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ASBURY

AND

HIS COLLABORERS.

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REV. WM. C. LARRABEE, A. M.

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P R E F A C E .

IN the following sketches I have availed myself of all the biographic and historic materials accessible to me, and coincident with my design. I have not designed to produce formal biography nor stately history, but to present to general readers a graphic view of the prominent and interesting events in the career of Asbury, and of some of his most distinguished coadjutors.

Greencastle, Ind., April 21, 1852.

CONTENTS.

FRANCIS ASBURY.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE OF ASBURY.

Birthplace—Parents—Death of his sister—Asbury at school—Tyrannical teacher—Leaves school—His talents—Religious impressions—Hears the Methodists—His conversion—He begins to preach—Joins the conference.....Page 13

CHAPTER II.

ASBURY'S EARLY MINISTRY IN AMERICA.

First Methodist society in America—Philip Embury—Captain Webb—Boardman and Pilmoor—Asbury volunteers for America—His motives—Magnificence of the enterprise—Itinerating—Difficulties—Mr. Rankin arrives—The first conference—Mr. Rankin and Mr. Asbury dissent in their views—Difference in their character—Other difficulties—The war of the Revolution—Mr. Wesley—Address to the American colonies—Design of the address—Mr. Rodda's Toryism—Prudent course of Mr. Asbury—Flight of the English Methodist preachers—Asbury refuses to go—He refuses the Maryland state oath—Retires to Delaware—Affecting incidents—Trials and difficulties—Longings of Asbury for freedom—He leaves his asylum—He resumes his travels—Sufferings from disease—Discouraging circumstances—He thinks of leaving America—Determines to remain—Difficulties respecting the ordinances—Discontent of the preachers—Proceedings in Virginia—Asbury disapproves the measures—His prudent course—Asbury and others visit Virginia—Negotiations at the Virginia conference—Success of the negotiations—Harmony restored—Rejoicings over the result—Reflections—Asbury goes south—A hard journey—Hard fare—Death of Edward Bailey—Grief of Asbury—Affecting scene.....18

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE OF 1784.

Asbury acting as assistant to Mr. Wesley—Condition of things in America after the Revolution—Mr. Wesley determines to provide for the American societies—Lord King's views of Church government—Mr. Wesley's views—Mr. Wesley sends Dr. Coke to America—A conference called on Christmas day—Plan of Mr. Wesley adopted—Asbury elected and ordained bishop—Reflections—Cokesbury College founded—Fate of the enterprise—Reflections. Page 56

CHAPTER IV.

ASBURY AS A BISHOP—FIRST OCTENNIAL PERIOD.

Travels of Asbury—Inconveniences of traveling—Embarrassments—Crossing the Alleghanies—Prospect before him—Visit to Tennessee—A thunder-shower—The Holstein valley—Visit to Kentucky—Perils of the way—Strange fancies—A seminary founded in Kentucky—The return—Death of John Tunnel—Death of Rev. John Wesley—Asbury's first visit to New England—His impressions of the country—Success in Connecticut—Reception at New Haven—New way to get a congregation—An oasis—Reception at Middletown—A lovely family—Asbury passes through Rhode Island—Discouraging circumstances—He goes to Boston—Dark prospects—Lynn—Journey west—Dividing the parish—Asbury's estimate of New England—His faith in the future—Travels and labors in 1791—Difficulties—Dangers—Sickness—State of mind—Relation of Mr. Wesley to the American Church—Mr. Wesley's name omitted from the Minutes—Mr. Asbury's course in the matter—Unity of Methodism—Difficulty in preserving it—The council organized—Defects of the plan—Council abolished—Introduction of Sunday schools—Origin of the Book Concern—Objects of the establishment—Increase of Methodism. 68

CHAPTER V.

ASBURY AS A BISHOP—SECOND OCTENNIAL PERIOD.

The General conference of 1792—Journey of Asbury along the Juniata, the Susquehanna, and the Delaware—Efforts to establish district schools—Secession of Mr. O'Kelley—Effects of the secession—The yellow fever in Philadelphia—Asbury proceeds south—His health fails—Perilous Situation—A cheerful reception—Asbury's interest in New England—Campaign of 1794—Incidents by

the way—Morals of Charleston—Asbury's return to the east—Tour through New England—The grave of Philip Embury—Journey from Lake Champlain to New York—Tireless itineracy—Death of General Russel—Of Thomas White—Campaign of 1795—A rare scene—Death of Jacob Brush—Of Zadoc Priest—Of Benjamin Abbott—Asbury's health declines—Amount of his travels—He visits Maine—Conference at Readfield—Asbury's employment during sickness—His anxiety for the interests of the Church—Shades of itineracy—Sacrifices of the itinerant—Death of John Dickens—Of Hezekiah C. Wooster—Of Mr. Wells—Of Mr. Asbury's father—Remarks of Asbury on the death of Washington—Increase of members of the Church—Locations in the ministry—Causes of the locations—Effects on the Church—Remedies projected.....Page 108

CHAPTER VI.

ASBURY AS A BISHOP—THIRD OCTENNIAL PERIOD.

General conference of 1800—Election of Richard Whatcoat as bishop—A camp meeting scene—Origin of camp meetings—Revivals—Travels of Asbury in 1801 and 1802—Encouraging prospects—Long meetings—Death of the mother of Asbury—His tribute to her memory—His regard for his parents—Slow progress of Methodism in the towns—Asbury's journey west in 1803—New route west—Eastern tour in 1804—Difficulties of the way—Annoyances and inconveniences—Pleasures of being a bishop—Ingratitude—Renegades—Asbury's habits of observation—His remarks on New England—A new Yankee notion—The mounds of the west—Tour of 1804 and 1805—Campaign of 1806—Death of Bishop Whatcoat—Summer tour of 1807—Western route in 1807—Return to the north—Incidents—Bad roads—Changes and improvements—Steeple and bells—Methodist churches—A delegated General conference—Advantages of the plan—Increase of members during the third octennial period—Death of Tobias Gibson—Of Wilson Lee—Of Peter Jayne—Of George Dougherty.....148

CHAPTER VII.

ASBURY AS A BISHOP—FOURTH OCTENNIAL PERIOD.

The General conference of 1808—William M'Kendree elected bishop—Annual tour of Asbury and M'Kendree—Extent of their travels—Amount of their labors—Asbury falls sick—Review of his labors—Compensation for his services—His literary character—Amount of his writings—His character as a writer—His

obituary notices of preachers—His character as a preacher—His character as a superintendent—His character as a man—His delicate sensibility—The strength of his affections—His reasons for celibacy—His faith in the future—His tour in 1814—His tour in 1815—He commences his tour for 1816—His last sermon—His death—His burial—His epitaph.....Page 189

THOMAS COKE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE OF COKE.

Place and date of his birth—Death of his father—Coke at school—At the University—Irreligious influences—He becomes skeptical—Is awakened by a sermon—Interview with a skeptical clergyman—An unfaithful shepherd—Coke determines to examine the evidences of Christianity—He becomes confirmed in the truth—He determines to enter the ministry—He is ordained—Becomes curate at Petherton—His motives for accepting a curacy—His qualifications for the sacred office—His moral character—His zeal—His success—He becomes popular in the parish—His congregation increases—He enlarges the church at his own expense—Suspected of being tinctured with Methodism—He meets Thomas Maxfield—Correspondence with a dissenter—A curious compromise—Interview with a Methodist class-leader—He receives evidence of Conversion—He preaches without a book—He is dismissed from the parish—He preaches in the church-yard—His last discourse at Petherton—He visits Mr. Wesley—He becomes a Wesleyan—He preaches at London—Success.....227

CHAPTER II.

COKE'S FIRST MISSION TO AMERICA.

Origin of Methodism in America—Embarrassing condition of the societies—Coke appointed by Mr. Wesley superintendent in America—He accepts—He sails for America—First meeting with Asbury—The Christmas conference—Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church—Coke's travels in America—Perilous adventure—Cokesbury College founded—Misfortunes—Coke projects a mission to Nova Scotia—He returns to England.....248

CHAPTER III.

COKE'S SECOND MISSION TO AMERICA.

Coke is dissatisfied with the Established Church—Proposes the independence of the Methodist societies—Apparent inconsistencies—The missionary enterprise—The exiles of Nova Scotia—Coke projects a mission for their benefit—He sails with the missionaries—Disasters of the voyage—Change of destination—Superstitions of captain and crew—Encouraging omens—Arrival at Antigua—An unexpected meeting—Mr. Baxter—Mr. Gilbert—Remarkable introduction of Methodism into Antigua—Coke preaches in Antigua—Excursions among the West India islands—Arrival at Charleston—Travels in the United States—Return to England..259

CHAPTER IV.

THIRD MISSION TO AMERICA.

Oppression of the natives of the West India islands—Las Casas—His mission to the Indians—His efforts to ameliorate their condition—He proposes the substitution of Africans—Introduction of West India negro slavery—Condition of the slaves in the time of Coke—He projects a missionary enterprise for their benefit—He solicits aid of British Christians—He sails for America—Arrival at Barbadoes—Unexpected friends—Excursion among the islands—Mission to the Caribs—Events at St. Eustatius—A strange law—A marine accident—Dr. Coke attempts to preach at St. Eustatius—He leaves the island—He visits other islands—Jamaica—He proceeds to the United States—Incidents—He returns to England..... 272

CHAPTER V.

VARIOUS MISSIONARY ENTERPRISES.

Coke pleads in England for the cause of missions—He succeeds in raising funds—Fourth voyage to America—Reverses in Barbadoes—A strange appellation—Failure of the Carib mission—A conference in the West Indies—Coke visits Jamaica—Opposition to missions—Passage to the United States—Disasters—Arrival at Charleston—Travels in the States—He hears of the death of Mr. Wesley—He returns to England—Cold reception—Aids in writing the Life of Mr. Wesley—Attempts to establish a mission in Paris—Failure of the enterprise—Fifth voyage to America—Intolerance in the West Indies—He appeals to the King of England for toleration—He visits Holland to procure toleration in the Dutch islands—

Ill success—He projects a mission to the Foulahs of Africa—Fine prospects of the mission—It fails from bad choice of agents—Reflections on the result—Sixth voyage to America—Return—Strange whim of a sailor—Visit to Scotland and Ireland—Seventh voyage to America—Captured by a privateer—Set ashore on the coast of the United States—Return to England—Visit to the island of Guernsey—An amusing accident—Eighth voyage to America—Return to Europe—Projects a mission to the Welsh—Last voyage to America—Mission to Gibraltar—Mission to the French prisoners of War—Mission to Sierra Leone—Difficulties in supporting so many missions—A fair and liberal contributor—He marries Miss Penelope Goulding Smith—Her excellent character—Her death—He marries Miss Loxdale—Her death—His liberality in contributing to missions from his own resources—Organization of missionary societies. Page 287

CHAPTER VI.

LATTER YEARS OF COKE.

Dr. Coke and the British authorities—He appeals to the King against the laws of several of the colonial islands—Success of his appeal—Literary pursuits of Dr. Coke—Life of Wesley—Commentary—History of the West Indies—History of the Bible—Cottage Bible—Letters to the Methodist societies—His projects of reform in the economy of the Wesleyan societies—Relation of the Wesleyans to the Established Church—Dr. Coke's overtures to Bishop White—To the Bishop of London—Remarks thereon—Dr. Coke not a judicious ecclesiastical leader—His impulsive spirit—His character as a preacher—His amiable virtues—His relation to American Methodism—He projects a mission to India—He sails for India—His sudden death at sea—His burial in the Ocean. 311

RICHARD WHATCOAT.

Early life of Richard Whatcoat—He settles in Wednesbury—Hears the Methodists—He becomes converted—His excellent character—He begins to preach—Joins the conference—Travels in England, Ireland, and Wales—He removes to America—Itinerates on districts—He is elected bishop—He travels extensively—His death—Testimonies of his estimable character. 337

FRANCIS ASBURY.

100

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

FRANCIS ASBURY.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE OF ASBURY.

Birth.

Conversion.

FRANCIS ASBURY was born near Birmingham, England, in August, 1745. His parents were amiable and respectable people in common life. Francis was their only son. They had one daughter, a sweet and lovely child, but she passed in childhood away to the spirit-land, leaving the mother disconsolate, and the brother without a companion for his childhood years. The death of his little sister deeply affected Francis. He became thoughtful and serious.

At the early age of seven years he experienced the influence of grace in his heart, and he led from childhood to manhood a life of blameless morality.

It was the desire and intention of Mr. Asbury to give Francis a thorough education. With this design he placed him early at school.

A Churlish Schoolmaster.

But the schoolmaster was one of those churlish beings, one of those "sons of Belial," who delight in petty tyranny. There always has been, there is now, and I fear there ever will be, in human society, a class of men, and not a very small class, who, either from inherent viciousness of temper, or from the deficiency of good sense, are totally unfit to have the management of children. Such men never should become either parents or teachers. A man who can not govern children by kindness, by love, and by moral suasion, but who must use physical force, and apply corporeal punishment, ought never to have, in any way, the control of rational beings and immortal intelligences.

So barbarous were the manners, so sour was the spirit, so tyrannical the discipline, and so unamiable the temper of the teacher, to whom young Asbury was committed, that the child, as was natural, became utterly disgusted with the school, and with all its associates. His dislike became deep-rooted and inveterate. He, therefore, persuaded his father to permit him to leave school, and to enter apprentice to a tradesman. But for the inexcusable tyranny of that teacher, Francis Asbury might

have had the inestimable advantage of a thorough and accomplished education. He might have graduated at Oxford, and taken his place in the literary world among stars of the first magnitude. He had naturally a mind of the first order. The educational acquirements of Wesley, of Fletcher, and of Benson, would have proved to him, in the important station he filled for near half a century, of incalculable advantage.

His serious and thoughtful habits, which commenced when he was seven years old, continued, without material change, till he arrived at the age of fourteen, when, by the influence of a devout man, who visited the neighborhood, he became awakened to a deeper and more acute sense of his fallen nature, and of the necessity of regeneration. He began more attentively to read the Scriptures, more earnestly to pray, and more anxiously to inquire the way of salvation. He had heard of the Methodists, and he asked his mother who and what they were. She gave him a favorable account of them, and directed him to a person who would take him to Wednesbury and hear them. To Wednesbury, therefore, he went, and found his way to a Methodist meeting.

To his surprise the minister prayed fluently and fervently without a prayer-book, and preached eloquently and elegantly without a note-book. Asbury had never seen nor heard the like before. Yet he thought this was, after all, the better way.

On his return home, he continued with increasing earnestness his habits of prayer and devotion, diligently seeking the way of life. With a companion, as serious as himself, he retired to his father's barn for prayer. While there, deeply engaged in prayer, his soul was filled with light and love, with peace and joy. He arose from his knees, assured by his own consciousness of a moral and spiritual change of heart, and convinced, by the testimony of the Spirit of God, bearing witness with his own spirit, that his sins were forgiven, and that by faith through the atonement he had received justification.

Soon after his conversion he began to hold meetings in his father's house. Having for some time exercised his gifts as an exhorter, he offered himself to the preacher in charge of the circuit in his neighborhood, as a local preacher. He was accepted, and invited to preach in the Methodist Chapel. He still

Entire Devotion to the Ministry.

carried on the business of his trade of buckle-making, but held himself ready when called on, by night or by day, to go with hasty steps, far and wide, to preach and to do good. He thus continued laboring at his calling, and preaching often four or five times a week, for five years. He then determined to abandon all worldly pursuits, and to devote himself wholly to the work of the ministry. He, therefore, offered himself to the Wesleyan conference as an itinerant preacher. He was received, and appointed to labor on a circuit according to the Wesleyan form.

CHAPTER II.

ASBURY'S EARLY MINISTRY IN AMERICA.

WESLEY had, in his youth, labored a year in America, but left no permanent fruits of his works. Whitefield had traveled repeatedly along the coast from the Savannah to the Merrimac, and preached with great effect to many thousands, but he had formed no Methodist societies. The honor of organizing the first Methodist society in America was reserved for a poor Irish emigrant—Philip Embury, who removed to America in 1765. He had been a local preacher among the Methodists in his native isle, and soon after arriving in New York he gathered five or six of his countrymen into a society, and preached to them at his own house. The number of hearers rapidly increased, the little room became too small, and they hired a larger hall in the lower part of the city, near the military barracks.

While the little band of exiles from their native home were quietly worshiping, one Sab-

The Soldier Preacher.Captain Webb.

bath day, in their humble sanctuary, they were surprised and alarmed at the entrance of a stranger in military dress. They supposed he had come either with intention to interrupt or authority to persecute them. They, however, continued their worship. Their surprise became still more evident when they saw the martial stranger humbly kneel during prayers, and heard him utter lustily and with a good will the well-known *amen*. Rising from his knees, the stranger joined his voice with them in a joyous hymn of praise. After the sermon by Embury, the stranger arose and poured out from his full soul an exhortation of surpassing power and eloquence. Then did the little company know that God had sent them, in that martial dress, a friend and a brother. It was Captain Webb. He had stood on the heights of Quebec by the side of the gallant Wolfe. Wounded in that memorable battle, he had returned to England, where he met Wesley, and became a Christian and a Methodist. Not long after his conversion, being at Bath, he was induced to address a congregation in place of the circuit preacher, who had on that occasion failed to meet his appointment. He was soon ordered by the military authorities to

The John-street Church.Boardman and Pillmoor.

America, and stationed at Albany. His neighbors at Albany, becoming acquainted with his pious habits, requested permission occasionally to attend the morning and evening prayers in his family. Stimulated by the presence of his neighbors, he occasionally either opened or closed the exercises with an exhortation. Visiting New York, and hearing of the little Methodist society, he sought out their place of worship, and became one of them.

Under the united labors of Embury and Webb the society rapidly increased. Their room again became too small. They at first hired a sail loft in William-street, and soon after erected the John-street Church. They sent to Mr. Wesley an account of the condition of things and of their proceedings, and earnestly requested him to send them a preacher.

At the Wesleyan conference held at Leeds, in 1769, Mr. Wesley reported the intelligence and request he had received from America, and proposed to send over to the aid of the infant society two missionaries. For this work he called for volunteers. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pillmoor came nobly forward, and offered their services. In the autumn of 1769

Society of Philadelphia.Bristol Conference.

they arrived at Philadelphia, where they found, to their surprise and joy, a flourishing society of one hundred members, raised up by the noble-hearted and indefatigable Captain Webb, who had extended his labors to that city. Mr. Pillmoor, therefore, remained in Philadelphia, while Mr. Boardman went to New York. Each of the missionaries sent frequent dispatches to England, informing Mr. Wesley of the success and prospect of Methodism in America, and calling for more help.

At the conference held in Bristol, in 1771, Mr. Wesley again called for American volunteers. Scarcely had he introduced the subject to the conference when the youthful Asbury came forward, and said that for some months he had had a strong presentiment that his destiny was for America, that he believed the finger of Providence pointed him toward the setting sun, and that he was ready to go. Mr. Wesley and all the conference appeared at once convinced that God had called Asbury to the American service, and they all approved and accepted the offer so generously made.

From conference Asbury proceeded home to bid his father and his mother farewell. They knew nothing of his enterprise till he gently

Asbury's Ruling Passion.Sails for America.

and prudently made it known to them. He was devotedly attached to his parents, and to leave them gave him great pain. Nor was it a small sacrifice for them to give up their only child, and see him go on a distant and probably returnless mission. But, by the assistance of divine grace, they all became resigned to what seemed the order of Providence. With Asbury duty only was the ruling passion on this occasion. He could expect in America neither pleasure, nor wealth, nor fame. He knew he must there work hard, and fare hard, and be used hard. But he was *impressed* with a conviction of duty, and he could not and would not hesitate. Time, in its development of events, proved him right in his impressions. Providence did call him to America, and did make him the honored instrument of a great and glorious work.

In the autumn of 1771 he sailed for America in company with Mr. Richard Wright, who had also volunteered for the American mission. After a tedious and unpleasant voyage, the ship arrived at Philadelphia. The feelings of Asbury, as he was approaching the American coast, could not be well described. Behind him was the vast and stormy Atlantic, in

The Voyage.American Labors.

whose bosom, three thousand miles away, lay enshrined his native isle, with home, and kindred, and early associations. Before him stretched an illimitable continent, abounding in rivers, by the side of which the Thames would appear but a tiny brook; in mountains, compared with which the grandest highlands of England would appear but ant-hills; and in plains, on which the whole kingdom of Britain, Scotland, and Ireland, might be spread out, with room to spare. He was but a youth, and was intrusted by the venerable Wesley with the superintendence of the greatest enterprise of modern days on this magnificent continent. The responsibility might have proved sufficient to break down any man of ordinary power, but it only nerved Asbury for more indomitable exertion.

On landing, he went immediately to work, preaching, visiting the societies, and administering Discipline. He held the general superintendence of the American work, under the direction of Mr. Wesley, for about two years, during which he traveled, frequently, from New York to Baltimore, visiting the intervening places. New York city, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Newcastle, Wilmington,

Trenton, and Burlington seem to be the principal centers, from which he radiated into the rural districts, carrying light and truth wherever he went. There were in connection with him some six or seven assistants, each having his allotted station or circuit. At each quarterly meeting a general change was made, so that no preacher generally remained more than three months in one place.

Asbury found serious difficulties in discharging his duties as superintendent. He considered himself merely the assistant of Mr. Wesley, and felt bound to carry out to the letter the regulations and rules of the Wesleyan Minutes. But he found among the American societies a strong tendency to relax the rigid rules of Wesleyan discipline. The people were often unwilling to abide by the rules regulating class meetings and love-feasts, and the preachers were much inclined to settle down in the cities, leaving the rural districts neglected.

Methodism in America was yet considered, as in England, but a branch of the Episcopal Church. Methodist preachers had no authority to administer the sacraments; but both themselves and their people had to depend on the services of the Episcopal ministers

Church of England.

First Philadelphia Conference.

of the parishes. Of this the people complained. The American Methodists had no particular regard for the services or ministry of the Church of England, and they could not understand why their own preachers might not be authorized by ordination to administer the Lord's supper and baptism to their own people. These matters were all sources of severe trial to Asbury; yet he resolutely persevered in the enterprise before him, fearless of man, and trusting in God.

At the Wesleyan conference of 1772, Mr. Wesley determined to send additional missionaries to America, and proposed to Mr. Thomas Rankin, a distinguished disciplinarian, to go to America, and become general superintendent. Mr. Rankin consented to go, and chose Mr. George Shadford as his companion. They arrived at Philadelphia in June, 1773. Soon after the arrival of Mr. Rankin the first annual conference was held. It met in Philadelphia, on the 14th of June, 1773. The number of preachers stationed at this conference was only ten. The number of members in all the societies in America was eleven hundred and sixty.

At this conference it was determined to

enforce throughout the connection in America all the rules and regulations of the British Wesleyan conference. The sacrament was not to be administered by Methodist preachers; but the people were to be earnestly advised to attend and receive baptism and the communion at the Episcopal churches. Surely, the conference of that day could have no conception of the future progress of Methodism, or they would have at once perceived it impossible to accommodate the multitudes of Methodists at the very few Episcopal churches in the land.

