



OF

CAPT. JAMES WILSON.

CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF HIS RESIDENCE IN INDIA; HIS CON-
VERSION TO CHRISTIANITY; HIS MISSIONARY VOY-
AGE TO THE SOUTH SEAS, AND HIS
PEACEFUL DEATH.

ABRIDGED:

FROM THE MEMOIR BY REV. JOHN GRIFFITH.

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LIFE OF
CAPTAIN JAMES WILSON.

CAPTAIN WILSON is well known as the able and enterprising conductor of the first Christian Mission to the South Seas, in 1796, an expedition at that time novel in its character, and altogether unprecedented in its object. He commanded the ship *Duff*, which was purchased and fitted out at the expense of the Missionary Society, for the purpose of introducing the blessings of religion, and the arts of civilized life, among the remote and barbarous islands of the Pacific Ocean; the destination fixed upon by the Directors, as the most eligible for commencing the benevolent exertions of missionary zeal.

The singular prudence and ability with which he discharged that important trust, not only contributed materially to the success of the expedition, but stamped a general character of respectability on the Society; which speedily manifested itself, in the increased confidence and popularity which the subject attracted, both

at home and abroad; and it tended also to secure many favours and valuable privileges, both from the British and other governments, who have lent an attentive ear to their official representations, and extended the shield of their protection over the heads of those adventurous apostles of Christianity, who have since, under the patronage of numerous societies, carried the message of salvation to almost every region of the habitable earth.

The life of Captain Wilson was marked by a strange variety of changes and misfortunes, and furnishes a narrative, which, for diversity of circumstances, affecting incidents, and striking illustration of the happy influence of religious principles, has but few equals. It affords, at the same time, a beautiful and remarkable development of those kind but mysterious operations of Providence, which often makes events, that we consider adverse or accidental, to terminate in some wise and salutary result, and accomplishes the most momentous changes in our lives, by means of the most unpromising instruments. In the early period of his life, the perils, imprisonments, and almost incredible sufferings he endured, throw an air of romance over that part of his history, which makes it resemble more the adventures of a fabulous hero, than a literal detail of truth and fact. These

interesting events have been recorded at considerable length, as tending, not merely to gratify a laudable curiosity, but to present that particular view of his character, which it is our main object to elucidate. It is chiefly, however, after he had weathered the storms of captivity and adverse fortune, and retired to enjoy, in calm security, the fruits of his successful speculations in commerce, that his narrative becomes a subject of importance, by presenting him as a convert to the truth of religion, and one of the earliest and most distinguished agents in its propagation among the heathen.

CAPTAIN JAMES WILSON was born in 1760, and was the youngest son of nineteen children. His father, who was commander of a ship in the Newcastle trade, trained him from his earliest years for the sea service, a profession for which he soon discovered an excellent capacity. He entered the navy while quite a youth, and served in the American war. He was present at Bunker's Hill, 1775, the first regular battle that was fought between the British army and the colonists; and at Long Island, where the Americans effected a dexterous retreat, under cover of a thick fog.

On his return to Europe, he obtained a birth as mate of an East Indiaman, a preferment for

which his nautical experience sufficiently qualified him. On their arrival at Bengal, he quitted his ship and engaged in the service of the country. His bold and seaman-like conduct, speedily procured him both friends and promotion. He was employed as the bearer of dispatches to the Nicobar Islands; to advertise the ships returning from the East, of the arrival of the French squadron, under Suffrein, on the coast; but, from the leaky state of his small vessel, he was obliged to put about for Madras; and when off Pulicat, where he discovered the French fleet, he was under the necessity of running her on the beach to save their lives.

When he reached Madras, the British troops in that settlement, under Sir Eyre Coote, were in the greatest distress, and in danger of starvation; their stores being nearly exhausted, and all supplies by sea cut off by the French squadron, then at anchor at Pondicherry, while the army of Hyder Ali intercepted their provisions by land. Several ships, laden with rice, were lying ready for their relief, but the enemy's fleet being directly in the way, they durst not attempt the passage. The Governor of Madras, apprised of Mr. Wilson's courage and dexterity, offered him four hundred pagodas if he would undertake to carry down the ships with supplies

for the troops to Cuddalore, near which Sir Eyre Coote was encamped.

This hazardous service he engaged to perform; and embarking immediately with four vessels under his command, all navigated by Hindoos, without a single European on board, except himself, and a military officer on his passage to the army, he proceeded, with sufficient caution to conduct the long expected stores towards their destination. By a piece of singular good fortune, he passed the French fleet near Pondicherry, in the offing, at such a distance as not to be discovered, at the moment when they were occupied in repairing their water casks, which had been staved, while lying on shore to be filled, by a party of the British grenadiers. This providential escape enabled him to bring in the whole of the cargoes entrusted to his convoy, which proved a most seasonable relief to the army, already reduced to extreme necessity, and threatened with impending famine. For this fortunate adventure, which produced him nearly £1000, he received the most cordial acknowledgments of the General, who invited him next day to dine with his staff, and placed him at his right hand, in testimony of the high value he set upon his services.

He continued, for some time, to be employed in carrying down supplies, without meeting

with any thing in these voyages particularly interesting. On one of these occasions, however, while conveying a valuable cargo of military stores for Sir Edward Hughes, whose ammunition had been exhausted in a late engagement with the enemy, under Suffrein, he was unfortunately captured by the French; and carried prisoner to Cuddalore, which had lately fallen into their hands. Here he found the officers and crew of the *Hannibal* doomed to the same captivity. At first the officers were permitted to be at large on parole, and entertained hopes of being shortly exchanged; but these expectations were sadly disappointed.

Hyder Ali, who had overrun and desolated a great part of the Carnatic, and hoped, with the assistance of the French, to expel the British from the whole of that territory, was then using every effort to get English prisoners into his hands; in order to tempt them into his ranks, either by bribery, or the tortures of a lingering death. Suffrein was prevailed upon, by an offer of 300,000 rupees, to deliver up to him all his prisoners at Cuddalore, though the greatest indignation was testified by the commander and officers of the fort at this infamous bargain. All the captives on parole were accordingly ordered to be surrendered, without delay, to the escort appointed to carry them next day to Seringapa-

tam, there to join the standard, or be exposed to the brutal cruelty of the Hindoo conqueror.

No sooner was this intelligence communicated to Captain Wilson, than he determined that very night, if possible, to effect his escape; although no other alternative remained, than dropping from the rampart into the river that ran at the foot of the walls, in hopes of making his way across the country, to some neutral settlement, before he should be discovered. He intimated his design to a brother officer, and his own servant, a Bengalese boy, who both resolved to accompany him in his flight. They had concerted to meet on the ramparts as it grew dark, before the guard was set, and silently drop down from the battlement; but ere the hour arrived, his companion's heart failed him. The captain, with his boy, stole unperceived to the spot, and as not a moment was to be lost, he leaped down from a height of about forty feet, and fortunately pitched on his legs: but the shock of so great a descent made his chin strike against his knees, with such violence, that he tumbled headlong into the river. Upon recovering himself, he returned instantly to the foot of the wall, and caught the boy, who dropped from the same height, safe into his arms.

All that part of the 'Tanjore country is low, and intersected by rivers branching from the

great Coleroon, some of which are very wide, and dangerous from the rapidity of the tides. These obstacles, however, embarrassing as they were, it was necessary to encounter. As their hopes of safety depended mainly on the distance they could reach before the morning light, he pushed resolutely forward; and taking the boy on his back, as he could not swim, he crossed three arms of the river, directing his course towards Porto Nuovo, about four leagues and a half distant. Near this place, they were challenged by a sentinel, whose inquiries they fortunately eluded by concealing themselves. The river here was very broad, and greatly agitated by the tide. Taking the boy again on his back he plunged in, but after they had advanced a considerable way, the boy became so terrified in the midst of the breakers, that the captain was compelled to return and put him ashore, otherwise they must have inevitably perished together. After directing him to a place of security, he plunged again into the waves; but the tide running in so strong, he found it impossible, with all his efforts, to gain the opposite side, and was glad to turn back, after being carried to a considerable distance up the stream by the impetuosity of the current.

Here he providentially discovered on the dry beach, a canoe, which he instantly seized, and

was preparing to launch, when two Indians rushed upon him, demanding to know whither he was going, and what his intentions were. Seizing the outrigger of the boat, as his only weapon of defence, he told them, in a determined tone, that he had lost his way, and was proceeding to Tranquebar, where he had urgent business that required instant despatch. Overawed by his stern and undaunted air, the two black assailants laid down their paddles, and when he had drawn the canoe to the river, they peaceably rowed him across. He continued his route, favoured by moonlight, and after travelling several leagues, he reached the Coleroon before day-break, much exhausted with anxiety and fatigue.

The width of this mighty river, the parent of all the others he had crossed, caused a momentary dismay and hesitation, as he stood friendless and solitary on its sandy brink. But the approach of morning, and the perils of delay, dissipated his reluctant timidity, and casting himself into the flood, after long struggling, and almost in a state of insensibility, he reached the land before sunrise. He now congratulated himself that all his dangers were past, and his liberty secured; but these flattering expectations proved only the harbingers of new and more afflicting calamities.

Upon ascending a sand-bank, to look around him, he was immediately discovered by a party of Hyder's cavalry, scouring the coast. Unable to fly or resist, he was seized in a moment, and stripped naked, his hands tied behind his back; and in this situation he was driven before them several miles to head-quarters, under a burning sun, and covered with blisters; having travelled, as he supposed, since he quitted his prison, more than forty miles, besides all the rivers he had crossed. The officer there, who was a Mahometan, and one of Hyder's chieftains, interrogated Wilson sternly, whence he came, and whither he was going? The prisoner gave him an ingenuous account of his escape from Cuddalore, and the reasons for it, with all the circumstances attending his flight. The officer regarded him at first as an impostor, and could not credit his narrative; telling him that no man ever yet passed the Coleroon by swimming, or could possibly escape the alligators. But being assured of the fact by evidence he could no longer doubt, his indignation changed into reverence, and he began to look upon him as a being of some superior order.

From this place he was marched back, naked and half famished as he was, to his former prison; and, as an additional punishment for his flight, he was refused permission to join his

fellow officers, and thrust into a dungeon among the meanest captives. Next day he was brought out, chained to a common soldier, and, in that deplorable condition, in a burning climate, ordered to march on foot to Seringapatam, nearly five hundred miles distant. His companions, though unable to procure him any redress, expressed their concern by endeavouring to alleviate his miseries, and supplying him with clothes and other necessaries for his long and toilsome journey. But the avarice of his brutal conductors soon deprived him of these slender accommodations; for no sooner had they reached the first halting place, than they again stripped him to the skin, and left him once more exposed to the rays of a vertical sun.

They added insult to cruelty; and after goading him on all day, at night they thrust him, still chained to his fellow-sufferer, into a damp, unwholesome prison, crowded with other miserable objects. In various villages through which they passed, he was exhibited to the country people as an object of curiosity, many of them having never before seen a white man. There he was compelled to present himself in all possible positions, and to display all the gestures of which he was capable, that his mercenary keepers might obtain money at the expense of their captive.

On their way, he, with other prisoners, were brought into Hyder's presence, who strongly urged them, as the only means of regaining their liberty, to enlist in his service, and profess his religion; which some of them were induced to do, to escape from the horrible barbarities they had suffered. But Captain Wilson, though a stranger to any nobler principles than those of honour, rejected this offer with disdain, and resolved to encounter death with all its horrors, rather than desert his country, or exchange the creed of the Christian, for that of Mahomet; although, as a matter of faith, he probably regarded all religions with equal indifference.

In consequence of this inhuman treatment, and the forlorn state to which he was reduced, from the want of food and clothing, his health had begun to sink under such a complication of severities. He reached Seringapatam, however, greatly weakened by disease; his limbs corroded with the irons, his body covered with sores, and emaciated with dysentery, which had attacked him in addition to the rest of his afflictions. Here a new series of calamities, and more aggravated wretchedness awaited him, for he was thrust, without food or medicine, into a noisome dungeon; and cooped up with one hundred and fifty-three fellow-sufferers, who were chiefly prisoners of Colonel Macleod's

Highland regiment. He was loaded with the very irons which Colonel Baillie had worn, of thirty-two pounds weight; and kept chained to a common soldier night and day. This extraordinary rigour was inflicted as a punishment for his daring to escape, as well as for his rejecting the tempting offers of Hyder's friendship; for the other officers, among whom was General Sir David Baird, who afterwards avenged their wrongs by storming this very city, were permitted to be at large.

In this horrible captivity he remained two-and-twenty months, of unvaried and inexpressible misery. The place of confinement allotted to the common soldiers, was a kind of area or square, covered above, but exposed on all sides to the wind and rain. Thus, without any bed but the earth, or covering except the rags wrapped round him, he continued, fastened to his wretched companion, and suffering the extremity of disease and privation. Their whole allowance was only a pound of rice a day for each man, which they had to cook for themselves. This scanty portion, which was often of bad quality, was scarcely sufficient to sustain life, much less to appease the cravings of raging hunger; and they were compelled to the disagreeable resource, in order to make up the deficiency, of collecting and frying the white

ants, which pestered them in their prison. The rice was brought in, not in separate rations, but in a large basin; and, in order to secure an impartial distribution, and prevent any from taking more than their share, they provided themselves with a small piece of wood, rudely formed into a spoon, which no one was suffered to use but in his regular turn.

Such unexampled misery was more than the human constitution could bear. The hardy and athletic Highlanders fell among the first victims. Dropsy and flux were making daily inroads into this melancholy group of sufferers, and rapidly diminishing their numbers. How Captain Wilson escaped, is truly astonishing. Often was the dead corpse unchained from his arm in the morning, that another living victim might take its place, and fall by the same disease. Yet he himself recovered from the attack which he had when first carried into prison, and for more than a year maintained a tolerable state of health.

Before his captivity expired, however, he was seized with the usual symptoms, and felt the effects of the disorder that had carried off so many others. His body and legs swelled exceedingly, so that his chains were too strait to be endured: his face became livid and bloated, and every appearance seemed to indicate the

moment of his dissolution to be at hand. And when his circumstances are considered, exhausted with famine and disease, breathing the infected vapours of a prison, and bearing a weight of iron, cankering and consuming his flesh, it seems next to a miracle that he could ever have recovered or survived. A singular incident, however, whether by design or accident, is not said, proved the means of unexpected and instantaneous relief. He happened one day to exchange his usual allowance of rice for a small species of grain, called *ratche pier*, which he eagerly devoured, and being very thirsty, he drank the liquor in which it was boiled; and such was the effect of this diet, that, in a very short time, his body was reduced almost to a skeleton; and though greatly weakened, he felt completely relieved. The same remedy was recommended to others, and tried with great success by many of his fellow-prisoners.

By this time the ravages of death had greatly thinned their numbers, and it is probable the few that remained, the living monuments of Ali's cruelty, would not have struggled much longer with their miseries, had not the victories of Sir Eyre Coote happily compelled the barbarian to submit; and extorted from him as one of the conditions of peace, the release of all the Bri-

tish captives. At this announcement, the prison doors flew open, when a scene of inexpressible wretchedness presented itself. Of one hundred and fifty-three brave men, only thirty-two remained, in a state of disease and emaciation, that told too plainly the dismal history of their sufferings. Their humane and compassionate deliverer, Mr. Law, son to the Bishop of Carlisle, immediately provided them with food and clothes, and dressings for their wounds; but the kindness of their friends had nearly proved, to some of them, as fatal as the cruelties of their oppressors. Though cautioned against the dangers of excess and repletion, their ravenous appetites could not be restrained; and they devoured their meat with such voracity, as completely to surcharge the weakened and exhausted powers of nature.

Of this number, Captain Wilson was one. After devouring, with too great avidity, a large piece of beef, he was almost instantaneously seized with a violent fever, became delirious, and for a fortnight his life was despaired of. His constitution, which had resisted more than human nature seemed capable of enduring, sustained, in the moment of liberty and abundance, a severer shock than it had yet received, from the complicated infliction of fetters and famine. But in the councils of Supreme Wisdom, it was

determined that he should not thus perish; for He who had watched over him in prisons, and in perils by sea, restored his understanding, and brought him once more back from the gates of death; though as yet he acknowledged not the hand of his deliverer, nor expressed one sentiment of thankfulness, in gratitude to his benefactor.

