

After the Conference of 1786 was concluded, Mr. Wesley paid a second visit to Holland, in company with Mr. Brackenbury and Mr. Broadbent; preached in various places, expounded to private companies, and engaged in conversation with many learned and pious individuals.

On his return to England, his Journal presents the usual record of constant preaching and travelling, interspersed with useful remark and incident. The labours and journeys of almost every day are noticed, exhibiting at once a singular instance of natural strength, sustained, doubtless, by the special blessing of God, and of an entire consecration of time to the service of mankind, of which no similar example is probably on record; and which is rendered still more wonderful by the consideration that it had been continued for more than half a century, on the same scale of exertion, and almost without intermission. The vigour of his mind at this age is also as remarkable: the same power of acute observation as formerly is manifested; the same taste for reading and criticism; the same facility in literary composition. Nor is the buoyant cheerfulness of his spirit a less striking feature. Nothing of the old man of un-renewed nature appears; no forebodings of evil; no querulous comparisons of the present with the past:—there is the same delight in the beautiful scenes of nature: the same enjoyment of conversation, provided it had the two qualities of usefulness and brevity; the same joy in hopeful appearances of good; and the same tact at turning the edge of little discomforts and disappointments, by the power of an undisturbed equanimity. Above all, we see the man of one business, living only to serve God and his generation, "instant in season and out of season," seriously intent, not upon doing so much duty, but upon saving souls; and preaching, conversing, and writing for this end alone.

This period of his life must have been to him one of rich reflection. In his Journal of 1785, March 24, he observes:—"I was now considering how strangely the grain of mustard-seed, planted about fifty years ago, had grown up. It has spread through all Great Britain and Ireland, the Isle of Wight, and the Isle of Man; then to America, through the whole continent, into Canada, the Leeward Islands, and Newfoundland. And the societies in all these parts walk by one rule, knowing that religion is in holy tempers, and striving to worship God not in form only, but likewise in spirit and in truth."

He must, indeed, have been insensible to the emotions of a generous nature, had he not felt an honest satisfaction, that he had lived down calumnies; and that where mobs formerly awaited him, he met with the kind and cheering attentions of the most respectable persons of all religious persuasions, in every part of the country. But, more than this, he could compare the dearth and barrenness of one age with the living verdure and fertility of another. Long-forgotten truths had been made familiar; a neglected population had been brought within the range of Christian instruction, and the constant preaching of the word of life by faithful men; religious societies had been raised up through the land, generally distinguished by piety and zeal; by the blessing of God upon the labours of Mr. Whitefield, and others of his first associates, the old Dissenting churches had been quickened into life, and new ones multiplied; the Established Church had been awakened from her lethargy: the number of faithful ministers in her parishes greatly multiplied; the influence of religion spread into the colonies, and the United States of America; and, above all, a vast multitude, the fruit of his own ministerial zeal and faithfulness, had, since the time in which he commenced his labours, departed into a better world. These thoughts must often have passed through his mind, and inspired his heart with devout thanksgivings, although no allusion is ever made to them in a boastful manner. For the past, he knew to whom the praise belonged; and the future he left to God, certain, at least, of meeting in heaven a greater number of glorified spirits of whose salvation he had been, under God, the instrument, than any minister of modern ages. That "joyful hope" may explain an incident, which occurred at Oxford towards the close of his life. The Rev. Henry Moore, who was with him at the time, observes, that one Sunday morning, Mr. Wesley, on entering the pulpit, instead of announcing the hymn immediately, to the great sur-

prise of the congregation, stood silent with his eyes closed, for the space of at least ten minutes, rapt in thought; and then, with a feeling which at once conveyed to all present the subject which had so absorbed his attention, gave out the hymn commencing with the lines—

"Come let us join our friends above,
Who have obtain'd the prize."

It was also his constant practice to preach on All Saints Day, which was with him a favourite festival, on communion with the saints in heaven—a practice probably arising out of the same delightful association of remembrances and hope.

On his attaining his eighty-fifth year, he makes the following reflections:—

"I this day enter on my eighty-fifth year. And what cause have I to praise God, as for a thousand spiritual blessings, so for bodily blessings also! How little have I suffered yet by 'the rush of numerous years!' It is true, I am not so agile as I was in times past: I do not run or walk so fast as I did. My sight is a little decay'd. My left eye is grown dim, and hardly serves me to read. I have daily some pain in the ball of my right eye, as also in my right temple, (occasioned by a blow received some time since,) and in my right shoulder and arm, which I impute partly to a sprain, and partly to the rheumatism. I find likewise some decay in my memory, with regard to names and things lately past; but not at all with regard to what I have read or heard twenty, forty, or sixty years ago. Neither do I find any decay in my hearing, smell, taste, or appetite, (though I want but a third part of the food I once did,) nor do I feel any such thing as weariness, either in travelling or preaching. And I am not conscious of any decay in writing sermons, which I do as readily, and I believe as correctly, as ever.