Mr. Rankin remained in America about five years. To him, being a man of more age and experience than Mr. Asbury, Mr. Wesley thought best to commit the superintendence of the societies. During this time Mr. Asbury received, in common with the other preachers, his station from the annual conference. His appointments were at Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk. The appointment of Mr. Rankin over Mr. Asbury as superintendent, by Mr. Wesley, though in strict accordance with Methodist economy, which, from time immemorial, places the eldest preacher in charge, did not, as it appears to us, prove

Peculiarities in Rankin's Character.

favorable to the interests of the Methodist societies. Mr. Rankin was a good man, a man of piety and respectable talents; but he was too much of an Englishman to manage well American matters. He and Mr. Asbury had each at heart the same purpose—to maintain in the American societies the Discipline of the Wesleyan connection in England. But they did not each strive in the same way to accomplish the object. Mr. Asbury was firm yet conciliating, efficient yet unassuming, decided yet not dictatorial, strict yet mild. Mr. Rankin was inclined to effect by authority what Mr. Asbury could more easily effect by reason and moral influence. Mr. Rankin assumed power to decide on matters which Mr. Asbury thought should be decided by the conference. Mr. Rankin could never become any other than an Englishman, with English habits, English notions, English principles, and English prejudices. His political notions of Church and state, of government and obedience, were all formed on the English model. Mr. Asbury could easily become an American, with liberal views and republican sentiments. He was disposed, while exercising official authority, to regard the views, the feelings, the

wishes, and the personal interests of those under his ecclesiastical control.

Though governed by the best and purest of motives, yet with dispositions so different, Mr. Rankin and Mr. Asbury could not reasonably be expected to agree in opinions and measures. They particularly disagreed respecting revivals. Mr. Rankin thought the spirit of revival "went to disgrace religion by the destruction of order." Mr. Asbury conceded that some enthusiasm and extravagance might occasionally exist in time of revival; but he deemed it injudicious to animadvert with severity on those exhibitions of passionate excitement which always do accompany deep and lasting revivals of religion. The friends of order, he thought, might well allow a poor and guilty mortal to tremble before his God, under deep conviction for sin, and the people of God to sing and shout when the holy One of Israel appears in power and grace among them. To be hasty in plucking the tares might endanger the wheat. We should not venture to reach forth our hand to touch the ark lest we be smitten for sacrifice.

Their relations did not, therefore, long prove agreeable. Mr. Asbury could not cordially approve the administration of Mr. Rankin,

Wesley's Suspicions Excited.Battle of Lexington.

and Mr. Rankin did not like Mr. Asbury. Mr. Wesley was informed, by Mr. Rankin, of the misunderstanding, and evidently influenced, for a time, unfavorably in his opinion of Mr. Asbury. Mr. Asbury thought that the case was not fairly represented, and that Mr. Wesley's opinion was unjustly prejudiced against him. It is probable that Mr. Wesley, from the representation of Mr. Rankin, did suspect Mr. Asbury and the American societies of some design to assume a position of insubordination and independence.

Other troubles of a more serious nature were accumulating, and ready to burst on the head of Asbury. As he was preaching one day in Maryland, a messenger came along, breathless and alarmed, with news of the battle of Lexington. War, then, which had long been feared, had actually commenced. Blood had been shed—the blood of American patriots—blood which could only be expiated by the utter overthrow of the British power in America. The discerning eye of Asbury saw at once the calamities which the war must bring on him and his associates, and the societies under their care. They were Englishmen, Methodism was of English origin, and Wesley,

Hatred to England.Wesley's Address to the Colonies.

the acknowledged head of the Methodist connection, was known to be a high-toned royalist.

It is difficult, at the present day, to conceive of the violent antipathy and murderous hatred which were generated and nourished in those days toward all who were suspected of favoring, ever so remotely, the royal cause. The current of prejudice was directed toward the Methodists the more strongly by means of Mr. Wesley's "Calm Address to the American Colonies," and several other political tracts, which he published about that time. This venerable man was an ardent lover of *legitimate* liberty. His notions, however, of government were all formed on the model of the British Constitution. Under that Constitution the subject enjoys more personal than political freedom. Personal liberty Mr. Wesley would never surrender. Political liberty, or, to use his own language, "political independence," he did not highly estimate. He judged of republican liberty only by Venice, Genoa, and Holland, and he saw that in these republics the citizen enjoyed much less personal freedom than did the subject of the English monarchy. He, therefore, concluded an American republic, if estab-

“The Sovereignty of the People.”

lished, might prove more oppressive on the individual citizens than the British Government ever could become on the colonists. He considered the colonies as corporations, governed by a charter, and having no right to any immunities or privileges not expressly granted in the charter. He believed that the question at issue was not one between the people of America and the Government of England, but one between a chartered incorporation and the Government. The idea of the “sovereignty of the people” had never been developed in his mind. The great and glorious doctrine of man’s sovereign and inalienable right to self-government—a doctrine yet destined to effect important modifications even in American legislation, and to revolutionize every other government on earth—was not known at that day to Wesley. He thought the American people must acknowledge and obey a sovereign, either in the person of the British King or in a *soulless* corporation.

He thought, also, that the American colonies were prompted and excited to complaints and resistance by certain persons and parties in England, whose purpose was not to aid the colonies in asserting and maintaining their

Agitations.

"Calm Address."

rights, but to subvert the English Government at home. In his journeyings over England he found his societies agitated and divided and their spiritual prosperity greatly injured by political excitement. Perceiving the sympathy of the English Methodists in favor of the American colonies, and fearing that sympathy would be used by designing men to involve the people in rebellion against the King, and in the horrors of civil war, and the dangers of revolution, he wrote his "Calm Address to the American Colonies," and other tracts, in which he conscientiously took the British side on the American question, and endeavored to sustain and defend the positions of the English ministry. These tracts were evidently designed by Mr. Wesley for the meridian of London rather than that of Philadelphia. He wished to calm the excitement and tranquilize the spirit of the English Methodists. At the very time of publishing the "Calm Address" in England, he cautioned the Methodist preachers in America against becoming partisans, or saying a word against either side. He advised them to be peace-makers, to be conciliators to all, and to act in harmony among themselves.

The "Calm Address," however, found its way to America, and did much mischief. It implicated the Methodists as partisans of royalty and oppression. It gave plausible reasons for their enemies to brand them as Tories. To make the matter worse, one of the English preachers, Rev. Mr. Rodda, distributed through his circuit in Maryland copies of the King's proclamation, thereby becoming an active Tory partisan. All these things Mr. Asbury decidedly disapproved. He was "truly sorry that Mr. Wesley, that venerable man, ever dipped into American politics." He would not "attempt a vindication" of those preachers who had meddled with the controversy between the colonies and the Government. His own course was most prudent and proper. He would take no part nor say one word on the questions in debate.

Difficulties kept accumulating about him. So excited became the public mind and so violent the prejudice against the partisans of royalty, among whom they included the English Methodist preachers, that personal hazard to Asbury and his associates was apprehended. Mr. Rankin proposed to leave the country and escape to England, while they had a chance.

Rankin and Asbury.Rankin Returns to England.

Mr. Asbury declined the suggestion. He could not and he would not abandon the three thousand people in religious connection with him. His European associates might go, if they pleased; but he would stand to his post, whatever might betide.

He frankly told Mr. Rankin, that he felt quite sure the Americans would never be satisfied with any thing short of independence; and he felt a *presentiment* that God Almighty designed America to be free and independent, and that a great American Methodist people would be gathered in the country. Some time before Mr. Asbury had checked Mr. Rankin in an abusive tirade in conference against the spirit and designs of the Americans. From these facts, Mr. Rankin considered Mr. Asbury as leaning strongly toward the "rebels," and he felt very indignant, and it is probable that he used these circumstances to compromise Mr. Asbury in the opinion of Mr. Wesley. Soon after this, Mr. Rankin, with every English preacher except Asbury, left his work, and returned to England. Asbury then found himself alone.

He kept prudently about his business, preaching in Baltimore and vicinity, till he

Asbury Leaves Maryland.

Lives in Delaware.

was required to take an oath of allegiance to the state of Maryland. The form of the oath was, as he thought, "preposterously rigid," and its terms such as he thought unreasonable. He, therefore, on conscientious principles, declined taking it. He could then no more preach in Maryland. Accordingly, he retired to the state of Delaware, where the state oath was not required of clergymen. He says, however, he could have taken, with a good conscience, the Delaware oath, had it been required. As it was, he would gratuitously have done it, had he not been prevented by fear of hurting the scrupulous consciences of others. From this we see that he was at heart friendly to the cause of the colonies, and ready to renounce allegiance to the British crown, and to become, in fact, what he already was in spirit, an American citizen.

He retired to an asylum at the residence of Thomas White, Esq., in Delaware. He had remained quietly in the family about one month, when circumstances rendered it advisable for him to leave for a time his asylum. He, therefore, moved on, not knowing where he should find shelter. He traveled a few miles, when, weary, he stopped at a house to

A Funeral.A Homeless Wanderer.

rest. It proved a house of mourning. An inmate of the family was lying in a coffin, and the neighbors were assembled to bury the dead. But no man of God was there to speak words of comfort to the mourner or of warning to the careless. Asbury hesitated not to improve the occasion so unexpectedly occurring, to speak to the people of redemption, and salvation, and heaven. He then went on his weary way along a devious and lonely road. Late at night, weary and sick, he found shelter. Here he intended to rest till Providence should direct his way. But the next evening he heard of circumstances which induced him to think it prudent to move the next day. Deeply depressed was his spirit. He was three thousand miles from his native home and his kindred. All his countrymen associated with him had left him to his fate. He was considered by most persons, who knew not his heart and his motives, as an enemy to the country, and he was, accordingly, liable any hour to be apprehended and abused.

Leaving his resting-place, he went into a wild and dismal swamp, where he lay concealed till night, when a friend kindly took him in and protected him. Under these cir-

Persecution of Ministers.Troubles Thicken.

cumstances of trial he was sustained by the consciousness that he was in the way of duty. He was seeking neither riches nor honor. He was laboring only for the spiritual good, for the salvation of his fellow-men. He trusted in Providence, being confident the God of the prophets and of the apostles would protect and relieve him.

In his seclusion he heard that his friend and brother, Rev. Joseph Hartley, had been apprehended and imprisoned in the county of Queen Ann, and that the amiable Freeborn Garrettson had been assaulted, abused, and nearly murdered by his persecutors. After about a month spent in seclusion, he ventured to return to his old home at Judge White's, where he remained till the troubles were passed.

It was with the utmost difficulty he could maintain contentment and resignation in his restricted circumstances. Pent up in the little state of Delaware, he felt straitened and repressed in his very soul. He says his mind was twisted and tortured; he knew not whether to fight or run; he was worried by temptations; every thing appeared under a cloud; and often he was ready to choose death rather than such a life. Yet he had an agreeable home, he was

Asbury's Mental Characteristics.

in no immediate danger, and he had the whole state of Delaware for his prison-bounds. Yet he was unhappy. Nor could it be otherwise, since God had made him for an itinerant, and called him to travel, and designed the whole country, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi and from the Gulf of Mexico to the St. Lawrence, for his circuit. Had you placed him in a palace in Delaware, and given him an Eden for his rambles, and a magnificent cathedral for his preaching-place, and ten thousand souls for his audience, he still would have been uneasy. He would have pined for the freedom of the whole continent. He would have longed to climb the mountains, and swim the rivers, and face the bleak winds of the plains. His soul would have yearned to carry the Gospel to the frontier settler in his rude cabin, and to gather into the fold of his Master the lost and wandering sons of neglect and the daughters of destitution. Insult not such a man as Asbury with offers of eligible settlements, of desirable alliances, of wealth, of ease, of ambitious promotion. But give him enough of Gospel work to do, and room enough to work, and then, and then only, you insure him content and happiness.

Two Years at Judge White's.

Goes to Baltimore.

He made his home at Judge White's about two years. The first year he went out but short distances from home, and preached but little. In April, 1779, he held a conference in his secluded place of exile. The preachers of the northern stations were all present, and great harmony prevailed. So unhappy had Mr. Asbury been under his cramped and straitened circumstances through the year, that he determined, at whatever risk, to venture out from his seclusion and perform regular circuit work. Delaware was accordingly made a circuit, and Asbury appointed in charge. No sooner had he left home for some distant part of the state than his spirits began to revive. He still, however, made his headquarters at Judge White's, though he was most of the time absent on some part of his circuit. After having spent two years in Delaware, he went to Baltimore to attend the conference of 1780. He had become a citizen of Delaware, and returned to Maryland under the recommendation and protection of the Governor of Delaware. By this means he avoided all further interruption, and was permitted to prosecute his work without hindrance.

Health Becomes Impaired.The American Climate.

From the arrival of Mr. Rankin in America, in 1773, till the spring of 1780, Mr. Asbury was suffering most of the time anxieties and distress both of body and mind. He did not, as we have already seen, approve of the spirit and the measures of Mr. Rankin in the administration of Discipline among the Methodists, and he himself had no authority to remedy the effects he so much deplored. His health became greatly impaired. The process of acclimation was severe in its effects on him. The heat of summer and the cold of winter were equally intense, far beyond any thing he had ever experienced in England. Indeed, the people of the British Isles could hardly conceive of the variableness, intensity, and unhealthy influences of the climate of Maryland and Delaware at that period. Asbury suffered severely from chills and fever, and other diseases incident to a new and miasmatic region. In winter the changing temperature exposed him to repeated attacks of cold and of sore throat. Almost any other man would have been utterly disabled under the severe and oft-repeated attacks he suffered.

The circumstances under which he had to preach were often extremely discouraging.

Poor Preaching-Places.

Thinks of Leaving America.

He found no comfortable and neatly-finished churches, such as now abound every-where in the land; but he had to preach in private rooms, and in barns, and in all sorts of inconvenient places. He found few large and attentive congregations, inspiring by their presence liberty and eloquence in the preacher, but he had to address small congregations, seldom exceeding one hundred persons, and they often inattentive, heedless, dull, disorderly, and every way unpromising. It is no wonder that often he found himself embarrassed in preaching, "shut up," as he would say. It indeed requires much philosophy, much zeal, and no small development of hope to preach with any effect an extemporaneous sermon in an inconvenient place to an uninteresting congregation. Sometimes, however, the spirit of Asbury would burst its shackles, and he would speak with fluency, power, and eloquence.

During these years of trial and seasons of depression he thought once or twice of leaving America. At one time he thought of going to Gibraltar. At another time he received a pressing invitation to go to Antigua, where had been collected a society of several hundred members, who were then left without any

Antigua.

Church Difficulties.

preacher. He was strongly inclined to go, and had received the consent of Mr. Wesley. But there were in the way difficulties, which he then could not remove nor surmount. Not having then been ordained, and there being no provision by which, according to the rules of Methodism, he could receive ordination, he could not labor with success in Antigua, where there were no Episcopal clergymen to administer for him the ordinances.

We can but admire the order of Providence in continuing, by whatever means, Asbury in America. Had he gone to Gibraltar or to Antigua, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America might never have received the comely form and admirable proportions which it assumed under the hand of Asbury.

The difficulties respecting ordination assumed about this time a form of alarming omen to the unity of the American Methodists. In England Methodism had ever been merely a society within the Established Church. Wesley and all the Methodist preachers, and all the Methodist members, were considered still members of the Episcopal Church. Baptism and the Lord's supper had to be administered by Episcopal clergymen. The Wesleys were

Peculiar Church Embarrassments.

themselves clergymen in regular standing, and so were some of their coadjutors; but the greater part of the Wesleyan preachers were deemed mere laymen. In America there was no Methodist preacher qualified by ordination to administer the ordinances. It was the intention of Asbury to follow the English plan, gathering persons into Methodist societies, but letting them depend for the sacrament and baptism on the services of the ministers of the Episcopal Church, or, if they preferred, on Presbyterians, Baptists, or any other evangelical denominations. With this order of things the American Methodists did not and could not long remain satisfied. They had not, as had the European Methodists, any particular association with Episcopalians, or any partiality for prelatie usages. There were few Episcopal ministers in the country, and fewer still of that few were distinguished for moral excellence or religious temper. There could be no satisfactory alliance of Methodists with other American denominations. It is strange that Wesley and Asbury were so long in comprehending the impossibility of grafting Methodism on the "dead, twice dead, and plucked up by the roots" Episcopal Church of America. The

Dr. Franklin Consulted.Inquiries Started.

Episcopalians themselves were nearly as luckless as the Methodists in obtaining the administration of the ordinances. After the American Revolution two candidates for the Episcopal ministry went to England to procure ordination. But no English bishop could ordain them unless they would take an oath of fidelity to King George. This no American citizen *could* do. Dr. Franklin, whom they consulted in the emergency, told them their only chance was to go home and elect a bishop of their own, or turn Presbyterians.

The members of the Methodist societies could not understand why their own ministers should not be qualified and allowed to administer the ordinances of Christianity, as well as the ministers of the Baptist and Presbyterian societies. The native Methodist preachers themselves began to inquire why they were not called to administer the ordinances as well as to preach. They knew that only ordained men were deemed qualified to baptize and administer the sacrament. But they thought they had a right to ordination. If there was any rule debarring them from ordination, they thought that rule wrong.

The ecclesiastical disabilities of the Methodist

Disaffection.

Self-Ordination.

preachers constituted ground of discontent, more especially in the south. The preachers in Virginia exhibited indications of resistance to the defective order of things. There were intimations of a separation from Asbury and from the northern districts, unless some remedy should be allowed for the acknowledged grievances. At the conference held by the northern preachers in 1779, a judicious and conciliatory letter was adopted and sent to the south, in order, if possible, to prevent the threatening division. The letter, however, failed to produce any material effect. At the conference held in Virginia, a few weeks after the session of the northern conference in Delaware, the southern preachers resolved to proceed in the work they deemed so necessary. They accordingly appointed a committee of the most respectable and elderly men among them to ordain the preachers. The committee first ordained themselves and then the other members of the conference. They then went forth to administer the ordinances among their people.

Mr. Asbury could by no means approve these measures. The proceeding was altogether a violation of Methodist economy. His heart, and soul, and intellect at once became devoted

to unremitting efforts to reclaim the dissenting brethren. He wrote them a long, an able, and an affectionate letter. He endeavored to persuade the dissenters to be content to receive the ordinances from the hands of the parochial clergy of the Episcopal Church. They replied that the Methodist *people* would not receive the ordinances from the hands of ministers who were confessedly unconverted men, and many of them notoriously immoral in their conduct. Asbury could but acknowledge the force of the objections; yet still he could not permit a course so irregular as the southern preachers had taken. Fearing a separation inevitable, he yet determined to rescue as many as possible from the disastrous effects of the schism.

A few days before the session of the northern conference for 1780, he received a letter from one of the Virginia preachers, encouraging him to hope for effecting a reconciliation by conciliating and prudent measures. When the conference assembled, the Virginia difficulties became matter of earnest debate. Some were for disowning, at once, all who had presumed to administer the ordinances contrary to the order of the Church of England. Asbury proposed a union, on condition that the dissentients should

Prospective Final Separation.

A Committee Appointed.

ordain no more; that they should not presume to administer the ordinances where there was a decent Episcopal minister; and that they should consent to hold, with the north, a union conference. The consent of the conference could not be obtained to these terms of union, and there seemed no alternative but a final separation. In this extremity Asbury made one effort more. He moved that a committee be appointed to proceed to the southern conference, and to propose a suspension of all proceedings respecting the ordinances for one year. He hoped that, through communication with Mr. Wesley, some plan might, in the mean time, be devised to prevent the disastrous results of a separation. To this plan the conference assented. Asbury, William Watters, the oldest native preacher in the connection, and the amiable and accomplished Freeborn Garrettson were appointed the committee. With much anxiety, and many fears for the result, the committee proceeded to Virginia.

The conference met. Asbury, on being desired by the conference to open the case, read Wesley's "thoughts against separation" from the Church, exhibited his own private letters and instructions from Wesley, and explained to

A Sermon from Asbury.

An Affecting Scene.

them the sentiments of the conferences held at Delaware and at Baltimore. He then preached a public discourse, in which he prudently omitted all allusion to existing difficulties, presenting only a plain exhibition of Gospel truth, accompanied by a warm and affectionate exhortation.

The morning session of conference thus closed with the prospect of satisfactory adjustment of all difficulties. Outdoor talk, however, during the recess produced an unfavorable change of sentiment, and in the afternoon they met, with little disposition to compromise. Asbury, with his colleagues, explicitly stated the conditions of union, mildly expostulating with the dissenters, and firmly insisting on the terms of compromise, as the ultimatum to which he and the northern conference could agree. He then left them to deliberate on the matter. After an hour, the conference informed him they could not accept the terms of union. On receiving intelligence of their decision, Asbury was overwhelmed with such a cloud of sorrow as never had settled on his soul in the American hemisphere. He wept, his associates wept, and the committee appointed by the conference to announce their decision wept. All hope of pre-

The Conference Yields.A Good Love-feast.

venting a final division among the Methodists vanished. Henceforth the people who ought to be united in sentiment and in practice, harmoniously laboring to spread Scriptural holiness over the land, would be distracted by dissension and driven by rivalry into measures of hostile aggression on each other. With a sorrowful spirit and desponding heart, Asbury kneeled alone in his chamber before the Lord, and poured out his full soul in fervent prayer. He then called at the conference room to bid them good-by. Exhilarating was the revulsion of feeling in his soul, great was the joy of his heart on learning at the door that the conference had yielded. The terms of compromise were adopted, the conditions of union accepted, and the Methodists were one again. After mutual congratulations, the eloquent William Watters delivered a sermon on that appropriate text, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." After preaching they held a love-feast. It was an affecting, a glorious time. Preachers and people talked, and wept, and sung, and shouted. The spirit of dissension was effectually *laid*. The Methodist community throughout America was yet one and indivisible.

A separation at that early day would have been most disastrous. The whole number of preachers in America was then only forty-two, and twenty of these would have been cut off from the Wesleyan connection by the separation. Of the eight thousand people in connection with the Methodist societies at least three thousand would have been lost by the division. The division would not, probably, have been long confined to local limits, but would have operated to the ruin of the societies north as well as south of the Potomac. The glory of Methodism would have been sadly dimmed, if not extinguished; and its mission greatly trammelled, if not rendered a total failure. The catastrophe so much to be deprecated, was evaded only by the admirable wisdom, consummate prudence, reliable firmness, mild forbearance, and conciliating temper of Asbury. In the hands of almost any other man the negotiation for peace, on admissible terms, would have failed. Either by hasty admissions and ill-advised concessions, the integrity of Wesleyan Methodism would have been impaired; or by uncompromising assumption and uncharitable severity, the disaffected portion of the society might have been utterly alienated. The

Proceeds to Virginia and North Carolina.

incomparable prudence with which Asbury managed this most difficult matter, indicated the possession of talents qualifying him for the responsible place of leader of the Methodist forces in America.