A supply of clothes had been humanely forwarded to the destitute captives, by Lord Macartney; but there not being a sufficiency for all, some had one thing, some another. To Captain Wilson's share, a very large military hat fell, with a banian and pantaloons, very much out of repair. As soon as he was capable of undergoing the fatigues of the journey, he joined some others of his countrymen, and proceeded to Madras. Here he was received and welcomed in the kindest manner, by his former friends, who were not a little astonished at the grotesque figure he cut in his tattered and motley habiliments; which, added to his meagre person, made him very much resemble a maniac. Their hospitable treatment soon restored him to his wonted strength and spirits; and he began to think of entering again on service, as he had yet obtained but a very scanty provision. Accordingly, he made a voyage to Bencoolen and Batavia, as first mate of the *Intelligence*. Ben-

coolen is a most unhealthy place, and few who visit it escape without the putrid fever. On this occasion, there was a very great mortality among the crew of the *Intelligence*; every European on board, except Captain Wilson, having died before they left Puley Bay. A recruit of black men were taken in to navigate the vessel, and after visiting Batavia, they returned to Bengal. This proved to Captain Wilson a very profitable voyage, though his health had suffered materially.

In this manner he continued, for a year and a half, to improve his fortune; and became himself the commander, as well as a sharer in the vessel. By one of those mercantile speculations, the success of which seems often to be determined by the most trifling circumstances, he rose at once to prosperity and independence. Taking advantage of a sudden and unexpected turn of the wind, he got the start of all the other merchantmen bound for the same port, and finding the markets very much in want of the articles with which he was freighted, he obtained his own price for the greater part of his goods, as there was no competitor to contend with him. Thus in one month, and by a singular occurrence in his favour, he realized a sum sufficient to induce him to retire from business,

and exchange the toils and hazards of the sea, for the comforts of domestic society.

With this view he embarked, in 1794, as a passenger in a ship that was returning from Bengal to England. On the voyage, he had frequent disputes about religion with a Baptist missionary on board, who was greatly scandalized at his infidel principles, as well as his careless conduct; and used to observe, that he should have more hope of converting the Lascars to Christianity, than Captain Wilson. On arriving in safety at Portsmouth, he immediately began to look about him for an agreeable abode, in which he might repair his shattered health, and enjoy the fruits of his fortunate enterprise. He soon discovered a place to his mind at Horndean, in Hampshire. This he purchased: and set himself down contented, anticipating much happiness from the sports of the country, and the fashionable society in the neighbourhood. Being unmarried, he found it necessary to have a proper person to manage his household economy. This duty he devolved upon his niece, a prudent and agreeable person, and one whose sentiments were imbued with true piety.

Here he lived nearly two years, decent and sober in his conduct, but careless and unconcerned about religion, and an utter stranger to

its principles and its power. During all the perils and sufferings he had undergone, his heart appears to have remained as insensible as the nether millstone to any thing like feelings of gratitude or devotion. No humiliation, no prayer, no sense of sin, no recourse to the blood of a Redeemer, no regard for the future welfare of his soul, ever seems to have entered his thoughts, or alarmed his conscience. He came out of the furnace as hardened and impenitent as ever—his principles unchanged, and the obduracy of his heart not softened with the tears of repentance, nor melted down into godly sorrow.

His mercies had no better effect than his chastisements and afflictions. He returned to life and health with the same callous propensities, the same stubborn nature, the same forgetfulness of God, and the same insensibility to those manifestations of divine care, that had in such a wonderful manner led him by a way which he knew not—preserved him in deaths oft—in hunger, and thirst, and nakedness—in journeyings and in prisons—in perils of waters, in perils in the wilderness, in perils by the heathen; and after all these dangers, crowned his labours with uncommon success, by means which appeared almost miraculous. But the plans of Omniscience are inscrutable; and while

they are directed by infinite wisdom, they are also characterized by benevolence. His Divine Master, who had chosen him from the beginning to be the herald of his cross, and to carry the message of eternal life to the neglected solitudes of the Indian Ocean, bore with him in his ignorance and rebellion, and was gradually preparing him, by a series of providences, for that peculiar work, in which he afterwards embarked with so noble and disinterested a zeal.

Captain Wilson's infidelity may be ascribed mainly to two causes; the want of an early and scriptural acquaintance with religion and his residence for so many years in India: a country which has proved fatal to the principles of many Europeans; who, making wealth the sole object of their worship, prostrate their hearts before the shrine of this golden image, with a more unhallowed devotion, than if they bent the knee in the chambers of Asiatic idolatry. His mind had been rendered completely callous, by the events and occupations of his life; and this baleful influence had darkened down upon his faculties, so as to obliterate any remains of religion, and all sense of God's moral government among men.

Like all other disciples of Deism, he entertained lofty conceptions of human nature, and was deeply imbued with a self-complacent ad-

miration of his own goodness. He considered that he had so conducted himself as to merit the congratulations of the world, and had done nothing he could reproach himself with, as unjust to his neighbour or offensive in the eye of God. He had even, in some instances, behaved with a generosity that he thought could not fail to secure for him the divine approbation; and when compared with others of his countrymen in that part of the world, he flattered himself he ought rather to be celebrated as a man of exalted virtue, than regarded as an unbeliever, or a sinner. He was conscious of the goodness of his heart and the general integrity of his actions, and therefore saw no reason to embitter his present enjoyments with disagreeable or alarming reflections. Besides, his many wonderful escapes, his singular preservations, and above all, his success in his mercantile engagements, which had raised him to affluence, after being stripped of all he possessed, led him proudly to imagine that he was not only a child of fortune, but in special favour with the Deity. He had, while in the prime of life, obtained an easy competency, returned home with a constitution unsubdued by an eastern climate, possessed a cheerful mind, which fitted him for company, and for what the world calls a man of fashion; it was time, therefore, he con-

ceived, to enjoy himself, and to adopt the maxim of the rich man in the gospel, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for thou hast goods laid up for many years." In this state of tranquillity and easy indifference, he felt no desire to investigate the evidences of religion, or have his repose broken in upon by considerations about the moral government of the world—the method of man's acceptance with God, or the final retribution to be awarded hereafter to the righteous and the wicked.

It is difficult, indeed, to imagine almost any thing more unlikely, than that the subjects of revelation should engage, or interest a mind so wrapt up in the flattering opinions of superior worth, and the romantic schemes of earthly happiness. The objections must have appeared to him numerous and formidable, against receiving a book as a revelation from God, the design of which was to teach him that his heart was deeply depraved—that he had been a rebel through life against his Maker—that he had incurred his displeasure, and must expect pardon and happiness solely through the unmerited mercy of him he had offended. These sentiments, however, humiliating and repugnant as they were to his present system, he came at length to adopt.

The conversations and exemplary conduct of

his niece, had no small share in diffusing this preparatory influence over his mind; though he regarded her anxiety about religious ordinances, as a weakness, or a needless scrupulosity of conscience; and her aversion to mingle in fashionable society, he mistook for a morose contempt of innocent gaieties and social amusement. He was favoured also with the acquaintance and friendship of Captain Sims, a gentleman who had retired from the active duties of his profession, upon a respectable competency, and was residing in the immediate neighbourhood. Captain Sims was then advanced in life, but he had for many years regularly attended divine worship, and professed a zealous attachment to the principles of vital religion. He had frequently introduced the subject to Captain Wilson, representing to him the dangers of infidelity, and endeavouring to impress his mind with a conviction of the truth of a divine revelation: but though a confirmed believer himself, he was better acquainted with the interior of religion, than qualified to defend its outworks. He had studied the Scriptures with great care, but had employed his mind about the general evidences of Christianity too little, to meet the sophistical reasonings of his sceptical companion.

'The Indian Captain proudly defied the artillery of his heavy denunciations against unbe-

lievers, and smiled at his entreating him to abandon the ranks of scepticism, in which he had enrolled himself, and to join in affinity and allegiance with the orthodox party. Citations from Scripture, to prove that his principles were wrong, with him had no authority, because he disbelieved them; and demanded better evidence than mere assertion, that the Bible was really the word of God. He found it easy, therefore, to obtain a temporary victory over his friend, and to foil a less dexterous combatant, who was sincere in his profession, but unskilful in the use of his weapons.

Captain Sims, unable to defend himself against the spiritual attacks of his ingenious antagonist, wisely withdrew from the field, but left, as a substitute, a book, written by the late General Burn, entitled, “The Christian Officer’s Complete Armour;” being a dialogue between a captain and a major, on the evidences of revelation. Of this treatise, Captain Wilson read only the title page, and finding that it related to the defence of Christianity, he returned it, after having kept it carelessly by him for a few weeks.

These conversations and discussions, however unprofitable at the time, were not without their good effects. Occasionally, and at intervals, transient convictions would strike his con-

science, like the flashes of lightning that cross the path of the benighted traveller. He would sometimes indulge the reflection, that if Christianity were from God, his plan of life was altogether wrong, his estimate of himself erroneous, and his hopes of future happiness fallacious. Yet though his judgment might suggest the propriety of a candid investigation of the subject, his heart rose with indignant opposition, against sentiments which were at variance with the system of his whole life.

It happened that Captain Sims had invited the minister of the chapel at Portsea, (the Rev. J. Griffin,) where he attended divine worship, to spend a few days with him in the country. During this short visit, he was introduced to Captain Wilson, and this seemingly accidental circumstance, not only proved the happy means of his conversion, but laid the foundation of a cordial attachment between them, that was only broken off by death. At one of their dinner parties, the topic of conversation chanced to be on the authenticity of the sacred Scriptures, and Captain Sims pleasantly remarked, that, as he had already been foiled on that subject, he referred the cause to his young friend the minister, who was better able to maintain the contest than he was.

The minister politely declined what might

seem an obtusion of his sentiments on the company, and added, that he thought the matter too serious and important for the occasion, although he was ready at all times to defend the truth, according to the best of his abilities. Captain Wilson smiled at the gravity of the clergyman, and observed, that it would be no obtusion: "I assure you, sir," continued he with a dogmatical air, "I am glad of the opportunity to converse on it; for I have never met with a clergyman yet, and I have conversed with several, that I could not foil in a quarter of an hour." This seemed a challenge that no man of honour could decline; and when the party broke up, the two combatants, embracing the delightful opportunity which a fine evening in July afforded, adjourned to a shady bower in the garden, there to debate the point, whether Christianity was a revelation from God.

The minister reminded him to treat the subject with all the seriousness it deserved; and very generously proposed to allow him the choice of his own mode of argument, either to object or reply, as he might find most agreeable. Captain Wilson admitted the subject was serious, and that he intended to treat it as such; but rather declined entering into a formal and logical mode of reasoning; observing, that if the principal objections were removed, he was ready

to acknowledge the Scriptures as the word of God; and would endeavour to conform his principles and his conduct accordingly. He granted at once the superior excellence of Christianity, and that none of the writings of the Mahometans, the Hindoos, or the Chinese, could bear a comparison of claims to divine revelation, with those contained in the Old and New Testament; but he thought there were difficulties connected with its evidences and its doctrines, which could not be satisfactorily explained. These it appeared to him impossible to obviate, in such a way as to produce conviction.

Being requested to state what he thought most objectionable, the following, after some deliberation, were urged as the chief reasons of his incredulity: That the Scriptures give an unlovely representation of the divine character, contrary to what appears in the works of nature; that they increase our perplexities with respect to religion, by requiring us to believe mysteries, or truths not within the sphere of our understanding; that what is assumed as a revelation from God to the world, and as a universal remedy for all its intellectual errors and moral evils, had not, after so many thousand years, reached one-tenth part of the inhabitants of the globe; that the magnitude of creation renders it

altogether improbable that the Supreme Being has conducted himself towards the inhabitants of this comparatively insignificant spot of the universe, in the manner the Scriptures represent him to have done; and that Judaism and Christianity, instead of being a benefit, had been an injury to the world. 'These he confessed were the most weighty and formidable difficulties, and though there were others in detail, yet if these could be removed, the rest, he allowed, would have very little influence.

'These objections, the reader will perceive, have been produced and re-produced by infidels in various forms, and as often refuted in the most satisfactory manner; but as it would not have answered his present design merely to make this assertion, the minister condescended to reply briefly to the several particulars, in such a way as he hoped would tend, if not fully to repel the arguments, at least to weaken their force. He stated as a general preliminary, that it was unphilosophical, and contrary to the acknowledged methods of sound reasoning, to object to the truth of a proposition, because that truth contained some principles difficult to be comprehended. Such a prejudice would be a mighty barrier to the attainment of knowledge in almost every science; in chemistry, mathematics, natural history, &c., where there are

innumerable principles, the truth or reality of which is proved by incontestible evidences, although the truth itself contains first principles that cannot be explained.

This mode of objecting, he observed, would apply with equal force against Deism as against Christianity, since there were many positions in natural, as well as in revealed religion, against which similar difficulties might be urged. For example, the permission of moral evil, the providence of God, the existence of spirit as distinct from matter, and consequently a future state of being, might all be denied on the same principle, since each of these truths have mysteries connected with them; and yet many Deists believe them, and admit the evidence by which they are proved. This, therefore, clearly showed the unreasonableness of those who objected to the evidences on which revelation is founded, merely because the subject was found to contain some inexplicable difficulties.

He next replied to his objection as to the Scriptural representations of the divine character—unloveliness and severity. He observed, that our conceptions of character are often rather pictures drawn after our own fancies or feelings, than exact resemblances of the truth; and that which is excellent in the esteem of one man, often is, in the opinion of another, quite the re-

verse. Thus, a disobedient son, an indolent servant, or a condemned criminal, will form their estimates as to the character of a father, a master, or a judge, very differently from a virtuous child, an industrious servant, or a loyal subject. The one will see goodness and virtue, where the other can discover nothing but harshness and severity. One who has a competent fortune, a comfortable residence, and pleasant gardens, will think more favourably of the kindness and munificence of the Deity, than the slave in the mines, or the beggar who wanders on a precarious charity. If it be true, as Scripture asserts, that we are in a state of enmity and rebellion against God, is it to be wondered at if we should dislike the description he has given us of himself, or deem those features unlovely that we cannot look upon but with terror!

He showed him, on the other hand, that they must adopt very partial and erroneous views of the divine character, who should conceive of it as all goodness and mercy; forgetting, that at the same time, to be consistent with itself and with our ideas of perfection, it must possess also the attributes of justice and holiness. These latter attributes are in Scripture associated with his goodness, in order to form a complete and perfect character. In order to apply this argu-

ment, and bring it home to the case of his opponent, the minister drew a contrast between the two systems, and left his friend to infer, which of them gave the most favourable representation of the goodness and benevolence of the Deity—that which assured us of a future state, which brought life and immortality to light, and directed us to the means of obtaining them; or that which left these momentous and interesting questions in darkness and uncertainty. “Is this then,” he asked, “a proof of the goodness of God, to leave you in a state of the most awful suspense, on subjects that so nearly concern your greatest happiness? Is this a mark of goodness, to give you the dim light of reason, which, like that of the glow-worm, only serves to make the surrounding darkness more visible; and to refuse that light which is able to dispel your darkness? To give you a conscience capable of tormenting you, without the method of having it appeased—without knowing whether he will pardon few sins, or many, and on what conditions? And is this the system that is founded on the goodness of God? No: the subject will not bear looking at; the further you go, the more the mind is perplexed. It is revelation that gives the most lovely exhibition of this goodness. There the doubts and fears of the anxious mind are resolved. Life and

immortality are brought to light by the gospel.”

To this Captain Wilson had nothing to reply; but he mentioned some particular passages in the Old Testament that he could not reconcile with his ideas of the divine goodness, such as the distinction between the offerings of Cain and Abel, the command of God to the Israelites, with respect to the nations that were to be expelled from the promised land, and especially the destruction of the Canaanites. Of these the minister gave him such explanations, as satisfied him that the Scripture account was not attended with greater difficulties than any other, but the contrary; and that even as matters of fact, they appeared not to be a greater violation of justice or humanity, than the African slave-trade, which he scrupled not to reconcile with his principles.

