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MEMOIR  
OF  
MRS. PORTEUS.



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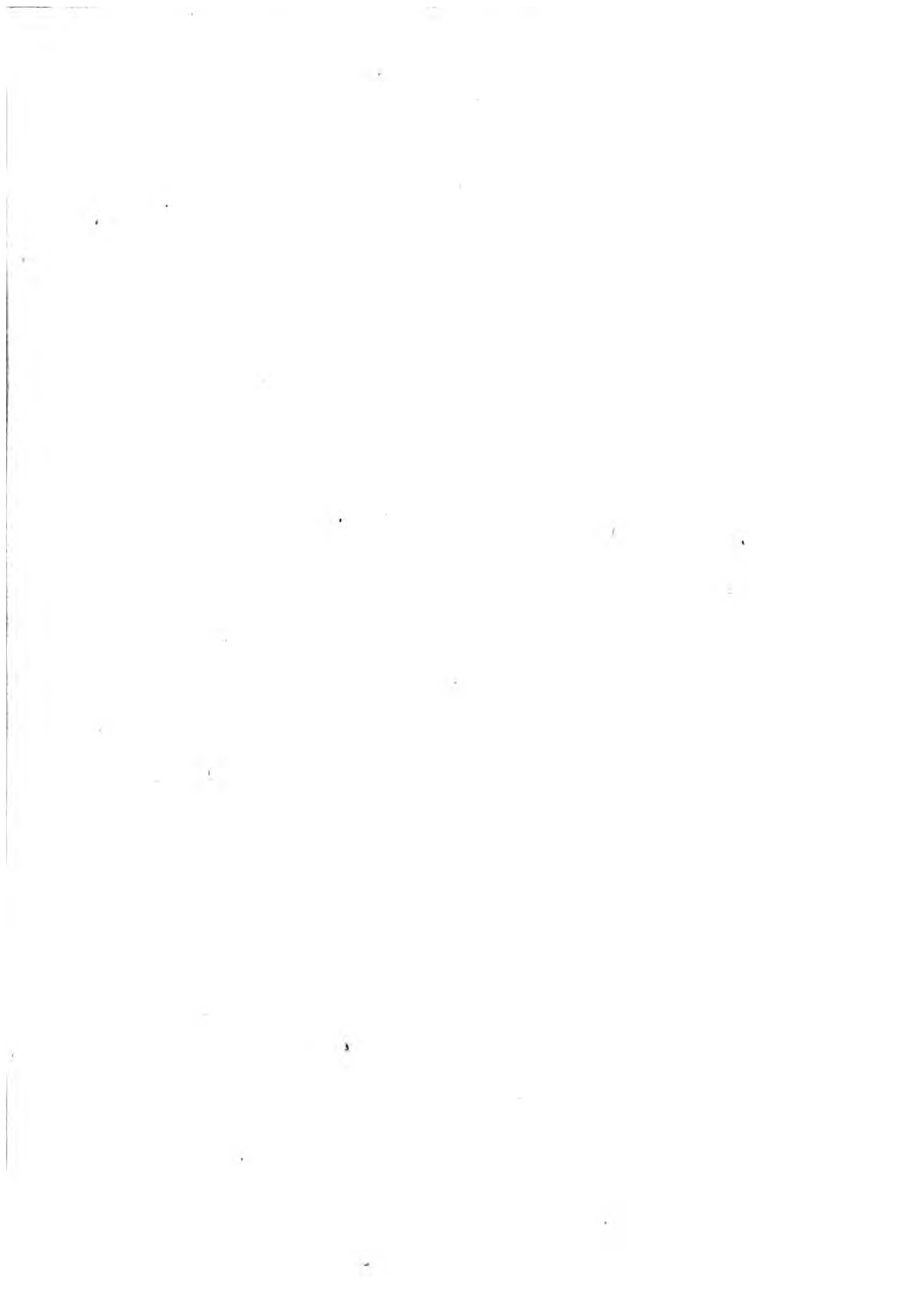
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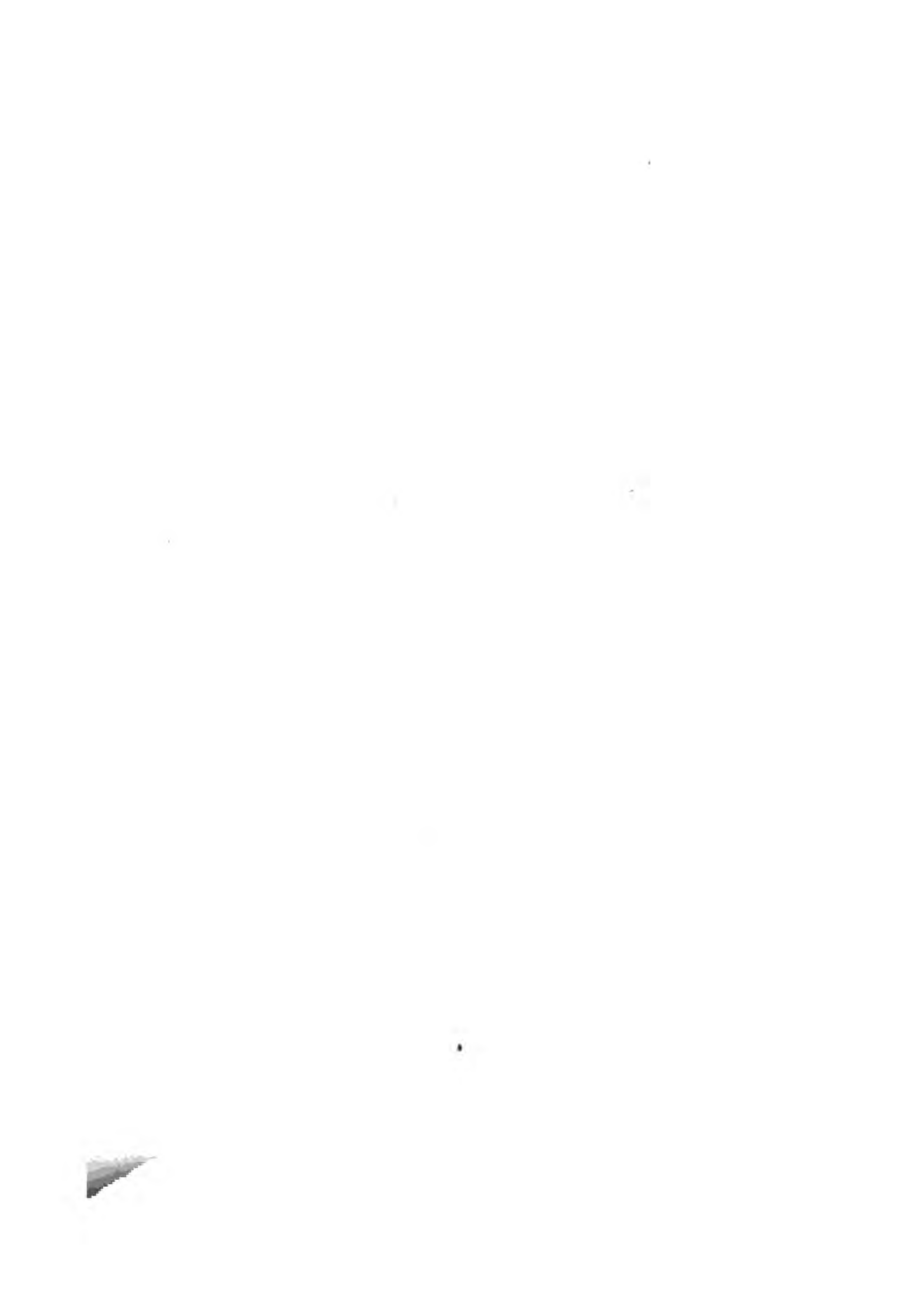




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THE POWER OF FAITH AND PRAYER  
EXEMPLIFIED IN

THE  
LIFE AND LABOURS  
OF

MRS. MARY PORTEUS,

LATE OF DURHAM,

WHO FOR FOURTEEN YEARS WAS A TRAVELLING  
PREACHER, AND TWENTY-TWO YEARS A LOCAL  
PREACHER IN THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST  
CONNEXION.

“A MOTHER IN ISRAEL.”

BY THE  
REV. JOHN LIGHTFOOT,  
PRIMITIVE METHODIST MINISTER.

“I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not.”  
ISAIAH XLII. 16.

“Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God  
led thee \* \* \* to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know  
what was in thy heart.”—DEUT. VIII. 2.

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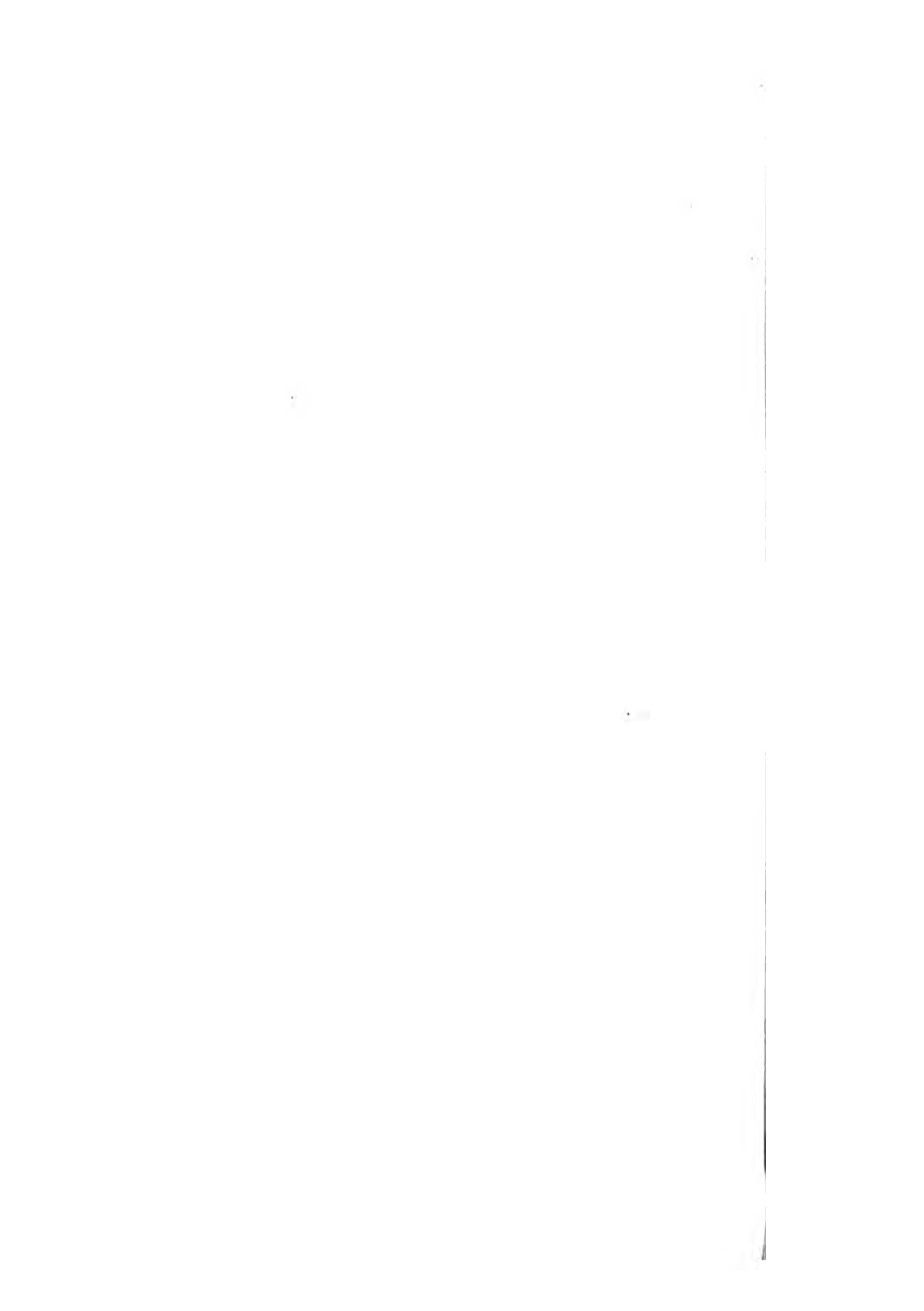


## DEDICATION.

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To the sincere lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ connected with every section of His Church; to the ardent spirited Primitive Methodists in particular, who are seeking assiduously to extend the dominions of the Redeemer—including the numerous friends and admirers of the subject of these Memoirs; and to all who may be enquiring the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, and may need assistance and encouragement in the way; this humble attempt to memorialize the Life and Labours of one of the most devoted of her sex, is most respectfully and prayerfully dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.



## P R E F A C E.

—000—

A CLOSE intimacy with the late Mrs. Mary Porteus for more than forty years, together with her often expressed desire, induced her family and friends to urge me to prepare for the press a condensed account of her Christian experience and ministerial labours, such as might best accomplish what was the ardent desire of her heart—the encouragement and edification of the children of God, especially those of them who, like herself, have, for the trial of their faith, to endure the privations of poverty, in connection, at times, with severe spiritual conflicts.

This, with much diffidence, is attempted in the following pages ; the substance of which is collected from her own Diary and Letters, and my own personal recollections, but chiefly from a narrative of her experience which she commenced in the year 1823, but which, it is to be regretted, she did not continue to the close, at least, of her ministerial career.

In this work the reader will observe, that the

question ' Whether females ought, under any circumstances, to preach the Gospel, or to officiate otherwise in the Church of God, is not considered. The design of the work did not seem to admit of this. The writer is, however, fully satisfied that some females, like the late Mrs. Fletcher, of Madeley, for instance, have received an extraordinary call to exercise their talents in public teaching, and that much edification to God's people, and the conversion of many souls have been the happy result. Whether Mrs. Porteus received such a call, let the reader judge, after seriously considering the very striking indications of Providence she received, and which fully satisfied her own mind.

This little book, such as it is, must now be left to speak for itself.

In presenting it, however, to the public, the author gratefully acknowledges his obligations to the Revs. C. C. Mc. Kechnie and the Rev. Thos. Greenfield for their valuable assistance in preparing the sheets for the press : also to the Revs. R. Fenwick and W. Saul, and to Mr. T. Gibson for their kind suggestions.

That God may abundantly bless it to the benefit of many souls, is the earnest prayer of the writer,

*Chester Road, Sunderland,*

J. L.

*May 13, 1862.*

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Life and Labours  
OF  
MRS. MARY PORTEUS.

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CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE AND YOUTH.

THE subject of this Memoir was the youngest child of John Thompson, joiner and cabinet maker; and was born in Newcastle-on-Tyne, in the year 1783. Her father seems to have been a staunch Presbyterian, and a pious man: who, with habits derived from the early Covenanters, strictly observed the Sabbath, and led his family to the house of God. When she was very young, her father, after a long and impoverishing illness, died, and left her mother entirely unprovided for, with five

children to support. Her mother being of a frugal disposition, became absorbed in worldly matters ; and, taking offence at her minister for some real or fancied neglect, she got to feel so prejudiced against him, and against religious professors generally, that, instead of making the Lord her strength during the years of her struggling widowhood, she absented herself from public worship entirely, and discontinued religious observances in her family.

God however was gracious to little Mary. Although the family lived in an exceedingly wicked neighbourhood, she was at an early age impressed with the fear of God. His sacred name was regarded by her with so much reverence, that when she sung the National Anthem, as she sometimes did with other children, she omitted that name from the chorus, and sang,

“ O save the King.”

When she was seven years of age—her mother being much reduced in circumstances—Mary was taken from school, where she had but imperfectly learned to read. Her reverence for the Sabbath now became apparent. Although, from the proximity of a public-house to her home, the most disgusting scenes of wickedness, accompanied with oaths and blasphemies, were common on that sacred day, and public worship was altogether neglected in the neighbourhood ; and although her mother, fatigued with the labours of the week, would usually spend the Sabbath either in bed or in household affairs, yet, under these unfavourable circumstances, Mary would steal away to some place of worship, not with the view of being instructed, but from a sense of duty, because it was the *Lord's* day.

Thus impressed, she durst not play on the Sabbath as on other days ; and when she ventured to do so, as she sometimes did, she became so unhappy that she could not enjoy anything ; and on one occasion, meeting with an accident when thus engaged, she thought it a judgment for her wickedness. On other days she was not impressed in this way, but could indulge the natural hilarity of her disposition by dancing and singing foolish songs without remorse.

About the eleventh year of her age, some of the children of the neighbourhood having been sent to the Wesleyan Orphan House Sunday School, Mary desired to accompany them, but was prevented by her mother's strong prejudices against the Methodists ; yet, from curiosity she would sometimes find her way to a prayer-meeting on a Sabbath evening ; but, being strongly tinctured with her mother's prejudices, would ridicule what she had seen or heard, and, with her sister, laugh at it during the week.

Her mother thus neglecting the religious training of her children, does not appear favourably on these pages. We may however record here as a redeeming trait in her character, that she instilled into them some valuable Scriptural maxims of morality ; taught them at an early age to spin and do household work, and would not allow them time to play till their daily tasks were performed. "Owe no man anything," "Provide things honest in the sight of all men," were the chief of the maxims she taught, and which, poor as she was, she constantly exemplified. Nothing was ever taken upon credit ; and the practice of pledging goods at pawnshops, so common among poor people, she treated with disdain ; and hence, if the daily supplies of the family

were lacking, she taught her children to wait till they could be procured by their honest labour.

What effect would be produced on the interests of Trade by the universal adoption and practice of these maxims in this way, we must leave others to judge. Certain we are, however, that were they generally acted upon, it would be well for the working community at large, and especially so for both the temporal and spiritual interests of the poorer classes of religious people.

How much the other members of this family were, in after life, influenced by this severe discipline, we know not: but upon Mary the effect was beneficial. As the general rule of her life, she contracted no debts; and many a time she blessed God for the good this habit had produced, and for the evil it had prevented.

At the age above mentioned, she was sent to work in a factory among a number of girls and boys of her own age. Here her morals were tainted, and might have been altogether corrupted, had it not pleased God, as she says, to send a good man to work among them, who attempted to reform their manners. This man was particularly attracted to Mary, and his talking seriously to her induced her to read and study the Assembly's Catechism, which he procured for her. The reading of this book afforded her much light, but did not change her heart.

Soon after this, she was afflicted with fever, which prostrated the whole family, and took away a brother, who was their chief support. Under this fever her sufferings were extreme. Many a night her mother wept over her apparently hopeless condition, but never mentioned the concerns of her soul, or pointed her to the Saviour. While thus suffering, the question



rushed upon her mind, What is this compared with hell-fire? Reflection upon this question produced the most acute anguish of spirit; she wept; thought that if she died then, she would be lost, and promised that if God spared her she would serve him in future; but, like too many similarly affected, she did not remember afterwards either her prayers or vows.

Not fulfilling this promise when she recovered, a long season of spiritual deadness seems to have ensued, during which she neglected public worship, and indulged freely in worldly vanities. But at the age of fifteen, God graciously visited her again. At that time, her brothers and sister, being settled in life by marriage or otherwise, she was left alone with her mother; and as her mother was frequently engaged away from home, she was on these occasions left to spin yarn for a factory. Thus engaged, it occurred to her that if she had a book she could both read and work. Instantly she remembered some old books of her father's, in a lumber-drawer. One of these, the first she met with, seemed suited to her state. It contained a discourse on the text—"Pray without ceasing," entitled, "Prayer the Saint's Exercise." This she read, and then thought, If prayer be the saint's exercise, and only praying souls go to heaven, what will become of me, for I never pray? Conviction of her lost, miserable condition as a sinner was thus produced, and she instantly dropped on her knees, and cried for mercy. Reading onwards, this conviction was deepened, and she prayed again, using a form, as recommended in the work she had been perusing; but soon she found that she could not be fettered by forms. The anguish of her spirit impelled her to use language of her own. The next book

she found produced in her still more enlightened and profound convictions. This was a copy of the Assembly's Larger Catechism, from the exposition of the Ten Commandments in which she was enlightened to discover the spirituality of God's holy law, and was cut off from all hope of salvation in herself.

In this condition she remained several months, without a friend to instruct her, and altogether unacquainted with the way of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Only this she knew and felt, that she was a sinner, and needed mercy; and for this she prayed night and day.

Her mother soon perceiving this change, opened upon her a flood of persecution, to overcome her melancholy, as she termed it; but the more her mother persecuted her, the more she prayed. In this condition she became acquainted with a family who attended the High-Bridge Presbyterian Church, and she accompanied them to that house of prayer. Her emotions were now altogether different from those she experienced in her younger days. On crossing the threshold of the chapel, she felt she entered into God's house and into God's presence, and she went there to inquire of the Lord. Here she heard declared the way of salvation through the Redeemer. The first sermon she heard from Rev. ii. 10 produced in her mingled emotions of joy and grief; but the second, on the "Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax," afforded her much encouragement. The instruction she now received led her to see that her experience was the result of God's grace, although small like a spark of fire among flax; and had the minister preached to her a present salvation, or had she, as she afterwards said, enjoyed the privilege of a Methodist class-

meeting, she might have soon enjoyed an assurance of salvation. But, although she more and more loved God's house and God's people, and the minister seemed as an angel of God to her, yet, having no one to seek counsel from, she remained a stranger to this invaluable blessing.

Having taken a sitting in this chapel—to pay for which she appropriated the small sums she formerly expended on trifles—her mother more and more persecuted her, by withholding the gratuities she had previously enjoyed, and by compelling her to go without either breakfast or dinner on the Lord's day. This drove her still nearer to the Lord, to trust in him for protection, and to pray for her mother's salvation; which she did most earnestly, sometimes rising at midnight, and prostrating herself on the ground for this purpose: with what result, we shall see in the next chapter, as also the result of these preliminary gracious leadings.

## CHAPTER II.

### ORPHANAGE AND CONVERSION.

THE year 1801 now opens on the life of our—  
I was going to put down the word *heroine* ;  
but this, perhaps, is a word not admitted into  
the vocabulary of Christian biographers ; although  
there is unquestionably more real heroism displayed  
by devoted Christians than by any other class of per-  
sons engaged in the battle of life ; for, “he that ruleth  
his own spirit,” a high authority has declared, and  
ruleth it, we may say, so as to beneficially sway the  
spirits of other men, “is better than he that taketh a  
city.”

At the close of the last chapter, we left Mary some-  
times prostrated on the ground at midnight, wrestling  
in prayer for the salvation of her mother. Her reli-  
gious earnestness is by this act sufficiently declared ;  
although she did not then profess to know God experi-  
mentally, it was certainly indicative of the religious dis-  
tinction she ultimately acquired. It indicated an intense  
desire for her mother’s salvation, and a deep conviction  
of the power of Divine grace and the prevalence of  
prayer. Desires and convictions such as these are, we  
fear, only experienced by few of the Christian professors  
of our day. Were the young converts in our churches  
to copy her example, the effects, in most cases, would

be eminently beneficial both to themselves and to others.

In August or September of this year, her mother was smitten with the affliction of which she died. From the very first she believed it would be unto death; and God instantly, and deeply too, smote her heart with penitence. The convictions she then experienced of her lost condition as a sinner, of her base apostacy in departing from the Lord, and of her cruelty to her unoffending daughter, were deep and overpowering,—such as led her to bewail her condition, to crave mercy of God “with strong cries and tears,” and also to ask forgiveness of the daughter who was then dutefully watching over, and still praying for her. While thus broken down in spirit, she was wont to say, how piously she and her husband had lived, how rigidly they had observed the sanctity of the Sabbath, and what the temptation was that had led her astray: and then again she would exhort her daughter to take warning from her example, to be watchful, and hold fast to the end.

Poor woman! who can help being touched by, and interested in, her case? There is much in her sterling integrity, in her inflexibility of moral character, in the untiring industry which led her to sacrifice herself for her family, and now in her profound grief before God, that excites our sympathy and admiration.

On the day of her death—which was on the 31st of December, after four months of acute physical and mental affliction—she, supposing herself unheard, repeated from memory the whole of the fifty-first Psalm. But she had listeners—her two daughters, who were overwhelmed with grief, especially as, soon afterwards,



she expired, without expressing to them an assurance of her acceptance with God.

Here, however, we may enquire, Can such grief as she evinced for her departure from God, and not on any worldly account, have any other source than that of the Divine Spirit? Can cries for mercy, such as she uttered, be fruitless, or disregarded by that Being who pities those that fear him and humble themselves before him infinitely more than the most indulgent parent ever pitied his erring and penitent child? If not, can the salvation of such be a doubtful matter; especially if they recognise, as she, an instructed Presbyterian, did, and rely for salvation on, the atonement of Christ alone, and love nothing so much as to have the people of God to pray with them, which was her case also? Certainly not. Mary was afterwards assured of this. She concluded that the same Spirit that wounded would also heal, and that the same Spirit that led her mother to groan for mercy would also show mercy. And still more clearly she saw, by the light of her subsequent experience, that had her mother been made acquainted with the doctrine of a present salvation, she would have enjoyed full Christian liberty before her death. As the case then stood she and her sister consoled themselves with the following lines from the Scottish Church's Paraphrases:—

‘ Take comfort, Christians, when your friends in Jesus fall asleep.  
 Their better being never ends,—why then dejected, weep?  
 Why unconsolable as those to whom no hope is given?  
 Death is the messenger of peace, and calls the soul to heav'n.’