Having happily settled the difficulties in the conference, Asbury proceeded on a tour through Virginia and North Carolina to preach, and to exert his influence as a peace-maker in the distracted societies. The journey proved a hard one. The roads were desperately bad. He had to cross bridgeless rivers where the water was deeper than the horse's head, and the bottom, when it could be reached, full of rocks, and the banks incumbered by logs. He had to wind a devious way through pathless woods. Often he got lost, and had to wander about the forests and swamps at the imminent hazard of his life. His horse became often so enfeebled from hard service and want of food as to sink down under him. Overtaken at one time among the mountains by darkness, he had to lie out among rocks and fallen trees all night. When he found a lodging-place in the cabin of some settler, it often proved extremely uncomfortable. Sometimes his bed was spread in a loft oppressively hot in summer, and admitting, by capacious

Rough Lodgings.

Curious Congregations.

openings, the wind and the cold in winter. Sometimes he had to sleep in the same small room with a large family amidst the disagreeable odor of air contaminated by excessive respiration, and the annoyance of all manner of domestic insects. Once, after riding seventeen miles and preaching, while sick of a high fever, he could find no better bed than a rough plank. His food was often as coarse as his lodging. He often met with people of a character not uncongenial with the lodging and the fare. At one preaching-place several persons came in drunk, and with their guns. At others the people appeared dull, or senseless, or careless, or rude, or inhospitable. He found one congregation that set a low estimate on his preaching talents, because he did not "speak like thunder." He, however, wisely concluded it not worth while to throw himself into any unnatural heat, or overstrained exertion to please such tastes. He often got utterly weary of the kind of company he had to keep at his stopping places, and was obliged to resort to the woods for retirement, at the risk of being annoyed by ticks, chegres, and musketoos.

On returning from North Carolina he arrived among his friends in Virginia in a sad plight.

Reduced to an Extremity.

Edward Bailey.

His clothes were worn out, actually ragged, and his horse essentially used up. His friends, however, fitted him out anew, and he started for the north. He was accompanied from Virginia by Edward Bailey, a "good and sensible" man from Ireland, who agreed to give up his business and travel with him. Bailey was a zealous and powerful exhorter, and rendered Asbury efficient service for about two months, when he fell sick one day on the journey. As it was raining, and Asbury was anxious for the health of his friend, he stopped till the next day. The following morning he proceeded with his sick companion. Bailey was able to keep along through the week, though frequently so ill as to be obliged to stop and rest, while Asbury went on to his appointments. On Sunday he gave out as he was on his way to the preaching-place. Asbury left him in the carriage, went on to his appointment, preached to a large congregation, and immediately returned to his friend, whom he found with all the symptoms of a severe bilious attack. Finding Bailey unable to travel, Asbury left him in the care of a kind family and a skillful physician, and went on to his appointments, which had been made far in advance, and could not

Bailey's Death.Asbury in Sorrow.

be easily recalled. In about ten days he received the melancholy tidings of Bailey's death, which had occurred on the third day after he left him. The poor man died among strangers, far away from his sister, his wife, and his children, whom he commended in his last hour to the generous attention of Asbury.

The death of Bailey fell severely on the heart of Asbury. There was no doubt but the fatal result of the case was induced by neglect, which could not, from circumstances, be avoided, in the early stages of the disease. Asbury was so affected by the event, that he was ready to say, "None shall ride with me hereafter." His heart was easily touched by sympathy. It is true, he seldom wept, but, as he himself says, he perhaps suffered more than those who "weep away their distress." Yet sometimes he did weep. On one occasion, calling on the sister of one of the preachers, he found her weeping for the absence of her brother. At that moment there came up before him the image of his own mother pining in solitude for him, her only child, three thousand miles away. At this conception picture even Asbury, the magnanimous Asbury, wept like a child. He met, also, on his return to Del-

Two Sad Deaths.

aware from his southern tour, with a family in which bereavement had made work so sad, as deeply to affect him. A man, who had been one of his constant hearers, but who was not religious, had fallen sick. He had a son, a very interesting little boy, of whom he was passionately fond. The father, in the delirium of fever, thought himself going on some long, dreary, perhaps returnless journey, and frequently called on the child to go along with him. Thus the poor man died. The child looked with intense agony on the dying scene, and as soon as he saw the father dead, he went out and hanged himself. Thus father and child together departed, and in the same grave were they buried. When Asbury met the widow, he could but weep in sympathy.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE OF 1784.

MR. ASBURY had been originally appointed by Mr. Wesley superintendent of the Methodist interests in America. The term, however, by which the office was known, was *assistant*. Mr. Wesley was deemed the head of Methodism in Europe and America, and Mr. Asbury superintended matters in America as *assistant* to Mr. Wesley. While Mr. Rankin was in America, he, being older and of more experience in ecclesiastical matters than Mr. Asbury, assumed, by Mr. Wesley's direction, the office of assistant or superintendent. Mr. Asbury, however, was not thereby deposed. He and Mr. Shadford were joined with Mr. Rankin by Mr. Wesley's order. When Mr. Rankin and Mr. Shadford had returned to England, and no late intelligence nor direction had been received from Mr. Wesley, the conference resolved, that Mr. Asbury, from his age, from his original appointment by Mr. Wesley, and from his having been joined with

Mr. Rankin and Mr. Shadford by Mr. Wesley's order, ought to act as general assistant or superintendent.

Mr. Wesley seems to have permitted matters thus to remain, without any further interposition of his own authority, which the American Methodists highly respected, till near the close of 1784. In the mean time he had been informed by Mr. Asbury of the difficulties respecting the ordinances, and had been anxiously deliberating on means of providing for the ecclesiastical government of the societies in America. The venerable man well knew that something must be done. The connection between the Church of England and the American societies had been wholly severed by the American Revolution. The persons in America, who had been members of the Church of England, could no longer retain their Church relations. There might be still Episcopalians in America, but they could not be Church of England Episcopalians. The Church of England acknowledged for its head the British King. The Church in America could not do that. There must be, therefore, formed a new Church in America. It might be formed on the Episcopal, or the Presbyte-

Methodist Episcopal Church Organized.

rian, or the Congregational model. But whatever the form of government might be, the Church, formed in America out of those who had been members of the Church of England, would be, to all intents and purposes, a new, an original Church. All who had been members of the Church of England in America, including both the parish establishments and the Methodists, might be united in one new Church, or they might be formed into two or more separate Churches. After mature deliberation, and much consultation with good and learned men, Mr. Wesley determined to organize the American Methodist societies, with the consent of those interested, into a separate Church, to be called the Methodist Episcopal Church. Forty years before this time he had, on reading Lord King's "Inquiry into the Constitution and Discipline of the Primitive Church," been convinced, in spite of the prejudices of his education, that bishops formed not in the Christian ministry a rank or order distinct from the rank or order of elders. Indeed, Lord King, drawing from the stores of antiquity an array of evidence that could not be broken, impeached, or evaded, proves most incontestably, even *demonstrates*,

so far as any proposition of moral reasoning can be demonstrated, that during the first three centuries of the Christian era, there were in the Church but two orders of ministers—deacons and elders. The deacons were required, as their name imports, to *serve* the Church in providing for the poor, in distributing the consecrated elements at the sacrament, in baptizing, and, when necessary, in preaching or expounding the Scriptures. The elders were “overseers” of the flock, and superintendents of the work, with power to administer all the ordinances of the Church, to preach, and to ordain other elders and deacons. The deacons and the elders were consecrated by distinct acts of ordination, and constituted distinct orders or ranks. There were sometimes several elders residing in the same local community. For the effective execution of Church Discipline, and for securing the regular and orderly administration of the ordinances, the local Churches were accustomed to elect from the elders residing among them one to take the special charge of the Church. To this one so elected, the term bishop, implying *overseer*, or *superintendent*, was applied. By becoming bishop he acquired no new power or authority

Mr. Wesley as a Bishop.

inherent in his order, but only acquired the privilege of exercising, in a particular place, the power and authority inherent in the order of elders. Any elder might be chosen a bishop. When thus chosen over any particular Church, all the administrative business of the Church became intrusted to him, and the other elders residing within the bounds of the parish acted as his assistants.

Mr. Wesley was constituted by Providence, as he thought, by circumstances whose import he could not mistake, and by the common consent of all interested, the overseer, the superintendent, the *bishop* of the "people called Methodists." These people were not, like the local Churches of primitive ages, residing in one neighborhood, but yet they had chosen to deem themselves one people, and to submit to one *bishop*. Mr. Wesley, therefore, deemed himself as much a bishop, in the Scriptural sense of that word, over the "people called Methodists," as was the Bishop of London, or of Bangor, or of Bristol over those cities. The time had come when the Methodists in Europe and in America could no longer remain one people. The American Revolution had severed the legal and constitutional connection. The

American portion of the people must be formed into a new and distinct Church. They had requested him to provide them with a Church organization, which should secure to them the regular and orderly administration of the ordinances of Christianity. He, therefore, advised them to adopt an episcopal form of Church government. This form, according to Mr. Wesley's understanding of the usage of the Primitive Church, involved the two distinct orders of ministry, deacons and elders, and a superintendent to be elected, or otherwise appointed. There were among the Methodists of America neither deacons nor elders. But Mr. Wesley, being himself an elder in the Church of England, did not doubt his power and right, with the assistance of other elders, forming a presbytery, to ordain elders, who would, in their turn, become qualified to ordain others. He, therefore, by the assistance of Rev. Thomas Coke, and Rev. Mr. Creighton, elders of the Church of England, ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, as elders for the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Mr. Wesley then appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury joint superintendents over the Methodists of America. He then

Dr. Coke Arrives in America.

A Change Made.

proceeded, with the assistance of other elders, to ordain Dr. Coke as superintendent or bishop.

Dr. Coke, with Mr. Whatcoat and Mr. Vasey, arrived in America in the autumn of 1784. He immediately explained to Mr. Asbury and other American preachers whom he met, the plan of government Mr. Wesley had advised, and the appointments he had made. It was determined to call, at the earliest possible day, a conference of all the Methodist preachers, to deliberate and determine the matter. The Christmas of 1784 was the time, and the city of Baltimore the place appointed by common consent for the conference.

The conference assembled. The letter of Mr. Wesley was read, analyzed, and cordially approved. His plan of Church government was adopted. Some slight changes of names and terms only were made. As the words superintendent, overseer, and bishop originally mean nearly the same thing, and as bishop is the word usually occurring in the New Testament, the conference changed the name of the chief administrative officer of the Church from superintendent to bishop.

Mr. Wesley had, from his own discretion,

appointed Coke and Asbury superintendents. The conference made no objection to receiving these excellent men in that office, on Mr. Wesley's appointment. But Mr. Asbury seems in this case, as through his whole life, to have acted with scrupulous regard to popular rights. He utterly refused to act as superintendent over the Church in America on the appointment of Wesley in England. He insisted on the right of the conference to *elect* their superintendents. The office was, therefore, made elective, and has thus remained to this day. Having determined the tenure of office, the conference, by a unanimous vote, elected Coke and Asbury joint superintendents. Asbury was ordained by Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey, deacon and elder. Subsequently Coke, with the assistance of the same elders, and of the Rev. Mr. Otterbein, of the German Church, ordained Asbury as superintendent. The conference then elected a sufficient number of deacons and elders, who received ordination in the usual form.

Asbury had now, by virtue of his own intrinsic merit, by the providence of God, and by the unanimous suffrages of his brethren, arisen to a position of dignity, of moral power,

Review of Personal Afflictions.

and of incalculable usefulness. To him this conference must have been a scene of thrilling interest. Thirteen years had passed since he left his early home, his father, his mother, and the grave of his only sister, for an adventurous voyage over the Atlantic, and a magnificent enterprise of Christian benevolence in America. He had landed on the shores of the Delaware a stranger, without influence, without wealth, and nearly without money. He had passed, during the thirteen years, through scenes of suffering from sickness and from embarrassments, such as seldom fall to the lot of a whole lifetime. He had seen all his countrymen forsake him and flee. He had been driven, by the violence of the times, into seclusion and confinement, while war was committing its awful ravages over his adopted country. He had seen the people whom he came to serve, nearly rent and ruined by divisions. Through all difficulties he had held fast his integrity. He had nobly stood his ground and labored on in hope, till better days had dawned. The number of members in the Church, to whose services his life was devoted, had increased, since his arrival in this country, from six hundred to eighteen thousand, and

the number of native preachers from one to one hundred. And as he looked over that hundred assembled before him, his eye lighted on many whose future career of eloquence and eminence might then be foreshadowed to his far-reaching vision. There were present the accomplished Freeborn Garrettson, the adventurous and indomitable Jesse Lee, and the youthful and eloquent Hope Hull. There were present also, William Phoebus, Nelson Reed, Ezekiel Cooper, and Thomas Ware—men whose eminently-useful lives were continued down to our own times, and over whose graves the grass has yet hardly grown green. But there was one, for whom Asbury looked in vain—one who had been his companion in many a long and dreary journey—one whose eloquent voice had often made the heart of listening multitudes

“Thrill as if an angel spoke,
Or Ariel’s finger touched the string”—

Pedicord, the gentle-spirited, the generous-minded, the noble-souled, the silver-tongued Pedicord, had fallen—fallen in his youth—fallen in his opening glory and abundant promise. Asbury looked for him and he was not. The grave had closed over his body, and his spirit had passed to the land where only

Cokesbury College Organized.

Destroyed by Fire.

spirits so refined, so sensitive, so ethereal as his find congenial sympathy and rest.

It is an interesting fact, that the first thing done by the conference, after the organization of the Church was completed, was the establishing of a seminary of learning for the education of youth. The enterprise had been projected by Asbury nearly five years before, and a subscription had been drawn up at his suggestion, by John Dickins. At this conference the plan was presented, and adopted. The institution was called, in honor of its founders—Coke and Asbury—Cokesbury College. It was located at Abingdon, about twenty-five miles from Baltimore. The site was most beautiful and eligible. It commanded a magnificent prospect of the Chesapeake, the Susquehanna, and a vast extent of rural scenery. A large building was soon erected, an extensive and thorough course of classical and scientific study adopted, and a respectable number of scholars admitted. Every thing went on prosperously for about ten years, when the buildings took fire and were utterly consumed. Efforts were made to resuscitate the institution, and a heavy subscription was raised for rebuilding. But an advantageous offer of buildings already

The College again Consumed.

erected being made in Baltimore, the trustees removed the college to that city, and reopened it with encouraging success. Scarcely had operations recommenced under new and favorable auspices, when the new buildings took fire, and were utterly consumed, with the Methodist church on the same lot.

Under these repeated calamities, Bishop Asbury became discouraged, and concluded that it was not the pleasure of Providence for the Methodists to engage in founding and managing colleges. He was not aware that there were, in his presence at the conference of 1784, those who should live to see, in a state of the American Union, of whose name he had never then heard, a university bearing his own name, having a thorough course of study in the various departments of learned and professional life, richly endowed, and cordially cherished, efficiently sustained, and liberally patronized by a hundred thousand Methodists.

Extensive Field of Labor.

CHAPTER IV.

ASBURY AS A BISHOP—FIRST OCTEN-
NIAL PERIOD.

IMMEDIATELY on the adjournment of the Christmas conference of 1784, the conference so memorable in the history of the Methodist Church, Asbury started on a tour to the south. The position in which he then stood, was one of great interest and responsibility, and the prospect before him was one of moral sublimity. He might, with Wesley, say the world was his parish. His diocese extended over all the American states, and all the British Provinces of North America. As yet, however, Methodist societies had been organized in only nine of the Atlantic states, from New York to Georgia. But what a circuit was this for him to make every year! And some of the states he visited oftener than once a year. From January, 1785, to January, 1790, only five years, he made twenty visits to Virginia, ten to North Carolina, seven to South Carolina, nineteen to Maryland, seven to Penn-

sylvania, ten to New Jersey, seven to Delaware, five to New York, and two to Georgia. His daily rides were usually upward of thirty miles, and sometimes upward of fifty. And this not along smooth plains, and good roads, but over mountains, through swamps, across bridgeless rivers, and through pathless woods. His horse often fell weary or lame, but still the rider must push on, for his appointments were given out at every available place all along the route. He preached somewhere nearly every day. He could not wait for pleasant weather, but on he went, exposed in summer to the hot sun, and drenching thunder-shower, and in winter to the bleak wind, the drifting snows, and the icy waters. Often he would have to swim rivers full of floating ice, and then ride twenty miles with his clothes wet nearly to his breast.

When, cold, wet, weary, and hungry, he arrived at the end of his daily journey, he did not always meet hospitable treatment, or find desirable fare. At some places his visits were as unwelcome as "snow in harvest." By some on whom he called for entertainment, he was refused outright, and sent away for miles to some other less gruffy neighbor. When he

Bed-Chamber.

Peculiar Trials and Sickness.

did succeed in obtaining entertainment, his troubles were not ended. The poor family might have little or nothing for him, or for themselves to eat. The house was glassless and nearly doorless. His sleeping apartment, usually in some log loft, was all open to the weather and to the rain.

As might be expected from his incessant exposure, he was often sick. Violent headaches and sore throat were the common consequences of cold rides, with wet clothing by day, and cold lodging-rooms, with insufficient covering by night. Frequent attacks of disease naturally produced dejection of spirit. His nervous irritation was often increased by the discouraging circumstances in which he found himself. After riding twenty or thirty miles to preach, he would often find only a very small, or a very stupid, or a very disorderly congregation. Often disturbances would occur. The windows of the house, in which he was preaching, would be broken by rioters. People would sometimes come to meeting disgracefully drunk. The condition of morals in most of the country through which he traveled, would seem deplorably bad. Intemperance prevailed to an extent seriously alarming. Sel-

The Maryland College.Undaunted Spirit.

dom could he arouse the people from their insensible apathy, and their stupid carelessness, and excite them to religious concern.

He had undertaken to establish and sustain a college in Maryland. It proved an expensive, burdensome, and unfortunate enterprise, greatly embarrassing and perplexing him. Under such an accumulation of annoying circumstances he often, as was natural, had hard and dry times preaching. Extemporaneous preachers, even under the most favorable circumstances, often fail to meet their own ideal, or the expectations of their hearers. It is no wonder, then, that Asbury, traveling in all kinds of weather, thirty miles a day, having hard fare, being sick, finding himself embarrassed with the debts of a college, and often thrown into society uncongenial to him, should complain, sometimes at least, of embarrassment in preaching.

Yet all these things he heeded not, but went on his way with a firm step, and a manly heart, sustained by his own indomitable spirit, by unfaltering faith in God, and by hope in the future.

In 1781, during one of his visits to Virginia, Asbury went up the south branch of the Poto-

The Alleghany Mountains.

Glorious Prospect.

mac to the foot of the Alleghany Mountains. His engagements in other parts of the country prevented his ascending, at that time, the lofty range that separates the east from the west. In the summer of 1786, he, for the first time, stood on the summit of the Alleghanies, and looked down on the plains of the great west. When he had gained the hight, after a long and difficult journey, he could but stop to repose from his toils, and to look on the scene before him. He saw around him magnificent hills, crowned with a chaplet of dark evergreens. He saw before him a succession of lesser hills, still diminishing as they receded in the distance. And far beyond, reclining in quiet beauty in the summer sunlight, he saw the interminable plains of the west. It was to Asbury a glorious sight, and his soul leaped within him as he looked on the boundless, fertile, and sunny plain through which flows the Ohio, fairest of rivers. He might, as he stood on that mountain hight, have had some dreamy vision of the future, when the valley of the Ohio should be the home of millions of wealthy, happy, and pious people, upholding the religious institutions, which he was then endeavoring to introduce along the frontiers.

Not without serious difficulty did Asbury descend from that mountain hight to the plains below. His course lay over hills, and through valleys. Though midsummer, the mud and mire were such as might scarcely be expected in December. He journeyed on through desvious lonely wilds, where no food for man, and little for horse, could be found. At last he reached the Monongahela. Swimming across the river, he passed on till he stood on the banks of the Ohio. During the journey, he preached wherever he could find any number, however few, of people to hear him.

In the spring of 1788 he made his first visit to Tennessee. He had made his way from Baltimore to the western counties of North Carolina, and from thence he made a move for the mountains. He had to cross three mountain ranges, which, on account of their rugged and difficult ascent, he called, the first Steel, the second Stone, and the third Iron mountain. In one of the dark ravines, he was overtaken by a sudden and violent thunder-shower. The lightning flashed fearfully from peak to peak, the thunder echoed in awful crashes among the crags, and the rain poured down in torrents. Late at night he reached the solitary cabin of a

Violent Thunder-Storm.Visits Kentucky.

settler in one of the valleys, where he remained till morning. The next day he proceeded on his adventurous journey. Night overtook him in the midst of the mountains. He, however, kept on, and reached at last a log-cabin, where he rested till morning. Early on the third morning, he was again on his way. Ascending the last mountain range, he saw before him the valley of the Holstein river, to which he descended, and which, with much difficulty, he crossed, and soon after reached the place of his destination. This was a most toilsome and difficult journey. But Asbury had not hesitated to undertake it. Some year or two before he had sent two or three preachers to that distant and wild region, and he felt bound to go himself wherever his preachers and their people were.

In the spring of 1790 he made his first visit to Kentucky. Leaving Baltimore about the first of January, he passed through Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina to Georgia, from whence he returned to North Carolina, and proceeded to the western counties, intending to cross the mountains to the Holstein river. Leaving, on the first of April, the valley of the St. Johns river, he scaled the mountain

Laurel Hill.

Valley of the Holstein.

called Laurel Hill, rising often as steep as the roof of a house. The next day he rode on through a drenching rain, over the stony mountain, by a path so rough that he declines describing it, but advises those who wish to know how difficult is the pass to try it. As he was clambering along on his horse, his head came in contact with a tree inclining over the path, causing a severe and stunning blow. From the summit of the mountain, he descended by a path hardly less difficult than the ascent, to the Watauga, which he crossed in a canoe, the horses swimming by the side. He then ascended the Iron mountain range, and passed over to the valley of the Holstein. Here he met the little conference of preachers, who appeared indifferently clothed, and emaciated in body. Having rested a day or two, he began to prepare for his journey through the wilderness to Kentucky. The journey was extremely hazardous. There were no settlements for a long distance, and hostile savages were prowling all about the country. No one would venture to make the journey without a strong force well armed. Asbury had to wait several days for a company to be made up. At last a party of ten men, sent by his friends from

Trip to Lexington.

Affected with Delirium.

Kentucky as a guard for him, arrived at Holstein, and under their protection, with the addition of some half a dozen Holstein people, he started on the difficult and dangerous journey. On account of the danger from the savages, they traveled very rapidly, and reached Lexington, a distance of some three hundred miles, in six days. The way was over steep hills, across deep rivers, and through muddy swamps. Much of the time they were impeded by a thick undergrowth of reeds and bushes. The country was wholly wild, affording refuge only to wild beasts and savages. Owing to the strangeness of the scene, the excitement of the dangerous circumstances, and the disordered state of his health, Asbury could sleep scarcely an hour a night through the whole journey. The company fell short of provisions, and ate only as they went, stopping scarcely once in the six days for a regular meal.