The captain, finding that he could make no ground on his antagonist, abandoned this point as indefensible, and retired to what he considered a more tenable position, the absurdity of Scripture requiring him to believe mysteries. The minister admitted that the Scriptures contain a variety of truths which may be considered as mysteries; that is, which imply something in their nature, degree, or mode of existence, which lies beyond the sphere of our compre-

hension; not that the doctrine or truth itself is hidden, for this would be a contradiction in terms. But he contended, that these were not more mysterious than a number of principles which are commonly received by philosophers; the evidences of whose existence are so strong, that they cannot refuse their assent to them; such as the phenomena of animal and vegetable vitality; the formation of matter out of nothing; the eternity and immensity of the Divine Being, which no finite mind can comprehend. "If therefore," he concluded, "the inspired volume contains a variety of truths which lie beyond the sphere of our limited capacity, it is rather an evidence of its divine authenticity, than against it."

The captain was willing to allow, that he might receive some truths which he did not fully comprehend, but could never be brought to believe what was contrary to the nature of things. He instanced the doctrine of the Trinity; and added, that this was so contrary to reason, that he had hardly patience to attend to evidences which attempted to prove such an absurdity, as that three are one, and one is three; or that the book which contains such preposterous positions was the word of God.

The minister again reminded him, that the Scriptures contained some things hard to be un-

derstood, and therefore to attempt to explain what is inexplicable, would be as ridiculous as it was impossible; but this, he observed, could be no reasonable objection to our receiving a revelation from the Deity, if otherwise proved, that we could not understand the mode of his essence or existence. It was too assuming, to make our judgment of the Deity a standard by which to try the evidences of a revelation from him to man; since, upon such a principle, it would be impossible for the Divine Being to make a revelation of himself to his creatures, supposing that there was any thing in the nature of his existence, incompatible with our modes of reasoning. And as to believing nothing that is seemingly contrary to reason, he questioned whether, in this assertion, the captain was quite correct. "Do you not," said he, "believe that God is every where present, in the most strict and philosophical sense of the word? and yet do you not as firmly believe, that there are innumerable worlds of matter in the universe, and also innumerable spirits, who are distinct, intelligent, free agents? What power of reasoning is your mind endowed with, by which it can reconcile these two opposite propositions? Can two beings, two substances, occupy exactly the same space at the same time? If you believe the other two proposi-

tions, you must also believe that they can. But is not this contrary to your mode of reasoning; or as far as your perceptions go, contrary to the nature of things?"

The doctrine of the unity of the Deity, so clearly taught in Scripture, and which appears to us now to be a self-evident position, for many ages, he told him, had to struggle with the reasonings of men before it obtained extensive belief; and even yet had not obtained universal reception. It was contrary to the reason of the ancients, seeing there were so many opposite principles in the universe, both moral and physical, that there should be but one God. The belief of a plurality of deities was general through all nations; a fact which might serve to show how dangerous it is, to make our ideas of the nature of the divine existence a reason for refusing to examine the claims of Scripture to be a revelation from God: since, had men always acted under the influence of this principle, the doctrine of the divine unity might still have been treated as an absurdity.

The captain agreed that there was something in the nature of spiritual beings that we could not understand, and seemed to perceive the absurdity of his prescribing a mode of existence to what was incomprehensible, or of making human reason the standard by which to deter-

mine the nature of the divine essence. He, therefore, proposed to take up his third objection to revelation, viz. that it had never been universally known; a defect that rendered it, in a great measure, of no use, since it could neither be a rule of duty, nor a remedy for misery, where men had never heard of it. "It is not denied," replied his friend, "that the want of the universal diffusion of revelation, is a serious evil to the world; but may not the objection you now urge, have been one cause of preventing its becoming universal? If your argument is valid, it never can become so; for if all men refuse to examine its claims to divine authenticity, till it is universally known, it is morally impossible it should ever be received by the whole world, for the objection would present an insuperable barrier to its general reception. This is reasoning in a circle, and terminates in absurdity: it is, in fact, to say, that it ought not to be universally received, till it is universally received. But perhaps your objection supposes, that if God gave a revelation of his will to man, there is something in the nature of his character, and of his moral government, which would justify us in concluding, that he would at the same time make the discovery to all."

Upon this supposition, he showed him that his objection was quite unsupported by the

analysis of the divine government; and was extremely inconsistent in a Deist, who professed to believe that God had given a discovery of himself in his works, sufficiently intelligible to all mankind; and yet Deism was not universal, the numbers of its disciples being few, compared with Christians, and still smaller compared with heathens and idolaters. 'The objection ought, therefore, he observed, to have no weight with him, because it applied with more than equal force against his own system. "I see no alternative for you," he concluded, "upon your own argument, but either to admit the principles of Atheism or Paganism, or to go calmly into the evidences of Christianity." That the Scriptures are not universally known, he informed him, was one evidence of the truth of some of the great principles which they contain; for they describe men as in a state of rebellion against their Maker, not liking to retain God in their thoughts. It was not then a matter of surprise, that men should make objections against the divine origin of a book, which prescribed rules to which they have no wish to be conformed, motives of action they never feel, and denunciations of wrath against sins to which they are strongly attached, both by inclination and habit. But it can never be an excuse to the objectors of Christianity, that it is not univer-

sally received, or that others have neglected to inquire into its authority, or refused submission to its proposals. Such a plea would rather aggravate than extenuate their criminality. In applying the argument, he begged his friend seriously to consider, that however some might plead before the tribunal of their Maker, that they never had an opportunity to investigate the claims or the doctrines of Scripture, he would not be entitled to make this plea. "Let me entreat you then," he concluded, "patiently to examine their evidences, and study their contents. I am persuaded you will not be offended with me, for using this earnestness; since it must appear to you a species of hypocrisy in me, to profess to believe the truth and importance of revelation, and not be desirous that others also should believe its divine origin, and participate in its benefits."

The captain expressed himself obliged to the minister for his good wishes, however unnecessary he might think them; but dropt no remarks that could indicate what impression his arguments and earnest expostulations had made upon him. It appears, however, he could advance nothing in his own vindication, for he immediately turned the conversation towards another objection, which he drew from the extent or magnitude of creation. It seemed to him highly

improbable, he said, that the inhabitants of this comparatively insignificant spot, should receive that kind of attention described in the Scriptures, since the globe we inhabit, probably bears a less proportion to the universe, than an orange bears to the solar system: When we see that the waters and the air are full of animation, and that vegetables and animals are little worlds covered with inhabitants, is it not natural to suppose that the globes which float in the boundless extent of space around us, are also inhabited? And when we consider that our own is the centre of a system, with planets like our earth, and some of them much larger, revolving round it, is it not probable that the fixed stars are suns to other systems? Now, that a Being possessed of such vast, and to us, boundless dominions, should speak and act as though all his other works were made for the inhabitants of this little spot; and that he who made and governs all, should unite himself with human nature, and die to restore man to happiness, seemed so much beyond the bounds of probability, that he wondered how any man of a philosophical mind could believe such things.

Before replying to this objection in detail, the minister reminded him that the whole argument was weak; and one part of his view erroneous, since Scripture no where represents, that all the

works of God were made for the benefit of man, nor that any of them were made exclusively for his advantage. "I do not," he proceeded, "deny some of your probabilities; it may be true, that the stars are suns, and these suns have planetary systems, and these systems are all inhabited; but it may be useful to recollect, that these are only probabilities and not certainties. It is from one train of probabilities that you deduce another, so that the probabilities urged against the truth of revelation are not deductions from known facts: this to a philosopher (that is, to a man of close reasoning) must very much weaken the objection. To probability then, I would oppose probability, and thus balance your objection, or, as I think, turn the scale against it. The probabilities in favour of revelation, to be deduced from the minuteness of the works of God, are, I think, equal both in number and weight, to those which form the objection arising from the magnitude of his works."

This he illustrated, by referring to the nice adjustments in the minutest parts of the animal structure: the adaptation of the eye to light, the ear to sound, the lungs for respiration; and in short, the whole animal economy, which extended even to the smallest fly or insect. This minute attention of the divine Being to the operations of matter, made it probable, that he is

not less attentive to the operations of mind: and considering that all these arrangements are connected with animal or human happiness, the inference obviously was, that he who has been so kindly attentive to the body, had not neglected the soul; that he who has given light for the eye, has given truth for the understanding: And seeing that the Scriptures contain principles as suited to the comfort of the mind, as food is suited to the sustenance of the body, the probability is that these truths are from God, because there is as pleasing an adaptation between these truths and the state or condition of the human mind, as there is between food and hunger, light and the power of vision.

But the magnitude of his works suggests probabilities in favour of revelation, as well as the minuteness of them. In surveying the greatness of his power in creating such boundless works, and his astonishing wisdom in the management of them; who can resist the persuasion that he would, for the same reasons, magnify his condescension, goodness, and mercy, by some method corresponding with that by which he has displayed his wisdom and power; and nowhere is this so fully to be seen, as in those Scriptures which relate the history of the redemption of the world by the Son of God. This is an event which fills us with as much astonishment at his

loving kindness and tender mercy, as the vastness of his works fills us with astonishment at his power. Philosophy presents a magnificent display of the greatness of God, but the Scriptures give us also a grand display of his goodness. Here, therefore, the probability is also in favour of revelation.

In estimating the argument from the magnitude of creation, and the comparative insignificance of man, there was one fact we ought not to lose sight of, the superior excellence of intelligence to that of matter. The inhabitants of this earth, considered as intelligent creatures, were of more importance in the scale of being, than all the innumerable worlds of matter which God had made; and which appeared, either directly, or remotely to minister to the good of man. The demonstrations of beneficent design, therefore, arising from the works of God, were proofs in favour of the Scriptures being a revelation from him; and that he had done every thing to show his concern for the present and future happiness of his creatures. Besides, it was enough to expose the weakness of the objection, that the whole reasoning was built altogether upon hypothesis and probability.

These arguments, though they did not appear to the Captain altogether satisfactory, or convincing, yet tended, by his own concession, to

set the subject in a more favourable light. "But how do you account for it," said he, "that the principles of the Scriptures have done so little good in the world; and have been the cause of so much superstition, tyranny, and bloodshed?" "You appear," said the minister, "to take these things for granted, as though they were self-evident positions; but I must beg leave to deny the statement. Christianity has done vast good in the world, and has not, properly considered, been the cause of superstition, tyranny, or cruelty. It is certainly much to be lamented, that some, for ambitious purposes, under the mask of religion, have invented superstitious observances, to divert the attention of men from their just rights; and have persecuted myriads with unrelenting severity, for daring to think for themselves. But I presume you will admit that this was done from political motives; and nothing can be a stronger proof that these things cannot be fairly attributed to the principles of Christianity, than the Catholics having prohibited the people from reading the Scriptures. Who does not perceive, that had Christianity justified their conduct, they would most readily have circulated the sacred book in their own defence?"

Nothing, he justly observed, could be more opposite to the spirit of cruelty and oppression, than the language of Christ, or the principles

and examples recorded in the New Testament ; and nothing can be more uncandid, than to ascribe to Christianity, the vices and misconduct of those who have disgraced the name and profession of Christians. It must be evident to every one, that since the Scriptures have been more freely circulated, and more generally read, the state of society in Europe, and the world at large, has gradually increased in amelioration.

Here the Captain, imagining he had found in this sort of argument, a two-edged sword which he could turn with advantage upon his adversary, interrupted him ; and observed with a smile, " You certainly have a happy knack of getting clear of a difficulty. When I object to the mystery of your principles, you refer me to your practice ; and when I refer to the bad practices of the votaries of Christianity, you refer me to your principles." " Notwithstanding your pleasantry," rejoined his friend, " I am persuaded, however indignant you feel, and not more so than I do, at the conduct of those who have disgraced the Christian name, by their unjust and cruel actions, you do not believe it is fairly to be attributed to the principles of Christianity. This, however, is only the negative part of the subject ; but there are, I think, strong positive evidences that the Gospel has proved an extensive blessing to the world. In order to

See this truth in a strong light, we should contemplate the ancient state of the world, where revelation had not reached; and we should also compare those parts of the world now, where Christianity has not been received, with those where it has been suffered to have its unrestrained and native influence."

It could be proved, he observed, from various evidences of historical facts, that Christianity had been the cause of abolishing the practice of human sacrifices, which once prevailed both in Britain, and various parts of the Continent of Europe, where vast numbers of human beings were every year immolated, as the effect of their false religion, but the benign genius of the Gospel had long since trodden down their cruel altars, and wrested from them their bloody knife. It had restored women to their proper station in society, and thus tended to render one half of the inhabitants happy; and by them to soften the manners, and promote the happiness of the other half. The sacred institution of marriage had been sanctioned, and guarded by the Christian religion; divorce rendered difficult and unattainable, except for high crimes; females and children were thus protected, and the great and depopulating vices kept in check, by the laws and manners which it had diffused.

The cruel manner in which slaves were

treated by the ancients, is written in lines of blood on the historic pages of almost every nation—England and every kingdom of the Continent, had its market for slaves as well as for cattle, till the Gospel infused milder principles into their laws and usages. It is to the influence of Christianity that Europe owes its advanced state of civilization, beyond the other parts of the world; and wherever it has had the most extensive and unrestrained operation, there is the most improved and happy state of society. These, he concluded, were known and public facts, which could be accounted for on no other principles, than those enforced from the Christian revelation.

The Captain was here allowed an opportunity of offering any remarks he had to make, by way of refutation or defence; but as he remained silent, the minister began to infer, that he either found his objections giving way, or grew tired of the conversation. “I will relieve you from that suspicion,” replied the other, “for I assure you, I never was more interested in a conversation in all my life, and I should be sorry if our friends came to interrupt us: but there is one thing more I should like to have your remarks on, which has often occurred to me to be very unaccountable. If Christianity contains a divine revelation, how is it that there is such a

diversity of opinions among those who believe it to be the word of God? There are as many opposite sentiments as there are pages, and almost as many sects as sentiments; how then am I to know what is right?"

This objection, his friend answered, would apply more forcibly to the system of Deists than of Christians, since the former differ among themselves as much as the latter; and though they might have a few sentiments that are fixed, the far greater part were as fleeting and mutable as the clouds; for among all the Deists that have ever written, there were not two that had agreed even upon the outlines of the system of natural religion. But he begged to remind him, that the real differences among Christians were fewer than is generally supposed. Some of the opinions in which they differed, were about such comparative trifles, that they bear no proportion to the sentiments in which they agreed. Besides, as revelation never pretended to afford supernatural powers of intellect, to preserve all who received it from the possibility of any error; but proposed its truths to the minds of men, in the state in which it found them, it could not be matter of surprise, that there should be differences of opinion on subjects so various and complicated; especially considering what a diversity of degrees there is in the strength of

human reason—what secret influence the dispositions of the heart have over the decisions of the understanding, and how deep and extensive are the prejudices of education. It should also be remembered, that many who professed to believe Christianity, were not under the influence of its doctrines; and had an interest in giving them such explanations as suited their pride, their evil passions, and worldly spirit. As to the difficulty of knowing what is right among such a diversity of sentiments, he was told that the Scriptures did not lay him under obligation to be absolutely guided by the opinions of any; that he was to exercise his own faculties, and form his own opinions from the Scriptures themselves. If the heart, added his friend, be truly under the influence of the truths of the Gospel, the judgment will not be essentially and finally wrong; and wherever men are unanimous about the spirit and temper of the Gospel, and feel its influence, they can differ without disagreeing on subjects of minor importance.

As they had already spent a considerable time in this discussion, and could not expect much more leisure to prolong the debate, the minister could only advert in a very cursory manner to some of the leading particulars of the Christian evidences. He represented to him the neces-

sity of revelation, and the inefficacy of Deism to answer all the purposes of religion; though these were stated rather as preliminaries to the grand subject of inquiry: 'That no better evidence than the history of the heathen world was required, to prove that a revelation from God was absolutely necessary, to make known the attributes and will of the Deity; as well as to teach the reality, and explain the nature of the divine government—a subject denied, or misconceived by Pagans and Deists, and of which Scripture alone has given a correct and consoling view: 'That revelation was necessary to assure us of the reality of a future state—to give us a decisive standard of right and wrong, to describe our duty to God, to ourselves, to our relatives, and to our neighbours: 'That it was necessary to satisfy the guilty and anxious mind, whether God will pardon sins, and by what evidence we may know he pardons them.

