

Wesley preached his last sermon in the open air at Winchelsea, on October 7, 1790, from the text "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; repent and believe the Gospel." He stood under a great tree, with a listening and reverent crowd about him; and when his trembling lips had uttered the benediction, almost the last syllables of the greatest Christian ministry the English race has seen were spoken. And at least a touch of the strange yet familiar power of Wesley's preaching was in that last open-air sermon. "The tears of the people," says one who was present, "flowed in torrents."

The brave, eager spirit within the tired body was, however, still planning new toils. On February 6, Wesley wrote a letter, saying, "On Wednesday, March 17, I purpose, if God permit, to come from Gloucester to Worcester, and on Thursday, 18th, to Stourport." The letter, by accident, was not sent. Wesley discovered it amongst his papers, three weeks afterwards, and, with a touch of his characteristic method, he endorsed it: "February 28. This morning I found this in my bureau." These are the last words that Wesley's pen ever wrote. Three days after he was dead.

Through all these weeks he was conscious that he stood on the threshold of eternity. He closed each service he held with that fine verse of one of his brother's hymns:—

"O that without a lingering groan
I may the welcome word receive,
My body with my charge laid down,
And cease at once to work and live."

He had one brief, golden, pathetic counsel with which he ended every interview, and every meeting with his societies. It was the Apostle John's great message, "Little children, love one another."

On February 1, 1791, he wrote his last letter to America. His dying message ran: "Declare to all men that the Methodists are one people in all the world, and that it is their full determination so to continue—

"Though mountains rise and oceans roll
To sever us in vain."