Before they got to Lexington, Asbury became slightly affected with delirium. His ideas were confused. He would sometimes detect himself looking out for a fence in situations where nothing but an unbroken wilderness stretched away for a hundred miles, and

A Small Conference.Returns to Holstein.

he would be trying to recollect the houses, at which he should have stopped, though he had not seen a house on the whole journey.

Near Lexington he met the conference of about a dozen preachers, who had made their way through dangers and difficulties into this region, then so distant from the land of civilization. They had a very pleasant conference. Preachers were appointed to circuits about Lexington, Danville, and several other places in Kentucky. These devoted men, at that early day, and in that wild country, projected a seminary of learning, and actually obtained, at that conference, a subscription of fifteen hundred dollars toward its establishment. Asbury was delighted with the prospect. He was glad he had made the visit, though attended with imminent danger, and distressing fatigue. He hoped the visit would result in good to that generation, and to those who should come after them.

After spending about two weeks in Kentucky, he set out on his return to Holstein. The company consisted of about fifty persons, a part only of whom were armed for defense against the Indians. On the first day they traveled forty-five miles. The second day,

Travels Extensively.

discovering signs of hostile savages in the vicinity, they pushed on fifty miles. The third day they made *sixty* miles. On the fourth day Asbury reached his resting-place on the Holstein. We can hardly conceive how it was possible in four days to travel, on horseback, nearly two hundred and fifty miles through an unbroken wilderness, climbing hills, swimming rivers, and wading swamps. But the men of those days were giants in strength and endurance, and Asbury seemed chief among them all. From Holstein he crossed the mountains into North Carolina, from whence he went to Petersburg, Virginia, attending conferences in each state, and preaching every day. From Petersburg he again turned his face west, crossed the Alleghany Mountains near the center of Virginia, and proceeded along the western slope of the Virginia Alleghanies to Uniontown, Pennsylvania, where he arrived, and held a conference, on the first of August. By the first of September he had recrossed the mountains, and arrived at Baltimore. Whoever will trace his route on the map will readily perceive what a prodigious journey he performed in a few months.

As he was passing through Virginia on this

John Tunnell.Goes to Tennessee.

trip he was present at the funeral of one of his most faithful, and efficient, and popular preachers. John Tunnell was one of the great men of that day. Of the place of his birth, and of his early history, no record is known to me. We hear of him preaching at Brunswick, New Jersey, with William Watters and Freeborn Garrettson. He is described by Asbury as a man of learning, having a large fund of Scripture and historical knowledge, and a man of the most amiable and affectionate spirit. He had a strong, musical voice, and would often pour forth a flood of heavenly eloquence. In him strong and highly-developed powers of mind, and a most delicate and refined moral organization, were associated with a feeble and consumptive physical constitution. He knew he must die young, and he seems to have resolved to devote himself, soul and body, while he did live, to the work of the ministry. In 1787 he volunteered to go from New Jersey to the settlements on the Holstein river in East Tennessee, to carry the Gospel to the people sparsely scattered over that Alpine region. Having labored with great success, as presiding elder over that remote district, for about three years, he died of consumption,

Tunnell's Death.

Asbury's Remarks on Wesley's Death.

and was buried among the mountains, far from his native home. But he died not unlamented. "Few ministers," says Asbury, "were better known or more beloved."

A few months after the death of Tunnell, Asbury heard of the death of the venerable Wesley. He says on the occasion, that when he considers Mr. Wesley's "plain and nervous writings, his uncommon talent for preaching, his steady flow of cheerful spirit, his power in governing others, his knowledge as an observer, his attainments as a scholar, and his experience as a Christian," he concludes his superior is not found among all the sons of men. It would seem from this passage that Asbury had the mind to appreciate Wesley, and the heart to admire and love him, though evil-disposed persons had endeavored, by misrepresentation, to estrange them from each other.

In the summer of 1791 Asbury made his first visit to New England. Jesse Lee had volunteered, in the summer of 1789, to go, single-handed and alone, into the very midst of the strong-hold of Puritan Calvinism. Asbury seemed, at first, doubtful of the result, but in the autumn he heard accounts so encouraging from Lee, that he determined to

Asbury Visits New England.

First Sermon in Connecticut.

send Jacob Brush to assist him. In February, 1790, he carried out his intention of sending helpers to Lee, and sent not only Brush, but Roberts and Smith. So successful were these, and so greatly did the work increase and expand, that others—Bloodgood, Mills, Swaim, Covell, Hunt, Allen, and Rainor—were sent. At last Asbury determined to go himself, and see the far-famed New England, and the equally-famous Yankees.

On Wednesday, the first of June, he left the city of New York, and passed along by New Rochelle, White Plains, and Bedford, preaching as he went, and on Saturday he reached Wilton, in the state of Connecticut. In this place he preached his first New England sermon to a serious, feeling, well-behaved people. As he was journeying along through this land of steady habits, he was favorably impressed by the appearance of the country. The rocks and hills reminded him of the country about the peak of Derbyshire. The neat villages, and the thickly-strewed farm-houses along the way, seemed peculiarly pleasant to one who had just emerged from the western wilderness. The neat and beautiful churches, gleaming white amid the green trees, and rearing their

Preaches in a Barn.

Curious Incidents.

spires high in the air, assured him there had been once some religion in the country, and he doubted not there might yet be left a little in form and theory, though the spirit of evangelical piety had most sadly declined. On Sunday he preached in a barn at Reading to Lee's old congregation of about three hundred serious, attentive people. At evening he preached at Newtown, in a Presbyterian church, to a congregation made up of wild, laughing, and playing young people, and heavy, lifeless old people. He left this place with no very favorable opinion of the people. The depression of spirit, arising from his poor success, continued heavy on him all the next day. Tuesday he went to Stratford. Here he found the authorities of the town had voted that the town-house, in which the Methodists had usually preached, should be shut. One of the selectmen, however, opened the door, and he went in and preached, while "some smiled, some laughed, some swore, some talked, some prayed, and some wept." He refused to preach in that house any more, and expressed a hope that the Methodists, then about twenty in number, might "make a benefit of a calamity, and, since they were denied the use of other houses,

Goes to New Haven.

Visits the College.

the more earnestly labor to get one of their own."

He proceeded to New Haven, where a curious scene awaited him. His appointment had been published in the newspapers. "Everything," says he, "was quiet. We called on the sheriff. We then put up our horses at the Ball Tavern, near the college yard. I had the honor of having President Stiles, Dr. W., and Rev. Mr. E., with several of the collegians and a few scattering students, to hear me. The judges looked very grave while I was preaching. When I was done no man spoke to me. We visited the college chapel at the hour of prayer. I wished to go through the whole to inspect the interior arrangements, but no one invited me. The divines were grave, and the students attentive. They treated me like a fellow-Christian in coming to hear me preach, and like a stranger in all other respects. Should Cokesbury or Baltimore ever furnish the opportunity, I, in my turn, will requite their behavior by treating them as friends, brethren, and gentlemen." Asbury did not live to enjoy the opportunity of requiting, at a Methodist college, the attentions bestowed on him at Yale; but his successors have

Visits Wallingford.Middletown.

had the pleasure of meeting the successors of President Stiles at a Methodist college, located at a place much nearer New Haven than is Baltimore, and of reciprocating such attentions as are usually given and received by equals.

Leaving New Haven, without finding a place therein to eat or sleep, he went to Wallingford, and preached in a meeting-house belonging to the Separatists. The house was large, and the congregation small. He preached so loud as to alarm the town, and thereby greatly enlarged his congregation. On the whole, he had a better time at Wallingford than he expected. Proceeding to Middlefields, he found an oasis in the desert. He enjoyed the quiet use of a meeting-house, and was hospitably entertained by a niece of that devoted man of blessed memory, David Brainerd. There he spent the Sabbath, preaching twice to an attentive people. At evening he went to Middletown, and preached in the Congregational church to a very large, serious, and attentive congregation, among whom, however, not one was found of hospitable temper sufficient to invite him home. He had to go a mile out of town to find a place to lodge. He comforted himself with the reflection, becoming a Chris-

A Baptist Welcome.Goes to New London.

tian philosopher, that "to the poorer classes of the people was the preaching of the Gospel anciently blest."

The next day he passed on down the Connecticut, by Haddam, over a "dreadful rocky road," and late at night arrived at Lyme, where he was most kindly received by a Baptist minister, who arose from his bed to bid him welcome. He found here a most delightful family. "I trust," says he, "the Lord has a dwelling in this man's heart and house. His wife is a kind, loving soul. Their children are obliging, and ready to serve us cheerfully." Had Asbury often fallen into such families, he might have been induced to be more gently inclined to the connubial relations.

The next day he proceeded, through heat and dust, and over rocks, to New London. The annoyances of the journey caused him, he says, to feel temptation to impatience. But he wisely concluded murmuring would better nothing, neither make the heat less intense, nor the dust less troublesome, nor the rocks less frequent or rugged; so he went on cheerfully to Stonington, though it was a dreadful road for a carriage, almost equal to a drive over the Alleghany Mountains. He thought

Stonington and Newport.

Encouraged in Heart.

Stonington appropriately named. He entered Rhode Island, and crossed the Narragansett to Newport. He preached to the people at Newport, but concluded that they were "settled upon their lees, and wanted emptying from vessel to vessel to stir them up." He went on to Providence. As he was journeying alone, with only a guide in company, he suffered from feelings of despondency, naturally suggested by the circumstances. He was unknown; he had small congregations, and there was a jar in sentiment between him and the people. He evidently did not feel at home, yet he was glad he had visited New England, because, had he not visited them, he should not have felt so much interest for the preachers and people, and he hoped he might, at some future day, do something for them. He met, however, with an old man, who told him so much about old times, and Mr. Whitefield, and Gilbert Tennant, and the ministers of olden time, that his spirit became cheered and revived. Why is it that, often in hours of the deepest despondency, the listening to the rehearsal of the incidents and adventures of early times will arouse the soul to manly fortitude and buoyant hope?

Boston.Preaches there.

From Rhode Island he journeyed on, through dust and heat, to Boston, the renowned city of the Puritans. Boston contained at that time some nine or ten Congregational Churches, and some eight or nine of other denominations. But the Methodists had no place of worship. Their time had not yet come. An appointment was made for Asbury to preach at Murray's church. He went, and found twenty hearers in a very large house. The next evening he preached again in the same church, and by preaching very loud drummed up a larger congregation, though Satan came also, and excited his forces to make disturbance in the streets. Asbury greatly admired the industrious habits and the public buildings of the people of Boston; but he could not say much of their hospitality. No man invited him to lodge, or eat, or drink in the place. He concluded, on the whole, to give up Boston till the Methodists could obtain a lodging, a place to preach in, and some people to join them. At present, it seemed to him that the few who were friendly to the Methodists were ashamed or afraid even to publish an appointment for preaching.

From Boston he went to Lynn, where he

Lynn.

Brookfield.

was surprised to find a Methodist meeting-house, a promising society, and an exceedingly well-behaved congregation. He was so elated by the agreeable condition of things, that he seemed to transfer the agreeable feelings of his soul to the scenery of the place. Lynn appeared to him the perfection of beauty. He went to Salem, where he had a poor time. He concluded to go there no more till a better stand could be obtained.

Having returned to Lynn, and remained about two weeks, he started on his journey west, passing through Waltham, Marlboro, Worcester, Leicester, Spencer, and Brookfield to Springfield. No mention is made of preaching along the route. It would seem that at one place, perhaps Brookfield, at which he dined, the people declined encouraging him to preach, because they "did not wish to divide the parish." "But," says Asbury, "their fathers, the Puritans, divided the kingdom and the Church too, and when they could not obtain liberty of conscience in England, they sought it here, among wild men and wild beasts." The objection to "dividing the parish" sounds natural to some of us in much later times. The people of New England had been long

Fears Expressed.Hartford.

oppressed by taxation to support a religion established by law. They feared, should the Methodists draw off any part of the congregation, the taxes would be increased on those who might remain in the standing order. They therefore strongly objected to any favor toward the Methodists, lest the "parish should be divided," and the taxes raised.

At Springfield Asbury preached with some success. Passing down the Connecticut, he stopped at Windsor. Mr. S., by whom I infer he means the minister of the place, received him very kindly, but did not fail to let him know how lightly he thought of him and his principles. Such a reception annoyed the sensitive spirit of Asbury, and he secretly wished himself out of the way. Going, however, to the school-house, and finding it crowded with people, his feelings revived, and he preached with power and effect. At Hartford he preached before three ministers to a serious and attentive congregation. From Hartford he passed on through Farmington, Litchfield, and many other smaller places, and after a meandering journey of about one hundred and fifty miles, arrived at Albany. From Albany he proceeded, preaching as he went, to New York.

Review of his Trip.The New Englanders.

Thus ends Asbury's first visit to New England. He estimates the circumference of the circuit he had made, from New York to Lynn, Springfield, Hartford, Albany, and back to New York, with all its divergences from a regular line, at not less than fifteen hundred miles. He was gone from the first of June to the middle of August. He preached from seventy to eighty times, or at least one discourse a day, on the average, during the whole time.

It is interesting to trace him over the country, and read the brief indications he has left us of his thoughts and feelings. He exhibits a most amiable and charitable spirit. The New England country, the New England theology, the New England customs, and the New England notions, were all new to him. He must have been annoyed by the peculiarities of the people, as well as wearied by the rocky roads. Yet he finds no fault, and lets no expressions of impatience escape him. The hardest thing he says is, that he "*never saw a people who could talk so long, so seriously, and so correctly about trifles.*"

With the Methodists it was, as he often in his journal says, a "day of small things." Yet he had reliable faith in the future. He exhib-

Various Remarks.Middle and Eastern States.

its it on several occasions. At Newport he says, "I expect, before many years, the Methodists will have a house of worship here." At Providence, "I think the Lord will revive his work in Providence." At Boston, where he found no place to lodge, nor eat, nor drink, he says, "The time of the Methodists may come." At Lynn he exclaims in ecstasy, "Here we shall make a firm stand, and here from this central point, from Lynn, shall the light of Methodism and of truth radiate throughout the state." And when he had returned to New York, and was looking back on the incidents of his journey, he says, "I am led to think the Eastern Church will find this saying hold true in the Methodists, 'I will provoke you to jealousy by no people, and by a foolish nation will I anger you.' They have trodden on the Quakers, the Episcopalians, and the Baptists; see now if the Methodists do not work their way."

To introduce, establish, and build up the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, especially in the Middle and Eastern States, required just such men as Asbury—men of strong faith in the future—men whom nothing could intimidate, nothing discourage—men

The Office of Bishop.Arrives at New York.

who felt that a dispensation of the Gospel was committed to them for a specific purpose—men conscious that they were sent by God, the Almighty, on a mission of love and of mercy to the people. Asbury, in volunteering to come to America, in remaining in the country when all his associates had fled, and in cheerfully accepting the office of bishop—an office of excessive labor and heavy responsibility—and in executing the duties of that office with such singleness of heart, proved himself a man conscious of a high and noble destiny. Being conscious that God had called him to the work, he went straight on, with an unfaltering trust in Providence, wherever duty called him.

On arriving from his New England tour at New York, about the first of September, 1791, Asbury might spend a day or two in reconnoitering the ground over which he must travel in the course of one year. His circuit now embraced thirteen states, over which were scattered two hundred and fifty preachers, and about sixty-three thousand members. He had to attend, during the next year, seventeen conferences, and to superintend the multifarious interests of the Church. To travel from twenty

Extensive Labors.Travels

to fifty miles every day; to preach on the average at least once a day; to talk and pray in every house at which he called; to examine, receive, station, and change the preachers; and to provide means for sustaining a college in Maryland, and for founding schools in other places, might seem a series of Herculean labors for any one man. But Asbury flinched not at the undertaking. Onward manfully he went wherever duty called him.

Leaving New York in the early part of September, he proceeded by Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore, Alexandria, Petersburg, and Norfolk, Virginia, Raleigh, N. C., and Charleston, S. C., to Washington, in Georgia. Returning through South Carolina, he entered North Carolina; passed on to the western counties; crossed the mountains to the Holstein river, in Tennessee; plunged into the Kentucky wilderness as far as Lexington; returned to the Holstein; passed up on the west side of the Alleghanies, over a most mountainous region, through the whole breadth of Virginia, to Uniontown, in Pennsylvania; crossed the Alleghanies by Laurel Hill and Cumberland to Baltimore; went on to New York; proceeded directly through Connecticut and Massachu-

Difficulties of Traveling.

setts to Lynn; passed west across the valley of the Connecticut, by Northampton, and over the Berkshire hills, by Pittsfield, to Albany, and then down the valley of the Hudson to New York, where he arrived on the 28th of August, 1792.

No adequate conception can be formed of the distance he traveled, unless one attempts to trace his course on a map. Even then we fail to estimate the increase of distances from one prominent place to another, by means of the excursions and divergences he made in order to preach wherever the Methodists had an inch of ground. Nor can we easily conceive of the extreme difficulties of traveling at that time over such a country. He had to wade through the swamps along the lowlands of Virginia and North Carolina; he had to swim the rivers that flow from the eastern slope of the Alleghanies to the Atlantic; he had to cross the mountains between North Carolina and Tennessee; he had to pass three hundred miles and back through the unbroken wilderness of Kentucky; he had to range along the western slope of the Alleghanies, and cross numerous rivers from the Holstein river, in Tennessee, to Uniontown, in Pennsyl-

Perils in the Wilderness and Mountains.

vania; he had to cross the Alleghanies before the Cumberland or any road at all was made; and he had to travel from the Atlantic to the Hudson, over a road even yet rough, mountainous, and difficult. His way was not only difficult, but dangerous. In the woods of Kentucky, savages were prowling all along his path. Alarming accounts of depredations, abductions, and massacres were constantly reported. Once he himself had to stand sentry all night, with his gun, in a furious storm of rain. Along the western spurs of the Alleghanies, from Tennessee to Pennsylvania, there were few settlements, and few places of rest and refreshment for man or beast. For a stretch of fifty miles along this route, not a house was to be found, nor a human soul, unless some savage might be lurking behind a rock to shoot and scalp the hapless traveler.

To travel through such an extent of country, and so difficult, might seem enough for the endurance of any human being. But Asbury had work to do. He had seventeen conferences to attend, and more than three hundred sermons to preach during the year. Nor was this all. We find him at Baltimore, going from house to house, to beg means of support-

Peculiar Labors.

Suffers From Sickness.

ing the poor orphan children at Cokesbury College. We find him in some village, which he does not name, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, endeavoring to establish a female seminary. We find him in the western forest, providing for the erection of a seminary building for the children. We find him in Kentucky, writing a complimentary letter to a Presbyterian clergyman, who had made in the State Constitutional Convention an able speech in favor of the natural and inherent rights of man. And we find him in South Carolina, endeavoring to protect the feeble Church from the evil machinations of a renegade, who, not content with leaving the Church, was doing all the mischief he could.

Surely, so hard traveling, and so multifarious labor, might be sufficient for a man in full health; but Asbury was frequently suffering from disease. Through the Kentucky wilderness, and over the Virginia mountains, he was laboring under the debilitating influence of diarrhea, often reducing him to the necessity of taking his bed, should he fortunately find one, and waiting to recover a little strength. His exposure to cold, to wet, and to the necessity of long rides, without rest or refreshment,

His uncomplaining Spirit.

Communion with God.

wore hard on his constitution, and produced colds, sore throat, and rheumatic lameness.

Yet did he not, under all this labor and suffering, ever complain. He once came near complaining, as he was riding on a cold day, wet and hungry, over bad roads; but just as he was about to utter some brief soliloquy of impatience, he saw a poor woman walking along the road, barefoot and bareheaded, and carrying a child in her arms. Pity for her stilled at once all complaint for himself.

He maintained under his labors and trials a calm and devotional spirit. "I am resolved," says he, "on more frequent access to the throne of grace, not continuing so long as heretofore. I feel greater sweetness in so doing. It tends more to an hourly and monthly walk with God." After riding some forty miles one day, in heat and dust, he exclaims, "O, help me to watch and pray! I am afraid of losing the sweetness I feel. For months past I have felt as if in the possession of perfect love. I have no desire for any thing but God." In the midst of the disturbances made in Charleston, by Mr. Hammet, who had withdrawn from the Church, and was endeavoring to cause dissensions, Asbury received from some one a very

His Equanimity.Unity of the Church.

abusive anonymous letter. Instead of becoming angry, he fell on his knees and prayed fervently for those who were abusing him and rending the Church. In all his difficulties this year—difficulties from hard work, from disease, and from evil-disposed men—he maintained the equanimity of a Christian philosopher.

During this octennial period, in addition to traveling six thousand miles a year, preaching every day, and attending all the conferences, Asbury had on his mind various weighty and important matters, affecting the general interests of the Church throughout the continent, and extending in their influence through all the future.

Among other matters for deep and anxious reflection, was prominent in his mind the preservation of the unity of Methodism in America. Up to the Christmas conference of 1786, Methodism had been one in Europe and in America. Mr. Wesley was deemed the father and head of the whole system, and all the preachers, both in the old and in the new world, were considered his sons and helpers. Circumstances of distance, and the change of political relations between America and England, had rendered it expedient to organize the

The People Love Him.

Mr. Whatcoat.

American societies into a distinct and independent Church, whereby the relations between the Methodists of Europe and America were modified. Yet the American preachers by no means intended to abjure the moral authority of Mr. Wesley over them. They held him in great love and veneration. They were even willing to acknowledge themselves, "during the lifetime of Mr. Wesley, his sons in the Gospel, ready in matters of Church government to obey his commands." With this position, which they voluntarily assumed, and which, of course, they had a right whenever they saw good reason therefor to change, Mr. Wesley was evidently well pleased; but when, in 1787, Dr. Coke insisted that from this voluntary acknowledgment the conference was bound to receive Mr. Whatcoat as bishop, because Mr. Wesley had signified such to be his pleasure, the injudicious and inexpedient character of the "acknowledgment" became clearly evident. The conference had no objection to Mr. Whatcoat as bishop, but they feared Mr. Wesley intended, in pursuance of his "acknowledged" authority, to recall Mr. Asbury to Europe, and leave the American Church in charge of Mr. Whatcoat, or some other. They believed no

Opposition to Mr. Wesley's Views.

man could be found in Europe or America so well acquainted with their wants, and so well qualified to superintend Methodism on this continent, as Mr. Asbury. They, therefore, rescinded the resolution, deeming it not a contract with Mr. Wesley, which could be annulled only by the consent of both parties, but merely a voluntary concession of their own, to be revoked whenever they thought proper. With this proceeding of the American conference Mr. Wesley was not well pleased. He felt as if the American preachers had abjured his authority, and expelled him from all connection with them. Evil-disposed persons had misrepresented to him the course of Mr. Asbury, and he was therefore prepared to suspect him of being the author of the omission of the acknowledgment of his authority from the American Minutes. Under this impression, and in the state of feeling naturally arising, Mr. Wesley wrote to Mr. Asbury that famous letter, numbered seven hundred and thirty, in the Works of Wesley. But Mr. Asbury was in no way to blame in this matter. It is true he did not approve of the original acknowledgment; he thought the American Methodists had a right to elect their own superintendents;

nor did he "think it practical expediency to obey Mr. Wesley, at three thousand miles distance, in all matters relative to Church government." Yet he was "mute when it passed, and mute when it was expunged." Mr. Wesley, however, blamed him for allowing it to be rescinded, and thought he ought "to reject the whole connection, or leave them, if they would not comply." But Asbury "could not give up the connection so easily, after laboring so many years with them and for them."