'These were points essential to the happiness of man, especially to the inquisitive mind, even during health; but more peculiarly so, in the time of affliction and of approaching dissolution. Of these, Deism could give no satisfactory answer to men's anxious anticipations of future hopes or fears. It was incapable of bringing the mind, the heart, and the conscience to a state of rest and tranquillity. It was deficient

in strong and clear motives to produce a holy life; and appeared obviously unequal to effect any extensive moral change in the state of man. The principles and conduct of avowed Deists were for the most part immoral, and unconcerned about all religion; and the manner of their death has generally been such, as will bear no comparison with the death of a vast cloud of Christian witnesses, for unfeigned resignation, manly fortitude, or cheerful willingness to die, and a confident expectation of future felicity.

The minister next directed his attention to the evidences arising from revelation itself, from the nature, the number, and the designs of the facts recorded in Scripture. He showed him that if the facts were true, the doctrines could not be false; for the principal doctrines rested on the principal facts, which were such as none but Omnipotence could have effected, and were preferred for the purpose of confirming the doctrines taught by Moses and the prophets of the Old Testament, and by Christ and his apostles in the New. That the Scripture history had been sufficiently corroborated by the writings of the ancients, and the customs and manners of Eastern nations. That the critical observations of the most profound linguists, the disquisitions of those best acquainted with Oriental literature, the modern geographical discoveries within the

sphere of sacred history, together with the deepest researches into chronology, and the most accurate astronomical calculations, all united to prove the authenticity of the Scripture facts.

The Captain here confessed that since his return from India, on hearing his niece refer to some parts of the Bible, he had been forcibly struck with several things, which proved the Scriptures to be an Eastern book. Among other things, he remarked, that the language of one of the Psalms, where David says, *Thou anointest my head with oil, and my cup runneth over*, most likely alludes to a custom which has continued to this day. "I once, (says he) had this ceremony performed on myself, in the house of a great and rich Indian, in the presence of a large company. The gentleman of the house, poured upon my head and arms a delightfully odoriferous perfume, put a golden cup into my hand, and poured wine into it till it ran over; assuring me, at the same time, that it was a great pleasure to him to receive me, and that I should find a rich supply in his house. I think the sacred poet expressed his sense of the divine goodness, by allusion to this custom."

His friend assured him, that on a more careful perusal of the inspired writings, he would discover various other allusions to Eastern manners; and that so many historical truths, and

matters of fact, united to corroborate the claims of revelation, as could not possibly meet in any imposture whatever: that observances and anniversaries had been instituted, in memory of certain transactions; which still remain the venerable memorials of their reality: that such facts as the departure of the Israelites from Egypt—the destroying of the first born of all the Egyptians, in memory of which the passover was kept, and by the Jews still continuing to be kept—the dispersion of the Jews, and yet their continuing for so many ages a distinct people—the agreement of prophecies and historical events respecting the cities of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, and Jerusalem—the resurrection of Christ—the conversion of St. Paul—the gift of tongues—the institutions of Baptism and the Lord's Supper—and the irresistible success of the gospel, in opposition to the reasonings of the Grecian philosophers, the malignant designs of the Jews, and the systematic and persevering efforts of the Roman government—were all such singular and unparalleled events, that it appears almost impossible for any man seriously to consider them, in connexion with the truths they are designed to establish, without feeling an awe upon his spirit, and a secret conviction in his mind, that the Scriptures are the word of God.

Of the fulfilment of some of these predic-

tions, the Captain confessed that he had himself had ocular demonstration. Besides the Jews, whose dispersion and distinct nationality for so many ages, was very remarkable, there was another people equally distinct, and whose prophetic character he had often seen verified, viz. the Ishmaelites.—“I have frequently,” says he, “had them in my service, and seen them in various situations; but no change of place, connexion, or circumstances, in the least alters their character: *Their hand is against every man, and every man’s hand is against them.* Nothing can be more accurate than this description, which the Bible gives us of them.”

As the evening was drawing on apace, and time would not permit them to prosecute the subject at greater length, the minister, in order to strengthen the impressions which his arguments had evidently made, recommended to the Captain such books as treated on the several topics they had been discussing. A course of systematic reading, he thought best fitted to obviate all difficulties, which could not possibly be done in a hasty conversation; and to extirpate every lingering doubt that might still lurk in the dark recesses of his heart. Leland’s “View of the Deistical Writers,” and Halyburton’s “Inefficacy of Natural Religion,” were pointed out to him, as tests by which to try the efficacy

of his system. He was advised likewise to peruse Ryan's "History of the Effects of Religion on Mankind;" Butler's "Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion;" Leslie's "Short Method with the Deists;" Newton "On the Prophecies;" Campbell "On Miracles;" Lardner "On the Credibility of the Gospel History;" West "On the Resurrection of Christ;" Lytton "On the Conversion of St. Paul;" and Paley's "Horæ Paulinæ." "From these," added his friend, "your mind, I am persuaded, will receive such a refulgency of evidence, that you will as readily admit the divine authenticity of the Scriptures, as you do that light is the medium of vision, or that life is the cause of sensibility. Before parting, I must beg leave to remind you, that of all the subjects that can possibly engage your attention, this is the most important. Be not surprised, therefore, that I feel a sincere and friendly concern that you may believe unto eternal life; that you may experience the happiness which I believe nothing else can afford; and devote your life to glorify Him, who has so wonderfully preserved and prospered you." Captain Sims and their other friends now entered: "Has he convinced you?" said he, addressing himself to Captain Wilson. "I will not say much about that," replied the other, "but he has said some things I shall

never forget." Here the subject of controversy was dropt, and the evening spent in cheerful conversation.

The impression produced on Captain Wilson's mind, though it could hardly yet be said to amount to confirmation, or entire conviction, had the effect of rousing his attention to the subject. He read Major Burns' book, which he had formerly returned unopened, with the avidity with which a hungry man receives food. Every page fortified and confirmed the principles he had heard inculcated. For some days he continued to peruse the Scriptures, occasionally conversing with his niece, and the Captain of Marines. She attended the Baptist Chapel at Portsea, and under pretext of obliging her, he proffered to drive her down to the place of worship on Sabbath; but his chief object was to hear the minister, with whom he had held the late interesting conversation. He expressed himself highly delighted, with what he considered the simplicity of the worship, and the deep interest the congregation appeared to take in it. But the text was rather unfavourable for disarming the prejudices of one who had objected to the mysterious doctrines of Christianity.

On the day the Captain first entered the place, the text in course for the sermon that

morning was, "And whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son." The foreknowledge of God had been the subject of a previous discourse, predestination, therefore, was the subject for that morning. The minister was in a high degree of perturbation when he saw the Captain enter the place of worship, thinking it was unfortunate that such a doctrine should be the first he should hear, as he feared it might be misunderstood, and thus rivet his prejudices against the truth of Christianity. He felt a wish, if it had been any way possible, to change the subject, for some one in his view more likely to interest the Captain's mind, and impress his conscience, but this could not be done. He knew the people were come in expectation of this subject. Some feared the young minister might darken counsel by words without knowledge; others feared the doctrine might be so represented as to make God the minister of sin, and to extenuate the guilt of human transgression; while others were concerned lest it should be explained away, and the divine will be made to rest on the volition of fallen creatures, constantly changing, but always wrong; and, instead of his purposes directing and controlling all events, they should be represented as always floating upon human contingencies. Though

the minister was agitated with fears during the singing of the hymns, his mind reflected on itself, Do you believe the doctrine you are about to explain and prove? Do you not believe that the Spirit of God knew the subject, and who were to hear it? If it be truth, can he not make this truth, as well as any other, the means of that man's conversion to God? This reasoning calmed his apprehensions, and after some fervent ejaculations to the Spirit of Truth, he felt as though the voice of God addressed him, saying, "Arise, and preach the preaching that I bid thee."

The Captain, as he often declared afterwards, was highly delighted with what he considered the simplicity of the worship, and the deep interest the congregation appeared to take in it.

The introduction to the sermon was formed with a design to produce seriousness of mind, in the discussion of a subject which is of a serious and awful kind, and which, it is confessed, has difficulties, in whatever view it is taken; in the second place, to excite candour towards those who could not see the subject in the same light in which it appeared to the preacher, for the belief of the doctrine neither constitutes a real Christian, nor proves that he is one: and also to call for candour from those who differ from the predestinarians; for, how-

ever luminous the evidence of its being a Scripture truth may appear to them, and however important and useful they judge the belief of it to be, it is not considered by them in general as essential to salvation, that persons should believe it in the sense they consider and represent it; and, lastly, it was intended to excite prayer in the minds of the hearers, that what was error might be perceived and rejected, and what was truth might be cordially received, and humbly submitted to, whatever difficulties might attend it. The introduction disarmed the Captain's prejudice and fixed his attention.

The divisions of the sermon showed that it was the design of the minister—first, to make some observations explanatory of the doctrine of predestination; secondly, to advance some arguments to confirm it; thirdly, to show the uses that should be made of it; and, lastly, to guard both those that receive and those that reject the doctrine, from abusing it.

The outlines and general principles of this sermon are stated here for the purpose of showing in what light this doctrine was first presented to the Captain, seeing it was often mentioned by him to his relatives, his Christian friends, and to the missionaries, that it was the preaching of the doctrine of predestination that was the means of his conversion to God. As the doc-

trine had been useful in the hand of the Spirit to rouse his soul to a sense of his danger, and to constrain him to seek in earnest for divine mercy and gracious influence, it was natural for him to think that occasionally and scripturally to preach it, is calculated to awaken others. He used to reason thus: if it be a truth, it must have been revealed—if revealed, it is fit men should believe it; if they must believe it, the doctrine should be preached. Besides, certain minds require, he used to remark, strong and powerful sentiments to rouse their attention and awaken their conscience. If men are taught, that they are in danger of being lost, but that the remedy is in themselves, the representation is awfully deceptive—for the first part of the sentence is much weaker than the Scriptures represent the subject, and the other part is altogether untrue. The man who believes such a representation, is in danger of procrastinating that to some future time which should employ all the powers of his soul immediately. But if he believes that he is *now lost*, for “Christ came to seek and to save that which *is* lost”—that “he who has offended in one point is guilty of all”—that “he who believeth not is condemned *already*, the wrath of God abideth on him”—and that, in consequence of man’s moral depravity, “no man can come to Christ,

except the Father draw him;" or, in other words, if the man believes that he is ruined, and that it depends solely on the grace and mercy of God whether he shall be saved, he is most likely to be alarmed and at once to fly to the refuge set before him in the Gospel.

In the explanatory observations, it was stated, 1. By predestination is intended that wise, holy, good, and sovereign arrangement which God purposed in himself, and in which he predetermined whatsoever should come to pass; but, more especially, it is the gracious determination of his will, to save those whom he foreknew or approved, by delivering them from the condemnation of his law, through the justifying righteousness of his Son; and, by the influence of his grace subduing and finally eradicating sin, and restoring the lost image of God in their souls.

2. Predestination does not suppose a number of abstract decrees, but a connected and harmonious arrangement of purposes. It does not decree effects without causes, ends without means, volitions without motives; so that no one would be justified in reasoning, as some thoughtless and ignorant persons say the doctrine would justify us in doing: "If God has predestinated us to be saved, we shall be so, whatever we believe, and however we act."

Nothing can be more absurd or inconsistent with this doctrine than such reasoning, because the apostle declares, "whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of his Son;*" none can be saved, therefore, who is not conformed to the image of Christ, and he was "meek and lowly of heart, holy, harmless, and separate from sinners." He who has decreed the salvation of a soul, has predetermined that it shall believe, repent, be holy, and finally be made perfect in love; he has appointed the reading of the Scriptures, the keeping the Sabbath, the hearing of his word, and prayer, as means by which these ends are to be effected, and he has also promised the influence of his Spirit, as the great cause by which all is to be finally accomplished.

3. Predestination does not even interfere with, much less destroy, the free exercise of the human will. Men sin voluntarily, and all acceptable religious services must be the free exercise of the will. Though grace influences the will, it does not force, but inclines it, by the motives of the Gospel meeting and agreeing with the renewed dispositions of the heart, and hence the motives become operative on a pious or renewed soul, which have no influence on a wicked or unregenerated one.

It is said, when Satan came to Christ he

found nothing in him. The motives Satan had to present to him, met with nothing corresponding with them, in his holy mind, and hence the motives produced no effect; so, on the contrary, when motives to holiness and the service of God are presented to a bad man, they find nothing in his heart corresponding to them, and, consequently, they have no influence.

Though a man's conversion to God, therefore, be the result of predestination, yet predestination has not effected the freedom of his will; for he as freely wills to be righteous and serve God now, as he before freely willed to be wicked and disobey him. Besides, no one is influenced by the decrees of predestination, as motives of his conduct, seeing no one can be acquainted with them, as they are the secrets of the divine will.

4. Predestination affords no ground for presumption, or for putting things out of that order which infinite wisdom has assigned. The revealed will of God is the rule of faith and conduct, and not his secret will. The doctrine no more justifies a person in attempting to break the constituted order of things in moral and religious subjects, than in natural ones. He who has rendered air essentially necessary to respiration, and food for human sustenance, and both essential to the maintenance of animal life, has

rendered faith, repentance, and obedience essential to salvation, not as conditions in the sense some present them, but as constituent parts of salvation, as the others are constituent parts of human life. It would be as much in vain to expect salvation without these constituent parts, as for men to expect the continuance of life without air and food.

5. Predestination, properly understood, presents no inducements to indolence on the one hand, or despair on the other, but the contrary. Because I learn from the nature of things, that it is preordained that air should refresh me, I go into it; that water should quench my thirst, I drink it; and that fire should warm me, I approach it. Because God has predetermined that faith should be connected with salvation, I endeavour to believe, and because prayer is to be followed by answers, we offer them. The doctrine can be no just cause even of discouragement, much less of despair, because no one can understand what are the purposes of God, till events have discovered them; and the promise is absolute that all who seek shall find, and all who ask shall receive, and the promise is as much a part of the scheme of predestination, as the blessing promised, and surely the blessing of the promise being absolutely and immediately certain to them that believe, can afford no cause

of discouragement to faith. A man who knows the depravity of his own heart and the mutability of his best resolutions, will feel encouraged from considering that his final salvation is dependant on God, not on himself.

6. The doctrine of predestination accounts for many events which appear very unaccountable without it. Some persons appear to be singled out by Providence, by a peculiar train of occurrences, and are preserved amidst a thousand deaths, even while they are in rebellion against the Divine Being, and at length they are truly converted to God. Others are brought to genuine repentance under the first sermon they hear, while others continue to hear the word for years with awful indifference and to no saving benefit. The ways of Providence are inscrutable upon any scheme of doctrine, but they are more easily accounted for on that of predestination, than upon any other. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight," is a principle to which the reflecting mind must revert, while contemplating the divine government with reference to almost all events, respecting itself or others. It is by banishing contingencies or chance from our system of faith, and tracing every thing up to the sovereign, infinitely wise, and all controlling, but righteous will of God, that the mind is resigned

to afflictive dispensations, and calm amidst terrific circumstances—“It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good”—“Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?”—“The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away,” is language that shows our reason and will are prostrate before the throne of God, resolving all into the will of him who has a right to say, “my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

Lastly: There is nothing in the doctrine of predestination, properly understood, that is a reflection upon the justice or goodness of God, unless it could be proved that the events of Providence are reflections upon *his justice and goodness*; for the occurrences of every day and of every province exhibit instances, which cannot be reduced to any standard that such objections would erect of the justice of God. It is as difficult to account for the facts of the sufferings of children, in body, mind, and circumstances, on account of the conduct of their parents, of the sufferings of nations, arising from the cruel conduct of a few individuals, or of the wretched slavery of one great part of mankind to the other, and of innumerable favours being conferred by Providence upon some parts of the world which are withheld from the other, as it is to account for the doctrine of predestination:

this shows that men have incorrect ideas of the divine justice. To suppose that the Divine Being is bound by any principle of justice to exercise mercy upon a race of rebels against his government, is to suppose an absurdity; for this would resolve all his kindness to his creatures into acts of justice, which necessarily destroys the idea of mercy; and this involves another absurdity, that to exercise justice in any case would be an act of injustice. To suppose that because God is pleased to exercise mercy towards any of the rebels in his dominions, it would be injustice to the rest if he did not exercise mercy towards them, is not only limiting the Almighty by denying to him the prerogative exercised by every supreme governor in the world, which is that of displaying his sovereignty in the discrimination of the objects, and the ends of mercy, and of suffering justice to take its course as to others; but it is to suppose that the act of mercy towards the first individual that was pardoned, rendered it necessary, in order to preserve the honour of the Divine character, that all the rest should be pardoned; which converts what was an act of mercy in the first instance into an act of justice in every subsequent case; this also shows that some reasoners have very mistaken conceptions of the

divine justice. The supposition that this doctrine is a reflection on the justice of God probably arises from two causes; first, from the want of a deep and proper sense of the evil and demerit of sin, and next from the unwillingness of the human heart to submit to the absolute and unlimited sovereignty of the Divine Being; which is a principle so deep in human nature as not to be fully discovered, and so extensive in its operation as not only to arraign the truths of revelation at its bar, but also the ways of Providence and to "judge the justice of our God."

