

PART VII.  
1862-72.  
Chap. 68.

show itself and be rectified. In that which sometimes appears as an autoeratical dictum, he is only the mouthpiece of the present and former Committees, by whom the subject may have been many times discussed and settled. Sufficient checks are always at hand for a presumptuous Secretary. The Committee possesses a plastic power which few minds can resist. Your Secretaries owe many obligations to those who in this room help and guide and correct their plans. May this Committee ever regard their Secretaries as a part of themselves, uphold them by their sympathy, their counsel, and above all by their prayers, that their shortcomings may be pardoned and their mistakes overruled."

His skill in  
framing  
resolutions

His biographer, William Knight, speaks from long personal knowledge of Venn's skill in conducting the business of the Committee. "F's great desire was to avoid the formation of parties in it, to have each topic thoroughly discussed from every point of view, and so to frame each resolution or despatch as to cover the views of all present, or at least to make the minority—it might be of *one*—feel that its arguments had received due consideration. He had a happy tact in perceiving when a subject was exhausted, and discussion was degenerating into desultory talk." Knight gives an illustration of his anxiety not to dictate:—

"On one occasion he brought forward a plan which he had elaborated with much care and patience. It was not acceptable. At once he withdrew it without a word. Some time afterwards a Committee-man proposed the same scheme, and it was unanimously applauded. He merely called for his paper, read it aloud, and said, 'I read this to the Committee three months ago, but they would not hear of it.'"

An anvil,  
not a  
hammer.

As far back as 1833, eight years before Venn became Secretary, William Jowett concluded the Instructions to John Tucker on his departure for Madras with some words found in the letter of Ignatius to Polycarp on the latter's position at Smyrna—*Ἐπιθήτε ἑδραῖος ὡς ἄκμων τυπτόμενος*, "*Stand steady as an anvil when it is struck.*" Tucker in after years often recalled them, saying, "*Be an anvil, and not a hammer*"; and Knight quotes them as embodying the spirit in which Henry Venn acted in Committee, and indeed in life generally. But while quite ready to stand still and be struck himself, he would not allow his beloved Society to be struck with impunity. After his death, Bishop Wilberforce wrote of his devotion to the C.M.S. in very striking terms:—

"Once or twice, through the *Record* and otherwise, he has smitten me hard when he thought I in any way wronged C.M.S.; but I no more resented it than I should have resented Sir Lancelot's chivalry for his Queen."\*

Moreover, Venn would ever do what he could to prevent

\* *Life of Bishop S. Wilberforce*, vol. iii. p. 407. But the reference to the *Record* is misleading. That paper was always ready to fight the Bishop, no doubt, and needed no impetus from Venn in that direction; but Venn's personal influence with it was small. Even an outside reader in Mr. Haldane's time could see that Venn was no favourite of his; and Venn's private journals reveal his not infrequent dissatisfaction with the editorial utterances.