But though it had become, from circumstances, indispensable for Methodism to divide into two great and independent branches, the European and the American, yet it remained matter of deep interest with Asbury to preserve perfect unity of interest, of law, and of usage, among all the ramifications of the American branch. Previous to the organization of the Church in 1786, there had been held annually but one conference. All the preachers in the connection could meet at one time and one place, and propose, debate, and decide all necessary business, including the modifying, amending, or repealing of the rules of Discipline, and the introducing of any new rules and regulations that might be agreeable to a

Seventeen Conferences.Embarrassments.

majority of the conference. But from the rapid extension of the work over the country, and the great increase in the number of preachers, it became exceedingly inconvenient for all to assemble in one conference. The number of conferences, therefore, soon became large, and the places at which they were held at great distances from each other. In 1791 there were seventeen conferences held along the coast from Lynn, Massachusetts, to Charleston, South Carolina, and through the interior from the Hudson to the Holstein.

From this condition of things arose a serious difficulty. No business, except the ordinations and the stationing of the preachers, done in one conference, was of any avail till approved by all the others. No rule could be modified, repealed, or introduced, nor could any new enterprise, affecting the general interests of the Church, be commenced till it had been debated and sanctioned by seventeen different bodies in seventeen distant places. There was then no provision for a General conference, with authority to settle all matters of general interest. In such a state of things—a state into which the Church was forced by its very success and prosperity—there was great danger

Formation of a Council.

Asbury's Love of Republicanism.

that American Methodism would prove any thing but a unit.

To provide for the emergency which the extension of the work had produced, cost Asbury much anxiety and intense thought. At last he proposed, as the best thing that could be done, to form a council, consisting of the bishop and the presiding elders of all the districts, to meet at stated times, with authority to mature every thing they might judge expedient for preserving the general union, for rendering the external form of worship similar in all the societies through the continent, for preserving the essentials of the Methodist doctrine and Discipline pure and uncorrupted, for correcting all abuses and disorders, for promoting and improving colleges and plans of education, and accomplishing any other object they might judge necessary for the good of the Church.

In all the plans of Asbury may be seen his scrupulous regard for the rights of those who were to be affected by the rules that might be adopted, and the laws that might be made. In his plan for this council, it was provided that nothing should be received as the resolution of the council, unless assented to unanimously;

Plans of Operation.

and nothing so assented to by the council should be binding in any district, till it should be sanctioned by a majority of the conference for that district. These provisions rendered the whole project abortive. Unanimity upon the numerous and complicated measures that must enter into the administration of the affairs of a Church extending over the American continent, is, even among Methodist elders and bishops, wholly a Utopian idea. And then if every measure "matured" by the council had to go the rounds of all the conferences before it could become the law, there was nothing gained in time over the old method. The only effect of the "maturing" of the council, would be the enlisting of the feelings and interests of the members in carrying before their conferences the measures projected in council. And this very advantage—the only one the system could claim—was sure in practice to render the whole concern unpopular. The council, therefore, though when first proposed it had received the sanction of all the conferences, having, after two sessions, failed to do any good, and threatened to do evil, was wholly abandoned, and for it was substituted a General conference, to meet once in four years.

Introduction of Sunday Schools.

During this period, there originated among the Methodists, for the first time among any people in America, the Sunday school system. Its design was "to instruct poor children, white and black, to read." The schools were directed by the conference to be established "at or near the place of public worship," and to be open from six till ten in the morning, and from two till six in the afternoon, wherever those hours would not interfere with public worship. Though the Methodists were the first, they were not the last among the American Churches in organizing and sustaining Sunday schools, which have proved a most effective auxiliary means of "spreading Scriptural holiness over the land." The religious communion which should now hope to keep up its character, without a Sunday school in every place of worship, would be most egregiously deficient in the most important elements of prosperity.

Mr. Wesley had, at an early period in the history of the Methodist societies, availed himself of the press to diffuse truth and knowledge among his people, and to guard them against false doctrines. Books, either written by himself, or selected from the stores of the past,

The Book Concern Established.Its Objects.

were published, sold by the preachers among the people, and their profits appropriated to charitable purposes. The American preachers were, in the beginning, supplied with books from the English Wesleyan press; but it being found inconvenient and expensive to obtain, in this way, a supply for the increasing demands of the Church, a "Book Concern" was organized by the advice and influence of Asbury, and an agent was appointed to superintend the publication and sale of such books as might be thought useful for the purposes intended. These purposes were primarily and chiefly to diffuse among the people moral and religious information, and general intelligence on interesting and useful subjects. The Methodist Book Concern, thus founded by Asbury during the first octennial period of his administration, has become the largest printing and publishing establishment in America. It has accomplished an immense amount of good in promoting "literature and religion." The profits of the establishment have been, from the beginning, appropriated to the relief of the poor, the sick, and the aged preachers of the connection, and the widows and orphans of those who have died in the work.

Increase of Methodism.

During the octennial period, the number of circuits increased from forty to one hundred and forty; of preachers, from less than one hundred to two hundred and sixty-six; and of members, from eighteen thousand to sixty-six thousand. This shows an increase of more than three hundred per cent. in eight years. At the beginning of the period, Methodism had established itself only along the Atlantic coast, from New York to North Carolina. At the close, it had stormed the rocky fortresses of New England, on the east, and scaled the Alleghanies, and marched over, under its incomparable leader, into the boundless regions of the west, and taken possession of that fair land.

CHAPTER V.

ASBURY AS A BISHOP—SECOND OCTEN-
NIAL PERIOD.

THE first General conference after the organization of the Church met in the city of Baltimore, on the first of November, 1792. Arrangements were made at this conference to hold a General conference once in four years. All preachers in full connection in the itineracy might attend if they pleased, with the right of speaking and voting on all questions before the conferences. Immediately on the adjournment of the conference, Asbury started on his annual tour of the continent. He had to attend, in the course of one year, twenty conferences. He pursued nearly the same course of travel as the year before—along the Atlantic coast as far as Savannah, then through western North Carolina to Tennessee and Kentucky. Returning from Kentucky to the Holstein, he passed up the west side of the Alleghanies to Green Brier county, in Virginia, where he crossed the mountain range to the

head waters of the Shenandoah. He then wound his way along the mountain defiles to Oldtown, on the Potomac river, some distance below Cumberland, in Maryland. From Oldtown he struck off, by an entire new route, for the north-east. Leaving the Potomac he struck for the Juniata, which he crossed some forty or fifty miles above its confluence with the Susquehanna, and proceeded across the hills to Northumberland. He then continued up the Susquehanna to Wyoming, from whence he struck off over the hills, and through the swamps, to the Delaware, and then over the rough country to the Hudson, near Albany.

The reader, who knows any thing of the country, can, with difficulty, imagine it possible for any man sixty years ago, if even now, to make his way in any reasonable time over the innumerable and rough hills that intervene between the Potomac and the Hudson, along the Juniata, the Susquehanna, and the Delaware.

We find him this year busy at several places in organizing district schools. The plan was to establish a school for the education of the young in every presiding elder's district. This was not only desirable in the south, where there were no public schools, but even in the

north, where the higher seminaries were all monopolized, and appropriated to sectarian purposes, by those who were hostile to Methodism. In this laudable effort, however, Asbury found himself, as he did in many other enterprises, greatly in advance of the people. He drew up an address, calling the attention of the people to the subject. He exerted himself in every way to develop and advance the project; but not being sustained by the people, he was obliged to yield to circumstances, and wait till some of his sons, in a coming age, under better auspices, should recommend, and carry forward to completion, the enterprise. Sixty years are past, and we see his plan carried out in the establishing of conference seminaries in nearly, if not quite, every conference in America.

The spirit of Asbury was deeply grieved, and his soul vexed, during this year, by secessions from the Church. Discontent with the plan on which the Church was organized by the conference of 1784, had been more or less prevailing in some parts of the country for a long time.

The itinerant system of ministerial service, which providentially grew up and developed

itself under John Wesley, was peculiar in most of its characteristics. Wesley found, in taking the "world for his parish," more work on his hands than he could do. He therefore accepted the aid of young men of talent and piety, who placed themselves at his command, ready to go where he might send them, to preach and to watch over the societies. Once every year, Wesley met all his assistants, or helpers, in conference. In these conferences they talked over various matters connected with the work in which they were engaged, and settled, by the aid of Wesley, all matters of doubt either in doctrine, or policy, or practice. After they had spent a few days conferring together, Wesley, being well acquainted with the condition and wants of the work in every part of the country, and with the peculiar qualifications of every man among the preachers, appointed each one to the station, or circuit, which he thought him best qualified to serve for the next year. Wesley, therefore, acted as commander-in-chief of the Methodist forces. He could order each officer and each private to the place where his services in the great moral warfare were most needed, or could be rendered most available.

American and British Methodism.

In the organization of the American Methodist Church, in 1784, the American bishops were placed, so far as the power of appointment of preachers was concerned, in the same relation to the Methodist Episcopal Church, as Mr. Wesley occupied to the British Wesleyan connection. The bishop, traveling as he did all over the country, understanding from personal observation the condition and wants of each circuit, and knowing personally all the preachers, would be able, as was reasonably supposed, to distribute the laborers in the vineyard in a manner most advantageous to the work, and not oppressive to the workmen. The power of appointment was, therefore, by the fundamental and organic law of the Church, vested in the bishop.

The power thus conferred by the constitution of the Church, had been exercised judiciously and efficiently by Bishop Asbury for many years. His quick perception, his habits of observation, his strong common sense, his devotion to the interests of the Church, his unflinching moral courage, and his conscientious piety, eminently qualified him for the important position he occupied.

The philosopher can not fail to see, that

while such a system of ecclesiastical economy would be likely to be most efficient and useful for the interest of the pastoral and ministerial work, it may become oppressive in individual cases to the workman. The public interest of the Church at large, and the private interest of every individual preacher, may not always be coincident or even compatible. There were, therefore, found in the Methodist ministry men of influence and talent, who much desired a change of the mode of appointing preachers at the annual conferences. Accordingly, at the General conference of 1792, Rev. James O'Kelly, a preacher of considerable celebrity in Virginia, offered a resolution essentially modifying the law of appointment. It provided that after the bishop had appointed the preachers at conference to their several stations, should any one be dissatisfied with his own appointment, he might appeal to the conference and state his objections, and should the conference approve his objections, the bishop should appoint him to another circuit.

As the discussion of this resolution would naturally lead to remarks on the manner in which Bishop Asbury had exercised the appointing power vested in him, and as he de-

Dr. Coke.

The Itinerancy.

sired the investigation of his administration to be free, and the speakers to be unembarrassed in animadverting, if they chose, on his course at the annual conferences, he withdrew from the conference room, leaving Dr. Coke to preside, and sent back a letter explaining the reason why he retired, and advising them to speak their minds freely, but to be careful of making changes which might prove of doubtful expediency.

The Methodist itinerant system embodies all the elements of exalted philanthropy. The Methodist preacher devotes himself to the Church as the patriot would devote himself to his country. He sacrifices his own ease, his own worldly prospects, his own health, and his own life, on the altar of the Church, in whose service he has volunteered. In receiving his appointment to a circuit, his own convenience, his own wishes, his own personal advantage, if incompatible with the claims of the Church, must be postponed, or waived, or wholly sacrificed. If he can not consent to make the personal sacrifices which his relation to the Church—a relation voluntarily assumed—demands, he has only to ask, and he will receive, his discharge from the itinerant ranks.

Peculiarities of the Itinerancy Discussed.

In the discussion that arose on Mr. O'Kelly's resolution, these fundamental principles were neither forgotten nor overlooked. It was properly considered that the itinerant system was not devised to furnish pleasant and profitable employment to men who might lack either talent or inclination for other business, but to "spread Scriptural holiness over the land." It was clear that the passage of the resolution would enable some few preachers of influence to secure for themselves good places to the injury of the claims of their brethren, and of the interests of the Church. It would also lead to inextricable confusion in the conferences. If, after all the appointments for the year are made, some half a dozen men demand a change of their appointments, a half a dozen more must be removed to make room for the dissentients, and there would be no end to the difficulty. It was evident that a general superintendent, a capable and skillful master workman of the great enterprise, could man each station to much better advantage than could a whole conference, composed of men who had not the general knowledge of the country necessary to right judgment. The bishop could seldom have any motive to abuse the power

O'Kelly's Resolution Fails.

A Secession.

intrusted to him; but should he so far compromise the dignity of his office, or forget the claims of Christian charity, as to "station a preacher through enmity, or as a punishment," he would prove himself unworthy of confidence, and might be easily removed.

The resolution of Mr. O'Kelly failed by a large majority. He was much dissatisfied at the result, and determined on secession. Being a man of talent, of extensive acquaintance, and of much influence, he drew off with him a large body of preachers and of people. There arose a bitter controversy, and an exterminating schismatic warfare, waged with intense spirit, and by unscrupulous means, by the seceders. Their arrows, poisoned with calumny, and sharpened by rancorous hate, were aimed particularly at Asbury as the most conspicuous mark. He stood up like a man, and met the attack with the fortitude of a hero, and the patience of conscious integrity. He only regretted the deep injury the secession inflicted on those involved in it, and the obstacles it created in the way of prosecuting the great work of pious benevolence, to which he had devoted his life. He was deeply grieved in spirit at the havoc made among the societies,

Effects of the Secession.

Asbury Starts on Another Tour.

which, but for the useless agitation among the people of a question of ecclesiastical government, affecting only the preachers, would have continued in peace laboring for the conversion of sinners.

The effects of this secession were only temporary. Nearly all the preachers who seceded with Mr. O'Kelly eventually returned to the Church. One of them, then a young man, became afterward an associate of Asbury, as bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The societies gathered under the secession became in a few years extinct, and there remained not one vestige of the whole ill-advised and unfortunate enterprise.

On the first of September, 1793, Asbury had arrived at New York from his New England tour, and was about to start on another campaign south, west, and east. He proceeded toward Philadelphia, where, at that time, disease was stalking unquestioned abroad, and death had erected his throne. Yet Asbury stopped not for disease, and feared not death. He entered the city in the midst of the yellow fever, stood up before the terrified people, and enforced the language of the prophet, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trum-

Philadelphia.

His Travels.

Suffers Illness.

pet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." He went to another part of the city and cried, "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name. Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." "Poor Philadelphia," exclaims he, "the lofty city, how is it laid low! The streets are depopulated, and every thing wears a gloomy aspect."

He proceeded on through Delaware and Maryland. Sickness and alarm were prevailing every-where. He kept on his way through Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, as far as Charleston, intending to make his usual annual tour over the North Carolina mountains to Tennessee and Kentucky; but his health had become exceedingly precarious. He had been able to preach only four times in three weeks. He suffered from chills, from a sick stomach, and from an inveterate cough and fever. He therefore very wisely abandoned his journey to the west. "The American Alps," says he, "the deep snows, and great rains, swimming the creeks and the rivers, riding in the night, sleeping on the earthen floors, more or less of which I must experience, if I go to the western country, might at this

time cost me my life." He therefore wrote largely to the preachers, giving all necessary directions for the success of their work; yet it cost him much misgiving to abandon his intended visit to his western brethren. "I am solemnly moved," says he, "in not visiting my Holstein and Kentucky brethren. It may, however, be for their interest to desire the preservation of my life. While living I may supply them with preachers, and with men and money." Afterward he becomes satisfied that his decision was right. "Had I ventured," says he, "to Kentucky, how should I have stood the wilderness, with four or five such days of intense cold and incessant rain as we have lately had? I am thankful to God that I changed my course."

Though he did not go to Tennessee and Kentucky, yet he remained not idle. He traveled over much of South Carolina, visiting the people and preaching, and letting slip no opportunity of doing good. He was occasionally exposed to dangers not less than he might have incurred in the western wilderness. Attempting to cross the Catawba river, he got into deep water among rocks and whirlpools; his head swam, his horse was affrighted, and he barely

Narrowly Escapes Drowning.

"Old Father Harper."

escaped drowning. He however got over, and went on, but his troubles were not at an end. "Night came on," says he, "and it was very dark. It rained heavily, with powerful lightning and thunder. We could not find the path we intended. We continued on till midnight. At last we found a path, which we followed till we came to old father Harper's plantation. We made for the house, and called. He answered, but wondered who it could be. He inquired whence we came. I replied we would tell him when we came in, for it was raining so powerfully we had not much time to talk. When I came dripping in he cried, '*God bless your soul! is it brother Asbury? Wife, get up.*'"

This incident is characteristic. He often was out nearly all night in rain or snow, and without food. He did not always, however, meet such a welcome as "dear old father Harper" gave him. He sometimes was turned away supperless from the door of a southern planter, who was "too proud to sell, and too avaricious to give him" a meal of victuals or a night's lodging.

While rambling this winter through the south, his mind reverted to New England, and

he was "mightily wrought upon for New Hampshire, province of Maine, Vermont, and Lower Canada." He felt deeply for the ecclesiastical oppression under which the people in some of the New England states labored, "taxed to support a minister chosen by a small committee, and settled for life." "What a happy people," says he, "would they be, if they were not thus priest-ridden!" He prophesied, however, that such a state of things must soon come to an end. He had been able, it seems, to discover the true mode of reaching the New England mind. "It has been said," says he, "that the eastern people can not be moved. It is true they have been too much accustomed to hear systematical preaching to be moved by a systematical sermon even from a Methodist. But they have their feelings. Touch but the right string and they will be moved." Accordingly, his discourses in New England, as well, indeed, as every-where else, were eminently practical. He spoke to the conscience and the heart. There is, indeed, a chord of sympathy tuned in unison throughout the great heart of humanity. Whoever would move man must touch the heart. This Asbury understood. This his successors and sons in

The Campaign of 1794.Journal Extracts.

the Gospel have understood. Their success in New England, as well as elsewhere, proves their skill in practicing the lessons which Wesley and Asbury have given them.

The campaign of 1794 opened at the usual time at the usual place. He left New York the latter part of September, and proceeded on his way, and with the usual incidents of swimming rivers, wading swamps, riding all day in the rain, and nearly all night in the dark, preaching as he went wherever he could find a congregation, till he arrived at Charleston, South Carolina, on the first of January, 1795. The following records from his journal may be taken as a specimen of the journey :

“Friday, December 19. We rode twenty-five miles through a powerful fall of rain; but we wrought our way through the swamps, floating and sinking as we went.

“Saturday, 20. It snowed as powerfully today as it rained yesterday, yet we set out for Salem about nine o'clock. We forded two creeks; the third we swam. Brother Ward went in, and after a pause I followed. Being cloaked up, my horse nearly slipped from under me. One foot was properly soaked. I walked about one mile, and rode another, and

A Hard Time.

Tarries at Charleston.

reached the town at twelve o'clock, just as they were ringing the bell. Feeling the want of a fire, I went to the tavern, but found only one fireplace there. I sat down with the company, and dried my feet a little till my companions came along."

He pithily adds to this account the following reflection: "I have need of *power*—and I am accused of having too much—to stand such days as this. However, my soul is kept in peace and communion with God, and through grace I will not murmur at my sufferings, while the salvation of souls is my end and aim."

To avoid the utter ruin of his health from exposure, in traveling through January and February, he concluded to remain in Charleston till March. The mild climate and bland breezes of the south, might be favorable to his health; but the moral atmosphere of the city was shockingly offensive to him. "I was insulted," says he, "on the pavement with some as horrible sayings as could come out of the mouth of a creature this side of hell. When I pray in my room with a few poor old women, those who walk the streets will shout at me. The unparalleled wickedness of the people of this place most severely agitates my mind.

Wholesale Corruption.

Proceeds to Holstein.

The white and worldly people are intolerably ignorant of God. Playing, dancing, swearing, racing, these are their common practices and pursuits." If he left the city and went out into the plantations, the moral aspect was no more agreeable. "If," says he, "a man-of-war be a 'floating hell,' the southern rice plantations are *standing ones*; wicked masters, overseers, negroes, cursing and drinking, no Sabbaths, no sermons." Wearily wore the winter away, and glad was Asbury when the returning sun of spring enabled him to venture on his way, without the risk of chills, and colds, and icy streams, and frozen sleet. He left the "dreadfully-dissipated" city, consoling himself with the reflection that if faithful preaching could do so bad a place any good, there might yet be hope of Charleston; for while he remained there he had effectually tried it, and had not "shunned to declare the whole counsel of God."

He proceeded to Holstein, where he met in conference the preachers both from Tennessee and Kentucky. He then proceeded up to the head waters of the Holstein, crossed the mountains, proceeded along the valley between the Blue Ridge and the Alleghanies to the head

Record of a Journey.

Visits New England.

waters of the Shenandoah, which he followed to its mouth, then crossed the Potomac near Harper's Ferry, and proceeded to Baltimore. He says of this journey, "The toils have been great, the weather sultry, the rides long, and the roads rough. I suffered from irregularity in food and lodging. I have rode two hundred and twenty-seven miles in seven days and a half, and am so exceedingly outdone, and oppressed with pain, weariness, and want of sleep, that I have hardly courage to do any thing." For his recompense he was still looking to the future, in which he never lost confidence. "I hope," says he, "posterity will be bettered by my feeble efforts."

From Baltimore he proceeded to the north, arriving at New York by a new route, "over the Newark bridges, which are well established across the Second and Passaic rivers. It is the nearest way to New York, and preserves one from the heat in summer and the cold in winter, from musketoes, and from delays by wind, and other incidents." In his New England tour, he went over the old route by New Haven, Middletown, New London, and Providence to Lynn. Returning by Springfield, he proceeded across the Green

First Visit to Vermont.Philip Embury.

Mountains to Williamstown, and for the first time entered Vermont, at Bennington. He went as far north as Whitehall, near the head of Lake Champlain, and then returned down the valley of the Hudson to New York.