1. As an explanation of this subject was principally intended by introducing it here, it is unnecessary to say more by way of proof, than simply to state that the truth of the doctrine was argued from its being reasonable, that the Divine Being should propose to himself some ultimate end of all his works, that his glory should be that end, and that every thing and every event should be made conducive to it. An ultimate end to be accomplished supposes a design, a design supposes an arrangement of parts and operations, an arrangement supposes a determination, and the work is the result of the whole, this is what is intended by predestination. This argument is not only collected from the operations of the human mind in its

progress to the accomplishment of some design, but is evident from the works of creation and providence.

2. It was argued from the admission of the divine prescience or foreknowledge. To deny his foreknowledge, is to deny one of the perfections of his nature, and what in the Scriptures he claims as his distinguishing prerogative; but as it is observed by a great writer on this subject, "There can be no prescience of future contingencies, for it involves a contradiction to say, things which are not certainly to be, should be certainly foreseen. If they are certainly foreseen, they *must* certainly be, and can therefore be no longer contingent. An uncertain foresight is also an imperfect act, as it may be a mistake, and is therefore inconsistent with divine perfection. On the other side the difficulty is easily explained. When God decrees that an event shall take place, its existence becomes thenceforth certain, and as such, is certainly foreseen. For it is an obvious absurdity to say that a thing happens freely, that is to say, that it may or may not be, and yet that it is certainly foreseen by God. He cannot foresee things but as he decrees them, and consequently gives them a certainty of future existence; and, therefore, any prescience antecedent to his decree must be rejected as impossible. Conditional

decrees are farther absurd, inasmuch as they subject the purposes of God to the will and action of his creatures. Infinite perfection can wish nothing but what it can execute, and if it is fit to wish, it is fit to execute its wishes.’’

3. It was argued from the express language of the Scriptures, and from its being evident that the apostle Paul intended to establish the doctrine, not only from the arguments he used, but from his anticipating and replying to the objections usually urged against it; the apostle’s reasonings in the first of the Ephesians, and in the eighth, ninth, and eleventh chapters of the Romans, were cited in confirmation of the doctrine.

The use of the doctrine teaches those who believe it, to admire the harmony, the irresistible energy, and the immutable stability, of the divine government. It affords encouragement for prayer, by accounting for its efficacy, showing that the prayer, the promise, and the blessing are inseparably connected in the purpose of God, and therefore constantly united in the divine conduct and in our experience. It lays a firm basis for faith, confidence, and hope of whatever God has promised, as it teaches us that his infinite wisdom, his all-controlling energies, and his immutable fidelity are all engaged to accomplish these promises. If some of the

promises bear a conditional aspect, the condition of one promise is the blessing absolutely engaged by another.

The doctrine presents us with many powerful motives to employ every faculty we possess, in working out our salvation, for it is God that worketh in us both to *will* and to *do* of his good pleasure, and we are persuaded that he who has begun the good work will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ. "He is of one mind, and who can turn him, and what his soul desireth, that he doeth. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The doctrine affords the strongest inducements to holiness of heart and conduct, for we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son; that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; that we should apprehend that for which we are apprehended of Christ Jesus; and that we should be to the praise of his glory. Now if the subordinate ends are not accomplished or accomplishing, we have no just cause to expect the ultimate end will be accomplished in us; hence the inducements to self-examination, to much and fervent prayer, and to an earnest striving to enter in at the strait gate.

Lastly: The doctrine affords various reasons

for submission to afflictive dispensations, and patience to wait the issue; for "the vision is for an appointed time, but though it tarry, it shall speak and not lie"

The doctrine is indeed full of much holy and practical improvement, but it is acknowledged that it is abused by those who reject it, by making those who believe it, answerable for consequences which they utterly disavow, and by their denial of the sovereignty of God, and making events contingent, which the word of God assures us are certain. But the most fatal abuse to many is, that presuming on their own inherent ability, independent of the special grace of God, they rely upon the exertion of their ability at some future period, and thus from season to season they continue to procrastinate the work; and in consequence of depending on their own strength, they neglect earnestly to seek for that divine influence, which is promised to those who ask for it, till death closes the scene, and places the soul on that side of the gulf, mentioned by our Lord, from whence prayers are never answered.

Those who believe the doctrine, were cautioned not to abuse it, by viewing the subject in abstract parts, and separating effects from their cause—duties from privileges—the end from the means—sin from suffering—and holiness from

happiness—for God having united them in his purposes, we must unite them in practice.

They were cautioned against attempting to pry into secret things, and of being wiser than what is written, for “secret things belong to God, and revealed things to us and our children.” Could they read the book of purposes as clearly as the book of revelation, no one difficulty would be removed from the mind, but it must still submit to the divine sovereignty and wait in faith for the accomplishment of his will; and lastly, those who were under concern about eternal realities, and were desirous of salvation, were cautioned against drawing conclusions unfavourable to themselves; for whatever their doubtful minds might imagine respecting the secret purposes of God, there can be nothing contrary to the word of God, and its language is, “all that the Father giveth me, shall come to me, and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out.” “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

This sermon was listened to by Captain Wilson with a fixed attention, which excited the observation of those who sat near him, and especially of the minister in the pulpit. The sentiments produced a conflict of feelings in the

breast of the Captain, like what we may conceive to have been the conflict of the primary elements of nature, when blended in chaos, each striving to obtain its situation and influence in the universe. His memory, reason, conscience, imagination, and passions, were all in agitation. His prejudices for and against the doctrine, his hopes and fears, his love and hatred, his pleasures and disgusts, raised a storm in his soul, resembling the concussion of the elements in a hurricane; for while his heart rose in hatred against the sovereignty of God, the events of his whole life appeared before him as incontrovertible evidences of its truth.

The impassioned strains in which the concluding part of the sermon was addressed to the auditory, representing the infinite compassion of the Saviour, his long suffering with sinners, the various and persevering methods he used to bring them to repentance, and his inexpressible readiness to receive and pardon all that applied to him for mercy, drew tears from those eyes, which had never wept during the long and almost unparalleled sufferings he had endured under Hyder Ali. These silent tears, which he endeavoured to suppress, and which he was afraid to wipe off, lest he should excite observation, drew tears of benevolent joy from the eyes of his friend that sat opposite him, who

heard the sermon more for the Captain than himself, and spent a great part of the time in turning its principles into earnest supplications for his spiritual welfare.

When the service was ended, he declined giving any opinion, and showed a reluctance to enter into conversation on the subject; but when alone, he felt discomposed, and agitated with reflections, though he scarcely knew to what he should attribute them; at one time he was angry with himself, for allowing his feeling to carry him away; again, he thought it could be nothing else than the impressions of the Deity upon his mind, or the coincidence of the principles explained in the sermon, with the circumstances of his life. He was thus alternately agitated by speculations on the truths he had heard, and by the emotions they had excited. While reason and conscience, on the one hand, suggested that he ought patiently to investigate the matter, and if found to be truth, then to embrace and acknowledge it: the notion of enthusiasm on the other, and the dread of becoming an object of ridicule, returned with increased force, and determined him to resist the current. The painful remembrance of former sins, and the fearful apprehensions of futurity, recurred to aggravate this internal conflict. On their way home, he appeared very serious: and observed

to his niece, "If what I have heard to-day be true, I am a lost man." With great affection she began to present the bright side of Christianity to his mind, assuring him that he would soon find more pleasure in believing it, than he had ever found from the world.

He now became exceedingly pensive and thoughtful; the Bible and religious books formed his constant, and almost his only companions. He attended regularly and punctually the place of worship, joined with fervour in the service, and seemed wholly absorbed in the inquiry, *What shall I do to be saved?* This change in his principles he soon manifested to his acquaintance, by a change in his habits. But though he was ardent and sincere in his desires for eternal life, still he imagined he might believe in Christianity, without altogether renouncing the world; as he was acquainted with many who, though they professed to be zealous Christians, yet mingled in gay society, without losing or impairing their religious impressions. He was persuaded, therefore, that it was not necessary to abandon his former associates; and that he might frequent their company, with a view to their religious improvement, without going all the accustomed lengths of gaiety. For a time he accepted their invitations, and received their visits; but endeavoured to carry his

purpose into execution, by making every entertainment subservient to their spiritual edification. With one, he would converse on the truth of the Bible, and the necessity of practising what it enjoins. With another, he would speak of the sin and folly of swearing, and taking the Lord's name in vain. To a third, he represented the importance and sanctity of the Sabbath, and the guilt of not keeping it holy. To some of the loquacious ladies, he hinted some doubts whether all the anecdotes they related of their neighbours were quite correct, and whether they might not bear a more favourable construction than they gave them. On some occasions, he even ventured to mention the certainty of death, judgment, and a future state; and to make allusions and applications, intimating that he thought it their duty to consider these subjects.

For a while he supposed, from the silence with which he was heard, that his conversations had made some useful impression, and that this intimacy might be continued with advantage; but he soon found that his gay associates profited little by his exhortations, and only wanted an opportunity to rally their forces, and turn the current of ridicule against him. One remarked, from the solemn cast of his countenance, that he was surely very ill, and about to die—ano-

ther thought him excellently qualified for the Methodist Chapel—another took the Lord's name in vain, and then apologized. The lady he had questioned, as to the correctness of her reports against some who were not of her party, had no doubt but he would soon turn parson, and that she would see him with a white wig on a white horse; while a witty officer kept the company, for an hour at a time, in a roar of laughter, by relating a number of amusing anecdotes about the Puritans and Methodists.

The Captain found the artillery of wit which he had often poured on others, now returned on himself. He frequently tried to stem the torrent by argument; at other times he attempted to go with it, by joining in the laugh till it had spent itself, but all in vain. They were resolved either to rout him out of his strange notions, or to laugh him out of their society; but as they could not do the former, they gradually accomplished the other, by breaking off the connexion. This convinced him at length, that it is impossible to serve two masters—that there is no communion between light and darkness—and that a faithful and sincere Christian is constrained to come out from among the world, and to be separate. But though one class of society shunned his acquaintance, he soon found that another as eagerly courted it. Many rejoiced

to hear of his conversion, were solicitous for his spiritual welfare, and cheerfully aided his mind in its researches after evangelical and experimental truth.

As he had now much leisure, he occupied his time chiefly in reading, and in receiving occasional visits from his minister. Most of the principal works on the evidences of Christianity, he studied with great attention; until he had obtained such a firm persuasion of the truth of revelation, as to declare that nothing in the world, not even Satan, with all his principalities and powers could persuade him that the Bible was not the word of the Most High; neither could any thing have weaned him from his errors, so completely as that precious volume had done. He read the Scriptures daily with better understanding, and with increased delight.

Like most young Christians, however, his faith was occasionally obscured, and his soul involved in doubt and despondency. Reflection and self-examination taught him to discover in himself many deficiencies. Sometimes he began to question, whether his knowledge were not merely theoretical, the effect of human, instead of divine teaching; whether his pleasures in religion were not the excitements of mere human passions, instead of the exercise of pure

and heavenly affections: whether his confidence in the divine promises were not presumption, and his zeal for God the mere offspring of novelty or self-applause. But time, the corrector of mistakes, and a proper course of reading, soon relieved his mind from its perplexities, and gave him clearer views of the warrant of faith, and the nature of Christian experience. Though he perceived that the sanctification of the Spirit forms the evidence of our meetness for heaven, and is as essentially necessary to salvation, as an interest in the justifying righteousness of Christ; he likewise saw that the atonement of the Redeemer, and the promises of God, constitute the foundation of our hopes of acceptance with him. On this basis, he was enabled to build the superstructure of his faith, hope, and practice; and when the evidences of grace became weak and indistinct, he had recourse to these first principles, to revive and strengthen them.

Early in the year 1796, he was admitted a member of the congregation of Portsea, where he gave diligent and exemplary attendance, although his residence was ten miles from the place of worship. As he was naturally of an active and benevolent turn of mind, and perceived clearly that the design of God, in imparting divine grace to the heart, was not only to save

the individual, but to make him the means of saving others, it began to be a subject of considerable anxiety with him, and even an evidence of his being a true Christian, whether, and how far his faith would induce him to exercise this benevolence in behalf of others. And to such reflections as these, is to be ascribed the reason for his offering himself to the Missionary Society, to conduct their first expedition to the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

The thought is said to have originally occurred to his mind, from a sermon which he had heard on the faith of Abraham, in leaving his country and his friends at the call of God, not knowing whither he went. While meditating on the subject in his own garden, and reviewing other circumstances of the patriarch, he was much affected at the wonders wrought by faith; and admired the devotedness and self-denial of the worthies recorded by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. These contemplations led him to contrast his own faith with theirs, and to ask the question, whether, if called in providence to suffer or to serve like them, he could as readily give up all for Christ, and go forth at the divine bidding?

In a few weeks an opportunity seemed to offer of putting the strength of his principles to the test. He observed in the Evangelical Ma-

gazine, an account of a design to form a Missionary Society in London, and to convey the Gospel, if possible, to the islands in the South Seas. He approved of the project, and it struck his mind very forcibly, whether, if he were called upon to take the command of the expedition, he could freely devote himself to the service, and embark once more on the deep; not in quest of worldly substance, but to carry to heathen lands, treasures more valuable than the gold of nations. He felt at the moment that he could do it with pleasure; he perceived his faith equal to the sacrifice; that he could quit his present comforts, encounter the perils of the ocean, and brave all the dangers and difficulties to which such an enterprise must necessarily expose him.

He determined to accompany his minister to the general meeting of the Hampshire Association of Ministers, to be held at Salisbury; for the purpose, among other objects, of deciding on the intended mission, and promoting its accomplishment. But the result tended rather to damp and discourage his zeal; for although they were unanimously in favour of the missionary attempt, and highly applauded his desire to promote so glorious a cause, they could entertain but little hopes that his services would ever be required; as it seemed to them improba-

ble that a ship would ever be employed solely for that purpose.

A brighter prospect, however, soon opened up. The first general Missionary Meeting was announced to take place at London, in order to consult what steps were proper to be pursued, at the commencement of so great an undertaking. The Captain resolved to make one of the party. He listened with serious attention to the discourses and speeches that were delivered on the occasion; and their deliberations not only met with his cordial approbation, but had the effect of fully deciding his mind on the subject. He solicited an interview with one of their leading members, which he readily obtained. After some conference concerning the mission, he intimated with great modesty and diffidence, but with a firm decision of purpose, that if the Society could not find a better conductor, which he wished and hoped they might, the service should not be impeded for lack of nautical skill, and that he was ready, without any other reward than the satisfaction resulting from the service, to devote himself to the work, whatever inconvenience to himself it might be attended with.

A letter was immediately addressed to the president of the meeting in the Captain's name, offering his services to the Society. A committee of the Directors was appointed to con-

verse with him. They were equally charmed with his modesty, ability, zeal, and devotedness of heart to the work ; and concurred in opinion, that nothing could tend more powerfully to the accomplishment of their designs, than having such a man to command the vessel that should convey the missionaries to the place of their destination. It seemed to them an omen of success, that God was thus raising up, in different places, men, unknown to each other, for the fulfilment of his own gracious purposes towards the heathen. The offer was, therefore, embraced by the committee with delight, and seemed to animate their confidence, that God would provide all other necessary means for the equipment and execution of the enterprise.

The Captain was next presented to the Directors, and his demeanour at once confirmed the reports they had heard of his character, and his fitness for the service in which he had volunteered. It was their unanimous opinion, that a man more highly qualified for the task could not be hoped for, if they had sought the whole island. They found him in all his manners a gentleman—a mien that was commanding—an age yet in the vigour of manhood, with the maturity of experience—and withal, an amiable diffidence, that seemed only conquerable by the calls of the mission, and the deep impres-

sions resting on his own heart. After the lapse of a few months, which were spent in seeking out and examining missionaries, providing funds, and taking other preparatory measures, Captain Wilson was informed of the resolution the Society had come to, of making the attempt in a ship to be purchased by themselves, and requesting him to undertake the command.

