong by too much indulgence. And when the will of a child is totally subdued, and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of the parents, then a great many childish follies and inadvertencies may be passed by. Some should be overlooked and taken no notice of, and others mildly reproved; but no wilful transgression ought ever to be forgiven children without chastisement less or more, as the nature and circumstances of the case may require. I insist on the conquering of the will of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual. But when this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents, till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind.

"I cannot yet dismiss the subject. As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children ensures their after wretchedness and irreligion: whatever checks and mortifies it, promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more

evident if we farther consider that religion is nothing else than doing the will of God and not our own; that the one grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness being this self-will, no indulgence of it can be trivial, no denial unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on this alone, so that the parent who studies to subdue it in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving a soul. The parent who indulges it does the Devil's work; makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable, and does all that in him lies to damn his child body and soul for ever.

"Our children were taught as soon as they could speak the Lord's prayer, which they were made to say at rising and at bedtime constantly, to which, as they grew bigger, were added a short prayer for their parents, and some collects, a short catechism, and some portion of Scripture as their memories could bear. They were very early made to distinguish the Sabbath from other days, before they could well speak or go. They were as soon taught to be still at family prayers, and to ask a blessing immediately after, which they used to do by signs, before they could kneel or speak.

"They were quickly made to understand they might have nothing they cried for, and instructed to speak handsomely for what they wanted. They were not suffered to ask even the lowest servant for aught without saying 'Pray give me such a thing'; and the servant was chid if she ever let them omit that word.

"Tak God's name in vain, cursing and swearing, profani[illegible]ty, rude ill-bred names, were never heard among them; nor were they ever permitted to call each other by their proper names without the addition of brother or sister.

"There was no such thing as loud playing or talking allowed of, but everyone was kept close to business for the six hours of school. And it is almost incredible what may be taught a child in a quarter of a year by a vigorous application, if it have but a tolerable capacity and good health. Kezzy excepted, all could read better in that time than the most of women can do as long as they live. Rising out of their places, or going out of the room, was not permitted except for good cause; and running into the yard, garden, or street, without leave, was always esteemed a capital offence.

"For some years we went on very well. Never were children in better order. Never were children better disposed to piety, or in more subjection to their parents, till that fatal dispersion of them after the fire into several families. In these they were left at full liberty to converse with servants, which before they had always been restrained from, and to run abroad to play with any children, bad or good. They soon learned to neglect a strict observance of the Sabbath, and got knowledge of several songs and bad things which before they had no notion of. That civil behaviour which made them admired when they were at home, by all who saw them, was in a great measure lost, and a clownish accent and many rude ways were learnt which were not reformed without some difficulty.

"When the house was rebuilt, and the children all brought home, we entered on a strict reform; and then was begun the system of singing psalms at beginning and leaving school, morning and evening. Then also that of a general retirement at 5 o'clock was entered upon, when the eldest took the youngest that could speak, and the second the next, to whom they read the psalms for the day and a chapter in the New Testa-

ment; as in the morning they were directed to read the psalms and a chapter in the Old Testament, after which they went to their private prayers, before they got their breakfast or came into the family.

"There were several bye-laws observed among us. I mention them here because I think them useful.

"First, it had been observed that cowardice and fear of punishment often lead children into lying till they get a custom of it which they cannot leave. To prevent this, a law was made that whoever was charged with a fault of which they were guilty, if they would ingenuously confess it and promise to amend should not be beaten. This rule prevented a great deal of lying, and would have done more if one in the family would have observed it. But he could not be prevailed upon, and therefore was often imposed on by false colours and equivocations which none would have used but one, had they been kindly dealt with; and some in spite of all would always speak truth plainly.

"Second, that no sinful action, as lying, pilfering at church or on the Lord's day, disobedience, quarrelling, &c. should ever pass unpunished."

(One feels that in the last sentence Mrs. Wesley must have been interrupted, or that possibly a line or two of her letter may have been lost (it has been several times printed), for usually she was very clear-headed and precise in what she wrote, and certainly would have considered pilfering on any day and in any place sinful.)

"Third, that no child should be ever chid or beat twice for the same fault, and that if they amended they should never be upbraided with it afterwards.

"Fourth, that every signal act of obedience, especially when it crossed upon their own inclinations,

should be always commended, and frequently rewarded according to the merits of the case.

"Fifth, that if ever any child performed an act of obedience, or did anything with an intention to please, though the performance was not well, yet the obedience and intention should be kindly accepted, and the child with sweetness directed how to do better for the future.

"Sixth, that propriety (the rights of property) be invariably preserved, and none suffered to invade the property of another in the smallest matter, though it were of the value of a farthing or a pin, which they might not take from the owner without, much less against, his consent. This rule can never be too much inculcated on the minds of children; and from the want of parents and governors doing it as they ought, proceeds that shameful neglect of justice which we may observe in the world.

"Seventh, that promises be strictly observed; and a gift once bestowed, and so the right passed away from the donor, be not resumed, but left to the disposal of him to whom it was given, unless it were conditional, and the condition of the obligation not performed.

"Eighth, that no girl be taught to work till she can read very well; and that she be kept to her work with the same application and for the same time that she was held to in reading. This rule also is much to be observed, for the putting children to learn sewing before they can read perfectly is the very reason why so few women can read fit to be heard, and never to be well understood.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

A wise and generous nature found expression in these eight rules, and the last of them bespoke a

woman who valued mind above matter. Very few of her country men and women at the present day ever attain the art of reading aloud audibly and intelligibly, as may be observed by diligent attendance at church, where the average clergy mumble and murder both liturgy and lessons.

Perhaps school-books of the ordinary sort were scarce at Epworth—certainly there was no money to spare for the purchase of them—or perhaps it was on principle that Mrs. Wesley's children were taught their very letters and small words from the first chapter of Genesis, and made perfect in reading each verse before going on to the next. As soon as the fifth birthday was passed the house was set in order, and the mother devoted the six school-hours of one whole day to teaching her youngest pupil its letters, with what success she herself has told us. She must have had a great deal of uninterrupted time for her educational work, as her husband spent most of his days in his study when at home, and was chosen by his clerical brethren in Lincolnshire to represent them three several times in Convocation. This took him to London for many months at a time; and though the journey and the expense of remaining in the metropolis so long were heavy drains on his purse, the occupation was congenial and kept him before the public eye, thus causing a readier sale for his literary productions and giving him the opportunity of distinguishing himself and communicating with publishers. During these absences Mrs. Wesley had everything in her own hands, the glebe, the parish, and the family; she kept the books, did the best she could with regard to farming operations; though having, like her husband, spent her youth in London, and among books, she could

hardly have been very conversant with anything of that kind; corresponded with her lord and master, and diligently instructed her children.

Just a little ease from pecuniary difficulties seems to have dawned on the Wesleys in the spring of 1702. The rector's "History of the Old and New Testament attempted in verse, and adorned with three hundred and thirty sculptures" had appeared a few months before, and doubtless was expected to prove a source of considerable profit. The money, however, came in very slowly, and creditors pressed so hard for what was due to them, that in March Mr. Wesley once more mounted his horse and rode to London for aid. His appeal was responded to in various quarters, for the Dean of Exeter gave him ten pounds, the Archbishop of Canterbury ten guineas, the Marquis of Normanby twenty, and the Marchioness five. A few other small sums raised the amount to sixty pounds, and the good man rode joyfully home with it, paid off some debts entirely, and a portion of others, and kept ten pounds in his own hands towards the expense of getting in his harvest. It need not necessarily be assumed that these moneys were given him out of charity pure and simple, for publishing was then, as now, an expensive process, and authors who had no capital accomplished it by subscription. It is very possible that the Marquis and the Archbishop and others had promised their subscriptions but not paid them up, so that Mr. Wesley may only have collected money justly due to him.

But loss and poverty pursued him, for the summer proved hot and the thatched roof of the parsonage got very dry, and perhaps the kitchen chimney wanted sweeping. At all events, some sparks fell upon it, and though the house was not burnt down, a great deal of

mischief was done. It must have occurred either when Anne was a very few weeks old or just before she was born. Mr. Wesley gave an account of it in writing to his kind and constant friend the Archbishop of York, to whom he had commenced a letter on July 25th, writing only the date and the words "My Lord." This identical sheet of paper was partly burnt and wetted with the water that extinguished the flames; but as it was saved, with other books and papers, the letter was ultimately completed on it and forwarded to Dr. Sharpe.

"He that 's born to be a poet must, I am afraid, live and die poor, for on the last of July 1702, a fire broke out in my house, by some sparks which took hold of the thatch this dry time, and consumed about two-thirds of it before it could be quenched. I was at the lower end of the town to visit a sick person, and thence to R. Cogan's. As I was returning they brought me the news. I got one of his horses, rode up, and heard by the way that my wife, children, and books were saved, for which God be praised, as well as for what He has taken. They were altogether in my study and the fire under them. When it broke out she got two of the children in her arms, and ran through the smoke and fire; but one of them was left in the hurry, till the other cried for her, and the neighbours ran in and got her out through the fire, as they did my books and most of my goods; this very paper amongst the rest, which I afterwards found as I was looking over what was saved.

"I find 'tis some happiness to have been miserable, for my mind has been so blunted with former misfortunes that this scarce made any impression upon me. I shall go on, by God's assistance, to take my title

(tithe?); and when that's in, to rebuild my house, having at last crowded my family into what's left, and not missing many of my goods."

There is a story concerning this part of Mrs. Wesley's life which, though it rests on the authority of her son John, must be either a mistake or an exaggeration; and, as the circumstance related occurred before his birth, he, of course, repeated it only from hearsay, and not of his own personal knowledge. It is to the effect that Mrs. Wesley, never having viewed William of Orange as the rightful Sovereign of England, did not respond to the prayer for the King as read by her husband at their family worship. He asked the reason why, and was favoured with a plain but full exposition of her political views; whereupon he retorted hotly, "Sukey, if that be the case, you and I must part; for if we have two kings we must have two beds," and declared that unless she renounced her opinions he would not continue to live with her. So much, runs the story, did he take her contumacy to heart that he left the room without another word, retired to his study, and in the course of the day rode off to Convocation without taking leave or holding any further communication with her. He remained in London for a year without corresponding, and only returned after Queen Anne's accession. There could be no dispute between the pair as to her right to reign, so the ordinary habits of life were resumed, and John Wesley was the first child born afterwards. So the story goes; but it is manifestly wrong, for in the first place neither the dates given nor the events mentioned fit in; and in the second place, John Wesley was born on the 17th of June Old Style, or the 28th New Style, 1703, when

his sister Anne was twelve months old; so that the tale of his father's absence from home for a whole year falls to the ground. The strength and tenacity of Mrs. Wesley's political feelings is shown by passages in her "Occasional Papers," written two or three years later. The country was at war, and the object of Marlborough's campaigns was to break the power of France, though there were some special pleaders who declared that their end and aim was the preservation of Protestantism. "As for the security of our religion," she writes, "I take that to be a still more unjustifiable pretence for war than the other. For, notwithstanding some men of a singular complexion may persuade themselves, I am of opinion that as our Saviour's Kingdom is not of this world, so it is never lawful to take up arms merely in defence of religion. It is like the presumption of Uzzah, who audaciously stretched out his hand to support the tottering ark; which brings to mind those verses of no ill poet:—

> In such a cause 'tis fatal to embark,
> Like the bold Jew, that propped the falling ark;
> With an unlicensed hand he durst approach,
> And, though to save, yet it was death to touch.

And truly the success of our arms hitherto has no way justified our attempt; but though God has not much seemed to favour our enemies, yet neither hath He altogether blest our forces. But though there is often many reasons given for an action, yet there is commonly but one true reason that determines our practice, and that, in this case, I take to be the securing those that were the instruments of the Revolution from the resentments of their angry master, and the preventing his return and settling the succession in an

heir. Whether they did well in driving a prince from his hereditary throne, I leave to their own consciences to determine; though I cannot tell how to think that a King of England can ever be accountable to his subjects for any mal-administration or abuse of power. But as he derives his power from God, so to Him only he must answer for his using it. But still, I make great difference between those who entered into a confederacy against their Prince, and those who, knowing nothing of the contrivance, and so consequently not consenting to it, only submitted to the present Government, which seems to me the law of the English nation, and the duty of private Christians, and the case with the generality of this people. But whether the praying for a usurper, and vindicating his usurpations after he has the throne, be not participating his sins, is easily determined."

It appears, also, that when a national fast day was proclaimed and observed, Mrs. Wesley stayed at home instead of going to church, and she justifies her action thus: "Since I am not satisfied of the lawfulness of the war, I cannot beg a blessing on our arms till I can have the opinion of one wiser, and a more competent judge than myself, in this point, viz., whether a private person that had no hand in the beginning of the war, but did always disapprove of it, may, notwithstanding, implore God's blessing on it, and pray for the good success of those arms which were taken up, I think, unlawfully. In the meantime I think it my duty, since I cannot join in public worship, to spend the time others take in that in humbling myself before God for my own and the nation's sins; and in beseeching Him to spare that guilty land wherein are many thousands that are, notwithstanding, compara-

tively innocent, and not to slay the righteous with the wicked; but to put a stop to the effusion of Christian blood, and, in His own good time, to restore us to the blessing of public peace. Since, then, I do not absent myself from Church out of any contempt for authority, or out of any vain presumption of my own goodness, as though I needed no solemn humiliation, and since I endeavour, according to my poor ability, to humble myself before God, and do earnestly desire that he may give this war such an issue as may most effectually conduce to His own glory, I hope it will not be charged upon me as a sin, but that it will please Almighty God, by some way or other, to satisfy my scruples, and to accept of my honest intentions, and to pardon my manifold infirmities."

It was probably a month or two before the birth of John that Samuel, the eldest boy, was placed at the school of Mr. John Holland, at Epworth, that there might be no break or loss of time in his preparation for Westminster School, and he was the only one of the brothers who received any other assistance on entering at a public school than that which could be given by his parents. John was probably a delicate babe, as he was baptized by his father when only a few hours old. He received the names of John Benjamin, after two baby boys (the tenth and eleventh children) who had preceded him and died in infancy. He was the only one of the family who had a second name, and it was never used, as he was simply called Jack, or Jacky, at home, and never signed himself otherwise than plain John.

CHAPTER VI.

TRIALS AND TROUBLES.

THE Rector of Epworth was not remarkably popular in his own parish; perhaps a very poor clergyman never is. He had great difficulty in repairing and rebuilding the part of his house that had been destroyed by fire; and when his son John was about seven or eight months old Mr. Wesley suffered a fresh loss, as his crop of flax was set fire to and demolished under circumstances that looked very much like incendiarism. He was also involved in a controversy that caused a deal of ill-feeling and bad blood in consequence of a letter, or rather pamphlet, which he had written in his youth, before he removed from London to South Ormsby, after attending a meeting of the Calves Head Club, a body of violent political Dissenters. Very much disgusted, Wesley went home, and, while his heart was hot within him, wrote off a long letter, and, after writing it, went to bed about five in the morning. A friend—probably his landlord, Robert Clavel, a bookseller and then Master of the Stationers' Company—came in while he slept, took possession of the MS., and, after reading, dissuaded Wesley from sending it to the person to

whom it was addressed, but contrived to keep it in his own hands. Twelve years afterwards, without the author's consent, he published it, under the title of "A Letter from a Country Divine to his Friend in London concerning the Education of Dissenters in their Private Academies in several parts of this Nation: Humbly offered to the consideration of the Grand Committee of Parliament for Religion now sitting." The temper of the House at that moment was one of extreme hostility to Dissenters and eagerness for their suppression.

The strife waxed quite furious as pamphlet succeeded pamphlet, and angry passions arose on all sides. Mr. Wesley's special antagonist was a Rev. Samuel Palmer, who, of course, had his adherents, and to such an extent did this wordy warfare go that Daniel De Foe, who took his full share in it, was committed to Newgate in July 1703. Mr. Wesley might, perhaps, have had the same fate had he lived in London; for so universal was the contention that, according to Dean Swift, the very cats and dogs discussed it, whilst fine ladies became such violent partizans of the Low and High Church parties "as to have no time to say their prayers." The Rector of Epworth, with his sharp tongue and hot temper, was far more likely to make enemies than friends at such a time, and no doubt a great deal of prejudice and ill-feeling was aroused against him in Lincolnshire, and his wife, as well as himself, had to bear the brunt of it.

It was a great trial to her to part with her first-born son, Samuel, who in 1704 was placed at Westminster, though she would have been the last woman to have stood in the way of her child's advancement. The boy went to London with his father, probably

riding before him on the same horse, and speedily won the favour of his new tutors and governors. He had also several friends in London; his paternal grandmother was still alive, and his uncle Matthew was a surgeon and apothecary in good circumstances, while another uncle, Timothy Wesley, and an aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Dyer, his father's only sister, also lived in the city. They all appear to have shown the boy the kindness to be expected by a nephew, and were most likely proud of his talents and rapid progress. His mother's anxious affection for him was so great that she devoted many hours, and also many sheets of foolscap, to writing him a series of letters, which were neither more nor less than treatises on Revelation and the law of reason. The first is dated March 11th, 1704, and is very long, and, to say the truth, dry, unrelieved by a scrap of home news or gossip. She, no doubt, in writing it and successive epistles, fulfilled what she felt to be a conscientious duty, but was aware that they were beyond the boy's comprehension at that period, as she told him to keep them till he was older and better able to understand them. A letter written towards the close of the summer seems more natural, and better suited to a school-boy's comprehension:—

"DEAR SAMMY, "Epworth, August 4th, 1704.

"I have been ill a great while, but am now, I thank God, well recovered. I thought to have been with you ere this, but I doubt if I shall see you this summer; therefore send me word particularly what you want.

"I would ere now have finished my discourse begun so long ago, if I had enjoyed more health; but I hope

I shall be able to finish it quickly, and then have you transcribe all your letters; for they may be more useful to you than they are now, because you will be better able to understand them. I shall be employing my thoughts on useful subjects for you when I have time, for I desire nothing in this world so much as to have my children well instructed in the principles of religion, that they may walk in the narrow way which alone leads to happiness. Particularly I am concerned for you, who were, even before your birth, dedicated to the service of the sanctuary, that you may be an ornament of that Church of which you are a member, and be instrumental (if God shall spare your life) in bringing many souls to Heaven. Take heed, therefore, in the first place, of your own, lest you yourself should be a castaway.

"You have had great advantages of education; God has entrusted you with many talents, such as health, strength, a comfortable subsistence hitherto, a good understanding, memory, &c.; and if any one be misemployed or not improved, they will certainly one day rise up in judgment against you.

"If I thought you would not make good use of instruction, and be the better for reproof, I would never write or speak a word to you more while I live, because I know whatever I could do would but tend to your greater condemnation. But I earnestly beg of God to give you His grace, and charge you, as you will answer for it at the last great day, that you carefully 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,' lest you should finally miscarry.

"You say you do not know how to keep a secret without sometimes telling a lie. I do not know what secrets you may have: I am sure nobody with you has

authority, however, to examine you; but if any should be so impertinently curious to do it, put them civilly off, if you can; but, if you cannot, resolutely tell them you will not satisfy their unreasonable desires; and be sure you never, to gain the favour of any, hazard losing the favour of God, which you will do if you speak falsely. To God's merciful protection I commit you.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

The next letter is not dated, but was written either during the same or the following year :—

"DEAR SAMMY,

"'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.'

"Examine well your heart, and observe its inclinations, particularly what the general temper of your mind is; for, let me tell you, it is not a fit of devotion now and then speaks a man a Christian, but it is a mind universally and generally disposed to all the duties of Christianity in their proper times, places, &c. For instance, in the morning or evening, or any other time when occasion is offered, a good Christian will be cheerfully disposed to retire from the world, that he may offer to his Creator his sacrifice of prayer and praise, and will account it his happiness, as well as his duty, so to do. When he is in the world, if he have business, he will follow it diligently, as knowing that he must account with God at night for what he has done in the day, and that God expects we should be faithful in our calling as well as devout in our closets. A Christian ought, and in the general does, converse with the world like a stranger in an inn: he will use

what is necessary for him, and cheerfully enjoy what he innocently can; but at the same time he knows it is but an inn, and he will be but little concerned with what he meets with there, because he takes it not for his home. The mind of a Christian should be always composed, temperate, free from all extremes of mirth or sadness, and always disposed to hear the still small voice of God's Holy Spirit, which will direct him what and how to act in all the occurrences of life, if in all his ways he acknowledge Him, and depend on His assistance. I cannot now stay to speak of your particular duties; I hope I shall in a short time send you what I designed.

"In the meantime, I beg of you, as one that has the greatest concern imaginable for your soul: I exhort you, as I am your faithful friend: and I command you, as I am your parent—to use your utmost diligence to make your calling and election sure, to be faithful to your God; and after I have said that, I need not bid you be industrious in your calling.

"Sammy, think of what I say, and the blessed God make you truly sensible of your duty to Him, and also to me. Renew your broken vows; if you have wasted or misemployed your time, take more care of what remains. If in anything you want counsel or advice, speak freely to me, and I will gladly assist you. I commit you to God's blessed protection.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

While the mother was writing to her absent boy, and keeping school with her other children, her husband was in his study writing rhyme as fast as it would flow from brain and pen. The Duke of Marlborough

was the hero of the hour, he had gained the battle of Blenheim in August 1704, and struck such terror into the French nation, as long found echo in the refrain *Marlbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre.* The nation delighted to honour the soldier-statesman, whose victory justified Queen Anne's confidence in him, both Houses of Parliament publicly thanked him, the City of London entertained him at a civic feast, the nation gave the Manor of Woodstock to him and his heirs for ever, and built for him that Blenheim Palace but just now despoiled of the art treasures he collected during his successful campaigns against the power of the *Grande Monarque.* Policy and patriotism both tended to inspire Mr. Wesley's muse, and he achieved a poem of five hundred and ninety-four lines, entitled, *Marlborough, or the Fate of Europe.* Archbishop Sharpe took poem and author under his fostering wing, and brought them under the Duke's notice. The least that the hero could do in return was to give Mr. Wesley the chaplaincy to Colonel Lepelle's regiment; and so pleased was another peer with the poem that he sent for its writer, and tried to procure him a prebend's stall. But, alas!

> The best laid schemes of mice and men
> Gang aft agley!

and the very means by which the poet-parson sought to serve his patrons and strengthen his position caused him to lose all that he had gained, as well as all he hoped for.

Early in May 1705, Mrs. Wesley gave birth to another son, but, between worry and weakness was unable to nurse it, so it was given into the charge of a woman who lived opposite the rectory. Epworth

was greatly disturbed on account of a contested election, and the street was so noisy one night that the nurse could not get to sleep till between one and two in the morning, and then slept so soundly that she overlaid and killed the child.

It was small wonder that Mrs. Wesley should have been worried both before and after her confinement; for Queen Anne had dissolved Parliament on the 5th of April, and it was well known that the contest between Whigs and Tories would be keen. No Romanist is so zealous or so bigoted as a "convert," and no Churchman is so "high" as one who was born and brought up in the bosom of Dissent. Thus it was perfectly natural that the Rector of Epworth should be a Tory of the first water, and throw all his weight and personal influence into the scale against Colonel Whichcott and Mr. Albert Bertie, the candidates who favoured Presbyterianism and had the Dissenters on their side, and who contested the representation of Lincolnshire with the previous members, Sir John Harold and "Champion" Dymoke. No doubt the Tory party, already friendly to him, would have remembered, and in some manner rewarded the zealous clergyman who had espoused their cause with all his might and main, had they been successful; but the Whigs carried the day, and he was consequently insulted by the mob, and was in some danger of maltreatment. His opponents speedily deprived him of his chaplaincy to Colonel Lepelle's regiment, so that he suffered in purse as well as in local popularity and reputation. His own account of the state of affairs is found in a letter he wrote to Archbishop Sharpe as soon as the hubbub had a little subsided.

"Epworth, June 7th, 1705.

"I went to Lincoln on Tuesday night, May 29th, and the Election began on Wednesday, 30th. A great part of the night our Isle people kept drumming, shouting, and firing of pistols and guns under the window where my wife lay, who had been brought to bed not three weeks. I had put the child to nurse over against my own house: the noise kept his nurse waking till one or two in the morning. Then they left off, and the nurse, being heavy to sleep, overlaid the child. She waked and finding it dead, ran over with it to my house, almost distracted, and calling my servants, threw it into their arms. They, as wise as she, ran up with it to my wife, and before she was well awake, threw it cold and dead into hers. She composed herself as well as she could, and that day got it buried.

"A clergyman met me in the Castle yard, and told me to withdraw, for the Isle men intended me a mischief. Another told me he had heard near twenty of them say, 'if they got me in the Castle yard, they would squeeze my guts out.' My servant had the same advice. I went by Gainsbro', and God preserved me.

"When they knew I was got home, they sent the drums and mobs, with guns, &c. as usual, to compliment me till midnight. One of them passing by on Friday evening, and seeing my children in the yard, cried out, 'O ye devils! we will come and turn ye all out of doors a-begging shortly.' God convert them and forgive them!

"All this, thank God, does not in the least sink my wife's spirits. For my own, I feel them disturbed and disordered; but for all that I am going on with

my reply to Palmer, which, whether I am in prison or out of it, I hope to get finished by the next session of Parliament, for I have no more regiments to lose.

"S. WESLEY."

But his worst trials were yet to come, and the manner in which they affected his wife and family are best told by himself. He was in debt to one of the people he had angered by his zeal at the recent Election, and, as he had not the wherewithal to pay, was speedily arrested, and sent to Lincoln jail. Here is the account given by his own hand to the Archbishop of York:—

"MY LORD, "Lincoln Castle, June 25th, 1705.

"Now I am at rest, for I am come to the haven where I've long expected to be. On Friday last (June 23rd), when I had been, in christening a child, at Epworth, I was arrested in my churchyard by one who had been my servant, and gathered my tithe last year, at the suit of one of Mr. Whichcott's relations and zealous friends (Mr. Pinder), according to their promise when they were in the Isle before the Election. The sum was not thirty pounds, but it was as good as five hundred. Now they knew the burning of my flax, my London journey, and their throwing me out of my regiment, had both sunk my credit and exhausted my money. My adversary was sent to where I was on the road, to meet me, that I might make some proposals to him. But all his answer (which I have by me) was, that I must immediately pay the whole sum or go to prison. Thither I went with no great concern for myself, and find much more civility and satisfaction here than in *brevibus gyaris* of my own Epworth.

I thank God, my wife was pretty well recovered, and churched some days before I was taken from her; and hope she 'll be able to look to my family, if they don't turn them out of doors, as they have often threatened to do. One of my biggest concerns was my being forced to leave my poor lambs in the midst of so many wolves. But the great Shepherd is able to provide for them, and to preserve them. My wife bears it with that courage which becomes her, and which I expected from her.

"I don't despair of doing some good here (and so long I shan't lose quite the end of living), and, it may be, do more in this parish than in my old one; for I have leave to read prayers every morning and afternoon here in the prison, and to preach once a Sunday, which I choose to do in the afternoon when there is no sermon at the minster. And I 'm getting acquainted with my brother jail-birds as fast as I can; and shall write to London, next post, to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, who, I hope, will send me some books to distribute amongst them. I should not write these things from a jail if I thought your Grace would believe me ever the less for my being here; where if I should lay my bones, I 'd bless God and pray for your Grace. Your Grace's very obliged and most humble servant,

"S. WESLEY."

Archbishop Sharpe's kind heart must have warmed to the man who could be so cheery in such a position, strive to help his "brother jail-birds" without repulsion, and look upon them as the flock committed to his charge for the time being. He immediately wrote him a sympathetic answer, told him the reports he had

heard, and asked for a statement of his affairs. Mr. Wesley was able to explain all satisfactorily, and, after detailing the falsehoods fabricated and spread by his opponents, adds :—

"My debts are about £300, which I have contracted by a series of misfortunes not unknown to your Grace. The falling of my parsonage barn, before I had recovered the taking my living; the burning great part of my dwelling-house about two years since, and all my flax last winter; the fall of my income nearly one half by the low price of grain; the almost entire failure of my flax this year, which used to be the better half of my revenue; with my numerous family; and the taking this regiment from me, which I had obtained with so much expense and trouble: have at last crushed me, though I struggled as long as I was able. Yet I hope to rise again, as I have always done when at the lowest; and I think I cannot be much lower now."

How Mrs. Wesley and the family fared at home, he tells in a letter written on the 12th of September :—

"Concerning the stabbing my cows in the night since I came hither, but a few weeks ago; and endeavouring thereby to starve my forlorn family in my absence, my cows being all dried by it, which was their chief subsistence; though, I hope, they had not the power to kill any of them outright.

"They found out a good expedient, after it was done, to turn it off, and divert the cry of the world against them; and it was to spread a report that my own brawn (boar) did this mischief, though at first they said my cows ran against a scythe and wounded themselves.

"As for the brawn, I think any impartial jury would

bring him in not guilty on hearing the evidence. There were three cows all wounded at the same time, one of them in three places; the biggest was a flesh wound, not slanting but directly in towards the heart, which it only missed by glancing outwards on the ribs. It was nine inches deep, whereas the brawn's tusks were hardly two inches long. All conclude that the work was done with a sword by the breadth and shape of the orifice. The same night the iron latch of my door was turned off, and the wood hacked in order to shoot back the lock, which nobody will think was with an intention to rob my family. My house-dog, who made a huge noise within doors, was sufficiently punished for his want of politics and *moderation*, for the next day but one his leg was almost chopped off by an unknown hand. 'Tis not everyone could bear these things; but, I bless God, my wife is less concerned with suffering them than I am in the writing, or than I believe your Grace will be in reading them. She is not what she is represented, any more than me. I believe it was this foul beast of a worse than Erymanthean boar, already mentioned, who fired my flax by rubbing his tusks against the wall; but that was no great matter, since it is now reported I had but five pounds loss."

Whether the Archbishop of York went to Epworth to see the state of affairs for himself, or whether Mrs. Wesley met him at Lincoln or elsewhere, during her husband's imprisonment, is not known, but certain it is that they had an interview, at which, among other questions, he asked, "Tell me, Mrs. Wesley, whether you ever really wanted bread?" "My Lord," said she, "I will freely own to your Grace that, strictly speaking, I never did want bread. But then I had

so much care to get it before it was eat, and to pay for it after, as has often made it very unpleasant to me. And, I think, to have bread on such terms is the next degree of wretchedness to having none at all." "You are certainly right," replied the Archbishop, who the next day gave the much-tried rector's wife a handsome present in money.

When Mr. Wesley had been in prison about three months, some of his clerical neighbours and some of his political friends assisted him by paying off about half his debts, and arranging for the liquidation of others. The joyful intelligence speedily produced a very grateful letter, in which he told the Archbishop what had occurred, and mentioned another touching manifestation of his wife's devotion :—

"My Lord, "Lincoln Castle, Sept. 17th, 1705.

