

deliverance from those sins which had ensnared him, or held him in bondage—the victory that overcometh the world, and boldness to confess Christ before men. He had the witness in himself; a sensible evidence, both that the word of God is true, and that he had not in vain sought the fulfilment of its promises to himself. Now it was that he again sought the acquaintance of Mr. Newton, and began to attend the ministry of Mr. Scott, the well-known author of the Commentary on the Bible. From this time his principles became fixed, and exerted their influence upon his religious character till, by the grace of God, it assumed that lovely form, which the pious beheld with unfeigned delight, and to which increasing years only added dignity, and permanence, and strength.

The horrors and iniquity of the African Slave Trade began about this time to engage the attention of the public of Britain. Several benevolent individuals had exerted themselves to point out its glaring injustice and cruelty, and excite the sympathy of the nation towards the oppressed race, and the evils that for many years had been inflicted upon them, with a design to abolish the horrid system of slave-dealing altogether. We are not writing the history of the abolition, or we should be most eager to place in a proper light the deeds and the virtues of those noble-minded men who sought, and at length obtained, the removal of “the greatest practical evil that ever afflicted the human race.” Our limits will only permit us to notice them so far as may be necessary to throw light upon the exertions of Mr. Wilberforce in this glorious cause. Dr. Peckard, Vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge, preached against the slave trade in 1784, and the following year gave for a prize essay the subject, “Is it right to make slaves of

others against their will?” Mr. Clarkson, afterwards so honourably known among the friends of humanity, wrote for the prize and obtained it. He made something more of it, however, than an intellectual exercise; his heart was affected by the details of cruelty and suffering which his researches disclosed to him; and he resolved, with a noble generosity, to relinquish all his hopes of preferment in the church, and devote the remainder of his life to the cause of abolition. Having, with other friends of the slave, formed a committee, which sat for the first time on the 22d of May, 1787, notice was sent to Mr. Wilberforce of the event, and he cordially united with them in this labour of love. It was the high privilege of the writer of this sketch to have some personal knowledge of these three eminent philanthropists in their latter days; and their venerated forms are now as distinctly visible to his mental eye as though it were but yesterday that he saw them.

The accession of Mr. Wilberforce was of incalculable advantage to the cause. He engaged to bring the subject before parliament, and accordingly gave notice in the House of Commons of his intention to do so; but indisposition which threatened his life prevented him at that time from executing his purpose. Mr. Pitt, therefore, undertook the duty for him, and a resolution passed the House, that it would proceed in the next session to consider the state of the slave trade, and the measures it might be proper to adopt with respect to it. Mr. Wilberforce, it was hoped, might recover; and such were his acknowledged talents and character, that both Pitt and Fox declared their conviction that the subject could not be confided to abler hands. In the mean time evidence was procured of the most decisive and appalling character, shewing the villainies that