The affair having arrived at this state of maturity and decision, the Captain sold his house at Horndean, fixed his niece in London, and went thither himself to superintend and forward the necessary preparations.

About this time he wrote to his friend at Portsea, describing the state of his mind.

London, June 23, 1796.

“MY DEAR FRIEND—According to my promise, I write to inform you, of a ship having been purchased yesterday afternoon. I this morning took possession. She is the first rate vessel of her burden in the river, but when I tell you she cost five thousand pounds, you will think she ought to be a good one. Such is the high value of ships at present, that I think she is worth what we gave for her. She is river built, two years old, copper bottomed and fastened, and a complete vessel for our purpose. I cannot help observing that it will require all the

well wishers of the cause to exert themselves to the utmost—but why should I talk thus? Has He not power to command the gold, that commanded such a rebellious wretch as I was, to be willing in the day of his power?

“Praise be to God for all his mercies. Were it not for the many precious promises, I know not what I should do, for it is really hard parting from all those we fondly love, and entering into a sea of trouble and perplexity. I look back on my past life with pain, to my future pilgrimage I look with fear and trembling, but to that state where we shall all meet, and every tear be wiped from our eyes, I look with a pleasing hope, that I shall be one of that happy number, that God in his great mercy has chosen. This cheers my drooping spirits and causes me to press onward to the prize, forgetting the past and the present, and looking only to the future for real happiness.

“Had I thought I should have been held up to public view, as I have been by some of my friends, I should most certainly never have offered myself, but now there is no retreating.

“I therefore trust that the Lord will strengthen me for the work, and enable me to accomplish it to his praise and glory. Ah! my worthy and dear friend, you say what I now experience: ‘New engagements and new circum

stances will cause new trials.' I am persuaded that even at this early stage of the business, I have seen more of the human heart, than I should have known for years in the calm retreat of a country life, but knowledge is of little use if it does not influence the heart. If I do not deceive myself, I think I feel more humble, and find Jesus more precious than ever, and a throne of grace the greatest consolation I can enjoy.

“I am your affectionate brother in Christ,
J. WILSON.”

London, July 27, 1796.

“MY VERY DEAR FRIEND—I have just time to tell you, I received your kind and affectionate letter; it came at a very suitable time. I had just returned from the India House, where I met with the severest ridicule; but blessed be God, I bore it with patience, and I trust this is some proof, that he will bear me up through every trial and difficulty.

“I find my mind, though severely pained, yet quite resigned to the will of my gracious God and Father, and can look up to him for a supply of grace and strength in the trying hour of parting. You are mistaken, my dear friend, respecting my inward conflicts; I have never been more assaulted by the great adversary, since I professed to believe the truth as it is in

Jesus, than I have recently; but blessed be his name, he has kept me, though I have been constrained to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." My inward and outward trials keep me very low, but I trust the Lord will enable me to carry his people to the furthestmost parts of the globe. Should he bless me thus far, I trust I shall then be able to resign my all into his hands; for the only thing I wish now to live for is to promote his glory.—Your affectionate letter I shall peruse when I am many leagues from you, and will follow your kind advice.

"I hope the Lord will be with you of a truth. I shall be on my knees at half-past six on the morning you allude to, for the purpose of praying for you and my church, through whose instrumentality I have received such unspeakable blessings.

"I am ever, ever, your affectionate friend,

J. WILSON."

He sought out and purchased a proper vessel, which cost £5000; engaged the mariners, and took an active share in every thing connected with his department. The ship, which was called the Duff, was manned by three principal officers, besides a gunner, carpenter, steward, and sail-maker, fifteen sailors, and the captain;

most of whom made a profession of being under the influence of Christian principles. In her were embarked, four ordained ministers, a surgeon, with twenty-five other missionaries, or settlers, who had for the most part been employed in business or mercantile engagements, highly necessary to impart the principles and habits of civilization to the South Sea Islanders. Besides these, there were six women, wives of some of the missionaries, and three children.

Several of the directors visited the ship, and crowds of pious people, who left a variety of presents, either for the missionaries or for the natives. The zeal of Captain Wilson burned with all the fervour of a first impression; and he declared himself astonished, after what he had seen and heard, that none of the prominent ministers in London should offer to go as missionaries. He was equally surprised that any, who were not absolutely bound by circumstances, and had felt the power of truth, and knew the state of the heathen world, could quietly remain in England, while millions abroad were perishing for lack of knowledge.

The novelty of the scheme, and the publicity given to the whole proceedings, excited a very general and lively interest in their design. It was a new event in the Protestant Church, for an expedition to be wholly employed in convey-

ing the messengers of divine truth to the most distant part of the globe. By this means, the attention and the benevolence of the public were attracted, in a manner such as they never could have been, had the Society been more limited and private in this first outset of its operations. It was of immense importance to the missionary cause, that they should commence on such a scale, and with an embassy so well calculated to excite an interest in the religious world: and to this partly may be ascribed that universal diffusion of the missionary spirit, which has since imparted its energies to so large a portion of Christendom, and lighted up a sacred flame, which has not only continued to blaze in England, but spread to many of the churches on the continents of Europe and America.

Whether the islands in the South Seas were the most eligible spot that could have been pitched upon for making this experiment, it is needless now to inquire; yet it cannot be denied, that the situation possessed many advantages. Their extreme distance, and the glowing, and even exaggerated descriptions of them, which represented them as equalling, in natural charms, all that the imagination conceives of the Elysian fields, or the primeval paradise, threw an air of adventure and romantic anticipation over the enterprise, that tended to increase the popula-

rity of the subject. The station was, besides, one that could create no jealousy or opposition, nor give the smallest possible offence to the English or to any other government, or national church upon earth. Perhaps there was no other place to which the attention and energetic operations of the Society could have been directed, at that perturbed period of the world, without exciting alarm or opposition from some quarter or other.

The character of the mission, and the object which it professed, soon dispelled any unfavourable suspicions that might have been entertained against it, and obtained for its agents and its transactions, not merely public confidence, but even official patronage and protection. In producing this effect, the conduct of Captain Wilson, his skill as a navigator, his prudence in presiding among the missionaries, and his success in the voyage, it must be admitted, contributed in no small degree. He certainly had an arduous task to perform; such as made several aged and experienced Christians tremble for the ark of God, and the event of the expedition. He had duties to discharge, which required great diversity of talents, and even opposite qualifications. Among the sailors, he had to maintain authority and command, and yet conduct himself towards them as a brother in Christ.

Among the missionaries, he had to superintend their arrangements, and preside in their meetings and debates. His authority on the quarter-deck, was here to be softened down into Christian meekness, and the character of commander exchanged for that of a counsellor and a friend. Such a situation required great firmness and decision of mind, and yet much real kindness and pliability of temper.

On the 10th of August, 1796, the expedition sailed from the river 'Thames, having for their flag, hoisted at the mizen-top-gallant-mast-head, three doves argent, on a purple field, bearing olive branches in their bills. At Spithead, where the Captain joined her and took the command, they were detained, waiting for wind or convoy, for some weeks. On the 23d of September, the convoy being at length ready, the *Duff*, in company with more than fifty others, weighed anchor, wafted by propitious winds, and under the auspices of the effectual fervent prayers of many thousands of British Christians. The Captain was furnished, by the Directors, with an excellent letter of instructions, by which he was to regulate his conduct, as far as it might be expedient, both with respect to the voyage itself, and also with relation to the establishment of the mission. Although Otaheite was the place destined for making the first attempt, their plan

embraced a field of much greater extent. The Friendly Islands, the Marquesas, the Sandwich, and the Pelew Islands, were specified as coming within the limits of their enterprise, and as being desirable stations for planting the knowledge of the Gospel.

Within six days after her departure, the Duff passed the Island of Madeira; on the 14th of October, she touched at St. Jago; and on the 12th of November, she cast anchor in the harbour of Rio de Janeiro, from whence the captain addressed the following letter, giving an account of himself and the voyage, to his friend at Portsea:

Rio de Janeiro, Nov. 15, 1796.

“MY DEAR AND REV. FRIEND—Were you near the Directors, I would refer you to their letter for information; but as that is not the case, I will give you all I can. We sailed from you on Friday the 23d of September, and on the following Sunday we lay to off Falmouth; and on the 30th a fresh wind springing up from the north east, I thought it a favourable opportunity of parting with the convoy, by which we had been considerably detained. In six days afterwards, we passed the Island of Madeira, and on the 14th of October, cast anchor in Porto Praya Bay, in the Island of St. Jago. After

getting our water-casks filled, and obtaining other refreshments, we sailed the next day, so that you will see there was no time lost. At this place, and the two following days we experienced the hottest weather, and then the thermometer was only 77 degrees, and when immediately under the sun, which was in latitude 16° south it was 72—30. Thus you see how exceedingly kind our God has been to us. From the time we sailed, till our arrival here, the vessel has had little more motion than on the day you and our friends came on board in the sloop. On the 29th, we crossed the Equator in longitude 30° west. Hereabout we had a few squalls. These being what the missionaries were not accustomed to, the first one alarmed them very much. They were at prayers below at eight in the evening, when the vessel laying down suddenly, some fell to leeward; one in particular got up the fore hatchway, but before he knew where he was, he tumbled head foremost down the main without hurting himself. These things to old sailors cause a great deal of mirth when attended with no injury.

“ We arrived here on Saturday the 12th instant. After waiting on the Governor, I could not go on shore again, owing to the ceremony of visiting the ship, which was not over till late last night. A fleet bound to Lisbon being on

the point of sailing, I thought it best to stay on board to write to you and the Directors, lest I should lose this opportunity. I mean, if possible, to sail from this place by Saturday next, as I wish to get to the field of action. I trust the great Head of the Church will conduct us safely through, and give me wisdom to conduct this interesting undertaking. We must be infidels indeed, after experiencing the past loving kindness of the Most High, not to trust him for the future.

“ Myself, officers, missionaries, and ship’s company, are all in perfect health, blessed be his name, who said, ‘ When thou goest through the waters, I will be with thee ;’ this promise, with many others, we have fully realized. I have had five of the missionaries at my table every day, besides giving all on board one, and sometimes two fresh meals a week, beside other refreshments suited to the climate. Some of the missionaries tell me they have not tasted salt meat yet. Their conduct has really been very pleasing. I have no doubt but the Lord will do good by them to the poor Indians. I am persuaded should one soul be called to the knowledge of the glorious Gospel of our blessed God and Saviour, it will more than recompense me for all the dangers, watchings, anxieties, and various privations that I have had or may have to endure in this long voyage. I feel my mind

prepared to act as circumstances offer; I am persuaded that God has called me to this work, and that he will carry me through it. I know, my dear friend, in my own strength I can do nothing right, but as the apostle says, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.'

“The Bible is no cunningly devised fable, though I may have my doubts at times of my personal interest in the glorious work of redemption, yet not all the men in the world, nor Satan with all his principalities and powers, can, or ever will, I trust, be able to persuade me that it is not the word of the Most High. Nothing in this life could so completely have weaned me from the things and maxims of this world, as this precious volume has done since I have been enabled to believe it to be the word of God. I have not had yet a single wish for any of my temporal blessings left behind, and the only fear I have had has been that the Lord would not prosper the work in my hands. I have been often afraid lest I should not please the Society; but now, though conscious of always offending, I can go and plead with my great Employer, my own ignorance and insufficiency, and earnestly intreat for more wisdom and strength according to his promises. This, my dear friend, is part of my experience since I left you; I trust I have an interest in your

prayers and in those of the church. Give my Christian love and affectionate regards to them all. My continual prayer to God for them is, that they may live in brotherly love, and that they may stir up each other to act more and more like king's sons and daughters, and not to choke the good seed with over anxious cares for the things of this world. This will pain their consciences and fret their souls till they are as lean as Pharaoh's cattle. I trust, my dear friend, as the Lord has placed you over his vineyard, you will be careful to destroy those injurious weeds. I know you cannot do this of yourself, but what you have to do, is to use the means, to cry aloud and spare not, and leave consequences with your Master.

“I would have written to my friend Mr. Eastman, but I think as I have written you every particular, and am very much engaged, he will excuse it; give my Christian love to him and to all his family—let me hear from you at Canton in China. Give my love to all my Christian friends in your neighbourhood. The Lord bless you; guide you; prosper and preserve you, is the fervent and sincere prayer of your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. WILSON.”

The officers, missionaries, and whole ship's

company were in perfect health; their conduct had been in every respect pleasing; and all entertained the most sanguine hopes of success. After receiving a plentiful supply of provisions, they left that port on the 19th; but finding it impossible, from tempestuous weather, to beat round Cape Horn, they bore away to the eastward, to go by the Cape of Good Hope, and after nearly circumnavigating the globe, they landed at Otaheite, after a voyage of five months, on the 4th of March, 1797; where they were received in the most friendly manner.

This island, as well as most of the others which are spread over the vast expanse of the Southern Ocean, had, thirty years previous to the arrival of the *Duff*, been repeatedly visited by Europeans, who were traversing those unexplored regions, either for the purpose of enlarging the boundaries of science, or with the hope of discovering new and promising fields for commercial speculation. With one or other of these objects in view, a succession of adventurers, among whom were Wallis, Cook, Bligh, and Edwards, besides several continental navigators, had paid occasional visits, and kept up a friendly intercourse with these remote islanders; although the only return they received for their attachment, appears to have been a knowledge of some of the arts and vices of civilized life;

and the communication of diseases that had diminished, and seemed to threaten the extinction of the whole race. A nobler object had engaged the attention of the present expedition. They came to communicate the word of life; the greatest blessing, and the most inestimable gift that was ever imparted to mankind. It was not avarice or science that had attracted them to these distant shores; but the desire of repairing the injuries and miseries which Europeans had partly occasioned, of presenting them with a remedy against their moral and spiritual degradation, and saving their souls as well as their bodies from destruction.

The missionaries, before landing, had made all necessary arrangements, and separated themselves into divisions, according to their respective establishments. Eighteen were allotted for Otaheite, ten for the Friendly Islands, and two for the Marquesas. Those destined for Otaheite, were immediately provided by the chiefs with suitable accommodations. Nothing could have exceeded the kindness and attention of the natives. Their deportment was frank and peaceful. Every day they attended worship, and listened with seriousness to such addresses as their instructors were able to make to them, through an interpreter.

As soon as they were fixed in permanent and

commodious settlements, the Duff sailed for the Friendly Islands, and on the 9th of April, they made the harbour of Tongataboo. Here the missionaries disembarked, and it was their good fortune to be received with the same respectful and hospitable treatment; they were taken under the protection of the government; a house and a portion of land was furnished them, and no attempts were made to molest either their persons or their property. The remainder of the mission proceeded on their voyage to the Marquesas; leaving their brethren perfectly content with their situation, and thankful for the kind reception they had experienced from the natives. At this place, the last two of the brethren were settled; and though there was not the same appearance of comfort and fertility as in the other islands, they experienced an equal degree of respect and kindness from the inhabitants.

The following letter was received from Captain Wilson from China, which is inserted because it gives an epitome of the voyage, in the laconic and unvarnished language of the Captain.

To Joseph Hardcastle, Esq.

Canton, December 16, 1797.

“DEAR SIR—I wrote to you last from Rio Janeiro, dated the 15th of November, which I

hope you received, informing the Society how kind our heavenly Father had been in wafting us so far in perfect health and safety; we can now further say, from experience, that he has never left us from that time to this. At present I can only give you the outlines of our voyage, which no doubt you will be all glad to hear.