"I am so full of God's mercies that neither my eyes nor heart can hold them. When I came hither my stock was but little above ten shillings, and my wife's at home scarce so much. She soon sent me her rings, because she had nothing else to relieve me with; but I returned them, and God soon provided for me. The most of those who have been my benefactors keep themselves concealed. But they are all known to Him who first put it into their hearts to show me so much kindness; and I beg your Grace to assist me to praise God for it, and to pray for His blessing upon them.

"This day I have received a letter from Mr. Hoar, that he has paid ninety-five pounds which he has received from me. He adds that 'a very great man has just sent him thirty pounds more'; he mentions not his name, though surely it must be my patron.

I find I walk a deal lighter, and hope I shall sleep better now these sums are paid, which will make almost half my debts. I am a bad beggar, and worse at returning formal thanks, but I can pray heartily for my benefactors; and I hope I shall do it while I live, and so long beg to be esteemed your Grace's most obliged and thankful, humble servant,

"SAM. WESLEY."

Shortly after this, Mr. Wesley was released and returned home, where he lived with a lighter heart in the bosom of his family, and engaged in a voluminous correspondence with his eldest son at Westminster School.

CHAPTER VII.

MATERNAL SOLICITUDE.

Of the next five or six months of Mrs. Wesley's life nothing is recorded; so they were probably passed in as much quietude and comfort as she had ever known. In May she wrote a letter to her eldest son, which shows that what we now call teetotalism was not among the austere virtues practised either in her own circle or that in which her boy lived.

"Dear Sammy, "Epworth, May 22nd, 1706.

"You cannot imagine how much your letter pleased me wherein you tell me of your fear lest you should offend God; though, if you state the case truly, I hope there is no danger of doing it in the matter you speak of.

"Proper drunkenness does, I think, certainly consist in drinking such a quantity of strong liquor as will intoxicate, and render the person incapable of using his reason with that strength and freedom as he can at other times. Now there are those that, by habitually drinking a great deal of such liquors, can hardly ever be guilty of proper drunkenness, because

never intoxicated; but this I look on as the highest kind of the sin of intemperance.

"But this is not, nor, I hope, ever will be your case. Two glasses cannot possibly hurt you, provided they contain no more than those commonly used; nor would I have you concerned though you find yourself warmed and cheerful after drinking them; for it is a necessary effect of such liquors to refresh and increase the spirits, and certainly the Divine Being will never be displeased at the innocent satisfaction of our regular appetites.

"But then have a care; stay at the third glass. Consider you have an obligation to strict temperance which all have not—I mean your designation to holy orders. Remember, under the Jewish economy it was ordained by God Himself that the snuffers of the Temple should be perfect gold; from which we may infer that those who are admitted to serve at the altar, a great part of whose office it is to reprove others, ought themselves to be most pure, and free from all scandalous actions; and if others are temperate, they ought to be abstemious.

"Here happened last Thursday a very sad accident. You may remember one Robert Darwin, of this town. This man was at Bawtry fair, where he got drunk; and riding homeward down a hill, his horse came down with him, and he, having no sense to guide himself, fell with his face to the ground and put his neck out of joint. Those with him immediately pulled it in again, and he lived till next day; but he never spake more. His face was torn all to pieces, one of his eyes beat out, and his under-lip cut off, his nose broken down, and in short he was one of the most dreadful examples of the severe justice of God that I

have known. I have been the more particular in this relation because this man, as he was one of the richest in the place, so he was one of the most implacable enemies your father had among his parishioners; one that insulted him most basely in his troubles, one that was the most ready to do him all the mischief he could, not to mention his affronts to me and the children, and how heartily he wished to see our ruin, which God permitted him not to see. This man and one more have been now cut off in the midst of their sins since your father's confinement. I pray God amend those that are left. I am, dear Sammy, your faithful friend and mother,

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

A few months later Mr. Wesley himself wrote to his boy a letter, which speaks so beautifully of the mother that no life of her would be complete which did not contain this tribute to her worth:—

"DEAR CHILD, "Epworth, September 1706.

"The second part of piety regards your duty towards your parents; towards whom I verily hope you will behave yourself as you ought, to the last moment of your life; disobedience to them being generally the mother of all other vices. . . . .

"God Himself was doubtless infinitely pleased and satisfied in giving being to His creatures; but I never could see any reason why this should lessen, or render unnecessary, their obligations to Him.

"But, further, if there were no obligation to our parents, on account of having received our being from them, but only subsequent benefits, as education and the like, it would follow that there is no manner

of duty towards an unkind and harsh parent, which I doubt is contrary to Scripture and to reason. Nay, supposing a parent was not able to provide for his child, but be forced to expose him in infancy, and leave him to the pity and charity of others, which you know is very common in the great city where you live; I say it would follow that, if such a child should afterwards accidentally come to know his parents, he would not be obliged to pay them any manner of duty; which is so false that I believe nature itself would teach him otherwise. I own that the obligations of benefits, good education, and the like, when added to that of nature, make the tie much stronger; and that those children whose parents either neglect them or give them ill examples, may be said, in one sense, to be but little beholden to them for bringing them into the world. But where these two are united we can hardly express gratitude enough for them.

"Perhaps you will think I am pleading my own cause; and so, indeed, I am in some measure, but it is the cause of my mother also; and even your own cause, if you should ever have children. And, indeed, that of nature and civil society, which would be dissolved, or exceedingly weakened, if this great foundation-stone should be removed.

"Yet, after all, though the tenderness and endearments between parents and children, which ill-natured people, who, perhaps, are not capable of them, may be apt to call 'fondness,' be a very sensible and natural pleasure, and such as I think mutual benefits only could hardly produce; I should think, if we come to weigh obligations, that if the parents after-care, in informing the mind of the child, and launching it out into the world, are perhaps

not without difficulty to themselves, in order to their living comfortable here and for ever—this must surely be owned to be much the greater and more valuable kindness; and consequently reason will sink the sail on this side, how heavy soever affection may hang on the other.

"Now on both these accounts you know what you owe to one of the best of mothers. Perhaps you may have read of one of the Ptolemies who chose the name of Philometer as a more glorious title than if he had assumed that of his predecessor Alexander. And it would be an honest and virtuous ambition in you to attempt to imitate him, for which you have so much reason; and often reflect on the tender and peculiar love your dear mother has always expressed towards you, the deep affliction both of body and mind which she underwent for you both before and after your birth; the particular care she took of your education when she struggled with so many pains and infirmities; and, above all, the wholesome and sweet motherly advice and counsel which she has often given you to fear God, to take care of your soul, as well as of your learning, to shun all vicious practices and bad examples (the doing which will equally tend to your reputation and your happiness) as well as those valuable letters she wrote you on the same subjects. You will, I verily believe, remember that these obligations of gratitude, love, and obedience, and the expressions of them, are not confined to your tender years, but must last to the very close of life, and even after that render her memory most dear and precious to you.

"You will not forget to evidence this by supporting and comforting her in her age, if it please God that she should ever attain to it (though I doubt she

will not), and doing nothing which may justly displease and grieve her, or show you unworthy of such a mother. You will endeavour to repay her prayers for you by doubling yours for her, as well as your fervency in them; and, above all things, to live such a virtuous and religious life that she may find that her care and love have not been lost upon you, but that we may all meet in heaven.

"In short, reverence and love her as much as you will, which I hope will be as much as you can. For though I should be jealous of any other rival in your heart, yet I will not be of her; the more duty you pay her, and the more frequently and kindly you write to her, the more you will please your affectionate father,

"SAMUEL WESLEY."

The tenderness of the father's nature is very touchingly shown in his whole series of letters to the "dear child" who was the first to leave home and go out into the world.

No exact date has ever been assigned to the birth of Martha, who was Mrs. Wesley's next baby, her eighth daughter and seventeenth child; but it must have been during the later months of 1706. She was an ailing and delicate infant, and from the time she began to take notice always reserved her brightest smiles for her little brother John, who was next to her in age, and about three years and a half old when she was born. Her mother's hands must have been very full during the first few months of Martha's life, though her elder girls were big enough to relieve her sometimes of the care of the child. Nevertheless, there was a break of several months in the correspon-

dence with her first-born; but in March 1707 she wrote him a long and earnest letter, only one passage of which need be quoted here :—

"I have a great and just desire that all your sisters and your brother should be saved as well as you; but I must own I think my concern for you is much the greatest. What, you, my son, you, who was once the son of my extremest sorrow, in your birth and in your infancy, who is now the son of my tenderest love, my friend, in whom is my inexpressible delight, my future hope of happiness in this world, for whom I weep and pray in my retirements from the world, when no mortal knows the agonies of my soul on your account, no eye sees my tears, which are only beheld by that Father of spirits of whom I so importunately beg grace for you that I hope I may at last be heard, —is it possible that you should be damned? O that it were impossible! Indeed, I think I could almost wish myself accursed, so I were sure of your salvation. But still I hope, still I would fain persuade myself that a child for whom so many prayers have been offered to Heaven will not at last miscarry."

Only a few weeks later Mrs. Wesley's heart, as well as that of her husband, was rejoiced by an official intimation that "Sammy" would probably be elected to one of the King's Scholarships at Westminster, which would enable him to go to Oxford. This drew forth another epistle from the wise yet anxious mother.

"DEAR SAMMY, "Epworth, May 7th, 1707.

"Though I wrote so lately, yet, having received advice that your election is so much sooner than I expected, I take this opportunity to advise you about it.

"The eternal, ever-blessed God, that at first created all things by His almighty power, and that does whatever pleases Him, as well among the inhabitants of earth as in the armies of heaven, you know is the only Disposer of events; and, therefore, I would by all means persuade you solemnly to set apart some portion of time (on the Sabbath if you can) to beg His more especial direction and assistance upon a business on which a great part of your future prosperity may depend. I would have you, in the first place, humbly to acknowledge and bewail all the errors of your past life, as far as you can remember them; and for those that have escaped your memory pray, as David did, that God would cleanse you from your secret faults.

"Then proceed to praise Him for all the mercies which you can remember you have received from His divine goodness; and then go on to beg His favour in this great affair, and do all this in the name and through the mediation of the blessed Jesus.

"Sammy, do not deceive yourself. Man is not to be depended on; God is all in all. Those whom He blesses shall be blessed indeed. When you have done this, entirely resign yourself and all your fortunes to the Almighty God; nor be too careful about your being elected, nor troubled if disappointed.

"If you can possibly, set apart the hours of Sunday, in the afternoon, from four to six, for this employment, which time I have also determined to the same work. May that Infinite Being, whose we are, and whom I hope we endeavour to serve and love, accept and bless us.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

The lad was finally elected, and in some sort entered

on a new life; that is to say, he had fresh duties and a wider sphere. He probably had a good voice, and some knowledge of music, or he would not have been chosen for a King's Scholar, as boys occupying that position are almost always choristers at the Chapel Royal. This brings them into notice, and they receive many invitations into musical and aristocratic society. Mrs. Wesley was terribly afraid that her son might become of the world, worldly, and wrote to warn and exhort him :—

"DEAR SAMMY, "Epworth, August 30th, 1707.

"Prithee how do you do in the midst of so much company and business, to preserve your mind in any temper fit for the service of God? I am sadly afraid lest you should neglect your duty towards Him. Take care of the world, lest it unawares steal away your heart, and so make you prove false to those vows and obligations which you have laid upon yourself, in the covenant you personally made with the ever blessed Trinity, before your reception of the Holy Communion. Have you ever received the Sacrament at London? If not, consider what has been the cause of your neglect, and embrace the next opportunity.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

In October Mrs. Wesley's motherly sympathies were called forth by hearing that her boy was laid up with rheumatism; but by the end of November he had recovered, and she wrote him a very long letter, chiefly theological, but containing some plain words on the temptations likely to assail a youth on the threshold of manhood. The opening and closing paragraphs are alone suited to these pages :—

"Epworth,

"DEAR SAMMY, November 27th, 1707.

"We both complain of not having often heard from each other. What foundation there is for complaints on your side I know not; but I am apt to suspect you have written more letters to me than I have received, for you lately sent one that never came to my hands, though I was advertised of some part of the contents of it, as of you having received the Sacrament, at which I was greatly pleased, and that you desire some directions how to resist temptations, and some particular advice how to prepare for the reception of the blessed Communion.

* * * * *

"Of temperance in recreation I shall say little. I do not know what time is assigned you for it, and I think your health and studies require that you should take a pretty deal of exercise. You know whether your heart be too much set upon it. If it be, I will tell you what rule I observed in the same case when I was young and too much addicted to childish diversions, which was this: never to spend more time in any matter of recreation in one day than I spent in private religious duties. I leave it to your consideration whether this is practicable by you or not. I think it is.

"I am so ill, and have with so much pain written this long letter, that I gladly hasten to a conclusion, and shall leave your request about the Sacrament unanswered till I hear from you; and then, if I am in a condition to write, I will gladly assist you as well as I can. May God, in His infinite mercy, direct you in all things.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

About three weeks after the writing of this letter Mrs. Wesley was prematurely confined of her eighteenth child, Charles, who became the sweet singer of Methodism. This was on December 18th, 1707. The babe was a frail and almost inanimate little creature, and neither cried nor opened his eyes for several weeks. He was too fragile even to be dressed, and was kept wrapped up in wool for some time. When the moment arrived at which he should have come into the world if all had been well with his mother, he opened his eyes and cried, and thenceforth throve tolerably. He was somewhat delicate as a youth and young man, but lived to a good old age. In these circumstances Mrs. Wesley could not be expected to write letters, and there is a long gap in her correspondence with Samuel, which the father did his best to fill up.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIRE AND PERIL.

CHARLES WESLEY'S infancy was longer than that of most children, and he was still a helpless babe when, on the night of the 9th of February 1709, Epworth Rectory was burnt down. Mrs. Wesley wrote a short account of this calamity to her eldest son at Westminster five days afterwards, in fact as soon as she had found shelter, rest, and clothing.

"DEAR SAMMY, "Epworth, Feb. 14th, 1708–9.

"When I received your letter, wherein you complained of want of shirts, I little thought that in so short a space we should all be reduced to the same and indeed a worse condition. I suppose you have already heard of the firing of our house, by what accident we cannot imagine; but the fire broke out about eleven or twelve o'clock at night, we being all in bed, nor did we perceive it till the roof of the corn-chamber was burnt through, and the fire fell upon your sister Hetty's bed, which stood in the little room joining upon it. She awaked, and immediately ran to call your father who lay in the red chamber; for, I being ill, he was forced to lie from me. He says he

heard some crying 'Fire!' in the street before, but did not apprehend where it was till he opened his door; he called at our chamber, and bade us all shift for life, for the roof was falling fast, and nothing but the thin wall kept the fire from the staircase.

"We had no time to take our clothes, but ran all naked. I called to Betty to bring the children out of the nursery; she took up Patty, and left Jacky to follow her, but he, going to the door and seeing all on fire, ran back again. We got the street door open, but the wind drove the flame with such violence that none could stand against it. I tried thrice to break through, but was driven back. I made another attempt and waded through the fire, which did me no other hurt than to scorch my legs and face. When I was in the yard, I looked about for your father and the children; but, seeing none, concluded them all lost. But, I thank God, I was mistaken. Your father carried sister Emily, Sukey, and Patty into the garden; then missing Jacky, he ran back into the house to see if he could save him. He heard him miserably crying out in the nursery, and attempted several times to get up-stairs, but was beat back by the flames; then he thought him lost, and commended his soul to God, and went to look after the rest. The child climbed up to the window and called out to them in the yard; they got up to the casement and pulled him out just as the roof fell into the chamber. Harry broke the glass of the parlour window and threw out your sisters Matty and Hetty; and so, by God's great mercy, we all escaped. Do not be discouraged, God will provide for you.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

One can imagine how rapidly the fire spread through a house built only of timber and plaster, with a thatched roof, and how difficult it was to get out with life and limb safe, without stopping for clothes or wraps. A day or two afterwards Mr. Wesley, who apparently was unaware that his wife had summoned up strength and energy to write to her eldest boy at Westminster, wrote a more detailed account to the Duke of Buckingham:—

"Righteous is the Lord, and just in all His judgments! I am grieved that I must write what will, I doubt, afflict your Grace, concerning your still unfortunate servant. I think I am enough recollected to give a tolerable account of it.

"On Wednesday last, at half an hour after eleven at night, in a quarter of an hour's time or less, my house at Epworth was burnt down to the ground——I hope, by accident, but God knows all. We had been brewing, but had done all; every spark of fire quenched before five o'clock that evening—at least six hours before the house was on fire. Perhaps the chimney above might take fire (though it had been swept not long since) and break through into the thatch. Yet it is strange I should neither see nor smell anything of it, having been in my study in that part of the house till above half an hour after ten. Then I locked the doors of that part of the house where my wheat and other corn lay, which was threshed, and went to bed.

"The servants had not been in bed a quarter of an hour when the fire began. My wife being near her time, and very weak, I lay in the next chamber. A little after eleven I heard 'Fire!' cried in the street, next to which I lay. If I had been in my own cham-

ber as usual, we had all been lost. I threw myself out of bed, got on my waistcoat and nightgown, and looked out of the window; saw the reflection of the flame, but knew not where it was; ran to my wife's chamber with one stocking on, and my breeches in my hand; would have broken open the door, which was bolted within, but could not. My two eldest children (Susanna and Emilia) were with her. They rose, and ran towards the staircase, to raise the rest of the house. Then I saw it was our own house, all in a light blaze, and nothing but a door between the flame and the staircase.

"I ran back to my wife, who by this time had got out of bed naked and opened the door. I bade her fly for her life. We had a little silver and some gold —about £20. She would have stayed for it, but I pushed her out; got her and my two eldest children down-stairs (where two of the servants were now got) and asked for the keys. They knew nothing of them. I ran up-stairs and found them, came down and opened the street door. The thatch was fallen in all on fire. The north-east wind drove all the sheets of flame in my face, as if reverberated in a lamp. I got twice on the steps, and was drove down again. I ran to the garden door and opened it. The fire was there more moderate. I bade them all follow but found only two with me, and the maid with another (Charles) in her arms that cannot go, but all naked. I ran with them to my house of office in the garden, out of the reach of the flames; put the least in the other's lap; and, not finding my wife follow me, ran back into the house to seek her. The servants and two of the children were got out at the window. In the kitchen I found my eldest daughter, naked,

and asked her for her mother. She could not tell me where she was. I took her up and carried her to the rest in the garden; came in the second time and ran up-stairs, the flame breaking through the wall at the staircase; thought all my children were safe, and hoped my wife was some way got out. I then remembered my books, and felt in my pocket for the key of the chamber which led to my study. I could not find the key, though I searched a second time. Had I opened that door, I must have perished.

"I ran down, and went to my children in the garden, to help them over the wall. When I was without, I heard one of my poor lambs, left still above stairs, about six years old, cry out dismally, 'Help me!' I ran in again to go up-stairs, but the staircase was now all afire. I tried to force up through it a second time, holding my breeches over my head, but the stream of fire beat me down. I thought I had done my duty; went out of the house to that part of my family I had saved, in the garden, with the killing cry of my child in my ears. I made them all kneel down, and we prayed God to receive his soul.

"I tried to break down the pales, and get my children over into the street, but could not; then went under the flame, and got them over the wall. Now I put on my breeches and leaped after them. One of my maid-servants that had brought out the least child, got out much at the same time. She was saluted with a hearty curse by one of the neighbours, and told that we had fired the house ourselves, the second time, on purpose. I ran about inquiring for my wife and other children; met the chief man and chief constable of the town going from my house, not towards it to help me. I took him by the hand

and said, 'God's will be done!' His answer was: 'Will you never have done your tricks? You fired your house once before; did you not get enough by it then, that you have done it again?' This was cold comfort. I said 'God forgive you! I find you are chief man still.' But I had a little better soon after, hearing that my wife was saved, and then I fell on mother earth and blessed God. I went to her. She was alive, and could just speak. She thought I had perished, and so did all the rest, not having seen me nor any share of eight children for a quarter of an hour; and by this time all the chambers and everything was reduced to ashes, for the fire was stronger than a furnace, the violent wind beating it down on the house. She told me afterwards how she escaped. When I went first to open the back door she endeavoured to force through the fire at the fore door, but was struck back twice to the ground. She thought to have died there, but prayed to Christ to help her. She found new strength, got up alone, and waded through two or three yards of flame, the fire on the ground being up to her knees. She had nothing on but her shoes and a wrapping gown and one coat on her arm. This she wrapped about her breast, and got safe through into the yard, but no soul yet to help her. She never looked up or spake till I came, only when they brought her last child to her bade them lay it on the bed. This was the lad whom I heard cry in the house, but God saved him almost by a miracle. He only was forgot by the servants in the hurry. He ran to the window towards the yard, stood upon a chair, and cried for help. There were now a few people gathered, one of whom, who loves me, helped up another to the window. The child seeing a man come into the

window, was frightened, and ran away to get to his mother's chamber. He could not open the door, so ran back again. The man was fallen down from the window, and all the bed and hangings in the room where he was were blazing. They helped up the man the second time, and poor Jacky leaped into his arms and was saved. I could not believe it till I had kissed him two or three times. My wife then said unto me, 'Are your books safe?' I told her it was not much now she and all the rest were preserved, for we lost not one soul, though I escaped with the skin of my teeth. A little lumber was saved below stairs, but not one rag or leaf above. We found some of the silver in a lump, which I shall send up to Mr. Hoare to sell for me.

"Mr. Smith of Gainsborough, and others, have sent for some of my children. I have left my wife at Epworth, trembling; but hope God will preserve her, and fear not but He will provide for us. I want nothing, having above half my barley saved in my barns unthreshed. I had finished my alterations in the *Life of Christ* a little while since, and transcribed three copies of it. But all is lost. God be praised!

"I know not how to write to my poor boy (Samuel) about it; but I must, or else he will think we are all lost. Can your Grace forgive this? I hope my wife will recover and not miscarry, but God will give me my nineteenth child. She has burnt her legs, but they mend. When I came to her, her lips were black. I did not know her. Some of the children are a little burnt, but not hurt or disfigured. I only got a small blister on my hand. The neighbours send us clothes, for it is cold without them.

"SAMUEL WESLEY."

The rector wrote pretty cheerfully considering how great was the trial. The books which he had carefully collected one or two at a time, and paid for with money which could only be spared by self-denial, were only a little less dear than his children, and his collection of Hebrew poetry and hymns was of considerable value. A large number of letters from friends and literary connections were also consumed, as well as papers connected with the Annesley family and the parish registers. One item alone was left, and that was a hymn of six verses, written by Mr. Wesley, and set to music by, as is supposed, either Purcell or Dr. Blow. It is incorporated in the Methodist hymn-book, and is the only specimen of the elder Mr. Wesley's versification it contains: the opening words are "Behold the Saviour of Mankind." Then there was the well-worn though useful furniture, and the clothes of all, the little store of money and the indispensable comforts prepared for the expected babe, all were swept away in a few minutes. The children were scattered; but Emilia, the eldest girl, who was about seventeen, remained to take care of her mother in the lodgings where she and her parents were domiciled at Epworth, and became her patient and cheerful nurse and constant companion for nearly a year. She was an unusually well-educated girl, having shared the lessons given by the father to Samuel as long as he remained at home, and it was intended that she should earn her own living as soon as she was old enough, as a governess. She loved her mother with the adoring fondness sometimes seen in an eldest daughter who is old enough to sympathise with her parent's trials, and regarded the months in which she had her almost to herself

as one of the happiest times of her life. All day long she was busy, but in the evening she read either aloud or to herself, and was very happy and contented.

In March 1709, about a month after the fire, Kezia was born, and proved to be the last of Mrs. Wesley's children. That she should be ailing and delicate was only to be expected, considering what her mother, who was just forty years of age, had gone through.

Five months later Mrs. Wesley, at the request of a neighbouring clergyman, wrote to him a little further account of the fire :—

"Epworth, August 24th, 1709.

"On Wednesday night, February 9th, between the hours of eleven and twelve, some sparks fell from the roof of our house upon one of the children's feet. She immediately ran to our chamber and called us. Mr. Wesley, hearing a cry of fire in the street, started up (as I was very ill he lay in a separate room from me), and opening his door, found the fire was in his own house. He immediately came to my room, and bid me and my eldest daughters rise quickly and shift for ourselves. Then he ran and burst open the nursery-door, and called to the maid to bring out the children. The two little ones were in the bed with her; the three others in another bed. She snatched up the youngest, and bid the rest follow, which the three elder did. When we were got into the hall, and were surrounded with flames, Mr. Wesley found he had left the keys of the doors above-stairs. He ran up and recovered them a minute before the staircase took fire. When we opened the street-door the strong north-east wind drove the flames in with such

violence that none could stand against them. But some of our children got out through the windows, the rest through a little door into the garden. I was not in a condition to climb up to the windows, neither could I get to the garden door. I endeavoured three times to force my passage through the street-door, but was as often beat back by the fury of the flames. In this distress I besought our blessed Saviour for help, and then waded through the fire, naked as I was, which did me no further harm than a little scorching my hands and face. When Mr. Wesley had seen the other children safe, he heard the child in the nursery cry. He attempted to go up the stairs, but they were all on fire, and would not bear his weight. Finding it impossible to give any help, he kneeled down in the hall and recommended the soul of the child to God.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

Man's extremity is God's opportunity; and John Wesley believed that it was at the moment when his father was thus recommending his spirit to the God who gave it, that he awoke, and not before; adding: "I did not cry, as they imagined, unless it was afterwards. I remember all the circumstances as distinctly as though it were but yesterday. Seeing the room was very light, I called to the maid to take me up. But none answering, I put my head out of the curtains and saw streaks of fire on the top of the room. I got up and ran to the door, but could get no further, all beyond it being in a blaze. I then climbed up on the chest which stood near the window; one in the yard saw me, and proposed running to fetch a ladder. Another answered, 'There will not be time;

but I have thought of another experiment. Here, I will fix myself against the wall, lift a light man and set him upon my shoulders.' They did so, and he took me out of the window. Just then the whole roof fell in; but it fell inward, or we had all been crushed at once. When they brought me into the house where my father was he cried out: 'Come, neighbours, let us kneel down; let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children; let the house go. I am rich enough.' The next day, as he was walking in the garden and surveying the ruins of the house, he picked up part of a leaf of his Polyglot Bible, on which just these words were legible: *Vade: vende omnia quo habes; et attolle crucem, et sequere me.*"

There are not many discrepancies in the three accounts; for father, mother, and son were all clear-headed people, and John Wesley's mind throughout life was singularly free from anything like "muddle." In fact the organization of Methodism is sufficient proof of the accuracy with which his brain worked. He neither forgot nor fancied, hasted nor rested, but did everything with such well-aimed precision that his rules and regulations were living forces instead of dry bones.

The fire made more change in the lives of Susanna and Hetty (Mehetabel) than in those of the other children, for their uncles Samuel Annesley and Matthew Wesley sent for them to come and stay in London; and then was laid the foundation of a very warm attachment between the latter and his clever, sprightly nieces. It does not appear, however, that they were able to give much information of what followed the calamity to their brother at Westminster, for in June he wrote the following letter to his mother:—

"St. Peter's College, Westminster,
"MADAM, June 9th, 1709.

"Had not my grandmother told me, the last time I was there, that you were near lying-in, at which time I thought it would be in vain to write what you would not be able to read, I had sent you letters over and over again before this. I beg, therefore, you will not impute it to my negligence, which sure I can never be guilty of, while I enjoy what you gave me—life. My father lets me be in profound ignorance as to your circumstances at Epworth, and I have not heard a word from the country since the first letter you sent me after the fire; so that I am quite ashamed to go to any of my relations for fear of being jeered out of my life. They ask me whether my father intends to leave Epworth. Whether he is rebuilding his house? Whether any contributions are to be expected? What was the lost (last?) child, a boy or a girl? What was its name? Whether my father has lost all his books and papers? If nothing was saved? To all of which I am forced to answer, 'I can't tell, I don't know; I've not heard.' I have asked my father some of these questions, but am still an ignoramus. If you think my 'Cowley' and 'Hudibras' worth accepting, I shall be very glad to send them to my mother, who gave them to me. I hope you are all well, as all are in town.

"Your most affectionate son,

"SAM WESLEY."

As the mother, just then, had more time than usual on her hands, it is more than probable that she answered her boy's questions, though her letter has

not been preserved. She wrote to him again in the autumn of the same year, as follows:—

"Epworth, October 1709.

"My dear Sammy,

"I hope that you retain the impressions of your education, nor have forgot that the vows of God are upon you. You know that the first-fruits are Heaven's by an unalienable right, and that, as your parents devoted you to the service of the altar, so you yourself made it your choice when your father was offered another way of life for you. But have you duly considered what such a choice and such a dedication imports? Consider well what separation from the world, what purity, what devotion, what exemplary virtue, are required in those who are to guide others to glory! I say exemplary; for low, common degrees of piety are not sufficient for those of the sacred function. You must not think to live like the rest of the world; your light must so shine before men that they may see your good works, and thereby be led to glorify your Father which is in heaven. For my part, I cannot see with what face clergymen can reprove sinners, or exhort men to lead a good life, when they themselves indulge their own corrupt inclinations, and by their practice contradict their doctrine. If the Holy Jesus be indeed their Master, and they are really His ambassadors, surely it becomes them to live like His disciples; and, if they do not, what a sad account must they give of their stewardship!

I would advise you, as much as possible in your present circumstances, to throw your business into a certain method, by which means you will learn to improve every precious moment, and find an unspeak-

able facility in the performance of your respective duties. Begin and end the day with Him who is the Alpha and Omega, and if you really experience what it is to love God, you will redeem all the time you can for His more immediate service. I will tell you what rule I used to observe when I was in my father's house, and had as little, if not less liberty than you have now. I used to allow myself as much time for recreation as I spent in private devotion; not that I always spent so much, but I gave myself leave to go so far but no farther. So in all things else, appoint so much time for sleep, eating, company, &c.; but, above all things, my dear Sammy, I command you, I beg, I beseech you, to be very strict in observing the Lord's Day. In all things endeavour to act on principle, and do not live like the rest of mankind, who pass through the world like straws upon a river, which are carried which way the stream or wind drives them. Often put this question to yourself: Why do I this or that? Why do I pray, read, study, or use devotion, &c.? By which means you will come to such a steadiness and consistency in your words and actions as becomes a reasonable creature and a good Christian.

"Your affectionate mother,

"SUS. WESLEY."

Truly the mother set a high ideal before her son; and though *he* did not prove to be the genius and divine of the family, she had her reward, in the way in which most human wishes are fulfilled. Samuel was always a good son and exemplary Christian, but it was John who became an apostle and a power in the world. Not the identical thing she desired from

the very birth of her first man-child, and before it, but a better blessing still.

Mrs. Wesley's letters to her daughters are not very numerous, as of course they were at home with her, while the boys were away at school and college. She, however, wrote a very long one, in which was embodied an exposition of the Apostle's Creed, to Susanna while in London, during the year that followed the fire:—

"Epworth,

"DEAR SUKEY, January 13th, 1709–10.