In going from Lynn to New York by Springfield, Bennington, and Whitehall, he made a journey with all its excursions of at least six hundred miles. The distance by the route usually traveled is only about two hundred and thirty miles. It would seem that he was induced to go this circuitous route partly out of respect to the memory of Philip Embury, the first Methodist preacher whose voice was heard on the shores of America. Embury was an Irish local preacher. He emigrated to America in 1765. He preached to a few people first in his own house, then in a hired room near the Battery, and afterward in the John-street Methodist Church, the oldest in America. After the arrival of Wesleyan missionaries to take charge of the society in New York, Mr. Embury removed to the little village of Ashgrove, a few miles below Whitehall. Here he organized a society, which, though left after his death for fifteen years without preaching, was yet found by Asbury alive and flourishing,

with a neat chapel. To visit this society, and to look on the grave of the good man who had raised it up, Asbury traveled nearly four hundred miles out of his way, though he had to pass over a rocky road, across the Green Mountains, and "through a mere wilderness of swamp, with the roots of the white pine, the beech, and the hemlock much in his way." He, however, accomplished, by the tour, other purposes than visiting Ashgrove. He had the opportunity of preaching in the "woods of Bennington," on the soil of Vermont; of attending a quarterly meeting in "a pleasant vale" near Lake Champlain, where they had a "high day. Many opened their mouths boldly to testify of the goodness and the love of the Lord Jesus;" of preaching to a thousand souls in the stone church at Coeymans; of spending a day or two with Freeborn Garrettson, at Rhinebeck; and of calling at the hospitable mansion of Governor Van Courtlandt, where he had all he needed, and abundantly more than he desired."

Such hospitable houses as that of Governor Van Courtlandt, were, for Methodist preachers in those days, "few and far between." Asbury could appreciate and enjoy elegant hospitality

Indomitable Missionary Spirit.

and refined society. When, after his long rides through swamps, over rivers, and across mountains, lodging in dismal cabins, on the earthen floor, or in open lofts, eating food of the coarsest quality, he arrived at the mansion of General Russell in Holstein, or Judge White in Delaware, or General Lippett in Rhode Island, or Governor Van Courtlandt in New York, or Mr. Bemis in Waltham, he seemed, for a few days, in the abundant supply of every want; and in the respectful attentions, and refined society of the family, to enjoy a paradise. But all this could not allure him from his great missionary enterprise. Soon he would tire of rest, and long to be away again. Once in Lynn, at the mansion of Mr. Johnson, where he was enjoying every attention, he grew tired after a few days, and exclaimed, "*To move, move, seems to be my life. I now lament that I did not set off with the young men to the province of Maine.*"

During his round this year, his soul was deeply grieved at the loss of two of his most cherished friends and hospitable entertainers. On his western excursion, he called at the well-known mansion of General Russell. But his friend, who had so often bade him welcome to

Loses Two Friends.

Effect on his Heart.

his house, was no longer there to receive him. The generous-spirited and noble-minded Russell, who had been a "living flame, and a great blessing in the neighborhood," had fallen on a visit to his friends, and died away from home. On passing through Delaware he called at his old home, the residence of Thomas White, where he had found an asylum during the troublous times of the Revolution, and where he had always found a hospitable retreat, whenever he desired rest. But his friend, the presiding genius of the hospitable mansion, had gone to the spirit-land. "He was," says Asbury, "a friend to the poor and oppressed. His house and his heart were always open. He was a faithful friend to liberty, both in spirit and in practice. He was a most indulgent husband, a tender father, and an affectionate friend. He professed perfect love and great peace, living and dying." The death of this good man deeply affected Asbury. "The news," says he, "of his death was attended with an awful shock to me. I have met with nothing like it in the death of any friend on the continent. When I came to the house, it was like his funeral to me."

His health, during the campaign of 1795,

His Itinerant Spirit.

The Slaves.

was too feeble to endure the labor and exposure of a journey to the extreme west, during which he would have often to suffer from "feet wet, body cold, and stomach empty." He, therefore, proceeded no farther than East Tennessee, where the Kentucky preachers met him. Nor was he, on his eastern tour, able to go farther than Connecticut, though he longed to visit the province of Maine, three hundred miles distant." Yet he managed to get over during the year a distance of at least three thousand miles. For the sake of his health, he spent the winter in Charleston, much as he disliked the place. He was evidently unhappy, wherever he might be, unless he could be on the wing. "I feel," says he, as spring approached, "afraid of being out of my duty in staying here too long. My soul longeth to be gone like a bird from a cage." He was constantly employed during the winter, reading, writing, preaching, and visiting from house to house.

He did not, in his pastoral visits, forget nor overlook the poor Africans. "I was happy last evening," says he, on one occasion, "with the poor slaves in brother Wells's kitchen, while our *white brother* held a sacramental

A Curious Sight.Several Preachers Die.

love-feast in the front parlor up stairs. I must be poor. This is the will of God concerning me." To an observer, that house on that evening must have presented a scene of rare interest: *the venerable Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, instructing and encouraging in piety the *slaves in the kitchen*, while the *preacher of the station*, a young man, who had been in the ministry less than six years, and remained less than six more, was holding a sacramental love-feast *in the front parlor up stairs!*

The year was marked by the death of several of his most promising coadjutors. Jacob Brush, who had done efficient service with Lee in New England, had fallen at the early age of thirty-three, of the yellow fever, in the city of New York. Reuben Ellis, who had for twenty years been laboring very extensively and successfully through the middle and southern states, had fallen at Baltimore. The youthful and zealous Zadoc Priest, who a few years before had left his home and his friends on the banks of the Connecticut, had fallen sick with bleeding lungs, on his circuit, called at the hospitable house of a Christian brother, saying, as he entered the door, "I have come to die

Benjamin Abbott.

Precarious Health.

with you," laid down on his bed, and tranquilly died, expressing "strong confidence in the favor of God." And that extraordinary man, Benjamin Abbott, "one of the wonders of America, no man's copy, known to hundreds as a primitive Methodist preacher, full of faith and the Holy Ghost," had died on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

From the General conference of 1796 to that of 1800, Asbury was, for most of the time, in a very precarious state of health. His constitution, though naturally good, had become shattered and broken by exposure to heat, cold, wet, and hunger; by excessive labor in traveling and in preaching; and by the enervating malaria of the miasmatic lowlands of the south. He was subject to repeated and often long-continued attacks of fever, and various other forms of inflammatory diseases. He started, at the usual time, in 1796, for the south. Having spent the winter as usual in Charleston, he left in the spring for his western tour, but could proceed no further than Holstein, from whence he slowly retreated through Virginia to Baltimore. He was more than two months performing the journey, during which he suffered greatly from "inflammatory fever, and fixed

Desists from Preaching.

Spends the Winter in Charleston.

pain in his breast," being unable even to write up his journal. He remained in Maryland about one month, when he attempted to visit the north.

When he reached New Rochelle, near the boundary between New York and Connecticut, he was obliged to desist from attempting to go further, and to remain quiet for nearly a month. He then started on his tour for 1797, and proceeded as far as Virginia. His health not improving, he was obliged to desist from traveling till the spring of 1798. By the middle of April, 1798, he was able to return slowly to the north. Spending some time in Baltimore and Philadelphia, he reached New York about the first of July. The latter part of August he was able, with much difficulty, to attend the first conference ever held in Maine.

The winter of 1798-9, he spent, according to his custom, in Charleston. During the summer of 1799 he proceeded no further east than New York city, but went north as far as Albany. Returning south in winter, he remained till spring, when he was able to travel again north, arriving at Baltimore about the first of May to attend the General conference of 1800. During most of these four years, specially the latter

Jesse Lee.

Asbury Visits Maine.

two, he could preach but seldom, and could do but little at the conference. Jesse Lee traveled with him as assistant, doing most of the preaching, and often presiding in the conferences.

The only new ground visited by Asbury during these four years, was the province of Maine. Jesse Lee, solitary and alone, had made his way to Maine in 1793, and organized societies and circuits. Hall, Mudge, Merritt, Brodhead, and Taylor—men of glorious memory—had followed him, and in 1798 a conference was held in Maine, and Asbury, who had long looked anxiously toward that distant land, could not, though in so feeble health, be restrained from attempting the journey. He left New York on the first of July, proceeded through Connecticut and Rhode Island to Boston, and from thence passed through Lynn, Salem, and Newburyport to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Crossing the Piscataqua river at Portsmouth, he stepped for the first time on the soil of Maine. Proceeding along the seashore road, through Old York, the “parish of father Moody, whose only salary he ever received was the prayers of his people,” through Wells, with its lovely bay and beautiful beach,

A Varied Experience.A Small Congregation.

over the pine plains of Kennebunk, and around the saline marshes of Scarborough, he arrived at Portland, where he found himself "among strangers." Proceeding on to the Presumpcot river, he preached in a barn; at Gray he preached in a school-house; and at New Gloucester in the house of a widow. Making his way "through the woods" to the Androscoggin, he crossed near Lewiston Falls, and went on to Monmouth. He preached at Monmouth in the "open meeting-house," just then erecting, being the second Methodist church built in Maine. At Winthrop he was unable to preach, though an appointment had been made for him in the Congregational meeting-house. From Winthrop he "had to beat his way between Winthrop and Readfield, through the woods, which are as bad as the Alleghany Mountains, and the shades of death." The conference was a great thing for the people in "those parts." Asbury computes the number present on Thursday, the "great day," at eighteen hundred.

On his returning from Readfield to Boston, he spent the Sabbath in Portland, preaching in "Widow Boynton's back room to about twenty-five persons, chiefly women." Surely,

Confinement and Sickness.

Mental Characteristics.

it is no wonder Asbury thought that the "day of small things." *Francis Asbury* preaching in the city of Portland to a congregation of only twenty-five persons, chiefly women!

During his confinement by sickness, he suffered greatly in mind as well as in body. It was his "life to be on the move," yet he must confine himself for two or three months at a time to the house. The smallest exercise or application to study was too great for him. "O, to rest," says he, "to be idle and dependent, is painful." He was able to read but very little. He recorded, when able to write, in his journal such observations, theological and practical, as were suggested to him from his daily Scripture readings. These observations display the characteristics of mind for which he was distinguished, quick perception, and good judgment. He sometimes recorded, on the political and social institutions of the country, observations which exhibit liberal and wise views, often fifty years in advance of the age. When he was unable to read or to write, he would employ himself helping the children of the family wind cotton. He could not be idle.

Sometimes he thought it extremely doubtful

Trials of his Illness.

Meditates Resigning.

whether he should ever recover. He was willing, on his own personal account, to die. The world had no longer charms for him, constantly suffering as he was from disease. But he was deeply anxious for the Church, whose superintendent he was. He says, in affecting language, "What brings the heavy pang into my heart, and the big tear to roll that never rises without a cause, is the thought of leaving the connection without some proper men of their own election, to go in and out before them in my place, and to keep that order which I have been seeking these many years to establish. As Dr. Coke spent most of his time in Europe, and the American Methodists could hope little from his services, Asbury had reason to fear his own death, before some American could be elected by the General conference to supply his place, would produce great confusion in ecclesiastical affairs, and much injury to the Church.

He began anxiously to deliberate on the expediency, should he live to the General conference of 1800, of resigning his office as superintendent, and of falling into the common rank of elders. He could not be content, while he remained bishop, to do so little service to the

His Resignation Proposed.Action of Conference.

Church, and he, after much reflection and prayer, actually made up his mind to resign, and leave his place for another to fill. He had even prepared his letter of resignation, but before it was offered the conference passed a resolution requesting him to withhold it, and earnestly entreating him still to continue to act as one of the superintendents of the Methodist Episcopal Church so far as his health would permit. The good Asbury could not resist the brethren he so much loved. He told them he would prefer personally to resign an office whose duties he could not perform to his own satisfaction; yet, as they had given an unequivocal expression of their approbation of his services, inefficient as they, from his feeble health, had lately been, and as they had so decidedly signified their desire for him to continue his services, he would withhold his resignation, and go on, as he had done, according to his ability.

While confined by sickness, he often suffered from reflections, which must be familiar to every Methodist preacher in similar circumstances. He had no home and no property to provide for his support. He must be wholly dependent on others to take care of him.

The Early Methodist Preachers.Sixty-four Dollars a Year.

“When I get sick,” says he, “and feel dispirited, I think, were I not required by duty, and necessity, and conscience, to do the best I can, I would rather go into some other line of business to get my own living. I feel for those who have had to groan out a wretched life dependent on others, as Pedicord, and Gill, and Tunnell.” The Methodist preacher of that day had usually neither wife, nor children, nor home. His only salary was *sixty-four dollars* a year, and not often did he get even so much as that. If he fell sick, if lingering disease laid her withering finger on him, if he must drag his weary life along through many years of suffering, he had no recourse but the hospitality of some benevolent family, who might, in the kindness of their heart, open to him their doors, and provide for his maintenance. Yet these men, Gill, and Pedicord, and Tunnell, and Asbury, were men who might, from their talents and industry, not only make a living, but acquire a fortune in the usual employments of professional and business life. They might have sustained a high character, and earned both fame and money at the bar, or in the halls of legislation. But they felt that to them was committed a dispensation of the

The Present and Past Age.Yellow Fever.

Gospel, that they had a mission to perform, and on the altar of benevolence and philanthropic devotion, they laid as a sacrifice their ease and comfort, wealth and friends, expecting only their reward on high. Magnanimous men were they, the primitive Methodist preachers; men of chivalrous enterprise, indomitable energy, tireless perseverance, unbounded philanthropy, and unflinching fortitude. The present age demands not, and, therefore, produces not such men. Were it not for the records of early times, we should not know that such sacrifices as these men made for the Gospel of Christ, were ever necessary. Asbury remarks very wisely, that when the Methodists should become, as become they would, a numerous and wealthy people, the preacher would never know, but by the journals and records of early times, the difficulties with which he and his coadjutors had to cope.

The heart of Asbury, during this disastrous period, was affected not only by his own afflictions, but by the death of many of his coadjutors and friends. The yellow fever was prevailing during a part of the time with dreadful mortality in New York, Philadelphia, and

John Dickins.H. C. Wooster.

Baltimore. Seven Methodist preachers fell victims to the pestilence. Among these was John Dickins, for nearly a quarter of a century an able, faithful, and distinguished preacher, "one of the greatest characters that ever graced the pulpit, or adorned the society of ministers or Methodists." He was the first book agent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a man of education and talent. His name will go down to future generations, as one of the most eminent of the early preachers.

In the latter part of 1798 there passed from earth, after a most brilliant and glorious career, the youthful Hezekiah C. Wooster. He was one of those remarkable men who seem endowed with the power of Michael and the eloquence of Gabriel. Under his powerful denunciations, the stout-hearted and bold-faced sinner would fall prostrate in the public congregation. Under his pathetic appeals the whole congregation would be overwhelmed with tears; and again, under his joyous words of faith and hope, there would arise from a thousand voices a simultaneous shout. When he was so reduced by consumption that he could not speak above a whisper, he still retained his power over the human heart. He

 Wooster's Death.

Mr. Wells.

Death of Asbury's Father.

would speak in the whisper. Another, catching the sentence, would repeat it to the congregation. It would thrill the heart like a trumpet. One resistless tide of emotion would sweep over the people, and cries and shouts would alternately resound, and tears and smiles come and go over the face of the congregation. He closed his career sadly brief, but dazzlingly brilliant, at the early age of twenty-eight.

There died in the south, in 1797, Mr. Wells, in whose hospitable family Asbury usually spent his southern winters. Asbury describes him as a "gentleman of spirit, and sentiment, and fine feelings, a faithful friend to the poor, and warmly attached to the ministers of the Gospel." On the first visit of Asbury to Charleston, Mr. Wells opened to him his house, which ever afterward was the home of the Methodist preacher. Asbury deeply lamented his death.

In 1798 Asbury heard the sad intelligence of his father's death. He speaks of the subject in the following beautiful and pathetic language: "I now feel myself an orphan, with respect to my father. Wounded memory recalls to mind what took place when I parted with him, twenty-seven years ago. Though he

Asbury's Grief.

Washington's Death.

seldom wept, yet when I came to America, he cried out in grief, and overwhelmed with tears, 'I shall never see him again.' Thus, by prophecy or by providence, he hath spoken what is fulfilled."

The death of Washington, which occurred the latter part of 1797, is thus beautifully noticed by Asbury: "Slow moved the northern post on the eve of New-Year's day, and brought the heart-distressing intelligence of the death of Washington—Washington, the calm, intrepid chief, the disinterested friend, first father, and temporal savior of his country, under Divine protection and direction. A universal cloud sat upon the faces of the citizens of Charleston; the pulpits clothed in black, the bells muffled, the soldiery paraded, a public oration decreed to be delivered, a marble statue to be erected in some proper situation—these were the expressions of sorrow, and these the marks of respect paid by his fellow-citizens to the memory of the great man. I am disposed to lose sight of all but Washington—matchless man! At all times he acknowledged the providence of God, and never was he ashamed of his Redeemer. We believe he died not fearing death. In his will he ordered the manu-

 Decrease of Members.

 Great Location of Preachers.

mission of his slaves—a true son of liberty in all points.”

At the close of the second octennial period of the administration of Asbury, there was found but very little increase during the eight years in the number of circuits and of preachers, and none whatever in the number of members in the connection. There was reported, on the Minutes for 1800, even less members by at least one thousand than for 1792. This decrease of members during this period, was only one of the disastrous effects of the secession of Mr. O’Kelley, and of the agitations and difficulties that grew out of the schism.

The small increase in the number of preachers—only twenty-one in eight years—was not owing to secession, for nearly, if not quite all, who seceded with Mr. O’Kelley, returned soon after to the Church, but to the immense number of locations that occurred every year.

During the eight years there had retired from the itinerant ranks, and entered on the pursuit of some secular business, no less than *two hundred and twenty-one men*, many of them the most able, useful, and popular ministers in the connection. The talents of these men were nearly lost to the Church, for the

Effects of Location.

Causes of Location.

sphere in which a local preacher may operate in the Methodist Episcopal Church is exceedingly limited. He may preach occasionally, but he can have no pastoral charge, and can exert but little influence. Methodism suffers, and the cause of humanity is impeded when such men as John Easter, "the son of thunder," and Hope Hull, the "son of consolation," and two hundred others, in the short space of eight years, are induced by any means, and constrained for any cause, to leave the circling orbit in which they moved, and along which they shed a glorious radiancy for the obscure and oblivious path of the local ministry. But for these locations there was in early times a necessity which fortunately no longer exists. The necessity arose from the utter absence, in the early Methodist economy, of all means of support for families. Preachers were allowed, if they could raise it among the people, to receive *sixty-four* dollars a year for their services; but no provision was made for the support of wives and children. Only single men, therefore, could remain in the traveling connection.

Asbury felt and deplored the effect of these numerous locations. He saw annually the best, most faithful, and most successful of his

men compelled to ask their discharge from the itinerant army. To carry on the warfare he was often left with only the young, the inexperienced, the undisciplined; yet it could not well be helped. The country over which the Methodists traveled was generally new, and the people poor. Those who were not poor were not accustomed to give much, if any thing, for the support of the Gospel. There would be nothing gained by raising the salary. It was very seldom that all of the sixty-four dollars was actually received. If the people to whom they preached did not choose to give enough to bring up the salaries of the preachers to that amount, there was no help for it.

To remedy in part these defects in the system of itinerancy, the plan of creating a fund known as the Chartered Fund was projected. The fund was to be raised by contributions, donations, and bequests from the members and friends of the Church, and its income was to be appropriated for the relief and support of the necessitous preachers and their families, and of the widows and orphans of the departed. Though the plan was projected from motives pure and benevolent, yet it has accomplished but little, having never afforded so much as

Present Salaries of Preachers.

two dollars a year for each preacher in the connection. Indeed, at this day, the middle of the nineteenth century, the income of the Chartered Fund and the Book Concern together would not, if divided equally among all the traveling preachers, give each one more than *five dollars* a year. That Methodist preachers in modern days are not obliged to locate in order to make a living for themselves and families, that they are supported in general as liberally as are the ministers of other denominations, may find a satisfactory explanation, not in the existence of any corporate fund, but in the number, wealth, and liberality of the Methodist people.

CHAPTER VI.

ASBURY AS A BISHOP—THIRD OCTEN-
NIAL PERIOD.

AT the General conference of 1800 Rev. Richard Whatcoat was elected bishop, and immediately commenced with Asbury the annual tour of the continent. Asbury was thus relieved from the necessity of preaching, and of presiding in the conferences when his health might be totally inadequate to the effort. His health, however, was greatly improved. A few weeks after the conference, he says, "My health is restored, to the astonishment of myself and friends."

Leaving Baltimore he traveled through Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, visiting several places along the route to New York, thence through Connecticut and Rhode Island, as far east as Lynn, from whence he returned by Hartford, on the Connecticut, and Rhinebeck, on the Hudson, to New York. About the middle of August he left New York on his southern and western tour, which he

Goes to the South.

A "Sacramental Meeting."

extended as far south as Georgia, and as far west as Nashville, in the state of Tennessee. After having traveled extensively over Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, he proceeded north as far only as Philadelphia, where he was confined by lameness from the first of June till the first of August, 1801.

The most interesting incidents of travel during the year, occurred in the west. He arrived on the banks of the Holstein, on the 17th of September, 1800. On the 27th he began his grand route to Kentucky. On the third of October he reached the seat of the conference, on the Kentucky river, some forty miles above Frankfort. After spending two weeks in that part of Kentucky he struck down south-west for Nashville, where he arrived on the 19th of October. Near Nashville he attended a "sacramental meeting," which had been already held four days by several Presbyterian ministers. He and Whatcoat and M'Kendree immediately joined the band of "officiating ministers," and the services were continued for several days longer. "The stand," says Asbury, "was in the open air, embosomed in a wood of lofty trees. The ministers of God,

A Union Revival.

Camp Meetings.

Methodists and Presbyterians, united their labors, and mingled with the childlike simplicity of primitive times. Fires blazing here and there dispelled the darkness, and the shouts of the redeemed captives, and the cries of precious souls struggling into life, broke the silence of midnight. The weather was delightful, as if heaven smiled, while mercy flowed in abundant streams of salvation to perishing 'sinners.'"

In this extract the reader can not fail to recognize the description of a camp meeting scene—a scene familiar to modern Methodists, and often attended by the most interesting results. These meetings originated at that time on the Cumberland river, in Tennessee. The Presbyterian people came together for a sacramental occasion; the power of the Almighty was revealed in their midst; sinners were converted, and saints rejoiced. The meeting was protracted several days. Another meeting was soon appointed. The people came together in countless multitudes from a vast distance, bringing their provisions with them. For greater convenience and comfort, they erected in the grove temporary tents, in which they lived during their stay at the meeting. As no

house could be found sufficiently large to hold the people during worship, they assembled for divine service near their tents in the grove. Great and marvelous were the effects of these meetings. A great revival spread over the country, and thousands were added to the Church. The Methodists, seeing the glorious effects of the meetings among the Presbyterians, adopted them, and afterward appropriated them to themselves.

I enter here on no defense of camp meetings; they need no defense. The Methodist who should object to them, would only prove thereby his defective observation of their results, or his want of manly independence to sustain a good institution when cavilers proscribe it. There are now in the Methodist Church hundreds of preachers, and thousands of members, who owe their moral standing in society, and their religious connections, to the influence of camp meetings.