“ After receiving a plentiful supply of every thing needful, which I was able to pay for, having cash of my own, we left that port on the 19th. From that time to the 3d of December, nothing material happened, only the weather getting gradually colder. But the Lord showed us we were going the wrong way by sending a severe gale from the south. We could now see that to beat round Cape Horn would be folly to attempt. After shipping several heavy seas, by which we lost some of our live stock, we bore up to go by the Cape of Good Hope. This was a great trial, being in latitude 30, and longitude 50 west, and having now a line to run of 262 degrees in longitude, besides latitude. However, we had soon reason to rejoice, for, by the 24th of January, 1797, we were in longitude 133 east. Had we laid to another night, ere we bore away, we must have lost all our stock; instead of which, the Missionaries had fresh meat twice a-week all the way, besides dining with me, as before related, and though we had

repeated gales we never had occasion to batten down our hatches once: add to this the inestimable blessing of the public ordinances of our God, and the Missionaries every means of improvement. Thus were we carried along in a most pleasing manner. On the 30th of January we rounded New Zealand, and on the 4th March made Otaheite; but, from various winds, we did not anchor in Matavia till the 6th, where we were received in the most friendly manner.

“Here mark the dealings of Providence: a large house, which the natives had built for Captain Bligh, was just finished; the whole island in perfect peace; (Pomarre and his son Otoo being absolute sovereigns of this island and of Eimeo,) thus our business was expedited; for instead of many chiefs, as we expected, we had only to make our errand known to Pomarre. This we were fully able to do, our God having kept two Europeans for the purpose, the other having gone to Europe; one of them, whose name is Peter, had left the *Dædalus*, the other, named Andrew, was cast away in the *Matilda*, and had been five years on the island—both could talk the language fluently. Our reasons for coming were no sooner made known to Pomarre, than he said we should not only have the house, which is a hundred feet by forty, but that all Matavia should be given to the English,

which was accordingly done in the most formal manner.

“ After having thus succeeded far beyond our expectation, it is now necessary that I should acquaint you that, some time before we made the land, the Missionaries had divided in the following manner: eighteen for Otaheite, besides women and children; ten for the Friendly Islands, and two for the Marquesas. This being the case, we had no time to spare. As soon, therefore, as I saw them in their commodious house, we sailed for Eimeo, with a view to get the ship ready, but more particularly to see how the natives would behave during the absence of the ship. After five days we returned—found them all well, the natives having treated them with the utmost kindness. Having no time to spare, we made all sail to the Friendly Islands. This was on the 26th of March. On the 1st of April we made Palmerston Islands, and on the ninth, Tongataboo. The next day we anchored about the place Captain Cook lay, according to his bearings. The anchor was no sooner gone than the ship was surrounded with canoes. A number of chiefs came on board, who informed us that two Europeans were on the island, and to our great joy they soon made their appearance; but of all the men we ever saw, these were certainly the most wicked look-

ing fellows, and they soon gave us proof they were as bad as they appeared to be. One of them was an Irishman, named John Kennelly, the other Benjamin Ambler, of London. They told us a strange story respecting their coming to these islands, but this was a matter of little consequence to us, firmly believing that the Lord had sent them as our interpreters; for though we had provided, as we thought, sufficient instruments for the purpose, by bringing Peter and two Otaheiteans with us, we should have been much at a loss, the language differing so much, that they could not understand one word in ten: but these two men, Ambler and Kennelly, who had been only thirteen months on the island, speak the language well. After some time our business was partly told them. They readily agreed to give all the assistance in their power. After giving them and the chiefs presents, they all went on shore, apparently highly satisfied. Very early the next morning, we were surrounded with a prodigious number of single canoes, besides ten or twelve large double ones. From the peaceful manner they left us the night before, we had not the least suspicion, until the two Europeans came and told us they intended to take the ship. This, you may easily conceive, alarmed us very much. We got the people to their quarters as

privately as possible. After getting thus ready, we scaled two of our guns; on this, the large canoes began to sheer off, and a number of single ones followed. Whether their intention was really to attack us we know not—but it was very alarming to see so many canoes and people round the vessel, presenting their clubs and spears for sale, which might in a moment be turned against us.

“Our fears in a great measure being done away, Ambler pointed out four chiefs which he said were the only ones we need care for. Tibo Mamoe, the present king, was then at the point of death, and his son Tugahowe, the least of the four, would certainly succeed his father, which afterwards proved to be so, he would therefore recommend the Missionaries being placed under his care. After talking with them on the subject they readily agreed to go. I told them they could not expect to keep their chests, and if they were the least afraid I would take them back to Otaheite. Their answer was, that property was only a secondary object with them, that they would go in an humble dependence on that God who had brought them safe over the mighty ocean, and had enabled them to leave their country and their friends. After a most solemn season in prayer, six of them went with the chief and Ambler, but not before they

promised they should want for nothing. The other chiefs wanted each to have one, but we thought it best for the present they should all be together, promising them that when the ship returned, if they then chose to separate, each should have some of them—this satisfied them all. Having received various presents they all went on shore before dark, and all the canoes left us. The next morning we weighed and ran further out, that we might have plenty of room in case of an attack. About noon, two of the Missionaries returned with the pleasing intelligence that the natives did not attempt to steal, but treated them with the greatest respect. We then loaded the canoes with the remainder of their things, and with such stores as they thought they should want.

“ We now got under weigh to endeavour to find a channel to the westward of the spot where Captain Cook got a-ground. After some time a very good one was found, which we sailed through. This we conceived to be a valuable acquisition, as we should now, in case of being attacked, be able to sail out of the harbor either to the east or west. Being now without the reefs, we intended to spend two or three days to see how the natives would behave to our people; but the Lord saw fit to send us a smart gale from the north-west, so that at day light

we found ourselves in a critical situation, not being able to weather the reefs on either tack; but to our comfort we just fetched the channel which we had discovered only the day before, and thus we narrowly escaped shipwreck. Before we cleared the harbor we were nearly cast away a second time. What cause have we to praise our God for thus preserving us in such imminent danger. Having now cleared the harbor, April the 16th, we made the best of our way towards the Marquesas, with the only two Missionaries on board, Messrs. Harris and Crook. The fair wind lasted six days, and was succeeded by hard gales from the eastward, so that on the sixth day of May, we were only in 206 degrees of longitude and 39 degrees of south latitude.

“On the 23d of May we discovered two islands, on which we endeavoured to land, but the natives from their hostile disposition prevented us. We named one the Crescent, from its shape, the other after Sir Charles Middleton; they lay in latitude $23^{\circ} 12'$ south, and in longitude $226^{\circ} 15'$ east. The next day we discovered another which we named after Admiral Gambier, latitude $21^{\circ} 36'$ longitude $225^{\circ} 40'$ east, and on May the 29th, discovered another, which we called after our friend Mr. Searle; latitude $18^{\circ} 18'$ south, longitude $224^{\circ} 12'$ east.

On the 4th of June made the island Christiana, and the next day anchored in Resolution Bay, after a long disagreeable passage of fifty days. Our rigging being now in a bad state, it was necessary to get it on deck. I shall only remark, that on getting the fore shrouds down we found two of them gone, so that had we been on the starboard tack instead of the larboard, during the gales we had in this passage, we must have been dismasted. O what cause of gratitude for all His kindness to us! We no sooner arrived than we were visited by many of the natives, and amongst them the chief, whom, after a few visits, we gave to understand that the two Missionaries were to stay with him. On hearing this he could not contain himself, but jumped about the cabin for joy. He said they should have a house, and that they should never want while he had to give. The young lad, Crook, went immediately with the chief, but Harris staid on board to get the things ready as he said; however, I am sorry to say in this place, that though he was the first that proposed coming to these islands, and was the cause of two others not coming, he seemed now to have lost his missionary spirit, which was visible to every one. After a little time, he went on shore, but with such a gloomy countenance, that the natives soon took a dislike to

him. The youth on the contrary, was cheerful and obliging, so that the whole village was remarkably fond of him. In consequence of this, I was under the necessity of carrying Harris back to Otaheite. I would have brought Crook away likewise, but he begged to be left, which was agreed to, and I have no doubt but he will prove a blessing to those poor good-natured heathens.

“ Having now refitted our rigging, supplied Crook with every thing needful, we took an affectionate leave of each other, and sailed for Otaheite on the 27th of June. In our way we took a view of Trevenen’s and Sir Henry Martin’s Islands, and arrived in Matavia the 6th of July, when I found them all well. I began dividing their property, which I found a very disagreeable task; this took up all the time I was here, but I got through it apparently much to their satisfaction.

“ Having now completed our business, we took leave of our dear friends and the kind natives, the 4th of August, and touched at Huahine, which was in a dreadful state, owing to their wars. From this we made Palmerston Island, and planted bread-fruit, plantains, and Ava trees; and on the 18th of August, anchored off Tongataboo, nearly in our old berth. We were soon visited by our dear people, who in-

formed us they were all well, except one, and how the Lord had preserved them from the machinations of their countrymen, who had done all in their power to make the poor heathen destroy them; and that some of them had separated, (under different chiefs,) with a view to counteract their villainous plots. During my stay, Messrs. Buchanan and Galton went to live with another chief, which I trust will be the means not only of gaining their affections, but will likewise facilitate the knowledge of the language, which is of the greatest importance. After doing every thing in our power with the chiefs, and dividing the articles, we parted with many tears on both sides. I brought away Mr. Nobbs, by their advice, as he had not his health from the time he landed. Our intention was now to touch at the Fegee Islands, and if possible to have some intercourse with the natives.

“ On the 7th of September, we left Tongataboo, and on the 9th, in the evening, made the Fegees; but after six days toil, trying to find anchorage, we were under the necessity of quitting them without finding any, or having any intercourse with the natives; yet not before we struck on a coral rock, but got off without receiving any damage. I believe no islands in the world are so hemmed in by dangerous reefs. We got into the middle of them, and we have

reason to be thankful we got out in the manner we did. In steering to the westward, we made the Island of Ruttuma, and had a little intercourse with the natives, who seem to be of the same race with the Friendly Islanders; they talk the same language, and their canoes are of the same construction. From thence we intended making the best of our way to the Pelews, but from variable winds and calms, we did not reach them till the 7th of November, and then from the stormy appearance of the weather, we did not think it prudent to stay; after a little intercourse with the natives, therefore, we proceeded on our way to this port, with a view to send you intelligence, if possible, by the first ship. We found on our arrival at Macao, which was the 21st of November, that we could not proceed to Wampoa, without an authority from the Hoppo, because we had no cargo. Finding a ship had been detained a month, I went to Canton, by which means we got permission the fourteenth day we anchored at Wampoa. There are three of the last ships ready for sea; but I prefer sending you this by a Danish ship—there are four direct ships arrived. My nephew received a few lines from you and Mr. Fenn, but I have not yet received any; three of the packets are not yet up, and I could not think of losing this opportunity.

“ This brief relation, I hope will be satisfactory to all our dear friends, but you must make great allowance for the writer. Shall conclude with only observing, that as our work has been great, having been eleven months out of fourteen at sea, the wear of the sails, &c. has been in proportion. We never split a sail, nor carried away a mast. The seamen and officers are in the ship, all well, except one seaman, who ran from the ship. I can give you no idea when we shall leave this place. To me it is the worst part of my voyage, having to associate with the professed enemies of my Lord, and frequently I am the butt of the whole company.

“ May the Lord increase your zeal, and present you with such instruments as he will own and bless. This is, and ever will be the sincere prayer of, dear sir, your affectionate servant,
J. WILSON.”

Having now established the missionaries in their respective destinations, Captain Wilson returned once more to Otaheite, anxious to know in what circumstances he might find the brethren whom he had settled there. The report he heard was in every respect pleasing. They had in general enjoyed good health; the natives had constantly observed the same respectful behaviour towards them as at first, and had never

failed a day to supply them with abundance of provisions; as to the success of their religious labours, it was a point of which they could not yet say much more than that appearances were encouraging. Before taking his final departure from the South Seas, he again visited the other stations, where he had also the satisfaction of learning, that no threatening danger, and no material obstacle had occurred, to oppose the glorious design in which they were engaged; but that a door for preaching the word throughout these extensive islands was opened to them, even by unexpected and improbable means.

Thus was the first expedition of the Missionary Society crowned with a success beyond what they had ventured to anticipate, and which far exceeded their most sanguine expectations. During the whole of their extended voyage they lost not a single individual, and scarcely ever had a sick list. After traversing more than twice the circumference of the globe, passing through climates so different, amidst shoals, reefs, and hidden rocks, they not only escaped dangers and indispositions, but arrived at the various destinations, in better health than when they quitted their native shores. By this experiment, the way was opened up, into the innumerable groups that cover the Southern Ocean; and the facilities for extending the missionary labours,

greatly increased. The foundations thus laid, succeeding adventurers have built upon with advantage. The seeds of knowledge then planted have struck root, and spread with all their happy effects, over a great portion of these unenlightened regions. New and vast countries around them have become accessible, and afforded an inexhaustible field for the most vigorous exertions of Christian zeal.

Before finally quitting the islands, Captain Wilson received several, both general and individual testimonies, of the affection and gratitude of the missionaries. From Tongataboo, the last island that he visited, he received at his departure, a very kind and complimentary letter, expressive of the grateful sense they entertained of the many friendly and endearing offices he had rendered them, in the course of their long and successful voyage. On the 7th of September they left Tongataboo, and proceeded, according to their letter of instructions, on their way to Canton, which they reached about the 14th of November. Here Captain Wilson met with considerable ridicule from his old Indian acquaintances, on account of his religious enthusiasm. The singularity of the manners of the officers, and ship's crew, likewise excited observation. All immorality being utterly discountenanced, not an oath heard, and an unusual

devotion maintained, induced those who witnessed this extraordinary conduct, to signalize the Duff, by calling her, *The Ten Commandments*. They left China on the 3d of December, and after touching at the Cape of Good Hope, St. Helena, &c. they arrived in safety in the river Thames, on the 10th of July, 1798; after being wafted from place to place, in a most wonderful manner, and having sailed nearly 50,000 miles, in little more than one year and nine months.

The return of the Duff, and her successful voyage, excited an unusual degree of interest, and of gratitude to God, among the friends of the Missionary Society; while the admiration at the conduct of the Captain, was the subject of almost universal conversation. On her arrival, the fervour of pleasing emotion glowed in every bosom, and darted from individual to individual, like an electric shock. A day of public thanksgiving was appointed by the Society, in gratitude for the singular interposition of Providence, from beginning to end of this remarkable expedition. As a token of their respect for the Captain, and as a lasting memorial to his family, an elegant representation of his public interview with the king and queen of Otaheite, was painted, and presented to him by the directors. His friend, Dr. Haweis, one of the founders, and a

most zealous promoter of the institution, complimented him with a diamond ring of considerable value, accompanied with the following note:—"Anxious for your arrival, I had prepared the following little token. I wish to couple my name with yours. The circle is an emblem of the eternity I hope to spend with you. The brilliant is not brighter than my affections, nor the gold purer than my friendship. Wear me on your heart; while mine beats, it will remember you, and bless God for you."

A narrative of the voyage, drawn up from their several journals, under the superintendence of a committee of the directors appointed for the purpose, was immediately published, and dedicated to the king. To it was prefixed a scientific discourse on the geography and history of the South Sea Islands, where the missionaries had settled; together with a detailed account of the natural and civil state of Otaheite, from original documents. The Society obtained £2000, for the copy-right of this volume; of which 12,600 copies were printed, of the first edition. This sum, together with £4100, received from the East India Company, for freight of teas from China, and the value of the ship, greatly reduced the expenses of the voyage; which, including the outfit of the missionaries, furnishing them with books and implements, conveying them to

their several destinations over half the globe, and settling them comfortably with ample stores in the islands, did not exceed £140, for each individual.

After Captain Wilson's return from the South Seas, he resided in London for some time; his niece having again resumed the superintendence of his domestic concerns. The effects of a sedentary life, after a long sea voyage, soon manifested themselves in a very serious bilious attack, which indicated a morbid affection of the liver, and in his own opinion threatened his life. In this state of body, however, he possessed great patience and comfort of mind. He felt that he had lived to accomplish an important object, and he was therefore not unwilling to die; but He who had fixed the bounds of his habitation, added nearly twenty years more to his life, though he was frequently annoyed by renewed attacks of the same disease.

The conspicuous part he had acted, might, had he inclined, have given him a commanding influence among the religious societies in London; yet being naturally diffident of his own opinion, on subjects not within the range of his immediate profession; and perhaps not sufficiently inured to the free discussions and unrestrained animadversions of popular meetings, in this land of liberty, so uncongenial with the

habits and manners of an East India merchant, he found the storms of protracted debates, a sphere of action not suited to his talents and disposition, and therefore preferred retirement to the bustle and business of official life. He was chosen, from time to time, on the direction of the affairs of the Missionary Society, but did not make a point of attending, unless when he thought his mercantile, geographical, or nautical knowledge could be turned to advantage; and then he never withheld his presence or his opinions, whenever his health would admit of his attendance.

