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## ARTICLE IV.

CHARLES WESLEY AND METHODIST HYMNS.<sup>1</sup>

BY REV. FREDERIC M. BIRD, PHILADELPHIA.

It is a singular circumstance that the most prolific and powerful of Christian lyric poets should be comparatively unknown. *Positively* unknown he is not; his praise is in all the churches; no Christian denomination has entirely refused to accept his valuable help in the common work of worship; in every modern English and American hymn book he is represented by some of the noblest of spiritual songs. But relatively to his genius and his works, the world knows little of him. Perhaps one tenth of his poetry is yet in print. The Methodists cherish his memory, and their various collections contain some eight hundred hymns bearing his honored name. Other hymnals have a sprinkling of the Wesleyan style and spirit, more or less, according to the views, the prejudices, the knowledge of their editors: if

<sup>1</sup> The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A. By Thomas Jackson. 2 vols. 8vo. London. 1841.

Hymns and Sacred Poems. By John and Charles Wesley. 2 vols. 1749.

Hymns and Sacred Poems. By Charles Wesley. 3 vols. 1739, 1740, 1742.

Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures. By Charles Wesley. 2 vols. 1762, 1794.

Hymns on the Lord's Supper. 1745, 1825.

Hymns on God's Everlasting Love. 1756.

Funeral Hymns. 2 vols. 1753, 1759.

Hymns for Children and others of Riper Years. 1766, 1842.

Hymns for the Use of Families and on Various Occasions. 1767, 1825.

Hymns on the Trinity. 1767.

The Wesleyan Psalter. Nashville, Tenn. 1855.

And divers others.

Methodist Hymnology. By David Creamer. 12mo. New York. 1848.

Wesleyan Hymnology. By the Rev. W. P. Burgess. London. 1846.

A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists. By the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. London.

Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Episcopal Church. New York.

Hymns of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Nashville, Tenn.

the compiler have an unusually liberal spirit, and a rare acquaintance with his subject, the number of Wesleyan hymns may approach one hundred. But we have yet to see an American non-Methodist selection which does fair justice to the greatest of hymn writers.

Beyond what is contained in the standard denominational hymn books, the Wesleyan poetry is inaccessible to ordinary readers, and can be reached by the most zealous book-worm (in America at least) only at some expense of time, trouble, and labor. It is scattered through over thirty separate publications, the dates of which range from 1738 to 1785. Most of these were never reprinted; and all, except three which have been republished by the British Methodists within the century, have been out of print for many years. So much for the *published* poems (between four and five thousand) of Charles Wesley; but there are nearly as many, says his biographer, which he left in manuscript at his death, and which have never seen the light. Such is the enterprise and spirit of the English Wesleyan Conference, to which they belong.

It is difficult properly to handle a subject of such magnitude, and one which has been so little studied and appreciated. "The glorious reproach of Methodism" is scarcely yet extinct; the name of Wesley still arouses many old-time prejudices: Calvinists have not quite lost their suspicion of the Arminian teacher, nor churchmen forgotten to look coldly upon the great schismatic. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Charles Wesley was the "bard of Methodism"; and most people, without knowing very thoroughly what Methodism is, judge it to be something quite different from other forms of Christianity, and therefore conclude that its poet can hardly be the poet of the church at large. Mr. Creamer, in his "Methodist Hymnology," hazards the opinion, that the man is not born who should fully appreciate the genius of the Methodist poet. Certainly the day will come when the grateful praises of his own people shall be echoed by the thanks of the whole

Christian world ; when posterity shall remedy the tardy justice of time, and Charles Wesley be acknowledged as a name great among British poets, and *facile princeps* of modern sacred song. It is because the Methodist poet is *not known*, that he is not appreciated. The more extensively and closely his writings are examined, the more will be found in them worthy to be admired and used. Other hymn writers have had some measure of justice done them. Of Dr. Watts especially, the name and writings are household words : his Psalms and Hymns may be found at every bookstall, and very copious extracts from them in every hymn book. But only a few venturesome persons have explored the vast mine of Wesleyan poetry ; and its treasures are as yet unclaimed and unused by the church at large. Dr. Watts has been commonly considered the most voluminous and powerful of hymnists. Many of our readers will be surprised to hear that the published Wesleyan hymns are five times as numerous as his, and that of this immense mass the literary standard is far higher than that of the lesser bulk of the more celebrated writer. Set aside one hundred of Watts's and five hundred of Wesley's best hymns ; there will be no comparison between the remainder, in style and poetic merit. Dr. Watts was a poet at certain times, and under special inspiration ; Charles Wesley was a poet by nature and habit, and almost always wrote as such. Of course his effusions are not equal among themselves ; but he established and observed, through all his multiplicity of verses, a standard which no other hymn writer up to his time was able to approach, and which none has since surpassed.

The above remarks have an air of special pleading. It may relieve our readers to know, that the present writer is not a Methodist, and simply wishes to see justice rendered. He has had inclination and opportunity to study the Wesleyan poetry as few persons have done, and the conclusions resulting from that study are here expressed. The object of the present Article is to communicate as thorough and

extensive a knowledge of the subject as our limits will permit, by allowing our author to speak for himself as naturally as may be, and illustrating the various phases of his genius and character by extracts from his works. If any attention is thereby drawn to a realm of literary wealth which lies a little off the high road, and has been neglected by most travellers, but offers to the enterprising visitor unequalled attractions and rewards; if, in any quarter, an enlarged interest be awakened in the most fertile and important, yet least explored, region of English hymnology, the labor will not be lost.

The interest which attaches to the Wesleyan poetry is not due merely to its intrinsic excellence. It is the product, not only of a great mind, but of a rare day, and wonderful doings. No hymns were ever so autobiographic and historical. They groan under the mortal anguish of repentance; they throb and quiver with the throes of the new birth; they swell with the triumphs of faith, the full glories of a present salvation. The whole vitality, not only of the poet, but of his people and the Lord's, is in them. The life-blood of the time flows through them; they are big with the great awakening, which turned the world upside down. The controversy of the Lord with the nations has come; his servants are at war with the world; the "spark of grace" has fallen, the fire is beginning to burn. The fearless preacher has gathered his thousands in the open air; you hear the clamor of persecution, the shouts of the godless mob; you see the eager faces of the listening multitude, as the words of life drop into their hearts. The work goes on: the contempt of the high, the hatred of the low, opposition, slander, brute force, are wasted on it in vain.

How happy are the little flock  
Who, safe beneath their Guardian rock,  
In all commotions rest!  
When war's and tumult's waves run high,  
Unmoved above the storm they lie.—  
They lodge in Jesus' breast.

This is the peculiarity of the Wesleyan hymns. They are not versified moralities, not didactic disquisitions, nor languidly virtuous sentimentalisms; but they are most intensely alive and thoroughly practical. Dr. Watts and his followers wrote their hymns in their closets, and if there were a circumstance or story of personal interest in connection with any of them, it is told as something remarkable. Charles Wesley composed on horseback, on a journey, in all times, places, and surroundings; and the verses were generally called forth by the special fortunes and emotions of the hour. When "going to Wakefield to answer a charge of treason," he sings:

Thou who at thy creature's bar  
Didst thy Deity declare,  
Now my mouth and wisdom be;  
Witness for thyself in me.