After Mrs. Thompson's death, Mary was left, at the age of eighteen years, in an isolated state of orphanage; her sister having married a pious young man. In this condition it is lamentable to think what might have been the consequences, had not the gracious

Being who had hitherto been her guide raised up for her a friend and protector. An aged female in that neighbourhood took her for a servant, and became, it seems, a second mother to her. This woman, being a pious Presbyterian, Mary had ample opportunities of cherishing the good work which God had begun in her soul. These she improved to good purpose, by expressing all her doubts, difficulties, and sorrows to God in prayer; by diligently studying, frequently on her knees, the holy Scriptures—a copy of which she kept continually on her person; by carefully regarding the sanctity of the Sabbath, and doing nothing on that day which she could accomplish on the Saturday; and by constantly attending the public means of grace.

In this way God led her towards the period of her conversion, when he fully manifested himself as her Saviour by richly shedding abroad his love in her heart. This was at a celebration of the Lord's Supper, which had been announced to be held three weeks previously. The minister having invited all intending communicants for the first time to wait upon him at his dwelling, to receive instruction, Mary, from a conviction of duty, did so, notwithstanding the severity of her mental exercises at that time; and much fearing, by a misapprehension of Paul's words, that she should "eat and drink damnation to herself." The minister interrogated her on several matters of Christian doctrine and experience, but not so closely as she expected or desired. He accepted her as a communicant, and fervently prayed for her salvation and progress in the Divine life.

The interval between this and the Sabbath was spent in much self-examination and in importunate prayer. On the morning of the Sabbath she arose

early ; and read, with solemn feeling, Matthew's narrative of our Lord's sufferings, following him in thought from Gethsemane to Pilate's judgment-seat, and thence to Calvary ; and then exclaimed—

“ O wondrous love ! O love beyond degree !  
Th' offended dies to set th' offender free !”

In this spirit she attended service in the chapel. The first psalm, she thought, condemned her :—

“ Who is the man that shall ascend into the hill of God ?  
Or, who within his holy place shall find a firm abode ?  
Whose hands are clean, whose heart is pure,” &c.

She thought if only such characters as these have to attend the Lord's table, then she need not attempt to go. Thus she sat condemning herself till the last table had to be served, when she ventured forward with the language of Esther on her lips, “ If I perish, I perish.” ; and doing so, as soon as she received the bread into her hand, the love of Jesus, as she declares, burst into her heart.

In this way the Lord blessed her with Christian liberty—filled her with peace and joy—and enabled her to exclaim, with Thomas, “ My Lord and my God ;” in which happy condition she remained for several months, enjoying a sweet and constant communion with God, as a happy child with a loving father.

One Sabbath morning, in the house of God, the following passage was applied to her mind with power : “ Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” Matt. v. 16. Instantly she was convicted—First, for not confessing Christ among the people of God—for which, however, the Presbyterian

Church, at that time and place, afforded her few facilities—and Secondly, for not reprovng sinners, and warning them of their danger. She clearly saw that these duties were imposed on her; and that on obedience to them the life of God in her soul was subordinately dependent. But here a struggle ensued. What she terms her cowardly spirit, disposed her to think she never could perform these duties; and she continued to resist the convictions of conscience till her soul was brought into spiritual darkness. Instead of at once taking up the cross of duty, and thereby maintaining peace of mind, she shunned the cross, and thus became completely dissatisfied both with herself and everything else.

In this spirit she resolved upon leaving her situation, and looking for one of more respectability. This was her first great error; which is the more to be regretted as it opened the way to another, which became the bane of her life. She parted from her kind and loving mistress, after a severe struggle, much against the will of the old lady, who earnestly entreated her to remain.

All this while, Mary continued to pray, and to commit, in this way, her concerns into the hands of the Lord; but not with that spiritual power she had once enjoyed. She got another situation, but not such a one as she had left. Her new master, she admitted, was a pious man, who attended closely to family worship, and who allowed her some privileges; but her mistress was of so uneasy a temper that it was exceedingly difficult to please her. In this state of things she became acquainted with the young man that ultimately became her husband.

But this must be the subject of another chapter.

## CHAPTER III.

### HER MARRIAGE AND ITS RESULTS.

“BE ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” in marriage especially, is a highly important apostolic injunction, that ought to be frequently enforced by the ministers of religion. Incalculable has been the mischief done in the church of God by its infraction, and immense the misery entailed upon the guilty parties. We are sorry to have to reckon the subject of this Memoir among this class, and to speak of the bitter consequences of her imprudence. But God remembered her again in mercy, as we shall see. Meanwhile, we hope to be able to rear a warning beacon, in her example, that may guard our young readers, now voyaging on the ocean of Time, against the rock on which she split.

After twenty years' experience, she thus writes respecting this the great error of her life:—

“When I first became acquainted with him who afterwards became my husband, it was powerfully impressed on my mind that he was destitute of religion, and that it would be improper to encourage his addresses. Had I followed this, which I believe now was the voice of God, I should have done right. Indeed, I did do this for a time, until I yielded to my own carnal reasonings, thus : “Well, 'tis true he does



not enjoy experimental religion, but he regularly attends a place of worship, and seems to be a man of tender feelings, and to possess a good moral character; and who knows but I may be the instrument, in God's hands, of his soul's conversion. Besides, I have no father or mother, and no home; and if every mistress be as bad to please as is this one, my life will be wearisome. It will be far better to have a home of my own.'

"Thus, poor wretch! I reasoned, as I termed it, instead of consulting God's holy word. I did indeed pray, and anxiously and earnestly prayed, that God would prevent it if it were not his will. O, infatuated mortal! as I was. How differently the Lord has caused me to see this now. O that this part of my life may be a warning to young people not to split on this rock. Did not my conduct argue a great want of faith? What though I had no earthly parents, and no home, yet I had the promise, or what is the same, 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up,' Psa. xxvii. 10. And what had I to do in thinking to become an instrument in his soul's conversion? Had I not learned by painful experience that I did not properly, according to God's will, perform my own duty, or live up to the privileges he had favoured me with? So far from this, I needed one stronger than myself, to help me, rather than a weight for me to drag on in my husband, or rather to pull me back.

"And how inconsistent my conduct in prayer. How much like that of Balaam. When the messengers came the first time to invite him to curse Israel, he enquired of God, and God said, 'No. Thou shalt not go.' So God's Spirit said to me at first. But

when the messengers came the second time to that infatuated prophet, and promised him Balak's wages of unrighteousness, he went to enquire again, and was then in displeasure permitted to accompany them. But he got his reward ; for afterwards, we find, he was slain among God's enemies. How just. Could he suppose that God would change his word ? And where was my assurance to pray, as I did in this case, by asking him to work a kind of providential miracle to prevent me in it, when he had positively said in his word, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ?' Was not this enough ? Did I think he was going to alter his word to please me ? Thus inconsistent was my conduct. Instead of taking the Spirit for my counsellor, and his word as my guide, I contrived plans for myself ; and after I had got them all well arranged, as I thought, and as some other professors of religion thought too, I went to God, and prayed him to disown his own plans, and to sanction mine.

"Another delusion I may here mention as a warning to the young. In praying on this subject, I desired the Lord to signify his will by certain signs, and persuaded myself that I had got some favourable answers. But what do I now clearly see these answers were ? Well, my affections being fixed on the man, I mistook those natural affections for what I supposed was produced by the Spirit as an indication of Divine approbation. Thus I was led astray. What a mercy I am not in hell ! Glory to God for his grace !

"On the 8th of March, 1803," Mrs. Porteus goes on to say, "the solemn marriage-knot was tied ; and we rented a room below the one occupied by my sister and her pious husband." Here it was soon evinced that Mr. P. was destitute of experimental godliness.



Prayer is the life of the regenerated soul, or the appointed means of sustaining it; and no two persons united to each other by marriage, and to God by the bonds of the Christian covenant, can possibly fail to pray with and for each other, or to institute family worship. The neglect of this duty by Mr. Porteus was the occasion of much trouble to his young wife; the more so, as her sister and husband attended to it regularly. In this state of things, it occurred to her that she ought to establish family worship herself; and well had it been for her had she carried this thought into effect. Serious consequences might have been prevented. But what she again designates her "cowardly spirit," prevented her, by representing this work as a thing impossible to her; and thus by keeping in abeyance the clear convictions of duty, her soul was brought into darkness. She then records the consequences.

"I lost my confidence in God; durst scarcely bend my knees in secret; and at length, lost all desire for prayer. My Bible, too, was completely neglected; and public worship became so wearisome, that it was at length totally abandoned.

"In this awful state I continued for nearly two years; during which time none but God knows the misery I endured. It then being a time of war, and my husband a seaman, liable to be pressed, he was obliged to conceal himself. We opened a small shop, but Providence seemed to frown on us. Everything went against us, and a state of complete destitution was the result. Yet so benumbed, so stupid had my soul become, that I never prayed to God for help. Nay, it seemed as if I had lost all sense of religion or of

religious things ; and now I think it a mercy indeed that I was not given up to a reprobate mind."

But God had not so "appointed her to wrath." After enduring this misery for a year longer, after the birth of her second child, a brighter day dawned upon her.

But here we must pause for a while in our narrative. Whoever reads the future pages of this book, may, it is hoped, pardon the biographer for some of these apparently uninteresting details, as they seemed necessary to him for the full development of his subject : and while revealing the evils resulting from imprudence and disobedience to the clear convictions of duty, they also reveal through what terrible conflicts the Lord frequently leads those whom he designs for future eminence, to enable them to magnify his victorious grace, and to administer, as Paul intimates (2 Cor. i. 4) suitable counsel and consolation to others.

Young disciples are here specially warned against the evils resulting from improper connections in life ; and all who desire to walk closely with God are taught that God's will, as revealed in his word, and not their own will, must be their guide if they wish to avoid the evils here recorded, and to grow in the knowledge and the love of God.

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord ; his going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth," Hos. vi. 3.

## CHAPTER IV.

### RECOVERY TO GOD, AND CONNECTION WITH THE WESLEYANS.

**A**T the period to which the preceding chapter conducted us, Mr. Porteus and family removed to the Ballast Hills, near to Newcastle-on-Tyne, where they rented part of a house occupied by a pious Methodist family. Providence in this evidently guided them; as, although Mrs. Porteus, from her education and habits, was strongly prejudiced against the Methodists, this family were the agents employed in her deliverance from the misery and thralldom of sin. Her husband having gone to sea again, she was left much alone with her children. Coming down stairs one day, she overheard the pious family earnestly engaged in devotional exercises. This at once smote her heart. She remembered from what she had fallen; and returning to her room, prostrated herself before God, and with strong cries and tears, sought again for mercy. A struggle then ensued worthy of notice. A passage of Scripture was suggested to her mind which produced the most harassing cogitations. He that "having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is not fit for the kingdom of God." On this she ruminated much. The conflict in her became terrible; for she concluded that if not fit for heaven, she was fit only for hell. But although plunged in despondency,

she still prayed on; being powerfully impelled thereto, doubtless, by the working of God's Spirit.

Her prejudice against the Methodists preventing her from mentioning her case to the pious family to whom she was so much indebted, she endured the most acute anguish in silence for several weeks. She, however, resumed her attendance at the Presbyterian chapel, where, on one occasion, a sermon on the Parable of the Lost Sheep afforded her some relief. Still the enemy haunted her with the old passage, "No man having put his hand to the plough," &c.—so adroitly Satan can quote Scripture for evil purposes—till she was reduced to a state of distraction inconceivable by those who were never placed in a similar condition. In this harassed and agitated condition she says:—

"One evening, after my children had gone to rest, I wandered around my room with my Bible in my hand, and looking earnestly up to heaven, I exclaimed (whether right or wrong let others judge), 'Lord, if thou hast not given me up to a reprobate mind, and canst have mercy on such a wretch, let me open thy book on a promise; but if thou hast, let me have a threatening.' With trembling hands, I opened my Bible, when, lo! astonishing Mercy at once presented to my eye that most encouraging of all passages to a person in my condition—'I will heal thy backslidings, and will love thee freely.' This was enough. I at once believed, and was blessed with glorious liberty. The work was done. I was filled with joy and peace, and went on my way rejoicing."

Thus God had mercy on her, but her example here is, we think, not safe for general imitation: at least, much caution is requisite in adopting this method of obtaining relief to guard against presumption and fanaticism.

In this happy condition her husband found her when he returned from sea. Another struggle then ensued. The same cross she had refused to lift before, and thereby losing her confidence in God, was again presented before her: *family worship*. This struggle also was severe, but she conquered. On the third night, she ventured to put the question to her husband, whether she might pray with him and the children; when, to her surprise, he answered, "If you think it your duty to pray with your family, then why do you not?" This slight reproof she received with gratitude; and kneeling down, she prayed. Thus another victory was gained; and this duty was never afterwards omitted.

Another sphere then opened before her. The woman in the adjoining room professing to have received some good from hearing her pray, invited her to visit a sick person in the neighbourhood; which at once, without much consideration, she promised to do. But immediately after she had promised, she wished, as she says, a thousand times that she had not. "Me," she thought. "pray with any one! I have no abilities to pray with sick people; and, besides, I am a woman, and I cannot think it right for a woman to engage in any public capacity."

Thus she reasoned, wept, and prayed again, till the Bible settled this matter also, by presenting, in answer to special prayer, this passage to her eye: "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say," Exod. iv. 12. She therefore accompanied the woman in her visit, and had much liberty in speaking both to the sick person and to the other parties present, and much power in prayer.

Still she was strongly prejudiced against the Me-



thodists, and vehement were her exclamations against their practices and creed, or what, at that time, she erroneously supposed were their practices and creed. Yet many a precious visit she had from the Lord, both at home and at her own chapel; particularly, the sacrament of the Lord's supper was to her a feast indeed.

But her present sphere was evidently not the ultimate one the Lord designed her to move in, and for which he had been preparing her. Her prejudices must now be melted down, as a further preparation for a more enlarged field of usefulness.

“One evening,” she says, “I was in the house of the Methodist family to whom I have alluded, when a Mr. Mc Allum's name was mentioned. I said, ‘Mr. Mc Allum—that is a Scotch name. Who is he?’

“‘One of our preachers,’ they replied.

“‘Astonishing!’ I remarked. ‘A Scotchman, and a Methodist preacher! I thought the Scotch people had more wisdom than to join the Methodists.’

“This was presuming very much on my part, but they replied ‘Yes, he is both a Scotchman and a Methodist preacher, and he has to preach next Sunday afternoon, at the Ebenezer chapel, in the New Road: will you go and hear him?’

“To gratify my curiosity, I consented to do so; and glad I am that I did. The sermon, from, ‘I am the Lord that healeth thee,’ was distilled like dew into my soul, and my heart melted so fully with a consciousness of the Divine presence, that I was constrained to acknowledge that God was among the Methodists. After this, whenever Mr. Mc Allum had to preach, I went to hear him.”

In the month of August, 1807, Mr. Porteus and family removed to North Shields; where we shall find

that the work commenced at Newcastle was completed.

Mrs. Porteus, after a short residence there, found her way to the Wesleyan chapel, first on a Thursday evening. Mr. James Everett then preached from, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." She says: "I felt the power of the word, and my soul exclaimed, 'It is good to be here;' but how was I astonished when he published for Mr. Mc.Allum to preach on the following Sunday, afternoon and evening."

Mr. Mc.Allum, she found, had been stationed by Conference for North Shields, and was then commencing his ministry there. This seemed such a favour of Providence, that she instantly determined to confine herself to the Methodist ministry. Accordingly, on the following Sunday, she enjoyed what she terms a high day at the Methodist chapel, her husband and children accompanying her; and she continued to attend all the public services on both Sabbaths and week-days.

Under the ministry of these eminent men—Mr. Mc.Allum being unquestionably a star of the first magnitude, and Mr. Everett, then in his youthful vigour, distinguished for his zeal, devotedness to God, and promising talents—she became thoroughly enlightened on the doctrines of Methodism, and her prejudices vanished like "the morning cloud and the early dew." She, however, continued to entertain a high respect for the people under whose ministry she was first brought to God.

Had Mrs. Porteus been an ordinary person, these circumstances might appear unimportant; but as they opened a way for extended usefulness, and as they, in fact, made her what she afterwards became, they



are deserving of special note. Accordingly, after enduring some sharp conflicts, and praying much for Divine direction, she suffered herself to be conducted to a class-meeting, and received her first ticket from Mr. Mc Allum in December, 1807. She thus writes of this class-meeting :—

“ The first person the leader addressed had been for some time, under deep convictions. He said, ‘ Brother, has the Lord pardoned your sins yet?’ He said, ‘ Yes, praise his Name ! he has. One night, I was wrestling in secret—my soul so much distressed I knew not what to do. In a moment, the Lord applied a promise ; I believed it ; my burden fell off, my soul was set free, my sins were pardoned, and now I feel the “ love of God is shed abroad in my heart.” ’

“ Hearing him speak thus, my own ignorance was revealed unto me in such a light as completely abashed me. I thought, ‘ Poor stupid creature that I am ! I have enjoyed this blessing for several years, and yet have been denying the possibility of its attainment. But when the leader addressed me, I simply told him my state, and he gave me suitable encouragement.”

Class-meetings, or other meetings of a similar nature, have been richly productive of good to an immense multitude, who now form a part of heaven’s inhabitants ; and are certainly strongly desired by spiritually-minded people. No valid objection, we conceive, can be raised against such meetings, when constituted and conducted on Scriptural principles ; exemplifying, as they do, the communion which saints have so much practised in all ages, and which is so strongly enjoined, especially in the apostolic writings. Indeed, the genius of Christianity seems to require such meetings ; and, we presume to add, that were the

church of Christ more pure or more persecuted, in either case their value would be correspondingly appreciated. "Then"—the reference is to a period of severe persecution—"they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels. And I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Malachi iii. 16, 17.

For some time after Mrs. P. united herself with the Methodists, she went on her way rejoicing, both in her family and in the public means of grace, and then troubles arose. But these require a more extended consideration.

## CHAPTER V.

### MENTAL AND TEMPORAL STRUGGLES, DELIVERANCES, AND REMOVAL TO GATESHEAD.

TROUBLES, we have said, arose, both mental and temporal. The former were the result of strivings against convictions of duty, which she honestly charges herself with, and which are here recorded as a warning to others; the latter, the result of family destitution: in both the abounding goodness of God is seen in seasonable and suitable deliverances.

When Mrs. Porteus identified herself with the Methodists, the remarkable talent she evinced for public prayer was soon observed, and she was requested to engage in this exercise. This was a heavy cross to her, to avoid which, she frequently absented herself from meetings, and thus brought herself into darkness and distress. Another conviction she had of her duty was to visit the sick, against which her evil reasonings frequently prevailed. She exemplifies this in the following instance:—

“A woman in our neighbourhood took ill; and after much mental conflict I visited her, but in doing so, my timidity so much overcame me that, solemn to say, I asked her about the state of her body, but left without saying a word to her about her soul. She died: but God only knows what I suffered. I wandered my room many nights, and durst scarcely go to bed, dreading that the ghost of the departed would

appear and charge me for not preventing the loss of her soul." All this may appear ridiculous to many ; " But," she goes on to say, " my mental agony was insupportable. I promised the Lord that if he would again pardon me and smile upon my soul, I would, his Spirit assisting me, yield to the convictions of duty in these respects, and take up my cross ; and,— O the loving-kindness of my God !—one night while wrestling with him in secret, he burst the cloud and filled my soul again with joy."

Temporal difficulties, soon after this, began to accumulate with overpowering force, in connection with family affliction. She thus writes of these :—" My husband tiring of the sea, procured a small boat, and depended, for the support of his family, on his stray earnings on the river, which, for a long time amounted to not more than six shillings a week. This was a small sum indeed for the support of ourselves and three children, and to meet other payments. Yet, being determined unflinchingly to adhere to my old maxim taught by my mother,---'Owe no man anything,' and which, up to this time, I had made the rule of my life, it is astonishing how the goodness of God was displayed in the supply of our absolute necessities, by the sympathy of friends to whom nothing had been said in the way of complaint. But, many times, while looking at my children's wants, anxiety and fear oppressed my mind. I remember on the Christmas-eve of this year we had nothing in the house but a piece of bread, and a piece of mint which I poured boiling water on to drink with the bread. While partaking of this scanty meal, I said to my husband, ' To-morrow is Christmas Day,—you always liked to have something better for your dinner on that day ;

but, ah, it seems that we and our children will have nothing at all to-morrow.' He replied, 'Do not doubt; the Lord will provide for us a dinner.' Saying this, he went to his boat, and while sailing up the river, he met with a ship's long boat adrift, that had broken from the vessel to which it belonged. This he took to its owner, who rewarded him with a large lump of beef, and thus enabled him to verify what he had said—that God would provide them with a dinner.

“By this time the period of my fourth confinement drew near, and I had not been enabled to make the requisite preparation for it. Our quarter's rent was becoming due, and we had nothing to pay it with. But I had got a little more faith in the Lord. I urged my case at his throne, and trusted in him. And, O his goodness! may I never forget it! every little article I needed was sent to me by one friend or another, without making my necessities known to any one; and what was most remarkable, nothing was sent but what I really did need. And what is more remarkable still, during the very week of my confinement my husband met a man in the street, to whom fifteen years before he had lent some money, and whom he had never afterwards seen till this time. This man, who had only the day before landed at Shields harbour, gave him two twenty shillings notes, one of which we paid to our landlord, and the other helped us through our trying time.”

These are certainly remarkable instances of a benignant providence watching over, and providing for, those who, in their exigencies, trust alone in the Lord.

Shortly after the above circumstances, Mr. P. thought proper to remove his family again to Newcastle-on-Tyne.



Before we pursue them thither, the following suggestive incident, which transpired at North Shields, and which Mrs. P. was accustomed to narrate, is worthy of notice.

“ At one of the quarterly Lovefeasts I attended, an aged and much respected member of the society stood up, and referring to his early experience, said : ‘ When I first joined the Methodist Society drunkenness was my besetment, which overcame me on three occasions. After my first fall I was severely reprovèd ; still more so after my second ; but after the third I was expelled from the society. Determined, however, to overcome this besetment by God’s grace, and to save my soul, I attended the next class meeting as usual. The leader, after speaking to the other members, sternly turning to me, said ‘ Did I not tell you to come here no more.’ I replied, ‘ Nay, don’t be in such a hurry. If the enemy beat me last time, I may beat him the next.’ And, blessed be God, I did, so as never to be overcome by my besetment more ; and I was received again into the society. And now, having been engaged in the service of God for many years, and outlived my family and early associates, I have been asking the Lord not to confine me by a long affliction to be an incumbrance to other people, but to take me at once, if his will be so, to his heavenly kingdom, and having received what I consider a favourable answer, I am now waiting every day for the coming of my Lord, which I believe draweth near.’ He was not mistaken in this. During the following week as he was slowly passing up the street, he suddenly staggered, dropped down, and died. And as this transpired at the door of a well known and philanthropic medical gentleman, who was also a member of the same society, medical assistance was at hand, but unavailing ; and his remains were decently interred.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### SPHERES OF LABOUR, AND FULL CONSECRATION TO GOD.

**A**T the time when Mr. P. and family removed to Gateshead, the Methodist Society in that place was but in its infancy, or, at least, in a low condition. The place of worship was a large rented room, and the congregation but small compared with what Mrs. P. had worshipped with at North Shields. She, however,—not like many who, when they remove to a new place, avail themselves of the opportunity to break off from their former religious connections—immediately presented herself to the minister, and was soon enrolled a member of the class of Mr. Elliot, then, and for many years after a well known and highly talented leader.

Here the grief she experienced at leaving her old associates at Shields soon subsided. Although only a very poor woman, her talents and piety, and especially her power in prayer, soon attracted others around her by whom she was much beloved, and spheres of usefulness opened before her, into which she was constrained to enter. A prayer meeting established in her own home on the Sunday evenings, afforded her many opportunities of engaging in prayer; and extensive visitations of the sick, to which she was invited by an aged class leader, who generally accompanied her, occupied the most of the time she could spare



from her family. In these exercises many were converted whom she expected to meet in heaven.