The celebrity he had acquired, greatly widened the circle of his friends and connexions; and among other families of worth to whose acquaintance it introduced him, was that of Richard Holbert, Esq. of Denmark-Hill, Camberwell; a gentleman of very ample fortune, and who had only one child, a pious and amiable daughter. This lady Captain Wilson married, in 1799, and found in her to his latest day, a most tender and affectionate wife. With her he got a considerable addition to his fortune, which was deemed by many, a providential compensation for the noble sacrifice of time and property he had made, in the missionary voyage.

Circumstances occurred, however, which taught him an experimental lesson, on the muta-

bility and uncertainty of human possessions; and tended to wean his heart from placing an undue attachment on gifts merely temporal and earthly. He had, from motives of pure benevolence, and a friendly concern for promoting the interests of some of his relatives, engaged in mercantile life, and advanced, on various occasions, to the amount of many thousand pounds. These sums, from the pecuniary embarrassments of the times, and the failures of the British merchants in the shipments to South America, were all swallowed up in adventurous and unsuccessful speculations.

Though these losses, on the whole little short of £30,000, deprived him of none of the comforts of life, or the means of making a respectable appearance in society; for, through the kindness of a munificent providence, he still possessed sufficient fortune for his children, in the right of Mrs. Wilson; yet they tried his mind in a very considerable degree, not only on his own account, but also on account of those friends and relations who had partaken of his kindness; and from whom he now found himself compelled, in a great measure, to withhold his benevolence. They led him to examine, and to know more thoroughly his own character, which he often lamented he had not studied with sufficient care. They furnished instructive

views of the dispensations of providence, by showing how easily God can return to his people a hundred-fold in this life, for what they do for his cause; and how easy it is for him to take it again, when he pleases. Few lives could have impressed this truth more clearly and forcibly than his, which was subject to so many changes, disasters, and reverses. “In how many ways, (he observes) has God taught me my dependence upon him. All I possessed was by his special gift; and the same hand which had given, or rather lent, had a right to take it again. He saw this was the most effectual way to humble my spirit, to wean me from the world, and to bring me nearer to himself; and I trust he has done it.”

In these reflections, the Captain alludes to the two points in his character, which were considered by his friends, as the most exceptionable; for none are without their faults, and to have described him as such, would, in the esteem of all that know human nature, even in its most improved state, have tended to discredit the whole account. His temper was naturally reserved, and though softened and rendered affable by divine grace, yet at times it partook of something bordering on hauteur. Of this he was himself sensible, and it was to him the cause of much sorrow and regret. This, however, was sub-

duced, and more than counter-balanced by his noble feelings of kindness and generosity.

Another shade, which his friends alleged to mingle with the general excellence of his character, was a little too much attachment to the wealth of this world; and a want of a sufficient sense of his obligation to God, by not devoting a larger proportion of his property to the support of religion. It is a question of conscience, perhaps not very easily determined, what is the exact portion of their income, which the richer members of the church of Christ ought to appropriate to the cause of religion, or of charity. There is no fixed rule that can hold universally, or even individually; the liberality of the wealthier classes, in the cause of God, must very often be regulated by the importance of the object, or the particular exigency of the occasion. Captain Wilson was guided very much by this principle. He did not circumscribe his benevolence within the limits of stated rules, or methodical calculations; but left his benefactions to depend principally upon the number, or the nature of the demands made upon him.

The charge of penuriousness, however, can hardly with propriety be alleged against him, when it is considered that he had lost to a considerable amount, by the adventurous speculations of others—that he had a young family to

provide for—and that from the general report of his possessing a very large fortune the friends of religion were led to form too sanguine hopes, and to expect from him donations or annuities for pious purposes, corresponding in some measure with his riches, and his former distinguished zeal in the service. The calamity above referred to, greatly abridged his resources; and prevented him at his death from leaving any bequest, as a token of his concern for that Society and cause, to which he had contributed so much by his personal exertions. Had the commercial enterprise, in which so large a share of his fortune was embarked, been successful, there seems no reason to doubt that his liberality would have kept pace with his zeal, and that the Missionary cause would have had to enroll his name among the number of its testamentary benefactors.

His family afflictions, and frequent personal indispositions, produced retired and domestic habits; and though he was not prominent in any of the associations in the metropolis, for general usefulness, yet he improved his retirement to the benefit of his personal religion. His reading did not partake of an extensive range of subjects, but it was well employed on those of theology; he not only read, but studied the Scriptures. The word of God was his com-

panion. Part of the day he employed in committing certain portions of it to memory, and another part to a repetition of them, as he walked or rode to town, or occupied himself in his garden. He had in this manner learned to repeat, with perfect accuracy, a great part of the Psalms of David—many chapters of the prophecies, and of the gospels—and several entire epistles of the New Testament. The account he gives of this extraordinary practice is: That when he had arrived at the age of forty-six, and had begun to experience a failure of sight, the idea struck him, that he might perhaps become wholly unable to read the sacred volume. Under this impression, he set himself to learn by heart whole chapters, and even books; which he rehearsed in his solitude, whether at home or abroad, in set portions every day. In course of a week, he would repeat all he had learned; and by this means he retained what he had previously acquired, and still continued adding something to the store. The pleasure and advantage of this, he felt when laid on a sick-bed; and when incapable of reading, he drew from those sacred treasures an inexhaustible fund of consolation.

By this means he obtained a most familiar acquaintance with Scripture, and a great richness in experimental religion. His conversation with his intimate friends, was highly instructive

and animating. His religious feelings were kept so much alive by this profitable train of meditation, and frequent prayer, that he felt considerable reluctance to company; as he was often disappointed in not meeting with a correspondent disposition in others, to converse on spiritual subjects.

Towards the close of 1813, his health had begun visibly to suffer by the encroachments of an internal distemper. No very alarming symptoms, however, at first appeared; but, as weeks and months revolved, it was impossible not to observe the change which increasing disease had made on his frame and appearance. In the month of February, he was unable to appear in his usual manner, as a worshipper in the sanctuary of God. He had cherished a steady attachment to the ordinances of religion, and his punctual attendance at divine worship, as well as his humble, unassuming deportment there, were attested by all who knew him. This incapacity, and unavoidable detention from the courts of Zion, were to him the subject of much uneasiness and regret.

His aspect was such as to excite the regret and apprehension of all his friends, and he even then entertained some thoughts that his sickness would *probably be unto death*. Under this impression, he made the following observation—"I would as

soon die *now*, as at any time, if it were not on account of these ties, (alluding to his endeared wife and his little children,) but the Lord is all-sufficient; I can trust them in the hands of that God who has been my God." The first Sabbath in January, 1814, was the last in which he officiated at the table of the Lord, in distributing the elements of bread and wine, and the last but one (I believe in the month of February,) in which he appeared as a worshipper in the sanctuary of God. He used to express much regret at this unavoidable detention from our public assemblies, saying, "When shall I come and appear before God?" and in the language of Hezekiah, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?" a commendable feeling this in the chamber of sickness, and very unlike the temper of some professing Christians, who pant more ardently for a return to the places of busy traffic and mercantile concourse, and are sooner seen there on recovery, than for the courts of Jehovah—the palaces of Zion.

It pleased God to exempt our departed brother from acute pain, of which he had only two severe paroxysms during his long protracted illness. This alleviating circumstance, enabled him to employ his leisure hours in those thoughts and exercises of mind, which were suited to the dispensation under which he was

placed, and to the prospects which were opening before him, in unparalleled grandeur and awful solemnity. As I was a near observer of the operations of his mind, at this critical juncture, I shall record them as they offered themselves to my notice. I marked in the first place, a deep and anxious *investigation* into the state of his soul. He debated the matter of his personal religion, as in the light and under the immediate eye of God. Considering the ease with which a man may deceive himself, and impose upon others by an empty and unprofitable form of godliness, he was desirous of availing himself of every assistance in ascertaining the truth of his condition. He felt perplexed on the ground of *indwelling sin*, and for the sake of obtaining clear views and refreshing his recollections on this important point, he read Dr. Owen's masterly treatise on the subject. On one occasion, he told me, he had been seriously engaged in examining the grounds and evidences of his own *conversion*, fearing lest he should take too much for granted, or regard a change of sentiment and a reformation of manners as conversion, without the inbeing of that spiritual life and those concomitant fruits of the Spirit, which the Scriptures represent as indispensably necessary. He dwelt much on this theme, and we concluded with prayer for light, sincerity, and satisfaction.

Having attained to some good degree of certainty on this momentous point, he enjoyed a *stable peace*, by faith in the atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ, and never afterwards betrayed even a momentary disquietude or alarm, at the prospect or consequences of his approaching dissolution. He had been generally accustomed to repeat those lines of Dr. Haweis at the end of every day:

“ One day more is past,
 And the nearer my last,
 To the close of my life and my labours I haste.
 My strength as my day,
 Renewed—I stay
 On Jesus my hope, and still hold on my way.”

and was wont to add, with peculiar emphasis and delight—

“ And when my work done,
 My full course I have run,
 And my pilgrimage finished under the sun,
 To heav'n I shall soar,
 Where the night is no more,
 And awake to thy praise, thee ever t' adore.”

Habituated thus familiarly to converse with death, he was not in the least degree dismayed by its nearer approaches. To his medical friend, and to those who occasionally visited him, he would talk with as much calmness of his departure from the world, as of any transaction to which he had been accustomed while in it. On one occasion he quoted with evident

pleasure the lines of that experimental author named above, as applicable to his own case :

“ Safe lodg’d my fruits, at even tide I rest ;
My work near done, I lean on Jesus’ breast,
Wait, *without fear*, death’s winter drawing nigh,
Preparing for my mansion in the sky.”

His, indeed, was a strong and unwavering faith, which swallowed up every fear, and enabled him to look at death not only without dread but with joy and triumph. The exercise of this holy principle, moreover, was not restricted to the concerns of his soul, which he had committed into the hands of the Redeemer, but extended also to those of his family. He was the subject of warm affections, and as a kind husband and a fond father, his little ones were closely entwined about his heart ; yet, through a fiducial reliance on the divine Providence, he was enabled to divest himself of all the tender anxieties of a relative life, and to cast them on his God and Saviour. The struggle was painful, but faith was completely victorious. He would pray earnestly for his dear children, and express a strong desire that they might be trained up in scriptural sentiments, and thus be brought to the knowledge of Christ—but it was evident that he had no disquieting care concerning them, and no prevailing wish to continue with them. The cords of earthly attachment were all loosen-

ed, and the willing spirit waited without perturbation, the signal for its flight.

Exemplary patience was a distinguishing feature in the character of this dying believer. Though made to possess months of vanity, and though many wearisome nights were appointed unto him, not a murmuring word was heard to escape his lips. He justified the sovereign disposer of events in his dealings towards him, and was rather inclined to enlarge on the subject of his mercies than his afflictions. *Charity*, also, to his fellow-creatures was manifestly apparent in his last hours. He declared his forgiveness of those who had injured him, and testified his good will towards them by offering up prayers on their behalf. In this state of readiness for the hour of his departure, he seemed considerably disappointed when the morning light returned and beheld him still in this vale of tears, and especially when the revolving Sabbath witnessed those conflicts on earth which he longed to exchange for the *rest* and the *triumph* of heaven. Surveying the wastes of disease, in his emaciated frame, he exclaimed, "What a different body will this be in the morning of the resurrection, if I am found in Christ! I hope I shall be enabled to wait with patience till my change come. I am not afraid to trust my all in the hands of the despised Nazarene!" To a

relation who said, "I hope you will get better," he replied, "my hope is beyond Jordan!" At one time he repeated these lines as applicable to his own case—

"Triumphant now from sin and death,
From law and curse secure;
Peaceful I yield my parting breath,
And know my heaven is sure."

On the return of his pastor from an excursion in the country, of whom he had already taken a solemn, affectionate, and, as it was judged, a last farewell, he expressed great surprise that we had met again in the body, "I had hoped," said he, "to have obtained my release ere this, but the messenger still delays. I desire to say, the will of the Lord be done—but I request you will pray for a speedy dismissal." His nights, which for the most part, were sleepless, he passed in prayer, and in the recollection of those passages of Scripture which were familiar to his mind. And it is here especially worthy of observation that he derived the utmost solace and refreshment from the many portions of sacred writ which he had committed to *memory* in the last years of his life. The word of Christ dwelt in him richly, and as he delighted much in the law of the Lord, so he meditated therein, day and night.

From a personal experience of the benefit ac-

cruing from such a familiar acquaintance with the Bible, he enjoined it upon his dear children, and recommended to his young friends in general, to copy his example in this respect, only to begin much earlier than he did. After expressing his kind wishes for a young gentleman for whom he entertained a great esteem, he sent this message to him by a mutual friend, who was about to visit him in a remote part of the country, "Charge him to store his memory with the Scriptures, to begin immediately, for now is the time to set about it. Had I begun at his age, I should now have been able to recite that blessed book from beginning to end." It is believed this message from the lips of a dying Christian had its full weight; and has led to the adoption of the salutary practice it was intended to recommend. In one of those nights which he passed without sleep, he informed an old friend who kept watch at his bed-side, that he had repeated the Epistle to the Hebrews, from the first to the eleventh chapter inclusive; and he believed, without the omission of a single verse. To one of his children, the Sabbath before his departure, he said, with a firm tone, "My dear child, I thought I should not have seen you again, I expected this would have been the first Sabbath I should have spent in eternity, but God's time is best." On one of his friends in-

quiring if he were comfortable, he replied, "Yes, and if I had but my tongue," (his mouth being in such a state as to render speaking exquisitely painful,) "I would let you all know how happy I am; I am looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God my Saviour." At one season he observed, "Here I am, waiting for my change—what a mercy! If I were a heathen I could not wait so." To his medical attendant, who, aware of his unconquerable aversion to medicine, had, with much kindness, administered as little as the case would admit, he said, "I cannot take any more, let me go as easily as you can;" and then, lifting up his eyes to heaven, added, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for I trust mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Not long before his dismissal, he used the following verses, with a reference to his own circumstances—

" My fluttering pulse, and falt'ring breath,
Announce the near approach of death ;
How can I meet, dear Saviour, say,
The last dark, dismal, cloudiest day.

Look to my cross, the sovereign cure,
For *all the ills* thou can'st endure ;
Whence dart the beams of endless day,
And clouds and darkness flee away."

He was blessed with the continuance of his intellectual faculties till within two or three

hours of his dissolution, when the powers of nature being completely exhausted, the unfettered spirit was allowed to take its joyful flight to that blissful region, where the inhabitant saith not, "I am sick," the people that dwell therein having been forgiven their iniquities. Contemplating his undisturbed and tranquil exit, we may truly and emphatically say, "the end of that man was peace."

Thus terminated the life of Captain Wilson, on Friday, August 12, 1814, at the age of fifty-four, leaving a widow, a son, and four daughters, to lament their loss. Since his death, Mrs. Wilson has been bereaved of her second daughter about eleven years of age, who gave pleasing testimony that she was graciously fitted to meet the blessed spirit of her father in the realms of eternal light and felicity.

The life and death of Captain Wilson furnish to every serious mind, matter for much profitable reflection. The whole of his eventful history, discovers a beautiful and interesting development of the procedure of Divine Providence; which appears mysterious, yet wise in its operations—often afflictive in its events, yet kind in its designs—the minutest parts accurately arranged, and all, like the seasons of the year, terminating in some grand and beneficial result. The storms of commercial life, the tranquillity

of domestic retirement, the blasts of temporal adversity, the beams of prosperity, religious friendships, and family afflictions, all concurred in fitting him to be an instrument of good, or in promoting his final and everlasting welfare. Who would have looked, as Dr. Haweis says, for a convert in a haughty unprincipled Indian merchant; or for the commander of a Christian mission, in an infidel sailor chained in a prison at Seringapatam? Who would expect the Deist, who returned from India contradicting the faith of Christ, and blaspheming the cause of the cross, within five years afterwards on the quarter-deck, in the midst of prayer and praise, carrying the everlasting Gospel to the Isles of the Pacific Ocean? Yet such are the mysterious ways of Providence, such the irresistible influence of truth, and such the power and efficacy of Christian principles.

THE END.

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