Not only in the west, but in the middle and eastern states revivals gloriously prevailed during the whole year. Asbury was elated at the accounts he was constantly receiving of the wonderful accessions to the Church in every part of the continent. He frequently read, in

Asbury Elated.Starts on his Annual Tour.

the public congregation, the cheering accounts received from his correspondents of the gracious work prevailing throughout the Union. His own heart was greatly cheered, and his spirit wonderfully sustained, in the midst of his labors and sufferings, by the glad tidings of revival so constantly brought to him.

As soon as Asbury sufficiently recovered from the lameness by which he had been confined in Philadelphia for two months, he started in August, 1801, for his annual tour of the continent. It was arranged for him to go west, in company with Nicholas Snethen, while Whatcoat was attending the southern conferences. Asbury proceeded along through Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, to the Holstein river, meeting the western preachers in conference near Jonesboro, Tennessee. He then recrossed the mountains, and spent the winter traveling and preaching in South Carolina and Georgia. By the first of March, 1802, he returned to Baltimore; and after attending the conferences in the middle states, proceeded, in company with Whatcoat, as far east as Monmouth, in the province of Maine. Returning from Monmouth to the Piscataqua, he crossed the state of New Hampshire by what is now called the

Abraham Bemis.

Kindness of the People.

upper route, by Dover and Exeter, crossing the Merrimac at Haverhill, and proceeded by Andover and Lexington to Waltham. At Waltham he remained, as was his custom, a few days, in the hospitable mansion of Abraham Bemis. This charming spot, embosomed in beautiful scenery, retired from the busy world, and adorned with all the elegancies of wealth and refinement, was a favorite resort of Asbury and his coadjutors. After resting a few days he wended his way, by Hartford, Farmington, Winstead, and Sharon, to Rhinebeck, on the Hudson, and then down the river road to New York.

Asbury seems, on his tour this year, to be greatly cheered by indications of improvement in the moral and physical condition of the people. The effects of the general revival of religion, which began in 1800, and which still continued, were most glorious. Asbury found every-where open doors, cheerful hearts, and liberal hands to receive, encourage, and sustain him, yet in some sections of the country, particularly on the western frontier, he was subject to hard fare. "Why," says he, "should a living man complain? Yet, it is at least inconvenient to be three months on the front-

His Experience.

Amount of his Preaching.

iers, where generally you have but one room and fireplace, and half a dozen folks about you, strangers, perhaps, and their family certainly—and they are not usually small in these plentiful new countries—making a crowd; and this is not all, for here you may meditate if you can, and here you *must* preach, read, write, pray, sing, talk, eat, drink, and sleep, or fly to the woods. Well, I have pains in my body, which are very afflictive when I ride, but I cheer myself as well as I may with songs in the night.”

The amount of preaching done by Asbury and his colleagues was enormous. He preached on the average five hundred discourses a year. Wherever he came it was usual for him and all his company to preach. During this year he and Snethen and Whatcoat often preached in succession at the same appointment, continuing the services without intermission for four hours. Nor were the people weary or impatient. It would indicate much perversity of taste to get weary hearing Francis Asbury, Nicholas Snethen, and Richard Whatcoat, even though the services might be protracted four or five hours.

While attending the session of the Baltimore

Death of Asbury's Mother.Tribute to her Memory.

conference, in 1802, Asbury heard of the death of his venerable mother. She died at the advanced age of eighty-seven years. He pays the following beautiful tribute to her memory: "Her paternal descent was Welsh, from a family ancient and respectable of the name of Rogers. She lived a woman of the world till the death of her only daughter, Sarah Asbury. How would the bereaved mother weep and tell of the beauties and excellences of her lost and lovely child, pondering on the past in the silent suffering of hopeless grief! This afflictive providence graciously terminated in the mother's conversion. When she saw herself a lost and wretched sinner she sought religious people. But 'in the times of this ignorance' few were 'sound in the faith,' or 'faithful to the grace given.' Many were the days she spent alone, chiefly in reading and prayer. At length she found justifying grace and pardoning mercy. For fifty years her hands, her house, her heart were open to receive the people of God and the ministers of Christ. She was an afflicted yet most active woman, of quick bodily powers, and masculine understanding. Nevertheless, 'so kindly were all the elements mixed in her,' that her strong and

Asbury's Parents.

Letter to his Father and Mother.

quick mind felt the subduing influences of that Christian sympathy which 'weeps with those who weep,' and 'rejoices with those who rejoice.' As a woman, she was modest, blameless; as a mother, ardently affectionate; as a friend, she was generous, true, and constant."

The parents of Asbury, though respectable, were poor people. He was constantly remitting to them all the money he could possibly spare from America. Some of his letters to them are preserved, and they exhibit a beautiful specimen of filial piety. "I have had," says he, in a letter to his father and mother, in 1793, "considerable pain of mind from information received that the money was not paid. I last evening made arrangement for a remittance to you. It will come into your hands in the space of three or four months. My salary is sixty-four dollars. I have sold my watch and library, and would sell my shirts before you should want. I have made a reserve for you. I spend very little on my own account. My friends find me some clothing. The contents of a small saddle-bags will do for me, and one coat a year. Your son, Francis, is a man of honor and conscience. As my father and my mother never disgraced me by an act of

His Filial Love.Thinks of Returning to England.

dishonesty, I hope to echo back the same sound of an honest, upright man. I am well satisfied that the Lord saw fit you should be my parents rather than the king and queen, or any of the great. I sometimes think you will outlive me. I have made my will, and left my all to you, and that is soon done. While I live and do well, I shall remember you every year. O, that your last days may be your best, and that you may not only live long, but live well and die well!"

By the following extract it would seem he was seriously thinking of returning to England to provide for his parents, or of their removing to America, so as to be near him: "I have received several letters expressive of your paternal love and gratitude toward me. I have often revolved the serious thought of my return to you. I have frequently asked myself if I could retire to a single circuit, step down and act as lay preacher. This, if I know my own heart, is not my difficulty. With humility I may say one hundred thousand respectable citizens of the new world, three hundred traveling, and six hundred local preachers, would advise me not to go. I hope the voice of the people is the voice of God. At present

Another Letter to his Parents.

we have more work than faithful workmen. I am like Joseph—I want to have my parents near me. I am not ashamed of your *poverty*, and I hope, after so many years professing religion, you will not be wanting in *piety*. I have considered you have that which is my joy and my glory; that you have had for forty years open doors for religious exercises when no other would or even dare do it. It is a serious subject whether you think it is your duty still to keep a place for preaching, or if on your removal the Gospel will be taken from the place. Yet when I think you have no child with you, nor friend that careth for you, the distress of the land, and the high prices of provisions, I wish to see you, and have you near me. It is true, while I live you will live also, if I keep my place and piety. I study daily what I can do without. One horse, and that sometimes borrowed, one coat, one waistcoat—the last coat and waistcoat I used about fourteen months—four or five shirts, and four or five books. I am in doubt, if I should be called away, you will not be provided for so well in England as in America, among those for whom I have faithfully labored these twenty-four years. It is true, you are not

Advises his Parents to Remain in England.

immortal any more than myself, and judging according to the nature of things you may go first, one or both of you. All these things I have weighed in my mind. I wish you to consider the matter, and ask much counsel of God, and of your best and most impartial friends. I wish you, after considering the matter, to send me another letter. Whether I be present or absent, dead or alive, I trust my friends in Baltimore will take care of you by my help. You have spent many pounds upon Christian people, I know, from my childhood. Happy was I when this was done, and I hope it will come home to you in mercy. You must make it matter of much fasting and prayer before you attempt any thing. You must not expect to see me more than twice a year."

It would seem from the following extract, that he afterward concluded that their interest would be best promoted by remaining in England: "Perhaps I was constrained, from the high sense of filial duty I had, to invite you here. I now think you are much better where you are. I sincerely wish I could come to see you, but I see no way to do it without sinning against God and the Church. Since I wrote I have traveled nearly two thousand, five

A Remittance to his Parents.

Slandered.

hundred miles, through Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. Hard wear and hard fare; but I am healthy and lean, gray-headed and dim-sighted."

On making his parents a remittance of money in 1795, he says, "Were it ten thousand per year, if I had it in my possession, you should be welcome if you had need of it."

By the following remark it would appear that his kindness to his parents was made, by some persons, a ground of charge against him: "It is wickedly reported of me, that I collect money from the printing Concern and for the college, and send it home to my friends in large sums. This is done by wicked men whom I have prevented from oppressing and robbing the Church of God. To cover their own baseness they charge me."

After news had arrived of the death of his father, he wrote as follows to his mother: "From the information I have received I fear my venerable father is no more an inhabitant of this earth. You are a widow and I am an orphan with respect to my father. I can not tell how to advise you in this important change. You have made yourself respectable and exten-

Writes to his Mother.

Amiable Spirit.

sive friends, who, though they can not give to you, can comfort you. I have been, as you have heard, afflicted by excessive labors of mind and body. I had to neglect writing, reading, and preaching for a time. I had to stop and lie by in some precious families, where parents and children, in some measure, supplied your absence. I laid by in Virginia. When you hear the name you will love it unseen, for you will say, 'That is the place where my Frank was sick.' I am now much mended. I move in a little carriage, being unable to ride on horseback. Were you to see me, and the color of my hair—nearly that of your own! My eyes are weak even with glasses. When I was a child, and would pry into the Bible by twinkling firelight, you used to say, 'Frank, you will spoil your eyes.' It is a grief to me that I can not preach as heretofore. I am greatly worn out at fifty-five; but it is a good cause. God is with me; my soul exults in God."

These extracts we have given in order to exhibit the amiable and filial spirit of this good man, who, though prevented by the pressing duties of his responsible station from ever visiting his father and mother in their old age, spared no pains to cheer and aid them in the

The Asbury Family Extinct.

Difficulties of Early Methodism.

decline of life. The high position he occupied in America did not make him forget the village of his birth, nor amidst all the thousands in America who admired and loved him, did he forget the humble Joseph and Elizabeth Asbury. Much did he desire to see them again; but their faces he saw no more. The humble homestead passed to strangers, and the family has long since been extinct.

On preaching at Fredericktown, while on his way south in 1802, Asbury remarks that "at last, after more than thirty years labor, the Methodists have in Fredericktown a house of worship and thirty souls in fellowship." This remark strikingly indicates the difficulties which the early Methodists had to encounter in the villages and towns. Thirty years of labor required to erect a house of worship and gather a society of only thirty persons, and this, too, not in New England, but in Maryland! Other denominations had taken the ground in most of the American villages, and considered and treated the Methodists as intruders and heretics. Far from furnishing the Methodist preachers facilities for preaching the Gospel and forming societies, they placed every possible impediment in their way. It would seem

Natural Bridge.

Tennessee Journey.

difficult to render the course pursued toward the Methodists compatible with the religious profession made by the persons who opposed them.

From Fredericktown Asbury proceeded up the valley of the Shenandoah, between the Blue Ridge and the Alleghanies, on his way to the western conference, on the Cumberland river, in Tennessee. He called, as he passed along, to see the curious Natural Bridge. He estimates the width of the bridge sixty feet, the length one hundred and sixty, and the height of the arch above the stream one hundred and sixty. He could but think, as he looked at the beautiful arch thrown so curiously over the chasm, what a fine place there might be under the bridge to hold religious services, and he intimates an intention of preaching there at some future time.

His journey to Tennessee was one of great toil and exposure. By sleeping several nights without shelter, in the woods, he brought on himself an accumulation of infirmities which laid him up nearly a month. He, however, was able to make his usual tour through South Carolina and Georgia, and return to Baltimore in the spring. In the summer of 1803 he

attended the New England conference at Lynn, and then crossed the country by Brattleboro, on the Connecticut, to Ashgrove, on the Hudson, at which he held a conference. From Ashgrove he proceeded down the Hudson. At Newburg he left the river and bore off through the central part of Orange county, by New Windsor and Warwick, into New Jersey, and passed on by Trenton to Philadelphia.

On the 22d of July he left Philadelphia on his tour for 1803. He took this year a new route to the west. He went by Lancaster, Columbia, and York, to Carlisle. From Carlisle his route lay by the small villages of Shippensburg, Strasburg, and Emmetsburg, to the waters of the Juniata, which he crossed near Bedford, and then by "pleasant Berlin" to Connelsville, on the Youghiogheny river, thence by Uniontown, to the Monongahela, which he followed down to Pittsburg. Advancing west he crossed the Ohio at Steubenville, returned to the Virginia side, went down to Wheeling, again crossed the Ohio, and passed through the woods—for there was no National Road, nor indeed any road at that time—to the Muskingum, near Zanesville, thence over the Pickaway plains to the Scioto, at Chilicothe, then

Goes South.Extent of his Annual Tours.

south-west to the Ohio again, near Maysville, and south to the seat of the Kentucky conference, near Paris.

After the session of the Kentucky conference, he continued south to Tennessee, and then east and south through North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Returning north in the spring of 1804, he passed on the old route by Baltimore, where he attended the General conference in May; by Philadelphia and New York; by Boston, Lynn, and Newburyport, in Massachusetts, Exeter and Dover, in New Hampshire, and Berwick and Alfred, in Maine, to Buxton, on the Saco river. On his return he passed by Livingston, in Maine, Effingham, Center Harbor, and Hanover, in New Hampshire, crossed the Connecticut river near Windsor, passed down to Brattleboro, then across the Green Mountains, by Pittsfield, to Rhinebeck, on the Hudson, and arrived at New York city by the first of August.

Of the vast extent of these annual tours the reader can form no conception, unless he will take the pains to trace the entire route on some large map. Of the great difficulties of the journey no adequate idea can possibly be suggested. So changed, since the days of Asbury,

Perils and Exposures in his Travels.

is the whole country in roads, cultivation, and conveniences of every kind, that we can not appreciate the amount of toil, exposure, and privation he must endure at that early day. In the north the roads were rough, but the accommodations for entertainment were respectably convenient. In the south and west there were neither roads nor accommodations. Hear his account of his entertainment in Kentucky and Tennessee in 1803: "No room to retire to; that in which you sit common to all, crowded with women and children; the fire occupied for cooking; much and long-loved solitude not to be found, unless you choose to run out into the woods in the rain. Six months in the year, for thirty-two years, I have had to submit occasionally to what can never be agreeable to me. The people are the kindest souls in the world; but kindness will not make a crowded log-cabin, twelve feet by ten, agreeable." Among his other troubles he often became affected with cutaneous diseases, and he says that, considering the filthy houses in which he had to eat, and the filthy beds in which he had to sleep, he saw no security against contagion but by "sleeping in a *brimstone* shirt."

In the south the open houses, finished only

Chills and Fever.

A Methodist Bishop.

for warm weather, exposed him to constant attacks of chills and fever. He says the people in South Carolina and Georgia suffer, from their open houses, more in cold weather than do the people of the north and east. "If," says he, "any one doubt this, let him make the trial for one winter." The houses of worship were even worse than the dwelling-houses—mere pole cabins, open to wind and rain, and exposing both preacher and congregation to excessive suffering and risk of sickness.

So far as mere human and temporal considerations are concerned, he sometimes thought the office of bishop was not to be coveted. "For myself," says he, "I pity those who can not distinguish between the Pope of Rome and a Methodist bishop, who has the *power given him* of riding five thousand miles a year, at a salary of eighty dollars, through summer heat and winter cold, traveling in all weather, preaching in all places, his best covering from rain often but a blanket, his best fare, for six months in the twelve, coarse kindness, and his reward, from too many, suspicion, envy, and murmurings all the year round."

These "murmurings" probably came from

Sundry Murmurings and his Replies to them.

preachers who were dissatisfied with their appointments. He refers again to these vexations in the following language: "People unacquainted with the causes and motives of my conduct, will always, more or less, judge of me improperly. Six months ago a man could write to me in the most adulatory terms, to tell me of the unshaken confidence imposed in me by preachers and people. Behold, his station is changed, and certain measures are pursued which do not comport with his views and feelings. O, then I am menaced with the downfall of Methodism, and my influence, reputation, and character are all to find a grave in the ruins." Men who owed their position, their importance, their influence, their very souls to Methodism, beginning to entertain a higher opinion of their own talents than Asbury thought the circumstances warranted, and failing to receive the appointments which they thought they deserved, would withdraw from the Church, and ambitiously abuse the Bishop, and every body and every thing they thought in the way of their sunshine.

The usages of the Methodists in their religious meetings are peculiarly calculated to bring out the latent talents of young men. In the

class meeting the young convert begins to speak; in the prayer meeting he begins to pray in public. If he exhibit evidence of "gifts and grace" he is encouraged to hold meetings for exhortation, and ultimately he becomes a preacher. Talents which might in most other Churches have lain dormant, thus become, by Methodistic usages, developed. Thus many a young man, who otherwise might never have been known beyond his own neighborhood, has by his connection with the Methodists risen to eminent distinction. Yet often it did happen in early times, and sometimes it does happen even now, that men deeply indebted to the Methodist Church become renegades from her communion, revilers of her Discipline, and bitter opponents of her friends. There may be circumstances in which one may with propriety change his religious relations; but when one not only abandons the Church to which he owes his consequence in society, but labors unscrupulously to malign her supporters, and neutralize her influence, he betrays a depraved taste, if not a depraved heart. Asbury's fearless independence in the performance of whatever he thought the duties of his office required, rendered him the special object of

Asbury's Knowledge of Human Nature.

hostile attack from all the seceders and renegades from the Church, and all the grumblers and croakers in it. Yet he remained unmoved, conscious of rectitude, and confident of the success of the cause and of the triumph of truth.

Asbury was an attentive observer both of men and of things. His remarks occasionally on the country through which he traveled, and the people whom he met, exhibit much shrewdness. He correctly understood and fully appreciated New England. In passing through New Hampshire he says, "The soil, though barren, exhibits, in the abundant productions of grass, oats, barley, rye, and potatoes, what the arm of labor and the habits of economy and industry will do. Out of doors there is a well-kept stock of cattle, sheep, and hogs, and in doors you see plenty of cheese, butter, and milk, and fish from the mill ponds, which are wonderfully frequent, producing the finest trout and pike. The people are pictures of health, and appear to be of the old English stamina." Of the New England women he says, "The simplicity and frugality of New England is desirable. You see the woman a mother, mistress, maid, and wife, and in all these characters a conversable woman. She sees to her own

New England Women.

Religious Deficiency.

Ohio.

house, parlor, kitchen, and dairy. Here are no noisy negroes running and lounging. If you wish breakfast at six or seven o'clock, there is no setting the table an hour before the provisions can be produced."

He was not, however, blind to the faults of New England. Boston he thought deficient in "religion and good water." He relates a very curious circumstance to illustrate the *religious* deficiency: "I will not mention names, but I could tell of a congregation that sold their priest to another congregation in Boston for the sum of one thousand dollars, and hired out the money at the unlawful interest of twenty-five or thirty per cent. Lord have mercy on the priest and the people that can think of buying the kingdom of heaven with money! How would it tell to the south that the priests were among the notions of Yankee traffic?"

In traveling through Ohio he was surprised and delighted at the beauty and fertility of the country. The intervals of the Muskingum and of the Scioto exceeded in luxuriant fertility all he had ever seen, or of which he had ever dreamed. Nor was he less astonished at the rapid settlement of Ohio. "It is," says he, "but four years since Zane first opened the road for

Ancient Mounds.

Falls Sick.

the General Government through the *wilderness*, so lately called, and now there are the towns of Marietta, at the mouth of the Muskingum, of a thousand houses; Cincinnati, containing as many; Hamilton, of five hundred houses, and many others whose names are scarcely fixed."

He noticed, with much interest, the ancient mounds scattered along the river valleys. "We passed," says he, "near Chilicothe, some of those mounds and intrenchments which still astonish all who visit the country, and give rise to many conjectures respecting their origin. Shadows, clouds, and darkness rest and will rest upon them."

About the first of September, 1804, Asbury started on his usual western tour. When he had reached western Pennsylvania he fell sick, and was confined more than a month, near Uniontown. The long delay, and his feeble condition, obliged him to dispense with his intended visit to Kentucky, and he made his way slowly through western Virginia to the southern conferences, spending the winter in South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina.

In the spring of 1805 he returned north, meeting the Baltimore and Philadelphia conferences, and arrived the first of June at Ash-

New York Conference.

Travels Extensively.

grove, in the northern part of New York, where he met the New York conference. Leaving the banks of the Hudson he crossed the Berkshire mountains by Pittsfield, descended to the valley of the Connecticut by Westfield, and proceeded, by Ellington and Thompson, Connecticut, to Lynn, Massachusetts, where he met the New England conference, and then returned, by Wilbraham, Hartford, and New Haven, to New York. He was not, however, permitted to enter the city of New York, because he had passed through New Haven, where the yellow fever was prevailing. Arriving at Philadelphia, he was for the same reason debarred entrance to that city; so he turned his face westward, and made his way, by Lancaster, York, Carlisle, Berlin, Connellsville, Pittsburg, and Wheeling, to Chilicothe, Ohio, where he crossed the country to the Miami, which he descended to Cincinnati, making his first visit to that renowned place. At Cincinnati he crossed the Ohio, and went through Kentucky to Holstein, whence, crossing the mountains, he made his usual southern winter tour. In the spring of 1806 he returned, by his usual route, to New York, which he left the latter part of May for his northern tour, during

North-Western Travels.Whatcoat Dies.

which, this year, he passed over some new ground. Having gone over his old route as far as Buxton, on the Saco river, for the sole purpose, it would seem, of attending a camp meeting, he directed his steps north-west, by a new route, through Livingston, in Maine, across New Hampshire to Montpelier, Vermont, and Burlington, on Lake Champlain. After spending a few days about Champlain, he descended the Hudson to Lansingburg, then crossed the Berkshire mountains to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and went down the valley of the Housatonic to Sharon, Connecticut, where he attended a camp meeting, and then went on to New York. With this northern tour he was much pleased. He wondered he had never before thought of holding the eastern conferences earlier, and thereby gaining time to visit the interesting country about the Saco, the upper Connecticut, and Lake Champlain.

In the summer of 1806 the faithful and beloved Whatcoat died, and Asbury was left alone in the episcopacy, with the North American continent and seven conferences before him. He started on his annual tour from New York about the first of July, went through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland,

and Virginia, to Holstein; spent the winter of 1807 in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia; returned in the spring of 1807 by the usual route north, as far as Trenton, New Jersey, from whence he made his north-eastern tour by a route nearly new, leaving, both in going and returning, the city of New York out of his way.

From Trenton he went direct to Newburg, and followed up the Hudson to Coeymans, near Albany, where he met the New York conference. From the close of the New York conference at Coeymans, to the commencement of the New England at Boston, he had three weeks to spare. These three weeks he could not afford to spend in rest, or in riding only two hundred miles, the distance from Coeymans to Boston by the road usually traveled. He must explore new ground. So he went up the Hudson to Ashgrove, passed into Vermont, ranged along the west side of the Green Mountains to Chittenden, some distance north of Rutland, crossed by a very difficult passage to Pittsfield, on White river, passed down the valley of White river to the Connecticut, crossed the Connecticut near Dartmouth College, made a zigzag diagonal through New Hampshire by Concord

 Object of his Journey.