"Since our misfortunes have separated us from each other, and we can no longer enjoy the opportunities we once had of conversing together, I can no other way discharge the duty of a parent, or comply with my inclination of doing you all the good I can but in writing.

"You know very well how I love you. I love your body, and do earnestly beseech Almighty God to bless it with health, and all things necessary for its comfort and support in this world. But my tenderest regard is for your immortal soul, and for its spiritual happiness, which regard I cannot better express than by endeavouring to instil into your mind those principles of knowledge and virtue that are absolutely necessary in order to your leading a good life here, which is the only thing that can infallibly secure your happiness hereafter.

"The main thing which is now to be done is to lay a good foundation, that you may act upon principles, and be always able to satisfy yourself and give a reason to others of the faith that is in you; for anyone who makes a profession of religion only because

it is the custom of the country in which they live, or because their parents do so, or their worldly interest is thereby secured or advanced, will never be able to stand in the day of temptation, nor shall they ever enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And though, perhaps, you cannot at present comprehend all I shall say, yet keep this letter by you, and as you grow in years your reason and judgment will improve, and you will obtain a more clear understanding in all things.

"You have already been instructed in some of the first principles of religion: that there is one, and but one God; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that this God ought to be worshipped. You have learned some prayers, your creed and catechism, in which is briefly comprehended your duty to God, yourself, and your neighbour. But, Sukey, it is not learning these things by heart, nor your saying a few prayers morning and night, that will bring you to heaven; you must understand what you say, and you must practise what you know; and since knowledge is requisite in order to practice, I shall endeavour, after as plain a manner as I can, to instruct you in some of those fundamental points which are most necessary to be known, and most easy to be understood. And I earnestly beseech the great Father of spirits to guide your mind into the way of truth.

* * * * *

"I cannot tell whether you have ever seriously considered the lost and miserable condition you are in by nature. If you have not, it is high time to begin to do it; and I shall earnestly beseech the Almighty

to enlighten your mind, to renew and sanctify you by His Holy Spirit, that you may be His child by adoption here, and an heir of His blessed kingdom hereafter."

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOME REBUILT.

THE Rector of Epworth was not a man to do things by halves, and, even if he had been, the repair or rebuilding of a parsonage is a matter that comes under the notice of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and must be done in what they consider a suitable style. Queen Anne's reign was an era when red brick was generally used for all new buildings of any pretensions, if we may go by the quaint, substantial houses that in many English cities date from her time.

The foundations of the old abode were dug up, and bricks were used for the walls instead of the former lath and plaster. The house was probably not more commodious than its predecessor, it would have been a work of supererogation to have made it so; but the old parsonage, with its five bays, had contained ample accommodation for a large family, and the new one was quite equal to it. There were three stories; that is to say, dining-room, parlour, study, and domestic offices on the ground floor, bed-rooms above, and a large garret or loft over all. The house still stands, and when a few months ago its walls were stripped for

the purpose of being repapered, behold! there came to light, in one room, in Mrs. Wesley's own handwriting, the names, ages, and measurements of height of all the children alive when the family took possession of the new house. Doubtless those who had been away were much grown, and it was a matter of natural parental interest to see exactly their respective heights. Many fathers and mothers have taken such measures of their boys and girls, and delighted in comparing notes of their stature at various ages.

Fruit trees were planted to run over the front and back of the new parsonage; mulberry, cherry, and pear-trees in the garden, and walnuts in the adjoining field or croft. This was indeed planting for posterity! The re-building seems to have been completed within the year, and cost four hundred pounds, a terrible sum of money for a poor clergyman who had no fire-insurance company to help him. Then the children were collected, and the mother once more resumed her daily work of teaching them. It was not all such plain sailing as before they had been scattered abroad; she found many bad habits to correct, and, besides, the discipline of home was broken through, and its bonds had to be tightened and perhaps somewhat strained. Then it was that she began the custom of singing a hymn or psalm before beginning lessons in the morning or after leaving them off in the afternoon; and then, too, she appears to have used, as text-books for religious instruction, the expositions of the principles of revealed religion, and of the being and perfections of God, which she had written for her eldest son soon after he went to Westminster, and those of the Apostle's Creed and Ten Commandments, which she had prepared during the year of comparative leisure

she spent in lodgings while the parsonage was being rebuilt.

The Rector was away during a great part of the first year spent by his wife and family in the new house. His busy brain was never allowed to rust or vegetate, and he was, of course, glad to earn whatever he could by his pen.

Events of considerable political importance were taking place in London during 1709, and, from various causes, the Duke of Marlborough was losing his popularity. The nation was getting tired of the war with France, which Dean Swift declared had cost "six millions of supplies and almost fifty millions of debt"; and Marlborough, who had long been in the position of a "Tory man bringing in Whig measures," as Lord Beaconsfield puts it, was accused of continuing the struggle with Louis Quatorze for his own enrichment and aggrandisement. The Tories regarded him as a traitor to his party, and aggravated every little incident that could strengthen their own power. Dr. Henry Sacheverell, rector of St. Saviour, Southwark, was a popular and prominent High Church clergyman of the day, narrow-minded and violent, especially against Dissenters. At the summer assizes at Derby he preached a very exciting sermon before the judges, and on the 5th of November, in St. Paul's Cathedral, he declaimed in a most inflammatory manner against toleration and the Dissenters, who were evidently his pet aversion; declared that the Church was in danger from avowed enemies and false friends; and altogether raised such a commotion that his sermons, which were published under the protection of the Lord Mayor and were widely circulated, were complained of to the House of Commons as containing positions contrary

to the principles of the Revolution, the Government, and the Protestant succession. The two sermons, which contained a great deal of abuse of prominent personages, were voted scandalous and seditious libels; and Dr. Sacheverell, being brought to the bar of the House, acknowledged the authorship of them, and was committed to the custody of the deputy usher of the black rod, bail being refused at first, but afterwards allowed. The trial came on in Westminster Hall on the 27th of February, 1710, and lasted three weeks, Queen Anne coming every day in a sedan-chair as a spectator, and the populace thronging the hall and its approaches, and behaving as though Sacheverell were a saint and martyr. The excitement was so great that it culminated in a riot, during which a good deal of mischief was done, in consequence of which some ring-leaders were arrested and, afterwards, tried for high treason. The Queen, in her heart, favoured the Doctor; her chaplains extolled him as the champion of the Church; and when his counsel had finished the defence, he himself rose and delivered a speech, in which he solemnly justified his intentions towards Her Majesty and her Government, and spoke in most respectful terms of the Revolution and the Protestant succession. He maintained the doctrine of non-resistance in all circumstances as a maxim of the Church of England, and by many touches of pathos endeavoured to excite the compassion of the audience. That this speech was the composition of the Rector of Epworth seems to have been universally recognised in Lincolnshire, and, in after years, John Wesley declared positively that his father was its author. Probably he was paid, in some shape or form, for preparing it, although, perhaps, like an old war-horse, he scented

the battle from afar and did his share of the fighting gratuitously.

Having proved himself so good a spokesman for his party, the clergy of the diocese once more chose him as their representative in Convocation; so he journeyed to London in November 1710, ill as he could afford it, and did so seven winters successively, while his family at home were in want of clothes, food, and, in fact, of all the necessaries of life. Mrs. Wesley suffered a great deal from weakness, and possibly from the damp inevitable in a house inhabited before it was properly seasoned; and, according to her daughter Emilia, from insufficient nourishment and clothing. No doubt the husband and father hoped that, being in London, he should find literary employment, and he might reasonably have looked for some pecuniary help from the party he so zealously served.

In spite of weakness and weariness the mother struggled on, and, in proportion as her family's little comforts in this world decreased, her anxiety for their happiness in a future state grew and strengthened. In Mr. Wesley's absence Emilia, probably rummaging in his study for a book to read, met with the account of a Danish mission to Tranquebar, written by the two devoted and saintly men who had worked in it. Missions were then uncommon, and the story brought with it the thrill of a new interest, and diverted the mother's thoughts from her own surroundings. Emilia, who was a good reader—her brother John said the best he had ever heard, when the book happened to be Milton's poems — read it aloud, and Mrs. Wesley herself told her husband how it affected her.

"Soon after you went to London," she wrote to him, "Emilia found in your study the account of

the Danish missionaries, which, having never seen, I desired her to read to me. I was never, I think, more affected with anything than with the relation of their travels, and was exceedingly pleased with the noble design they were engaged in. Their labours refreshed my soul beyond measure, and I could not forbear spending a good part of that evening in praising and adoring the Divine goodness for inspiring those good men with such ardent zeal for His glory. For some days I could think and speak of little else. It then came into my mind—though I am not a man nor a minister of the Gospel, yet if I were inspired with a true zeal for His glory, and really desired the salvation of souls—I might do more than I do. I thought I might live in a more exemplary manner, I might pray more for the people, and speak with more warmth to those with whom I have opportunity of conversing. However, I resolved to begin with my own children, and accordingly I proposed and observed the following method: I take such a proportion of time as I can best spare every night to discourse with each child by itself, on something that relates to its principal (personal?) concerns. On Monday I talk with Molly, on Tuesday with Hetty, Wednesday with Nancy, Thursday with Jacky, Friday with Patty, Saturday with Charles; and with Emily and Sukey together on Sunday."

The result of her conversations with "Jacky" is recorded in her Private Meditations under the heading "Son John," and dated May 17th, 1711. So deeply were the child's religious feelings worked upon that his father allowed him to become a communicant when only eight years old; but the wisdom of thus exciting a boy into precocious devotion at a time when nature

intends him to be simply a healthy young animal, may be questioned. In this instance the reaction set in soon after he left home for school, and from the age of eleven to that of twenty-two he appears to have been like other youths, and neither to have made any special profession of religion, nor to have contemplated going into the Church.

There is no doubt that from the time of settling down in the new rectory and gathering together of her flock, Mrs. Wesley and her husband, when at home, concentrated their attention on John's education, that he might start fairly and be a credit to himself and them on entering a public school. He was a disputatious youngster, given to very cool deliberation and much argument. One of his biographers says that if asked between meals whether he would take a piece of bread or fruit he would answer, with cool unconcern, "I thank you, I will think of it"; but this is somewhat at variance with the mother's accepted rule that no child was permitted to eat anything between meals. His impetuous father was on one occasion so far provoked with the boy that he exclaimed: "Child, you think to carry everything by dint of argument; but you will find how little is ever done in the world by close reasoning." This characteristic love of argument, which always makes a child trying to teach and manage, is further illustrated by Mr. Wesley's jocosely affectionate remark to his wife: "I profess, sweetheart, I think our Jack would not attend to the most pressing necessities of nature, unless he could give a reason for it."

But whatever else Mrs. Wesley found to occupy her, she still made time to write to her eldest son, even if the letter were short; and there is one epistle, dated

soon after the re-assembling of the family, which exhibits the only sign of petulance observable in her correspondence:—

"Epworth, April 7th, 1710.

"DEAR SAMMY,

"I thought I should have heard from you ere now, but I find you do not think of me as I do of you. Indeed, I believe you would be very easy were you never to hear from me more; but I cannot be satisfied, myself, without writing sometimes, though not so often as I would.

"I have sent you a letter which I sent to your sister Sukey at Gainsborough, which I would have you read and copy it, if you have time. [This was probably the exposition of the Apostles' Creed previously mentioned.]

"When I have my leisure, I think I cannot be better employed than in writing something that may be useful to my children; and though I know there are abundance of good books wherein these subjects are more fully and accurately treated of than I can pretend to write, yet I am willing to think that my children will somewhat regard what I do for them, though the performance be mean, since they know it comes from their mother, who is, perhaps, more concerned for their eternal happiness than anyone in the world. As you had my youth and vigour employed in your service, so I hope you will not despise the little I can do in my declining years; but will for my sake carefully read these papers over, if it be but to put you on a more worthy performance of your own.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

During the ensuing summer Samuel, then twenty years of age, and a scholar of whom Westminster was justly proud, attracted the attention of Dr. Sprat, Bishop of Rochester, and prebend of Westminster, who had himself been a distinguished Westminster scholar in his youth. He was old, and had a kindly feeling for the boy whose grandfather had been his own college friend, and whose father had received ordination at his hands. He took him down to his country house as reader. Samuel did not appreciate his new position, and even complained of it to his father, calling the Bishop "an unfriendly friend."

His first patron soon died, and was succeeded in the see of Rochester by Dr. Atterbury, Dean of Westminster, who took quite as much interest in Samuel as his predecessor had done, and won his affection and partisanship so thoroughly that they endured throughout life, undiminished by the circumstances which ultimately led to the Bishop's exile. This prelate, when at Oxford, had been at Christ Church; and it was by his advice and persuasion that Samuel Wesley entered himself a student at that college in 1711. His father and mother must have been more than mortal if they had not felt some amount of pride in the boy, who had thus won the friendship of two men who were ripe scholars as well as high dignitaries of the Church. There is, however, no trace of exultation on either side, and early in December Samuel wrote to his mother a letter beginning "Dear Mother," instead of the formal "Madam" of the period. This seems to have touched her, and added warmth to the epistle which the gravity of so great an impending change as leaving school and going to Oxford called forth :—

"Thursday, December 28th, 1710.

DEAR SAMMY,

"I am much better pleased with the beginning of your letter than with what you used to send me, for I do not love distance or ceremony; there is more of love and tenderness in the name of *mother* than in all the complimentary titles in the world.

"I intend to write to your father about your coming down, but yet it would not be amiss for you to speak of it too. Perhaps our united desires may sooner prevail upon him to grant our request, though I do not think he will be averse from it at all."

This is the only time that Mrs. Wesley, in her brave acceptance of the inevitable, alludes to a desire to see the beloved son from whom she had been so long separated.

"I am heartily glad that you have already received, and that you design again to receive, the Holy Sacrament; for there is nothing more proper or effectual for the strengthening and refreshing the mind than the frequent partaking of that blessed ordinance.

"You complain that you are unstable and inconstant in the ways of virtue. Alas! what Christian is not so too? I am sure that I, above all others, am most unfit to advise in such a case; yet, since I cannot but speak something, since I love you as my own soul, I will endeavour to do as well as I can; and perhaps while I write I may learn, and by instructing you I may teach myself.

* * * * *

"I am sorry that you lie under a necessity of conversing with those that are none of the best; but we must take the world as we find it, since it is a

happiness permitted to a very few to choose their company. Yet, lest the comparing yourself with others that are worse may be an occasion of your falling into too much vanity, you would do well sometimes to entertain such thoughts as these: 'Though I know my own birth and education, and am conscious of having had great advantages, yet how little do I know of the circumstances of others. Perhaps their parents were vicious, or did not take early care of their minds, to instil the principles of virtue into their tender years; but suffered them to follow their own inclinations till it was too late to reclaim them. Am I sure that they have had as many offers of grace, as many and strong impulses of the Holy Spirit, as I have had? Do they sin against as clear conviction as I do? Or are the vows of God upon them as upon me? Were they so solemnly devoted to Him at their birth as I was?' You have had the example of a father who served God from his youth, and though I cannot commend my own to you, for it is too bad to be imitated, yet surely earnest prayers for many years, and some little good advice, have not been wanting.

"But if, after all, self-love should incline you to partiality in your own case, seriously consider your own many feelings, which the world cannot take notice of because they were so private, and if still, upon comparison, you seem better than others are, then ask yourself who it is that makes you to differ; and let God have all the praise, since of ourselves we can do nothing. It is He that worketh in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure; and if, at any time, you have vainly ascribed the glory of any good performance to yourself, humble yourself for it before God, and give Him the glory of His grace for the future.

"I am straitened for paper and time, therefore must conclude. God Almighty bless you and preserve you from all evil. Adieu.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

Much of this letter has been omitted on account of its being exclusively a theological dissertation. Indeed, in none of Mrs. Wesley's epistles is religion presented in a less attractive aspect, for she represents God as a hard master dealing out strict retribution to all who diverge from the straight and exceedingly narrow path of righteousness. She would surely have been a happier woman if her mental attitude had been that of the German divine whose evening prayer, after many hours of labour in his Master's service, was, "Lord, all is as ever between me and thee," before he lay down to his peaceful and well-earned slumber.

There are only one or two hints of what took place at Epworth during the years 1811 and 1812. Mrs. Wesley must have employed a great deal of her leisure in writing a manuscript containing sixty quarto pages, entitled "A Religious Conference between Mother and Emilia," on the outside of which were the texts, "I write unto you, little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be found in you," and "'May what is sown in weakness be raised in power.' Written for the use of my children, 1711–12."

In the spring of April 1712, while Mr. Wesley was away in London, five of the children had small-pox, which was then a far more terrible scourge than in our own day. The mother's hands must have been very full; but she seems never to have caught the infection, although the family was visited by it at least on one other

occasion. She wrote to her absent husband: "Jack bore his disease bravely, like a man, and indeed a Christian, without any complaint." It is probable either that they had the complaint in a mild form, or that some very effectual means were taken to prevent any permanent traces being left; for all the family had the reputation of being good-looking, and no mention is made by anyone, nor is there any lingering tradition, of their being marked. It may be said, perhaps, that in the absence of inoculation or vaccination this disfigurement was too common to excite any remark; but it must be remembered that Charles Wesley's wife had the small-pox in 1753, when she lived at Bristol, and, although she lay down a really handsome young woman of six-and-twenty, she rose up from that bed of sickness so disfigured as to become almost proverbial for plainness throughout the rest of her life.

CHAPTER X.

TEACHING IN PUBLIC.

CONFUSION as to dates was very common in the early part of the eighteenth century. From force of habit people computed their time according to the Old Style; but on formal occasions, or when they thought of it, the New Style was adopted. This may probably account for the fact that the Rector of Epworth is said to have left behind him an unsatisfactory *locum tenens* when he went to Convocation in November 1710, but that the correspondence it led to between himself and his wife is dated February 1712.

The incident has hitherto been treated by every biographer of the Wesley family in a purely religious light, and the case has been stated as though the curate left to do duty in the church and parish had been a formalist of the driest order, and the congregation has invariably been described as longing to hear the "full Gospel" to which it had been accustomed when the Rector himself occupied the pulpit. This savours very much of the phraseology of "the

people called Methodists," and, indeed, of the party who in later times have styled themselves Evangelical. But when we read that the curate, who was named Inman, preached perpetually to the flock on the duty of paying their debts and behaving well among their neighbours, it is impossible to forget that Mr. Wesley had not always been able to pay *his* debts, and was at that very moment terribly hampered by them; that unseemly brawls had at exciting times disturbed the peace of the little town; and that for political reasons, added to perpetual impecuniosity, the Wesleys were not over-popular in the parish. The better disposed among the people very possibly complained that the curate's preaching was not in good taste, and it cannot have been pleasant to Mrs. Wesley that her family and servants should be obliged to listen to him. This is at least as likely as that his ministrations were considered "barren," and the flock craved for "fuller privileges." Whichever explanation of the situation be accepted, certain it is that Mrs. Wesley began to hold a service every Sunday evening in the rectory kitchen for the benefit of her own children and servants. A serving-man told his parents, who asked permission to come; others followed their example till forty or fifty assembled; and, whether the motive were mere curiosity, or an ardent desire to participate in the instruction given, it is said that the numbers increased so rapidly that, by the end of January 1711, two hundred were present at the home service, and many were obliged to go away because there was not even standing room. This is the universally received account, based on Mrs. Wesley's own statements in a letter to her husband.

Good woman though she was, perhaps she exagge-

rated a little, or perhaps when her congregation became so large she adjourned to the barn or granary, or some other roomy outbuilding. Certain it is that the rectory kitchen remains the same size as it always was; and a very ardent Wesleyan, who has spent his life in collecting particulars respecting the various members of the Wesley clan, recently stood in it, and expressed his opinion that it could not have accommodated even forty persons. In summer-time, with open windows, many might have stood outside and joined in the service going on within; but in the depth of winter that was impracticable. The story goes that when Mr. Wesley returned, his parishioners complained of the curate's shortcomings, and he thereupon requested him to prepare a sermon for the following Sunday morning on the text, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," saying that he should make a point of being present to hear it. Sunday came, and Mr. Inman began: "Friends, faith is a most excellent virtue, and it produces other virtues also. In particular it makes a man pay his debts." In this strain he proceeded for a quarter of an hour, and the Rector considered the case fully proven. Possibly this conduct was intentional impertinence; possibly, as cash was scarce, Mr. Inman's stipend was in arrears; but the situation was an extremely unpleasant one for all parties. Mrs. Wesley took matters into her own hands in conducting her home services, at which she always read a sermon, and she distinctly told her husband that reading the account of the Danish mission to Travancore stirred her up to endeavour to do something more for the parishioners as well as for her own family. He certainly wrote from London remonstrating with her, and her reply is characteristically clear and lucid:—

"Epworth, February 6th, 1712.

"I heartily thank you for dealing so plainly and faithfully with me in a matter of no common concern. The main of your objections against our Sunday evening meetings are, first, that it will look particular; secondly, my sex; and lastly, your being at present in a public station and character; to all which I shall answer briefly.

"As to its looking particular, I grant it does; and so does almost everything that is serious, or that may anyway advance the glory of God, or the salvation of souls, if it be performed out of a pulpit, or in the way of common conversation; because, in our corrupt age, the utmost care and diligence have been used to banish all discourse of God or spiritual concerns out of society, as if religion were never to appear out of the closet, and we were to be ashamed of nothing so much as of professing ourselves to be Christians.

"To your second, I reply that as I am a woman, so I am also a mistress of a large family. And though the superior charge of the souls contained in it lies upon you, as head of the family, and as their minister, yet in your absence I cannot but look upon every soul you leave under my care as a talent committed to me, under a trust, by the great Lord of all the families of heaven and earth. And if I am unfaithful to Him, or to you, in neglecting to improve these talents, how shall I answer unto Him when He shall command me to render an account of my stewardship?

"As these and other such-like thoughts made me at first take a more than ordinary care of the souls of my children and servants; so, knowing that our most holy religion requires a strict observation of the Lord's

day, and not thinking that we fully answered the end of the institution by only going to church, but that likewise we are obliged to fill up the intermediate spaces of that sacred time by other acts of piety and devotion, I thought it my duty to spend some part of the day in reading to and instructing my family, especially in your absence, when, having no afternoon service, we have so much leisure for such exercises; and such time I esteemed spent in a way more acceptable to God than if I had retired to my own private devotions.

"This was the beginning of my present practice; other people coming in and joining us was purely accidental. Our lad told his parents—they first desired to be admitted; then others who heard of it begged leave also; so our company increased to about thirty, and seldom exceeded forty last winter; and why it increased since I leave you to judge, after you have read what follows."

Here comes in the account of finding the book about the Danish Missions, and the result of perusing it which have been previously quoted.

"With those few neighbours who then came to me I discoursed more freely and affectionately than before. I chose the best and most awakening sermons we had, and I spent more time with them in such exercises. Since this our company has increased every night, for I dare deny none that asks admittance. Last Sunday I believe we had over two hundred, and yet many went away for want of room.

"But I never durst positively presume to hope that God would make use of me as an instrument in doing good; the farthest I ever durst go was, 'It may be: who can tell? With God all things are possible.

I will resign myself to Him'; or, as Herbert better expresses it:—

> Only, since God doth often make,
> Of *lowly matter*, for *high uses* meet,
> I throw me at His feet;
> There will I lie until my Maker seek
> For some *mean stuff* whereon to show His skill;
> Then is *my* time.

"And thus I rested, without passing any reflection on myself, or forming any judgment about the success or event of this undertaking.

"Your third objection I leave to be answered by your own judgment. We meet not on any worldly design. We banish all temporal concerns from our society; none is suffered to mingle any discourse about them with our reading or singing; we keep close to the business of the day, and as soon as it is over they all go home. And where is the harm of this? If I and my children went a-visiting on Sunday nights, or if we admitted of impertinent visits, as too many do who think themselves good Christians, perhaps it would be thought no scandalous practice, though, in truth, it would be so. Therefore, why any should reflect upon you, let your station be what it will, because your wife endeavours to draw people to the church, and to restrain them, by reading and other persuasions, from their profanation of God's most holy day, I cannot conceive. But if any should be so mad as to do it, I wish you would not regard it. For my part, I value no censure on this account. I have long since shook hands with the world, and I heartily wish I had never given them more reason to speak against me.

"As for your proposal of letting some other person

read, alas! you do not consider what a people these are. I do not think one man among them could read a sermon without spelling a good part of it; and how would that edify the rest? Nor has any of our family a voice strong enough to be heard by such a number of people.

"But there is one thing about which I am most dissatisfied; that is, their being present at family prayers. I do not speak of any concern I am under, barely because so many are present, for those who have the honour of speaking to the great and holy God need not be ashamed to speak before the whole world; but because of my sex, I doubt if it be proper for me to present the prayers of the people to God.

"Last Sunday, I fain would have dismissed them before prayers; but they begged so earnestly to stay, I durst not deny them.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

A letter from Mr. Inman, requesting the Rector to stop his wife's meetings, and saying that more people attended them than came to church, must have followed close on this epistle from Mrs. Wesley. The reply of the rector to his wife does not seem to have been preserved, but it must have been sent almost immediately, for before the end of the month she again wrote to him, but had evidently waited several days after the receipt of his answer before doing so:—

"Epworth,

"DEAR HUSBAND, February 25th, 1712.

"Some days since, I received a letter from you, I suppose dated the 16th instant, which I made no great haste to answer, because I judged it

necessary for both of us to take some time to consider before you determine in a matter of such great importance.

"I shall not inquire how it was possible that you should be prevailed on by the senseless clamour of two or three of the worst of your parish to condemn what you so lately approved. But I shall tell you my thoughts in as few words as possible. I do not hear of more than three or four persons who are against our meeting, of whom Inman is the chief. He and Whiteley, I believe, may call it a conventicle; but we hear no outcry here, nor has anyone said a word against it to me. And what does their calling it a conventicle signify? Does it alter the nature of the thing? Or do you think that what they say is a sufficient reason to forbear a thing that has already done much good, and may, by the blessing of God, do much more? If its being called a conventicle, by those who know in their conscience they misrepresent it, did really make it one, what you say would be something to the purpose; but it is plain in fact that this one thing has brought more people to church than ever anything did in so short a time. We used not to have above twenty or twenty-five at evening service, whereas we now have between two and three hundred, which are more than ever came before to hear Inman in the morning.

"Besides the constant attendance on the public worship of God, our meeting has wonderfully conciliated the minds of this people towards us, so that now we live in the greatest amity imaginable, and, what is still better, they are very much reformed in their behaviour on the Lord's Day, and those who used to be playing in the streets now come to hear a good

sermon read, which is surely more acceptable to Almighty God.

"Another reason for what I do is that I have no other way of conversing with this people, and therefore have no other way of doing them good; but by this I have an opportunity of exercising the greatest and noblest charity, that is, charity to their souls.

"Some families who seldom went to church, now go constantly, and one person who had not been there for seven years is now prevailed upon to go with the rest.

"There are many other good consequences of this meeting which I have not time to mention. Now, I beseech you, weigh all these things in an impartial balance: on the one side the honour of Almighty God, the doing much good to many souls, and the friendship of the best among whom we live; on the other (if folly, impiety, and vanity may abide in the scale against so ponderous a weight), the senseless objections of a few scandalous persons, laughing at us, and censuring us as precise and hypocritical; and when you have duly considered all things, let me have your positive determination.

"I need not tell you the consequences if you determine to put an end to our meeting. You may easily perceive what prejudice it may raise in the minds of these people against Inman especially, who has had so little wit as to speak publicly against it. I can now keep them to the church; but if it be laid aside I doubt they will never go to hear him more, at least those who came from the lower end of the town. But if this be continued till you return, which now will not be long, it may please God that their hearts may be so changed by that time that they may love

and delight in His public worship so as never to neglect it more.

"If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me that you desire me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience; but send me your positive command, in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting this opportunity of doing good, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

This wise and temperate letter shows plainly that there was no personal partisanship about its writer. She was not anxious that the people should come to her service instead of going to hear Mr. Inman, but earnestly desired that they should go to the services conducted by him, for the honour of God and the Church; and also regarded herself as a stewardess, keeping the flock together till such time as the Rector could return. And it must be remembered that Mr. Wesley was acknowledged to be one of the readiest and best preachers of his day, so that his hearers were somewhat spoilt, and resented having an inferior man set over them during his absence. Whatever may have been the motive that first led Mrs. Wesley to hold private services, or that made the neighbours wish to attend them, it is evident that closer contact with the earnest high-souled woman, who held on her stedfast way through evil as well as good report, called forth a feeling of deep respect which ripened in many instances into affection. All difficulties ceased when Convocation rose, and Mr. Wesley returned home to resume his ministrations in the parish and in his own household.

The next event in Mrs. Wesley's life was the parting with her son John, who was placed at the Charterhouse through the good offices of the Duke of Buckingham, to whom his father and the circumstances of the family were well known. The mother does not appear to have corresponded with him so anxiously or frequently as with her elder son, or at all events, if she did so, none of her letters have been preserved. It is possible that she trusted him to some extent to the fostering care of his brother at Westminster, who was frequently able to see him, or perhaps she did not think his disposition called for such continual attention on her part. His father bade him run three times round the garden every morning, and he is said to have obeyed him dutifully, and he was probably not less careful to observe his mother's instructions as to his daily conduct and devotions. He did not need any stimulus to study, for the love of learning was part and parcel of his nature.

No letters written by Mrs. Wesley to her son Samuel during the year he spent at Oxford are forthcoming, nor is there any record of her feelings and sympathies when he married in 1715. His wife was the daughter of the Rev. John Berry, one of the masters at Westminster, who took some of the scholars as boarders. He loved her very dearly, and, being by that time established as an usher in his old school, probably felt justified in taking a wife. It is not likely that his mother did not show a warm interest in this change in his life, and it is well known that he continued to be a most affectionate son, while his wife showed the utmost kindness and right feeling to his young brothers and to her mother-in-law. Samuel, junior, was as fond of writing rhyme as his father had been

before him, and doubtless he described the nut-brown maiden of his choice as eloquently in his letters home as in the lines which describe her as one who

> "Made her little wisdom go
> Further than wiser women do";

or more at length when he says:

> "Her hair and skin are as the Berry, brown;
> Soft is her smile, and graceful is her frown;
> Her stature low, 'tis something less than mine;
> Her shape, though good, not exquisitely fine.
> Though round her hazel eyes some sadness lies,
> Their sprightly glances can sometimes surprise.
> But greater beauties to her mind belong:
> Well can she speak, and wisely hold her tongue.
> In her, plain sense and humble sweetness meet:
> Though gay, religious; and though young, discreet.
> Such is the maid, if I can judge aright,
> If love or favour hinder not my sight.
> Perhaps you 'll ask me how so well I know?
> I 've studied her, and I 'll confess it too.
> I 've sought each inmost failing to explore;
> Though still the more I sought, I liked the more.
> Oh, to see my Nutty smiling,
> Time with amorous talk beguiling,
> Love, her every action gracing,
> Arms still open for embracing,
> Looks to mutual bliss inviting,
> Eyes delighted and delighting,
> Spotless innocence preventing
> After-grief and sad repenting;
> Neither doubting, both believing,
> Transport causing and receiving;

Both with equal ardour moving,
Dearly loved, and truly loving.
Long may both enjoy the pleasure
Without guilt and without measure!