Being thus fully engaged in God's work, she became painfully conscious of the necessity of a deeper work of grace in her own soul. She clearly saw, indeed, that to be useful to others, she must be holy herself. This was mentioned to her aged friend, who brought her, "Fletcher's Last Check" to read, together with "An Address to both Perfect and Imperfect Christians." These she read, studied, and prayed over. The result was, that she became thoroughly aroused to seek with all her heart for the blessing of entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, as taught by, not only the Wesleys, Fletcher, and old Methodist preachers generally, but frequently by other divines also.

This blessing, according to Mrs. Porteus' apprehension, consists not in such a perfection of human nature as Adam enjoyed previous to his fall; which included in it the most perfect knowledge of all matters with which it was conversant, conjoined with the perfection of holiness, which rendered unnecessary an atoning sacrifice, or, so far as we can see, anything mediatorial for admission into the presence of the Deity. Those who enjoy the blessing desired by our sister are not perfect in knowledge, even of things spiritual. They, even in their best estate, know but in part; and many of them are destitute, in a high degree, of general knowledge. And so far from them being rendered independent of the Saviour's sacrifice, none so much feel their need of the merit of that sacrifice for admission into the presence of their Heavenly Father, and for the enjoyment of those higher and richer blessings for which they pant; none feel so much their own ignorance and weakness, and the

continuous necessity of being guided by the counsel and upheld by the omnipotence of Him in whom all their desires concentrate.

Much less does Christian perfection consist in what has been termed "Angelic Perfection," which seems to admit of perpetual soarings in the uneclipsed vision of Jehovah's glory, and is free from all fluctuation in the pure enjoyment resulting therefrom, and without the possibility *now* of ever lapsing from its integrity or losing its bliss. So far from this being the correct view of Christian perfection, those who enjoy the blessing are exposed to numerous fluctuations in this imperfect state of being; and many are the clouds of darkness, and seasons of acute affliction, bereavement and temptation, through which they have to pass for the trial of their faith and patience. Moreover, this blessing is only secured to those who, obedient to the Spirit within them, watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation; and who live a life of faith in the Son of God.

Our beloved Christian sister was fully tested in all these ways, as we shall see; but she obtained the blessing, and retained it even to the end of her mortal career.

In what, then, according to her view, did the blessing of Christian perfection consist,—for which she was led to pant, and which she professed to enjoy for many years? It consisted in the fulness of the Divine Spirit within her, cleansing the thoughts of the heart, or the fountain of desire, so as to develop to maturity the powers of her regenerated nature in perfect love perfect peace, perfect patience, perfect meekness, and all the other graces of the Spirit. It is, in fact, the fulness of God in the soul; the state, not of a babe in

Christ, but of a mature Christian, who has arrived at "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This is what Paul, in his Letter to the Ephesians, terms "the perfecting of the saints;" and in the same epistle prays for so ardently. See iii. 16-20; iv. 12, 13, &c.

Mrs. P., in seeking this blessing, endured much inward conflict for several weeks. She says:—

"My convictions for a clean heart were as strong as those I experienced when groaning for *pardon*. Only with this difference—I had the witness of the Divine favour,—no condemnation, but a vehement panting, longing, thirsting for the blessing, that nothing could satisfy but an answer to prayer."

In this state, her old friend frequently visited her in the evenings to pray for her. "One night," she says, "when he was gone, and the children had retired to rest, I resolved to continue on my knees till I obtained the blessing I sought. My pain of mind was great. I struggled till near midnight. I cried, 'Lord, I cannot let thee go; I will not rise. Oh, for thy dear Son's sake, answer prayer.' At length that promise was applied with power to my soul—'I will sprinkle clean water upon thee, and thou shalt be clean.' I laid hold of this by faith; and while contemplating the Great Being who had recorded this promise, was led to pray thus: 'O thou Eternal Jehovah, thy voice at first spake the world out of nothing, thy hands stretched the heavens, and planted the stars. Thy power upholds all things: then nothing is too hard for thee. Thy powerful word *can* speak my nature clean. And art thou not as willing as thou art able? Ah, yes. It was thy own love that moved thee to make this promise. None compelled

thee to make it. Art thou not then willing to fulfil it to my soul? O yes, I do believe. If there be one thing in which thou canst take more pleasure than another, it must be this, to stamp thine image on the soul. Oh, then, do this for thy gasping dust. I long for the sprinkling of thy Spirit. Make my infected nature pure. I do believe thou wilt be as good as thy word. Thou hast promised, and thou also wilt do it. Now let it come. This moment is only mine. Thou hast given me no warrant to hope for to-morrow. Thy word has said, 'Now is the accepted time.' I take thee at thy word; let me have it now. Thou hast said, 'I will;' yes, and my soul replies, 'I will, I do believe.' Thou canst not falsify thy word. It is done.'

"When I thus ventured to lay hold of the promise, the witness was given; my soul sank in solemn awe. I had no high-flowing rapture, but such a weight of glory as I cannot express. My soul, the room, and all around, seemed full of God. How long I continued gazing, praying, adoring, and wondering, I cannot tell."

The next day, the reality of this work was tested by a severe trial; but she stood the test, and from that day onwards could rejoice in the enjoyment of a full salvation.

Up to this time she had not learned to write. Now she was anxious to learn, for the purpose of recording her Christian experience; and, mentioning this to her aged friend, was encouraged by him to proceed. A few copies set by him enabled her, in a fortnight, to join the letters, and to write a verse from the Bible. But for this invaluable acquisition, she never would have been able to do the work she afterwards did; and her



family and friends would not have been furnished with her interesting and highly instructive diary and letters—extracts from which we purpose to give in the course of this work.

We are now required to consider her in another sphere of action—that of a Class Leader ; in her appointment to which, the Divine hand is clearly seen.

A glorious revival of religion broke out in the Methodist society, in the promotion of which she engaged with all her power. One Sunday evening, at her own house, eleven persons, chiefly young females, were brought into Gospel liberty. These she rejoiced over till a late hour, blessing and praising God.

On the following day, Mrs. Porteus, ruminating on what had transpired, had her intercourse with God checked by a suggestion that she would be required to unite these young women into a class, and become their leader. This she resisted as a temptation to pride, during the whole of that and the following day, till, after vehement prayer at all opportunities, God convinced her otherwise, and encouraged her by applying to her mind these words—“ Fear thou not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,” Isa. xli. 10.

In this spirit she awaited the issues of Providence, without mentioning what had transpired to any one. The next morning, her class leader and minister visited her, and disclosed to her the purport of their visit, which was, to appoint her to the office of class leader over the young women recently converted. Mrs. Porteus, in reply, told them that had not the

Lord prepared her for this work, neither they nor any others would have prevailed on her to undertake it. The class was then formed, which soon numbered twenty-seven members.

About this time, the following rather ludicrous circumstance transpired, which is recorded here as one among many every-day incidents that Mrs. Porteus's observant faculties and tenacious memory enabled her to relate.

A poor woman in her neighbourhood was so dreadfully afflicted with a nervous affection that she was persuaded, at length, to believe by a Roman Catholic female who lived near her, that she was possessed of the devil, and that Mr. W., the Catholic priest, could cast him out. Mr. W. was therefore sent for, and Mr. W. came. "Well, my good woman," said he, "what is the matter with you?"

"Well, I believe, sir, I am possessed of the devil."

"O are you? Well then I can cast him out."

"Will you then, sir?" she replied. "If you only will, I will give you all I have in the world, and will pray for you as long as I live."

Mr. W., affected doubtless by this stupendous offer, then told her that "if she could only believe, it would be done."

"O but," she replied, "if it has to depend on my believing, I doubt it will never be done."

He then however presented her with a bottle of holy water, and directed her how to use it; when, immediately clutching the bottle, she drank off its whole contents, exclaiming, "Oh, let me have it in the inside—it's the inside that's bad."

Mr. W., thus foiled, had to leave the place without any accession of fame in this department of his supposed apostolic work.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AFFLICTION AND TEMPORAL DELIVERANCES.

**T**HE close of the last chapter brought us up to the month of April, 1814. We pass onwards to the years 1816 and 17, during which interval the Lord favoured Mrs. Porteus with repeated tokens of his power and love.

We shall find it difficult to conceive of circumstances more distressing than the following, as recorded by her own pen, or more strikingly illustrative of Scripture in the seasonable fulfilment of promises made to those who, bereft of other visible means of support, trust in the Lord alone for their daily bread.

It would seem that up to this time (1816) her husband had been accustomed to do some little for the support of his family, which, aided by a school for young children conducted by Mrs. Porteus, numbering from twelve to twenty, enabled them in a scanty way to provide for their necessities without contracting debt. But, at the above period, she informs us, her husband by an accident, got his boat broken to pieces; and this being his only means of subsistence, he was in consequence laid entirely aside.

“About a fortnight after,” she goes on to say, “I was visited by affliction that confined me to my bed. My school was thus necessarily abandoned for the time; and, to add to our calamities, my eldest boy, who had been for some time earning two shillings per



week for going errands, was dismissed by his employer he having nothing more for him to do. Thus one trial, as in the case of Job, came closely at the heels of another: and my husband, myself, and four helpless children were left without any visible means of subsistence.

“ In this situation I was totally confined to my bed for five months. This was indeed a period of my life that I trust for ever to remember with gratitude. A trial did I call it? Say rather, it was an opportunity to put Jehovah to his word, and to test the truth of his promise. As I felt the Lord had full possession of my soul, I felt it not difficult to trust him with my body. As I lay in bed, these words of Scripture were frequently suggested to my mind—‘ I have commanded the ravens to feed thee.’ 1 Kings xvii. 4. I answered, ‘ Yes, Lord, and if thou commandest in such a case, who dare disobey?’ Strange to tell,—but is anything too hard for the Lord?—people came to see me that I had never seen before, who brought me both victuals and money; and thus, although sometimes powerfully attacked by the enemy of souls who attempted to wrest from me my faith, yet, holding fast my confidence, during the whole five months I never had five minutes’ anxiety.

“ During this affliction I learned such useful lessons as I hope ever to remember. They have done me good ever since. As my sleep nearly forsook me, I usually spent the night from twelve to six o’clock in meditation. These hours were so precious they seemed short. The Lord seemed to pass before me and to reveal his Divine attributes and perfections in a new and instructive light: I saw his infinite wisdom in creating, redeeming, and governing the world in a

way that filled me with amazement. In particular, I saw Him sitting at the helm of the universe, regulating all its movements ; and, as the bountiful benefactor of, especially, his human family, I saw him dealing to every one his portion, and so gratefully I received mine from him, bitter though it was, that at that time I felt I would not exchange my condition with that of the highest lady of the land. I also was favoured with such views of the faithfulness, truth, goodness, and love of God, as served to strengthen my faith abundantly. Many a time, by faith, my eternal home appeared in view. I traversed its golden streets ; conversed with its inhabitants ; and then exclaimed, ‘ Fly on, ye moments, and hasten the time when I shall join with them to cast my crown at the Redeemer’s feet !’ This period at that time seemed to be rapidly advancing. To human appearance I was near the grave ; and so anxious to depart, that when any of my friends prayed for my recovery I could not say Amen.

“ At this time, that man of God, Mr. William Bramwell travelled in the Newcastle circuit, and came to see me. Every circumstance of this visit is deeply impressed on my mind. As I was hardly able to speak, he enquired of the woman who waited on me how many children we had, and what were our circumstances. Receiving this information he turned to me and said, ‘ Are you happy ?’ I said, ‘ Yes.’ He enquired again, ‘ Are you always happy ?’ I answered, ‘ Sometimes my spirits are depressed with weakness, but at my lowest times I can say, “ The Lord is my portion.”’ He then turned to the woman and said, ‘ Can you say that ?’ She answered, ‘ I thank God for what he has done for my soul, but I have not got

that length yet.' With his usual seriousness he then looking at her said, 'Woman, thou art a backslider. Once thou hadst religion, but thou hast lost it; thy heart is like a train of gunpowder, the devil often sets his match to it, and it goes off with such a report.' He then, after faithfully and affectionately exhorting the poor woman, broke out in singing—

'Who suffer with our Master here,' &c.

While he was singing, my mind was troubled because he had said so little to me. This, however, was his way. After singing he prayed: first for the woman, that God would have mercy on her and change her bad heart; and then, without any hesitation in praying for me, or even stopping to say 'Thy will be done,' he seemed at once to lay hold on God by faith, and with holy fervour exclaimed, 'Lord, raise up the woman to her family.' These words he repeated again and again with increasing fervour, till I thought, 'It's of no use me wishing to die. Mr. Bramwell sees a need for my life, and it will be granted to him;' I therefore began every time he repeated his petition, to say, 'Amen.' And, wonderful to tell, from that day I began to recover. The poor woman, too, was so convinced of her danger, that for many weeks she could not rest, frequently rising during her nights of agony to pray for mercy, till God again spoke peace to her soul."

In this simple narrative we may see how true piety evinces its power to support and comfort under acute suffering, and complicated troubles; and also, the mightiness of the prayer of faith. When 'an interpreter, one among a thousand,' such as Mr. William Bramwell, is sent on a mission of mercy to a poor

sufferer, then the Lord is indeed gracious, as seen in this instance.

The following incidents are not less striking than the foregoing.

“ After I had gradually recovered my health, still the cloud of providence seemed dark. Adversity seemed to be our lot. But through grace my soul did not fear under it. Nay, it only sent me oftener to the Lord, and enabled me to see more clearly his wondrous love and delivering hand. It is impossible for me to note down every instance of his loving-kindness to unworthy me. I shall only notice a few.

“ As the winter advanced, and my children were but poorly clad, especially my girls (for at that time I had three girls and two boys), I looked on them, and thought, ‘ If it were in my power, you ought to have each a warm stuff dress for winter ; but, alas, I cannot procure them for you.’ Under these circumstances I lifted up my heart to God with sweet resignation to his will. I never asked the Lord for these things, nor yet durst I run into debt for them, but just cast myself on the mercy of God. And thus I sweetly lay in his hand, saying, ‘ Thy will be done.’ Mark the result. In about three weeks’ time I received a parcel from a friend in London—a person I had not seen for some years—containing several articles of clothing for my children ; and what was most remarkable, among the rest were three stuff frocks for my girls, and a stuff dress for myself. Thus my necessities were supplied at that time by the watchful care of my heavenly Father.” Again :

“ On one occasion the time drew near for my rent to be paid, but with all the means I could use I had only saved ten shillings instead of twenty. Seven days were allowed me to collect this money. Nothing re.



mained therefore for me but at once to present this, also, to my infinite benefactor who had so often relieved me. I hence, without mentioning my case to any one, took it to him ; and with tears and strong cries—as my fear was I should be involved in debt—I made known my request to him, and this I continued to do till I got power to believe that he would again deliver me ; and my soul was filled with humble confidence and holy joy. Nothing could afterwards shake me from this. I was enabled stoutly to repel every temptation of the enemy till deliverance came. And thus it was :—On the Saturday, the rent being due on the Monday following, I had business with my class-leader, who said, ‘ I have been at Carville this week, and Mrs. Reay was enquiring after you. I advise you to walk down to-morrow and see her, when you will hear Dr. Taft preach.’ I did so ; although I was altogether unacquainted with Mrs. Reay, I was kindly received by her. In the evening returning home, she put some silver into my hand, which I afterwards found was the exact sum I needed to make up my rent. Was not the hand of God clearly visible in this ? Observe, neither my leader nor Mrs. Reay was at all acquainted with my case. O that my soul may praise him for ever !” We record here another instance of the same kind.

“ A friend of mine knowing the circumstances of my family, had, for several months, given me regularly a loaf of bread on the Thursday of each week. This with a stone of wheat meal, with care, brought us through the week. This I gratefully accepted as a great boon from the kind lady the donor, especially as the wheat meal was at that time four shillings and sixpence per stone. On one occasion being unable to raise the sum required for the meal, I so far departed

from my usual custom as to request the flour dealer to trust me one shilling and sixpence till the following week ; as I thought that by extreme carefulness with the bread, I should then be able to pay him. But here another trial of faith ensued. On the Thursday of that week I sent my daughter Ann as usual for the loaf. Immediately afterwards I felt strongly drawn out to pray ; I, however, could do nothing but praise. In this frame I continued on my knees till my daughter returned. As she was in tears I enquired the cause, when I at once understood why I had been so powerfully influenced in her absence. The good lady, for some reason I never got to know, had not sent the loaf, nor could she send any more. Being prepared in the way I have stated, I received this intelligence with perfect composure, and told my child not to fear, assuring her that the Lord would either assist us to provide for our own necessities, or would raise up for us some other friend to assist us. And so it was. Without mentioning the circumstance to any one, an unknown friend sent me one shilling and sixpence, which enabled me to discharge my debt to the flour dealer ; and my school, which I had resumed after my recovery from affliction, and which for some months had only numbered eight scholars, was, in answer to special prayer, increased to the number of twenty scholars. I was thus placed in better temporal circumstances than I had been in for some time. Praise the Lord for all his mercies ! I held fast the full salvation the Lord had blessed me with—my soul was happy ; and as I was made about this time a visitor for the Benevolent Society, and a teacher in the Sunday school, I could sweetly sing with Wesley—

‘ With me no melancholy void,  
Or moment lingers unemployed,  
Or unimprov’d below.’



## CHAPTER VIII.

### DIARY FOR 1818-19.

**I**N the diaries of even the most devoted people, we usually find much that is monotonous—simple relations of the sunshine and shade of Christian experience, common to all Christians. We purpose generally to pass over such entries in the present instance, and from many that are valuable for their suggestiveness, select only such as are most obviously so, or are most expressive of the inner life of the writer.

Mrs. Porteus prefixes to her Diary the following lines :

- “ Descend from heaven, celestial Dove,  
And, hovering, take me on thy wings ;  
And mount, and bear me far above  
The thoughts of all terrestrial things.
- “ O for a sight, a glorious sight,  
Of my exalted Saviour's throne,  
Where sits my Jesus clothed in white,  
Rob'd in a body like my own.
- “ Adoring saints around him stand,  
And all heaven's hosts before him fall ;  
The God shines gracious through the man,  
And sheds sweet light upon them all.
- “ When shall the day, my Lord, appear,  
When I shall mount and dwell above ;  
And stand and gaze upon them there,  
And see thy face, and sing thy love ?”

January 1st, 1818.—This day, I have solemnly engaged to be the Lord's, soul and body.

Sunday, 11th.—My soul still breathes after God. I renewed my covenant again at his holy table. It was a good time.

February 23rd.—Returned home this day, after spending a profitable week with my old friends at North Shields. Enjoyed sweet communion with them, especially in visiting the sick. Was thankful to find my class, when I returned, in a flourishing condition.

March 22nd, Easter Sunday.—This has been a good day. My soul has enjoyed much of the spirit of Mary, when she went to the sepulchre, to seek for her Lord. By faith I have been enabled to view his mangled body, as when laid in the tomb; and then to view him rising therefrom, a triumphant Conqueror, on this ever-memorable day. O the love I felt, while with her I could say, 'Rabboni, my Lord and my God.' My soul anticipates the happy moment when, at his command, the angels shall descend to bear my ransomed spirit home, and introduce me into his presence. Then, O then, I shall see without an intervening veil that blessed Head now crowned with glory, and the marks of the nails now shining brighter than the sun in his meridian splendour. I then shall cast my crown at his feet, and adore him for ever.

October 27th.—Since I wrote last, I have been called to endure one of the most painful trials I ever experienced. My dear daughter Mary died June 9th, aged twelve years and six months, triumphant in the faith for so young a child. It is not in my power to describe either her sufferings or my own feelings. The word of the Lord was verified in me—"As thy day, so shall thy strength be; yet, although I felt

grace for the day, I had trial sufficient for the grace. With, however, the feelings of a mother, I may humbly add, I enjoyed the patience of a Christian. O how many times, in secret, out of the fulness of my heart, did I plead, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" yet I could add, "Not my will, but thine, be done." On the morning when her spirit took its flight, my painful feelings subsided, and my soul was so filled with a calm serenity, I could not shed a tear. \* But although my Mary is dead, my James is born again, aged fourteen years and eight months. Notwithstanding the insinuation of the enemy to the contrary, the change in him is too visible to be disputed. Another source of comfort I have at present is, my class is reviving both in numbers and graces. For this department of my work, I constantly feel the need of wisdom from my God. O what an important work I feel it to be to have the charge of so many souls. Indeed, I never felt so much love to precious souls as I do at present. In secret, I can grasp the whole of mankind in my arms of love, and plead for their salvation. The wickedness of the wicked and the formality of professors, often so oppress my spirit that my body waxes feeble: yet I enjoy the beneficial results of this wrestling spirit in my own soul.

January 1st, 1819.—On reviewing the year that is past, I see many shortcomings to be humbled for; and yet many, very many, mercies to be thankful for. Through grace, I enter into a fresh covenant with my God, and resolve two things in his strength: 1. That I will read the Scriptures more than I have done, and strive more to retain what I read, and to reduce it to practice. And 2. That I will set apart at least five

times a day for private prayer and meditation ; and if possible, let nothing prevent me. O my God, I feel that while I am forming these resolutions, I have the inward testimony that thou art pleased with me. Help me, O help me, to perform them.

May 3rd.—O what a solemn sense of the majestic presence of my God did I enjoy this morning. My soul, too, seemed to converse with angelic beings. I felt overpowered with that word, “ The angel of the Lord encampeth around them that fear him, and delivereth them,” Psa. xxxiv. 7. How happy, then, and safe am I ! O my God, while I continue to fear and serve thee, may those pure and holy spirits never discover the least hypocrisy, formality, or lukewarmness in me all the days of my life. Amen and amen.

9th, Sunday.—I feel happy, as the result of this day’s exercises. From five in the morning till after ten at night, my soul and body have been engaged, without interruption, in the private and public means of grace. O what a lovefeast we had at Carville. My soul rejoiced to hear of the Lord reviving his work in other parts of the world, and in the hearts of his children. This intelligence prostrates me at thy feet, O my God, and my heart exclaims, “ O Jesus, ride on till all is subdued,” &c. Amen.

16th, Sunday.—This morning at five, in my usual walk, my mind was led out in meditation on the unparalleled love of my adorable Redeemer ; the state of the world when he appeared in it ; the amazing extent to which the devil had got possession of both the bodies and souls of men ; and the rapid spread of the Gospel. The morning’s sermon was very profitable. Although I did not feel much, yet I got substantial good. My judgment, my understanding, and

my memory got what I trust will be a feast for many days. In the evening I enjoyed a calm sweetness of spirit: but O I long for the fulness of love.

Saturday, 27th.—This has been our district meeting week. I have enjoyed very much, and been much profited by both the morning and evening preaching. I see more clearly the divinity of my Saviour; the immense price paid for my redemption; the exceeding greatness of the Saviour's sufferings; and the all-sufficiency of his atonement. Upon this, the anchor of my soul seems firmer fixed. O my adorable Redeemer, upon thee alone I hang for my present and eternal salvation. Be thou the subject of my conversation every day, and my song in the house of my pilgrimage. And O, be thou my Pilot when I have to cross Jordan, and safely conduct to the promised land my ransomed, my delivered soul.

31st.—This has been a day never to be forgotten. My soul was drawn out after God at our lovefeast at the New Road chapel. My class, at night, was a little Bethel. But we had a fellowship meeting in the vestry that far exceeded all the rest. My soul felt as if it had got into the third heaven, there seemed to be such a oneness of soul among us, and such a spirit of prayer. Four souls were set at liberty, and with reluctance we separated at a late hour.

June 20th, Sunday.—The enemy seems determined to make my way as rough as possible by his subtle temptations. This morning, in secret, when regaling myself, as it were, under the shadow of the throne, my soul was raised on the wings of contemplation, and for a few minutes, was wafted among the blessed, in eternal glory. There, by the eye of faith and the strength of imagination, I saw Jehovah, as Isaiah saw



him on his lofty throne. His perfections, like so many sunbeams shining forth from himself, and shedding their glorious lustre on every inhabitant of the heavenly country. On each side of the throne stood the angelic choir, with garments glittering with reflected glory, brighter than the sun in its meridian splendour; and in the front stood, in regular ranks, the redeemed of the Lord, ranged according to their sufferings or usefulness, and shining with borrowed rays from the Sun of Righteousness. While thus gazing and praising—viewing Jehovah as a fountain of light, life, and happiness, enjoying in himself independent of created good, all possible perfections and felicity, yet, communicating light and happiness to every inhabitant of the heavenly region; with solemn awe I was just expressing these words, ‘O thou self-existing, and alone independent Jehovah,’ when a paralyzing suggestion as swift as lightning darted through my soul—‘*Envy him—covet his estate.*’ My soul started. Although, praise God, I felt nothing within responding to this suggestion, yet my view was in a moment eclipsed, and my soul, like the affrighted dove, fled for shelter to the bosom of Jesus. I could not help exclaiming, “O thou wicked enemy, this is the very sin thou wast cast out of heaven for thyself. Lord Jesus, save me from such a thought.” What a mercy he will not be permitted to enter the gates of the New Jerusalem. My soul shall enjoy a perfect and everlasting rest there.