And "afterwards":

Who that trusted in the Lord  
Was ever put to shame?  
Live, by earth and heaven adored,  
Thou all-victorious Lamb!

For every occasion of human life he (as his biographer observes) "had a hymn, had a psalm." His soul was melody, and its most natural language praise or prayer. "His thoughts flowed most readily in sacred verse." His songs and his life illustrate and reproduce each other. In his poems we may trace all the more important events, experiences, changes of his history, whether as a man or as a minister. The death or loss of his friends; the progress of the "new religion"; his personal blessings and trials; the varied circumstances and wants of the people whom he was over in the Lord, are all immortalized in his glowing strains. "His heart overflowed with sacred verse till it ceased to beat; and his tuneful voice was never silent till it was silenced in death." In his last illness, when his failing hand had ceased to hold the pen, he dictated to his wife these dying lines:

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

We shall see more of the fluency and versatility of his genius as we go on. It will also appear how much more truth there is than most non-Methodists would be apt to suppose in Mr. Jackson's strong assertion: "In the composition of hymns adapted to Christian worship, he certainly has no equal in the English language, and is perhaps superior to every other uninspired man that ever lived. It does not appear that any person besides himself, in any section of the universal church, has either written so many hymns, or hymns of such surpassing excellence."

Charles Wesley was born at Epworth in Lincolnshire, Dec. 18, 1708; being five years younger than his brother John. But little has been told concerning his early days. His father was an excellent clergyman, of some name in literature, author of a versified scripture history, and of the hymn, "Behold the Saviour of mankind." Talent, and a certain energy and weight of moral character, seem to have been hereditary among the Wesleys. In 1716, Charles was put at Westminster school, under the care of his brother Samuel, another poet, some of whose verses are still in the hymn books. In 1726 the embryo psalmist entered Christ Church, Oxford, where he remained nine years. At the age of twenty he "became serious," and with a few others of like mind formed the famous "Holy Club." Here they were soon honored with the name of "Methodist," when John Wesley was not as yet with them. Their doings might seem to be harmless enough: they simply wished to lead more studious, regular, and Christian lives than was common among the collegians. But the surprising fact that half a dozen young men met stately to explore the pages of inspired as well as of classic writers; that they mingled devotion with their readings; that they attended the sacra-

ment weekly, and visited the poor, the sick, and the prisoners,—this overturned the grave university, and was noised abroad through all England. The event justified this widespread interest; for, within that little circle were the men commissioned to kindle God's fire upon earth, and execute a work, the like of which had not been seen since the Lutheran Reformation. The days of field-preaching and startling doctrines were not yet; but in the quiet routine of their daily prayers and labors, Whitefield and the Wesleys were unconsciously fitting themselves for the evangelization of Great Britain and America. It is not easy to estimate the vast results that spring from specific and humble causes; but the little glimmering ray that rose in that seat of learning a hundred and thirty years ago, has since shed its generous light over half the world. That something of vital Christianity exists among professed believers of every name; that the doctrine of justification by faith is generally understood and preached; that we are not blind Pharisees, or dead formalists, or practical Socinians and deists,—we may trace the cause in great part (we cannot tell how largely) to the Holy Club of Oxford Methodists.

Yet at this time these chosen vessels, or at least the Wesley brothers, were themselves not under grace, but under the law. Ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, they went about to establish a righteousness of their own. In outward life and to all appearance the holiest of men, they had not yet discovered that true Foundation, other than which can no man lay. Honest, zealous, hungry and thirsting after righteousness, making it their meat and drink to do their Master's will; consecrated, with seeming unreserve, to his service; self-denying to asceticism; separated utterly from worldly ties and passions—we wonder how they could have groped so many years in unregenerate darkness, and missed the simple wisdom that cometh down from above. But so it was. The way of salvation was not made so universally plain in that day as in this: it was harder to find Christ; there was less of his presence in the earth; his wit-



nesses were few; churchmen and dissenters were asleep together; spiritual wickedness was in high places; there were not many professed teachers of righteousness who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Then the individuality of the Wesleys was strong; their minds (or rather mind, for they were as one man) were *sui generis*: they could not take an idea at second-hand, or fall in easily with another's mode of thought; originality was strongly stamped on all they said and did; any new experience must come to them agreeably to the wants and capacities of their peculiar character; they must learn the lessons of life in their own way. And so, we may suppose, redemption could only reach them as it reached the world, "when the fulness of time was come."

Meantime they followed blind guides, and greatly revered certain "mystic divines," particularly one William Law, whose works, celebrated at that time, extol inward godliness while obscuring saving faith, and propose to make men Christians without much help from Christ. "He set his pupils," says Mr. Jackson, "on the hopeless task of attaining to holiness while they remained in a state of guilt." A visit paid by Charles Wesley to this apostle of Judaism, called forth a conversation which is worth recording:

"*Wesley.* What of one who dies unrenewed, while endeavoring after it? *Law.* It concerns neither you to ask, nor me to answer. *W.* Shall I write once more to such a person? *L.* No. *W.* But I am persuaded it will do him good. *L.* Sir, I have told you my opinion. *W.* Shall I write to you? *L.* Nothing I can either speak or write will do you any good." Such was the dreary and profitless gospel which served many spiritually-minded people in that age, for want of a better. Let us be thankful that we have more cheery and condescending expounders of the law.

It does not appear that in these days Charles had as yet applied himself to poetry. If his genius was precocious, his biographer does not mention the fact; and his earliest known effusions seem to have come forth within the year,

or less, preceding his conversion. It was fitting that the harp of this new David should be strung, and the trumpet of Methodism first sounded, in close connection with the commencement of his knowledge, privileges, and labors as a genuine Christian.

In 1735, the brothers undertook a missionary enterprise in Georgia, and were away from England somewhat above a year. The experience therein gained was doubtless a part of the providential plan concerning them; but it does not appear that they did any particular good in their wanderings. Charles endured various hardships, and was near death several times, by land and water. After his return, he was depressed by sorrows real and imaginary. His temperament was gloomy, his health feeble; he felt the insufficiency of his spiritual state, and his woes began to flow in melancholy verse. His "defective creed and gloomy feelings" are set forth in the famous Hymn for Midnight, where he describes himself as

Doubtful and insecure of bliss,  
Since *death* alone confirms me His.

With "faith" instead of "death," part of this poem still stands in the English Wesleyan collection. It is one of the most imaginative and elegant that ever came from his pen, or any other. Witness the last two verses:

Absent from thee, my exiled soul  
Deep in a fleshly dungeon groans;  
Around me clouds of darkness roll,  
And laboring silence speaks my moans.  
Come quickly, Lord! thy face display,  
And look my darkness into day!

Sorrow, and sin, and death are o'er,  
If thou reverse the creature's doom;  
Sad Rachel weeps her loss no more,  
If thou, the God, the Saviour come;  
Of thee possess, in thee we prove  
The light, the life, the heaven of love.

These were earnest but as yet unfulfilled aspirations. At this time he hoped to be saved because he had <sup>read his heart</sup>

endeavors to serve God; he had nothing else to trust to. After a severe sickness, he says :

Of hope I felt no joyful ground,  
The fruit of righteousness alone :  
Naked of Christ my soul I found,  
And started from a God unknown.

