

9. But where is he to be found? Shall we "go up into heaven," or "down into hell," to seek him? Shall we "take the wings of the morning," and search for him "in the uttermost parts of the sea?" Nay. *Quod petis, hic est!* What a strange word to fall from the pen of a heathen! "What you seek, is here!" He is "about you here!" He is "about your path." He "beats you behind and before." He "lays his hand upon you." Lo! God is here! Not afar off! Now, believe and feel him near! May he now reveal himself in your heart! Know him! Love him! and you are happy.

10. Are you already happy in him? Then see that you "hold fast whereunto ye have attained!" "Watch and pray," that you may never be "moved from your steadfastness." "Look unto yourselves, that ye lose not what ye have gained, but that ye receive a full reward." In so doing, expect a continual growth in grace, in the loving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Expect that the power of the Highest shall suddenly overshadow you, that all sin may be destroyed, and nothing may remain in your heart, but holiness unto the Lord. And this moment, and every moment, "present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," and "glorify him with your body and with your spirit, which are God's."—*Rev. J. Wesley.*

BIOGRAPHY.

REV. JOHN FLETCHER.

THE following sketch, by Dr. ROBERT SOUTHBY, is taken from his "Life of Wesley"—the facts of which, though originally furnished by Mr. FLETCHER'S official biographers, are introduced by the Doctor with remarks which shew the high opinion he entertained of the Vicar of Madely; and which is the more to be appreciated, as he cannot be suspected of sectarian partiality.

JEAN GUILLAUME DE LA FLECHERE, (this was properly his name,) was a man of rare talents, and rarer virtue. No age or country has ever produced a man of more fervent piety, or more perfect charity; no church has ever possessed a more apostolic minister. He was born on the 12th September, 1729, at Nyon, in the Pays de Vaud, of a respectable Bernese family, descended from a noble house in Savoy. Having been educated for the ministry at Geneva, he found himself unable to subscribe to the doctrine of predestination, and resolved to seek preferment as a soldier of fortune. Accordingly he went to Lisbon, obtained a commission in the Portuguese service, and was ordered to Brazil. A lucky accident, which confined him to his bed when the ship sailed, saved him from a situation where his fine intellect would have been lost, and his philanthropic piety would have had no room to display itself. He left Portugal for the prospect of active service in the Low Countries; and that prospect also being disappointed by peace, he came over to England, improved himself in the language, and became tutor in the family of Mr. Hill, of Fern Hall, in Shropshire. The love of God and of man abounded in his heart; and finding among the Methodists that sympathy which he desired, he joined them, and, for a time, took to ascetic courses, of which he afterwards acknowledged the error. He lived on vegetables, and, for some time, on milk and water, and bread; he sat up two whole nights in every week, for the purpose of praying, and reading and meditating on religious things; and, on the other nights, never allowed himself to sleep, as long as he could keep his attention to the book before him.

At length, by the advice of his friends, Mr. Hill and Mr. Wesley, whom he consulted, he took orders in the English church. The ordination took place in the Chapel-Royal, St. James's; and, as soon as it was over, he went to the Methodist chapel in West-street, where he assisted in administering the Lord's Supper. Mr. Wesley had never received so seasonable an assistance. "How wonderful are the ways of God!" said he, in his journal; "when my bodily strength failed, and none in England were able and willing to assist me, he sent me help from the mountains of Switzerland, and an help meet for me in every res-

pect. Where could I have found such another?" It proved a more efficient and important help than Mr. Wesley could then have anticipated.

Mr. Fletcher (for so he now called himself, being completely anglicised,) incurred some displeasure, by the decided manner in which he connected himself with the Methodists: neither his talents nor his virtues were yet understood beyond the circle of his friends. By Mr. Hill's means, however, he was presented to the vicarage of Madely, in Shropshire, about three years after his ordination. It is a populous village, in which there were extensive collieries and iron works; and the character of the inhabitants was, in consequence, what, to the reproach and curse of England, it generally is, wherever mines or manufactures of any kind have brought together a crowded population. Mr. Fletcher had, at one time, officiated there as curate; he now entered upon his duty with zeal proportioned to the arduous nature of the service which he had pledged himself to perform. That zeal made him equally disregarding of appearances and of danger. The whole rents of his small patrimonial estate in the Pays de Vaud were set apart for charitable uses, and he drew so liberally from his other funds for the same purpose, that his furniture and wardrobe were not spared. Because some of his remoter parishioners excused themselves for not attending the morning service, by pleading that they did not wake early enough to get their families ready, for some months he set out every Sunday, at five o'clock, with a bell in his hand, and went round the most distant parts of the parish, to call up the people. And wherever hearers could be collected in the surrounding country, within ten or fifteen miles, thither he went to preach to them on week days, though he seldom got home before one or two in the morning. At first, the rabble of his parishioners resented the manner in which he ventured to reprove and exhort them in the midst of their low revels and riotous meetings; for he would frequently burst in upon them, without any fear of the consequence to himself. The publicans and maltmen were his especial enemies. A mob of colliers, who were one day baiting a bull, determined to pull him off his horse as he went to preach, set the dogs upon him, and, in their own phrase, bait the parson; but the bull broke loose, and dispersed them before he arrived. In spite, however, of the opposition which his eccentricities excited, not from the ignorant only, but from some of the neighbouring clergy and magistrates, he won upon the people, rude and brutal as they were, by the invincible benevolence which was manifested in his whole manner of life; till at length his church, which at first had been so scantily attended, that he was discouraged as well as mortified by the smallness of the congregation, began to overflow.