July 11th, Sunday.—This morning I walked down to Shields to hear my dear Mr. Burdsall. On the road I had such a struggle with unbelief as led me to think I had never known what it was before. I was tempted to call in question every thing sacred, and to



doubt its reality. But, O, my soul was refreshed through the day, I got such a faith-view of my exalted Redeemer holding the powers of hell in chains like a mighty conqueror, and empowering the weakest of his followers to conquer their numerous foes, that unbelief vanished. The enemy quitted the field; my faith acquired more strength, and I returned home, instead of being fatigued with my sixteen miles' travel, refreshed in both body and soul.

August 1st, Sunday.—My mind is very solemn. Our text this morning was, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.” Praise God for faithful preaching. There never was more need of it than now. May I never sink into a state of indifference: there is nothing I more dread. Keep me, O my God, for ever.

3rd.—This word has been applied with power:—“The Lord has set apart him that is godly for himself.” This, with awe and reverence, I earnestly desire:—to be set apart entirely for himself, and to be employed in his work whatever it may be.

4th.—Our text this evening was, “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart.” Psalm xxxvii. 3. This I experience. I delight in him alone; and regarding my desires, I find they are according to his word and will, and these I rest in confidence shall be granted.

8th, Sunday.—Our text this afternoon, “The Lord preserveth all them that love him,” (Psalm cxlv. 20.) was made a blessing to me. I feel I love the Lord: 1st, as my Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. 2nd, As my bountiful benefactor, supplying all my necessities from his beneficent hand. 3rd, As my master, appointing me my work and empowering me to do it. 4th, As a sympathizing and indulgent Father, listening

to all my complaints, redressing my grievances, and giving to, or withholding from, me what his wisdom dictates as best. I also feel I love him, fifthly, as my husband. As such I am sweetly united to him by a spiritual union, and he supports, comforts, and defends me. But "the Lord *preserveth* all them that love him." I feel he does; not *from* temptation, affliction, adversity, persecution, death, or judgment. No: but he preserveth them *in* them. In many of these I have proved this to be true, and I believe he will never leave or forsake me.

16th.—My soul this day has been deeply affected with the value of souls, thousands of whom are every day, to all appearance, perishing for ever. O send forth Thy light and truth, and may thy children be aroused everywhere to pray for thy Spirit to be poured out on all flesh.

31st, Sunday.—This has been a day of extreme grief to my soul. Confusion in the nation, and a division likely to take place in the church, wound my soul in the tenderest part. I spent an hour this morning in prayer about these things. Surely we are a highly privileged people, and yet how proud, formal, &c. O may Thy justice again linger into love, or else take me to heaven.

## CHAPTER IX.

DIARY CONTINUED FOR 1819-20.

**T**HE preceding chapter of extracts, culled from many other entries, all interesting, will, it is hoped, be profitable to the serious reader who is living in the enjoyment of, or ardently desiring the full salvation of the Gospel. The following, if perused in the spirit of prayer, will be equally profitable.

December 12th, 1819.—This morning, I arose at four o'clock, and retired into secret. After breathing awhile to God, and enjoying his gracious presence, my mind was led into a strain of meditation. First, these words were powerfully impressed on my mind, "With God shut in." I instantly conceived myself placed in a spacious and elegant apartment, the chief seat of which was occupied by my Lord. Thus favoured, I gazed for a while on his ineffable glory, and received from him such consolation and increase of faith as elevated my soul above the world and its transient vanities, and filled me with a holy awe. Thus prepared, my mind was powerfully led out more extensively into another field of meditation on these words, from one of the most seraphic of our sacred poets—

"Let all I am in *Thee* be lost."

Here I was led to enquire, What am I in myself? and was constrained to acknowledge that by nature I am a compound of unbelief, pride, self-will, anger, &c. Without the grace of the Gospel I am all this. I was led to enquire again, Whence came all this? My heart answered, Not from God. Man was made in the image of his Maker—holy and without spot. But see, O see, the malice of Satan! Like the mighty torrents from the mountain, which, with their constantly accumulating force, spread devastation and ruin wherever they advance, till at length their hideous roar, their filth and relentless fury, are lost in the mighty ocean; so, O my soul, see the mighty flood of iniquity, which, issuing from the bottomless pit, has deluged our world, and polluted every faculty of the human spirit. See its terrible ravages, both in the world and in the church. But see the polluted, sinful soul, submerging into the boundless ocean of the Redeemer's love, and completely lost in God. Where now that unbelief? It is swallowed up in a full assurance of faith. Where that pride, that hellish offspring of Satan? It is lost in deep humility. Where that self-will? Lost in the will of God, doing nothing and praying for nothing but what God has promised. Where that anger? Lost in meekness and gentleness of spirit. Thus also covetousness is lost in doing good to all; resentment and revenge in patience, tenderness, and longsuffering; and hatred and malice in love to God and man. Praise the Lord for such a deliverance and for such a deliverer! O my God, may I and all thy children experimentally know what it is to be lost in thee for ever. Amen and amen.

January 1st, 1820.—Reviewing the mercies of the year now for ever closed, my soul is bowed down with grateful emotions to thee, my God. Conscious I am that I might have progressed more rapidly in thy ways; yet, glory, for ever glory, to thy grace! I am still in the way to thy kingdom. Yes, and I feel my love stronger to thee and thy people than I ever did. Now, at this propitious period, and at this moment, I would enter again into a solemn covenant engagement to be thine and thine only. Here I am, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in thy gracious presence for this purpose. I give myself entirely to thee; for thine I am by creation, preservation, and redemption. Take my soul with all its faculties—my understanding, judgment, and memory, my will also. I give them all up freely to thee, to be employed for thee and by thee. My body, with all its members, shall be thine also. May my eyes never gaze on any object that would draw my heart from thee. May my ear never listen to anything that would disturb my peace or produce languor in my affections. May my tongue, at all times and everywhere, be preserved from vain, trifling, contentious, and in any sense hurtful speech, and be used only for thee. May my hands, too, be perpetually employed for thee; and my feet run only in the way of thy commandments. And on thy part, give, O give me, at all times, grace thus to live to thy glory. Hear it, O ye angels that gaze continually on the glory and majesty of my God and Saviour: this morning I have devoted myself again to his service; I am his henceforth and for ever. O my Saviour, sensible that without thee I can do nothing, I would wholly renounce all self-confidence, and give myself wholly unto thee—to be guided by thy wisdom, pro-



tected by thy power, comforted by thy love, and supported by thy grace. Never for a moment leave me, or cause me to depart from thee. May the sweet assurance I now enjoy that thou hast accepted of this my act, continually abide with me for my encouragement, consolation, and hope. To this, as my solemn act, I subscribe my name, MARY PORTEUS.

January 4th.—The theme of my meditation this day has been the question, Whether we shall or shall not see Deity in heaven; and much my soul has been troubled by the supposition that we shall not. O this craving I feel, that seems not to be satisfied with anything less than a dwelling in the presence of the Triune God, and gazing perpetually on the beatific vision! Tell me, O ye angels, who dwell in the palace of the King of kings, Are ye not permitted, in some way, to see the face of your Creator and God? Tell me, O ye spirits of the just made perfect, who dwell in the region of eternal day, Do not the beams of Jehovah's countenance constitute your heaven? And tell me, O my Father and God, Shall I not see thee?—I do not say comprehend thee. That I believe is impossible; but I shall live in hope. And O how this hope animates my soul, that after this short life is ended, I shall be admitted into thy presence, and shall not only see my Saviour Jesus, which will be heaven sufficient—if so the limit of my vision is restricted—but shall, in some way, see Deity; and while gazing on his ineffable glory—especially after “the Son has delivered up the kingdom to the Father, and God is all in all”—shall prostrate myself before him, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

— 13th.—This day, the words we often sing,

‘ His love is as great as his power,’



have been a source of much consolation to me. For who can comprehend his power, as displayed in the creation and sustenance of the stupendous universe, of which our globe is but an atom, with all their innumerable tribes of inhabitants. Is it so, then, that thy love is as great as thy power—for our reason says it is; no one attribute of the Deity can be stronger or weaker than another—then who can fathom or comprehend thy love? None absolutely. And what have I to fear? Nothing.

— 20th.—During the last week, my soul has enjoyed some precious seasons while witnessing the struggles of some dear young men, companions and band-mates of my son James, for “full salvation;” and while wrestling with them, frequently for hours together, till they were enabled fully to grasp the blessing; and I believe they now enjoy it.

— 21st.—While engaged in prayer this morning, these words, “O thou perfection of beauty,” opened before me a field of meditation. O my God, thou art perfect in all thy attributes. Perfect holiness without any, the least, taint of impurity, and glorious in it; perfect Wisdom, perceiving everything as it is, without error; perfect Power, without the least restraint or weakness; perfect Truth, with no wavering; perfect Justice without severity; and perfect Love with no intermixture of hatred: and in all these respects, thou art infinite, unchangeable, and eternal. Where, in all creation, is there to be found such beauty or perfection as in thyself? The most beautiful thing in all thy creation is the sanctified soul; and yet how imperfect is it still, compared with thyself. The most devoted Christian is but weakness and ignorance; and all the good

he enjoys comes perpetually from thee. All the beauties of creation, too, are but emanations from thee. O thou Perfection of Beauty, may my soul constantly adore thee; and may all my thoughts, words, and actions show forth thy praise.

— 31st.—O what a feast my soul enjoyed while meditating on these words, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you,” John xv. 7. My Lord thus applied them with power:—If ye continue to see your own ignorance, so as to abide in me for wisdom and direction; if ye see your own weakness, so as to abide in me for strength; if ye continue to see your danger, so as to abide in me constantly for protection and refuge: and if my words abide in you—if my promises abide in you, to comfort and support you; if my threatenings abide in you, to deter you from evil; if my doctrines abide in you, as the ground of your hope; and if my commands or precepts abide in you as your rule and guide—then, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be granted to you. Glory to thy grace! with humility I can say, I am thus abiding in thee. And regarding what I am permitted to ask for, I desire nothing but what is according to thy will. But O my God, is it not according to thy will to convert my husband? Surely it is. This I intensely desire. Grant unto me this request speedily, for I cannot and will not give it up.\*

February 1st.—News has arrived of the death of our aged Sovereign [George III.]. O may God undertake our cause as a nation. May his successor on

\* Many other entries of Mrs. Porteus’s Diary express the same desire and wrestling spirit for her husband’s salvation, which, we believe, was ultimately granted to her.

the British throne be an instrument, in thy hand, in preserving our religious privileges; and may we, as subjects, use them to thy glory. Amen.

— 15th.—I arose this morning at my usual hour, my mind much harrassed, as it had been many days, with the enemy. I had not, however, wrestled long before the Sun of Righteousness arose upon my soul, like the natural sun emerging from a dense cloud, and dissipating the dreary gloom. This trial of my faith has more fully taught me some useful lessons:

First, I see very clearly I cannot quicken my own soul, and that my dependance must be on Jehovah alone.

Second, That all the means of grace are but conduit pipes by which the Lord conveys his blessings; and that without him, they are but empty cisterns. And,

Third, That none of the children of God, however much I may love them, can afford me relief in the day of trouble.

I have also learned more fully how to speak to, and sympathise with, others, in trouble.

## CHAPTER X.

### CALL TO PREACH, AND CONNECTION WITH THE PRIMITIVE METHODISTS.

**T**HE extracts in the two preceding chapters from a diary extending over five years, will, we deem be sufficient to impress the reader with the exalted piety and superior natural talents of Mrs. Porteus. We now proceed to condense from her own more extended narrative, such of the leading and regulating events and incidents of her subsequent life, as may most effectually accomplish her own object in recording them—the spiritual profit of the reader.

Two of these we have to consider in this and the following chapter; her call to preach the Gospel, and her connection with the Primitive Methodists.

Before we proceed with these we must notice here a painful domestic occurrence, for the purpose of evincing more fully how her faith and power in prayer enabled her to overcome her daily difficulties.

It appears that her son James, who, as has been stated, was converted in his fifteenth year, and who, for some time advanced steadily in the divine life, was, by the failure of his master to whom he was apprenticed, sent to work with men of sceptical opinions, whose daily conversation at length polluted his spirit and robbed him of his religious confidence. The

consequence was, he left his class, neglected the prayer-meetings, and ceased to pray in private; and had he not been passionately fond of music, and connected with the chapel choir, would, doubtless, have ceased attending the public ordinances of religion also.

His mother, observing all this with the most painful solicitude, thus writes:—"Many nights of grief and days of agony I spent, and glad was I indeed on all occasions to be alone, and give vent to my anguish in a flood of tears. One day when thus engaged, and my mind had been led to fix itself on the prevalence of the Saviour's intercession, I got power to believe, and prayed as in an agony for the Lord to show me what he would do. Opening my Bible, these words at once were presented to my eye:—"Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.' Isaiah xlix. 25. I exclaimed, 'It is enough, my Lord. The terrible lion of hell has taken my son captive—he has seized him as his prey. But thou wilt unloose his dreadful grasp, and set the prisoner free; yes, and thou wilt save my other children. Two of them are in heaven already, and the other four shall unquestionably follow them.' On this promise I fully rested; which, after a few months' trial of my faith, was accomplished in a way that completely nonplussed my feeble judgment. As the result of the pernicious influence that lured him from his God, my son ran away—travelled on foot one hundred and eighty miles—was reduced to the necessity of selling his clothes—was thus brought into a state of mind that obliged him to acknowledge that there is a



God, and that he so rules in his providence that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice—returned home completely subdued in spirit—recovered what he had lost—joined the people of God again and continued to stand fast.”

For the encouragement of, and as an example to, other pious parents, who may have to endure a similar trouble, it may be proper here to record the experience of Mrs. Porteus during the absence of her son.

Her own consternation and that of her family may be easily conceived, when it was ascertained that he had left home, and that no means were left by which to trace his footsteps. She knew, however, what to do. Her grand refuge in every emergency was prayer. For this purpose she, at all opportunities, ascended to her little “Mount Zion,” as her attic closet was termed, and there, sometimes for hours, she prostrated herself before God. Another significant scripture passage of God’s all-sufficiency was there, in answer to special prayer, presented to her mind :—“ And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds ; and they shall be fruitful and increase.” Jer. xxiii. 3. This passage (though literally applicable to the Jews, yet, according to the well known logical canon, that whatever is predicable of a genus or class, may be predicated of everything, or event, included in that class) she applied to herself in the case of her son, fully believing that as the Lord had driven the remnant of his flock into various countries, as the result of their apostacy from him, so he had driven her son away for the same reason ; and that, according to the promise, he would not only bring him home again, but would restore him to his fold and people. This promise



she, under her trying circumstances, and the discouragements she met with even from her most affectionate Christian associates, tenaciously grasped as her own, till after seven weeks' trial of her faith it was fulfilled. A simple circumstance may be here noticed which may be variously interpreted, and even ridiculed by some people, but which, perhaps, as she interpreted it, attests a doctrine now almost exploded by many,—the power and evil influence of Satan. She says :—“ On the Friday night, or early on the Saturday morning, only two days before he returned, I was wakened out of my sleep by a low, hollow voice repeating as distinctly as I ever heard anything, ‘ *O the Humber, the Humber, the Humber!* ’ I immediately arose—felt a strange fear to pervade my breast—and got a little confused, but could see nothing. As I related this circumstance to my family the next morning at breakfast, my husband said, ‘ The Humber! Well, dear me, he would have to cross the Humber on his passage home [from Lincolnshire]; and don't you remember what a gale of wind it was yesterday? I doubt he is drowned on his passage, and we will never see him more.’

“ At this my heart trembled, and much my faith might have staggered, too, had not my dear little son Thomas recalled me to my proper position. Looking me earnestly in the face, he said, ‘ Mother, did not the Lord tell you that James would come back? Now if he be drowned in the Humber, how can God's promise be fulfilled?’

“ I said, ‘ Praise the Lord! my child. He has made you the instrument of good to my soul. I see clearly that this is a work of the enemy, to shake my faith; but it shall not be; my faith I will still hold

firmly. My dear son will return.' And on the day following, he did, to the joy of my heart."

Returning from this seeming digression, we proceed to notice the call of Mrs. Porteus to preach the Gospel.

Those who devoutly peruse the preceding extracts from her diary will receive an impression—at least many will—that she was eminently qualified for the work of preaching the Gospel; and that during the years covered by these extracts, the Lord was preparing her for it. If anything more be needed to produce this conviction, the following extract will be sufficient.

March 5th, 1820.—Being so unwell as to be unable to attend the chapel, the Spirit of God preached such a sermon to my conscience, this evening, when engaged in secret prayer, as completely prostrated me for two hours in the Divine presence. The text was Matt. xvi. 24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." It was first revealed to me that to come after Jesus is to believe his doctrine, to do his will, to realise his promises, to enjoy the privileges he reveals, and to inherit his glory. The other parts of the text were also divided and subdivided, but the duty of self-denial was more particularly enforced and applied, as required in company, conversation, dress, food, sleep, and desire. These particulars were so explained to my mind, together with the duty of following Christ, that I was again and again obliged to pause, and seriously enquire of my God whether ever I had enjoyed true religion or not.

We enlarge not here, but leave the reader to draw his own inferences.

A call to preach the Gospel is a sacred thing. Many pious persons may be endowed with pre-eminent

lents, and yet not called to preach the Gospel publicly. God chooses his own agents for this work, and these are influenced by the Holy Spirit to engage in it, not that they may exhibit their talents, but to save souls. Mrs. Porteus was thus influenced, but not till after she had heard the Primitive Methodists. Previously indeed, she seems to have been prejudiced, as many good people are, against female preachers. On this subject, she thus writes :

“ After hearing the Primitive Methodist missionary, the Lord, with a peculiar force, laid souls near my heart. O how I saw and felt their value. Their weight pressed down my spirit. Many a time, when in the street, if I saw a sinner do evil, or heard him speak sinfully, my heart recoiled, and I got home as fast as I could, to engage in prayer for him. Often, in secret, I was led to wrestle for hours, as in an agony, for the salvation of souls, till I thought my body would become a sacrifice to my feelings. I oft wondered what the Lord was going to do with me. I thought this holy tenderness of soul was a sure prelude of something extraordinary—I knew not what. Often, in the simplicity of my heart, I thought, surely the Lord is about to take me home, as I thought it impossible for me to exist long under such feelings. This anguish, I found, was the result of a tender regard for the honour of my Lord, and was produced also by such views as I had never experienced of the dreadful state of sinners and of the torments of the damned.

“ One day, in this state of agony, I was laid wrestling on my face on the ground, crying, ‘ Lord, I cannot bear it. Men and women, in this Gospel-land, are dying every day and going to hell. Yonder they

sink beneath the flames, to feel the weight of thy just indignation to all eternity. O wilt thou not either stretch out thine hand of power to save them, or take me home to thee?" Instantly it was as powerfully impressed on my mind as if the words had been pronounced audibly, 'Why liest thou there as if prayer were in itself sufficient to snatch souls from woe. Go forth, and preach the Gospel.'

"Much startled and excited, I exclaimed, 'Lord, I cannot; thou knowest I have no talents for preaching.' Then it was impressed on my mind, 'Who made man's mouth? Have not I; the Lord?' Ex. iv. 11. But I tremblingly replied, 'I am a woman; and I never could see it right for a woman to preach.' Again, with power, it was answered, 'Woman was the first that brought sin into the world—woman ought not to be the last to proclaim the remedy.'

"Thus silenced and confounded, I promised the Lord, at that time, that if this was an inward call to preach his Gospel, I would keep it as a profound secret, and without mentioning what had transpired to any one, would wait for an outward call, and would enter into the first door that he, in his providence, might open for me. This resolution I tenaciously adhered to; my lips were sealed on this subject till the door was opened."

## CHAPTER XI.

### CALL TO PREACH, ETC., CONTINUED.

**T**HE introduction of Primitive Methodism into the populous towns of Newcastle-on-Tyne, Sunderland, North and South Shield, constitutes an interesting section of the Connexional History by the Rev. J. Petty. As most of our readers are supposed to have acquainted themselves with the facts as narrated in that history, it is unnecessary to repeat them here. Mr. J. Branfoot, from the Hutton Rudby Circuit, and afterwards a staff of eminent men—including Messrs. W. Clowes, with T. and J. Nelson—visited these towns from the powerful Hull Circuit, who, in the vigour of their years, and full of the Holy Ghost, entered upon their work, and with amazing success advanced in it. Mrs. Porteus heard Mr. Branfoot when he made his first attempt to preach in the vicinity of Sandgate, in Newcastle, 1821. She thus describes this service :

“ Being informed that a Primitive Methodist missionary was going to preach on a certain evening in Sandgate, I went to hear him. I was anxious to do so, as for some time I had heard numerous and somewhat contradictory reports concerning ‘the Ranters,’ as the Primitive Methodists were then vulgarly termed. I found him standing on a stool, surrounded by a rabble mob: some were swearing, and others encour-



aging dogs to fight. I thought, Surely if there was a necessity for John Wesley, in his day, to preach the Gospel in this vicinity, there is an equal necessity for a preacher of this description to preach it here now. The dear man, unable by the confusion to preach a regular sermon, yet endeavoured to impress the people with the value of their souls, and warned them faithfully of their danger. As he proceeded, I thought, Surely he must think that the people in these northern parts are little better than heathens; and doubtless he feels as Paul did at Athens—his spirit moved within him to see the people wholly given up to their idolatry. In the midst of much confusion the service terminated, after he had announced that he would preach on the following evening in Gateshead—a crowd of men and boys following him along the street. Musing on the preacher's evident love of souls, and deeply affected by the state of the people, I returned home; and was much surprised, shortly afterwards, by Bro. Lightfoot bringing the preacher to our house. I was glad; thought it too great an honour for me to have such a man beneath my roof; and enjoyed a precious time with him in prayer. Bro. Lightfoot took him with him to lodge; and the next day, I collected as many as I could to hear him in Gateshead. Here the congregation was large and orderly. He stood beneath some trees, in the very spot where John Wesley once stood; and preached with much power, as many felt, from, 'I am the resurrection and the life,' &c."

Some considerable time after this, when, as has been said, Mr. Clowes and the Nelsons visited the North, and the mission was fully opened, Mrs. Porteus took the opportunity of visiting her friends in North Shields, in order to hear those notable evangelists.

Mr. J. Nelson preached that evening with great power and then conducted the crowd to a chapel in the neighbourhood, for a prayer-meeting. "At the commencement of this meeting," she writes, "I felt a degree of consternation. The light tunes they sang rather disgusted me, and the disorderly conduct and indifferent aspect of several persons deeply affected me. But as they got on to pray, and sinners began to cry for mercy, I was otherwise affected. The power of God filled my soul; I felt inexpressibly for the souls of the people, and with much difficulty suppressed a strong desire I felt to mount a form and address the people; but being an Old Methodist, a female, and a stranger, as I thought, to most of the people, who might think me impudent if I did so, I refrained. I however prayed with them, and endeavoured to make myself useful among the penitents; and many were brought into glorious liberty. At the close of this meeting, I felt, as I expressed myself to my kind hostess, Mrs. Robinson, that I could sit up all night, had not prudence dictated otherwise, to wrestle with God for immortal souls.

"On the following day, when I returned home, a host of reflections arose in my mind on what I had witnessed. I thought, What can this mean? Never in my life did I feel such a desire to speak in public as I did among this people yesterday. Surely the Lord is not going to send me among them. This rather startled me. I certainly felt no prejudice against them; yet my heart was so much united to the Wesleyans, that I thought it impossible for me to leave them. I however durst not dictate to my God in this matter. Casting myself at his feet, I exclaimed, 'Father, it is thy work to choose, and mine to obey.' In all this I kept as a profound secret the promise I had previously

made, to enter the first door freely opened for me, without my concurrence, to preach the Gospel.

“ Lest I should be precipitate in opening a door for myself, for some time after the Primitive Methodists had established their cause in Newcastle, I never went to hear them, but abode closely with the Wesleyans ; and this I might have continued to do, had not the distressing circumstance transpired regarding my son James.\*

“ On the first Sabbath morning after he left home, I attended, as usual, the Methodist chapel ; but O, when I saw another one occupying his place, and playing the bass violin, the feelings of a mother so completely overpowered me that I could not endure the sight. I therefore, in the afternoon, went to hear the Primitives, at an open-air service, in a field near to Gateshead. Mr. Jeremiah Gilbert, that eminent man of God, preached to a large congregation. The sight was new and exciting. Although, from the rain that had fallen during the preceding week, the ground was wet and dirty, yet many dropped on their knees, and cried aloud for mercy, and continued kneeling till they were blessed with peace and salvation. I looked and thought, This is the way the Lord wrought in the early days of Methodism, under the ministry of Wesley and others. My mind was so completely raised by this sight above my trouble, that I got home I hardly knew how, and did not regret leaving my own chapel again in the evening, to finish my day with this people.