"To what cause can I impute this, that I am as I am? First, doubtless, to the power of God, fitting me for the work to which I am called, as long as he pleases to continue me therein; and next, subordinately to this, to the prayers of his children. May we not impute it, as inferior means: 1. To my constant exercise and change of air? 2. To my never having lost a night's sleep, sick or well, at land or sea, since I was born? 3. To my having sleep at command, so that, whenever I feel myself almost worn out, I call it, and it comes, day or night? 4. To my having constantly, for above sixty years, risen at four in the morning? 5. To my constant preaching at five in the morning, for above fifty years? 6. To my having had so little pain in my life, and so little sorrow or anxious care?—Even now, though I find pain daily in my eye, temple, or arm, yet it is never violent, and seldom lasts many minutes at a time.

"Whether or not this is sent to give me warning that I am shortly to quit this tabernacle, I do not know; but be it one way, or the other, I have only to say—

"My remnant of days
I spend to His praise,
Who died the whole world to redeem:
Be they many or few,
My days are his due,
And they all are devoted to him."

And, referring to some persons in the nation, who thought themselves endowed with the gift of prophecy, he adds, "If this is to be the last year of my life, according to some of these prophets, I hope it will be the best. I am not careful about it, but heartily receive the advice of the angel in Milton—

"How well is thine; how long permit to heaven."

The two brothers, whose affection no difference of opinion could diminish, were now to be separated by death. Dr. Whitehead, who visited Mr. Charles Wesley frequently during his last illness, observes:—

"He possessed that state of mind which he had been always pleased to see in others—unaffected humility, and holy resignation to the will of God. He had no transports of joy, but solid hope and unshaken confidence in Christ, which kept his mind in perfect peace. A few days before his death, he composed the following lines. Having been silent and quiet for some time, he called Mrs. Wesley to him, and bade her write as he dictated:

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

"He died March 29, 1783, aged seventy-nine years and three months; and was buried, April 5, in Marybone churchyard, at his own desire. The pall was supported by eight Clergymen of the Church of England.

"On his tomb-stone are the following lines, written by himself on the death of one of his friends. They could not be more aptly applied to any person than to Mr. Charles Wesley:—

"With poverty of spirit bless'd,
Rest, happy saint, in Jesus rest;
A sinner saved, through grace forgiven,
Redeem'd from earth to reign in heaven!
Thy labours of unwearied love,
By thee forgot, are crown'd above:
Crown'd, through the mercy of thy Lord,
With a free, full, immense reward!"

"The Methodists are greatly indebted to Charles Wesley for his unwearied labours and great usefulness at the first formation of the societies, when every step was attended with difficulty and danger. And being dead, he yet speaketh, by his numerous and excellent hymns, written for the use of the societies, which still continue to be the means of daily edification and comfort to thousands."

Mr. Wesley was on his regular pastoral visit to Ireland when he entered his eighty-seventh year. After holding the Irish Conference in Dublin, and the English Conference at Leeds, in August, he returned to London; from thence he set out to Bristol, and proceeded on his usual tour through the West of England, and Cornwall. From thence he returned, by way of Bristol and Bath, to London. In the early part of next year he was again at Bristol, whence he proceeded, preaching at several intermediate towns, to Birmingham. From this place he proceeded through Staffordshire to Madeley. He then visited, for the last time, the societies in Cheshire, Lancashire, and the north of England. On his return southward, he passed through the East Riding of Yorkshire, to Hull; preaching in every place, as on the brink of eternity. He also visited Epworth, and various parts of Lincolnshire; and, upon entering his eighty-eighth year, has the following reflections:

"This day I enter into my eighty-eighth year. For above eighty-six years I found none of the infirmities of old age; my eyes did not wax dim, neither was my natural strength abated; but last August I found almost a sudden change; my eyes were so dim that no glasses would help me; my strength, likewise, now quite forsook me, and probably will not return in this world; but I feel no pain from head to foot—only, it seems, nature is exhausted, and, humanly speaking, will sink more and more, till

"The weary springs of life stand still at last."

"This," says Dr. Whitehead, "at length was literally the case: the death of Mr. Wesley, like that of his brother Charles, being one of those rare instances in which nature, drooping under the load of years, sinks by a gentle decay. For several years preceding his death, this decay was, perhaps, more visible to others than to himself, particularly by a more frequent disposition to sleep during the day, by a growing defect in memory, a faculty he once possessed in a high degree of perfection, and by a general diminution of the vigour and agility he had so long enjoyed. His labours, however, suffered little interruption; and when the summons came, it found him, as he always wished it should, in the harness, still occupied in his Master's work!"

That interesting record of unparalleled labours "in the Gospel," the Journal of Mr. Wesley, closes on Sunday, October 24, 1790, when he states that he preached twice at Spitalfields church. He continued, however, to visit various places till February, continually praying, "Lord, let me not live to be useless."

On Thursday, February 17, 1791, he preached at Lambeth, but on his return seemed much indisposed, and said he had taken cold. On the