Only two children were born to the young couple, the former of whom was named Samuel, after his father and grandfather. Being the first grandchild, he was thought a great deal of, and much grief was felt when he died shortly before what would have been his twenty-first birthday. The daughter was a great favourite with her uncles, and attached herself especially to Charles Wesley. She was known in the family as "Phil."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SUPERNATURAL NOISES.

THE subject of supernatural manifestations is one on which mortals must agree to differ. One half of humanity refuses to give credence to anything but what it can see and handle, and regards those who believe in spiritual influences of any kind as the dupes and votaries of degrading superstition; while the other half has a deeply rooted, if indefinable, faith in second sight, mysterious intuitions, and communications from the unseen. The Apostle's Creed contains a sentence which is frequently interpreted as embodying belief in some kind of intercourse between the dead and the living, and even between those who, though absent from each other in the body, are present in the spirit, when it states, "I believe in the Communion of Saints." In this Mrs. Wesley had a firm faith, having been heard by her son John, during her widowhood, to say, that she was often as fully persuaded of her deceased husband's presence with her as if she could see him with her bodily eyes. Her sons, inheriting her temperament to the full, always found an irresistible attraction in the subject; John in-

variably preached on it with great exaltation on All Saints' Day, and declared that he was sometimes so vividly aware of the presence of those he loved who had crossed the dark river before him, that he had turned round expecting to see them; and anyone acquainted with Charles Wesley's hymns must observe that they are frequently instinct with the same faith.

Persons who see signs and visions, and hear sounds inaudible to others, are always highly strung, sensitive, and emotional. They are almost invariably individuals who, from choice or necessity, are extremely abstemious (not to say underfed), and in whom the veil of flesh is thin, while the mental and spiritual faculties are abnormally developed. This description applied to all the Wesleys, so that they were exactly the kind of people to accept and believe in occult influences.

The first impression produced on Mrs. Wesley's mind by the extraordinary noises which were heard at Epworth Rectory in December 1816, when only herself, her husband, and her daughters were at home, was that they betokened that death, or some calamity, had befallen one or other of the absent boys. Charles, by this time, was at Westminster School, though only eight years old, Samuel having sent for him, considering that he could best relieve the family burdens by undertaking the maintenance and education of his youngest brother. Little Charles was a plucky boy, and remarkably ready with his fists; and, perhaps, mother-like, Mrs. Wesley was always anxious lest harm should come to him. In after days, and when assured of the safety of her own children, she connected the first noises with the death of her brother in India, who ceased to be heard of about that time. But as the sounds continued during many years, and

were, in fact, audible to some of the family throughout life, they must have applied to many occurrences, if indeed they were of the nature attributed to them by the hearers. The first account of the disturbances was written by Mrs. Wesley herself to her son Samuel, and it was at his request that his sisters and father also recorded what they had themselves experienced. Mrs. Wesley's letter is very circumstantial :—

"DEAR SAM, "January 12th, 1716-17.

"This evening we were agreeably surprised with your pacquet, which brought the welcome news of your being alive, after we had been in the greatest panic imaginable, almost a month, thinking either you was dead, or one of your brothers, by some misfortune, (had) been killed.

"The reason of our fears is as follows: On the 1st of December our maid heard, at the door of the dining-room, several dismal groans, like a person in extremes at the point of death. We gave little heed to her relation, and endeavoured to laugh her out of her fears. Some nights (two or three) after, several of the family heard a strange knocking in divers places, usually three or four knocks at a time, and then staying a little. This continued every night for a fortnight; sometimes it was in the garret, but most commonly in the nursery or green chamber. We all heard it but your father; and I was not willing he should be informed of it, lest he should fancy it was against his own death, which, indeed, we all apprehended. But when it began to be so troublesome, both night and day, that few or none of the family durst be alone, I resolved to tell him of it, being minded he should speak to it. At first he would not believe but some-

body did it to alarm us; but the night after, as soon as he was in bed, it knocked loudly nine times, just by his bedside. He rose, and went to see if he could find out what it was, but could see nothing. Afterwards he heard it as the rest.

"One night it made such a noise in the room over our heads, as if several people were walking, then ran up and down stairs, and was so outrageous that we thought the children would be frighted; so your father and I rose and went down in the dark to light a candle. Just as we came to the bottom of the broad stairs, having hold of each other, on my side there seemed as if somebody had emptied a bag of money at my feet; and on his, as if all the bottles under the stairs (which were many) had been dashed in a thousand pieces. We passed through the hall into the kitchen, and got a candle, and went to see the children, whom we found asleep.

"The next night your father would get Mr. Hoole to lie at our house, and we all sat together till 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning, and heard the knocking as usual. Sometimes it would make a noise like the winding up of a jack, at other times, as that night Mr. Hoole was with us, like a carpenter planing deals; but most commonly it knocked thrice and stopped, and then thrice again, and so, many hours together. We persuaded your father to speak, and try if any voice would be heard. One night, about 6 o'clock, he went into the nursery in the dark, and at first heard several deep groans, then knocking. He adjured it to speak, if it had power, and tell him why it troubled his house; but no voice was heard, but it knocked thrice aloud. Then he questioned it if it were Sammy, and bid it, if it were, and could not

speak, knock again; but it knocked no more that night, which made us hope it was not against your death.

"Thus it continued till the 28th of December, when it loudly knocked (as your father used to do at the gate) in the nursery and departed. We have various conjectures what this may mean. For my own part, I fear nothing now you are safe at London hitherto, and I hope God will still preserve you; though sometimes I am inclined to think my brother is dead. Let me know your thoughts on it.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

Samuel Wesley was very much impressed by this letter, and wrote to both his parents in reply, asking the minutest questions, as to the possibility of rats, mice, or other animals having caused the noises, whether there were fresh servants, &c., and requesting that his father would write, that Mr. Hoole would favour him with an account, and that each of his sisters would give her version of what had taken place. It is evident that he had a firm belief in the supernatural origin of the disturbance, and wished to have it confirmed. This called forth a second letter from his mother:—

"DEAR SAM, "January 25th or 27th, 1716–17.

"Though I am not one of those that will believe nothing supernatural, but am rather inclined to think there would be frequent intercourse between good spirits and us, did not our deep lapse into sensuality prevent it, yet I was a great while ere I could credit anything of what the children and servants reported concerning the noises they heard in several

parts of our house. Nay, after I had heard them myself, I was willing to persuade myself and them that it was only rats or weasels that disturbed us; and, having been formerly troubled with rats, which were frightened away by sounding a horn, I caused a horn to be procured, and made them blow it all over the house. But, from that night they began to blow, the noises were more loud and distinct, both day and night, than before; and that night we rose and went down, and I was entirely convinced that it was beyond the power of any human creature to make such strange and various noises.

"As to your questions, I will answer them particularly; but, withal, I desire my answers may satisfy none but yourself, for I would not have the matter imparted to any. We had both man and maid new this last Martinmas, yet I do not believe either of them caused the disturbance, both for the reason above mentioned and because they were more affrighted than anybody else. Besides, we have often heard the noises when they were in the room by us; and the maid, particularly, was in such a panic that she was almost incapable of all business, nor durst ever go from one room to another, or stay by herself a minute after it began to be dark.

"The man, Robert Brown, whom you well know, was most visited by it, lying in the garret, and has often been frighted down barefoot, and almost naked, not daring to stay alone to put on his clothes; nor do I think, if he had power, he would be guilty of such villainy. When the walking was heard in the garret, Robert was in bed in the next room, in a sleep so sound that he never heard your father and me walk up and down, though we walked not softly, I am sure.

All the family has heard it together, in the same room, at the same time, particularly at family prayers. It always seemed to all present in the same place at the same time, though often, before any could say it is here, it would remove to another place.

"All the family, as well as Robin, were asleep when your father and I went down-stairs, nor did they wake in the nursery when we held the candle close by them, only we observed that Hetty trembled exceedingly in her sleep, as she always did before the noise awaked her. It commonly was nearer her than the rest, which she took notice of, and was much frightened, because she thought it had a particular spite at her. I could multiply particular instances, but I forbear. I believe your father will write to you about it shortly.

"Whatever may be the design of Providence in permitting these things, I cannot say. *Secret things belong to God;* but I entirely agree with you, that it is our wisdom and duty to prepare seriously for all events.

"S. WESLEY."

The second daughter, commonly called Sukey, wrote substantially the same account to her brother, but adds that the door-latch and warming-pan rattled beside her bed, and continues: "It is now pretty quiet, only at our repeating the prayers for the king and prince, when it usually begins, especially when my father says 'Our most gracious Sovereign Lord,' &c. This my father is angry at, and designs to say *three* instead of *two* for the Royal Family. We all heard the same noise, and at the same time, and as coming from the same place. To conclude this, it now makes its personal appearance; but of this more hereafter.' Of

course this letter made Samuel more curious than ever, and he wrote begging for further information, and gravely asked his mother, "Have you dug in the place where the money seemed poured at your feet?" To his father he observed, "if the noises bode anything to our family, I am sure I am a party concerned." It was some time before the Rector could be persuaded to answer his son's inquiries, but at last he enclosed a few lines with a long letter from Emilia, which gave some particulars not mentioned by anyone else:—

"DEAR SAM, "February 11th, 1716–17.

"As for the noises, &c. in our family, I thank God we are now all quiet. There were some surprising circumstances in that affair. Your mother has not written you a third part of it. When I see you here you shall see the whole account, which I wrote down. It would make a glorious penny book for Jack Dunton; but while I live I am not ambitious for any thing of that nature. I think that 's all, but blessings, from

"Your loving father,

"SAM WESLEY."

Emilia described the sound as hollow and different to anything else, and said: "It would answer to my mother, if she stamped on the floor and bade it. It would knock when I was putting the children to bed, just under me, where I sat. One time little Kezy, pretending to scare Patty, as I was undressing them, stamped with her foot on the floor, and immediately it answered with three knocks, just in the same place. It was more loud and fierce if anyone said it was rats,

or anything natural." The young lady also described how something resembling a white rabbit or a badger had been seen in the house, and asserted her opinion that it was witchcraft, adding that her father had been preaching "warmly" against the custom prevalent in the parish of consulting cunning men, shortly before the rappings and other manifestations at his own house.

Ventriloquism and occult phenomena were not unknown even in the days of George the First, to those who posed as wizards and soothsayers; and the notion that some one or other of these cunning men were paying the rector out for robbing them of their gains by denouncing the practice of consulting them from the pulpit, cannot but suggest itself to the profane and unbelieving mind of this nineteenth century. But the Wesleys, and many of their biographers, took these wonders seriously, and firmly believed that they had beneficial effects on the minds of some of the family.

One incident marvellously like our modern table-turning was chronicled by Sukey, who wrote to her brother how "last Sunday, to my father's no small amazement, his trencher danced upon the table a pretty while, without anybody's stirring the table, when lo! an adventurous wretch took it up, and spoiled the sport, for it remained still ever after."

Samuel probably continued to ask questions, for on March 27th Mrs. Wesley wrote to him: "I cannot imagine how you should be so curious about our unwelcome guest. For my part, I am quite tired with hearing or speaking of it; but when you come among us you will find enough to satisfy all your scruples, and perhaps may hear or see it yourself."

Mr. Wesley himself wrote a detailed account of

everything that took place, and the following are the most remarkable passages.

"When we were at prayers, and came to the prayers for King George and the Prince, it would make a great noise over our heads constantly, whence some of the family called it a Jacobite. I have been thrice pushed by an invisible power, once against the corner of my desk in the study, a second time against the door of the matted chamber, and a third time against the right side of the frame of my study door, as I was going in.

* * * * *

"This day (January 24) at morning prayer, the family heard the usual knocks at the prayer for the King. At night they were more distinct, both in the prayer for the King and that for the Prince; and one very loud knock at the *Amen* was heard by my wife and most of my children, at the inside of my bed.

* * * * *

"On Friday the 25th, having prayers at church, I shortened, as usual, those in the family at morning, omitting the confession, absolution and prayers for the King and Prince. I observed, when this is done, there is no knocking. I therefore used them one morning for a trial; at the name of King George it began to knock, and did the same when I prayed for the Prince. Two knocks I heard, but took no notice after prayers till after all who were in the room, ten persons besides me, spoke of it, and said they heard it. No noise at all the rest of the prayers.

"Sunday, January 27th.—Two soft knocks at the morning prayers for King George, above stairs."

There was something wonderfully like human agency in all this, especially when Mrs. Wesley's Jacobite proclivities are remembered. Imagination, perhaps, caused the girls to think that the latches of their doors were uplifted and their beds heaved up from underneath. It is, moreover, on record that the phenomena were almost always accompanied by the change and rising of the wind. Everyone who knows how servants and ignorant rustics are in the habit of out-Heroding Herod when there is anything mysterious afloat will take the statements of Robin Brown, the man-servant, for what they were worth. He heard gobbling like a turkey-cock, and something stumbling among his boots and shoes, saw an uncanny little beast resembling a white rabbit, and once, when grinding corn in a handmill, declared that the handle went round vigorously when the mill was empty and he was not touching it.

The fear shown by the mastiff whenever the noises began was very curious. A memorandum written by John Wesley records that "the first time my mother ever heard any unusual noise at Epworth was long before the disturbance of Old Jeffery." This was the name given by the girls to the intruding agency. "My brother, lately come from London, had one evening a sharp quarrel with my sister Sukey, at which time, my mother happening to be above in her own chamber, the door and windows rang and jarred very loud, and presently three distinct strokes, three by three, were struck. From that night it never failed to give notice in much the same manner against any signal misfortune, or illness of any belonging to the family." Emilia, writing thirty-four years afterwards to one of her brothers, declared that Jeffery "never

failed to visit her when any fresh trouble was coming."

This, then, is the history of the Epworth ghost. It reads rather puerile and silly, and perhaps would have been so regarded by the family, had not the rappings of the spirit appeared to justify or chime in with the Jacobite prejudices of Mrs. Wesley. She had implanted them very deeply in the mind of her eldest son; and his connection with and friendship for Dr. Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, fostered them. A few years later, in 1722, Atterbury, who was a distinguished High Churchman, and indulged in implacable animosity towards the House of Hanover, was implicated in a conspiracy which had for its object the placing of the Chevalier de St. George, that is to say the "Old Pretender," on the English throne, and was consequently tried at the Bar of the House of Lords, deprived of his see, and banished the kingdom for ever. He was a restless spirit and unpopular among his brother bishops, and, as Samuel Wesley was a writer of squibs and invectives, both in prose and rhyme, against the Whig party, there is no doubt that he did so with his patron's approval and at his instigation. Samuel was also on intimate terms with the Earl of Oxford, Pope, Swift, and Prior, all of whom were of Jacobite proclivities. The fall of Bishop Atterbury did not make any immediate difference to the Westminster usher; but when changes took place in the great school, and he looked for promotion, he was simply left out in the cold. The Earl of Oxford used his influence and procured for him the headmastership of the Tiverton Grammar School, where he spent the remainder of his life. He maintained a close correspondence with the exiled bishop and his

family, and never changed his political opinions, as may be seen by a glance at his collected poems, which were reprinted as lately as 1862.

The last words Mrs. Wesley is known to have written on the supernatural were in 1719, in answer to a letter from John Wesley, who gave extraordinary credence to stories of ghosts and apparitions; he was then at Oxford, where he was interested in a haunted house in the neighbourhood. The special subject of his epistle was to describe how a Mr. Barnesley and two other undergraduates had recently met a wraith in the fields, and afterwards ascertained that Barnesley's mother had died in Ireland at the very moment of the spectre's appearance. Mrs. Wesley's reply was temperate, and even guarded:—

"DEAR JACKY,

"The story of Mr. Barnesley has afforded me many curious speculations. I do not doubt the fact; but I cannot understand why these apparitions are permitted. If they were allowed to speak to us, and we had strength to bear such converse—if they had commission to inform us of anything relating to their invisible world that would be of any use to us in this —if they would instruct us how to avoid danger, or put us in a way of being wiser and better, there would be sense in it; but to appear for no end that we know of, unless to frighten people almost out of their wits, seems altogether unreasonable.

"S. WESLEY."

It was a very curious circumstance that about a hundred years after the Wesleys had ceased to have

any connection with Epworth, strange noises were heard in the Rectory; and the then incumbent, not being able to trace or account for them, went away with his family and resided abroad for some time.

CHAPTER XII.

DISAPPOINTMENTS AND PERPLEXITIES.

Mrs. Wesley, it will be remembered, had a brother, Samuel Annesley, who went to India, which, in those days, was regarded almost as live-long banishment. He left a wife and perhaps young children behind him, who seem to have resided at Shore House, Hackney, a fine old red brick residence which was in the fields when Jane Shore lived there, and was approached by her royal lover by a footpath from the main road, known for many generations as King Edward's Path, but now widened and built over, and called King Edward's Road. Shore House is well remembered by numbers of people still living, but it has shared the fate of so many similar edifices, and been pulled down, the old bricks being used in the erection of small villas built over what was once a fertile and well-stocked garden, and forming a short thoroughfare called Shore Road. Samuel Annesley must have been in fairly prosperous circumstances to have established his family at Shore House, and it is nearly certain that after the fire at Epworth Rectory one or two of his nieces stayed with them for a time, and produced

a favourable impression. In going out to India Mr. Annesley hoped to amass a fortune, and is supposed to have done so, though at the time he was expected to return to England he was lost sight of, and no intelligence of his fate, nor any of the money he had obtained, ever reached his relatives. About 1712–13 he wrote to Mr. Wesley, requesting that he would act as his agent in England with the East India Company; and after some hesitation Mr. Wesley accepted the post, hoping, with the assistance of his son at Westminster, to be able to do so satisfactorily. He was not, however, a man of business, and as soon as his brother-in-law discovered this, he transferred the agency to someone else. Mr. Annesley not unnaturally wrote to his sister, complaining of her husband's short-lived administration of his affairs, and she as naturally showed a wifely spirit in defending him. Letters in those days took a great while to go and come, and a long and interesting letter from Mrs. Wesley to her brother, was written on her birthday, and gives us one of the few glimpses we have at the then condition of her family :—

"Sir, "Epworth, Jan. 20th, 1721–2.

"The unhappy differences between you and Mr. Wesley have prevented my writing for some years, not knowing whether a letter from me would be acceptable, and being unwilling to be troublesome. But feeling life ebb apace, and having a desire to be at peace with all men, especially you, before my exit, I have ventured to send one letter more, hoping you will give yourself the trouble to read it without prejudice.

"I am, I believe, got on the right side of fifty,

infirm and weak; yet, old as I am, since I have taken my husband 'for better or for worse,' I'll take my residence with him, 'where he lives will I live, and where he dies will I die, and there will I be buried. God do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part him and me.' Confinement is nothing to one that by sickness is compelled to spend great part of her time in a chamber; and I sometimes think that if it were not on account of Mr. Wesley and the children, it would be perfectly indifferent to my soul whether she ascended to the supreme Origin of being from a jail or a palace, for God is everywhere:—

> No walls, nor locks, nor bars, nor deepest shade,
> Nor closest solitude excludes His presence;
> And in what place soever He vouchsafes
> To manifest His presence, there is heaven.

And that man whose heart is penetrated with Divine love, and enjoys the manifestations of God's blissful presence is happy, let his outward condition be what it will. He is rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things. This world, this present state of things, is but for a time. What is now future will be present, as what is already past once was; and then, as Mr. Pascal observes, a little earth thrown on our cold head will for ever determine our hopes and our condition; nor will it signify much who personated the prince or the beggar, since, with respect to the exterior, all must stand on the same level after death.

"Upon the best observation I could ever make, I am induced to believe that it is much easier to be contented without riches than with them. It is so natural for a rich person to make his gold his god (for whatever a person loves most, that thing, be it what it will, he will certainly make his god); it is

so very difficult not to trust in, not to depend on it for support and happiness, that I do not know one rich man in the world with whom I would exchange conditions.

"You say, 'I hope you have recovered your loss by fire long since.' No, and, it is to be doubted, never shall. Mr. Wesley rebuilt his house in less than one year, but nearly thirteen years are elapsed since it was burned, yet it is not half furnished, nor his wife and children half clothed to this day. It is true that by the benefactions of his friends, together with what he had himself, he paid the first; but the latter is not paid yet, or, what is much the same, money which was borrowed for clothes and furniture is yet unpaid. You go on: 'My brother's living of £300 a year, as they tell me.' *They*,—who? I wish those who say so were compelled to make it so. It may be as truly said that his living is £10,000 a year as £300. I have, Sir, formerly laid before you the true state of affairs. I have told you that the living was always let for £160 a year; that taxes, poor assessments, sub-rents, tenths, procurations, synodals, &c., took up nearly £30 of that moiety, so that there needs no great skill in arithmetic to compute what remains.

"What we shall or shall not need hereafter God only knows, but at present there hardly ever was a greater coincidence of unprosperous events in one family than is now in ours. I am rarely in health, Mr. Wesley declines apace; my dear Emily, who in my present exigencies would greatly comfort me, is compelled to go to service in Lincoln, where she is a teacher in a boarding-school; my second daughter Sukey, a pretty woman, and worthy a better fate,

when by your last unkind letters she perceived that all her hopes in you were frustrated, rashly threw herself away upon a man (if a *man* he may be called who is little inferior to the apostate angels in wickedness) that is not only her plague, but a constant affliction to the family. Oh, Sir! oh, brother! happy, thrice happy are you, happy is my sister, that buried your children in infancy, secure from temptation, secure from guilt, secure from want or shame, or loss of friends! They are safe beyond the reach of pain or sense of misery; being gone hence, nothing can touch them further. Believe me, Sir, it is better to mourn ten children dead than one living, and I have buried many. But here I must pause awhile.

"The other children, though wanting neither industry nor capacity for business, we cannot put to any, by reason we have neither money nor friends to assist us in doing it; nor is there a gentleman's family near us in which we can place them, unless as common servants, and that even yourself would not think them fit for, if you saw them; so that they must stay at home, while they have a home,—and how long will that be? Innumerable are other uneasinesses, too tedious to mention, insomuch that, what with my own indisposition, my master's infirmities, the absence of my eldest, the ruin of my second daughter, and the inconceivable distress of all the rest, I have enough to turn a stronger head than mine. And were it not that God supports, and by His omnipotent goodness often totally suspends all sense of worldly things, I could not sustain the weight many days, perhaps hours. But even in this low ebb of fortune, I am not without some kind interval. Unspeakable are the blessings of privacy and leisure, when the mind

emerges from the corrupt animality to which she is united, and, by a flight peculiar to her nature, soars beyond the bounds of time and place in contemplation of the Invisible Supreme, whom she perceives to be her only happiness, her proper centre, in whom she finds repose inexplicable, such as the world can neither give nor take away.

"The late Archbishop of York once said to me (when my master was in Lincoln Castle) among other things, 'Tell me,' said he, 'Mrs. Wesley, whether you ever really wanted bread?' 'My lord,' said I, 'I will freely own to your Grace, that, strictly speaking, I never did want bread. But then I had so much care to get it before it was eat, and to pay for it after, as has often made it very unpleasant to me; and, I think, to have bread on such terms is the next degree of wretchedness to having none at all.' 'You are certainly in the right,' replied my lord, and seemed for a while very thoughtful. Next morning he made me a handsome present, nor did he ever repent having done so. On the contrary, I have reason to believe it afforded him comforting reflections before his exit."

A passage in which Mrs. Wesley declares that her husband had done his disinterested best with regard to Mr. Annesley's business, even if he had not understood the wisest way of managing affairs, has here by common consent been omitted. She proceeds:—

"These things are unkind, very unkind. Add not misery to affliction; if you will not reach out a friendly hand to support, yet, I beseech you, forbear to throw water on a people already sinking.

"But I shall go on with your letter to me. You proceed: 'When I come home'—oh, would to God

that might ever be!—'should any of your daughters need me'—as I think they will not—'I shall do as God enables me!' I must answer this with a sigh from the bottom of my heart. Sir, you know the proverb, 'While the grass grows, the steed starves.' That passage relating to Ansley I have formerly replied to; therefore I'll pass it over, together with some hints I am not willing to understand. You go on: 'My brother has one invincible obstacle to my business, his distance from London.' Sir, you may please to remember I put you in mind of this long since. 'Another hindrance: I think he is too zealous for the party he fancies in the right, and has unluckily to do with the opposite faction.' Whether those you employ are factious or not, I'll not determine, but very sure I am Mr. Wesley is not so; he is zealous in a good cause, as everyone ought to be, but the farthest from being a party man of any man in the world."

Here blazes out for a moment the keen partizanship of the woman who acknowledged the Divine Right of the "King over the water" and of no other. The remainder of the letter shows that she was not one of those who are blind to the shortcomings of a husband, and also proves how completely she understood that he had not found the exact niche in life which his talents and energies best fitted him to fill.

"'Another *remora* is, these matters are out of his way.' That is a *remora* indeed, and ought to have been considered on both sides before he entered on your business: for I am verily persuaded that that, and that alone, has been the cause of any mistakes or inadvertency he has been guilty of, and the true reason why God has not blessed him with desired

success. 'He is apt to rest upon deceitful promises.' Would to heaven that neither he nor I, nor any of our children, had ever trusted to deceitful promises. But it is a right-hand error, and I hope God will forgive us all. 'He wants Mr. Eaton's thrift.' This I can readily believe. 'He is not fit for worldly business.' This I likewise assent to, and must own I was mistaken when I did think him fit for it: my own experience hath since convinced me that he is one of those who, our Saviour saith, 'are not so wise in their generation as the children of this world.' And did I not know that Almighty Wisdom hath views and ends in fixing the bounds of our habitation, which are out of our ken, I should think it a thousand pities that a man of his brightness and rare endowments of learning and useful knowledge in relation to the Church of God should be confined to an obscure corner of this country, where his talents are buried, and he determined to a way of life for which he is not so well qualified as I could wish; and it is with pleasure that I behold in my eldest son an aversion from accepting a small country cure, since, blessed be God! he has a fair reputation for learning and piety, preaches well, and is capable of doing more good where he is. You conclude, 'My wife will make my cousin Emily?' It was a small and insignificant present to my sister indeed; but, poor girl, it was her whole estate; and if it had been received as kindly as it was meant, she would have been highly pleased. I shall not detain you any longer—not so much as to apologise for the tedious length of this letter.

"I should be glad if my service could be made acceptable to my sister, to whom, with yourself, the

children tender their humblest duty. We all join in wishing you a Happy New Year, and very many of them.

"I am your obliged and most
obedient Servant and Sister,
"SUSANNA WESLEY."

The above letter was written evidently in reply to some not very distant communication from Mr. Annesley, and it is not quite clear whether the date is according to the Old Style or the New. It is also uncertain whether it was ever received, as no reply came to it in any form, and when, two or three years later, the newspapers of the day announced that Mr. Annesley was, or would be, a passenger on board a certain homeward-bound vessel, and some of his relatives arranged to meet him, they were disappointed, as he did not arrive, and nothing definite could be heard about him.

Life at Epworth was at this time very uncomfortable, and the old adage, that "when poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the window," seems to some extent to have been verified in the case of the Wesleys. On one occasion Mrs. Wesley wrote to one of her sons that unfortunately his father and she never thought alike, and the eldest son Samuel, in a familiar letter to his brother John, who was then in Lincolnshire, and had written a confidential account of the state of affairs, says he would to God that his father and mother were as easy in one another as himself and his wife. Emilia, the eldest daughter, speaks of being in "intolerable want and affliction," in "scandalous want of necessaries," and of her mother being ill in bed all one winter, and

even expected to die, while she herself did her best to keep the large family on a very small sum of money. Kezia and Martha, and, in fact, all the girls, told the same tale of the scantiness of money and clothes, and how their mother's ill-health was to a great extent caused by want of common comforts. Mary, the deformed girl, appears to have been almost the family drudge; and the others, who would fain have gone out as governesses or companions, or, in fact, in any capacity, were unable to do so for want of clothes in which to make a decent appearance. The only chance they saw of bettering their circumstances was marriage, and to that most of their thoughts seem to have been directed. One or two of them loved very deeply and truly, but bestowed their affections on men who were not worthy of them, and ultimately made marriages in which there was little or no prospect of happiness. Many suitors appeared for one or the other of them, but were refused by the parents, perhaps not always on sufficient grounds, for, taken altogether, the matrimonial affairs of the daughters were eminently unhappy. Hetty, who was a pretty, clever, sprightly girl, went wrong altogether, and was treated by both her parents with the harshness of rigid virtue that has never known temptation. They utterly refused to see or forgive her; and had not her brothers and uncle pitied and made allowances for her, her fate would have been even worse than it was. Samuel probably interceded and reconciled them during his visit home in 1725. She still had some lingering hope of being married to the man who had beguiled her and whom she truly loved; but her father and mother looked on this as the climax of everything undesirable, and absolutely commanded

her to accept a suitor named Wright, a journeyman plumber and glazier at Lincoln, with whom her life proved one long purgatory. Sukey appears to have accepted the first offer she received after losing all expectation of a little money from her uncle Annesley, who, from the time she spent with him after the fire at Epworth, had held out some hopes that he would ultimately provide for her.

Some little increase of comfort seems to have come in 1724, when the little living of Wroote, four and a half miles off, and worth about fifty pounds a year, was given to Mr. Wesley; and though the parsonage was very far inferior to the one at Epworth, the family moved into it and lived there for some years. The country round was a mere swamp, the house a poor thatched dilapidated place, and the parishioners rustics of the lowest order. It is possible that a tenant may have offered for the rectory of Epworth for a time, but this is mere conjecture. Emilia had now been a teacher at a boarding-school at Lincoln for about five years, and, although she worked hard for them, was able to purchase comfortable garments, and enjoyed the unwonted luxury of having a little money in her pocket. The state of things for some years at Wroote is told by an extract from a long letter which she wrote to her brother John, after she had lived at home again a little more than a year:—

"The school broke up; and my father having got Wroote living, my mother was earnest for my return. I was told what pleasant company was at Bawtry, Doncaster, &c., and that this addition to my father, with God's ordinary blessing, would make him a rich man in a few years; that they did not desire to confine me always here, but would allow me all

the liberties in their power. Then I came home again in an evil hour for me. I was well clothed, and, while I wanted nothing, was easy enough. . . . Thus far we went on tolerably well; but this winter, when my own necessaries began to decay, and my money was most of it spent (I having maintained myself since I came home, but now could do it no longer), I found what a condition I was in: every trifling want was either not supplied, or I had more trouble to procure it than it was worth. I know not when we have had so good a year, both at Wroote and at Epworth, as this year; but, instead of saving anything to clothe my sisters or myself, we are just where we were. A noble crop has almost all gone, beside Epworth living, to pay some part of those infinite debts my father has run into, which are so many, as I have lately found out, that were he to save fifty pounds a year he would not be clear in the world this seven years. So here is a fine prospect indeed of his growing rich! Not but he may be out of debt sooner if he chance to have three or four such years as this has been; but for his getting any matter to leave behind him more than is necessary for my mother's maintenance is what I see no likelihood of at present. . . . Yet in this distress we enjoy many comforts. We have plenty of good meat and drink, fuel, &c., have no duns, nor any of that tormenting care for to provide bread which we had at Epworth. In short, could I lay aside all thought of the future, and could be content without three things, money, liberty, and clothes, I might live very comfortably. While my mother lives I am inclined to stay with her; she is so very good to me, and has so little comfort in the world besides, that I think it barbarous to abandon her. As soon as she is in heaven, or

perhaps sooner if I am quite tired out, I have fully fixed on a state of life—a way indeed that my parents may disapprove, but that I do not regard. Bread must be had, and I won't starve to please any or all the friends I have in the world."