By "righteousness" here, he must be supposed to mean "the righteousness which is of God by faith"; of this he was not yet possessed. But God had better things in store for him. Early in 1738, he and his brother met Peter Bohler, a Moravian preacher, and from him obtained such an insight into the simple but essential truths of scripture, as all their learning and zeal had never stumbled upon. May 4th, John Wesley writes, in the spirit of prophecy: "Peter Bohler left England. . . What a work hath God begun since his coming into it! Such a one as shall never come to an end till heaven and earth pass away."

Yet the "work" in their own minds was not accomplished at once. On the 25th of April, Charles was seriously offended with John for upholding instantaneous conversion; but four weeks later he became the subject of it himself. After various struggles and inward agonies the brothers both passed from death unto life on the 21st of May, 1738. And now "the harp was tuned to gladness," and the full tide of the poet's heart burst forth in triumphant strains of sacred joy :

Where shall my wondering soul begin?  
How shall I all to heaven aspire?  
A slave redeemed from death and sin;  
A brand plucked from eternal fire!

He addressed a poem to his brother, "Congratulation to a Friend, upon believing in Christ:"

What morn on thee with sweeter ray,  
Or brighter lustre, e'er hath shined?

And a year later he wrote, for "the Anniversary of One's Conversion," the noble hymn :

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise!

We are now fairly launched upon the mighty stream of Wesleyan poetry. Before we pursue our course, it becomes us to sum up, in a brief table, the various publications in which that poetry is contained; put forth by Charles alone, or conjointly with his brother, during the fifty years of his Christian life and ministry.

In 1738, the Wesleys first published a small book containing "twenty-three psalms and forty-six hymns; price, 8d." Of these a few only are original, and they were afterwards included in other of their books. This volume is not known to exist in this country; Mr. Creamer of Baltimore, the best American authority on these points, has never seen it. In the invaluable collection of that gentleman, the present writer has had the privilege of examining *all* the publications mentioned below, except the small tract of 1782, "Hymns for the Nation." The list represents, as accurately as may be, the number of hymns published by Charles Wesley. It is impossible, amid so great a quantity, to do this precisely, for some—a very few indeed—occur more than once; many are in two or more parts; and in the first three volumes the poems are not numbered. The earliest, that of 1739, contains one hundred and thirty-eight poems; but many of them are adapted and modernized from Herbert and other English authors; twenty-three are translated from the German, etc., by John Wesley; six were written by Gambold; and a few of Charles's own cannot be regarded as hymns. It is altogether a more miscellaneous volume than any which they published afterwards.

	pp.	Hy. by C.W.
1739 Hymns and Sacred Poems, . . . .	223	50
1740. Hymns and Sacred Poems, . . . .	162	76
1742. Hymns and Sacred Poems, . . . .	311	165
1745. Hymns on the Lord's Supper, . . . .	170	166
Hymns for Times of Trouble and Persecution,	83	64
Hymns for the Watchnight [reprinted in H. & S. P., 1749], . . . .	12	—
1745. Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord, . . . .	18	21
1746. Hymns for Public Thanksgiving Day, Oct. 9, . . . .	12	7
Graces before and after Meat, . . . .	12	26

	pp. Hy. by C. W.	
1746. Hymns for those that seek, and those that have, Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ, . . .	68	52
1747. Hymns of Petition and Thanksgiving for the Promise of the Father (Whitsunday), . . .	36	32
Hymns for Ascension Day, . . . . .	11	7
Hymns for our Lord's Resurrection, . . . . .	23	16
1749. Hymns and Sacred Poems, 2 vols. . . . .	690	455
1750. Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, . . . . .	—	19
Gloria Patri, or Hymns to the Trinity, . . . . .	12	24
Hymns for the year 1756, particularly for the Fast Day, . . . . .	24	17
1755. Hymns for New Year's Day, . . . . .	6	7
1756. Hymns on God's Everlasting Love, . . . . .	84	40
1758. Hymns of Intercession for all Mankind, . . . . .	34	40
Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Preachers, . . . . .	10	7
Funeral Hymns, . . . . .	24	16
1759. Funeral Hymns (larger tract), . . . . .	70	43
Hymns on the Expected Invasion, . . . . .	12	8
1762. Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture, 2 vols. . . . .	824	2348
1766. Hymns for Children and others of riper years, . . . . .	84	105
1767. Hymns for the Use of Families, . . . . .	180	168
Hymns on the Trinity, . . . . .	132	188
1772. Preparation for Death, in several Hymns, . . . . .	46	40
1780. Hymns written in the Time of the Tumults, . . . . .	19	13
1782. Hymns for the Nation, . . . . .	47	40
Prayers for Condemned Malefactors, . . . . .	12	10
	4260	

We shall notice the more important of these publications separately. Many of the "scripture hymns" can scarcely be regarded as independent lyrics, being but four, six, or eight lines long; but, on the other hand, the earlier volumes contain numerous poems of twelve or twenty eight-line verses, which are counted but as single hymns, when out of them two, three, or even more, in the present collections have been or might be extracted. So, taken all in all, the above is a fair approximation to the number of Charles Wesley's published hymns. Those which have never appeared are said by his biographer to be equally numerous. So much for Mr. Jackson's first claim, that "no other person has written so many hymns." The other point, as to their

“surpassing excellence,” is not so easily settled, being a matter of taste and judgment. It is not pretended that all, or the chief part, of the compositions are “adapted to Christian worship.” How could so vast a quantity be compressed within the range of what is precisely fitted for congregational singing? Of hymns that *are* thus fitted, he has produced more than any other known author. But it is the deliberate conviction of the present writer that the Wesleyan poetry will sustain an honorable comparison, taking it in any way,—the best with the best, the whole with the whole, or the inferior mass against its like,—with the works of any British lyricist; and that it will disdain such comparison, if made extensively and thoroughly, with the effusions of any other *hymn-writer* in the language. “Next to Dr. Watts, as a writer of hymns,” says Montgomery, “undoubtedly stands the Rev. Charles Wesley.” Next to Watts he undoubtedly is; but it may be next before, as easily as next behind. “It is sufficient for him,” said Dr. Johnson, with true dogmatic stupidity, of the venerated father of English hymnology, “to have done better than others what no man has done well.” It is sufficient for the Methodist poet, we may say with greater justice, to have done better than all others what many have done well.

It is a very common and very gross error to suppose that Wesley’s genius had no variety; that his style is a monotone; that his harp, powerfully touched perhaps, possessed but a single string. “The paucity of his topics,” says Milner, the biographer of Watts, “produces frequent repetition. He has little variety of manner, and less variety of matter.” This is mere foolishness; or, it might be more charitable to say, ignorance. Let any one look at the list of his published poetry above: is there little variety of matter there? Hymns for every possible occasion of human life, for the individual, the family, the church, the nation; for the reigning sovereign, and the dying malefactor; hymns on doctrines and on festivals; hymns expository, narrative, hortatory, peti-

tionary, laudatory, rhapsodic. No other sacred poet has attempted such a "variety of matter;" and his versatile muse handles all these multifarious topics with unequalled, almost with unvarying, ease and grace. We are not advancing unsupported assertions; abundant illustrations will presently be given of the fecundity of genius, the rare adaptive power, the "variety of matter *and* manner" which are peculiar to Charles Wesley. But let us hear Mr. Milner further. "The amount of genius requisite for the composition of such hymns was far less than that which Watts brought and employed in his task." That is purely a matter of opinion: the facts above presented seem to justify the opposite conclusion. Nor does it appear why Wesley "must yield the palm for originality, catholicity, and versatility of genius." "There is far less appearance of effort in his (Watts') hymns than in Wesley's; they are less strained and artificial, and bear in a higher degree the stamp of being the spontaneous effusions of devotional feeling." It happens that Wesley was the most fluent and natural of versifiers; song was the natural language of his heart; much of his poetry came out of him, as it were, without his help. It will be news to Methodists that their hymns are "artificial;" and Mr. Milner, if he had not been pressed to make, by any means, the best of a bad case, must have seen that there are no hymns in the world of such "spontaneous devotion;" none so loftily spiritual; none so unmistakably genuine and intensely earnest, as the best known and most largely used of Wesley's. It is the highest praise of the few noblest hymns of Watts and Cowper, that they reach an elevation on which the Methodist poet generally sat, and express a mental state which was habitual with him.

