

appointed. He could not, indeed, have been more respected in the Church of England than he was afterwards when he settled down as minister of Surrey Chapel.—We find him alluding to this in after life. “I am not a Dissenter,” he would say, “the church turned me off; and not I her. I confess I like a little more liberty than she allows, and thank God I can ask great Dr. Chalmers and great Dr. Morrison and others, when they come to London, to preach in Surrey Chapel.” And then we are told he would add, with an arch look, “I suppose they would not let St. Paul, if he was to come upon earth, preach in his own cathedral: but I really do not think that it would produce an earthquake, if he did.” Mr. Hill’s mother, Lady Hill, who had been greatly opposed to his course of preaching, died this same year, and as it was his manner to choose texts expressive of his own feelings at the time, the first sermon he preached after her decease, was from 2 Sam. 23, 5—“Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” In his journeys into Wales Mr. Hill appears to have received much comfort. He would sometimes preach three or four sermons in one day, while the people would follow him from place to place by thousands, and we are told, what was often the case at tent preachings in old times in Scotland, that they would remain listening to the sound of the Gospel unconcerned, though the rain was pouring down upon them. He often mentioned this to his English hearers when the weather kept them at home on the Sabbath. “If you loved the Gospel,” he would say, “as well as the Welsh, you would not mind a shower.”

Mr. Hill being thus left to choose a parish for himself, erected a dwelling house and tabernacle in a very romantic part of the country, in Wotton, Gloucestershire. The late Robert Hall once spoke of it as the most paradisaical spot he had ever seen, and here, what must have given the place its crowning excellence in the esteem of its worthy possessor, an attached people waited on his ministrations. Mr. Hill, however, continued his itinerating labours as before. He visited London, Portsmouth, and other places, and his success among the sailors appears to have been considerable. While Mr. Hill resided at Wotton, a circumstance occurred, which must have been a source of grief to him, as showing the inefficacy of his labours in a quarter where something better might have been expected. It so happened

that his gardener, whom he had always looked upon as an honest, quiet sort of man, was apprehended on a charge of committing divers depredations on the property of others. He was brought to trial, and, being found guilty, was sentenced to death. His master waited on him while in prison, to whom he made confession of the many crimes which he had committed. “How was it, William,” he enquired, “that you never robbed me, when you had such abundant opportunity?” “Sir,” replied he, “do you recollect the juniper bush on the border against the dining-room? I have many times hid under it at night, intending, which I could easily have done, to get into the house and plunder it—but, sir, I was afraid; something said to me, he is a man of God, it is a house of prayer—if I break in there, I shall surely be found out; so I could never pluck up courage to attempt it.” And in another conversation he told him, “Sir, I well knew that old Mr. Rugg (a person of uncommon piety) was in the habit of carrying a deal of money in his pocket; times and times have I hid behind the hedge of the lane leading to his house—he has passed within a yard of me, when going home from the prayer-meeting again and again—I could not stir, I durst not touch so holy a man. I was afraid. I always began trembling as soon as he came near me, and gave up the thought altogether, for I knew he was a holy man.” In these days the number of evangelical ministers were few, in comparison of those who preached pelagian error, and though they were often despised and shamefully treated in some parts, they were peculiarly honored in others. It was so with Mr. Hill, he received many flattering tokens of the good produced by his labors. Letters were written to him, some containing accounts of the conversions that had attended his ministrations—others expressing the deep sorrow of the writers on account of having spoken reproachfully of his character—and many notices were put into his hands, while entering the pulpit, requesting public acknowledgment might be made of such sins. It was the manner of Mr. Hill to read these notices aloud to the congregation. An impudent person one day had taken occasion to put a slip of paper before him when the service was commencing. He took it up and began to read—“The prayers of this congregation are desired”—Umph—for—umph—‘well, I suppose I must finish what I have began’—for the Rev. Rowland Hill, that he will not go riding about in his carriage on Sunday.” This would have