It must have been about the time of the removal to Wroote that Mrs. Wesley heard that her brother was coming home in one of the East India Company's ships as before mentioned, and undertook the journey to London in order to meet him. Her son John was by that time at Oxford, having obtained a Charterhouse scholarship worth forty pounds a year, which, however, did not cover his expenses. Samuel, who was just then laid up with a broken leg, and knew how glad his mother would be to see her second son, asked him to come up to Westminster. This letter gave the youth so much pleasure that he wept for joy, for he had longed exceedingly to see his mother again, as well as to go to Westminster. But as money was scarce, and he was already in debt, he was unable to leave Oxford; and, as soon as Mrs. Wesley got home, she wrote him an anxious yet hopeful little note:—

"DEAR JACK, "Wroote, August 19th, 1724.

"I am uneasy because I have not heard from you. I don't think you do well to stand upon points, and to write only letter for letter. Let me hear from you often, and inform me of the state of your health, and whether you have any reasonable hopes of being out of debt. I am most concerned for the good, generous man that lent you ten pounds, and am ashamed to beg a month or two longer, since he has been so kind as to grant us so much time already. We were amused with your uncle's coming from India;

but I suppose these fancies are laid aside. I wish there had been anything in it, for then, perhaps, it would have been in my power to have provided for you. But, if all things fail, I hope God will not forsake us. We have still His good providence to depend on, which has a thousand expedients to relieve us beyond our view.

"Dear Jack, be not discouraged; do your duty; keep close to your studies, and hope for better days. Perhaps, notwithstanding all, we shall pick up a few crumbs for you before the end of the year.

"Dear Jacky, I beseech Almighty God to bless thee!

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

Less than a month afterwards she wrote again:—

"DEAR JACKY, "Wroote, Sept. 10th, 1724.

"I am nothing glad that Mr. —— has paid himself out of your exhibition; for though I cannot hope, I do not despair of my brother's coming, or at least remembering me where he is.

"The small-pox has been very mortal at Epworth most of this summer. Our family have all had it except me, and I hope God will preserve me from it.

"I heartily wish you were in orders, and could come and serve as one of your father's curates. Then I should see you often, and could be more helpful to you than it is possible to be at this distance."

The burden of debt did not press very heavily on the shoulders of the young undergraduate, and his replies to his mother contained only a little news of what went on around him, some mention of Dr. Cheyne's *Book of Health*, which was interesting to him because he himself was delicate, and requests for

more home news. These communications must have been pretty frequent, as will be seen by Mrs. Wesley's reply:—

"DEAR JACKY, "Wroote, Nov. 24th, 1724.

"I have now three of your letters before me unanswered. I take it very kindly that you write so often. I am afraid of being chargeable, or I should miss few posts; it being exceedingly pleasant to me, in this solitude, to read your letters, which, however, would be pleasing anywhere. Your disappointment in not seeing us at Oxon was not of such consequence as mine in not meeting my brother in London; not but your wonderful curiosities might excite a person of greater faith than mine to travel to your museum to visit them. It is almost a pity that somebody does not cut the weazand of that keeper for lying so enormously.

"I wish you would save all the money you can conveniently spare, not to spend on a visit, but for a wiser and better purpose—to pay debts, and make yourself easy. I am not without hope of meeting you next summer, if it please God to prolong my mortal life. If you then be willing, and have time allowed you to accompany me to Wroote, I will bear your charges as God shall enable me.

"I hope, at your leisure, you will oblige me with some more verses on any, but rather on a religious subject.

"Dear Jack, I beseech Almighty God to bless you.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

Perhaps it was Mrs. Wesley's wish that John should take orders and become one of his father's curates that

weighed with him, for about this time he had some correspondence with Mr. Wesley on the subject, who very properly warned him against undue haste and also against mercenary motives. To his mother the young man confided many of his mental moods, as well as his doubts and questions. The next of her letters that has been preserved deals with these as well as with his desire for ordination :—

"DEAR JACKY, "February 23rd, 1735.

"The alteration of your temper has occasioned me much speculation. I, who am apt to be sanguine, hope it may proceed from the operation of God's Holy Spirit, that, by taking away your relish of sensual enjoyments, He may prepare and dispose your mind for a more serious and close application to things of a more sublime and spiritual nature. If it be so, happy are you if you cherish these dispositions, and now, in good earnest, resolve to make religion the business of your life; for, after all, that is the one thing that, strictly speaking, is necessary, and all things else are comparatively little to the purposes of life. I heartily wish you would now enter upon a serious examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation; that is, whether you are in a state of faith and repentance or not, which you know are the conditions of the gospel covenant on our part. If you are, the satisfaction of knowing it would abundantly reward your pains; if not, you will find a more reasonable occasion for tears than can be met with in a tragedy.

"Now I mention this, it calls to mind your letter to your father about taking orders. I was much pleased with it, and liked the proposal well; but it

is an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family that your father and I seldom think alike. I approve the disposition of your mind, and think the sooner you are a deacon the better; because it may be an inducement to greater application in the study of practical divinity, which I humbly conceive is the best study for candidates for orders. Mr. Wesley differs from me, and would engage you, I believe, in critical learning, which, though accidentally of use, is in no wise preferable to the other. I earnestly pray God to avert that great evil from you of engaging in trifling studies to the neglect of such as are absolutely necessary. I dare advise nothing; God Almighty direct and bless you! I have much to say, but cannot write you more at present. I long to see you. We hear nothing of H——, which gives us some uneasiness. We have all writ, but can get no answer. I wish all be well. Adieu!

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

In the following June, after receiving a letter in which John quoted St. Thomas à Kempis, Mrs. Wesley gave an opinion of that old author which is perfectly just and perspicacious, with an explanation of her meaning, philosophical rather than exclusively theological:—

"I have à Kempis by me; but have not read him lately. I cannot recollect the passages you mention; but believing you do him justice, I do positively aver that he is extremely in the wrong in that impious, I was about to say blasphemous suggestion, that God, by an irreversible degree, has determined any man to be miserable even in this world. His intentions, as Himself, are holy, just, and good; and all the miseries

incident to men here and hereafter proceed from themselves. The case stands thus:—This life is a state of probation, wherein eternal happiness or misery are proposed to our choice; the one as a reward of a virtuous, the other as a consequence of a vicious life. Man is a compound being, a strange mixture of spirit and matter, or rather a creature wherein those opposite principles are united without mixture, yet each principle, after an incomprehensible manner, subject to the influence of the other. The true happiness of man, under this consideration, consists in a due subordination of the inferior to the superior powers, of the animal to the rational nature, and of both to God.

"This was his original righteousness and happiness that was lost in Adam; and to restore man to his happiness by the recovery of his original righteousness was certainly God's design in admitting him to the state of trial in the world, and of our redemption by Jesus Christ. And, surely this was a design truly worthy of God, and the greatest instance of mercy that even omnipotent goodness could exhibit to us.

"As the happiness of man consists in a due subordination of the inferior to the superior powers, &c., so the inversion of this order is the true source of human misery. There is in us all a natural propension towards the body and the world. The beauty, pleasures, and ease of the body strangely charm us; the wealth and honours of the world allure us; and all, under the management of a subtle malicious adversary, give a prodigious force to present things; and if the animal life once get the ascendant of our reason, it is the greatest folly imaginable, because he seeks it where God has not designed he shall ever find it. But this

is the case of the generality of men; they live as mere animals, wholly given up to the interests and pleasures of the body; and all the use of their understanding is to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, without the least regard to future happiness or misery.

"I take à Kempis to have been an honest weak man, with more zeal than knowledge, by his condemning all mirth or pleasure as sinful or useless, in opposition to so many plain and direct texts of Scripture. Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure; of the innocence or malignity of actions? Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself. And so on the contrary.

"'Tis stupid to say nothing is an affliction to a good man. That is an affliction that makes an affliction either to good or bad. Nor do I understand how any man can thank God for present misery, yet do I very well know what it is to rejoice in the midst of deep afflictions; not in the affliction itself, for then would it cease to be one; but in this we may rejoice, that we are in the hand of a God who never did and never can exert His power in any act of injustice, oppression, or cruelty, in the power of that Superior Wisdom which disposes all events, and has promised that all things shall work together for good, for the spiritual and eternal good of those that love Him. We may rejoice in hope that Almighty Goodness will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the

temptation make a way to escape that we may be able to bear it. In a word, we may and ought to rejoice that God has assured us He will never leave nor forsake us; but, if we continue to be faithful to Him, He will take care to conduct us safely through all the changes and chances of this mortal life to those blessed regions of joy and immortality where sin and sorrow can never enter.

"Your brother has brought us a heavy reckoning for you and Charles. God be merciful to us all! Dear Jack, I earnestly beseech Almighty God to bless you! Adieu!

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

The brother here alluded to was Samuel, who, much to his mother's pleasure, came down to Wroote in the summer of 1725 with his wife and son. In taking Charles to live with him, he had stipulated that his father should provide the boy with clothes; and he had also advanced some ready money to John, so that altogether the Rector owed him ten pounds. This visit was a great pleasure to Mrs. Wesley, but it appears to have been the cause of postponing John's ordination till September, probably on account of the necessary expenses. He was ultimately ordained in that month by Bishop Potter, and preached his first sermon at South Leigh, near Oxford. He then went down into Lincolnshire and assisted his father, and in the following March, mainly through the influence of Dr. Morley, Rector of Lincoln College, and of Scotton, near Gainsborough, was elected to a fellowship. This was a subject of great thankfulness and pride to Mr. and Mrs. Wesley; the former wrote a jubilant letter to his "Dear Mr. Fellow Elect of Lincoln"; and,

though he had no more than five pounds wherewith to keep his family till after harvest, and questioned what would be his own fate, added: "Wherever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln." The mother gave thanks with a full heart to God for his success, and speedily had one of her great desires fulfilled in having him with her during the whole summer, reading prayers and preaching twice every Sunday either at Epworth or Wroote. This assistance to his father must have come in the very nick of time, for in the spring the Rector had a slight stroke of paralysis which disabled his right hand. No sooner did John get back to Oxford in September than he was chosen Greek Lecturer and Moderator of the Classes; and, as Charles was then at Christ Church, was in a position to be of considerable assistance to him.

The waters were out terribly that summer over the boggy ground between Epworth and Wroote, and the only communication between them was by boat. Emilia, who had suffered terribly from fever and malaria, had gone to Lincoln in quest of health and employment. Mrs. Wesley suffered very much from the damp, aggravated by continual anxiety and frequent privation. Early in July her husband wrote to John and Charles: "You will find your mother much altered. I believe what will kill a cat has almost killed her. I have observed of late little convulsions in her very frequently, which I don't like." A day or two later, news was sent to the absent boys that she was dangerously ill; and John wrote at once supposing he should never see her more. But the blow was averted, and the cheery old Rector, who had been expressing his desire to be able to serve both his cures, and saying that if not he should die plea-

santly in his last dyke, wrote a short bright letter, probably with his left hand :—

"Wroote, July 18th, 1727.

"DEAR SON JOHN,

"We received last post your compliments of condolence and congratulation to your mother on the supposition of her near approaching demise, to which your sister Patty will by no means subscribe, for she says she is not so good a philosopher as you are, and that she can't spare her mother yet, if it please God, without very great inconveniency."

Patty was the eighth daughter and seventeenth child, and had been looked upon in the family as a special favourite with her mother. She denied that she had any greater share of maternal love than the other girls, saying: "What my sisters called partiality was what they might all have enjoyed if they had wished it, which was permission to sit in my mother's chamber when disengaged, to listen to her conversation with others, and to her remarks on things and books out of school hours."

The father's letter continues :

"And, indeed, though she has now and then some very sick fits, yet I hope the sight of you would revive her. However, when you come you will see a new face of things, my family being now pretty well colonised, and all perfect harmony—much happier, in no small straits, than perhaps we ever were before in our greatest affluence (!) ; and you will find a servant that will make us rich, if God gives us anything to work upon. I know not but it may be this prospect, together with my easiness in my family, which keeps my spirits from sinking, though they tell me I have lost some of

my tallow between Wroote and Epworth; but that I don't value, as long as I 've still strength to perform my office. . . .

"I 'm weary, but your loving Father,

"SAMUEL WESLEY."

The two sons did come home, and found their mother better. On their way back to Oxford they stayed at Lincoln to see Emilia, who was assisting a Mrs. Taylor who kept a girls' school in that city, and Kezzy, the youngest of the family, who was also teaching there and probably receiving some instruction in return for her own and her sister's services. In the following year they both left, Emilia that she might nurse Mrs. Ellison, who was dangerously ill, and Kezzy because she could not remain without Emilia for lack of funds.

CHAPTER XIII.

PARTINGS.

THE routine of life at Wroote, where there was "plenty of meat and drink," though money and clothes were so scarce, and where the girls each took their part in the business of the house and glebe, and in waiting on their parents, is pleasantly described in verse by Samuel Wesley, who saw things at their best during his visit in the summer of 1725, and probably then succeeded in reconciling Hetty and her father and mother. Odes and metrical addresses were very much in vogue, and the Wesleys were all fluent writers of verse. The piece was entitled "Wroote," and sent to Hetty. Here are a few of the stanzas which are contained in his published poems :—

The spacious glebe around the house
Affords full pasture to the cows,
Whence largely milky nectar flows,
O sweet and cleanly dairy!
Unless or Moll, or Anne, or you
Your duty should neglect to do;
And then 'ware haunches black and blue
By pinching of a fairy.

* * * *

Observe the warm well-littered sty
Where sows and pigs and porkets lie;
Nancy or you the draff supply.
They swill and care not whither.
* * * *
But not so glad
As you to wait upon your dad!
Oh, 'tis exceeding pretty!
Methinks I see you striving all
Who first shall answer to his call,
Or lusty Anne, or feeble Moll,
Sage Pat, or sober Hetty;
To rub his cassock's draggled tail,
Or reach his hat from off the nail,
Or seek the key to draw his ale,
When damsel haps to steal it.
To burn his pipe, or mend his clothes,
Or nicely darn his russet hose—
For comfort of his aged toes—
So fine they cannot feel it.

There were, however, times when Wroote was far from being a pleasant abode even in summer, while the difficulties of serving the two cures were very great. Mr. Wesley, though glad of help from his sons when they could come, was afraid lest their constitutions should suffer from hardships which did not appear to have any worse effect on himself than increasing the weariness of which from time to time he complained. Part of a letter written to John, in June 1727, tells what the difficulty was of getting about the fen country when the waters were out :—

" When you come hither, after having taken care of Charterhouse, and your own rector, your head-quarters

will be, I believe, for the most part at Wroote, as mine, if I can at Epworth, though sometimes making an exchange. The truth is, I am ipped (*sic*) by my voyage and journey to and from Epworth last Sunday, being lamed with getting wet, partly with a downfall from a thunder-shower, and partly from the wash over the boat. Yet, I thank God, I was able to preach here in the afternoon, and was as well this morning as ever, except a little pain and lameness, both which I hope to wash off with a hair of the same dog this evening.

"I wish the rain had not reached us on this side Lincoln, but we have it so continual that we have scarce one bank left, and I can't possibly have one quarter of oats in all the levels; but, thanks be to God, the field barley and rye are good. We can neither go afoot or horseback to Epworth, but only by boat as far as Scawsit Bridge, and then walk over the Common, though I hope it will soon be better. . . . I would have your studies as little interrupted as possible, and hope I shall do a month or two longer, as I 'm sure I ought to do all I can both for God's family and my own; and when I find it sinks me, or perhaps a little before, I 'll certainly send you word, with about a fortnight's notice; and in the meantime sending you my blessing, as being your loving father,

"SAMUEL WESLEY."

A few days later he wrote:—

"I knew John could not get between Wroote and Epworth without hazarding his health or life; whereas my hide is tough, and I think no carrion can kill me. I walked sixteen miles yesterday; and, thank God, this morning I was not a penny worse."

A glimpse of dutiful conduct and industry on the

part of one of the girls is also chronicled by the Rector in one of his letters to John at Oxford, where he says: "M—— miraculously gets money even at Wroote, and has given the first fruit of her earning to her mother, lending her money, and presenting her with a new cloak of her own buying and making, for which God will bless her."

The marriages of some of the daughters took place from Wroote, though Susanna was married in 1721 to Mr. Ellison before leaving the Epworth parsonage. He was comfortably off in those days, and she bore him four children, but he was extremely disliked by the Wesleys; and, after a fire which destroyed his house so that the family only just escaped with their lives, his wife left him never to return, and spent the remainder of her days among her children who were grown up and settled in London and Bristol.

Hetty must have been married from Wroote to William Wright very much against her own will, and justly so, as he was in every way unsuited to her. Her uncle Matthew gave her a handsome sum of money, with which her husband set himself up in business in London, where they lived in Crown Court and Frith Street, Soho. Most of her children died in infancy, to her great grief, and her uncouth and illiterate husband took to drinking habits and ill-treated her. She saw a good deal of her uncle while he lived, of her brother at Westminster, and of John and Charles when they were in London. They all sympathised with her, and did all that could be done by fraternal affection to lighten her burdens. She was known and highly thought of in the literary circles of the day, meeting clever people at her uncle's house. Like most of her family, she wrote poems, many of which were

published from time to time in the *Gentleman's Magazine.*

Anne appears to have been married in 1725 to John Lambert, a land surveyor of Epworth, a very worthy man, who was fond of her and appreciated her father's talents. They lived for some time at Epworth, and then removed to Hatfield, where they were within reach of their relatives in London. They had one son named after John Wesley, who was his god-father. Mr. Lambert collected all his father-in-law's pamphlets, and took great pride in them. This marriage was in every way satisfactory.

One of the events that diversified the monotony of life at Wroote must have been the memorable application (probably about 1725) of Garrett Wesley, of Dangan Castle, Ireland, to the Rector, who was his kinsman, asking whether he had a son named Charles, and, if so, whether he would allow him to be appointed his heir. The youth left the decision to his father, who again referred it to Charles as the person most nearly concerned; and Mr. Garrett Wesley went to see him at Westminster and pressed him to accept what he had to offer. For some unaccountable reason it was refused, and Garrett Wesley left his property to a more distant relation, Richard Colley, on condition that he should assume the name of Wesley and the armorial bearings of the family. This Richard Colley Wesley was created Baron Mornington in 1746, and his only son Garrett married the daughter of Viscount Dungannon, and became in due time Earl of Mornington. His eldest son was the Marquis Wellesley, some time Governor-General of India, and his third son the great Duke of Wellington.

In none of Mrs. Wesley's correspondence is the

slightest allusion made to this circumstance. It is difficult to imagine why the heirship should have been refused. Most parents with so large a family would have been only too thankful that one of them should have been raised to a station which his talents and character in every way fitted him to adorn, and Mr. Wesley's natural anxiety on behalf of his wife, should she survive him, would have been allayed had one of his sons been in good circumstances. John Wesley, in the fervour of his religious zeal, and appreciating his brother as a coadjutor, once remarked that this decision made by Charles was "a fair escape"; and Methodist writers generally have regarded and spoken of him as a kind of eighteenth-century Moses, "who esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." The followers of John Wesley, however, have not shown themselves averse to wealth, and many of them have made noble use of it.

While John Wesley was a resident Fellow of Lincoln, and spending his long vacations at Wroote, he was not insensible to feminine charms. As is well known, he succumbed several times to the power of the tender passion, although, when quite a middle-aged man, he made a prosaic match that brought him little or no happiness. The home circle was aware that in 1727 his fancy was caught by a young lady in Worcestershire, Betty Kirkham, and it is probable that she was his first love. He was on unusually affectionate terms with his mother, and perhaps made her his *confidante*, for only something of that nature was likely to have called forth the following beautiful letter :—

"DEAR SON, "Wroote, May 14th, 1725.

"The difficulty there is in separating the ideas of things that nearly resemble each other, and whose

properties and effects are much the same, has, I believe, induced some to think that the human soul has no passion but *love*; and that all those passions or affections which we distinguish by the names of hope, fear, joy, &c., are no more than various modes of love. This notion carries some show of reason, though I cannot acquiesce in it. I must confess I never yet met with such an accurate definition of the passion of love as fully satisfied me. It is, indeed, commonly defined as 'a desire of union with a known or apprehended good.' But this directly makes love and desire the same thing, which, on a close inspection, I conceive they are not for this reason: desire is strongest and acts most vigorously when the beloved object is distant, absent, or apprehended unkind or displeased; whereas when the union is attained and fruition perfect, complacency, delight, and joy fill the soul of the lover while desire lies quiescent, which plainly shows (at least to me) that desire of union is an effect of love, and not love *itself*.

"What then is love? Or how shall we describe its strange mysterious essence? It is—I do not know what! A powerful something! source of our joy and grief, felt and experienced by everyone, and yet unknown to all! Nor shall we ever comprehend what it is till we are united to our First Principle, and there read its wondrous nature in the clear mirror of uncreated Love; till which time it is best to rest satisfied with such apprehensions of its essence as we can collect from our observations of its effects and propensities; for other knowledge of it in our present state is too high and too wonderful for us, neither can we attain to it.

"Suffer now a word of advice. However curious you

may be in searching into the nature, or in distinguishing the properties, of the passions or virtues of human kind for your own private satisfaction, be very cautious in giving nice distinctions in public assemblies; for it does not answer the true end of preaching, which is to mend men's lives, and not fill their heads with unprofitable speculations. And after all that can be said, every affection of the soul is better known by experience than any description that can be given of it. An honest man will more easily apprehend what is meant by being zealous for God and against sin when he hears what are the properties and effects of true zeal, than the most accurate definition of its essence.

"Dear Son, the conclusion of your letter is very kind. That you were ever dutiful, I very well know. But I know myself enough to rest satisfied with a moderate degree of your affection. Indeed, it would be unjust in me to desire the love of anyone. Your prayers I want and wish; nor shall I cease while I live to beseech Almighty God to bless you. Adieu!

"Susanna Wesley."

Part of a letter written to John at Oxford during the winter of 1727 shows that Mrs. Wesley sometimes gave him prudent, practical advice which was not exclusively religious :—

"Dear Jacky, "Jan. 31st, 1727.

"I am nothing pleased we advised you to have your plaid, though I am that you think it too dear, because I take it to be an indication that you are disposed to thrift, which is a rare qualification in a young man who has his fortune to make. Indeed, such a one can hardly be too wary, or too careful. I would

not recommend taking thought for the morrow any further than is needful for our improvement of present opportunities in a prudent management of those talents God has committed to our trust; and so far I think it is the duty of all to take thought for the morrow. And I heartily wish you may be well apprised of this while life is young. For—

'Believe me, youth, (for I am read in cares,
And bend beneath the weight of more than
fifty years).'

Believe me, dear Son, old age is the worst time we can choose to mend either our lives or our fortunes. If the foundations of solid piety are not laid betimes in sound principles and virtuous dispositions, and if we neglect, while strength and vigour lasts, to lay up something ere the infirmities of age overtake us, it is a hundred to one odds that we shall die both poor and wicked.

"Ah! my dear son, did you with me stand on the verge of life, and saw before your eyes a vast expanse, an unlimited duration of being, which you might shortly enter upon, you can't conceive how all the inadvertencies, mistakes, and sins of youth would rise to your view; and how different the sentiments of sensitive pleasures, the desire of sexes, and pernicious friendships of the world would be then from what they are now, while health is entire and seems to promise many years of life.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

In the spring or early summer of 1731, Mr. Matthew Wesley, the elder brother of the Rector of Epworth, made a journey to Scarborough, accompanied only by a servant, and stayed to visit his relations on the way.

He had shown some of their children many kindnesses, and had seen his brother from time to time when business took him to London, but had never before been at his home. It appears that the family was by that time again at Epworth, and all that is directly known of the visit is contained in a letter from Mrs. Wesley to John at Oxford.

"July 12th, 1731.

"My brother Wesley had designed to have surprised us, and had travelled under a feigned name from London to Gainsborough; but there, sending his man out for guide to the Isle (of Axholme) the next day, the man told one that keeps our market his master's name, and that he was going to see his brother, which was the minister of Epworth. The man he informed met with Molly in the market about an hour before my brother got thither. She, full of the news, hastened home, and told us her uncle Wesley was coming to see us, but we could hardly believe her. 'Twas odd to observe how all the town took the alarm, and were upon the gaze, as if some great prince had been about to make his entry. He rode directly to John Dawson's (the Inn); but we had soon notice of his arrival, and sent John Brown with an invitation to our house. He expressed some displeasure at his servant for letting us know of his coming, for he intended to have sent for Mr. Wesley to dine with him at Dawson's, and then come to visit us in the afternoon. However, he soon followed John home, where we were all ready to receive him with great satisfaction.

"His behaviour among us was perfectly civil and obliging. He spake little to the children the first day, being employed (as he afterwards told them) in observing their carriage, and seeing how he liked them;

afterwards he was very free, and expressed great kindness to them all.

"He was strangely scandalised at the poverty of our furniture, and much more at the meanness of the children's habits. He always talked more freely with your sisters of our circumstances than to me, and told them he wondered what his brother had done with his income, for 'twas visible he had not spent it in furnishing his house or clothing his family.

"We had a little talk together sometimes, but it was not often we could hold a private conference; and he was very shy of speaking anything relating to the children before your father, or indeed of any other matter. I informed him, as far as I handsomely could, of our losses, &c., for I was afraid that he should think that I was about to beg of him; but the girls (with whom he had many private discourses), I believe, told him everything they could think on.

"He was particularly pleased with Patty [who was then twenty-five years old]; and, one morning, before Mr. Wesley came down, he asked me if I was willing to let Patty go and stay a year or two with him in London. 'Sister,' says he, 'I have endeavoured already to make one of your children easy while she lives; and if you choose to trust Patty with me, I will endeavour to make her so too.' Whatever others may think, I thought this a generous offer; and the more so, because he had done so much for Sukey and Hetty. I expressed my gratitude as well as I could, and would have had him speak to your father, but he would not himself—he left that to me; nor did he ever mention it to Mr. Wesley till the evening before he left us. He always behaved himself very decently at family prayers, and, in your father's absence, said grace for us

before and after meat. Nor did he ever interrupt our privacy, but went into his own chamber when we went into ours.

"He stayed from Thursday to the Wednesday after; then he left us to go to Scarborough, whence he returned the Saturday se'nnight after, intending to stay with us a few days; but, finding your sisters gone the day before to Lincoln, he would leave us on Sunday morning, for, he said, he might see the girls before they set forward for London. He overtook them at Lincoln, and had Mrs. Taylor, Emilia, and Kezzy, with the rest, to supper with him at the 'Angel.' On Monday they breakfasted with him; then they parted, expecting to see him no more till they came to London; but on Wednesday he sent his man to invite them to supper at night. On Thursday he invited them to dinner, at night to supper, and on Friday morning to breakfast, when he took his leave of them and rode for London. They got into town on Saturday about noon, and that evening Patty writ me an account of the journey.

* * * * *

"Dear Jacky, I can't stay now to talk about Hetty and Patty, but this—I hope better of both than some others do. I pray God to bless you. Adieu!

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

The poor Rector, after his brother's return to London, received a stern letter from him on the sin of not having better provided for his family. It does not appear, however, that he was addicted to any worse personal extravagance than his pipe and a little snuff; but on the one hand he had no aptitude for business, and on

the other, Mr. Matthew Wesley, having had but one child of his own (a son, who turned out badly), did not know how expensive it was to have for so many years an ailing wife and an annually increasing family, and was equally ignorant of the cost of clothing so large a number of grown-up girls. His nieces were no longer children, and were no doubt able to give him a tolerably correct idea of the true state of affairs; and he seems to have been too kind to have given pain unless there was good cause for it. He evidently thought that a man had no business to surround himself with more olive-branches than he could afford to bring up decently and provide for; but there the Rector differed from him *in toto*, and evidently considered that he had considerably benefited his country by adding so largely to the population.

There is another of Mrs. Wesley's letters bearing the same date; but whether that is exact is not ascertainable. It is just possible that news of the accident she relates may have been forwarded to London immediately after its occurrence, and may have caused Mr. Matthew Wesley's unexpected visit:—

"DEAR JACKY, "July 12th, 1731.

"On Friday, June 4th, I, your sister Martha, and our maid were going in our waggon to see the ground we hire of Mrs. Knight at Low Millwood. Father sat in a chair at one end of the waggon, I in another at the other end, Mattie between us, and the maid behind me. Just before we reached the close, going down a small hill, the horses took into a gallop, and out flew your father and his chair. The maid, seeing the horses run, hung all her weight on my

chair and kept me from keeping him company. She cried out to William to stop the horses, and that her master was killed. The fellow leaped out of the seat and stayed the horses, then ran to Mr. Wesley; but ere he got to him, two neighbours, who were providentially met together, raised his head, upon which he had pitched, and held him backwards, by which means he began to respire; for it is certain, by the blackness of his face, that he had never drawn breath from the time of his fall till they helped him up. By this time I was got to him, asked him how he did, and persuaded him to drink a little ale, for we had brought a bottle with us. He looked prodigiously wild, but began to speak, and told me he ailed nothing. I informed him of his fall. He said 'he knew nothing of any fall, he was as well as ever he was in his life.' We bound up his head, which was very much bruised, and helped him into the waggon again, and sat him at the bottom of it, while I supported his head between my hands, and the man led the horses gently home. I sent presently for Mr. Harper, who took a good quantity of blood from him; and then he began to feel pain in several parts, particularly in his side and shoulder. He had a very ill night; but on Saturday morning Mr. Harper came again to him, dressed his head, and gave him something which much abated the pain in his side. We repeated the dose at bed-time; and on Sunday he preached twice and gave the Sacrament, which was too much for him to do, but nobody could dissuade him from it. On Monday he was ill, and slept almost all day. On Tuesday the gout came, but with two or three nights taking Bateman, it went off again, and he has since been better than we could have expected. We thought at first the waggon had gone

over him, but it only went over his gown sleeve, and the nails took a little skin off his knuckles, but did him no further hurt.

"SUS. WESLEY."

