

The Bicentenary of John Wesley.

OUR present aim is to trace some of the personal characteristics and some of the providential dealings which made Wesley such a factor in elevating the whole community of the English people.

One of his first characteristics was his valuation of time and his care to make the best use of it. In the preface to his Diary he says: "Fifteen years ago I began to take more exact account than I had done before, of the manner wherein I spent my time, writing down how I had employed every hour."—Few indeed there are who are thus careful; few there are, who at the close of a day can give an exact account of more than twelve out of its sixteen waking hours. Two or three or four hours may often slip away in minor occupations, of which the mind keeps no record. His care, therefore, in attempting to account for every hour is remarkable.

From his mother he inherited persistence. With all her goodness she was a most determined woman. One incident shall suffice for illustration:

"The revolution of 1688 threatened to disturb the early married life of Samuel Wesley (the father of John Wesley) and his spouse. The husband wrote a pamphlet in which he defended revolution principles, but the wife secretly adhered to the old cause. Nor was it until a year before Dutch William's death, that the rector made the discovery that the wife of his bosom, who had sworn to obey him, and regard him as her over lord, was not in the habit of saying amen to his fervent prayers on behalf of his suffering sovereign. An explanation was demanded, and the truth extracted, namely, that in the opinion of the rector's wife her true king lived over the water. The rector at once refused to live with Mrs. Wesley any longer until she recanted. This she refused to do, and for a twelve-month the couple dwelt apart, when, William III. having the good sense to die, a reconciliation became possible."

And John Wesley was her own son. We need not feel surprised to see him persistent amid jeers in the maintenance of the "Holy Club," nor in his work of preaching the whole truth, even though it cost his exclusion from pulpit after pulpit of the English Church; or in his field preaching, even though he were pelted in place after place. It is good

to be zealously affected always in a good thing.

HIS CONVERSION.

Although a member of the "Holy Club," Wesley, in his later life, did not claim that at that time he was converted. The special renewing grace of the Lord was necessary to his conversion; and it did not come till later. In this early life he was striving for salvation through ascetic formalities. For instance, on his voyage to Georgia, he resolved to eat no meat, and, at one time, while in the colonies, he resolved to live on bread alone. He was depending on the influence of these austerities to cleanse his heart.

And he was a ritualist. Any variation from the forms of the Church of England was to him in those days repulsive.

In this temper of mind, he went as a missionary to Georgia. He labored hard, and denied himself greatly, and yet at the end of a year and a half he returned to England with a sense of failure. He had not accomplished anything among the Indians, nor had he pleased the church people of Savannah, and he had evoked such opposition that his enemies (unjustly indeed) induced the magistrates to forbid his departure from Savannah until tried in court, and yet to postpone trial, week after week, till in desperation he left the city under cover of darkness.

In his journal of Tuesday, January 22, 1738, in his reflections upon a storm of January 13, he gives his own account of his state of mind in these words:

"I went to America to convert the Indians; but, oh! who shall convert me? Who, what is he, that will deliver me from this evil heart of mischief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'to die is gain'!"

"I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun My last thread, I shall perish on the shore."

"I think, verily, if the Gospel be true, I am safe; for I not only have given, and do give all my goods to feed the poor; I not only give my body to be burned, drownded, or whatever God shall appoint for me; but I follow after charity (though not as I ought, yet as I can), if haply I may attain it. I now believe the Gospel is true. 'I show my faith by my works, by staking my all upon it. I would do so again and again a thousand times, if the choice were still to make. . . .

"S
two
I left
teach
Chris
self i
leas
to An
myself
How
which
sion?
of Pe
ranks
Engla
pany.
came
work
again
"W
evenin
society
was r
Epistle
ter ber
the chu
throug
strange
Christ,
an assu
taken a
me fro
"I be
those w
despited
I then
I now f
From
Wesley
There
in his
bility to
needs of
out-door
weather
face the
listened
hearers
to the h
true Bre

The su
The orig
sity, Tor
bigger an
assembly
under the
ference I
others in