But a graver charge has been brought against our author, and is commonly credited. "Many of his pieces," says the same critic, "wear the exclusive aspect of the sectarian: he casts his mite into the treasury of a party; he writes as the 'poet of Methodism,' not as the servant of the universal church." It ought to be known, that when John and Charles

Wesley commenced writing hymns and preaching in houses, streets, and fields, they had no other object than to revive true religion, save perishing souls, and glorify God. It was years before Methodism grew into an outwardly definite system, or threatened to form an independent ecclesiastical body; and with this last prospect, Charles, as a strict and zealous churchman, had no sympathy. It is true the brothers had mental peculiarities, and held views of their own. As before stated, their character was strongly individualized, and they impressed that individuality deeply and permanently upon their disciples: the Methodist church of this day is the product and resultant of two mighty and intensely earnest minds. But that which is personal is not necessarily sectarian; and the peculiarities of Wesleyan doctrine and life are not so far distant from positive scripture and catholic Christianity as we are apt to imagine. The brothers were not bigots, but men of a liberal, loving spirit. They held their own views, indeed, strongly, as it was in their nature to do; but when other Christians have, by any accident, come to understand those views better and approach them more nearly, it does not appear that any serious injury has resulted. This is certain, that if we — compilers of hymn books, students of sacred literature, ministers, and Christians in general — would lay aside our prejudices and give the Wesleyan productions a fair trial, we should find more to sympathize with than to object against, and the poetry and piety of our hymn books would greatly gain thereby.

It is time to resume our theme, suspended for these discussions. When Charles Wesley had experienced the power of the atoning blood, his zealous soul yearned to extend the knowledge and benefits of that redemption, and he gave himself with renewed consecration to the work:

Oh that the world might taste and see  
The riches of His grace:  
The arms of love that compass me,  
Would all mankind embrace.



His only righteousness I know ;  
 His saving truth proclaim :  
 'Tis all my business here below,  
 To cry, " Behold the Lamb !"  
 Happy, if with my latest breath  
 I may but gasp his name :  
 Preach him to all, and cry in death,  
 Behold, behold the Lamb !

His inward comforts at this season of his first love he described, years afterwards, in the celebrated hymn :

How happy are they who their Saviour obey,  
 And have laid up their treasure above.

In this are some of those characteristic, extravagant expressions, which were perfectly natural to his excitable, imaginative, ardent nature :

On the wings of His love I was carried above  
 All sin and temptation and pain ;  
 I could not believe that I ever should grieve,  
 That I ever should suffer again.

I rode on the sky (Freely justified I !)  
 Nor envied Elijah his seat ;  
 My soul mounted higher, in a chariot of fire,  
 And the moon it was under my feet.

It is the reviewer's business to show the faults as well as beauties of his author. But the poet was perfectly honest in these things ; they were not mere prettinesses of language, or flights of fancy to him, but spiritual realities. In his diary he says of one of his early converts : " She rides on the high places of the earth ; she speaks in the plerophory of faith ; she lives in the spirit of triumph. One of her expressions was, ' I do not walk, but fly ; and seem as if I could leap over the moon.' " It has always been considered the most obnoxious feature of Methodism, that it allows too much to vain emotion, and encourages its votaries to lay a stress on sensations and fancies, which may be merely those of the natural man. Evil or good, or mixture of both, as it may be, this is an essential point in the system, for it was a vital element in the character of the founders of that system

Charles in particular was "the creature of feeling"; and we must not be surprised if his lively emotions sometimes ran away with his sober judgment. At least he never transgressed without a cause and an excuse; and his wildest pieces have more sense and taste than Watts's hymns on the Song of Solomon.

The grossest violation of correct judgment which our poet ever committed was in that remarkable hymn, which his brother strangely introduced, unaltered, to his great collection :

Ah, lovely appearance of death !  
 What sight upon earth is so fair ?  
 Not all the gay pageants that breathe  
 Can with a dead body compare.

With solemn delight I survey  
 The corpse when the spirit is fled ;  
 In love with the beautiful clay,  
 And longing to lie in its stead.

We know that the poet's views regarding death were eminently spiritual. As a sample of his personal feelings this singular "Funeral Hymn" is valuable, and the lines are invested with all his own grace and tenderness; but, tried by the standard of a severely correct taste, the language is unpardonable. He had no right to say :

Of evil incapable thou,  
 Whose relics *with envy* I see.

Nor,

What now with my tears I bedew,  
 Oh might I this moment become !  
 My spirit created anew ;  
 My flesh be consigned to the tomb.

The occasion and first idea of this very curious poem may be found in the author's diary. One of the good Methodists died at Cardiff, Wales, August 13, 1744. "We were all in tears. Mine I fear flowed from envy and impatience of life. I felt throughout my soul that I would rather be in his condition than enjoy the whole of created good. The spirit at its departure had left marks of happiness upon the clay. No sight upon earth, in my eyes, is half so lovely."

For many years the poet pursued his itinerancy with unselfish and unfaltering zeal; and, though weak in body and often oppressed by sickness, endured labors, hardships, and perils scarcely less than those of his brother and George Whitefield. Many passages from his diary, preserved by his biographer, exhibit the native magnanimity of his character, as well as his earnest devotion to his Master's business. After preaching an hour and a half, under physical pain and infirmity, at Gloucester, he says: "My voice and strength failed together; neither do I want them when my work is done." The first public opposition he met was in March, 1740. After being insulted and interrupted in his services, his simple comment is: "These slighter conflicts must fit me for greater." The greater conflicts soon came. The incompetence, bigotry, and spiritual blindness of the clergy in general were such as we, in this favored day, can hardly conceive. They refused to lend their churches to the Methodist, and often drove his converts from the altar at communion. "All who are healed by our ministry," said the devout churchman, "go and show themselves to the priest, and enter the temples with us." Yet he was forced to complain: "We send them to church to hear ourselves railed at, and, what is worse, the truth of God." In one place where his brethren were unusually civil, he says, "I am invited by them, but decline visiting, as I can neither smoke, drink, nor talk their language." One pious shepherd "wished the Bible were in Latin only, that none of the vulgar might be able to read it."

Meanwhile, in spite of opposition, persecution, and mobs often raised and sometimes headed by the clergy, the work went on. Charles Wesley, whose views were ascetic, who had a poor opinion of unregenerate human nature, and who regarded this world as Satan's seat, expected and desired little earthly comfort or encouragement in the discharge of his duty. His motto was: "Error of every kind may meet with favor; but the world never did, nor ever will, tolerate real Christianity." His first volume of poetry contains a curious "Hymn to Contempt:"

Welcome contempt! stern, faithful guide,  
Unpleasing, healthful food!  
Hail, pride-sprung antidote of pride;  
Hail, evil turned to good!