Mr. Wesley was evidently much shaken by this accident, from which he never thoroughly recovered; and, perhaps, taking it in conjunction with his brother's remonstrances, began to think seriously what would become of his wife and unmarried daughters if he were to die. Previously his sons seem to have been his first consideration, and perhaps that rankled a little in the minds of the girls, not because they grudged their brothers anything or were not proud of them, but because girls are conscious that they have at least as much claim on their parents as the boys. However this may have been, the father began to think it desirable that he should resign the living in favour of one of his sons, if that son could only be persuaded to accept it. First of all, he proposed it to Samuel, who had just lost his only son, and was terribly unsettled besides, because, after having been for twenty years an usher in Westminster School, he was deprived of what he considered his right. The head-master resigned; Dr. Nicoll, the second master was appointed in his stead; and Samuel Wesley, according to old precedent, expected the position of under or second master. Unhappily, he was not merely a Tory, but a positive Jacobite, and compromised by his devotion to the exiled Bishop Atterbury and his cause, which was that of the Pretender; consequently he found himself shut off from everything he most desired. At this crisis came his father's suggestion that he should become Rector of Epworth. "You have been," said the old man, "a father to your

brothers and sisters, especially to the former, who have cost you great sums in their education both before and since they went to the University. Neither have you stopped here, but have showed your pity to your mother and me in a very liberal manner, wherein your wife joined with you, when you did not overmuch abound yourselves, and have even done noble charities to my children's children. Now what should I be if I did not endeavour to make you easy to the utmost of my power, especially when I know that neither of you have your health at London. . . . As for your aged and infirm mother, as soon as I drop she must turn out unless you succeed me, which, if you do, and she survives me, I know you 'll immediately take her then to your own house, or rather continue her there, where your wife and you will nourish her till we meet again in heaven; and you will be a guide and a stay to the rest of the family."

Samuel, however, was not to be persuaded; he knew that, wherever he lived, his home would be open to his mother if she ever needed it, and was not at all inclined to bury himself in Lincolnshire. The subject was dropped for a little while, and supplanted by a new and engrossing interest in the now small Epworth circle. This was the engagement and marriage of Mary, or "Moll," the deformed daughter, who was called by Charles the "Patient Grizzle" of the family. Her husband was John Whitelamb, who was originally a poor boy in a small charity school at Wroote. Mr. Wesley observed that his mental abilities were considerable, and he must have written a good legible hand, for he was taken into the house at Epworth to transcribe the Rector's ponderous work on the Book of Job, and even to illustrate it with drawings of maps

and figures according to the "light of nature." Art was at a very low ebb; and Mr. Wesley could have been no judge of it, or he would not have dreamed that such drawings could add to the interest of his book, yet even he could see the lack of artistic merit in some of them. In return for "poor starveling Johnnie Whitelamb's" services he received instruction in Latin and Greek, and finally was sent to Oxford, where John Wesley did all he could for him, and spoke highly of his industry, intelligence, and faculty in learning languages. So poor was Whitelamb, that the Wesleys, father and son, and a few friends clubbed together to buy him a gown, though that is not a very costly item of apparel. He took deacon's orders, and became curate at Epworth, to the great comfort of his friend and patron who loved and trusted him. He certainly on one occasion saved his life at Burringham Ferry, when, Mr. Wesley says, "John Whitelamb's long legs and arms swarmed up into the keel and lugged me in after him." He was probably a good deal younger than Mary, who was thirty-eight when she married him; but the affection between them was genuine, and the match had the cordial approbation of all the family. It was extremely difficult to get any curate to live at Wroote, so damp and uninviting was the place; but Whitelamb loved it, and was very earnest in his desire to minister in its church, so Mr. Wesley provided for him and Mary by resigning this small living, and begging the Lord Chancellor to bestow it on his son-in-law. This was done; and he also contrived to give them twenty pounds to start with. Mary did not, however, long enjoy her new status and her husband's affectionate care, for she died in her confinement before she had been married a year, and,

with her babe, was buried in the church. Mrs. Wesley felt her loss very much, and the widower went to Epworth for sympathy. He was in the frame of mind in which men volunteer for missions, or hard work of any kind, and absence from the scenes that recall their sorrows; so Mr. Wesley wrote about him to General Oglethorpe, who was already at work in Georgia, and had a Wroote man among his party:—

"DEAR SIR, "Epworth, Dec. 7th, 1734.

"I cannot express how much I am obliged by your last kind and instructive letter concerning the affairs of Georgia. I could not read it over without sighing (though I have read it several times) when I again reflected on my own age and infirmities, which made such an expedition utterly impracticable for me. Yet my mind worked hard about it; and it is not impossible but Providence may have directed me to such an expedient as may prove more serviceable to your colony than I should ever have been.

"The thing is thus. There is a young man who has been with me a pretty many years, and assisted me in my work of Job; after which I sent him to Oxford, to my son John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College, who took care of his education, where he behaved himself very well, and improved in piety and learning. Then I sent for him down, having got him into deacon's orders, and he was my curate in my absence in London; when I resigned my small living of Wroote to him, and he was instituted and inducted there. I likewise consented to his marrying one of my daughters, there having been a long and intimate friendship between them. But neither he nor I were so happy as to have them live long together, for she died in

childbed of her first child. He was so inconsolable at her loss, that I was afraid he would soon have followed her; to prevent which I desired his company here at my house, that he might have some amusement and business by assisting me in my Cure during my illness. It was then, Sir, I just received the favour of yours, and let him see it for his diversion, more especially because John Lyndal and he had been fellow parishioners and schoolfellows at Wroote, and had no little kindness one for the other. I made no great reflection on the thing at first; but soon after, when I found he had thought often upon it, was very desirous to go to Georgia himself, and wrote the enclosed letter to me on the subject, and I knew not of any person more proper for such an undertaking, I thought the least I could do was to send the letter to your Honour, who would be so very proper a judge of the affair; and if you approve, I shall not be wanting in my addresses to my Lord Bishop of London, or any other, since I expect to be in London myself at spring, to forward the matter as far as it will go.

"As for his character, I shall take it upon myself that he is a good scholar, a sound Christian, and a good liver. He has a very happy memory, especially for languages, and a judgment and intelligence not inferior. My eldest son at Tiverton has some knowledge of him, concerning whom I have writ to him since your last to me. My two others, his tutor at Lincoln, and my third of Christ Church, have been long and intimately acquainted with him; and I doubt not but they will give him at least as just a character as I have done. And here I shall rest the matter till I have the honour of hearing again from you; and shall either drop it or prosecute it as appears most

proper to your maturer judgment; ever remaining your Honour's most sincere and most obliged friend and servant,

"SAMUEL WESLEY."

John Whitelamb, however, did not go to Georgia, but spent most of his time at Epworth during the months of pain and feebleness that preceded Mr. Wesley's death, though he seems to have made so long an absence, probably at Oxford, that Mrs. Wesley inquired of her sons about him. He ultimately returned to Wroote, where he lived a retired and studious life for thirty years, dying in 1769. He did not quite agree with John and Charles Wesley on religious subjects, which they did not very well like, and the whole family dropped their intercourse with him.

That the mother was afraid lest Martha should lose her comfortable home with her uncle Matthew is shown by a short letter dated February 21, 1732, and written on the same sheet as the one to John in which she detailed her famous system of education :—

"DEAR CHARLES,

"Though you have not had time to tell me so since we parted, yet I hope you are in health; and when you are more at leisure, I shall be glad to hear you are so from yourself. I should be pleased enough to see you here this spring, if it were not upon the hard condition of your walking hither; but that always terrifies me, and I am commonly so uneasy for fear you should kill yourself with coming so far on foot, that it destroys much of the pleasure I should otherwise have in conversing with you.

"I fear poor Patty has several enemies at London,

and that they have put it in her head to visit us this summer. I am apt to believe that if they get her once out of my brother's house they will take care to keep her thence for ever. It is a pity that honest, generous girl has not a little of the subtlety of the serpent with the innocence of the dove. She is no match for those who malign her; for she scorns to do an unworthy action, and therefore believes everybody else does so too. Alas! it is a great pity that all the human species are not as good as they ought to be.

"Prithee, what has become of John Whitelamb? Is he yet alive? Where is Mr. Morgan? If with you, pray give my service to him. I am sorry the wood-drink did him no service. I never knew it fail before, if drank regularly; but perhaps he was too far gone before he used it. I doubt he eats too little or sleeps cold, which last poisons the blood above all things. Dear Charles, I send you my love and blessing. Em, Matty, Kez send their love to you both.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

A letter that has not appeared since the year 1800, when it was published in the *Methodist Pocket Book*, shows how warm an interest Mrs. Wesley took in John's pupils, and how they exchanged opinions on books as well as doctrines:—

"DEAR SON, "Epworth, Jan. 1st, 1733.

"Pray give my service to Mr. Robinson, your pupil, and tell him I am as good as my word; I daily pray for him, and beg him, if he has the least regard for his soul, or any remaining sense of religion, to shake off all acquaintance with the prophane. It is the free-thinker and the sensualist, not the

despised Methodist, who will be ashamed and confounded when called to appear before that Almighty Judge whose Godhead they have blasphemed, and whose offered mercy they have rejected and ludicrously despised.

"The pleasures of sin are but for a short and uncertain time, but eternity hath no end; therefore one would think that few arguments might serve to convince a man who has not lost his senses that it is of the greatest importance to us to be very serious in improving the present time, and acquainting ourselves with God while it is called to-day, lest, being disqualified for His blissful presence, our future existence be inexpressibly miserable.

"You are certainly right. The different degrees of piety are different states of mind which we must pass through; and he who cavils at practical advice plainly shows that he has not gone through those states; for in all matters of a religious nature, if there be not an internal sense in the hearers corresponding to that sense in the mind of the speaker, what is said will have little effect. Yet sometimes it falls out that, while a zealous Christian is speaking on spiritual subjects, the blessed Spirit of God will give such light to the mind of the hearers as will dispel their native darkness, and enable them to apprehend those spiritual things, of which before they had no knowledge. As in the case of Cornelius and his friends, it is said: 'While Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard him.'

"Mr. Law is a good man, yet he is but a man; and, therefore, no marvel that he has not been so explicit as you could have wished in speaking on some particular subjects. Perhaps his mind was too full of the

sense of that blessed Being readily to hit upon words to express a thing so far above their nature. Who can think, much less speak, on that vast subject? His greatness, His dignity, astonishes us! The purity of His nature, His redeeming love, confounds and overpowers us! At the perception of His glory, our feeble powers are suspended, and nature faints before the God of nature.

"For my own part, after many years' search and enquiry, I still continue to pay my devotions to an Unknown God. I dare not say I love Him; only this —I have chosen Him for my own Happiness, my All, my only Good; in a word—for my God. And when I sound my will, I feel it adheres to its choice, though not so faithfully as it ought. Therefore I desire your prayers, which I need much more than you do mine.

"That God is everywhere present, and we always present to Him, is certain; but that we should always be able to realise His presence is quite another thing. Some choice souls have obtained such an habitual sense of the presence of God as admits of few interruptions. But, my dear, consider, He is so infinitely blessed, so absolutely lovely, that every perception of Him, every approach to His supreme glory and blessedness, imparts such a vital joy and gladness to the mind, as banishes all pain and sense of misery; and were eternity added to this happiness, it would be heaven.

"My love and blessing attend you!

"I am, your affectionate mother,

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

Mrs. Wesley had a good deal of anxiety about the health of her sons at Oxford, and suffered much her-

self "from pain of body and other severer trials not convenient to mention," besides seeing her husband's health rapidly failing; but no word about her own probable privations after his demise ever seems to have escaped her. Perhaps this was from the unselfishness of her nature, or perhaps she never thought it likely that she should survive him. She alludes to several of these subjects in portions of a letter to John:—

"I don't know how you may have represented your case to Dr. Huntingdon. I have had occasion to make some observation in consumptions, and am pretty certain that several symptoms of that disorder are beginning upon you, and that unless you take more care than you do, you will put the matter past dispute in a little time. But take your own way; I have already given you up, as I have some before which once were very dear to me. Charles, though I believe not *in* a consumption, is in a fine state of health for a man of two or three and twenty, that can't eat a full meal but he must presently throw it up again! It is a great pity that folks should be no wiser, and that they can't fit the mean in a case where it is so obvious to view that none can mistake it that do not do it on purpose. I heartily join with your small society in all their pious and charitable actions which are intended for God's glory, and am glad to hear that Mr. Clayton and Mr. Hall have met with desired success. May you still in such good works go on and prosper. Though absent in body, I am with you in the spirit, and daily recommend and commit you all to Divine Providence. You do well to wait on the Bishop, because it is a point of prudence and civility; though, if he be a good man, I cannot think it in the power of anyone to prejudice him against you.

"Your arguments against horse-races do certainly conclude against masquerades, balls, plays, operas, and all such light and vain diversions, which, whether the gay people of the world will own it or no, do strongly confirm and strengthen the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; all which we must renounce, or renounce our God and hope of eternal salvation. I will not say it is impossible for a person to have any sense of religion who frequents those vile assemblies, but I never, throughout the course of my long life, knew so much as one serious Christian that did; nor can I see how a lover of God can have any relish for such vain amusements.

"The *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* is an excellent, good book, and was an acquaintance of mine many years ago, but I have unfortunately lost it. There are many good things in Baxter, with some faults, which I overlook for the sake of the virtues. Nor can I say of all the books of divinity I have read which is the best; one is the best at one time, one at another, according to the temper and disposition of the mind.

"Your father is in a very bad state of health: he sleeps little and eats less. He seems not to have any apprehension of his approaching exit, but I fear he has but a short time to live. It is with much pain and difficulty that he performs Divine Service on the Lord's Day, which sometimes he is obliged to contract very much. Everybody observes his decay but himself, and people really seem much concerned for him and his family.

"The two girls, being uneasy in their present situations, do not apprehend the sad consequences which in all appearance must attend his death so much as I

think they ought to do; for, as bad as they think their condition now, I doubt it will be far worse when his head is laid low. Your sisters send their love to you and Charles; and my love and blessing to you both. Adieu.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

Some parts of a very long letter written to John by his mother during Mr. Wesley's last absence in London, are interesting as showing how well she was acquainted, through her son's conversation and letters, with his Oxford friends, and the mode of dividing their time and regulating their occupations which had already earned for them the appellation of Methodists:—

"DEAR SON, "Saturday, March 30th, 1734.

"The young gentleman's father (Mr. Morgan), for aught I can perceive, has a better notion of religion than many people, though not the best, for few insist upon the necessity of private prayers. But if they go to church sometimes, and abstain from the grossest acts of mortal sin, though they are ignorant of the spirit and power of godliness, and have no sense of the love of God and universal benevolence, yet they rest well satisfied of their salvation, and are pleased to think they enjoy the world as much as they can while they live, and have heaven in reserve when they die. I have met with abundance of these people in my time, and I think it one of the most difficult things imaginable to bring these off from their carnal security, and to convince them that heaven is a state as well as a place—a state of holiness begun in this life, though not perfected till we enter on life eternal—that all sins are so many

spiritual diseases, which must be cured by the power of Christ before we can be capable of being happy, even though it were possible for us to be admitted into heaven hereafter. If the young man's father were well apprised of this, he would not venture to pronounce his son a good Christian upon such weak grounds as he seems to do.' Yet, notwithstanding the father's indifference, I cannot but conceive good hopes of the son, because he chooses to spend so much of his time with you (for I presume he is not forced to it); and if we may not from thence conclude that he is good, I think we may believe he desires to be so; and if that be the case, give him time. We know that the great work of regeneration is not performed at once, but proceeds by slow and often imperceptible degrees, by reason of the strong opposition which corrupt nature makes against it. . . .

"Mr. Clayton and Mr. Hall (afterwards Mrs. Wesley's son-in-law) are much wiser than I am; yet, with submission to their better judgments, I think that though some mark of visible superiority on your part is convenient to maintain the order of the world, yet severity is not; since experience may convince us that such kind of behaviour towards a man (children are out of the question) may make him a hypocrite, but will never make him a convert. Never trouble yourself to enquire whether he love you or not. If you can persuade him to love God, he will love you as much as is necessary. If he love *not* God, his love is of no value. But be that as it may, we must refer all things to God, and be as indifferent as we possibly can be in all matters wherein the great enemy self is concerned.

"If you and your few pious companions have devoted two hours in the evening to religious reading

or conference, there can be no dispute but that you ought to spend the whole time in such exercises as it was set apart for. But if your evenings be not strictly devoted, I see no harm in talking sometimes of your secular affairs; but if, as you say, it does your novice no good, and does yourselves harm, the case is plain—you must not prejudice your own souls to do another good, much less ought you to do so when you can do no good at all. Of this ye are better judges than I can be.

"It was well you paid not for a double letter. I am always afraid of putting you to charge, and that fear prevented me from sending you a long scribble indeed a while ago. For a certain person [probably John Whitelamb] and I had a warm debate on some important points in religion, wherein we could not agree; afterwards he wrote some propositions which I endeavoured to answer. And this controversy I was minded to have sent you, and to have desired your judgment upon it, but the unreasonable cost of such a letter then hindered me from sending it. Since, I have heard him in two sermons contradict every article he before defended, which makes me hope that upon second thoughts his mind is changed; and if that is so, what was said in private conference ought not to be remembered, and therefore I would not send you the papers at all.

"I cannot think Mr. Hall does well in refusing an opportunity of doing so much service to religion as he certainly might do if he accepted the living he is about to refuse. Surely there never was more need of orthodox, sober divines in our Lord's vineyard than there is now; and why a man of his extraordinary piety and love for souls should decline the service in this critical

juncture I cannot conceive. But this is none of my business.

"You want no direction from me how to employ your time. I thank God for his inspiring you with a resolution of being faithful in improving that important talent committed to your trust. It would be of no service to you to know in any particular what I do or what method in examination or anything else I observe. I am superannuated, and do not now live as I would, but as I can. I cannot observe order, or think consistently, as formerly. When I have a lucid interval I aim at improving it; but alas! it is but aiming.

* * * * *

"But I am got towards the end of my paper before I am aware. One word more, and I have done. As your course of life is austere, and your diet low, so the passions, as far as they depend on the body, will be low too. Therefore you must not judge of your interior state by your not feeling great fervours of spirit and extraordinary agitations, as plentiful weeping, &c., but rather by firm adherence of your will to God. If upon examination you perceive that you still choose Him for your only good, that your spirit (to use a Scripture phrase) cleaveth stedfastly to Him, follow Mr. Baxter's advice and you will be easy: 'Put your souls, with all your sins and dangers, and all their interests, into the hand of Jesus Christ your Saviour, and trust them wholly with Him by a resolved faith. It is He that hath purchased them, and therefore loveth them. It is He that is the owner of them, by right of redemption; and it is now become His own interest, even for the success and honour of His redemption, to save them.'

"When I begin to write to you, I think I do not

know how to make an end. I fully purposed, when I began to write, to be very brief; but I will conclude, though I find I shall be forced to make up such a clumsy letter as I did last time. To-day John Brown, sen., sets forward for London, in order to attend your father home. Pray give my love and blessing to Charles. I hope he is well, though I have never heard from him since he left Epworth. Dear Jacky, God Almighty bless thee!

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

This last journey had been made by the Rector to London in his endeavour to see his "Dissertations on Job" through the press. He printed five hundred copies, more than three hundred of which were subscribed for, and Samuel at Tiverton and John at Oxford did their best to obtain subscriptions for the rest. Meanwhile he and his eldest son both did their utmost to persuade John to take the living of Epworth, so as to keep on the old home; but John gave twenty-six reasons against it, very good in his own eyes and in those of posterity. Perhaps the one uppermost at the moment was his utter freedom from care while in residence at Oxford. His food was ready at certain hours, and his income at fixed periods, so that he had only to take, count, and carry it home. The family had seen so much of care for meat and drink and the wherewithal for clothing, that this was perfectly natural. Afterwards, however, he did inquire in the necessary quarter whether it was possible that the Lord Chancellor might give him the living of Epworth, and, hearing that it was most unlikely, abandoned the project altogether.

The last time Mrs. Wesley put pen to paper before

her husband's death was on February 14th, 1735, when the household probably consisted only of the Rector, herself, Kezzy, and John Whitelamb. Mary was dead, Patty in London, and John in the study, writing to his father-in-law's dictation, or in some way endeavouring to lighten the burden of old age and infirmity. As the spring came on the Rector became weaker, and at length, feeling sure that the end was near, Mrs. Wesley sent for John and Charles. They came in time for him to enjoy seeing and talking with them; and as they watched him, they observed how his most cherished aspirations were given up at the approach of death. These were the desire of finishing "Job," of paying his debts, and of seeing his eldest son once more in the flesh. Emilia came over from Gainsborough, where her brothers had enabled her to set up a school for herself; and they took turns in watching and tending him. Mrs. Wesley was thoroughly broken down, and came into the room but rarely, for she invariably fainted and had to be carried away and restored by those whose hands were already so full. Mr. Wesley passed peacefully away at sunset on April 25th, 1735, sensible to the end, drawing his last breath as his son John finished repeating the commendatory prayer for the second time. They went immediately to tell their mother, who was less affected than they feared she would have been, and said that her prayers were heard in his having so easy a death and her being so strengthened to bear it.

Charles wrote all particulars on the 30th, probably two days after the funeral, to his brother Samuel, who was then settled at Tiverton, and added:—

"My mother would be exceedingly glad to see you as soon as can be. We have computed the debts,

and find they amount to above one hundred pounds, exclusive of Cousin Richardson's. Mrs. Knight, her (Mrs. Wesley's) landlady, seized all her quick stock, valued at above forty pounds, for fifteen pounds my father owed her, on Monday last, the day he was buried. And my brother this afternoon gives a note for the money, in order to get the stock at liberty to sell, for security of which he has the stock made over to him, and will be paid as it can be sold. My father was buried very frugally, yet decently, in the churchyard, according to his own desire.

"It will be highly necessary to bring all accounts of what he owed you, that you may mark all the goods in the house as principal creditor, and thereby secure to my mother time and liberty to sell them to the best advantage.

* * * * *

"If you take London in your way, my mother desires that you will remember that she is a clergyman's widow. Let the Society give her what they please, she must be still in some degree burdensome to you, as she calls it. How do I envy you that glorious burden, and wish I could share it with you! You must put me in some way of getting a little money, that I may do something in the shipwreck of the family, though it be no more than furnishing a plank."

All that was mortal of Samuel Wesley was laid in Epworth churchyard, and over his remains was placed a grit slab, supported by brickwork, and having cut on its surface an epitaph written by his widow. This was re-cut and repaired in 1819 by Dr. Adam Clarke, and in 1872 the tomb was thoroughly restored by a lady living at Epworth.

CHAPTER XIV.

WIDOWHOOD.

THERE was nothing to detain Mrs. Wesley at Epworth after her few affairs were settled and her sons had returned to Tiverton and Oxford. Samuel took Kezia home with him, and the mother took up her abode for a season with her eldest daughter at Gainsborough. It was no doubt a comfort to her to be with Emilia as the attachment between them had always been very strong, and Martha, the other daughter, who was particularly devoted to her mother, was in London, and preparing to be married. The man to whom she was engaged was Mr. Wesley, or Westley Hall, the friend and disciple of her brothers at Oxford, who was mentioned in some of Mrs. Wesley's letters to her sons. Martha first met him while keeping her uncle Matthew's house in London, where he proposed to her and was accepted, and he afterwards accompanied John and Charles to Epworth, where, curiously enough, no one seems to have known anything about his engagement, and he made diligent love to Kezia. After winning her affections, he pretended to have a vision from heaven forbidding the match, and, probably being quite aware of Mr. Matthew Wesley's kind intentions towards his

favourite niece, returned to his allegiance to Martha. When the brothers heard that she was about to marry Mr. Hall, they accused her of having robbed Kezia of her lover, and then she wrote a full account of the whole affair to her mother, who considered her quite justified in accepting Mr. Hall, and formally gave her consent to the match, adding that if the uncle also gave his, there could be no obstacle.

The pair were united in the summer of 1735, and went to reside at Wootton in Gloucestershire, where the bridegroom had a curacy. The wedding was celebrated by quite a long poem, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for September of that year.

The attention of John and Charles Wesley was just then much engrossed by their approaching departure to Georgia. General James Oglethorpe had some years previously founded the State of Georgia; he was, as we have seen, in correspondence with the Rector of Epworth, and personally acquainted with Samuel Wesley of Westminster, and in this manner came to know his energetic and zealous young brother. In 1732, he returned to England to beat up recruits for the better population of his colony and mission work among the natives. Through the assistance of the Government, he got together 130 Highlanders and 170 Germans to go back with him, and engaged John Wesley as chaplain and missionary, and Charles as his private secretary. When this expedition was first proposed to them it was personally distasteful, and John decidedly refused it. The general and the trustees urged him to reconsider his determination, and he no doubt remembered his father's warm interest in the colony. He was somewhat shaken in his resolution, but still said he could not leave England while his aged

and infirm mother lived. Then he was asked whether her consent to his going would alter the case, so he went down to Gainsborough and spent three days with Mrs. Wesley and Emilia, resolving in his own mind to accept his mother's decision as the voice of Providence. Her reply to what he had to say to her was, "Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more."

This, of course, was conclusive; Charles was at once ordained, taking deacon's and priest's orders within a few days on account of the exigence of the circumstances, and with two Oxford friends, Mr. Ingham and Mr. Delamotte, they started in faith and not without a spice of the love of adventure and change of scene natural to men of their age. They all sailed from Gravesend, in the good ship *Symmonds*, on the 14th of October 1735, about six months after the break-up of the home at Epworth.

It is not to be supposed that Mrs. Wesley did not exchange many letters with her sons on the subject, but only one has been preserved. The following short epistle was probably her first after they sailed:—

"Gainsborough,

"Dear Son, November 27th, 1735.

God is Being itself, the I AM, and therefore must necessarily be the Supreme Good! He is so infinitely blessed, that every perception of His blissful presence imparts a glad vitality to the heart. Every degree of approach towards Him is, in the same proportion, a degree of happiness; and I often think that were He always present to our mind, as we are present to Him, there would be no pain nor sense of misery. I have long since chose him for my only Good, my All,

my pleasure, my happiness, in this world as well as in the world to come. And although I have not been so faithful to His grace as I ought to have been, yet I feel my spirit adheres to its choice, and aims daily at cleaving steadfastly unto God. Yet one thing often troubles me: that notwithstanding I know that while we are present with the body we are absent from the Lord, notwithstanding I have no taste, no relish left for anything the world calls pleasure, yet I do not long to go home, as in reason I ought to do. This often shocks me; and as I constantly pray (almost without ceasing) for thee, my son, so I beg you likewise to pray for me, that God would make me better, and take me at the best.

"Your loving mother,

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

In September 1736, Mrs. Wesley, who moved about more in her widowhood than she had done during all her previous life, went to reside with her eldest son at Tiverton, most likely taking the place of Kezia, who was invited by the Halls to go and live with them. She was heartily welcomed by Samuel and his wife, and Mrs. Berry the mother of the latter. Samuel declared himself to be socially in a desert, "having no conversable person except my wife, until my mother came last week." It is almost certain that, while at Tiverton, Mrs. Wesley must have told her son as many particulars as she could remember about her father's family. It will be remembered that he was first cousin to the Earl of Anglesey, that he had only two sons (both of whom were dead, leaving no children), and that he left all papers in the hands of his youngest daughter, and, unhappily, they were destroyed in the fire that

consumed Epworth Parsonage. The Earldom of Anglesey had become extinct for want of heirs male. If the Annesley papers had been in existence, it was supposed that there might have been some possibility of Samuel Wesley claiming it through his mother. His only son, however, was dead, and the one daughter, who grew up to womanhood, married an ambitious man, a Mr. Earle, who might have pushed his researches vigorously with such a prize in view, had not Charles Wesley married late in life and become the father of sons. If there had been any prospect of success, it would have been that of Charles junior, but his father, who at twenty years of age had refused to be recognised as the heir of Garret Wesley of Dangan, was the last man to prosecute any inquiries into the inheritance of English estates and a title. The Earles after a time went to France and settled there; one of the daughters, it is said, married the celebrated Marshal Ney.

Disquieting intelligence speedily came from Georgia. John and Charles were terribly disappointed, especially the latter. He also became possessed of the idea that he was unregenerate. Samuel wrote urging his return, and sent word to John that he was uneasy about Kezia's residence with the Halls, both because he distrusted his sister's husband and on account of the affection the girl had previously had for him. He could not afford, he said, to keep her unless John could pay for her board. Charles did return, reaching England on the 3rd of December 1736, bringing dispatches from the colonists. He was heartily welcomed by his uncle Matthew, and at his house received a warm-hearted letter from Samuel, with all news, and an invitation to Tiverton, which he speedily

accepted, to the great joy of his mother, who was, however, at the moment confined to her room by illness.

In July 1737, Mrs. Wesley took up her abode with the Halls, where she seems to have been very comfortable. About her residence with them at Wootton, little is known. A letter from her to Mrs. Berry at Tiverton is in existence, but it is almost exclusively theological. In the concluding paragraph she says: "I thank God, I am somewhat better in health than when I wrote last, and I tell you, because I know you will be pleased with it, that Mr. Hall and his wife are very good to me. He behaves like a gentleman and a Christian, and my daughter with as much duty and tenderness as can be expressed, so that on this account I am very easy." When the Halls moved to Fisherton near Salisbury, she accompanied them, and it was while living there that she had the joy of seeing John return from Georgia, and, from what she heard from him and Charles, came to the conclusion that neither of them ought to go back there. She was very much astonished when her sons made the discovery (so called) that their religious creed and teaching had up to that time been erroneous, and declared that only by faith in the Atonement of Christ could men believe in the salvation of their souls. From that time forth they preached the doctrines known to theologians as justification by faith and the witness of the Spirit. She, perhaps, recognised that "God fulfils Himself in many ways," and was, moreover, approaching the border-land where souls see through the mist of prejudices to the eternal verities; for in reply to an excited letter from her eldest son, who cautioned everyone he knew to beware of this novel

method of preaching the Gospel, she penned an epistle which, having been much discussed, has become almost historical. She is supposed to have been on a visit to Epworth at the time:—

"DEAR SON, "Thursday, March 8th, 1738–9.

Your two double letters came to me safe last Friday. I thank you for them, and have received much satisfaction in reading them. They are written with good spirit and judgment, sufficient, I should think, to satisfy any unprejudiced mind that the reviving these pretensions to dreams, visions, &c., is not only vain and frivolous as to the matter of them, but also of dangerous consequence to the weaker sort of Christians. You have well observed 'that it is not the method of Providence to use extraordinary means to bring about that for which ordinary ones are sufficient.' Therefore the very end for which they pretend that these new revelations are sent seems to me one of the best arguments against the truth of them. As far as I can see, they plead that these visions, &c., are given to assure some particular persons of their adoption and salvation. But this end is abundantly provided for in the Holy Scriptures, wherein all may find the rules by which we must live here and be judged hereafter, so plainly laid down, 'that he who runs may read'; and it is by these laws we should examine ourselves, which is a way of God's appointment, and therefore we may hope for His direction and assistance in such examination. And if, upon a serious review of our state, we find that in the tenour of our lives we have or do now sincerely desire and endeavour to perform the conditions of the gospel covenant required on our parts, then we may

discern that the Holy Spirit hath laid in our own minds a good foundation of a strong, reasonable, and lively hope of God's mercy through Christ.