“ This raised, as I expected, a sort of hue and cry among my friends. The enquiry was, ‘ Where were you yesterday afternoon and evening ? In reply, I

\* As already recorded.

told them my simple tale about the bass violin, when they promised to discontinue the use of the instrument till James should return ; which they did, and thus removed this trouble."

Mrs. Porteus thus continued in union with the Wesleyans ; and in all probability, never would have left them, had the way been opened for her to preach among them without any concurrence of her own : for we know to a certainty that it was like the severance of a limb from her body for her to leave them, and till the day of her death she retained a strong affection for them. But God's ways are not as our ways. He opened a door for her to preach among the Primitives in a sphere of labour for which she was eminently qualified. This being the external call to preach for which, during the two preceding years, she had been waiting, she shall again speak for herself. She says :

" Bro. Lightfoot having been for some time a lodger with us, and having at length consented to become a Primitive Methodist travelling preacher, the preachers were frequently attracted to the house. Among the rest Jeremiah Gilbert came, one Saturday evening, to visit Bro. Lightfoot, and remained for the night with him. After I had taken their supper up stairs, and was preparing to retire again, Mr. Gilbert said, ' Mary, will you not sit down by us a little? What makes you so shy?' Thinking that if I did not, they might think that as I was a Wesleyan, I was prejudiced against them, I complied. He then began to tell Bro. Lightfoot that Mrs. Suddards had been preaching at Shields, and what crowds of hearers she attracted. He then, turning to me, said, ' Mary, what would you have thought, had this been you?' I answered, ' Me, sir! If it had been me, I must have had hold



of God with a strong hand of faith, or otherwise I would have sunk in the pulpit.' He replied, 'Indeed; but if you had hold of God, as you say, we should have had an excellent sermon.'

"I then left them, and the next morning, they went, both of them, into the country to preach. In the evening, when Bro. Lightfoot returned, he, among other things, said, 'What, think you, is it that Mr. Gilbert says? He says you must go to Wreckenton, on this day fortnight, to preach.' Completely electrified by this, so as to be unable to answer him, I retired. It then darted through my mind, Now this is the door Providence has opened for you. Remember your promise, and deny it if you dare. Alas, I durst not. I knew I had promised, but how to perform my promise I could not tell. The consequence of my preaching, too—as it might separate me from the Wesleyans, to whom I had been so long and so firmly attached—affected me exceedingly; and hence I wept and prayed a good part of the night. Nor was my trouble diminished on the following day. I durst not ask counsel of the Lord on this matter, seeing that my duty was so clearly revealed. I durst not seek advice from my Christian friends, as they, being Wesleyans, would not be willing for me to leave them. Neither durst I tell my own family, lest unprofitable reasonings should be the result. I therefore said nothing, and thus silently began to arrange for the fulfilment of my promise, and for what I saw must be its inevitable consequences. My class I delivered up to the leaders' meeting, and then consented to preach at Wrekenton, at the time appointed."

It is unnecessary to crowd these pages with a record of her experience till the appointment was fulfilled.



Suffice it to say, that though for some time her mental conflict was excessively severe, God afterwards made her soul unspeakably happy; and at the time appointed, a crowd of people assembled to hear her. The text she announced was Zech. xii. 10, "They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." In her introduction her mind for some moments was so confused that it seemed doubtful whether she would be able to proceed. This subsiding, the highest expectations of the people were realized. Her sermon was neatly and beautifully arranged, and the various classes who now pierce the Saviour were accurately described.

The writer, who was present, remembers all this distinctly, and also that a mighty effect was produced. After tea, the people would not be restrained from pressing her to preach again, at an adjacent village, in the evening. This was another trial of her faith, as she had no preparation for another service. Prayer, however, prevailed. She got light on Eph. iii. 8, and preached another neat, methodical sermon. Several were in distress afterwards, and others were rejoicing in God.

She was thus launched into the Primitive Methodist local ministry, with what results we shall soon see. God poured down his Spirit gloriously in those days. Her connection with the people of her adoption was most happy. Soon she got two classes to lead; and this was the language of her experience—

"My soul and body's powers *Thine*, wholly *thine*, shall be.

All, all my happy hours I consecrate to thee.

Thine may I live—thrice happy I; Happier still if thine I die.'

## CHAPTER XII.

### LABOURS AS A LOCAL PREACHER, DOMESTIC TROUBLES, ETC.

**T**HE spirit in which Mrs. Porteus commenced her work as a Local Preacher will be best expressed in the following letter, which was the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* for October, 1824.

“Gateshead, May 18th, 1824.

“DEAR BROTHER AND SISTER H.,

“Please inform Bro. Gilbert that, God willing, I shall be at Morpeth on Saturday evening; but shall only be able to speak morning and afternoon, as my family concerns require me to be at home on Sunday evening. I rejoice in the prospect of seeing you again in the flesh. I trust I shall find you happy in the Lord, and on full stretch for glory.

“Glory be to God! he has restored my family to health again. Help me to praise him. I am still going on bearing the burden of the Lord. I never saw the value of souls so clearly, nor felt so much sorrow and love for them as I do at present. The Lord save them! O pray—do pray—earnestly pray, that the Lord may back his word with mighty power, alarm poor sinners, and convert them to himself. My life will not be comfortable without this—it will only be labour and sorrow.

“My love to all the friends at Morpeth. Beg of them to join you in fervent prayer that the Lord may make my coming successful in winning souls. I know

and feel I have neither wisdom nor power to do this ; but my Lord is infinite in wisdom and almighty in power. I will strive to believe : do you likewise.

“ Farewell in the Lord.

“ From your unworthy sister in Christ,

“ MARY PORTEUS.”

“ On January 4th”—Mrs. Porteus writes—“ I took my first appointments on a Primitive Methodist preachers’ plan. It was a heavy cross for me thus to present myself before the public ; but I saw my way clearly : I must take up the cross, or otherwise forfeit my peace of mind, and perhaps my eternal salvation.

“ Scarcely, however, had I commenced my work, before my domestic troubles were intensely revived. Three of my children took a fever, and for many weeks were dangerously ill. I was obliged, in consequence, to break up my school for a while. This was a severe calamity to me, as, for several years, I had sustained myself and four children by this school and some little needlework I did occasionally, excepting the small wages of my eldest son. My house rent, too, amounting to 25s., became due at this time, with no provision for it.”

“ Under these distressing circumstances, I found a friend, as usual, in Jesus. To him alone I unbosomed all my grief. One day, while kneeling before him, these words were applied with power to my mind—‘ Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God,’ Phil. iv. 6. I clearly saw that this was the line of conduct I must, at this time of trial, specially adhere to ; which I did, and not in vain. My children, in a few weeks, recovered their

health; and friends at Chester-le-Street, Morpeth, and elsewhere, where I was sent for to preach, contributed to my temporal necessities, without me mentioning a single syllable respecting them."

"One day, as I was attending to my domestic duties, a smart rap came to the door. I opened it and found there a well dressed gentleman, who, seeing me, instantly said, 'Do you live here?' I said, 'Yes, sir; but I have not the pleasure of knowing you.' In reply, he said, 'I heard you preach in the Sallyport chapel the other Sabbath; I then enquired your name, and now passing your door and seeing your name on your little board—Mary Porteus' school—I thought I would look in and see if you were the same person I heard preach.' He then, without any other enquiry, put some silver into my hand, and went away without affording me an opportunity to thank him; and to this day I know not who he was. The silver, with what I had received previously, I found to be sufficient to clear my rent and to support my family during their affliction, without running a penny into debt. The Lord thus again proved to me the truth of his promise; for ever adored be his Name! May I ever live in his fear, and devote all my ransomed powers to his service!

"But this did not overcome my inward conflict regarding preaching. I saw the importance of the work so clearly, and was so fully conscious of my weak abilities for it, that I was often nearly overwhelmed by it; yet, wherever I went, the people bore with me. For thus, while many times I was so much teased with fear that my heart ached and my body shook so that I could hardly walk, my extremity was God's opportunity: he made his strength perfect in my

weakness. To his Name be all the praise!

“The first time I stood up at Kenton, a small village near to Newcastle, the place was densely crowded. After singing and prayer, I could not find my text. It then struck my mind that it had not been the right text; I therefore lifted up my heart to God, sought and found another; and O the liberty I had! The word reached many hearts, and five joined the society. This much encouraged me, and I went forward in the name of the Lord.

“The following, as related to me, will show how I was, even up to this time, prejudiced against the light tunes then in common use among our people.

“The first time I was planned at Lemington, near to Newcastle—a place where I had never been, and in a part of the country noted at that time for wickedness—I set off; but not knowing the road, when I got within two miles of the place, I got bewildered about the way; and having so bad an opinion regarding the people, I hardly durst make the requisite enquiries, lest they should mis-direct me. In this state, while I was looking around me, a man came running up to me, saying, ‘Are you the woman that is going to preach at Lemington?’ I said, ‘Yes: I am going to try.’ He then called upon some others, and we went on together. I enquired, ‘How did you know that I was the preacher?’ They answered, ‘We were meeting our class, saw you go past, and thought you were the person we expected.’ I said, ‘It is well I met with you, for I did not know the way and had heard there were so many wicked people about here that I durst not enquire.’ They said, ‘It is all true: for we were some of the worst; but, glory be



to God! he has changed our hearts.' I said, 'Then, tell me, as we go along, how the Lord wrought this change in you.' They did so: declaring that they were the vilest wretches in God's creation; that they used to work like horses all the week; and then went to the public-house and drank all the Saturday night and Sunday. 'Our families,' they said, 'were halt starved and half naked, and we ourselves had no clothes but the black clothes we worked in. Nor was drinking all. We cursed and swore like fiends; fought, frequently, till we closed up each other's eyes, and made the blood run down our faces; and then we would return to the house and drink ourselves friends again.

"One Sunday, as we were drinking as usual, a Ranter preacher came, and began to sing not far from the public-house. We did not see him at first, but heard the singing. One of us cried out in our usual way of speaking, "O lad, hear! there's somebody singing songs." Another said, "O thou feul, dis thou think onybody durst sing sangs on a Sunday?"—for although we durst drink and swear on that day, yet we thought that no one durst sing songs. Much excited, we all ran out to see. There was the preacher: we listened; we thought it a song tune sure enough, but O, what bonny words. He began to preach: the word went with power to our hearts; instead of returning to the public-house, we went home deeply convinced of sin, and never rested till the Lord set our souls at liberty; and now, praise God! we are all members of the society. Our wives and families reap the advantage of our wages. We have also good clothes for ourselves, and can attend a place of worship as we ought to do.'

“ I feel thankful to this day for the good this news did me. I thought, Never more will I be prejudiced against the light singing if such results as these have been produced by it. We got to the place ; had, as I expected, a blessed meeting ; and I returned home rejoicing.

“ Still my inward conflict regarding preaching continued. If I did not see visible fruit, I was tempted to think I had lost my call. One Sabbath morning, my soul was much oppressed with this. I mourned before the Lord ; and determined that if God did not that day convert souls, I would give up preaching. With this thought, I spoke at Gateshead in the afternoon. I enjoyed liberty, but saw no fruit ; although I was told afterwards that two women, by what I said, had been delivered from powerful temptations under which they had laboured for several months. Not knowing this, however, at the time, I left the place with a sorrowful spirit, still with my resolution strong within me ; and in the evening went to preach at the Ballast Hills, accompanied by three young women who were Methodists. The place, we found, was excessively crowded. After preaching with much liberty again, a woman, while we were singing, cried aloud for mercy, and would have fallen down had not the crowd sustained her. This woman was soon set at liberty. Shouts of glory then filled the place, and some ran away through fear. After this, I found a fine young woman in a corner dashing her head and beautiful straw bonnet against the wall in a perfect agony, and exclaiming, ‘ God be merciful to me,’ and ‘ What shall I do ?’ This person was also brought into liberty in answer to prayer ; and while we were rejoicing over her with exceeding joy, down went a

man at full length on the floor. I felt alarmed; he being completely motionless, as if dead. I got on my knees beside him, thinking if the man is dead we would be charged with his death. But the words of the apostle quickly passed my mind—‘You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.’ Encouraged by these words, we prayed till he began to move his lips, and then we heard him mutter, ‘Wretch, wretch that I am! what a wonder I am not in hell!’ Raising himself, he, with uplifted hands, exclaimed, ‘You need not pray for me; I cannot believe God will answer prayer for me. I have been a backslider for ten years, and have sinned against such clear light that God will never pardon me.’ We prayed on till I was obliged to leave; but our friends continued the meeting till near midnight, when he ran home, exclaiming, ‘Lost, lost, lost for ever,’ to the dismay of the people in the streets, and to the still greater dismay of his poor wife. Entering his home, he dropped down on his knees, and continued in vehement prayer till four o’clock on the Monday morning. Praise the Lord! In a few days, that man’s soul was set at perfect liberty, and he could rejoice in the God of his salvation.”

Little do congregations think—on special occasions particularly—when ministers present themselves before them, and, in the estimation of many, appear as angels of God, little do they think, indeed, what mental conflicts those ministers may be enduring at the time. Although, in the service at the Ballast Hills, Mrs. Porteus was delivered from the temptation regarding her call to the ministerial work, yet she was frequently assailed by other temptations tending to mar the efficiency of that work.

We shall record here two suggestive instances from the narrative of her experience.

“On one occasion, I was sent for to South Shields, and with fear and trembling responded to the call. The friends perceiving my condition strove to comfort me; and I resolved, despite my fears, to trust in God for the help I needed. In this spirit, I ascended the pulpit; but as soon as I opened my eyes on the congregation, my fears returned with an awful intensity. Instantly it darted through my mind—‘you will fall over the pulpit;’ and indeed I felt at that moment as though I would, which caused me to clutch the sides of the pulpit with both hands. As the people were singing the first hymn, I was reasoning, What must I do? I can hardly give out the hymn. How shall I be able to preach? I had better at once confess to the people that I cannot. But, I thought, I will pray first. When done, I ventured to announce the second hymn. Scarcely had I done so, when the awful fear returned with double force, You will, you will fall over the pulpit. This set me reasoning again. What, I thought, I have stood in as high pulpits as this, and have never fallen; what can be the matter to-day? Lord help me! What shall I do? Instantly I resolved to preach, whatever might be the consequence, and in doing so the temptation vanished; I had great liberty in preaching, and the people felt the power of God. This deliverance encouraged me much in my work. I returned home rejoicing in the Lord, and thought, Surely Satan will not be permitted to hinder me again.

“But how foolish are all such expectations. Soon afterwards, he tried me again, but in another way. The scene, this time, was Sallyport Chapel, Newcastle, with an overflowing congregation. Before I announced



my text—‘The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God,’ an overpowering fear again filled my soul, and shook my frame. The thought darted through my mind, Dare you take that text? You can make nothing of it. See what learned people are here, and what a number of preachers: you had better let it alone, and take another text. What do you know about the torments of hell? how can you explain them? I cried, ‘Lord help me! There is no time to delay.’ Instantly he answered. It was a time not to be forgotten. The word reached many hearts; and I returned home in an exulting frame of mind. This was, however, not the last of this temptation. About three o’clock next morning, I was awoke with a violent pain in my chest, altogether different from what I had usually felt. It seemed as if a hand grasped my heart, that produced an inexpressible agony of both body and mind. It seemed as though I was not only dying, but sinking into hell myself. For three hours this continued. At length, it darted through my mind, ‘This is the hour and power of darkness;’ and again, ‘This is a taste of the cup thy Saviour had to drink.’ I cried, ‘Lord, if a taste has produced such unutterable anguish in both body and soul, what must have been thy sufferings when thou hadst to drink the cup to its last dregs?’ I then could only exclaim, ‘Jesu’s blood! Jesu’s blood!’ which I continued to do till about six o’clock, when the pain and horror were removed, and I was again well. The mode in which I was delivered from this severe conflict did me much good. It stirred me up to watchfulness; strengthened my faith in Jesu’s blood; rekindled my zeal for precious souls; and enabled me more fully to leave all events in the hands of my heavenly Father.”



## CHAPTER XIII.

### CALL TO THE ITINERANT MINISTRY: PROVIDENTIAL INDICATIONS THEREOF.

**A**FTER Mrs. Porteus had been for twelve months engaged extensively as a local preacher, frequently on special occasions, in both Northumberland and Durham, she became deeply impressed with a conviction that God designed her for the itinerant ministry. This impression produced in her the most acute anguish of spirit: she trembled when the thought forced itself on her mind. In her own apprehension she had neither mental nor physical ability for the work; and in her usual way she besought the Lord not to lay this burden upon her. This was in January, 1825. After enduring this agony for two months, she found some relief from a piece of poetry in Mr. Fletcher's "Address to Perfect and Imperfect Christians," of which, the concluding words of each verse were, "Father, thy only will be done." She was thus enabled to leave it with him, saying, "Father, let not man have his will in this matter, or me have mine, or Satan have his, but thy will be done in me and by me in this and in all things." This conviction, like the one she received when first called to preach, she buried deeply in her own heart; and never either mentioned it, or in the most indirect manner hinted at it to any one, but set herself to watch the indica-

tions of Providence. At the above period, there seemed no probability of this being realised. The thing seemed not only unlikely, but impossible ; as the whole of her family were still with her. But what was all this to the Lord, or what did it signify what might be the opinions of the world, or even of many in the church, if, under her peculiar circumstances, the Lord of the universe and “ Head of all things to his church,” who in all ages has chosen his own agents for his work, designed her for it? He could easily make a way for her : and he did.

Soon after she received this conviction, her eldest son married, and went to reside in the country. A kind mistress was provided for the eldest girl. Two only then remained : one of these was a boy ready to be apprenticed. The disposal of him was, in her judgment, to test the divinity of her call to the regular ministry. If a master presented himself who would victual him during the whole term of his apprenticeship, then another incumbrance would be removed ; but if such a master could not be found, and she had to victual him at home, then, of course, she could not leave him. All this was laid before the Lord in prayer. And, “ O wonderful !” she says, “ in the month of May, a master came to my house, and took him home with him : a master in every way agreeable to me—a pious man with a pious wife, both Methodists—in whose house he found a comfortable home. This circumstance, while it removed from me another burden, brought the burden of my call more heavily upon me, by rendering it more and more clear. Still another encumbrance remained. My daughter Isabella, then only eight years of age, must be provided for, or I could not leave her. Here I rested and

waited, still keeping the matter hidden in my heart, and fulfilling all my appointments and engagements as a local preacher. Christmas at length came. My son's wife was about to be confined. He came for me; and as my school had holiday, I returned with him to nurse her for a few days, taking Isabella with me. I remained there a fortnight; and as my youngest boy's master lived in the same place, we got him bound on the 8th of January, 1826. When about to return home, they begged me to leave Isabella to nurse the baby, which I did.

"Being thus left alone, I thought, 'Now all hindrances are removed so far as your children are concerned, prepare for the work to which you have been called. The Lord is about to send you away now.' And so it came to pass. I had not been at home many hours before this was verified."

Before we proceed, we must notice the state at that time of Whitby and Guisborough Circuit, in which Mrs. Porteus commenced her itinerant work.

For some time, this circuit had been sinking into such a state of insolvency as rendered it necessary for its superintendent, Mr. R. Howcroft, to procure, by extraordinary means, funds for its relief. He was, for this purpose, during the Christmas referred to and for some time afterwards, at Newcastle, Sunderland, and elsewhere. During his absence, the circuit suffered severely. The disappointment of a preacher expected at that time, who had resigned the ministry, embarrassed it to an unendurable extent. Under these circumstances, Mr. Howcroft received a letter from the circuit, ordering him instantly to return home, or to procure another preacher. Receiving this letter, he at once repaired to Mrs. Porteus;

arrived at her house only a few hours after her return from the country; and in a tone and air of high authority (as she writes), he said he had come from Whitby Circuit for her to travel there, and that she must go. The concurrence of this with her own convictions, and the unmistakable providences here recorded, at once startled and silenced her. Without a single word in reply, she sought her husband—determined after all not to move without his consent—and stated the case to him, when he not only consented for her to go, but strongly urged her to do so. She, therefore, promised to start for Whitby as soon as she could make the requisite arrangements.

But in making these arrangements, Providence must still declare for her, or she cannot go comfortably or safely. Her wardrobe was not sufficiently furnished for the journey, or for the work on which she was about to enter; especially considering the inclement season of the year, and the rough roads of a moorland district. There were various articles of clothing she needed, or thought she needed, which she could not procure for herself without contracting debt, and this she would not do. If, therefore, she had really been called to this work by a divine call, he who had called her would provide these things for her, if they were really needed; and if not, she would do without them. These articles she enumerated in her mind as she took a piece of needlework to the house of a kind friend who had engaged her to work it; but determined in doing so, not to mention them to any one, or in the most indirect manner to hint at them. Mark, then, what follows. This kind friend, in receiving the needlework, immediately anticipated the tale Mrs. Porteus had designed for her, by mentioning

her own impressions ; which, she said, for a fortnight had so much troubled her as to frequently make her weep—that God was about to take her away from them. And then, after listening to that tale in which the providential indications in it were emphasized, immediately collected from her own wardrobe a bundle of clothing, including the most part of the things Mrs. Porteus had enumerated mentally, and presented it to her. And not only did this, but offered to pay her fare to Sunderland, and to accompany her so far on her journey. This was very cheering to her, and still more corroborative of her call. As, then, God had in this way provided for her so much of what she needed, he would provide the remainder ; which he did. On the afternoon of that same day, she visited another kind family, and told them her tale, when another of the essential articles was presented to her ; and on the Friday following, another friend presented her with a pair of strong boots to travel in. This completed the list.

Nothing now remained but for her to make her way clear with the officials of the Newcastle Circuit, which, after a fruitless discussion to engage her at home, was amicably effected. They gave her credentials, and bade her good speed in the name of the Lord.

After the fatigues of the week, Mrs. Porteus was exceedingly ill on the Sabbath—so hoarse indeed that she could hardly speak, and was obliged to keep her bed—and the expectations of the congregation at Butcher's Hall, Newcastle, of a farewell sermon from her which had been announced, were disappointed. And yet she had to leave home on the following day to engage in a work requiring the physical energies of a strong



man, and beneath which many a strong man has failed. Still, however, she trusted in God. She was about to engage in this work not because she desired it, but from a conviction of duty that God had called her to it; and therefore she told her friends, who endeavoured to dissuade her from it, that she believed the Lord would bless her with the requisite strength. This she had often proved in her experience. Before she commenced preaching, she was frequently so feeble as to require rest even when performing a short journey; but afterwards, in this work, she sometimes travelled twelve miles on a day, and preached twice.

Her expectations in all this were fully realised; as they will be assuredly by all who, found in the way of Providence, simply surrender up their wills to God, and fully trust in him.

On the Monday morning, she arose from what had been a bed of sickness, with her resolution strong within her, and prepared for her journey. She wrote to her children, commending them to God, and promising to visit them at the earliest opportunity; and then, after receiving an encouraging letter from Guisborough—which was itself in answer to prayer, as it removed some scruples from her mind—she, with her friend Mrs. M., who had promised to accompany her, took coach in the afternoon to Sunderland.

At Sunderland they were hospitably entertained by one of her early associates and admirers, who had been much benefitted by her ministry, and who, with Mrs. M., after a night of conference and prayer, at five o'clock on the following morning, consigned her to the care of the Stockton carrier.

Left now to her own musings during her long and cheerless ride on that cold winter's day, did she repent

of the past, or did she dread the future? Neither. But in the spirit of Abraham of old, when commanded by Jehovah to leave his country and kindred for the land of Canaan, she, with him, obeyed. Heb. xi. 8. At Stockton, after being obliged to rest for a night in a public-house, she was kindly entertained by the Primitive Methodists, to whom she was constrained to preach; and on the Friday evening, she arrived safely at Guisborough, where she was heartily welcomed by the minister and his family—Mr. and Mrs. Morris—and by many expectant friends.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### LABOURS IN THE WHITBY CIRCUIT. 1826-8.

**ON** the 21st of January, 1826, Mrs. Porteus commenced her work in the Whitby and Guisborough Union Circuit, by preaching morning and afternoon at that now celebrated watering-place, Redcar; and in the evening at Guisborough.

This circuit was at that time exceedingly extensive, including as boundary places Robin Hood's Bay, Whitby, Redcar, Guisborough, and Stokesley, and extending near to Pickering, through the moors and dales, bounded on the west and north-east by the Hamilton Hills: a very unlikely circuit for a feeble woman to labour in, especially considering its mountains and rugged roads. God, however, who had called her to labour in this circuit, and who, it is said, "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," or who, as the prophet says, "stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind," and has moreover said, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be,"—strengthened her for her work, and thus demonstrated that her faith in him had not been misplaced.