On this principle the poet seems to have faithfully acted for many years. Count Zinzendorf, the head of the Moravians, had told him in 1737, that "he and a lady were in love, till, finding something of nature, he resolved to renounce her, which he did, and persuaded her to accept his friend. 'From that moment I was freed from all self-seeking, so that for ten years past, I have not done my own will in anything, great or small. My own will is hell to me.'" With this singular disinterestedness Charles must have been greatly edified, though he did not attempt to imitate it when the tender passion afterwards found place in his own breast. But in other things he mortified nature sufficiently. "I had much discourse with Mr. C——, a sensible, pious clergyman. He gave me a delightful account of the bishop; yet I do not find it good for me to be countenanced by my superiors. It is a snare and burden to my soul." He rather preferred persecution and opprobrium: "I could not help smiling at (a clergyman), who had come, as he said, on purpose to judge me; and his judgment was, Sir, you have got very good lungs, but you will make the people melancholy." "I dreaded their [the ministers'] favor more than all the stones in Sheffield." There is a moral sublimity in such passages as this: "We went through honor and dishonor; but neither of them hurt us." He had a philosophic contempt for the transient favors of public opinion. While his labors were unusually successful and popular in Cork, he writes: "As yet there is no open opposition, though the people have had the word two months. Nay, it is not impossible but their love may last two months longer, before any number of them rise to tear us in pieces. At present we pass through honor and good report. The chief persons of the town favor us. No wonder then that the common people are quiet. We pass and repass the streets unpursued

by their blessings only. The same favorable inclination is all round the country. Wherever we go, we are received as angels of God. *Were this to last, I would escape for my life to America.*"

Such was the character of the man whom God had raised up to lead the devotions of his people in strains of sweetness and strength unknown before. The true Reformer's fire, the fearless zeal, the utter self-renunciation, the contempt for what other men prize, the unworldly aspirations, the miracle-working faith. As we see thus his daily sentiments and daily life, we can perceive the sincerity of such hymns as

Come on, my partners in distress,  
My comrades through this wilderness,  
Who still your bodies feel :

and understand what he means when he claims to

*sing triumphantly distress*  
'Till I to God return.

Whatever he called on the people to join with him in singing was *real*; it had been a part of his experience and theirs. There was nothing in their favorite range of subjects that he was not qualified to describe; from the groans of anguished penitence to the ecstasies of sublimated faith, he had *been there*. His converts knew it, and his songs had power accordingly. We languid Christians of the present day smile as we look over the quaint divisions of good John Wesley's great Hymn Book: "For Believers Rejoicing, Fighting, Praying, Watching, Working, Suffering; for Mourners Convinced of Sin, Brought to the Birth, Convinced of Backsliding, Groaning for full Redemption; for Believers Saved." But there was nothing strange to the simple Methodists about this; it all seemed to them vital realities, essential spiritual truths. They lived in that way; and their hymns were a part of their life.

Meantime the poet was "working, fighting, praying, suffering" on. Hardships and comforts were lost on him alike; no weather stopped his laborious course, no peril checked his

venturesome spirit; and his frail life, always hanging by a thread, was wonderfully preserved through what would have killed twenty common men. "At five I came to —, sated with travelling, but had not time to rest, the people demanding me. My knees and eyes failed me, so that I could neither stand nor see. I leaned on a door, and called: 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?' The word was not weak, like me."

Such labors were not lost. By these and like means the Lord everywhere purified unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The poet and his brother had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, and many a mountain of iniquity was through them removed and cast into the sea. Not many mighty, not many rich, not many wise after the flesh, were called; but among the neglected, ignorant, and depraved masses the preached word was the power of God unto salvation. Districts notorious for wickedness became a garden of the Lord: the benighted colliers of Kingswood exchanged the tavern for the chapel, and turned their weekly revel into a solemn watch-night; godless reprobates, the scorn or terror of their neighborhood, were changed to meek and consistent believers, sometimes to zealous and successful preachers of the truth. The contrast between these humble and persecuted disciples and the surrounding crowd of formalists and worldings was eminent enough. "The minister of Darlestone said, the meek behavior of our people, and their constancy in suffering, convinced him the counsel was of God; and he wished all his parish were Methodists." Such was the example of their outward walk; their spirit and inner life may be gathered from the following words of a young woman to Charles Wesley: "From twelve years old I have walked with God, and found him in all my ways, in every place, and business, and company. In all my words I find him prompting me. From my infancy he has been my guide and instructor. Many things he has taught me to pray for, which I did not myself understand at the time of my asking, nor fully till the answer came

This thought pursues me still, that I am to suffer for my Saviour ; and I should *grudge* the dying in my bed."

Such sublime results could only spring from the use of very unusual means ; and very unusual means were employed. No man ever surpassed the Methodist poet in describing the power of faith ; because no man ever felt that power more strongly :

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees ;  
Relies on that alone ;  
Laughs at impossibilities,  
And cries, it shall be done !

And it was done. He expected much, and much was given. He made the gospel offers apply to all, unrestrained by modern proprieties or refinements of reason, with a directness and definiteness which could not fail to take its hold and do its work :

Lovers of pleasure more than God,  
For you he suffered pain :  
Swearers, for you he spilt his blood ;  
And shall he die in vain ?  
Misers, for you his life he paid ;  
Your basest crimes he bore :  
Drunkards, your sins on him were laid,  
That you might sin no more.

Preaching in Wales, he says : " Many tears were shed at the singing of that verse :

Outcasts of men, to you I call,  
Harlots and publicans and thieves !  
He spreads his arms to embrace you all :  
Sinners alone his grace receives !

He teaches his converts to seek a redemption *from sin*, rather than from death and hell :

What is our calling's glorious hope,  
But inward holiness ?  
For this to Jesus I look up ;  
I calmly wait for this.

And he teaches them to expect this complete salvation with a faith that knows no fear, uncertainty, or doubt :

Saviour, to thee my soul looks up,  
My present Saviour thou !  
In all the confidence of hope,  
I claim the blessing now !

And he found apt scholars. Perhaps no other hymns, in the universal church's history, have been so popular and powerful. The author of "The Voice of Christian Life in Song" allows to the Wesleys the credit of making the first "people's hymn book." And Mr. Jackson says: "It is doubtful whether any human agency has contributed more directly to form the character of the Methodist societies than the hymns. The sermons of the preachers, the instructions of the class-leaders, the prayers of the people, both in their families and social meetings, are all tinged with the sentiments and phraseology of the hymns."

The Wesleys were zealous in the promotion of psalmody. A year before his conversion, Charles says, "I was present at [Count Zinzendorf's] public services, and thought myself in a choir of angels." But the Methodist singing soon equalled its Moravian prototype. One Williams, a pious Calvinistic dissenter, who visited the society at Bristol not long after its establishment, gives an interesting account of their doings: "Never did I hear such praying or such singing; never did I see such evident marks of fervency of spirit in God's service. Their singing was the most harmonious and delightful I ever heard. They 'sang lustily and with a good courage.' Indeed, they seemed to sing with melody in their hearts. If there be such a thing as heavenly music upon earth, I heard it there." To this day, the genuine Methodist singing is unequalled for hearty simplicity and earnestness, except by German Protestants and at Mr. Beecher's Plymouth church in Brooklyn.