"This is the assurance we ought to aim at, which the apostle calls 'the full assurance of hope,' which he admonishes us to 'hold fast to the end.' And the consequence of encouraging fanciful people in this new way of seeking assurance (as all do that hear them tell their silly stories without rebuke), I think, must be turning them out of God's way into one of their own devising. You have plainly proved that the Scripture examples and that text, in fact, which they urge in their defence will not answer their purpose, so that they are unsupported by any authority human or Divine (which you have well observed); and the credit of their relations must, therefore, depend on their own single affirmation, which surely will not weigh much with the sober, judicious part of mankind.

"I began to write to Charles before I last wrote to you, but could not proceed, for my chimney smoked so exceedingly that I almost lost my sight, and remained well nigh blind a considerable time. God's blessing on eye-water I make, cured me of the soreness, but the weakness long remained. Since, I have been informed that Mr. Hall intends to remove his family to London, hath taken a house, and I must (if it please God I live) go with them, where I hope to see Charles; and then I can fully speak my sentiments of their new notions more than I can do by writing; therefore I shall not finish my letter to him.

"You have heard, I suppose, that Mr. Whitfield is taking a progress through these parts to make a collection for a house in Georgia for orphans and such of the natives' children as they will part with, to learn

our language and religion. He came hither to see me, and we talked about your brothers. I told him I did not like their way of living, wished them in some place of their own, wherein they might regularly preach, &c. He replied, 'I could not conceive the good they did in London; that the greatest part of our clergy were asleep, and that there never was a greater need of itinerant preachers than now'; upon which a gentleman that came with him said that my son Charles had converted him, and that my sons spent all their time in doing good. I then asked Mr. Whitfield if my sons were not for making some innovations in the Church, which I much feared. He assured me they were so far from it that they endeavoured all they could to reconcile Dissenters to our communion; that my son John had baptised five adult Presbyterians in our own way on St. Paul's Day, and, he believed, would bring over many to our communion. His stay was short, so I could not talk with him so much as I desired. He seems to be a very good man, and one who truly desires the salvation of mankind. God grant that the wisdom of the serpent may be joined to the innocence of the dove!

"My paper and sight are almost at an end, therefore I shall only add that I send you and yours my hearty love and blessing. Service to Mrs. Berry. I had not an opportunity to send this till Saturday the 13th ult. Love and blessing to Jacky Ellison. Pray let me hear from you soon. We go in April."

Whether the Halls went to London at that time for more than a brief visit is not known, nor has any intimation been found of Mrs. Wesley's knowledge of the trials her daughter had to go through, or the angelic

manner in which she bore them. In the autumn of the same year Mrs. Wesley was again at Tiverton with her eldest son. Charles, who was very open-hearted, wrote to her fully and freely about the new lights that had dawned upon him and John, and she replied, not wishing to discourage him, but with much wonder as to what the novel ideas might be, and whither they were tending:—

"Dear Charles, "October 19th, 1738.

"It is with much pleasure I find your mind is somewhat easier than formerly, and I heartily thank God for it. The spirit of man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear? If this has been your case, it has been sad indeed. But blessed be God, who gave you convictions of the evil of sin, as contrary to the purity of the Divine nature and the perfect goodness of His law. Blessed be God, who showed you the necessity you were in of a Saviour to deliver you from the power of sin and Satan (for Christ will be no Saviour to such as see not their need of one), and directed you by faith to lay hold of that stupendous mercy offered us by redeeming love. Jesus is the only Physician of souls; His blood the only salve that can heal a wounded conscience.

"It is not in wealth, or honour, or sensual pleasure, to relieve a spirit heavily laden and weary of the burden of sin. These things have power to increase our guilt by alienating our hearts from God; but none to make our peace with Him, to reconcile God to man, and man to God, and to renew the union between the Divine and human nature.

"No, there is none but Christ, none but Christ,

who is sufficient for these things. But blessed be God, He is an all-sufficient Saviour; and blessed be His holy name, that thou hast found Him a Saviour to thee, my son! Oh, let us love Him much, for we have much forgiven!

"I would gladly know what your notion is of justifying faith, because you speak of it as a thing you have but lately received.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

A second letter, which shows that Mrs. Wesley did not quite comprehend the change of views experienced by her sons, and inculcated by them on their followers, was probably also written from Tiverton:—

"DEAR CHARLES, "December 6th, 1738.

"I think you are fallen into an odd way of thinking. You say that till within a few months you had no spiritual life nor any justifying faith.

"Now, this is as if a man should affirm he was not alive in his infancy, because when an infant he did not know he was alive. All, then, that I can gather from your letter is that till a little while ago you were not so well satisfied of your being a Christian as you are now. I heartily rejoice that you have now attained to a strong and lively hope in God's mercy through Christ. Not that I can think you were totally without saving faith before; but it is one thing to have faith, and another thing to be sensible we have it. Faith is the fruit of the Spirit and the gift of God; but to feel or be inwardly sensible that we have true faith, requires a further operation of God's Holy Spirit. You say you have peace, but not joy in believing. Blessed be God for peace! May this peace

rest with you. Joy will follow, perhaps not very closely, but it will follow faith and love. God's promises are sealed to us but not dated, therefore patiently attend His pleasure. He will give you joy in believing. Amen.

"SUS. WESLEY."

Mrs. Wesley was calmer than her son Samuel, but he was terribly alarmed by the reports of the strange wave of excitement that broke over men's souls and bodies at the preaching of his brothers and Mr. Whitfield; at the refusal of the clergy to allow them to speak from their pulpits, and of the bishops to permit them to preach in their dioceses. He recognised the voice of the priest announcing the forgiveness of sins from the place sanctioned by the authority of the Church, but he was afraid of the same doctrine when promulgated out of doors under the canopy of heaven. It seemed to him as if the bulwarks of the body ecclesiastic were being beaten down and the flood-gates of schism opened. Perhaps that, too, was the view of the Hebrew Rabbis eighteen hundred years ago, when the young and unknown Teacher spoke words that thrilled the hearts of the multitudes that clustered round him on the lake-shore or mountain-side. No such movement had ever roused England before; it was the response of soul to soul, the awakening of humanity from a long sleep, the magnetic touch of spiritual genius that kindled dry bones into vivid life. Samuel Wesley, with all his goodness, lacked the magic of the divine afflatus; but his mother, with her finer feminine instinct, began to feel and comprehend its inspiration. Perhaps the strife of tongues would have waxed hot in the family, had not the Master he

served faithfully according to his lights called Samuel up to the realms of peace and clear vision. Mrs. Wesley left him in his usual health at Tiverton and went to London early in 1739, perhaps resting at Salisbury on her way. John contemplated making a home and centre for his work in the metropolis, and wished her to live there. The Halls were near, Hetty in Soho, Anne at Hatfield, and Kezzy, her youngest born, at Bexley, where her brother John had placed her in the family of the Vicar, Mr. Piers, his friend and follower. Charles had recently been ill, and Kezzy, though delicate herself, had nursed him tenderly. The mother probably hailed the opportunity of being within easy reach of them all, and regarded the Foundry as a haven of rest for her old age. It certainly promised well, and bade fair to be a pleasant, healthy, airy residence.

Moorfields was the people's park of the period, with fine old elm trees, wide stretches of green grass and broad gravel walks, where the city fathers enjoyed rest and recreation with their families after business hours. Close to this open space was Windmill Hill, on the east side of which stood a ruinous tiled building, where successive Governments had cast the first great guns used by our armies. But in 1716, while the French cannon taken in Marlborough's successful campaigns were being re-cast, a terrible explosion took place, blowing off the roof, shattering the walls, and killing and maiming many of the workmen. It was felt that such a source of danger ought not to exist in the very midst of London, and for the future the guns were cast at Woolwich, the old foundry being left in ruins. There were about forty yards of frontage, and the depth of the plot of land on

which it stood was thirty-three yards. The site and building were secured for £115, and the edifice, when altered, repaired, and adapted for its new purposes cost about £650 more. John Wesley had no income beyond that brought in by his Oxford fellowship, but friends lent and subscribed money, though the full amount was long in coming. There was a rough chapel with benches, a rude pulpit, hastily made of boards, a house for the accommodation of the lay preachers and one or two servants, a small coach-house and stable, and, over the band room, apartments for John Wesley, to which he brought home his mother and installed her as mistress.

Here she was able to talk many things over with her son, who tells us that till a short time previously she said "she had scarce heard such a thing mentioned as the having God's spirit bear witness with our spirit: much less did she imagine that this was the common privilege of all true believers. 'Therefore,' said she, 'I never durst ask it for myself. But two or three weeks ago, while my son Hall was pronouncing these words in delivering the cup to me, "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee," the words struck through my heart, and I knew God for Christ's sake had forgiven me all my sins.' I asked whether her father (Dr. Annesley) had not the same faith; and whether she had not heard him preach it to others. She answered, he had it himself; and declared a little before his death, that for more than forty years, he had no darkness, no fear, no doubt at all of his being accepted in the Beloved. But that, nevertheless, she did not remember to have heard him preach, no, not once, explicitly upon it; whence she supposed he also looked upon it as the peculiar bless-

ing of a few; not as promised to all the people of God."

Thus Mrs. Wesley was won to the views of her son John, much to the distress of Samuel, who wrote about the middle of October 1739:—

"John and Charles are now become so notorious, the world will be curious to know when and how they were born, what schools bred at, what colleges of in Oxford, and when matriculated, what degrees they took, and where, when, and by whom ordained; what books they have written or published. I wish they may spare so much time as to vouchsafe a little of their story. For my own part, I had much rather have them picking straws within the walls, than preaching in the area of Moorfields.

"It was with exceeding concern and grief I heard you had countenanced a spreading delusion, so far as to be one of Jack's congregation. Is it not enough that I am bereft of both my brothers, but must my mother follow too? I earnestly beseech the Almighty to preserve you from joining a schism at the close of your life, as you were unfortunately engaged in one at the beginning of it. It will cost you many a protest, should you retain your integrity, as I hope to God you will. They boast of you already as a disciple. Charles has told Joe Bentham that I do not differ much, if we understand one another. I am afraid I must be forced to advertise, such is their apprehension or their charity. But they design separation. Things will take their natural course, without an especial interposition of Providence. They are already forbid all the pulpits in London, and to preach in that diocese is actual schism. In all likelihood it will come to the same all over England, if the bishops have courage

enough. They leave off the liturgy in the fields; though Mr. Whitfield expresses his value for it, he never once read it to his tatterdemalions on a common. Their societies are sufficient to dissolve all other societies but their own. Will any man of common sense, or spirit, suffer any domestic to be in a bond engaged to relate everything without reserve to five or ten people, what concerns the person's conscience, how much soever it may concern the family? Ought any married persons to be there, unless husband and wife be there together? This is literally putting asunder whom God hath joined together. As I told Jack, I am not afraid the Church should excommunicate him, discipline is at too low an ebb, but that he should excommunicate the Church. It is pretty near it; holiness and good works are not so much as *conditions* of our acceptance with God. Love feasts are introduced, and extemporary prayers and expositions of scripture, which last are enough to bring in all confusion; nor is it likely they will want any miracles to support them. He only can stop them from being a formed sect, in a very little time, who *ruleth the madness of the people.*

"Ecclesiastical censures have lost their terrors, thank fanaticism on the one hand, and atheism on the other. To talk of persecution, therefore, from thence, is mere insult. It is—

'To call the bishop greybeard Gaff,
And make his power as mere a scaff,
As Dagon when his hands were off.'

* * * *

"My sister Hall has written to me on the subject, whom I will answer as soon as ever I can. In the meantime I shall be glad to hear from you, and beg

your blessing upon us and ours, and your prayers that we may be safely guided through the painful remnant of our lives, and arrive by Christ's mercies to everlasting happiness.

"I am, dear Mother,
"Your dutiful and affectionate Son,
"SAMUEL WESLEY."

This long letter must have been one of the last Samuel Wesley ever wrote. He had not been very well, but considered himself "on the mending hand." On the 5th of November he went to bed in fairly good health, but was taken ill at three o'clock in the morning, and died after four hours suffering, at the age of forty-nine.

Before taking leave of Samuel Wesley, it is worth while to mention that St. George's Hospital, nearly opposite Apsley House, owes its existence to him. It was originally an infirmary, the first in Westminster, and was founded, in 1719, mainly through his untiring exertions. Hyde Park Corner thus bears witness to the triumphs of two kinsmen, one of whom was an adept in the arts of war, and the other in those of peace.

CHAPTER XV.

LAST YEARS.

THE news of Samuel Wesley's death was communicated by a friend and neighbour to Charles, who was then at Bristol, and probably also to John at the Foundry. The latter had often been rallied by his relatives on his reticence as to family matters, and it appears that he actually started off to meet Charles and go with him to Tiverton to see their widowed sister-in-law without communicating the sad news to his mother, who was ill in her own room. Very likely he had not the heart to do so, for all the family knew how dearly she loved her first-born, and what a pattern son he had been to her. Possibly he commissioned one of his sisters to tell her gently. How she bore it she herself told Charles:—

"DEAR CHARLES, "November 29th, 1739.

"Upon the first hearing of your brother's death, I did immediately acquiesce in the will of God, without the least reluctance. Only I marvelled that Jacky did not inform me of it before he left, since he knew thereof; but he was unacquainted with the manner of God's dealing with me in extraordinary cases, which,

indeed, is no wonder; for though I have so often experienced His infinite mercy and power in my support, and inward calmness of spirit when the trial would otherwise have been too strong for me, yet His ways of working are to myself incomprehensible and ineffable. Your brother was exceeding dear to me in this life, and perhaps I have erred in loving him too well. I once thought it impossible to bear his loss, but none know what they can bear till they are tried. As your good old grandfather used to say, 'That is an affliction that God makes an affliction.' Surely the manifestation of His presence and favour is more than an adequate support under any suffering whatever. If He withhold His consolations, and hide His face from us, the least suffering is intolerable. But, blessed and adored be His holy name, it hath not been so with me, though I am infinitely unworthy of the least of all His mercies. I rejoice in having a comfortable hope of my dear son's salvation. He is now at rest, and would not return to earth to gain the world. Why then should I mourn? He hath reached the haven before me, but I shall soon follow him. He must not return to me, but I shall go to him, never to part more.

"I thank you for your care of my temporal affairs. It was natural to think that I should be troubled for my dear son's death on that account, because so considerable a part of my support was cut off. But to say the truth, I have never had one anxious thought of such matters; for it came immediately into my mind that God by my child's loss had called me to a firmer dependance on Himself; that though my son was good, he was not my God; and that now our Heavenly Father seemed to have taken my cause

more immediately into His own hand; and, therefore, even against hope, I believed in hope that I should never suffer more.

"I cannot write much, being but weak. I have not been down-stairs above ten weeks, though better than I was lately. Pray give my kind love and blessing to my daughter and Philly. I pray God to support and provide for her.

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

About a month afterwards she wrote again, probably in reply to a letter from Charles, whose head-quarters were at Bristol:—

"Foundry, December 27th, 1739.

"DEAR CHARLES,

"You cannot more desire to see me than I do to see you. Your brother, whom I shall henceforth call Son Wesley, since my dear Sam is gone home, has just been with me and much revived my spirits. Indeed, I have often found that he never speaks in my hearing without my receiving some spiritual benefit. But his visits are seldom and short, for which I never blame him, because I know he is well employed, and, blessed be God, hath great success in his ministry. But, my dear Charles, still I want either him or you; for, indeed, in the most literal sense, I am become a little child and want continual succour. 'As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend.' I feel much comfort and support from religious conversation when I can obtain it. Formerly I rejoiced in the absence of company, and found the less I had of creature comforts the more I had from God. But, alas! I am fallen from that spiritual converse I once enjoyed.

And why is it so? Because I want faith. God is an omnipresent unchangeable God, in whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning; the fault is in myself, and I attribute all mistakes in judgment and all errors in practice to want of faith in the blessed Jesus. Oh, my dear, when I consider the dignity of His person, the perfection of His purity, the greatness of His sufferings, but above all His boundless love, I am astonished and utterly confounded; I am lost in thought. I fall into nothing before Him! Oh, how inexcusable is that person who has knowledge of these things, and yet remains poor and low in faith and love. I speak as one guilty in this matter. I have been prevented from finishing my letter. I complained I had none to converse with me on spiritual things, but for these several days I have had the conversation of many good Christians, who have refreshed in some measure my fainting spirits; and though they hindered my writing, yet it was a pleasing and I hope not an unprofitable interruption they gave me. I hope we shall shortly speak face to face; and I shall then, if God permit, impart my thoughts more fully. But then, alas! when you come, your brother leaves me. Yet that is the will of God, in whose blessed service you are engaged, who has hitherto blessed your labours, and preserved your persons. That He may continue so to prosper your work, and protect you both from evil, and give you strength and courage to preach the true gospel in opposition to the united prayers of evil men and evil angels, is the hearty prayer of, dear Charles,

"Your loving mother,

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

About this time Emilia Wesley, who had been for a

few years married to the sometime apothecary of Epworth, the terribly impecunious Mr. Harper, became a widow, and, leaving Gainsborough, came with a true and favourite servant to remain with her mother at the Foundry.

It must also have been at this juncture that Mrs. Wesley gave her testimony, in one instance, at least, in favour of lay preaching. John Wesley's work was that of an evangelist and organizer, whose parish was the world; he rode from place to place strengthening the churches, and it was necessary that someone should be left in charge at the Foundry. The person selected was Mr. Thomas Maxfield, "a young man of good sense and piety." His duties were to meet the classes and bands, and read and explain the Scriptures. From this to preaching a sermon was only a step, and he soon did it, speaking with much earnestness and eloquence. John Wesley was greatly disturbed when he heard of it and came quickly home. His mother saw that something was wrong, and asked what it was. "Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher, I find," was the curt answer of the man whose natural desire was to be head and chief in whatever he undertook. Mrs. Wesley soon gave him her opinion on the matter:—

"John, you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of readily favouring anything of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man; for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him yourself."

The mother's words had weight, and Maxfield preached before his master. "It is the Lord," exclaimed John Wesley, "let Him do what seemeth Him good. What am I that I should withstand God?"

And thus the ordained priest, who had been a stickler for sacerdotal privileges, the scholar and "Fellow of Lincoln" was led to sanction the lay preaching which was destined to form an important element in the Methodism he founded. It is supposed that Mrs. Wesley took a warm interest in the women who joined the classes at the Foundry and came there for teaching and advice. She would naturally do so when well enough.

It was characteristic of a youthful zealot like Charles Wesley to imagine that his mother's views of the plan of salvation were inadequate and to endeavour to correct them in a long letter. She not only took what he had to say very meekly but laid his words to heart; and her humble yet dignified reply to him is the last letter she is known to have written:—

"Dear Charles, "Foundry, Oct. 2nd, 1740.

"I do heartily join with you in giving God thanks for your recovery. He hath many wise reasons for every event of Providence, far above our apprehension, and I doubt not but His having restored you to some measure of health again will answer many ends which as yet you are ignorant of.

"I thank you for your kind letter; I call it so, because I verily believe it was dictated by a sincere desire of my spiritual and eternal good. There is too much truth in many of your accusations: nor do I intend to say one word in my own defence, but rather choose to refer all things to Him that knoweth all things. This I must tell you: you are somewhat mistaken in my case. Alas! it is far worse than you apprehend it to be! I am not one of those who have never been enlightened, or made partaker of the

heavenly gift, or of the Holy Ghost, but have many years since been fully awakened, and am deeply sensible of sin, both original and actual. My case is rather like that of the Church of Ephesus; I have not been faithful to the talents committed to my trust, and have lost my first love. 'Yet, is there any hope in Israel concerning this thing?' I do not, and by the grace of God I will not, despair; for ever since my sad defection, when I was almost without hope, when I had forgotten God, yet I then found He had not forgotten me. Even then He did by His Spirit apply the merits of the great Atonement to my soul, by telling me that Christ died for me. Shall the God of truth, the Almighty Saviour, tell me that I am interested in His blood and righteousness, and shall I not believe Him? God forbid! I do, I will believe; and though I am the greatest of sinners, that does not discourage me; for all my transgressions are the sins of a finite person, but the merits of our Lord's sufferings and righteousness are infinite! If I do want anything without which I cannot be saved (of which I am not at present sensible), then I believe I shall not die before that want is supplied. You ask many questions which I care not to answer; but I refer you to our dear Lord, who will satisfy you in all things necessary for you to know. I cannot conceive why you affirm yourself to be no Christian, which is in effect to tell Christ to His face that you have nothing to thank Him for, since you are not the better for anything He hath yet done or suffered for you. Oh! what great dishonour, what wondrous ingratitude, is this to the ever-blessed Jesus? I think myself far from being so good a Christian as you are, or as I ought to be; but God forbid that I should renounce the little Christianity I have; nay,

let me rather grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. I know not what other opinion people may have of human nature, but, for my part, I think that without the grace of God we are utterly incapable of thinking, speaking, or doing anything good: therefore, if in any part of our life we have been enabled to perform anything good, we should give God the glory. If we have not improved the talents given us, the fault is our own. I find this is a way of talking much used among this people, which has much offended me; and I have often wished they would talk less of themselves and more of God. I often hear loud complaints of sin, &c., but rarely, very rarely, any word of praise and thanksgiving to our dear Lord, or acknowledgment of His Infinite . . ."

The remaining sentences are lost, and, as they probably bore on the kind of persons who frequented the Foundry and its services, it is a pity.

It was about six months after the date of this letter, early in March 1741, that Kezia Wesley died at Bexley at the age of thirty-two. It is supposed that she never quite recovered the shock of finding that Wesley Hall had played with her youthful affections as a mere pastime while he was pledged to her sister Martha. She was the youngest, born just after her mother had gone through the terrible ordeal of fright and danger at the Epworth fire. She had endured many privations herself in her youth, all of which helped to account for her delicacy; but hearts do count for something in women's lives, and an unhappy attachment often produces a want of physical rallying power, especially in one who has no very strong ties to life. Charles seems

to have been present when his sister died, and to have been satisfied with her mental and spiritual state.

The only specific disease from which Mrs. Wesley suffered was gout, which in her case was hereditary. It certainly had not arisen from high living and luxury in her own person. The powers of life gradually failed, and all the remaining daughters gathered round their mother. She especially asked Anne not to leave her again if she had strength to remain. Charles was obliged to go away, thinking that she might linger till his return; John was at Bristol, and, hearing that she was failing fast, rode off on Sunday evening, July 18th, 1742, after preaching to a large congregation. He reached the Foundry on the 20th, and, after seeing her, wrote in his journal, "I found my mother on the borders of eternity; but she has no doubt or fear, nor any desire but, as soon as God should call her, to depart and be with Christ."

On the following Friday afternoon he saw that the end was very near: she was speechless, but conscious; so he read the commendatory prayer, as he had done seven years previously for his father. It was four o'clock, and, being weary with watching and emotion, he left her side for a moment to "drink a dish of tea." One of his sisters called him back. "She opened her eyes wide," he says, "and fixed them upward for a moment. Then the lids dropped, and the soul was set at liberty, without one struggle or groan or sigh. We stood round the bed, and fulfilled her last request, uttered a little before she lost her speech, 'Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God.'"

It fell to Mrs. Lambert's lot to write to Charles the particulars of his mother's last days, and she said:

"She laboured under great trials, both of soul and body, some days after you left her; but God perfected His work in her about twelve hours before He took her to Himself. She waked out of a slumber; and we, hearing her rejoicing, attended to the words she spake, which were these, 'My dear Saviour! are you come to help me in my extremity at last?' From that time she was sweetly resigned indeed; the enemy had no more power to hurt her. The remainder of her time was spent in praise."

Mrs. Wesley was buried on Sunday, August 1st, in Bunhill Fields, John reading the funeral service of the Church of England, and Emilia, Susanna, Hetty, Anne, and Martha standing round. A large number of friends were assembled, as well as others drawn together by sympathetic curiosity. Then a hymn was sung, and John Wesley, who in the prime of his early manhood had desired so earnestly that he might not survive his mother, stood by that mother's grave and preached to the assembled multitude one of his most eloquent and impassioned sermons.

A plain stone was soon set at the head of that last resting-place, with an epitaph in verse from the pen of Charles Wesley:—

"Here lies the Body
of
Mrs. Susanna Wesley,
Youngest and last surviving daughter of
Dr. Samuel Annesley."

"In sure and stedfast 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."

It was curious that the usually precise John neither mentioned his father on this tomb-stone, nor put the date of his mother's birth or death. He busied himself, however, in having a copper-plate engraving made of a very good likeness of her taken during her later years. A copy of this forms the frontispiece to Kirk's *Mother of the Wesleys,* and is seen in miniature at the commencement of Mr. Stevenson's *Memorials of the Wesley Family.* There is also a miniature extant which shows something of what she was like in her prime. Among her far-away descendants there are one or two women who resemble her very closely in appearance.

The original tomb-stone having become much defaced by time and weather, in 1828, when memorial tablets to the memory of several distinguished Methodists were put up in the City Road Chapel at the expense of the Wesleyan Book Committee, a new stone, with a fresh inscription, was set up over Mrs. Wesley's grave. Reverence for their sweet singer did

not induce them to perpetuate the whole of his verses, and the epitaph now runs :—

"Here lies the body of
MRS. SUSANNA WESLEY,
Widow of the REV. SAMUEL WESLEY, M.A.
(late Rector of Epworth, in Lincolnshire),
who died July 23rd, 1742,
Aged 73 years.
She was the youngest daughter of the
REV. SAMUEL ANNESLEY, D.D., ejected by the Act
of Uniformity from the Rectory of St. Giles's,
Cripplegate, Aug. 24th, 1662.
She was the mother of nineteen children,
of whom the most eminent were the
REVS. JOHN and CHARLES WESLEY;
the former of whom was, under God, the
Founder of the Societies of the People
called Methodists."

"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."

In 1869 Bunhill Fields, though long before closed to interments, was secured as a cemetery in perpetuity, planted with trees, and laid out with walks leading close to the most remarkable graves. The spot where Mrs. Wesley's remains are is where the numbers 17 and 42 intersect on the outer wall, and a few yards west-by-south from the tomb of John Bunyan, who was alive and preaching in her long-past girlhood.

An obelisk of Sicilian marble erected to her memory

has stood opposite the City Road Chapel, fronting Bunhill Fields, since December 1870, bearing a very similar inscription to the one last given.

This little life of Susanna Wesley can hardly be better concluded than in the words of the late Isaac Taylor, himself the son of a mother who, with her husband's assistance, educated the whole of her very large family, and had the satisfaction of seeing them grow up to be among the most cultivated and pious persons of their own or any other generation of English men and women: "The Wesleys' mother was the mother of Methodism in a religious and moral sense; for, her courage, her submissiveness to authority, the high tone of her mind, its independence, and its self-control, the warmth of her devotional feelings and the practical direction given to them, came up and were visibly repeated in the character and conduct of her sons."

CHAPTER XVI.

SURVIVORS AND DESCENDANTS.

THE family group that surrounded Mrs. Wesley's death-bed consisted of her daughters Emilia, Susanna, Hetty, Anne, and Martha, and her son John. Emilia, Mrs. Harper, was now fifty years of age, a widow, and childless; for though an infant had been born to her, it speedily died. She had known but little comfort during either her single or her married life; her temper was exacting and not very sweet; she was conscious of possessing talents, and painfully aware that she had had no opportunity of shining. In youth she was engaged to a Mr. Leybourne, and though in consequence of the disapproval of Mrs. Wesley and Samuel the match was broken off, Emilia was not a woman to forget, or to love again readily. This disappointment embittered her whole life. She was very fond of her mother, and her affection for John, who was eleven years her junior, had a good deal of the maternal element in it, but when Hetty stumbled she was hard upon her. Poverty takes a great deal of the sweetness out of a woman's nature, and after her marriage she suffered even more from this cause than when in her girlhood money and clothes were scarce at Epworth. Mr. Harper was scarcely able to maintain himself, the profits of her school did not go very far, she fell into ill-health, had to sell her clothes in

order to obtain food, and was reduced to the hourly expectation of having her very bed seized on account of being in arrears with her rent. Whether that calamity actually did come to pass or no is uncertain; but, at all events, her husband's death left her free to wind up her affairs at Gainsborough and come with an old servant to London. From that time John supported her, and she was a great deal at the Foundry, though she does not appear to have lived there altogether. The Epworth ghost did not altogether desert her, as is shown by the following letter to John:—

"DEAR BROTHER, "Feb. 16th, 1750.

"I want most sadly to see you and talk some hours with you as in times past. Some things are too hard for me; these I want you to solve. One doctrine of yours and of many more, viz. no happiness can be found in any or all things in this world, that as I have sixteen years of my own experience which lie flatly against it, I want to talk with you about it. Another thing is that wonderful thing called by us 'Jeffery.' You won't laugh at me for being superstitious if I tell you how certainly that *something* calls on me against any extraordinary new affliction; but so little is known of the invisible world, that I, at least, am not able to judge whether it be a friendly or an evil spirit. I shall be glad to know from you where you live, where you may be found. If at the Foundry, assuredly on foot or by coach I shall visit my dear brother, and enjoy the very great blessing of some hours' converse.

"I am your really obliged friend and affectionate sister,

"EMILIA HARPER."

A memorandum on the back of this note, in John Wesley's own hand, affirms that it was answered on the 18th, but that answer has not been preserved. "Jeffery" was an agent who usually proclaimed himself by raps and noises, and since, on the 8th of February, about a week previous to the date of the note, London had been thrown into confusion and alarm by a smart shock of earthquake, persons whose faith in the supernatural is not very strong, may be pardoned for imagining that Mrs. Harper may have mistaken noises produced by that convulsion of nature for those by which the sprite of Epworth had been in the habit of manifesting its presence.

When the Wesleyan body took the well-known chapel in West Street, Mrs. Harper and the old servant removed to the house which joined it, and took up their abode in rooms which communicated with the chapel by means of a gallery behind the pulpit and a window which, when thrown open, enabled the inmates to join in the services without being seen themselves. Mrs. Harper became a kindly and much subdued old lady when she had lost her memory, and died from general decay of nature in 1771, when nearly eighty years of age.

It will be remembered that Susanna Wesley, the second daughter of the Epworth family, married Richard Ellison in 1721, and that, though in fairly good circumstances, he was always considered an unpleasant son-in-law. When the four children born of this union were grown or growing up, a fire occurred in Mr. Ellison's house, and from that time his wife refused to live with him, and resided with first one and then another of her sons and daughters in London. The deserted husband tried by every means

in his power to get her to return, but she would neither see him nor reply to his letters. At last he caused a report of his death to be circulated, and she straightway went down into Lincolnshire to attend his funeral. Finding that it was only a *ruse* to get her back again, she immediately returned to London, and no one could persuade her to be reconciled to her husband. Misfortune overtook Mr. Ellison in his later years. It was the business of the Commissioners of Sewers in the Fen Country to keep the great drains open, and, as this was neglected, the water flowed all over and submerged his land for a couple of years. His cattle and horses died, he could raise no crops, and obtain no compensation, and was consequently reduced to such poverty, that he went to the Foundry and threw himself on the charity of his brother-in-law, John Wesley, who recommended him to a rich banker, having the distribution of some trust-moneys, saying that "the smallest relief could never be more seasonable." Although the unhappy man's wife kept aloof, John and Charles were very kind to him, and considered him quite a reformed character. He died in London early in April 1760, and Charles Wesley read the burial service over his remains.