We record here her experience at this interesting period. She says:

"On Saturday, January 20th, I commenced my itinerating labours with a seven-miles' journey to Redcar,—Mr. Morris accompanying me for a short

distance. I felt my body so feeble I had frequently to sit down and rest. My mind, too, was feeble. Various distressing thoughts troubled me. I thought of the difference between preaching where I was known, and where my ignorance could be in the spirit of charity endured, and preaching among strangers. I thought, too, of my incapacity for meeting the expectations of the people as a travelling preacher; and feeling so weak in body, was tempted to think I should never get through the work of the following day. Yet I could look to the Lord. I could appeal to him that I had not entered on this work of my own accord, and could trust in him for both wisdom and strength. As I neared Redcar, I was met by a person who conducted me to my lodgings. I thought this, too, though only a simple circumstance, an instance of Divine goodness, as I had forgotten the name of the person for whom I had to enquire; and I was disposed, at that time, to see God in every thing, walking by faith and not by sight. At my lodgings, I was received most affectionately; and but for the temptations I had to endure, I might have spent a happy night with them. Thus tempted and weary, I retired only to pour out my soul to my heavenly Father. In the morning, I remained on my knees, with my constant companion, my Bible, before me, till called down to breakfast; and then speedily retired again, till called to the chapel. When presented before the people, observing the difference of their dialect from mine, I was tempted to think they would not understand me. This perplexed me for some time; but by looking to my Master for help, I was enabled to overcome all this. I had liberty in prayer, and announced my text, Josh. i. 9, 'Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.' I then told the people my fears, and requested their prayers, which they granted, and God answered. We had a glorious time. I enquired if they understood me; and they said, 'Every word.' This repelled that temptation. In the afternoon, too,

we had a gracious time. Many were affected and blessed.

“I now set off for Guisborough, with my soul so happy I did not feel my aches, pains, or weaknesses. They all seemed gone. A friend met me with an ass. As I rode along, I thought with humility and love of my Master, and the honour thus conferred upon me. At Guisborough I was again much assisted, as, desiring to hide myself behind my Master, I enquired, ‘What think ye of Christ?’ We had again a refreshing service; at the prayer meeting afterwards, two souls were in distress, and one was brought into glorious liberty.

“I have thus minutely expressed my feelings on this the first Sabbath of my itinerating sphere of labour; and to the glory of my God be it recorded, I felt much stronger at night than I did in the morning. Upborn, thus, by the strength of my God, who had condescended to employ me in this work, and by the kindness of the people in every place, I was enabled to traverse this rugged circuit. Two hundred and sixty miles I travelled on foot—frequently through deep snow and over high mountains—in eight weeks, and spoke sixty times each round. I thus concluded my first six months’ labour; and, wonderful to say, felt considerably stronger than I was at its commencement.”

The compiler of these sheets, who travelled with Mrs. Porteus at this period—and who, he must be permitted to say, had not previously any idea of meeting with her in the circuit—remembers well the *eclat* with which she was received, the frequent crowds that attended her ministry, and the financial and spiritual improvement that resulted from her ministrations. During the first week after she arrived, he was permitted to hear her, at a small place, from Psa. xxxiii. 1, “Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright;” and remembers distinctly, and with profit, the happy use she made of Isaiah



lxi. 3, where the prophet is speaking of the Saviour being appointed to give to those "that mourn in Zion the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." "Attempt," she said, "to cover an ungodly man with this garment, and you will find it has not been prepared for him—he will look contemptible in it. But clothe the righteous or upright man with it, and he will look comely indeed." By such happy illustrations as this, which abounded in her discourses, her ministry was distinguished for its originality and freshness, and her reputation was fixed on a permanent basis.

The following letter, dated April of this year, will show clearly what was the state of her soul at this period, and how she was received in the circuit :

"DEAR BROTHER—

"I am thankful in being able to inform you that I am well in body, and my soul is panting for more of God. But O! how is it I enjoy so little of Him whom my soul desires so much? \* \* \*

"Here my feelings quite overcame me; and, unable to hold my pen any longer, I retired into Sister D.'s parlour. There, kneeling with the Bible before me, I endeavoured to give vent to my heart, and to pour my sorrowful complaint into the bosom of my Father. After thus weeping at his feet, I opened the Bible on Isa. lx. 15; and oh! what did I feel, especially while reading the nineteenth verse, every word of which was applied to me with power—'The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.' Feeling the power of these words, my soul was filled with humility, faith, and glory. Do help me to praise him, and do pray for me that I may hold this blessing fast. I may say, indeed, that both sun and moon shone upon me at Whitby. The people were uncommonly kind; and as for congregations, the chapel was

crowded every time. And, although my heart fluttered, and I trembled much as I approached the pulpit; yet, my Lord gave me power faithfully to deliver his message, and to clear my blood, and I trust not in vain. The silent tears I witnessed, and the low mutterings of sorrow and praise heard through the chapel, forbid my unbelief. But nothing can yield me real enjoyment but feeling the beams of the Sun of Righteousness constantly on my soul. All I desire is included in the passage I have mentioned. May the Lord help me to hold the promise fast, till I enjoy its accomplishment.

“Yours, &c.,

MARY PORTEUS.”

At the District Meeting for 1826, Mrs. Porteus was re-stationed for Whitby, under the superintendence of her old and much-valued friend, Mr. J. Gilbert.

She was then permitted to visit her family and friends, who expressed their astonishment, and with reason too, at seeing her so much improved in health and appearance, after expecting, as they did, to see her sent home ill, if not to die; and were constrained to exclaim, “It is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

Under the superintendence of Mr. Gilbert, Mrs. Porteus enjoyed another happy year, and the circuit improved more and more. “God,” she said, “for ever bless him and his dear wife for their unmerited favours to unworthy me! In their house I found a home, and from their sympathetic hearts I found real friendship, which often sustained my sinking spirits under sometimes severe temptations, in connection with many happy seasons. The year, thus crowned with considerable prosperity, happily glided away without a single week’s interruption from sickness;

and I returned once more home, to visit my family and friends."

The Conference of 1827 re-stationed Mrs. Porteus again at Whitby, much to the satisfaction of the circuit; and she resumed, once more with gladness, her labours in it.

But here a threatened interruption of those labours, in the following minute of Conference, had first to be overcome:—"No married woman shall be allowed to travel in any other circuit than that in which her husband resides." This seemed decisive. She enquired of Mr. Gilbert if she might return home; adding, she would gladly do so if the circuit so decided; but as it, in God's hand, had called her into the regular work of the ministry, she durst not move without its consent. Under these circumstances, the General Committee allowed her to remain, considering her's an "extraordinary case." "In this," she says, "I felt quite passive. I recurred to my old petition, 'Father, thy only will be done;' and was sustained by this passage, 'The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. Stand still, and see the salvation of God,' Ex. xiv. 13, 14.

"This difficulty over, I determined to prosecute my work with greater diligence. I thought, This may be the last year I may have to travel. The enemy may project some scheme to put me down; but I will try as much as I can, by the help of my God, to weaken his kingdom first. I cried to God, and he answered. A blessed revival broke out in many parts of the circuit, and many precious souls were brought into Christian liberty.

"The blessed Lord thus strengthened my hands. The kindness of the people abounded yet more

and more. In every place prayer was made for me, with supplication; and thus terminated what I term a jubilee year."

During the time that Mrs. Porteus travelled in this circuit, she was favoured with the following deliverance from an apparent assassin:—

"While travelling on one occasion through a solitary and rugged district, I saw a savage-looking man before me, who, when he saw me, lingered till I overtook him, and glaring at me with fiendish eyes, moved onward before me for awhile, and then disappeared by the side of the road. As I neared this place, pleading for deliverance—for I felt a considerable amount of trepidation—he suddenly appeared again, and came up to me with a large knife in his hand. Instantly I prayed aloud to the Lord for deliverance, when his hand was arrested. He stood looking at me, as if thunderstruck, and I at him. His countenance bespoke the agitation of his mind. He was as pale as death, and seemed to be bereft of power to use the murderous weapon he held in his hand. Thus reprieved, I endeavoured to move onwards as well as I could, still praying aloud. Looking back, I perceived that he re-mustered his courage, and again was pursuing me with rapid strides, when suddenly a man and cart appeared in sight, at which the ruffian disappeared, and I saw him no more. Thus I was delivered. Praise the Lord, O my soul!

“ ‘ Though men and devils rage,  
And threaten to devour,  
The saints, from age to age,  
Are safe from all their power.’

“ This I have proved hitherto, and this I hope to

prove, till the Lord himself release my spirit from this earthly prison-house, and transfer it to the regions of glory."

At the ensuing District Meeting, the circuit laboured hard to procure the re-station of Mrs. Porteus once more, and thought they had succeeded. The Conference, however, stationed her for Ripon.

At the termination of her labours in Whitby, she thus writes:—

"I found it hard to part with this loving people. Many a time my heart was sorrowful when bidding them farewell; but the hope of meeting them in heaven soothes my grief.

"I got home again, to see my family. Glory to God! they are all well. O what a mercy.

"I have now travelled round this wide, wide circuit for two-and-a-half years, and I feel better in my body than when I left home. It is surely the Lord's doing, and marvellous indeed."



## CHAPTER XV.

### LABOURS IN THE RIPON CIRCUIT, 1828-30.

**I**N the preceding chapter, a sphere of labour is presented to the reader that, at the period to which it relates, was quite common in the circuits of the Primitive Methodist Connexion. Strange then it is that Mrs. Porteus, considering her physical weakness when she entered upon this work, should be able to endure it. But what cannot an undeviating faith in the omnipotence and faithfulness of Jehovah, when based on his promises, enable a person to endure, the faith of the ancient worthies, who “out of weakness were made strong; waxed valiant in fight;” and “turned to flight the armies of the aliens?” Mrs. Porteus believed that God had called her to this work; and that so long as he thought proper to require her service, he would strengthen her for it.

The Ripon Circuit, to which she removed in July, 1828, was still more extensive: including what are now the Pateley Bridge and Thirsk Circuits, and the Knaresborough Branch. The labour, too, was equally arduous, if not more so. Five preachers were employed in this extensive range of country; and, frequently, they were several weeks together absent from what they termed their homes, travelling, it must be understood, not by the aid of wheeled carriages or

horses, but as hardy pedestrians, frequently by the least frequented and the roughest roads ; unless, perchance, some benevolent friend, like the one from Guisborough, might occasionally favour them with a short excursion on a pony or donkey. But such instances were generally "few and far between—like angel visits."

Mrs. Porteus was expected to do the full work of one of these preachers ; and by the help of her Master she did it.

"On July 4th, 1828," she says, "I travelled to Ripon with much fear and trembling, praying all the way that my gracious Master would teach me to preach so as most effectually to win souls."

Here, what she terms an *anecdote* occurred to her mind, which she once heard a minister relate concerning himself. When he entered on his first circuit, which included a careless and wicked population, being anxious to succeed in his work, he was led to enquire, "How must I preach so as to convert sinners?" and thinking that the terrors of the law, &c, would be most effectual, he selected passages containing the most awful threatenings, and preached the dismal torments of the damned, with the horrors of hell-fire. All this he found, however proper in connection with other truths, was, in itself, insufficient to arouse the people : they remained as hardened as ever. He, therefore, having failed by alarming, thought he would endeavour to accomplish his object by alluring ; and preached the glories of heaven—its happy company, its blessed employment, its sweet enjoyment, and its eternal felicity. Still he had the mortification to see that, after he had expatiated as long on these themes as he had on the others, the people remained

unmoved. He then knew not what to do, felt very unhappy, and thought that either God had not called him to the work, or that was not the proper circuit for him. This led him to weep and pray earnestly on the subject. In this state of mind he was invited to take tea with three other ministers, two of whom were young men going out as foreign missionaries, and the third, an aged veteran of the cross. After tea, in the course of conversation, these young ministers said to the aged one, "Now, father, as we are young and inexperienced; do tell us which is the best subject to preach to win souls." The venerable saint then arose, and putting his hands on the heads of these young men, said, "My dear lads, yours is a most important work—you are going to try to convert the heathen; if you wish to be successful in your work by having seals to your ministry, preach *Him*—that is, Christ—preach HIM, preach HIM." "This," said the preacher who related the anecdote, "was the very thing I wanted to know; I saw where my error lay: I had been trying in my own strength to convert the people by first alarming and then attempting to allure them, without preaching Jesus as I ought. I therefore preached *Him*: in his person, his offices, his character, his work, and his love; and soon had the satisfaction of seeing the people subdued by the word, and a glorious revival of religion ensued."

The recollection of this anecdote by Mrs. Porteus, "encouraged her," as she says, and directed her in her work; and she entered Ripon Circuit with a determination more than ever to hide herself behind her Master, and to preach *Him*.

It is to be regretted that she has furnished us with but scanty notices of her labours in this cir-

cuit. She merely states, as the result of the above determination, that she had the satisfaction of seeing many brought to God, among whom were several that had been very wicked, and great persecutors, who were so powerfully smitten by the word, as to fall to the ground and cry aloud for mercy. "So mightily," as Luke says, "grew the word of the Lord and multiplied." She then, after praising God for these, and the mercies she had herself personally experienced, goes on to say:—"I have now travelled in this circuit two years, and the people still bear with me everywhere as in Whitby; they uphold me with their earnest prayers. I have altogether travelled four years and a half in the Connexion. Still, although a monument of God's goodness, how much I am dissatisfied with myself. There seems after all to be so much formality about me. May God quicken me yet more and more! Strange as it may seem, I am strongly at times tempted to infidelity; yet I know it is but a temptation expressive of the malice of Satan; for after what I have experienced, I never can be an infidel. May the Lord help me to overcome! After seeing the arm of the Lord made bare so frequently and convincingly, I never felt myself more in danger, if not of this temptation, yet of others. Still my helpless soul I cast on the atoning blood."

This temptation to infidelity may perhaps be startling to some readers, but not to those who, like Mrs. Porteus, possess a quick and vigorous intellect, and who acknowledge the existence of Satan, and engage heartily in the Christian warfare. These have to endure formidable attacks from the principalities and powers of hell. But they find the shield of faith provided for them sufficient for their defence; and the result of every conflict in those who pray with all



prayer and supplication in the spirit, as they are directed to pray, only renders them more dexterous in the use of this shield.

The writer, who himself travelled in the circuit the last of the two years Mrs. Porteus spent in it, can corroborate the above statement. Everywhere she was received as a messenger from heaven, and in every place was popular, and in various degrees favoured with success. This was especially the case at Winksley and its neighbourhood, where, under her ministry, a revival broke out and many were converted.

We presume to record here the following characteristic sketch from our own recollections, as related by Mrs. Porteus.

In a small thatched cottage, skirting the common in the village of Grantley, near to Ripon, lived Tommy and Nanny Brown, both elderly, and much respected members of the Primitive Methodist Society in that place. Of Tommy, little need be said more than this—"he feared God above many;" but Nanny was remarkable for simplicity of character, and the naturalness of her conversational powers. For many years this unsophisticated couple hospitably entertained the preachers beneath their humble roof, and theirs was the preaching-house for the Primitive Methodists in the village.

One evening, after that Mrs. Porteus had been preaching on *ignorance*, in a way illustrative of Paul's declaration—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," (1 Cor. ii. 14) Nanny related to her the following instance of her own ignorance previous to her conversion. Being anxious to attend a lovefeast held in connection with the opening services of the Wesleyan Chapel in Grantley, she solicited a note of admittance to it. The man, in granting it, looked earnestly at her, and put the follow-



ing, not perhaps the most proper, question to her—“Do you want to go to heaven?” “I thought what a fool’s question that is; doesn’t everybody want to go to heaven? and I said, ‘To be sure I do.’” When admitted, she seems to have been much charmed by what she termed the heavenly singing and prayer that introduced the service. But afterwards when, as usual, they began to circulate the bread and water, she got startled, and mentally said, “Now they’re gannin to tak’d sakrament; but I’ll not tak’d, for I’m not fit.” Very good—quite proper. When the person presented the bread to her, she nodded. Not understanding this, he still presented the bread to her, when she nodded again. He then said, “Take a bit of bread;” and she not presuming still to do so, he threw a piece, as she said, upon her lap. This was a perplexity to poor Nanny: she knew not what to do. After, however, looking at the bread awhile, she presumed to put it into her pocket; and then thought so much of the sin she had committed in doing so, she could get no good, as she said, all the time the preacher was speaking. After this, as usual, the members of the congregation arose consecutively to relate their Christian experience. One of the earliest of these was a person with whom Nanny had been well acquainted for many years, and familiarly known by the name of Bet Biggens, who, grateful for spiritual illumination, commenced by saying, “Praise God for what he has done for me! once I was blind, but now I see.” Nanny said—“I thought, Ay, what a great lee: awve knawn ye ever sin’ ye war a bairn, and ye never were blind in your life. Aw never wad a comed to seccan a place as this to tell a big lee like that.” After her, a tall, thin, elderly man got up,—we knew him well, he was very pious, but weak-minded—who, with a shrill voice, said, “Praise God! I can say with my sister, once I was blind,” &c. This more than ever perplexed poor Nanny. She never knew that *Bet Biggens* had a brother, and the man called her sister. This was one thing: but still more was she perplexed by him saying that he also was once blind.

This, she thought, might be true; but she was sure that Bet Biggens never was blind in her life. He afterwards went on to speak—improperly, we think—of the persecution he had to endure, especially from a wicked wife. This so much exasperated Nanny, that she arose and in high dudgeon left the place, saying, mentally, “Aw, ye awd villain ye, if I only knew where your wife lived aw wad gan and tell her, and git her to bray ye again.”

Nanny, however, lived to understand all this. Even then she was groping her way toward the light of the Lord. And hence, when the Primitive Methodist preachers ignited that district with their flaming heavenly zeal, she forced her way into a crowded congregation assembled to hear one of them—a local preacher from Ripon—where, standing in front of the preacher, she was smitten by the word, and after a struggle, was brought into glorious Christian liberty. Long may she now, with her pious husband, have verified in the glories of heaven, the truth of the apostolic declaration—“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister,” Heb. vi. 10.

We also here record the following dream, which seems to have been designed to check some rising desire in Mrs. Porteus to retire again from the public ministry.

Under the date of July 10th, 1829, she writes:—  
“The Lord has wonderfully warned and instructed me by a dream. I thought I had gone home and had set up shop-keeping, in which I was carrying on a great trade. One day in the midst of my throng, I thought a respectable man came in, who, fixing his eyes on me, with deep earnestness said, “Are you the woman that used to travel and preach the Gospel?” I said, ‘Yes.’ In reply, he said, ‘Woman, how have you got your conscience quieted? Anybody might keep shops, but anybody cannot preach the Gospel.’

Without waiting for an answer, he retired; but his word went like a sword to my heart—I felt like a fiend tormented within. I would have given all the world at that moment to have been back to my work, but I thought I had shut my way up by coming away. I then felt so miserable and self-condemned I durst not pray, and thought I should never more enjoy a happy moment. At length, the torture of my mind awoke me, and glad was I indeed to find I was still at my work. This dream has often been made a blessing to me when tempted and depressed in my work. No thanks to me, therefore, if by it I am stirred up to do what I dare not leave undone.”

At the District Meeting for 1830, Mrs. Porteus was stationed for the Carlisle Circuit. This caused, at first, as she says, a great deal of trepidation in her. The circuit, she had been told, extended into Scotland; that the Scotch people could not endure, and would not receive a female preacher; and that, moreover, they were so intelligent she must despair of ever being able to instruct them. But this, she said, she had to comfort her—she had not run before she was sent; and she had not chosen the Carlisle Circuit, but the Carlisle Circuit had themselves chosen her. “Therefore,” said she, “I will take courage, and enter on this circuit also, believing that my Saviour will still stand by me.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

LABOURS IN THE CARLISLE CIRCUIT. 1830-33

**B**EFORE proceeding to Carlisle, Mrs. Porteus, as usual, visited her family, and also visited her friends at Whitby, whose kindness had provided a home there for her youngest daughter. She recognises the Divine hand in this as still directing her to proceed in her work, as, but for it, she must have discontinued her itinerating labours.

On July 10th, 1830, after a journey of two hundred miles, she arrived at Brampton, near Carlisle, where she was affectionately and hospitably received by those distinguished and never-failing friends to the cause—John and Nancy Maughan; and at Carlisle, she soon found that all her fears regarding the circuit were groundless. On the first Sabbath she spent in the city, three persons were converted; and after travelling round the circuit, she, on August 9th, writes:—“O, how much I am ashamed of myself before the Lord. Why was I afraid of the circuit? But it is the Lord: he has gone before me and opened my way. In every place the people feel, bear with, and pray for me.”

One particular instance of the Divine goodness she here records.

“On August 5th, I was directed by the Quarterly

Meeting to open the market-town of Wigton, as a mission preacher. At Bothel, on the preceding day, I read this passage in Mr. Wesley's Journal—'I rode on to Wigton, and preached at the Market Cross.' I thought, The Lord help me! I have to stand there to-morrow under vastly other circumstances. This frequently crossed my mind as I took my solitary journey to the place, sitting down occasionally by the road side to muse on what I was about to do. I thought Mr. Wesley was a gentleman and had a carriage. His very appearance would command respect and attention; and when he had declared his message if destitute of friends, he could provide for himself lodgings. But what am I? a poor 'ranter' preacher, so termed, and a woman too. What a look I shall have to go into a strange town, where I am entirely unknown, and thus publicly exhibit myself to preach. What can I think but that the people will laugh at me? And then, Where shall I get lodgings? possibly in some improper place or other. As I thus sat musing, I cried to the Lord for help. That passage came powerfully to my mind—'When I sent you without purse or scrip, lacked ye anything?' This encouraged me; I went on my way; arrived at the place; was providentially guided to a house where, although a stranger, I was kindly received. The woman made me tea, and when her husband came home she got him and two others to announce the preaching, and accompany me to the Cross. Hundreds attended. The Lord gave me utterance; the attention of the people was fixed; and I believe the fruit of the service will be found in eternity. Board and lodgings among decent people were gratuitously provided, and I was kindly invited to return again. Surely, surely,



this is the Lord's doing. May all within me bless and praise his holy name!

August 15th.—My kind Father has again helped me to-day. I walked ten miles, and preached three times. At night, two backsliders were reclaimed at Brampton—a man and his wife. Although they sat at opposite sides of the chapel they both cried for mercy, and were set at liberty at the same time. This seemed wonderful.

21st.—After reading a sermon of Mr. Whitfield's yesterday, O how much ashamed I was. The holy zeal expressed in that discourse has quite disconcerted me. I feel I must have more love to souls,—Lord give me to feel it!—or I can preach no more. Fill my soul with it, that my work may be more than ever delightful and successful, and this cowardly spirit I am so much troubled with may be overcome.

September 2nd.—Preached again at Wigton Cross. Crowds attended. A solemn time. Some good old Methodists assisted much, and one of them took me home with him. The Lord abundantly reward them.

5th.—Accompanied my kind friend Hogarth, this morning, to a village two miles from Bothel, where there is a number of inhabitants, but no church, no chapel, and no preaching, and where the children were running about like wild asses' colts. Although it was Sabbath day, yet the people were hunting, or otherwise unseemly engaged. We went to every door and told the people we were going to have a meeting in the street. When we commenced singing, the children first gathered around us, then the adults. I preached from 'It is appointed unto man once to die;' and while discoursing on the solemnity of death and its fearful consequences to the sinner, their tears

flowed, and the children, quite amazed, never moved till the meeting was closed. I invited them to attend the Bothel meetings, afternoon and night, and many of them came. Surely the time to favour that place is come. May the good remain!

10th.—I have been this day again shielded from danger, if not death, by the guardian care of my God. While travelling through a wood where the path is very narrow and the weeds long, I heard a strange sound at my feet, which I found to proceed from a large adder, which, raising itself, seemed to be about to pounce upon me, when I made a sudden spring and got away. O my gracious Lord, the life thou hast preserved shall be devoted to thee. I will serve thee and will love thee with my ransomed powers. Evidently, both beasts and men are under thy control.

November 7th.—Once more I have got to Wigton, but O how changed. No standing at the Cross now, but, praise the Lord! he has opened our way. A kind friend has taken a large school-room, and engaged to pay the rent himself. We have formed a society, and hope we shall do well.