It has been already intimated that the ardent and impetuous character of our author sometimes led him into incorrectness of idea and language. His was rather the theology of the emotions than of the intellect. "Full as he was of poetic fire, being the creature of feeling, it was not his



practice to analyze doctrinal principles with logical exactness." Hence some objectionable expressions in his finest hymns, as when his words at least encourage the error of Patripassianism: "The *immortal God hath died* for me;" or as that remarkable couplet, against which Adam Clark, in his Commentary, objects so strongly:

Give me to feel thy agonies;  
One drop of thy sad cup afford.

Hence, more frequently, those singularities of fanciful emotion, or that unrestrained gush of mere excited feeling, which are hardly profitable:

'Tis done! My Lord hath died;  
My love is crucified!  
Break, this stony heart of mine;  
Pour, mine eyes, a ceaseless flood;  
Feel, my soul, the pangs divine;  
Catch, my heart, the issuing blood!

And again,

Oh what a heaven of heavens is this,—  
This swoon of silent love!

Or,

Rapturous anticipation!  
Who believe, We receive Sensible salvation;  
Silent bliss, and full of glory,  
In thine eye, While we lie Prostrated before Thee.

The indulgence of this style scarcely agrees with another of his sentiments:

*Slighting nature's every feeling,*  
We on grace alone rely.

But this was a part of the man. We find the same thing frequently in his diary, especially in the earlier years. Praying for dying criminals, he says: "The great comfort we found therein made us confidently hope, some of them were received as the penitent thief at the last hour." On another occasion, "We had great power in prayer, and joy in thanksgiving. William Delamotte often shouted for joy." (Here is high authority for a poor practice.) While preaching near Kingswood, "I was pierced through with desires of

complete redemption, which broke out in tears and words that affected them in like manner. . . . . I began the sacrament with fervent prayer, and many tears, which almost hindered my reading the service. I broke out into prayer again and again. Our hearts were all as melting wax." He quotes with approbation a woman's experience; the description is a type of that sudden and violent manner of conversion which many good people consider it necessary to expect and endure: "She saw herself as it were dropping into hell; when, suddenly, a ray of light was darted into her soul, and filled her with all joy and peace in believing." Yet he had strong and solid sense, and used it on most occasions: "We have certainly been too rash and easy in allowing persons for believers on their own testimony; nay, and even persuading them into a false opinion of themselves." "Some stumbling-blocks I have removed, particularly the fits. Many more of the gentry come now that this is taken out of the way; and I am more and more convinced it was a device of Satan to stop the course of the gospel." He possessed a sharp and ready wit, with abundant self-command and self-respect. His services having been once interrupted and broken up by a magistrate, "I told him I had nothing now to do but to pray for him. He answered, 'I have nothing to do with prayer.' 'So I suppose, sir,' said I, 'but we have.'" In conversation with the Primate of Ireland, the latter said: "I never could account for your employing laymen. *W.* My lord, it is your fault. *P.* My fault, Mr. Wesley? *W.* Yes, my lord, yours and your brethren's. *P.* How so, sir? *W.* Why, you hold your peace, and the stones cry out. *P.* Well, but I am told they are unlearned men. *W.* Some of them are in many respects unlearned men; so the dumb ass rebukes the prophet."

The most remarkable feature of the poet's mind was its subjectiveness. His vision was perpetually introverted; he had no eyes for external objects, no interest in the things that other men care most for; he was all soul; spiritual ideas and facts were the world to him. His most natural and

fervent prayer is, not for protection, help, blessing, on the outward and visible life — he cares nothing about this ; but

Give me the enlarged desire, And open, Lord, my soul  
Thy own fulness to require, And comprehend the whole :  
Stretch my faith's capacity Wider, and yet wider still ;  
Then with all that is in Thee My soul forever fill !

He loses providence in grace ; he thinks not of times and seasons ; and when he condescends to notice carnal things at all, it is only as the types of things spiritual. He writes a hymn for New year ; but only to reflect,

Our life is a dream ; Our time, as a stream, Glides swiftly away,  
And the fugitive moment refuses to stay :  
The arrow is flown ; The moment is gone ; The millennial year  
Rushes on to our view, and eternity's here.

At the Land's End, "on the extremest point of the rocks," he sings :

Carry on thy victory ;  
Spread thy rule from sea to sea ;  
Reconvert the ransomed race ;  
Save us, save us, Lord, by grace.  
  
Oh that every soul might be  
Suddenly subdued to thee !  
Oh that all in thee might know  
Everlasting life below !  
  
Now thy mercy's wings expand ;  
Stretch throughout the happy land :  
Take possession of thy home ;  
Come, divine Immanuel, come !

and at his marriage :

Stop the hurrying spirit's haste ;  
Change the soul's ignoble taste ;  
Nature into grace improve,  
Earthly into heavenly love.  
  
Raise our hearts to things on high,  
To our Bridegroom in the sky ;  
Heaven our hope and highest aim ;  
Mystic marriage of the Lamb.

If he could not spiritualize a thing, he let it alone. Visiting his native place after an absence of years, there must have

been many old associations and tender memories awaiting him at every turn; but "he was too intent on saving the souls of the people to indulge in mere sentimentality." His itinerant duties took him among the wild scenery of Wales; but he had no leisure to look at mountains. His only verses on external nature occur in two hymns "For one retired into the Country":

Come then, thou Universal Good, And bid my heart be still,  
 And let me meet thee in the wood, Or find thee on the hill:  
 My soul to nobler prospects raise; My largest views extend  
 Beyond the bounds of time and space, Where pain and death shall end.  
 Lead to the streams of paradise, My raptured spirit lead,  
 And bid the tree of life arise, And flourish o'er my head.

This last line, it is due to the poet to say, is one of the lamest he ever wrote. In most hymn writers it would be respectable; but his muse seldom moved so haltingly. Now for the other:

Along the hill or dewy mead  
 In sweet forgetfulness I tread,  
     Or wander through the grove;  
 As Adam in his native seat,  
 In all his works my God I meet, —  
     The object of my love.  
 I see his beauty in the flower;  
 To shade my walks and deck my bower  
     His love and wisdom join:  
 Him in the feathered choir I hear,  
 And own, while all my soul is ear,  
     The music is divine.  
 In yon unbounded plain I see  
 A sketch of his immensity  
     Who spans these ample skies;  
 Whose presence makes the happy place,  
 And opens in the wilderness  
     A blooming paradise.

These verses show that the poet was not insensible to the beauties of creation, and could, had he chosen, have rhymed of purling streams and gentle breezes as well as his neighbors. He did better, in applying himself to higher themes.

Perhaps the finest example of his spiritualizing power is

found in his Hymn on the Curse pronounced, Gen. iii. 17-19. The use made herein of the thorns and sweat is nobly poetical :

Most righteous God, my doom I bear,  
My load of guilt and pain and care, Enslaved to base desires ;  
Hard toiling for embittered bread,  
I mourn my barren *soul* o'erspread With cursed thorns and briars.

Death's sentence in myself receive,  
And, dust, to dust already cleave ; Exiled from Paradise,  
Hasting to hellish misery,  
Jesus, if unredeemed by thee, My soul forever dies.