MR. FLETCHER AS A WRITER.

Toplady said of Mr. Fletcher's works, that, in the very few pages which he had perused, the serious passages were dulness double-condensed, and the lighter passages impudence double-distilled: "So hardened was" his own "front," to use one of his own expressions, "and so thoroughly was he drenched in the petrifying water of a party." If ever true Christian charity was manifested in polemical writing, it was by Fletcher of Madely. Even theological controversy never, in the slightest degree, irritated his heavenly temper. On sending the manuscript of his first Check to Antinomianism to a friend much younger than himself, he says, "I beg, as upon my bended knees, you would revise and correct it, and take off *quod durius sonat* in point of *works, reproof, and style*. I have followed my light, which is hat that of smoking flax; put yours to mine. I am charged hereabouts with scattering fire-brands, arrows, and death. Quench some of my brands; blunt some of my arrows; and take off all my deaths, except that which I design for Antinomianism."—"For the sake of candour," he says in one of his prefaces, "of truth, of peace—for the reader's sake, and above all, for the sake of Christ, and the honour of Christianity—whoever ye are that shall next enter the lists against us, do not wire-draw the controversy, by uncharitably attacking our persons, and absurdly judging our spirits, instead of weighing our arguments, and considering the scriptures which we produce; nor pass over fifty solid reasons, and a hundred plain passages, to cavil about non-essentials, and to lay

the stress of your answer upon mistakes, which do not affect the strength of the cause, and which we are ready to correct as soon as they shall be pointed out. I take the Searcher of Hearts, and my judicious unprejudiced readers to witness, that through the whole of this controversy, far from concealing the most plausible objections, or avoiding the strongest arguments which are or may be advanced against our reconciling doctrine, I have carefully searched them out, and endeavoured to encounter them as openly as David did Goliath. Had our opponents followed this method, I doubt not but the controversy would have ended long ago, in the destruction of our prejudices, and in the rectifying of our mistakes. Oh! if we preferred the unspeakable pleasure of finding out the truth, to the pitiful honour of pleasing a party, or of vindicating our own mistakes, how soon would the useful fan of scriptural, logical, and brotherly controversy purge the floor of the Church! How soon would the light of truth, and the flame of love, burn the chaff of error, and the thorns of prejudice, with fire unquenchable!"

In such a temper did this saintly man address himself to the work of controversy; and he carried it on with correspondent candour, and with distinguished ability. His manner is diffuse, and the florid parts, and the unctious, betray their French origin; but the reasoning is acute and clear; the spirit of his writings is beautiful, and he was the master of the subject in all its bearings. His great object was to conciliate the two parties, and to draw the line between the Solidian and Pelagian errors. For this purpose he commenced a treatise, which he called an "Equal Check to Pharisæism and Antinomianism; or, Scripture Scales to weigh the gold of Gospel Truth, and to balance a multitude of opposite Scriptures." Herein he brought together, side by side, the opposite texts, and showed how they qualified each other; the opinion which he inferred seems to correspond more nearly with that of Baxter than of any other divine. He traced, historically, the growth of both the extremes against which he contended. Luther, being an Augustinian monk, brought with him, from his convent, the favourite opinions of Augustine, to which he became the more attached, because of the value which the Romanists affixed to their superstitious works, and the fooleries and abominations which had sprung from this cause. Most of the reformers, and more especially Calvin, took the same ground. The Jesuits, seeing their error, inclined the Romish church to the opposite extreme; and, after a while, Jansenius formed a Calvinistic party among the Catholics, while Arminius tempered the doctrine of the reformed churches. Antinomianism was the legitimate consequence on the one part, and Mr. Fletcher thought that the English clergy were tending towards Pelagianism on the other. His great object was to trim the balance, and, above all, to promote Christian charity and Christian union. "My regard for unity," said he, "recovers my drooping spirits, and adds new strength to my wasted body—(he was believed, at that time, to be in the last stage of a consumption)—I stop at the brink of the grave, over which I bend, and, as the blood oozing from my decayed lungs does not permit me vocally to address my contending brethren, by means of my pen I will ask them, if they can properly receive the holy communion, while they wilfully remain in *disunion* with their brethren, from whom controversy has needlessly parted them."

He was then about to leave England, for what appeared to be a forlorn hope of deriving benefit from his native air; but, before his departure, he expressed a desire of seeing those persons with whom he had been engaged in this controversy; that "all doctrinal differences apart, he might testify his sincere regret for having given them the least displeasure, and receive from them some condescending assurance of reconciliation and good-will." All of them had not generosity enough to accept the invitation; the who did were edified, as well as affected by the interview; and some of them, who had had no personal acquaintance with him before, "expressed the highest satisfaction," says his biographer, "at being introduced to the company of one whose air and countenance bespoke him fitted rather for the society of angels than the conversation of men." Upon the score of controversial offences, few men have ever had so little need to ask forgiveness,