Bothel, February 18th, 1831. I wish here to record an anecdote my dear friend Hogarth told me respecting himself. Having the oversight of a part of the road between Bothel and Cockermouth, one Sabbath morning, the roads being blocked up with snow, some of the principal inhabitants of Bothel came and ordered him to engage men to cut them open. But he replied, 'It is Sabbath day: I never work on Sundays.' They said, 'It is a work of necessity: some one may be sick or dying, and how can a doctor be procured?' 'If,' he replied, 'it be a work of such importance as you represent it, then, as Christians,

we ought to do it for charity ; and, therefore, if you will go and do it without pay, I will go with you.' This they would not do ; but rather told him that if, as the overseers of the other portions of the road had done, he would not employ men to cut his part open, they would report him to the surveyor, and he would lose his place. To this he replied, ' I cannot help that : I have another Master to please—the God of heaven—and I would rather displease all the world than him ; but as soon as Sunday is over, I will endeavour to engage men and get it done.' This, they said, was not likely to please his fancy, after that the men had been working all the day. Well, he replied, he would put it into the hands of his God, for he was determined not to work on Sundays. After he had thus dismissed them, he was led to muse on the consequences of losing his work to his wife and five helpless children ; but the fear of this he overcame, in his usual way, by faith and prayer. He then retired to rest, and directed his wife to wait for, and arouse him by twelve o'clock. But when the time came, he found that the storm had returned with such violence as rendered it impossible to proceed. He retired again to rest, and, to the astonishment of the place, he found, in the morning, that his portion of the road was in as good a condition as that of his neighbours ; for the snow they had cut out had been blown back again ; he, therefore, told them that so far from him losing his work, they ought to lose theirs, for causing their master so much unnecessary expense ; and that, moreover, the Lord had thus showed them how much he disapproved of their conduct, by destroying their work.

In the spirit expressed in the above extracts, and

in a continuity of such labours as are therein recorded the year passed away, and the two following which she also spent in this circuit. The writer, who was appointed to superintend this circuit in 1831, gratefully records here again a high appreciation of her services. The circuit considerably improved in its finances, so as to be able to send a missionary to Paisley; and the Lord favoured us with many precious seasons, and several conversions. In one place, Cumrew—and this shows the value of even one devoted Christian in a place—there dwelt, at that time, an eminently pious female, in whose house the preachers found a hospitable home. This good woman, one evening, after Mrs. Porteus had preached, said to her, “I cannot tell how it is, but lately I have felt such a love to souls, and a desire for their salvation, that I cannot rest anywhere.” The reply she received to this was “Then be assured the Lord is about to favour you with a revival of religion; and, therefore, look out for it.” And so it was. The society soon received a considerable increase of members, and continued to prosper till the Lord took this praying saint to glory.

On July 18th, this year, Mrs. Porteus writes:—  
“This has been to me a day of much grief. This morning, at four o’clock, my dear Sister Maughan died in holy triumph. The moment her happy spirit was released, these words were applied to me with power—‘In every thing give thanks.’ I thought, This is indeed a hard task. I can readily enough say, ‘Thy will be done;’ but to give thanks for her death is rather repugnant to my feelings. Determined by grace to overcome this, I at once dropped upon my knees, and exclaimed with flowing eyes, ‘Thank God! my sister is dead. She is happily delivered from all



her troubles. Her heaven-born soul is now safely lodged in the bosom of her Saviour. This is a matter of thanksgiving indeed. Praise, praise to my God for a twelve months' loan of her. I was not deserving of such a favour. O may I follow her as she followed Christ, and be fully prepared to join her happy spirit above!"

Shortly after the death of this singularly benevolent and devoted woman, Mrs. Porteus wrote an interesting sketch of her character, which will be found in the Primitive Methodist Magazine for 1831. We recommend the reader to read attentively that sketch, and to copy the example therein graphically portrayed.

The writer deems it a high honour enjoyed by him in having been permitted to deliver an address over the remains of Mrs. Maughan in the street of Brampton, and to follow her to the grave. "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

October 5th.—Another exquisite trial. Brother John Boothman is also dead. He and Sister Maughan were the oldest members in Carlisle Circuit, and were nursing father and mother indeed. In each of their houses I had a home, in their affections I had a place, and in their petitions I had a share. My sorrowful heart would say, 'All these things are against me;' but dare I say so when my Father hath said, 'All things work together for good to them that love him.' In the removal of these estimable friends from me, I see his unspeakable goodness. He seems jealous of my affections; and knowing how apt I am to lean upon earthly props, he removes from me those I most love. May my heart always say, 'Father, thy only will be done.'



The following is simple but instructive.

December 26th.—I received a great blessing to-day through an apparently trifling circumstance. While travelling, I was overtaken by a sharp hail-shower, and sought refuge beneath a hedge where a woman and a boy about three years of age, had preceded me. The little boy seemed expecting some one, and kept running from the shelter of his mother's cloak and peeping down the road. At length, a man appeared, when the sweet child, regardless of the storm, with open arms ran to meet him. The delighted father, for such he was, embraced his child; and in the mutual joy of this affectionate but apparently poor family, I found I could participate. O what a sense of the Divine presence I felt. I cried, 'My Father, my Father, may my soul thus love thee, and always in this way be found watching, waiting and looking for thee. Here I am in this desert land: storms fly thick around me: may they never cool my love to thee.' Had this boy, I thought, although poor and cold, been invited at that time by a nobleman into his gilded carriage with a knowledge that he would thereby be borne away from his father and mother, with what disgust he would have refused the specious offer. And shall I then, O my God, ever allow my soul to be lured from thee? Is there anything in this world my soul prefers to thee? O no! thou knowest that the language of my heart is, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,' Psalm lxxiii. 25. A palace without Christ would be indeed misery to me.

We conclude our notices of Carlisle Circuit by transcribing the following practical illustration of Psalm xvi. 6, that may afford a lesson to many.

“ In the village of H.,\* a few miles from Carlisle, at the time I travelled in that circuit, lived two elderly sisters, both of whom had been brought to God under our ministry, and under whose humble roof our preachers had been entertained, and had preached for many years. In the latter end of August, 1830, I was there preaching in my regular appointment, and we had a gracious time. On the following morning after breakfast, a few of the neighbours gathered in, to whom I read part of a sermon from the above text, included in a volume of Cottage Sermons the sisters had. We also sang and prayed together, and then parted, saying with glowing hearts, ‘ the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage.’

“ On that day month I returned to that place, but before I arrived was overtaken with a heavy shower of rain. I found that the sisters were in the harvest field, but were of course expected home. I felt keenly for them as the rain continued to fall in torrents; and they had only a cheerless, fireless cottage to come home to. As I waited their arrival, in a neighbouring cottage, dripping with wet myself, Mary, one of the sisters at length arrived, apparently as contented and happy as ever. As I assisted to disencumber her of her wet clothing, I enquired, Now Mary, can you say, ‘ the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places,’ &c.? At once she answered, Yes, and I have good reason too, for although I am dripping wet, I have dry clothes to put on, and this is what many as wet as myself have not, and therefore ‘ the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places.’ But, I enquired, wishing still to try her, look around, see how the rain is dropping through the ‘ thatch’ and covering the floor, can you look at that and say ‘ the lines have fallen to me in pleasant place?’ She did so, and then replied again, ‘ Yes, and praise God, I have good reason, for although water is running over the floor, it is neither falling on the fireplace nor on the bed, and therefore ‘ the lines have fallen to me in

\* We suppose Hayton near to Brampton.

pleasant places.' I said again, 'Dont you feel uncomfortable? See, you have no fire. I fear you will catch a cold by being so wet. No, she replied, Still I can say 'the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places,' for although, at present, I have no fire, I have plenty of coals and sticks to make one, and that is what many more deserving people have not on this wet day.' "

O how happy I felt to hear her talk so. Soon we had a blazing fire kindled, a kettle of water boiled, and poor sister Ann's clothes warmed for her. As Mary's hand had been rather stricken with palsy, and trembled when she attempted to lift the boiling kettle, I said, let me do that for you. That trembling hand, look at it, and then say if you can say, 'the lines,' &c. Yes, she shouted, I can, for although I have trembling hands, I yet have hands of some use, which many have not, and therefore, bless the Lord, again I can say 'the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places.' When sister Ann came, I said, now you may well say, 'the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places,' for here is a good fire, and your clothes warm to put on. We then sat down to our plain barley cake and tea, and praised God together, saying, 'the lines,' &c.

"Since then sister Ann is removed from this world of sorrow to her Father's home above, after only four day's suffering. Fully resting on the merits of Jesus, she died in holy triumph. Mary, when I saw her, seemed like a solitary bird without her companion. I said, now Mary, can you still say, 'the lines, &c. 'O, yes, praise the Lord,' she replied, 'I have still good reason, for only think, how mercifully the Lord dealt with us. Had my sister been confined four months instead of four days, we might have been in a poor condition indeed. But, bless his holy name, he took her home at once after only four days' suffering, and raised up for us friends unexpected to assist us, and now, while I praise him for the past I will trust him for the future.' "

These are the fruits of Primitive Methodist

preaching. To God be all the glory. "Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven."

When the parting day arrived for Mrs. Porteus to leave the Carlisle Circuit, it was painful indeed, as it had been at both Whitby and Ripon. But Christians only part to meet again in heaven.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### LABOURS IN HEXHAM CIRCUIT; WITH DOMESTIC TROUBLES.—1833-1836.

**A**S Mrs. Porteus's narrative abruptly closes with the preceding chapter, we must trace more rapidly her subsequent career. We regret this the less as otherwise this work might be extended beyond reasonable bounds. We do regret it, however, knowing as we do that her ministerial attractions continued as mightily and successfully to influence the public as formerly; and her anecdotal stores, and observations on men and things, would have been to many a rich treasure indeed.

Before we proceed, we must find room for the following letter; which we deem may be consoling to those who, like the party addressed, may be suffering from bereavement.

*“ Carlisle, May, 1831.*

“MY DEAR SON AND DAUGHTER—

“I received your welcome but sorrowful letter; and, as a mother that loves you, can enter into your feelings. It revived in my mind the solemn time when my dear daughter Mary was taken to glory. I found that to be the keenest trial I ever had to endure. May that kind and gracious Being who then supported me, afford to you equal consolation under the recent loss of your beloved child. May you rest at his feet, and be enabled in truth to say, ‘Thy will be done;’ assured that, as God does not work at random, there is



a need-be in what he has done ; and what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.

In the first place, the Almighty, foreseeing danger, hath snatched away the dear child before the storm came on, and hath put him into a place of everlasting safety in the presence of his glory. Consider what an honour the Lord hath conferred upon you in permitting you to bring into the world, and for a short time to rear up for him, an heir of such glory. And consider, also, his kindness in securing the eternal salvation of your child, by so soon removing him from a world of sorrow, snares, and temptation ; and thus saving him from the trials, troubles, and anxieties his father and mother have had, and may yet have to endure. I think that, with all your painful feelings, you could not wish him back again from his blissful seat. ' Ah, no,' I think I hear your agonised but resigned hearts saying, ' stay, stay where thou art, beloved child ; and thy father and mother will strive with all their hearts to come to thee.' This was the language of your dear sister Mary. Only a day or two before her death, when she saw me crying, she said, ' O mother, don't cry : it won't be long before you come to me.' And O, methinks, could you hear your dear little William, he would say the same to you. Do not forget that death is yours. No doubt you have been looking too much down to earth, and the blessed Lord, to lift your eyes and hearts upwards has taken your jewel and fixed it near his throne. Do not therefore give way to overmuch sorrow, for, doubtless the stroke had been much heavier had one or both of you been taken, and your three helpless children been left behind without father or mother. \* \* \*

Listen, then, to his voice in this trial. Give yourselves wholly to God ; and ' Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.' Put the question to yourselves, Are we now ready ? and be in earnest. Thus endeavour to make a gain of your affliction, assured that it is included among the ' all things' intended by your heavenly Father to ' work together' for your good. May you use it to his

glory, and to your own soul's advantage. \* \*  
 And then, O blessed thought! we shall join with those  
 that have gone before us, and the rest of our family  
 shall join after, and join the ceaseless anthems to the  
 Lamb for ever. Amen ; so let it be. So prays,  
 "Your affectionate mother,  
 "MARY PORTEUS."

From Carlisle, Mrs. Porteus, in July, 1833, removed to Hexham, in Northumberland—a circuit then much more extensive, and much stronger, than at present, seeing that it employed and supported three missionaries—viz., Jedburg, Morpeth, and Rothbury. Its home department also extended over a wide tract of country, requiring its preachers frequently to travel on foot from ten to sixteen miles, and to preach three times on one day. How our sister endured all this, will be to every thinking person a matter of wonder. But the enigma has been solved already. God fulfilled in her the promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And we know that the friends received her with exuberant Christian kindness, and in every place provided for her a comfortable home.

From a letter the writer received from her in September of this year, he gives the following extract:—

"The first week after I arrived in this circuit, we had five missionary meetings. This was indeed a cross to me. I went grumbling to them; but I got whipped for it, and was obliged to carry the cross after all: for, on the road to Ingoe, I sprained my ankle. With much pain I stood and addressed the people, after which two women led me to my lodgings. They wanted to procure a bone-setter, believing that something was wrong; but I, doubting this, thought

we had better try faith and prayer. We did so. After a restless night, we copiously poured cold water on the sprained part, and prayed again. In the afternoon, I could limp across the room; and in the evening, they took me, on a horse, to the meeting at Whittington, and brought me back again. On the Saturday, I rested; and on the Sunday, was so far recovered that I walked ten miles and preached thrice. O that I may learn wisdom from what I suffer."

In the same letter, she mentions a happy meeting she had with some of her Carlisle and Brampton friends at a lovefeast at Haltwhistle. These friends, after a toilsome journey, arrived at Haltwhistle on the Sabbath morning; whence, not content to wait for her, they went to meet her. "Seeing each other at a distance," she says, "we ran to meet; and had you been present, you would have both smiled and wept at our meeting." Such meetings, to a preacher, are like an oasis in the desert to the thirsty traveller.

In this letter also we find the following reflections, as expressive of the state of her soul at the time:—

"At the quarterly meeting now closed, there were no charges preferred against me; but I can bring many against myself. Still my helpless soul I cast on the atoning blood. I feel indeed filled with shame and self-abasement, and can truly say,

"I loathe myself when God I see,  
And into nothing fall."

Praise him! I feel he loves me. Often, on my knees, I weep and wonder at his matchless patience. If he save me after all my imperfections, he will get to himself great glory; and that is just what I desire. Yes, this shall be my eternal happiness—to admire and

adore that matchless love that saved such a creature as I am."

In a postscript to the same letter, she says: "We have some fine jumpers in the shire [Hexhamshire]. I feel delighted in being among them, but have not yet learned to jump with them." No, certainly not. Her religion, it will be seen, was more intellectual and spiritual in its quality. Yet, outrageous as such worship may appear to many people, we question whether it is so offensive to the Deity as is the worship of multitudes who profess to believe the Gospel, and enjoy the rich blessings of Christianity, and its high hope of immortality, without betraying any emotion at all. While we certainly would discourage all senseless extravagance in religious worship, yet, we confess, we don't like such cold, statue-like worship as this. *There is neither nature nor grace in it.* Mrs. Porteus delighted to assemble with her Shire Jumpers, because she believed them to be devoted people, with the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them, and that their lives adorned their Christian profession.

With such a veteran soldier as Mr. John Coulson as superintendent, and such fellow-labourers as Messrs. Stephenson, W. Adamson, and J. Spoor—the latter then in his youthful vigour, with the agility of an antelope, scattering fire wherever he went—no wonder that sinners were converted, and the circuit was so prosperous as to be able, from its own resources, to support the missionaries on its borders.

Conspicuous among the friends of this circuit, we may record here the late R. I. Shafto, Esq., of Bavington Hall; who, at that time and for many years, contributed munificently both to the circuit and the



Connexional mission funds ; and who, in doing good, was seldom exceeded by those of ampler means. The writer thinks himself entitled to record this simple memorial of this gentleman, as he was the first Primitive Methodist preacher that preached in his village and hall, although not the first that attached him to the Primitive Methodist Connexion. In him and his lady Mrs. Porteus found fast and permanent friends, and a most hospitable reception whenever she visited Bavington, as did the preachers generally for many years.

Those happy years are gone for ever, and a blight has come over the place. Soon after Mr. and Mrs. Shafto's death, the preachers were banished from the home they had so long occupied, and the beautiful chapel they had for many years conducted worship in, and that had been so frequently the scene of delightful Sabbath School exercises, was appropriated to other purposes? But shall this always be? No; we are looking yet for a harvest of rich fruit in that locality from the good seed that Mr. Shafto so copiously scattered among the youth of those times, and, we believe, watered with his fervent prayers. The Lord shall hasten this in his time.

We must now hasten towards the close of Mrs. Porteus's career in this circuit; which, for wise purposes known to the Lord, we find was obscured by affliction. While crossing a brook with some friends, on one occasion, an accident dislocated her shoulder, and otherwise so severely injured her that she was confined to her room and bed for some months. Under this affliction, she experienced rich consolation in her spirit, and thus writes to a friend:—

“Although my arm is at present useless to me, and the source of much suffering, yet I must not for-



get that I have now, for fifty years, enjoyed the unfettered use of both arms; that it is my left arm, and not my right, that is disabled; and hence I am still enabled to write to my friends, and to do many little things for myself: and, moreover, it is my arm only; and hence I am able still to walk, and to resume, if God wills it, my work. ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.’”

When partially restored, the friends in the circuit generously sent her to Shields and Tynemouth, to recover her strength. But here another lowering cloud of Providence overshadowed her. Her eldest daughter, who had been for several years supporting herself in respectable situations, was at this very time sent home to her friends under an affliction that required the utmost care and tenderness. Instead, therefore, of enjoying the bracing and invigorating sea-breezes at Tynemouth, she was kept under close confinement, waiting on her daughter. This was a severe trial of her faith, but she saw at once her duty. She must not neglect her child. This seemed paramount at the time; and hence the Hexham Circuit, much to their grief, had in future to dispense with her labours; and this affliction continuing, and threatening a permanency, her name does not appear on the preachers’ stations for the following year.

How Mrs. Porteus made her way through the following year, will be found in the records of the Most High, in connection with multitudinous other similar cases of combined poverty and affliction. This much we know, that during the years of her itinerancy, she had never been able to hoard up anything for her own support, as, during the whole of those years, she had only received in the shape of salary £2 or £2 10s. a

quarter, in connection with her board and lodgings, and sometimes not so much, for the replenishing of her wardrobe, and occasionally to assist her family with. But she trusted in the Lord alone; and now, with a determination to adhere faithfully to the old principle of not contracting debts, she courageously, like Issachar of old, bowed her shoulder to bear the burden that Providence had placed upon her. And not in vain. With Habakkuk's faith she did wonderfully.

Her place of residence now was at Mount Pleasant, Newcastle-on-Tyne; where the writer once visited her, and found her settled down in her old habits. There she once more opened a day-school for young girls, which sufficed, although scantily, for the supply of her own and her daughter's necessities, and otherwise assisted herself, as formerly, by doing needlework. Her youngest son, Thomas, too, released from his apprenticeship, came to work in the neighbourhood, and assisted a little.

Thus, still labouring for the Lord occasionally, when opportunity and strength served; looked up to and loved by her old surviving friends; and mercifully supplied, as she has many a time acknowledged, with many both "upper and nether spring blessings," and above all, with "the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush,"—this year of trouble passed away. Her daughter gradually recovered her health; and once more, we find her name on the preachers' stations. This was in the year 1836, for North Shields Circuit.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### LABOURS IN THE NORTH SHIELDS, SUNDERLAND, AND DURHAM CIRCUITS; WITH HER SUBSEQUENT LOCATION.

**W**HEN Mrs. Porteus entered the North Shields Circuit, we may suppose that her mind would be crowded with commingled reminiscences of former times, both painful and pleasing; as, in that town, she endured much domestic trouble, and there she formed some of her happiest Christian associations.

In this circuit an arduous work awaited her, much too delicate and harrassing for a feeble woman, and indeed for many men. Circumstances that need not here be stated had so completely embarrassed the funds of North Shields chapel, that an extraordinary effort to replenish them became inevitable. A case was therefore made out, and Mrs. Porteus commissioned to take an extensive tour to collect funds through Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and elsewhere where Providence might favour her.

In this tour she met with a cordial reception in the circuits where she had travelled, and where she was known. But elsewhere, although the people were very kind, and provided for her gratuitously, yet, for various reasons assigned by them, she was prevented from collecting for the object of her mission—a cir-

cumstance not at all surprising to persons acquainted with that sort of work.

“Altogether,” she says, “I have travelled in this route 682 miles. Over 450 of these I rode in various conveyances, and 232 I walked, carrying my luggage with me. This I did frequently amidst wind, and frost, or rain, and in a strange country. But the Lord helped me. I begged my way. It did not cost me one penny for victuals; but it produced such rheumatic pains as I fear I shall never recover from. But I did it for the Lord; and my body and soul are his, and shall be his for ever.”

A part of the time that Mrs. Porteus laboured in this circuit, she was located alone, as a missionary, in the town of Alnwick, distinguished for its noble castle, the residence of the Duke of Northumberland. Here her celebrity and perseverance enabled her not merely to overcome the strong prejudices of the religious public generally of that place against Methodist doctrine and female preaching, but to maintain herself, and meet all the extra expenditure of the mission, including chapel rents, &c., with only very trifling aid from the circuit that employed her.

The following little incident, remembered concerning this place, may afford a lesson to many:—

The first time that Mrs. Porteus led the class at Alnwick, she found among the members an elderly female, who, on account of her known poverty, never contributed to the cause, but was distinguished in the class-book by the letter P opposite to her name. Observing this old lady was present, Mrs. Porteus did not call out her name as she did that of others, but put down the letter P, and passed on. At the close of the meeting, this person came to her, and said, “If you please, is not my name in the book now, that you did not mention it?” “O yes,” replied Mrs. Porteus, “but as I observed you were present, and that you

did not contribute with the others, I did not think it necessary to mention it." "O but," she replied, "*I clean the chapel for my privileges.*" Noble old woman! How many there are who ought to go and do likewise.

In this circuit, also, Mrs. Porteus enjoyed the pleasure of preaching much among her early associates at Morpeth and elsewhere; but best of all, she was permitted to see many awakenings, much spirituality diffused among the society, and the circuit relieved from its temporal embarrassment.

We insert here the following anecdote in the hope, however, that the ignorance of the individual it records was more feigned than real; if real, it is a deplorable case.

On one of the journeys of Mrs. Porteus southwards, she met, on the coach between Morpeth and Newcastle, with a North-of-England farmer with whom, in her accustomed manner, she entered into conversation; and finding him to be frank and communicative, she at length enquired if he knew the Lord Jesus, to which he replied, No, he did not: he had heard of Lord Grey, but had never heard of Lord Jesus. "Pray, ma'am, who is he? and where is his mansion and establishment!" What! never heard of the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of sinners? "No, I am sure I have not; and pray, who are sinners, ma'am?" On the discovery of such deplorable ignorance, she seriously began to open unto him the Scriptures, and to preach Jesus, as Philip did to the eunuch, and left him full of amazement and wonder with what she made known to him.

In July, 1838, she was removed to Sunderland Circuit, which included at that time what are now the Stockton and Durham Circuits. Here she met with her usual cordial reception, and her talents and piety were highly appreciated by an enlightened people. As, however, nothing remarkable is otherwise



recorded respecting this circuit, we pass on to state that at the succeeding conference, the city of Durham with several adjacent collieries was made into a distinct circuit, and Mrs. Porteus, with Mr. G. Tyndale as superintendent, was stationed to it. Here, after twelve months' labour, the collieries being mostly new ones, and the roads in winter excessively bad, her constitution completely failed, and she felt justified in retiring from the work in which for fourteen years she had been successfully engaged. God, however, as she writes, during her years of labour here, favoured the circuit with many glorious revivals, in which several notorious characters were converted, including drunkards, card players, fighters, sword dancers, and such like.

The following instance, as related by Mrs. Porteus, is a specimen.