The children of this ill-matched pair were John, Ann, Deborah, and Richard Annesley Ellison. The eldest lived and died at Bristol, and some of his descendants still reside in that city. Ann married Pierre le Lièvre, a French refugee, who died leaving her with one son; she afterwards married a Mr. Gaunt. She was a vivacious, clever, handsome little woman, and Mrs. Ellison resided principally with her, and died in her house, at the age of sixty-nine, early in December 1764. John Wesley wrote to Charles

on the 7th, saying, "Sister Sukey was in huge agonies for five days, and then died in full assurance of faith. Some of her last words when she had been speechless for some time were 'Jesus is here, Heaven is love!'"

Mrs. Gaunt's son by her first marriage was named Pierre after his father, and educated at Kingswood, at the great school founded by the Wesleys near Bristol. He Anglicised his Christian name into Peter and dropped the particle before his surname. He went into the Church and became head-master of the Lutterworth Grammar School, and curate and assistant to Mr. Johnson, who, in those days of pluralities, was rector of Lutterworth and vicar of Claybrook. At the latter place Mr. Johnson had a very nice house and grounds, and received pupils, among whom was the late Lord Macaulay. Mr. Lièvre married a Miss Sturges and reared six children. William, the last of them, died about twenty years ago at Bruntingthorpe, in Leicestershire, where he was probably master of one of those small endowed schools which have now either been remodelled by the Commissioners or absorbed by other educational institutions. He was a retiring, studious man, with the soul and much of the felicitous skill in diction of the true poet; and had his lot been cast in literary circles he would no doubt have made a name and a niche for himself. As it was, he was laughed at by his family for his rhyming propensities, and degenerated into the fecklessness often seen in those who have missed their true vocation. The Derbyshire and Leicestershire papers, however, gladly accepted his verses for their Poet's Corners. Several of them are very pretty, and, were they reprinted, would find favour with many.

Deborah Ellison also married a French refugee, a silk-weaver named Pierre Collett; and one of her daughters became the wife of a prominent Wesleyan, Dr. Byam.

Richard Annesley Ellison died when only twenty-seven, leaving two daughters. The eldest of them married Mr. Voysey of the King's House, Salisbury, and became the mother of two sons and two daughters. The elder son died unmarried; the elder daughter married the Comte de Fauconpret de Thulus, a French *savant* of great reputation, who, during his exile in this country, translated all Sir Walter Scott's novels into French. On the accession of Louis Philippe in 1830, he returned with his wife to France, where he held a high position in the University of Paris. Their home was at Fontainebleau, where they gathered round them many of the choice spirits of the day, and there M. de Fauconpret died in 1842. His widow died at Hackney in the summer of 1868. Her younger sister was twice married, first to Mr. Edlin, and secondly to Mr. Bristow. Two of her sons and her three daughters by her first husband are all living, and she herself has died whilst this work has been passing through the press. Mrs. Ellison's youngest grandson, Annesley Voysey, married and became the father of Henry Voysey, an architect of some note, Richard Voysey, who took orders in the Church of England, and the Rev. Charles Voysey, whose career is well known. No one in this branch of the family has ever been deficient in brain power, or in the courage to maintain his or her own opinions.

Hetty Wesley, Mrs. Wright, was in very poor health at the time of her mother's death; she was worn out by what she endured at the hands of her

besotted husband, who, nevertheless, seems to have preserved some kind of affection for her. She had several children, who died, much to her grief, in their babyhood; but a daughter, named Amelia, is supposed to have lived for some years, even if she did not survive her mother. She is said to have retained the traces of her youthful beauty till quite late in life. She had been the trusted friend, and, in his latter days, the nurse of her uncle Matthew, who was very good to her in a pecuniary sense. In 1743 she was living at Stanmore in Middlesex; soon after she became a Methodist, and saw a good deal of her brothers. They were persuaded that the Clifton Hot-wells, rightly used, would cure most physical evils, and accordingly sent her there. They had many friends in Bristol and its neighbourhood, and their sister was received by a Mrs. Vigor, with whom she remained for several months. In the autumn of 1745, she was at home again, and wrote a letter to Charles, in which she spoke affectionately of her husband:—

"London, Frith Street,

"DEAREST BROTHER, "October 4th, 1745.

"I received both your kind letters and thank you for them, but am surprised you have heard no account of my better health, though I could not write myself, since many have seen me who I know correspond with you, and some of them are gone to Bath or Bristol lately, especially sister Naylor and Mrs. Wigginton. Indeed, I continue exceeding weak, keeping my bed, except when I rise to have it made, and it is almost incredible what a skeleton I am grown, so that my bones are ready to come through my skin. But through mercy, the fever that immediately

threatens me (with a violent cough and some fatal symptoms) is gone off, and I am more likely to recover than ever; nay, if I could once get my strength, I should not make a doubt of it. This ease of body and great calm of mind, I firmly believe, is owing to the prayer of faith. I think this support the more extraordinary, because I have no sense of God's presence, ever since I took my bed; and you know what we are when left to ourselves under great pain and apprehensions of death. Yet, though I am yet in desertion, and the enemy is very busy, I enjoy so great a measure of quietness and thankfulness as is really above nature. Hallelujah! Whether or no the bitterness of death is past, I am perfectly easy and resigned, having given up this, with dear Will's spiritual welfare and all other things, to the Sovereign Physician of souls and bodies.

"Dearest brother, no selfish consideration can ever make me wish your stay in this most dangerous diabolical world; yet we must always say, 'Thy will be done'; and I am pleased still to think God will permit us to meet again, though I cannot say I desire life a minute longer, even upon these terms. Willy gives his love, and would be unfeignedly glad to see you. Pray join in prayer with me still that he may persevere. Matty, too, gives her duty and desires your prayers. Neither of their souls prosper as I could wish them. Strange that though we know sanctification is a gradual work, we want our neighbours to go faster than ourselves; but poor Willy only waits for the first gift. I have not one fear for those who are truly in earnest.

"If the nation is run stark mad in politics, though never a jot the wiser or holier, no wonder that the

person you mentioned in your last is brimful of them, though she keeps within bounds, and does not talk treason, whatever she may think. I am glad the believers I know seem to run into no extreme about the present affairs, either of losing the one thing needful by talking too much or praying too little. The Lord give us a right judgment in all things.

"My prayers, love, and best wishes attend all dear friends at Bristol, from whom I have received innumerable obligations; but, above all, Mrs. Vigor and her family, who showed unwearied love in serving and humouring me. . . .

"It has been one of my heaviest crosses that I have been unable to write to them all; but if ever I recover, I despair not of doing it yet, if acceptable from a novice. You think, perhaps, I may write to them as well as you; but, dear Charles, I write now in bed, and you cannot believe what it costs me. I trust to remember and bless you many times yet before I die; wishing we may have another happy meeting first, if it is best. So, with prayers for the universal Church, ministers, assistants, and all mankind, I take leave to subscribe myself your most obliged and loving sister,

"MEHET. WRIGHT."

Mrs. Wright seems to have partially recovered from this illness, though she was never strong again; but in January and February 1750, it was evident that her end was approaching. She shared in the exaggerated and almost hysterical sentiments so common among the early Methodists, and to a friend who went to see her said, "I have ardently wished for death, because you know we Methodists always die in a transport of joy." Charles seems to have been the only brother just then

in London, and he speaks of her on March 14th and 18th as "very near the haven"; but when he called on the 21st, her spirit had just departed. On the 26th, he adds, "I followed her to her quiet grave, and wept with them that weep." She was fifty-three years of age.

Mr. Wright was inconsolable, and begged Charles Wesley not to forsake him, though his sister was dead. He survived her several years, married again, and did not always live peaceably with his second wife. For some years he saw nothing of the Wesleys, but, when struck down by palsy, sent for Charles, and was much rejoiced to see him. That sanguine evangelist saw reason for hope in his end, and perhaps, after all, his faults were rather those of the head than of the heart.

Dr. Adam Clarke collected and published ten of Mrs. Wright's poems; they were in accordance with the ideas of the people among whom she moved, and tinged with the melancholy that saddened her existence; but unbounded weariness of this world, and ecstatic longing for the unknown and unknowable future is always morbid and unhealthy. The only verse worth quoting here is from a little poem addressed to a mother on the death of her children :—

"Though sorer sorrows than their birth
Your children's death has given;
Mourn not that others bear for earth,
While you have peopled Heaven."

We have no further glimpse of Anne Wesley, Mrs. Lambert, and her husband, after their presence at the mother's funeral in Bunhill Fields, nor is anything known of their son's career.

Martha Wesley, Mrs. Hall, so closely resembled her brother John in personal appearance, that Dr. Adam Clarke declared that no one would have known which was which if they had only been dressed alike. Her handwriting, also, was very much like his, and this must have arisen from the fact that when she was about nineteen she wrote "miserably," to quote her own expression, and felt very far inferior to Emilia and Hetty. John, therefore, set her some copies, which she imitated most carefully, and thus modelled her calligraphy by his.

We have already seen that she lived with her husband at Salisbury, and that Mrs. Wesley spent a good deal of time with them before her removal to the Foundry. During her residence in that city, Mrs. Hall had ten children, only one of whom lived beyond infancy. Mr. Hall was a strange, and, as it proved, an immoral man. He possessed all the qualifications necessary for a Mormon elder, and had he lived in these days, would very probably have joined that body. A good many of his shortcomings resulted from reaction after the strain and tension of religious fervour in his youth; he began to think for himself, and to entertain doubts which, though common enough now, were then regarded with horror. In a word, Mr. Hall became unorthodox and refused to believe in a great many doctrines which are now passed over in silence except by very ardent religionists. This was the true head and front of his offending in the estimation of many of John and Charles Wesley's coadjutors, who condemned him in stronger terms than the brothers did themselves. Human nature is prone to these extremes.

There is a certain hardness about the following letter

from John, written to Mrs. Hall very shortly after the burial of their mother. It is as if he would insinuate that the time spent by a mother in her natural duties towards her children must be abstracted from that which should be occupied in furthering her own spiritual advancement, and, if so, is an item of a very selfish creed. Happily, most of us believe that in rightly and conscientiously performing our parental and other obligations, we are best fulfilling the ends for which we are created. John Wesley, who never had a child of his own, and whose marriage was not precisely a union of souls, looked at the matter from quite another point of view :—

"Newcastle-on-Tyne,

"DEAR SISTER, "November 17, 1742.

"I believe the death of your children is a great instance of the goodness of God towards you. You have often mentioned to me how much of your time they took up. Now that time is restored to you, and you have nothing to do but to serve our Lord without carefulness and without distraction, till you are sanctified in body, soul and spirit. As soon as I saw Mr. Hall, I invited him to stay at the Foundry, but he desired I would have him excused. There is a strange inconsistency in his temper and sentiments with regard to me. The *still brethren* have gradually infused into him as much as they could of their own contempt of me and my brother, and dislike of our whole method of proceeding, which is as different from theirs as light from darkness. Nay, they have blunderingly taught him to find fault even with my economy and outward management, both of my family and society. Whereas I know this is the peculiar talent which God has given

me, wherein (by His grace) I am not behind the very chiefest of them. Notwithstanding this, there remains in him something of his old regard for me which he had at Oxford, and by-and-by it will prevail. He will find out these wretched men, and the clouds will flee away.

"My belief is that the present design of God is to visit the poor desolate Church of England, and that, therefore, neither deluded Mr. Gambold nor any who leave it will prosper. Oh! pray for the peace of Jerusalem. 'They shall prosper that love thee.' Mr. Hall has paid me for the books. I don't want any money of you, your love is sufficient. But write as often and as largely as you can to your affectionate friend and brother,

"J. WESLEY."

This letter proves how very far from John Wesley's own thoughts was any secession from the Church of England, and also shows him to have been thoroughly aware of his own gift for organization.

It is very uncertain whether Mrs. Hall confided in her relations so far as to tell them of her husband's infidelities till she had been outraged by them for many years. She was a woman of the highest and rarest type, and so resolutely crushed out all natural selfishness that she nursed the children of others with as much devotion as if they had been her own, while for the unhappy Hagars who gave them birth she showed as much tenderness and sympathy as if they had not been preferred by her husband to herself. Mr. Hall in his better moments felt and showed the greatest admiration of her conduct, but he was a weak mortal and had no control over himself. It is said that

on one occasion the father was angry with the Isaac of the family while his mother was tending an Ishmael, and frightened the child terribly by locking him up in a dark cupboard for some very trivial fault. This was almost more than she could endure, but she was determined that her husband's authority over his boy should not suffer. The punishment was out of all proportion to the offence, but she could not persuade him of it. At last she reminded him that though he was unreasonably passionate with her child she had not turned his out of the cradle, but declared that she would do it unless he released and forgave the terrified little fellow. John and Charles ultimately removed their nephew from his father's house and educated him at their own expense; but when about fourteen he caught the small-pox at school, and died before his mother could reach him. This was a grief which it was feared would have killed her; but she was patient and resigned, and Time, the great healer, brought her consolation.

Charles Wesley once asked his sister how she could provide comforts and even money in her hour of need for a woman who had usurped her place. "Ah," she said, "I knew I could obtain what I wanted from many; but she, poor creature, could not, for so many would make a merit of abandoning her to the distress she had brought upon herself. . . . I did not act as a woman, but as a Christian." It was a sublime Christianity and worthy of that Master who did not spurn Magdalen from His feet. Few, indeed, are the professing Christians who attain to anything like it.

When Mrs. Hall fell into poverty she was still so generous that her brother Charles said, "It is in vain to give Patty anything to add to her comforts, for she

invariably gives it away to some person poorer than herself."

In 1747 Mr. Hall became so incensed during one of John's visits to Salisbury, probably by his remonstrances, that he turned both him and Martha out of doors. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Hall left him, and wrote to explain the reason why:—

"Being at last convinced that I cannot possibly oblige you any longer by anything I can say or do, I have for some time determined to rid you of so useless a burden, as soon as it should please God to give me an opportunity. If you have so much humanity left for a wife who has lived so many years with you as to allow anything towards a maintenance, I will thank you."

She is thought to have forgiven and returned to him after this, but only to leave him again and seek John's protection at the Foundry. That she harboured no unkind feelings against her faithless husband, and regarded the separation only as temporary, is shown in another letter.

"Though I should have been very glad to have heard from you, yet I cannot wonder at your not answering my letter, seeing I not only left you a second time, but desired conditions which, I fear, you do not find yourself at all disposed to grant. Indeed, I am obliged to plead guilty to the charge, and, as I look upon you as the sole judge, I shall make no appeal from that sentence; only I desire leave to speak a few words before you pass it. You may remember, whenever I was angry enough to talk of leaving you, you could never work me up to such a height as to make me say I would never return."

Unlike the majority of badly-treated women, Mrs.

Hall never spoke ill of her husband, and used to say that it was impossible for a wife with true love in her heart to do so.

She was living at the Foundry when Charles married Miss Sarah Gwynne at Garth in South Wales, and wrote her her affectionate congratulations. As the pair did not for some little time provide themselves with a home, she would gladly have prepared for their reception in London, but they preferred settling at Bristol. To that city Mr. Hall also betook himself, and summoned his wife to join him; but as his feelings towards her family were the reverse of friendly, she evidently did not communicate with Charles or his young wife in Stoke's Croft. Charles met her by chance in the street when on his way to the room where he preached, and took her with him; but in the middle of the sermon Mr. Hall entered and fetched her away. The next day he went in again, calling Charles by name. Flight appeared the wisest policy, and Mr. Hall followed, but did not succeed in discovering his brother-in-law's retreat. The affair ended in Mrs. Hall's departure to London, and that of her peccant husband to Ireland, whence he finally went to the West Indies, but not alone. On the death of his companion he returned to England full of penitence, and was warmly received by his patient wife, who remained with and nursed him till his death, which took place at Bristol in January 1776, forty years after their marriage. During his last hours he exclaimed, "I have injured an angel, an angel that never reproached me." These words made up to Mrs. Hall for all the sorrow he had caused her.

In the long interval between Charles Wesley's marriage and Mr. Hall's death, Mrs. Hall had come to

know a good deal of her Welsh sister-in-law, and also of her friends the Joneses of Fonmôn Castle, with whom she became so intimate that they lived together for some time at Salisbury. She also took an almost maternal interest in the children of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wesley, who named a little girl after her. Like many other babes born to them, it died; but when Charles junior, Sally, and Samuel arrived, successively, she took the warmest delight in them. Sally grew up to be her beloved companion and friend, and, had it not been for the intimacy between them, much that we now know of the Wesley family would have been lost.

Mrs. Hall appears to have been very serenely happy during the latter part of her life, which was principally spent in London. She was a methodical, deliberate person, looking on the bright side of everything and everybody, and shunning all sad subjects. She spent a great deal of time with Dr. Johnson, who enjoyed her lively conversation and depended on her strong and accurate memory. He would gladly have persuaded her to become an inmate of his house, but two old ladies, Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Du Moulin, lived with him already, and she thought her own presence, except as an occasional visitor, unnecessary.

John Wesley respected the old lexicographer very highly, and sent him, through Mrs. Hall, a copy of his *Notes on the Old and New Testament*. She also had the pleasure of introducing them personally to one another, and Dr. Johnson liked the zealous scholarly man extremely, and would fain have seen more of him. He got quite provoked because John, who had long ago taken leave of leisure, had not time to cultivate him and his circle, and said one day to Boswell:

"I hate to meet John Wesley; the dog enchants you with his conversation, and then breaks away to go and visit some old woman."

And again:

"John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very diagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have his talk out as I do."

One feels that Dr. Johnson certainly was not made for an age of railways and steamboats, but that John Wesley would have taken to them very kindly.

Curiously enough Mrs. Hall was neither witty herself nor admired wit in others. Even as a child she was grave and staid; and when her mother once found her little ones romping and laughing, and exclaimed, "Ah! you will all be serious some day," Martha looked up in her face and asked, "Shall I too be more serious?" and Mrs. Wesley answered her with an emphatic "*No*," as if that were impossible. Charles said, "Sister Patty was too wise to be witty"; and it is on record that once, when Dr. Johnson was in doleful mood and holding forth on the unhappiness of mortals in her presence, she said: "Doctor, you have always lived among the wits, not the saints; and they are a race of people the most unlikely to seek true happiness or find the pearl of great price." She refused to admire Swift's works, which were favourites with her brothers and sisters, and especially disliked *The Tale of a Tub*, which she considered irreverent in the extreme.

After spending some twenty years of married life in Bristol, Charles Wesley and his wife removed with their children to London, where Mrs. Hall had the pleasure of introducing her niece Sally to the burly

Doctor, and showing him the verses she wrote from time to time. The sage used to pat her head kindly, and say to her aunt, "She will do, Madam, she will do."

James Boswell tells, in his life of Johnson, how on Easter Sunday, 1781, Mrs. Hall, a Mr. Allen, and himself dined with the Doctor and the two old ladies who were his pensioners. The day naturally gave its tone to the conversation, and Boswell "mentioned a kind of religious Robin Hood society, which met every Sunday evening at Coachmakers' Hall for free debate, and that the subject for this night was the text which relates what happened at our Saviour's death—'And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.' Mrs. Hall said it was a very curious subject, and she should much like to hear it discussed. Johnson replied, somewhat warmly, 'One would not go to such a place to hear it.' I, however resolved that I would go. 'But, Sir,' said she to Johnson, 'I should like to hear *you* discuss it.' He seemed reluctant to engage in it. She talked of the resurrection of the human race in general, and maintained that we shall be raised with the same bodies. Johnson: 'Nay, Madam, we see that it is not to be the same body, for the Scripture uses the illustration of grain sown. You cannot suppose that we shall rise with a diseased body; it is enough if there be such a sameness as to distinguish identity of person.' The Doctor told the story of hearing his mother's voice one day calling him when he was at Oxford. She seemed desirous of knowing more, but he left the question in obscurity." On this occasion Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Hall talked at their host so persistently that he at last stopped them by

quoting the well-known line from the *Beggars' Opera*—

But two at a time there 's no mortal can bear.

Dr. Johnson had a little weakness for being the chief speaker, and no man likes to be what he calls "preached at" by a woman. Mrs. Hall's preaching, however, was probably of a mild description, and dealt with theories rather than persons. She had something good to say of everyone; and if faults had to be mentioned, she always remembered extenuating circumstances.

She remained well and strong and able to take long walks to the last; and when she was over eighty, Sally Wesley tried to obtain a promise that she might be with her in her dying moments. "Yes," replied her aunt, "if you are able to bear it; but I charge you not to grieve for me more than half-an-hour."

John Wesley died in March 1791, leaving Mrs. Hall the sole survivor of the Epworth household, and she felt his loss deeply. She was then eighty-five, and only outlived him by about four months. In the beginning of July it was evident that she was gradually sinking, and Sally claimed the privilege of watching by her; but the invalid, unselfish to the end, insisted that she should always go home at night, "lest you should not sleep — then your anxiety would create mine." She died on the 12th; and shortly before, when her niece asked if she suffered any pain, she answered, "No, but a new feeling." Just before the end she called Sally, and, pressing her hand said, "I have the assurance which I have long prayed for. Shout!" Immediately afterwards she expired.

It seemed very natural that she should be buried in the same grave as her favourite brother in the

City Road Burial Ground, and never was a more suitable inscription placed on any tomb than when, after her name and age, these words of the wise man of Israel were cut on the stone: "She opened her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue was the law of kindness."

Mrs. Hall left her very small income, as well as her papers and letters, to her beloved niece, who prized them as the relics of one who had been to her a second mother.

Most incidents in the lives of John and Charles Wesley are so well known that it is needless to recapitulate them here. It is, however, rather curious that the family name has been transmitted only through Charles and his youngest son Samuel. Mrs. Charles Wesley was twenty-three at the time of her marriage, and her husband forty-two. They had nine children, only three of whom lived to grow up; and, as the eldest son and the daughter lived and died single, all the descendants are those of Samuel, several of whose children are still alive.

The maiden name of Mrs. C. Wesley was Sarah Gwynne, and her parents lived at Garth in South Wales. Her mother belonged to a very rich family, being one of six sisters, each of whom had thirty thousand pounds for her marriage portion. Beautiful voices and musical talent were hereditary in the family, so it was doubtless mainly through their mother that the two sons, Charles and Samuel, derived the genius for music that has made them famous. The union of Charles and Sarah Wesley lasted thirty-nine years, when he died at the age of eighty, and she survived him for thirty-four years, being ninety-six when she departed.

Their eldest son Charles, born December 11th, 1757,

first showed his talent when nearly three years old, by picking out a tune correctly on the harpsichord, and, what was more, putting a true bass to it. At four years of age his father took the little fellow to London, where the first musicians of the day pointed out that he ought to be brought up to follow his natural bent as a profession. His father and uncle do not appear to have made the slightest objection, and it was probably very pleasing to them when they found that the boy turned instinctively to cathedral music. Dr. Boyce was long his principal master, and after him Mr. Kelway, who introduced his pupil and protégé to the notice of King George III.

Under his father's tuition he received the rudiments of a classical education, grew up to have very gentle and even courtier-like manners, and for his simplicity and kindness of heart was a universal favourite; but so little calculated was he to take care of himself in this naughty world, that his sister devoted herself to him, and acted as a sort of guardian angel, though a very unobtrusive one.

The first time Charles received the royal command to attend at Buckingham House was in 1775, when he was just eighteen; and he was carried across the Park in a sedan-chair, after having been, it is said, carefully dressed by his mother and sister. From that time forth he was annually summoned to Windsor; and when Princess Charlotte was old enough to require a music master, he was selected for the post. He ultimately became organist at Marylebone Church, and was well known in musical circles. One who knew him well, said, "In music he was an angel; in everything else a child." He scarcely knew a day's ill-health, and died in 1834 at the age of seventy-seven.

Sally, as she was called to distinguish her from her mother, was born at Bristol in 1759, and from the first was a great favourite with her father, who was a most affectionate parent. Busy as he was riding to and fro between London and Bristol, and fulfilling his brother's behests, which were neither few nor far between, he managed to write long letters to his wife about the children. The little girl must have been about a year old when he wrote: "She should take after me, as she is to be *my* child. One and another give me presents for Charley, but nobody seems to take any notice of poor Sally—even her godmother seems to slight her." He was always thinking of his daughter, contriving surprises for her, and bidding her mother send her up the hill to Cotham from their home in Stoke's Croft, that she might be strengthened by the country breezes. She grew up to be a great reader, and early aimed at authorship, in verse of course, or she would not have been a Wesley. John Wesley was very fond of her, and, when she was about fifteen, promised to take her with him to Canterbury and Dover. A scandal arose which seemed to make it imperative that he should remain in London, and Charles urged him to postpone the journey. "Brother," said John, "when I devoted to God my ease, my time, my life, did I except my reputation? No. Tell Sally I will take her to Canterbury to-morrow."

She was a clever woman, and wrote a very neat, clear hand, expressing herself always in pure English, such as might be written by a lady of the present day; and her orthography was perfect. Every language she had the opportunity of learning came to her easily, as it had done to her father and grandfather; and she added to her slender income by translating foreign

letters for the journals of the day. Like her mother, she early lost her personal beauty through small-pox, and it added to the shyness of her disposition, which, however, wore off to some extent in her later years. She supplied Dr. Adam Clarke with a great many of the details he used in his *Wesley Family*. It is difficult to select a short poem illustrative of her style, but the following, which was addressed to Campbell on the death of one of his children, is a very good specimen. It was first published from her own manuscript in 1876 in Mr. Stevenson's *Memorials*, and was republished in the *Quiver*, with some original letters of her own and her brother's, a few months later:—

ON THE DEATH OF AN INFANT.

For thee no treacherous world prepares
A youth of complicated snares:
No wild ambition's raging flame
Shall tempt thy ripened years with fame;
No avarice shall thine age decoy,
Far off from sweet diffusive joy;
Happy beyond the happiest fate,
Snatched from the ills that vex the great,
From anxious toils, entangling strife,
And every care of meaner life.
Happy! though thou hast scarcely trod
The thorny path which leads to God,
Where friendless virtue weeps and prays,
Oft wildered in the doubtful maze,
Nor knew that virtue wept in vain—
Nor felt a greater ill than pain,
Already sainted in the sky,
Sweet babe! that did but weep and die!

Miss Wesley died at Bristol, in the autumn of 1828, of sore throat, when sixty-nine years of age. She was buried in the same grave with five of her brothers and sisters, in St. James' Churchyard; and Charles, inconsolable for her loss, and all but incapable of acting for himself, posted back to London, at an expenditure of thirty-six pounds!

Samuel was born on February 24th, 1766, on the eighty-second anniversary of Handel's birth. He was not so precocious as Charles in music, and, instead of instinctively playing a true bass by ear, did not attempt it till he had learned his notes. Someone gave him a small violin, and he used to accompany Charles on it, and sing to his playing, and sometimes, rather to the horror of those holding the notions of the time—that an elder brother was to be held infallible by the younger—he would presume to find fault. He began composing an oratorio called *Ruth* before he was six years old, and had quite finished and written it down by the time he was eight, when he gravely presented it to Dr. Boyce, who received it with ceremonious thanks. He must have been quite a child when he took the organ at Bath Abbey for a month, and played the first violin in many private concerts. He made satisfactory progress in his general education, and had plenty of common sense.

After Charles Wesley removed to London, and when his sons were a good deal talked about, Dr. Johnson —who, as is well known, had no ear for music—felt that it was his bounden duty, out of respect and friendship for the family, to call and hear the lads play. He made no preamble about the matter, but at once introduced the subject by saying—in his

ponderous fashion—to the father, "I understand, Sir, your boys are skilled in music; pray, let me hear them." They were always willing, and sat down to their instruments at once. Dr. Johnson took a chair, and, picking up a book from the window-seat, immediately began to read and to roll about, as was his custom. The moment the music ceased he looked up, closed his book, said, "Young gentlemen, I am much obliged to you," and departed.

Samuel Wesley had a great dislike to London, and for many years sought and found musical engagements in the country. After his marriage he lived for some time near Barnet, and then at Camden Town, which was quite rural in those days. He was an indefatigable letter-writer, and used to fill many sheets of paper with musical and other gossip, for the amusement of Charles and Sally. He gave at least ten "hostages to fortune," and died in October 1837, in his seventy-second year.

He lived to see his eldest son, Charles, a Doctor of Divinity, and Sub-Dean of the Chapels Royal. For thirty years Dr. Wesley was thus connected with St. James's Palace, and, in his official capacity, was present when Queen Victoria was confirmed, crowned, and married, and also when she was "churched," after the birth of her first child, the Princess Royal. He was at the royal infant's christening, and, seventeen years later, at her marriage with the Crown Prince of Prussia. He died at St. James's in 1859, and left two daughters.

Samuel Sebastian Wesley, well known as a Doctor of Music, was the third son of Samuel Wesley, and in his youth was one of the choristers of the Chapel Royal, St. James's. When little more than twenty-

one he was chosen organist of Hereford Cathedral, where, a year or two afterwards, he married the sister of the Dean, Dr. Merewether. In 1835 he became organist at Exeter Cathedral; but, after remaining there for seven years, he went to Leeds, and held the post of organist of the parish church during part of the late Dean Hook's long and vigorous incumbency. In 1849 the position of organist at Winchester Cathedral was offered to and accepted by him. This was a position very much to his taste, especially as it enabled his five sons to be educated at Winchester School. In 1865 he became organist at Gloucester Cathedral, and from that time took a prominent part in the musical festivals of the West of England. Two of his sons are clergymen in the Church of England, two are Doctors of Medicine, and one is pushing his way in Australia. He died on the 19th of April 1876, at the comparatively early age of sixty-six, which, to quote his Aunt Sally, when speaking of another relative, was far from being the term of life "attained by our respectable ancestors."

It is remarkable that Wesleyanism has found so little favour in its founder's own family. With the exception of some of their sisters, who became connected with the Society, John and Charles stood alone during their lifetime, so far as their relatives were concerned, and the majority of those who have since borne their name have adhered staunchly to the Church of England. This is as John himself would have had it, for he was no Separatist, though he could not stop the movement of which he was the mainspring; nor did he wish to do so, but he did not see that it would necessarily lead to secession. Blood, however, will tell, and a vast amount of talent

and energy are still manifested in all the descendants of the Epworth family. Impetuous and quick-witted, and, perhaps, not overmuch given to take thought for the morrow, they must all be up and doing, and in these characteristics they vindicate their lineage, and the vigour of that original strain which is still so far from being worn out.

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