But Jesus hath our sentence borne ;  
He did in our affliction mourn, A man of sorrows made ;  
A servant and a curse for me,  
He bears the utmost penalty, He suffers in my stead.

I see Him sweat great drops of blood ;  
I see him faint beneath my load ! The *thorns* his temples tear !  
He bows his bleeding head, and dies !  
He lives ! He mounts above the skies, He claims my Eden there !

But it was ordained that this unworldly mortifier of the flesh should experience some of the natural emotions, and form the strongest of the ties, which bind men to the present life. It is difficult to see why, with his views (which, be it remembered, were vastly different from the views of people in general), he should have wished to marry. For earthly happiness he had no desire, and natural appetites he regarded as profitless, if not sinful ; given to man to be restrained, not gratified. Whatever might be the effect on other men, marriage could hardly promote the piety of the devoted Christian who, wrapped up in his Master's business, had no ties, no interests, no desires of his own ; and it must of necessity curtail the usefulness of the itinerant preacher, whose spiritual children deserved and claimed all his sympathies, whose parish was the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. He might have foreseen, too, that the cares of an increasing family and the almost certain sorrows of a conscientious parent would add to the already sufficient burdens of a too sensitive heart, and

darken the evening of a life for which there was not much of earthly joy. The result would have justified such anticipations. Doubtless the *poet* was taught a larger sympathy with the common comforts and distresses of humanity, and enabled to tune his harp to themes which might else have remained unhonored and unsung; and doubtless the *man* attained, in the relations of husband and father, a completer experience of life below, a more rounded symmetry of character, than could have been vouchsafed to the unsettled, roving bachelor; but beyond these indirect and general benefits, it is hard to see what good came of the poet's matrimonial investment. He was as happy as men can expect to be in that relation; but petty troubles and great anxieties were born to him in numbers. His itinerant labors slackened, then ceased; his busy mind, accustomed to the turmoil and variety of incessant travelling and daily straining of body and soul, pined in the quietness of home; and the last thirty years of his life were spent in comparative inaction, obscurity, and idleness. He was still an eminently holy, industrious, and useful minister; but for the might of his strength, for the fiery ardor of his intensest zeal, for the glory of his greatest works, we must look back to the days of his youth, and stop with a period of some ten years after marriage.

But neither Charles, nor the others most concerned, thought of these things at the time, or saw the matter in this light. He was forty when he became engaged to Sarah Gwynne, the daughter of a family respectable for wealth, standing, and piety, in Wales. He was tenderly attached to the young lady; but that seems to have been the point of least consequence in the matter. He managed all in the most business-like style: concluded first that he had better marry then than later, if at all; then consulted his brother and other friends about it, and agreed that if any opposition were met, the plan should be forever abandoned. It all went smoothly enough, however. For the few months preceding the ceremony, he conducted with Miss G. a corre-

spondence "remarkable for its piety. Considerable part of his letters to her were written in verse; a vehicle in which his thoughts flowed in the most natural manner, especially when his feelings were excited. These epistles express many fears lest the love of the creature should at all interfere with that supreme love to God which is the soul of religion. Never was wedded love more strong and decided than that which he cherished; and never was it more thoroughly sanctified by a perfect and constant reference to God." On the day before the wedding, "we crowded as much prayer as we could into the day." April 8th, 1749. "I rose at four, spent three and a half hours in prayer or singing, with my brother, with Sally, and with Beck [his bride and her sister]. It [the wedding] was a most solemn season of love. I never had more of the divine presence at the sacrament. Prayer and thanksgiving were our whole employment. A stranger that intermeddled not with our joy said, 'it looked more like a funeral than a wedding.'" Three weeks afterwards he wrote: "Hitherto marriage has been no hinderance. You will hardly believe it sits so light upon me. I forgot my wife (can you think it?) as soon as I left her. Neither did death appear less desirable than formerly. I almost believe nothing shall hurt me."

A number of the poetic epistles above referred to were published in the second volume of his *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1749, under the common title "Christian Friendship." He is soberly anxious to keep his passion within proper limits; in one poem only does nature obtain fair vent, and then he is careful to justify it by the example of our Lord:

O Thou whose special grace Did kindly condescend  
Of all the chosen race To single out a friend,  
To shower on him, above the rest, Thy richest favors down,  
And press him closest to thy breast, — Thy best beloved John!

I lit my heart to thee, — To thee, who know'st the whole,  
Its dearest amity For one distinguished soul;  
The soft unutterable love Wherewith I one embrace,  
With gracious smiles behold, approve, And turn it to thy praise.

At the same time he is particular to guard and pray against any perversion or exaggeration of this permitted human love :

While with just, peculiar kindness We each other's soul embrace,  
Save us from that doting blindness Fatal to our fallen race ;  
From the mean, contracting passion Keep us free and unconfined ;  
Raise our generous inclination, Fix our love on all mankind.

Several hymns still used by the Methodists, and made to bear upon the church and Christian fellowship, were written at various times by the poet with direct reference to his wedded state.

Come away to the skies, My beloved, arise,  
And rejoice in the day thou wast born,

was addressed to his wife upon her birth-day. Its companion-piece,

Come let us ascend, My companion and friend,  
To a taste of the banquet above,

had a similar origin. So had the fine hymn, "Centre of our hopes thou art : " which in the original commences :

Author of the peace unknown, Lover of my friend and me,  
Who of twain hast made us one, One preserve us still in thee :  
All our heightened blessings bless ; Crown our hopes with full success.

His object in composition, says Mr. Jackson, was first his own edification, then the edification of the church. Hence it was natural for him to use language which, while referring directly to his personal affairs, could be easily turned to all believers and the church at large :

Why hast thou cast our lot In the same age and place,  
And why together brought, To see each other's face ?  
To join with softest sympathy, And mix our friendly souls in thee.

The poet's wife was an intelligent, amiable, and pious woman, who did her whole duty by her husband. Her character, as slightly recorded in his Biography, by Mr. Jackson, makes no profound or startling impression ; but they seem to have lived in uninterrupted peace. He was not so happy in his children. Five died in infancy, and the remaining three caused him much anxiety and sorrow by



their lack of early piety. The younger son, Samuel, a perverse and undutiful child, embittered his father's dying years by going over to Popery. The poet's fortune in this respect gave melancholy confirmation to that stoical preference of his brother's :

I have no babes to hold me here ; But children more securely dear  
 For mine I humbly claim ;  
 Better than daughters or than sons, — Temples divine of living stone,  
 Inscribed with Jesus' name.

We cannot forbear pursuing the comparison, in Charles's own touching verse. In the first poem, headed "Naomi and Ruth. Adapted to the Minister and People," he addresses his loved and loving spiritual children, who often, on foot, followed his horse for miles :

Turn again, my children, turn ; Wherefore would ye go with me ?  
 Oh forbear, forbear to mourn ; Jesus wills it so to be.  
 Why, when God would have us part, Weep ye thus, and break my heart ?

Go in peace, my children, go ; Only Jesus' steps pursue :  
 He shall pay the debt I owe ; He shall kindly deal with you ;  
 He your sure reward shall be, Bless you for your love to me.