When the colliery was first opened at Coxhoe, the Primitive Methodists, as usual, very soon opened a cottage for preaching, and formed a society. One Sabbath morning, during the hours of worship, a noted sinner of the place having to pass the house, stopped for a short time to listen, and then mentally said, "Aw think awl gan in." This purpose, however, was not allowed to pass unchallenged. He found he was unwashed, and thought he would not. Again he thought, What need he care, he would go in. And then again he looked at his dress, and thought he wouldn't. At length, as it is said, '*Aw will* conquered *aw winnot*,' and he went in and seated himself behind the door. The master of the house seeing such a noted character enter, and apprehending some evil purpose in so doing, kept his eye upon him; but perceiving that he was serious, and that he lingered behind the congregation at the close of the service, went up to him and said, "We are going to hold a class-meeting, will ye stop?" when at once he answered, "Aw think

aw will." He then at the meeting related the controversy that had passed at the door between '*Aw will* and *aw winnot*,' and what he felt during the service. and that his purpose henceforth was to serve God, While this was going on in the preaching-house, his poor wife was musing by her cottage fire with a baby on her knee—probably on the delinquencies of her husband, and the apparent hopelessness of her condition—when, suddenly the door was opened, and her husband, with something unusual in his countenance, bounced into the room. Passing rapidly behind her, she perceived that he opened a drawer, whence he drew out a pack of much used cards, and without speaking a word cast them into the fire. Instantly she arose, and disposing of her child, buried the cards in the fire with a shovelfull of coals, and then exclaimed, "Aye, mun, how's this come to pass?" Upon hearing from him the gratifying intelligence that he had been at what he termed the Ranters' meeting that morning and was going again that evening, she determined to accompany him. The evening service being what is usually termed a fellowship meeting, for the relation of Christian experience, she very soon arose and simply said, "The Lord bless ye for what ye have deun for my canny man;" and then proceeded to relate what had transpired in the house that morning. The results were that both these simple-minded people were brought to enjoy saving religion, and this circumstance became the foundation of a glorious revival. For this man being a leader of a company of sword-dancers, as they are termed in the North, when he got converted, the most of the others followed him; and the next time that Mrs. Porteus visited the place, she was told that the swords used for dancing were sold to be converted into *Gully knives*, for the purpose of purchasing Bibles and Hymn books.

We must now draw this simple narrative to a close, by briefly recording the leading incidents of Mrs.

Porteus' subsequent life. For the long period of twenty-one years after the termination of her itinerant labours, her life was preserved, not in a state of apathy or indifference, but, in unison with her previous experience and habits of piety, in multitudinous labours of love, especially on anniversary occasions, so far as her much-impaired physical powers would admit of. For the whole of these years, she was a pensioner on the bounty of Providence. But her confidence in God, which her habitual intercourse with him sustained, and which was strengthened by a remembrance of many signal providential deliverances, some of which we have recorded, preserved in her a noble independent spirit. Thus, while she humbly and gratefully received supplies from those who kindly, and without solicitation, furnished her with them, she did not trust in man but in God.

Her daughter Isabella, for whom she had felt much parental solicitude at the commencement of her circuit labours, was now grown up into womanhood, and first provided a home for her near to Sunderland, where also her elder daughter had married and resided. Afterwards, they removed to Easington-lane in the Sunderland Circuit, where they opened a pastry-shop and temperance coffee-house. After this, she was invited by her hospitable friend, R. J. Shaftoe, Esq., and Mrs. Shaftoe, to spend some time at Bavington Hall. Here, her daughter Isabella having married, she remained for the long period of six years, ostensibly for the purpose of nursing and instructing the mother of Mrs. Shaftoe, who, for a great part of this time, was an invalid confined to her room and bed; but chiefly because her religious services in the hall, and especially in the pulpit and Sabbath school, had become apparently, at least, indispensable.

Her correspondence with her friends and family during this period, is rich and edifying. We must find room for the following extracts. The first is to the writer, dated Bavington Hall, December 1st, 1842.

“I arrived here in the latter end of August. Felt like a poor forlorn traveller after a temporary shelter cast out again to endure the pitiless storm, when Mr. Shaftoe read to me Isabella’s marriage from a newspaper. What a mercy that I knew the way to the throne of grace! I wept and prayed constantly. Bavington Hall, the fine shrubbery, and beautiful garden, seemed all covered with crape. No bright spot but upwards. O that precious heaven! what a desire I felt and still feel to get home to my Father’s house. In thus being deprived of my anticipated residence with my daughter\*, I yielded to the earnest solicitations of Mr. and Mrs. Shaftoe to remain here so long as my services may be required. But I see that the Lord’s design is that I shall have no dependence on anything but himself” May I still sit at his feet, and for ever groan, ‘Father, thy only will be done. \* \* \*

“There is a good work going on in the Sunday school. We had ten boys and girls crying aloud for mercy the other Sunday. Mr. Shaftoe was in his element. He sat on his knees the whole time weeping like a child. We have a good school, and each child gets twopence per week besides books. May Mr. S’s life be long spared to continue his valuable services.

January 9th, 1844.—We closed the last year and commenced the new one gloriously. The children were all collected in the chapel. Mr. Ramsey and I addressed them. Mr Shaftoe afterwards distributed among them a basket full of copper, and rejoiced over them as if he had found great spoil. On new year’s eve, we held a watch-night. We had not many peo-

\* Mrs. Porteus was not aware at this time that one of the stipulations between her daughter and her husband was that a house should always be kept open for her mother with them.



ple, but the Lord was with us. A woman was set at liberty soon after the year came in. We have had two in distress since. I am well in body at present, and looking upwards. I feel no solid happiness in earthly things. My home is in heaven."

There are glimpses of many similar happy seasons which Mrs. Porteus enjoyed during her residence at Bavington Hall; but the work of God did not always go on thus smoothly. Wealth and the best intentions could not at all times secure this. Troubles frequently arose and retarded it.

Let complainers notice the following record.

"I saw a good old woman at Dunston, who was converted at Butchers' Hall, Newcastle, when our people preached in it. She has been confined to her bed fourteen years, and has been eight years blind. But, O how happy she was—not one complaint. She lives with her daughter—a poor woman—who is, she declares, the best daughter in the world. These are two of the Lord's jewels."

To her son James, September 8th, 1846. she writes:—

"I have been a fortnight to Sunderland, and have enjoyed several solemn yet heart-cheering seasons. First: I saw one of Mr. Lightfoot's children die, and go to heaven. Then I heard Mr. Caughey, the American revivalist, seven times. But such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit I never saw. There were three hundred and fifty brought in during this fortnight, including old grey-headed men and women. One man came eighty miles to get a clean heart, and returned home with heaven beaming in his countenance.

"The last time I heard him, he preached from—'*going on to perfection.*' He said the reason why so few Christians died triumphant was, they lived without holiness. 'But,' he said, 'you will ask, Will God send a justified soul to hell? No. But I will say God will not take an unholy soul to heaven.' To Christians thus living beneath their privileges, death



comes ; but, instead of finding them ready winged for their flight, the Spirit of God brings before them in battle array all their shortcomings, and then, instead of going triumphantly into glory, they have to endure a mental purgatory before they obtain the witness that God has purified their souls. He said he could compare them to nothing better than to two ships returning from a long and dangerous voyage. The one ship's crew, all in health, in full sail enters gallantly into the harbour ; but the other has to ride quarantine for seven weeks, because the crew is not in a healthy condition. Then, with a shout that pierced every heart, he cried, ' O the agony, the pain, in lying off at the mouth of the harbour when I might have been in it but for my unfaithfulness !' Many got the witness of purity that night."

We might multiply extracts here from numerous letters wise in counsel, rich in evangelical sentiment, and especially consolatory to bereaved parents ; but as these are interspersed with domestic matters, we pass them by. We must, however, make room for the following, addressed to a grandson who had begun to preach.

*October 24th, 1860.*

" MY DEAR THOMAS,

" \* \* \* O how thankful I feel that you are still on your way to Zion, and are trying to persuade others to go with you. Yes, the Lord can make use of the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. His will be done—his will be done. Never fear : he will stand by you. Look up to him. Study his word. Ask for the aid of the Holy Spirit to understand its meaning. Pray much—mind this. An original preacher is God's mint. A preacher that only repeats other men's sermons, is like a merchant that trades with other men's gold. If you get your matter from the Lord, it will have spirit in it, and will reach the hearts of those who hear it."

Again, January, 1861, she writes :—

“O how glad I was when I read your letter. It was not likely the church would let you sit still. The Lord did not give you the light to put it under a bushel. Only take care and keep humble. Watch and pray. Let your ruling principle be, Love to your divine Master, and love to poor perishing souls. And take Paul's advice to Timothy, (2 Tim. ii. 15, 16) it is much better than any thing I can say—‘ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.. But shun profane and vain babblings : for they will increase unto more ungodliness.’”

## CHAPTER XIX.

LOCATION CONTINUED. AFFLICTION AND DEATH.

**A**FTER Mrs. Porteus had left the hall at Bavington, she resided chiefly with her youngest daughter, who with her husband, only thought it too great an honour to receive such a mother into their humble dwelling, and to provide for her declining days. From their house as a centre, she, for many years moved about the country, whenever sufficiently well to respond to the numerous calls made upon her services. Frequently, too, for weeks or months together she would take visiting tours to Sunderland and elsewhere among her friends. At one time, we find her in Yorkshire, among her early associates. But wherever she went, her character as a "mother in Israel," was invariably sustained, and she was cordially received. Indeed, her lucid apprehension of divine truth, her accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the Scriptures, the discriminating power of her intellect, and her rich stores of facts and incidents, rendered her company peculiarly attractive.

But the stream of life did not always run smooth. Troubles arose ; yet they were mixed with mercy.

Before she left Bavington, her son Thomas died at Newcastle, at a time when affliction in herself, and an excessively severe winter prevented her from attending his funeral. This was a source of much grief to her,

as her letters indicate. He died, however, fully trusting in the merits of Christ for his salvation. Afterwards, her husband, for whose salvation she had always been solicitous, and had never ceased to pray, died, she believed a "monument of mercy." On one occasion, when on a visit to her daughter Ann and her son-in-law at Seaton Delaval, a fatal accident befel him in the mine. He was brought home on a litter, and soon expired. Happily, however, for him, a few days previously, he had given himself freely and fully to the Lord, and was able in his last moments to console his poor wife with the expressions of his faith in the Redeemer. Desolate, indeed, was the condition of his widow for some time. But God sustained her. By the kindness of the masters of that colliery, aided by a small school for children, and a conscientious adherence to her mother's principle—never to contract debts—she has been enabled, although only of a feeble constitution, to provide decently for her helpless family.

We must now suppose Mrs. P. entering on her 70th year, at which time she writes :—"O how little I know, and how little I have done, and what I have done has been done so imperfectly, that I feel I have nothing to depend on but the Atonement. I never felt my need of Christ more, and never felt him more precious than I do now." After this, affliction made rapid inroads on her constitution. On two occasions—an interval of two years between—she was struck with paralysis, which for some time completely prostrated her, but from which each time she amazingly recovered.

After the second of these attacks, she thus writes to her son James :—

“ Dragon’s Ville, Gilesgate Moor, Durham.  
“ June 14th, 1859.

“ MY DEAR JAMES,

“ I take this opportunity to write to you, lest I should never have another. I thought that by this time I should have been in my Father’s house above. About a week after you were here, I had a severe stroke, heavier than that I had two years ago. It came on me suddenly while in bed, and took away my speech entirely; my right arm was also powerless, and my right side. But my senses were not affected nor my faith. O what a sweet peace I enjoyed! I thought I was going home immediately, but here I am yet. Well, well, I can still say with Job, ‘All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.’ As, however, death may come upon me suddenly, and I may not have an opportunity or ability to speak, I write to you simply to say, ‘*Meet me in heaven.*’ Mind that passage—‘He that endureth to the end, shall be saved. Yours is a very responsible position. You have three dear lads; they will be men by-and-by, and they are looking up to you for a pattern. Mind you set before them such a one as you would like them to imitate when you are gone into eternity. Say nothing, do nothing, and indulge in nothing, but what you would wish them to follow you in. Remember, that if you have had strength to stand, they may not. Let your example, therefore, in all things say, ‘This is the way, walk ye in it.’ Not our long standing in the church, or the respect we receive from the church, is sufficient, but the mind that was in Christ Jesus. Remove, then, every stumbling-block from the way of your family, and then, should I not see you more in time, we will meet in heaven.

Your affectionate mother,

MARY PORTEUS.

We have said that from the second attack of Mrs. Porteus by paralysis, she surprisingly recovered, that



is, so as to visit her friends again, move in her ordinary spheres of usefulness, and especially to preach with her usual pathos and influence. At length, the long expected period of her departure arrived.

The prognostic in the above characteristic letter of a Christian mother, was verified—that, perhaps, she might not have opportunity or ability to say much in her last moments. The doctor had intimated that a third similar attack to those she had endured, might be fatal. And so it proved. At any rate, the affliction that removed her to her long desired heaven, was sudden; and, for the short period of its duration, so completely prostrated her, that she could not gratify her friends with the exultation or holy triumph they would otherwise, we question not, have witnessed. But no matter. Enough had been said, and enough was evinced in her emotions, signs, and faint whispers to declare that her exultant anticipations of the moment when she should enter in triumph her Father's house above were fully verified. This, to her, joyful event, transpired on the 18th of April, 1861. Then she “entered into the joy of the Lord.”

Up nearly to this period, she continued to move about. Only a short time before it, she took part in revival services in Gilesgate Moor Chapel. A few days afterwards, she preached her last sermon from, “Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,” 1 Peter i. 17. And later still, in her last interview with an aged friend, Mr. T. Snowdon, she told him she was going to enter heaven before him, but she would look out for him. To that blessed world she has now gone, and, we doubt not, has been welcomed there by a numerous company, to whose salvation she had been tributary.

Awaiting the resurrection trump, her remains peacefully repose in the church-yard of Hallgarth, Durham; and her death was improved in Gilesgate Moor Chapel, by the writer of these sheets, to a numerous audience, on the evening of May 19th, 1861, from "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," Psalm cxvi. 15.

## CHAPTER XX.

### HER CHARACTER, &c.

**I**N the preceding narrative, the object of the biographer has been to delineate the character of Mrs. Porteus as exhibiting a happy combination of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers of the soul in a high state of cultivation.

The cultivation of the intellect, if conducted properly, cannot be antagonistic to the admission or enjoyment of pure religion; nor can religion cripple the powers of the mind, seeing that it conducts its possessor through the loftiest regions of human thought, and presents to him subjects for investigation and analysis, so profound that even angels desire to look into them. Indeed, these themes, we conjecture, will give amplitude to the intellectual ranges of the saints in light, through the illimitable duration of eternity.

In the religious character of Mrs Porteus, we shall be able to discover the following particulars.

FIRST, *An unwavering recognition of Divine grace as the source of her salvation, and the ruling principle of her soul.*

The declaration of Paul—"By grace are ye saved through faith," &c., Eph. ii. 8, 9—was corroborated in her experience by every step of the way in which the Lord led her. And hence, Christ and his present,

free, and full salvation were her leading themes : Christ in his divine and human natures—his mediatorial offices—his vicarious sacrifice—his fulness, love, and sufficiency to save—and in the perfection of his example. Christ was thus her “all in all,” as he is to all who are taught by him.

SECOND, *Deep prostration of spirit before God.*

Having been by the light of heaven illumined to discover the vileness and helplessness of her nature, the malignity of sin, and the holiness of God, she was led to abhor herself in his sight, and in this spirit she has frequently for hours been found prostrated on the ground before him. The religion of the Saviour is thus intended to humble the loftiness of human nature. Happy those who enjoy it so as to experience this result! They, and they alone, shall be exalted to heaven. God will not allow those who do not acknowledge his supremacy, so as to be fully subjected to his sovereign sway, to dwell in the presence of his glory.

THIRD, *Supreme love to God.*

A clear revelation of pardoning mercy at the commencement of her Christian career, by the shedding abroad of the love of God in her soul, qualified her thus to love God. This capacity was strengthened in her by subsequent fuller and more glorious revelations of the God of love to her spirit. It was also strengthened by her habit of pious meditation. She could indeed say with David (Psalm civ. 34) “My meditation of him shall be sweet.” While attending to her ordinary work, on one day she would meditate on the eternity of God, on his spirituality the next, and thus go over day by day the attributes and perfections of the Divine nature. This was rather a

remarkable exercise for a poor woman dependant on her own manual labour for her daily bread. Yet so it was—at least at one period of her Christian career, as the writer heard her testify. O how much, indeed, do the accomplishments of many Christian ladies sink beneath this ; and how vastly the capacity for loving God would be increased in professors generally, did they seek to know him more by embracing with all their hearts, the privileges available by them, and by a regular and diligent exercise of the powers that God has blessed them with.

*FOURTH, Close fellowship with God.*

This included in her experience intercourse with each Person of the blessed Trinity. “If a man love me,” said Jesus, “he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him,” John xiv. 23. This rich promise was realised by her in her experience ; also the truth stated by Paul (1 Cor. vi. 19) “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?” She sought, therefore, fellowship with the three-one God, as the leading and regulating action of her life, and as a preparation for every duty either in her family or in the church. She sought this by constant faith and prayer, and by a diligent attention both to the private reading of the Scriptures and the public means of grace ; and not in vain : the Spirit led her to the Saviour, and the Saviour introduced her to the Father, and GOD became her all in all.

*FIFTHLY, Compassion for souls, and an ardent desire for God to be glorified in their salvation, and for the Redeemer to be thus exalted and satisfied, Isaiah liii. 11.*

This is most certainly what the religion of Jesus Christ is intended to lead Christian professors to ;



and if so, then those who are not so led, must have something wrong in them, although seemingly right in other respects. The very nature of religion declares this; and the experience of every devoted soul proves it. Let the religion exemplified by Mrs. Porteus be extensively enjoyed, and labourers such as she was will speedily rise up to vigorous action in all directions, and the triumphs of Christianity will rapidly progress in every nation.

The Rev. W. Saul, of Durham, who, especially during the last year of her life, was most intimately acquainted with her, has furnished the following sketch of her character.

“ My acquaintance with the late Mrs. Porteus commenced in the year 1849, during the sittings of our Conference at Sunderland. We lodged in the same house, worshipped in the same chapel, listened to the same sermons, and sang the same hymns of praise. My memory dwells with pleasure on the happiness which was the result of that personal intercourse. Up to that period, I had greedily read several excellent pieces of Female Biography, but had never met with such a living portraiture of genuine religious simplicity of character. During the last twelve years, I have been in the habit of enjoying unconstrained Christian intercourse with her, whenever opportunities presented themselves; and sometimes when they did not occur, I created them for the sake of listening to the sweet utterances of her piety. Beyond many, she possessed ‘ a meek and lowly heart,’ which hungered after righteousness, looking unto Jesus, the Alpha and Omega of her hopes, in whom alone she found ‘ rest for her soul.’

“ Having presented her whole self as an offer,

ing to Christ, whose grace adorned her with true lowliness, she was like a lily among thorns—like a bright star in a dark night—or like some costly jewel which, however you may turn and examine it, is on all sides beautiful, and is ever sending forth fresh rays of light and loveliness. All within the range of her influence were sure to feel it. Her piety was as active as it was spiritual: it gave eloquence to her tongue, and wings of willing obedience to her feet—it courted the hardest toil and the heaviest load. Having received the light, she diffused it, and filled her circle with the radiance of a pure and practical piety. Such a life bore its own evidence. It wanted no apology. Its beauty, blessedness, and utility were as clear as the ‘sun when he goeth forth in his brightness.’ Here was the secret: Christ dwelt in her heart as well as in the articles of her creed. She fed upon him by faith. He was her living bread; and with intense relish she feasted on him daily. Out of his fulness she received ‘good measure pressed down and running over.’ She knew that heaven was a feast of which she might partake the earnest—a harvest of which she might reap the first-fruits. She panted for an enlarged measure of that faith that works by love, and purifies the heart.

“The battle with the deep rooted corruptions of the heart, she fought in the strength which Omnipotence supplied, and found her weak yet ardent endeavours assisted. Her Bible had made it sufficiently clear that Christ had no pleasure in dwelling in a vile and unsanctified heart, hence she constantly breathed for *full salvation*. Personal purity and entire devotion to the blessed will of God, was the object of her ‘high vocation;’ with ‘the fatness of his house, and the

rivers of his pleasure,' could she alone be satisfied. And now, as we look over her past life, it may be seen that religion in her was no lifeless thing. No: it prompted her to a due and faithful discharge of the duties belonging to the domestic, civil, and social relations; in the culture of justice, temperance, truth, and love; in forgiving injuries, and following God with a zeal which no poverty or persecution could quench, and a constancy of moral improvement which disdained to place limits to its high aspiration.

“In addition to sincere and enlightened piety, Mrs. Porteus was remarkable for unyielding stedfastness to God through all the vicissitudes and painful exercises of her chequered career. Few persons, we guess, ever suffered more, and fewer still preserved more integrity or charged God less foolishly. The earlier years of her life seemed all disastrous. But through that baptism of suffering, what constancy, patience, and fortitude she experienced! In addition to the great temporal privations she experienced, which were sometimes surpassed by still greater mental agonies; the opprobrium and contempt usually cast upon Christian females who become public teachers of religion, were among the ‘trials of her faith.’ But depressed as she might have been by so many and various afflictions, and harassed by temptations and perplexities, she felt certain that God’s hand was no less present in suffering than in those dispensations which enlarged her heart with consolation, or those which filled her barrel with meal and her cruise with oil. With what undoubted confidence have I heard her say while bearing up bravely under affliction, ‘The Lord sitteth on the floods.’

“The disciplinary uses of sorrow she fully understood. As she believed that trouble did not spring from the dust, it was not suffered to come and go unheeded. Still less did she become angry and peevish, sour and irritable. When special or direct afflictions overtook her; when unpleasant changes occurred in her family circumstances; or when temptations of a painful nature assailed her, she knew that all this was designed in love to her soul—to correct, to purify, to prove, and discipline her for the heavenly world—thus illustrating the poet’s words—

‘Sweet are the uses of adversity, which,  
Like a toad ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head.’

Or these—

‘Amidst my list of blessings infinite,  
Stands this the foremost—that my heart has bled—  
For all I bless thee—most for the severe.’

“Another distinguishing feature in Mrs. Porteus’s character, was her busy and constant activity in doing good. For this purpose she made sacrifices, economised her time, means, and opportunities; put up with much that was hard and disagreeable; rose superior to the peculiar difficulties of her position; and even courted labour which often oppressed her feeble body. Her zeal for God showed itself where it is not often seen, viz., in her method of living—in her apparel—in her conversation—in the training and dress of her children—and in the various relations of life that she filled as a wife, a mother, a friend, and a religious instructor. She was like Dorcas—‘full of good works.’



“ To win poor sinners to Christ was both a passion and a principle, animating her every exercise of mind and action. In most of her letters which it has been our pleasure and profit to read, it is quite clear that her care for the soul was far greater than for the body. My personal intimacy with her gave me the impression that she would never pass much time in company without speaking of, and if possible giving prominence to, the high concerns of religion. Such was the unvarying bias of her heart and mind, the constant tendency of her life and actions.

“ But she was by no means a woman of imprudent boldness in company. She had discernment to know when and where to speak a word for her Divine Master. She was cautious not to cast her ‘ pearls before swine, or give that which is holy unto dogs.’ Her words were ‘ fitly spoken, and like apples of gold in pictures of silver.’

“ Her son-in-law has often assured me of the invaluable assistance rendered to him as a class-leader by her counsels and prayers. Her interest in the care of the individual members of his class was deep. She could exactly adapt her conversations to the difference observed in each person’s conduct and character. There was ever a correspondence between the utterances of their experience and her reply. It was a feast of fat things to hear her thus address an aged pilgrim:—‘ Fear not, O brother, to go down to the grave. Thou art under the care of Christ, who will attend thy every step. If he raised himself from the dead, he will also raise thee. More than this—the Divine Author and Finisher of thy faith will fashion thy body like unto his own glorious body. Like the rod of Aaron, thou shalt bud and blossom afresh.



Like Job, thy latter end shall be greater than thy beginning. Like the temple of the Jews, the glory of the latter house shall exceed the glory of the former one; and in that temple will the Lord give thee peace for evermore.'

"Her intense solicitude for the salvation of souls was no less manifest in her public than in her private religious instructions. Her sermons were plain and familiar;—plain by the habitual use of the Saxon element of our language; familiar, from the figures, images, anecdotes, and incidents which she constantly employed for illustration: thus bringing the truths she taught down to the level of every understanding. Hence her discourses were always adapted to the great class—the poor, the uneducated, who were the chief objects of her ministry. Indeed, 'the common people heard her gladly.' As for the more intelligent, they generally listened to her discourses with unqualified delight, and were generally of the opinion that she was worthy to be ranked with the most distinguished female preachers of this or of any other age. The general acceptance which her sermons met with, accompanied as they were with spiritual influences, rendered her labours extensively and permanently useful. Her style of speech was remarkable for simplicity, purity, and precision; surpassing in these respects that of the vast majority of educated people.

When, after fourteen years' exclusive devotion to the regular ministry, she retired, the public appreciation of her abilities was seen in the frequent applications made for her services on special occasions. Up to within the last few years of her life, when her infirmities became oppressive, she preached the word, was

instant in season and out of season. Latterly, however, she was scarcely able to take more than an occasional service. Her last public appearance but one was in connection with some special services in Giles Gate Moor Chapel. Her text was, 'God is love.' A few weeks after this, she was suddenly called from earth ; and we have good reason to believe that her spirit was translated to an eternity of bliss.

“ Well hath Solomon said, ‘Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain ; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.’ ”