Compare with this the earth-renouncing hopelessness, the mournful resignation of the following, when his aged heart was wrung by the ungrateful folly of his son in the flesh :

Farewell, my all of earthly hope,  
 My nature's stay, my age's prop, Irrevocably gone !  
 Submissive to the will divine,  
 I acquiesce and make it mine, — I offer up my son !

. . . . .  
 The blessed day of my release  
 (Should sorrow's pangs no sooner cease) Will swallow up my woe ;  
 Make darkness light, and crooked straight,  
 Unwind the labyrinths of fate, And all the secret show.

But while thy way is in the deep,  
 Thou dost not chide, if still I weep, If still mine eyes run o'er :  
 The bitterness of death is past ;  
 The bitterness of life may last A few sad moments more.

Patient till death, I feel my pain,  
 But neither murmur nor complain, While humbled in the dust :

My sins the cause of my distress  
I feel, and mournfully confess The punishment is just.

Wherefore with soft and silent pace  
I measure out my suffering days, In view of joys to come, —  
In hope his plan to comprehend,  
When Jesus shall with clouds descend, And call me from the tomb.

The life of Charles Wesley was a varied, and in the main, a sad one. He thoroughly understood the great lesson of the book of Ecclesiastes, and of all earthly life :

Taught by long experience, Lord, By thy Spirit taught, I see,  
True is thy severest word, All on earth is vanity :  
Empty all our bliss below, Seeming bliss, but real woe.

He never forgot that this is not our rest. He expected persecution and opprobrium as the natural and necessary favors of the world towards living Christians :

Since first we heavenward turned our face,  
Exposed and outraged all day long,  
A helpless, poor, afflicted race,  
For doing good, we suffer wrong :  
We suffer shame, distress, and loss,  
And wait for all thy glorious cross.

But the prospect did not frighten him. When he first undertook to follow Christ, he began to deny himself and take up his cross :

And did my Lord on earth endure  
Sorrow and hardship and distress,  
That I might sit me down secure,  
And rest in self-indulgent ease ?  
His delicate disciple, I,  
Like him might neither live, nor die ?  
Thy holy will be done, not mine ;  
Be suffered all thy holy will :  
I dare not, Lord, the cross decline ;  
I will not *lose* the slightest ill,  
Or lay the heaviest burden down, —  
The richest *jewel* of my crown.  
Sorrow is solid joy, and pain  
Is pure delight, endured for thee ;  
Reproach and loss are glorious gain,  
And death is immortality ;  
And who for thee their all have given,  
Have nobly bartered earth for heaven.

Some eminent pleasures, indeed, he enjoyed, in the consciousness of his Maker's favor, in communion with God's people, and in the exercise of his gifts for his Redeemer's glory :

How happy, gracious Lord, are we,  
Divinely drawn to follow thee, Whose hours divided are  
Betwixt the mount and multitude ;  
Our day is spent in doing good, Our night in praise and prayer.

With us, as melancholy void,  
No moment lingers unemployed, Or unimproved below ;  
Our weariness of life is gone,  
Who live to serve our God alone, And only thee to know.

And his impressible nature, susceptible of all extremes of emotion, sometimes rose to ecstasy in view of his spiritual privileges :

What a mercy is this, What a heaven of bliss,  
How unspeakably happy am I !  
Gathered into the fold, With thy people enrolled,  
With thy people to live and to die !

In a rapture of joy My life I employ,  
The God of my life to proclaim :  
'Tis worth living for this, To administer bliss  
And salvation in Jesus's name.

As often was he in the depths of despondency and gloom ; but his depression, like his excitement, is always that of a Christian. His most mournful pieces are full of submission, humility, and faith ; and thus, often his " sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought :"

A child of sorrow from the womb, By sad variety of pain  
Weighed down, I sink into the tomb, Yet only of myself complain :  
My sins the root of bitterness I must in life and death confess.

Always profoundly sensible that he was a pilgrim and stranger upon earth, worldly things seemed to him as a dream, and nothing real but the realities of eternity :

The angels are at home in heaven ; The saints unsettled pilgrims here :  
Our days are as a shadow, driven From earth ; so soon we disappear.  
We no abiding city have, No place of resting but the grave.

“On going to a new habitation,” moving from Bristol to London, he sings :

What then is change of place to me ?  
The end of sin and misery In every place is nigh :  
No spot of earth but yields a grave ;  
Where'er He wills, if Jesus save, I lay me down and die.

And again :

No matter where or how I in this desert live,  
If, when my dying head I bow, Jesus my soul receive :  
Blest with thy precious love, Saviour, 'tis all my care  
To reach the purchased house above, And find a mansion there.

His tender sympathies were often tried by the personal unkindness or spiritual faithlessness of his friends. Divisions were introduced into the Methodist societies ; some of his followers became Calvinists or Moravians, and were taught to turn from their spiritual father as a false prophet ; others embraced fatal errors, and abandoned the profession and practice of the common faith. On such occasions, the poet's wounded spirit soared to the healing fountain. In the volumes of 1739 are a number of hymns on the “Loss of his Friends :”

Take these broken reeds away ! On the Rock of Ages I  
Calmly now my spirit stay, Now on Christ alone rely ;  
Every other prop resign, Sure the sinner's Friend is mine.

Fly, my friends, with treacherous speed ; Melt as snow before the sun ;  
Leave me at my greatest need, — Leave me to my God alone,  
To my Help which cannot fail, To my Friend unchangeable.

While I thus my soul recline On my dear Redeemer's breast,  
Need I for the creature pine, Fondly seek a farther rest,  
Still for human friendship sue, Stoop, ye worms of earth, to you ?

With such sublime consolations did the Christian soothe his own afflicted spirit and the spirits of as many as could rise with him to that altitude of faith. But for the enduring comfort, the perfect rest of life, he looked beyond the present state :

Come, Finisher of sin and woe, And let me die my God to see ;  
My God, as I am known, to know, Fathom the depths of Deity,  
And spend, contemplating thy face, A blest eternity in praise.

The last poem ever written by his own hand, "a little before his death," possesses a peculiar interest. The fire of his youth is gone, but the grace and sweetness are still present ; it is now the subdued language of one full of years and earthly experience, who only desires to fulfil his Maker's will and depart in peace :

How long, how often, shall I pray, Take all iniquity away ;  
And give the plenitude of good, — The blessing bought by Jesus' blood ;  
Coupiscence and pride remove, And fill me, Lord, with humble love.

Again I take the words to me Prescribed, and offer them to thee :  
Thy kingdom come, to root out sin, And perfect holiness bring in ;  
And swallow up my will in thine, And human change into divine.

So shall I render thee thine own, And tell the wonders thou hast done ;  
The power and faithfulness declare Of God, who hears and answers prayer ;  
Extol the riches of thy grace, And spend my latest breath in praise.

O that the joyful hour were come, Which calls thy ready servant home,  
Unites me to the church above, Where angels chant the song of love,  
And saints eternally proclaim The glories of the heavenly Lamb !

He died March 29th, 1788, in his eightieth year. The epitaph placed over his remains had been written by himself for another :

With poverty of spirit blest,  
Rest, happy saint, in Jesus rest ;  
A sinner saved, through grace forgiven,  
Redeemed from earth to reign in heaven !  
Thy labors of unwearied love,  
By thee forgot, are crowned above ; —  
Crowned, through the mercy of thy Lord,  
With a free, full, immense reward !

*(To be continued.)*