Starts West.

and Dover, ranged along the sea-coast of Maine to Portland, struck off over the Androscoggin to Monmouth, and then returned by Portland, Dover, and Haverhill to Boston. The distance by this route from Coeymans to Boston, could not be less than seven hundred miles. He had no conference to attend, either in Vermont, or New Hampshire, or Maine. He made the journey only to visit the scattered Methodist societies, and to preach the Gospel along the route.

After attending the New England conference at Boston, on the first of June, 1807, he started for the west by a new route, that of the Mohawk, the Genesee, the Chemung, and the Susquehanna. Leaving Boston he crossed the Connecticut at Springfield, the Berkshire mountains at Pittsfield, the Hudson at Waterford, ascended the beautiful valley of the Mohawk to Utica, crossed the country by Cazenovia, Onondaga, Skeneateles, and the Cayuga Lake to Geneva and Canandaigua. Turning south, he passed along the shores of Seneca Lake, and down the lovely valley of the Chemung to the Susquehanna, near Owego. He then descended the Susquehanna to Wyoming, thence struck off over the hills to the Lehigh, and passed down the valley by the German settlements of

Western Conference.Attends Various Conferences.

Nazareth and Bethlehem to Allentown, then across by Reading, on the Schuylkill, to Lancaster. Without going to Philadelphia, he was immediately away by Carlisle, Bedford, and over the Alleghany Mountains by Uniontown, and across the Ohio by Wheeling, and on the distant Scioto, meeting the Western conference at Chilicothe. This was the first conference ever held north-west of the Ohio. There were present at the conference sixty-six preachers. Among them were men of distinguished renown in the annals of Methodism. Among the names on the list are William M'Kendree, Jacob Young, William Burke, John Sale, John Collins, Benj. Lakin, and many others, some no more among the living, and others still with us.

After the close of the Western conference, Asbury proceeded by the Miami to Cincinnati, thence across the Ohio, and through Kentucky, and by Holstein to the south, where he spent the winter in his usual manner, riding, visiting, and preaching every day. Early in the spring of 1808 he returned north, and attended the Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and New England conferences, in season to return to Baltimore by the first of May, to attend the General conference.

State of a Bishop's Finances.

We have thus, in the last few pages, briefly and continuously traced the great apostle of Methodism in his devious itineracy from 1800 to 1808, without noticing many of the incidents of interest, which we may cull from his journal. There are, however, connected with his history during this octennial period, some circumstances which should not be overlooked.

At no time has the Methodist itineracy ever been a lucrative field of operation. But in the days of Asbury, preaching seems, so far as pecuniary considerations were concerned, less profitable than in our day. In 1804 he says: "The superintendent Bishop of the Methodist Church in America, being reduced to *two dollars*, was obliged to make his wants known." In 1806, while attending the Western conference, he says: "The brethren were in want, and could not suit themselves. So I parted with my watch, my cloak, and my shirt." So we see the Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, the superintendent of five hundred preachers, and one hundred and thirty thousand members, at one time, reduced to two dollars, and at another selling his watch, his cloak, and one of his shirts, to supply the press-

Magnanimity.

Perils in his Travels.

ing wants of preachers poorer than himself. A more striking illustration of magnanimous philanthropy and Christian benevolence, can hardly be drawn from the history of the world.

Since Asbury first began his itinerant tours in America, the roads had greatly improved. Yet as late as 1807 he occasionally had to make a perilous passage over some bridgeless river, or along some mountain ravine. Of his passage across the Green Mountains he says: "I match it with rude Clinch, or rough Alleghany. When we came to White river, we were compelled to lead the horses, as they dragged the carriage up the hights, over rocks, logs, and cavings in of earth. When we arrived at the narrows, we found the bank had given way and slidden down. I proposed to work the carriage over by hand, while Daniel Hitt led the horses. He preferred my leading them, so on we went; but I was weak, and not enough attentive, perhaps, and the mare ran me upon a rock. Up went the wheel, hanging balanced over a precipice of fifty feet—rocks, trees, and the river beneath us. I felt lame by the mare's treading on my foot. We unhitched the beast, and righted the carriage, and thus got over the difficulty."

His Heart Cheered.

Steepled Churches.

On his journeys during this period, over the ground which he had traversed in earlier times, Asbury was often greatly cheered by signs of improvement in the country, and in the condition and prospects of Methodism. He saw every-where the Church increasing in numbers, in intelligence, and in standing and influence among the community. But in some parts of the country he found changes which he did not so well relish. One of the greatest abominations was a Methodist church with a steeple and a bell. He had hoped never to see steeples and bells on the Methodist churches of America. There were reasons satisfactory at that time, but no longer existing, why Wesley, Asbury, and all the early Methodist preachers were so incorrigibly opposed to elegant architecture, steeples, bells, and other exterior and interior furnishings of Methodist houses of worship. In England, as I have understood, though I can not now name the authority, none but the Established Church are permitted by law to erect church edifices with steeples. Wesley never aspired to raise Methodism to any dignity above that of a mere society within the Episcopal Church. The Methodist houses of worship were not allowed by him to be called

Asbury and other Preachers once Episcopalians.

churches, but merely *chapels*, nor was service allowed in them at the regular church hours, but only at morning and at evening. Asbury, Lee, M'Kendree, George, and nearly all the early American preachers, had been members of the Episcopal Church, and had been accustomed, especially previous to 1784, to regard the Methodist societies of America as Mr. Wesley did those of England—merely appendages to other denominations.

These prejudices of the fathers, arising naturally from the circumstances of the times, were too deep-rooted to yield to the influence of the new and greatly-changed circumstances of “the people called Methodists,” after they had become an independent branch of the general Church of Christ, with as much right as others had to eligible locations, imposing edifices, steeples, bells, and whatever else might belong, by long-established usage, to a regularly-instituted Church. It was a long time before the Methodists arose above the influence of these prejudices on matters of mere form and shape. For a long time Methodist churches in the villages and cities were generally built on some back street, or blind alley, or in the most out-of-the-way place possible,

and of a form and appearance much resembling the barn of a New England farmer. Though we have learned a better way, and though we now build our churches in more eligible localities, and of a form and style more neat, chaste, and in better taste, yet still we retain the very inappropriate custom of calling our churches *chapels*, as if they were mere lecture-rooms for some college or seminary, and of naming them after some man instead of designating them by the name of the street on which they are located.

Strong as were the prejudices of Asbury against steeples, he did not refuse to preach in a steepled house. To save sinners he would preach any where, even in a theater, as he once did, with the actors among his hearers.

During this period it was a matter of deep interest, much anxiety, and intense thought with Asbury to project some plan for maintaining permanent and unchangeable the fundamental principles of Methodism, and yet allowing such modifications in unessential details as circumstances, in the progressive development of the times, might require. He desired greatly a change in the mode of constituting the General conference, and a limitation of its power.

Though the General conference was indispensable to the union of the Church, yet there were evils in the mode of its organization. It consisted of all the preachers, should they choose to attend, of all the annual conferences. The body was becoming too unwieldy to do business. There must also be great inequalities in the numbers attending from the several conferences. From the central and thickly-settled regions about Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, in which cities the General conference was usually held, nearly all the preachers could attend. From the extreme east and the distant west but very few could afford the time and expense of the journey. Such inequality of advantage could not be expected to secure satisfaction.

The power of the conference when assembled was unlimited. They had supreme power over the whole doctrine, discipline, and economy of the Church. They could change any article of faith, or rule of action, or mode of procedure. They could, if they pleased, subvert the whole system of Methodism. Asbury and others thought, and with good reason, such power dangerous to the identity of Methodism.

A Representative General Conference demanded.

There appeared to him only one remedy for these evils—a delegated or representative General conference, with restricted power. The subject was agitated and discussed in the annual conferences, and in private circles for several years, and consummated at the General conference of 1808. By the constitution, at that time adopted, the General conference consists of representatives from the annual conferences, elected according to a ratio of numbers. This gives every section of the country a perfectly fair and equal representation, and provides against the inconvenience of too large an assembly. The restrictive rules under which the body is placed by the constitution, are designed to preserve the doctrines and fundamental principles of Methodism unchanged through all coming time, but not to prevent all useful reforms and judicious modifications, which ever-varying circumstances in the progress of human history, may demand, and which are consistent with the nature and design of Methodism.

The institution of the General conference, under its judicious constitution, is a most happy feature in the character of Methodism. In it is lodged the great conservative power of the

Church. In it is found the refuge of the sufferer from the oppression which the annual conferences often, from local and transitory excitements, may inflict on their members. In the decisions of the General conference, brought together, as its members are, from all parts of the country, local prejudices and party ebullitions can have little or no influence. One harshly judged and unreasonably censured, as it sometimes happens, in his own conference, under the overbearing influence of personal prejudice, or the relentless proscription of some local and exciting question, may always, by appeal to the General conference, hope for vindication and redress.

On looking at the evidences of success and prosperity exhibited by the numbers of ministers and members in the Church, at the close of this period, Asbury had reason to be grateful to Providence. The period commenced with less than sixty-five thousand members, and with only two hundred and eighty-seven preachers. It closed with more than one hundred and fifty thousand members, and with five hundred and forty preachers. This increase of nearly two hundred per cent. in the number of preachers, and of more than two hundred

Tobias Gibson.His Character and his Work.

and thirty per cent. in the number of members, was the more remarkable from the fact of the hardly-perceptible increase of preachers, and of the absolute decrease of members, during the preceding period.

But while Asbury had reason to rejoice at the appearance of so many new recruits in the ranks of the membership, and of the itinerancy, he had also to lament the loss of several of his most eminent coadjutors. The first on the list of the fallen was Tobias Gibson, a native of South Carolina. He was a man of gentle and amiable disposition, of devout and pious spirit, of well-cultivated mind, and of untiring zeal. In 1800 he was sent as missionary to Natchez, on the Mississippi. After traveling toward his mission six hundred miles, through the woods, and finding he could not get through the wilderness from the Cumberland river to Natchez, he committed himself and his scanty equipage to a frail canoe, paddled down the Cumberland to the Ohio, down the Ohio to the Mississippi, and down the Mississippi to Natchez, making a distance of nearly one thousand miles. This heroic Christian missionary died at Natchez in 1804.

The second was Wilson Lee, a native of

Wilson Lee.

Peter Jayne.

George Dougherty.

Delaware. He was a man of ardent zeal and of unwavering faith. Though feeble in body, he was mighty in spirit. During the twenty years of his ministry his voice had been heard calling sinners to repentance on the banks of the Connecticut, the Delaware, the Potomac, the Monongahela, the Ohio, the Kentucky, and the distant Cumberland. He died suddenly, of hemorrhage of the lungs, in the autumn of 1804. He left a glorious memory.

Peter Jayne was a native of Marblehead, Massachusetts. He was a man of great promise. His career was short but brilliant. He died in Boston in 1806, at the early age of twenty-eight.

George Dougherty was a native of South Carolina. He was a man of remarkable mind. "He had," says Asbury, "a fund of knowledge. It seemed as if he retained the substance of all he heard or read, and could recite it with great correctness." He was a very devoted man, and indefatigable in labor and study. He was a man of reliable independence. "If we wanted," says Asbury, "a guide, a pillar, or a man to stand in the gap, we might call on George Dougherty."

Besides Gibson, Lee, Jayne, and Dougherty,

Waters—Whatcoat.

the chivalrous Nicholas Waters, and the amiable Richard Whatcoat, had gone from their labor among men to their reward among the saints.

General Conference of 1808.

CHAPTER VII.

ASBURY AS A BISHOP—FOURTH OCTEN-
NIAL PERIOD.

AT the General conference of 1808, Bishop Asbury had to preside alone. Whatcoat was dead, and Coke was in Europe. The conference found it indispensably necessary to elect another bishop to aid Asbury in the arduous and responsible labors of the general superintendence. The choice fell on William M'Kendree, a man whom, probably of all others in America, Asbury would have chosen, had the election been left to him. "The burden," says Asbury, "is now borne by two pair of shoulders instead of one. The care is cast on two hearts and two heads." The number of conferences remained the same as for eight years past—seven; but the bishops were authorized by the General conference to organize, should they deem it expedient, an eighth conference, embracing the Genesee country and contiguous territory.

The two bishops traveled usually together,

Episcopal Plan of Visitation.

though sometimes they separated in their route from one important point to another, but they always met at each conference. Baltimore was the point of departure for the annual round. The route was generally from Baltimore by Philadelphia and New York to New England, thence across the country to Albany, up the Mohawk to Utica, over the hills and valleys to Cayuga Lake, along the lake shore to the Susquehanna, down the Susquehanna to Wyoming, down the Lehigh to Allentown, across the valley of the Schuylkill to Lancaster, up the Cumberland valley by Carlisle, over the Alleghanies by Bedford and Uniontown to Pittsburg, down the Ohio to Wheeling, across the valleys of the Muskingum by Zanesville, and of the Scioto by Chilicothe, and down the Miami to Cincinnati, through the state of Kentucky to the Cumberland in Tennessee, over the Holstein Mountains to North Carolina, south through the Carolinas to the central parts of Georgia, and finally, north through Virginia to Baltimore.

The circumference of the circuit, with the offsets they generally made, was more than six thousand miles. They annually made this tour for six successive years. Occasionally one or

both would digress from the regular orbit, to visit some new point, or some old friend. In the autumn of 1808, Asbury stepped over the Miami into Indiana, which he calls the Indian territory, in which he says "there may be twenty thousand souls already," and in 1810 he for the first and only time in his life visited Canada, crossing the St. Lawrence near Cornwall, going up to Kingston, and returning to the state of New York over Lake Ontario, by Sacket's Harbor.

We need not follow these apostles of Methodism, as they journeyed along over mountains, athwart valleys, along plains, through woods, and across rivers, sometimes on horseback, and sometimes both in one old "thirty-dollar chaise," preaching every day for six days in the week, and three times Sunday, attending conferences, camp meetings, and quarterly meetings, often riding all day without any thing to eat, and lying at night on the floor or the naked earth, getting drenched in the river, chilled by the snow, and lost in the woods. We have so often, in these sketches, followed Asbury through the very same scenes, that we should be but repeating the same story—

Asbury Becomes Sick.

His Great Labors.

With occasional deviations, the same route was pursued till the spring of 1814, when Asbury, on his way north, fell sick in New Jersey. M'Kendree went on alone to New England, and Asbury remained confined with fever for nearly three months. From this attack he never fully recovered. He became able to travel slowly and carefully, and to preach occasionally, but never again made the circuit of the United States.

It may be well for us to pause at this period of our narrative, and review the labors and study the character, though all too briefly, of this great man.

For forty-five years Asbury was the leader of American Methodism. Every year he made the tour of the American states, traveling never less than five thousand, and often more than six thousand miles a year. He must, therefore, during his residence in America, have traveled at least two hundred and fifty thousand miles, a distance equal to ten times the circumference of the earth. And this immense amount of journeying he performed under the most unfavorable circumstances. There were no railroads, no steamboats, no stage-coaches. There were hardly roads passable for any

Horseback Travels.Preaches Daily.

wheeled vehicle. The only method of getting over the country was equestrian. During the latter part of his life Asbury was able to get along in a gig, but far the greater part of his two hundred and fifty thousand miles was performed on horseback. In this manner he had to climb steep mountains, descend abrupt declivities, wind along sequestered valleys, cross extended plains, ford rivers, and wade swamps.

He usually preached at least once every week-day, and three times every Sunday. He estimates the number of discourses annually at about five hundred. At any rate, the number of discourses he preached during his ministry in America must exceed twenty thousand. He was accustomed also to pray with every family on whom he called on his daily journeyings; and when remaining in one place for a few days, he would pray every time he ate, every time a visitor called on him, and every time he made a call. He would talk personally on religious experience with every member of every family he visited. He attended seven conferences every year, and an unknown number of quarterly meetings and camp meetings. In addition to all this he wrote a great deal. His published journals make more than twelve

Letter-Writing.

Appointing the Preachers.

hundred pages. He wrote, as he estimates, nearly one thousand letters a year. He wrote also largely on various matters connected with the affairs of the Church. In the winter of 1796 he says he wrote, while tarrying in Charleston, "more than three hundred pages on subjects interesting to the society and connection."

Much was added to his labor of mind by the duty of stationing the preachers in the several conferences, districts, and circuits. There were on the average, during the last ten or twelve years of his superintendence, seven conferences, between thirty and forty districts, three hundred circuits, and five hundred preachers. It was his duty to apportion every year all these five hundred preachers among the three hundred circuits. In order to do this judiciously, he had to acquire acquaintance personally with the preachers, and to be informed, either by personal observation or by report, of the circumstances and wants of each circuit. He had not, as have our modern bishops, an informal council of presiding elders to make the appointments for him, requiring only his approval. He only availed himself of such facts as the presiding elders or others

Troubles and Perplexities.

Annual Salary.

might be able to give him concerning the men and the place, and then he made the appointments on his own responsibility, according to his own views of right or expediency. Often he was greatly perplexed to find the right man for some particularly-important station. Often by locations from ill-health or family embarrassments, the number of available and effective men was reduced greatly below the demands of the work. Often when he had done the very best in his power, the preachers complained of the appointments, or the people of the preachers he had given them. All these things added greatly to his labor, and sorely distressed him.

For all these services he received not one hundred thousand dollars a year, with the Archbishop of Canterbury; nor twenty-five thousand, with the President of the United States; nor nine thousand, with the American minister plenipotentiary to some foreign court; nor one thousand, with the settled clergyman of New England; but only *sixty-four dollars*. He received in addition to this his *traveling expenses*; that is, what he actually paid out in cash for ferriage, and toll, and tavern bills, in going from one conference to another, was

His Sixty-Four Dollars.

Acquirements.

refunded by the conferences. But with the *sixty-four dollars* he had to provide himself with horse and traveling equipage, and clothing, and books. He received during the latter years of his life some few legacies, amounting to about two thousand dollars, from some of his American friends who died childless, but he spent none of these bequests for his own advantage. In his will he appropriated all he had thus received to the Book Concern of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

His advantages for early education were very limited; yet he was by no means an unlearned man. We can hardly see how he could find time, or place, or books for study, yet he did become proficient in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He read the Scriptures in their original tongues, and he was capable of critical exposition of difficult passages. He was acquainted with several branches of polite literature, and always kept fully up with the history of the times. We have alluded to the great number of letters, and the large amount of other matter he wrote: where are these letters, and where are the papers he left on various "subjects interesting to the society and connection?" Why have they never been collected and published?

Qualifications as a Writer.

or, at least, used in producing a biography worthy of the man and of the Methodist Church? Since he died a whole generation has passed from earth, and the name and the fame of Asbury have been suffered to descend rapidly to the oblivion from which recovery may soon be hopeless. It can not be that the hundreds of letters received by Asbury from persons connected with him in Church fellowship, the thousands he wrote to his coadjutors and friends, and the papers on "various subjects," of which he often speaks, do not contain facts and suggestions of deep interest in the history of the times and in the illustration of his personal character. He was a writer of no inferior order. His journals, it is true, exhibit no peculiar graces of composition; yet even these daily memoranda contain occasionally passages of beauty, which surprise us, when we consider the circumstances under which he wrote—circumstances the most inconvenient possible; in log-cabins crowded with talkative women, noisy children, and barking dogs; with cold fingers, frozen ink, impracticable pens, and rumpled paper; and suffering from headache, toothache, chills, fever, sore-throat, and every other form of ill that "flesh

is heir to" in a new and sickly country. The only specimens of his composition I have found exhibiting a fair view of the qualities of his style as a writer, are the obituary notices of the early preachers, inserted in the old Minutes from 1785 to 1808. There is internal evidence that Asbury wrote all, or nearly all, these notices up to 1808. I have some doubt whether he wrote those from 1808 to 1814. But concerning those previous to 1808 I have not the slightest doubt.

These notices are beautiful, many of them surpassingly-beautiful specimens of obituary writing. Some of them are very brief, concise, and clear—such as Tacitus might have written. Of this class are the notices of Pedicord, Mair, Gill, and Tunnell. Others are more extended, yet chaste and pertinent. I have never read more appropriately-beautiful memoirs than those of Reuben Ellis, Tobias Gibson, Wilson Lee, and Richard Whatcoat.

There are probably those yet living who could give, from personal recollection, a description of his manner, style, and character as a preacher. Unfortunately for me I never saw him. I should have seen him at the New England conference of 1814, had not his health so

Style of Preaching.

Manner and Voice.

failed as to prevent his arrival. I was but a child then, but I walked some miles to the conference to hear M'Kendree, and I would have walked a hundred miles to hear Asbury. I can only form some estimate of his preaching talents from the notices of his texts and heads of sermons in his journal. His texts seem always appropriately chosen, and his thoughts presented in a natural order and simple style. He seldom meddled with controversy or metaphysics. He discussed the fundamental doctrines of evangelical religion with clear exposition and forcible logic. He enforced the practical precepts of Christian duty. He denounced sin sometimes in terrible language, while he invited the sinner to Christ in soft and soothing tones.

His manner, as we should infer from his own notices in his journal, was generally pointed and energetic, sometimes boisterous. His voice was deep and powerful, but he could speak in tones of sweetest melody, melting the hardest heart.

In looking over his journals, we can but admire his happy selection of texts appropriate to the circumstances under which he preached. Finding the people at one appointment divided

Selection of Texts.

New Rochelle.

among themselves, he preached from these words: "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another." To a very stupid people he preached from this passage: "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Arriving at his preaching-place one summer day, and beginning the services just as a plentiful shower, after a long season of drought, was pouring down from the clouds, he chose this text: "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it." A very small congregation he encouraged from these words: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Coming unexpectedly on the people at New Rochelle, he preached to as many as could be suddenly collected from these words: "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." A

Sermon by an Episcopalian.

By a Presbyterian Preacher.

very worldly and avaricious congregation he alarmed from these words: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Before a congregation of careless young people he enforced the words of Solomon: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Having heard a discourse from an Episcopal clergyman against experimental religion, he preached at evening to the same congregation from these words: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." Having heard a Presbyterian minister preach a sermon "too metaphysical and superficial," he preached at evening in the same village from these words: "Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." To a new congregation, who seemed to be wholly ignorant of Methodism, and to know little of any thing, he preached from these words: "May we know what this new doctrine, where-

Eschews mere Declamation.

Qualifications as a Bishop.

of thou speakest, is?" To a people whom he had often visited with little success he applied these words: "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed labor on you in vain."

He seemed never to choose a text admitting of mere declamation; nor did he make any effort to produce a sensation, and acquire applause by what is usually called a great sermon. His object was not to appear great, but to do good. He seemed to understand correctly the rule of greatness under the Christian dispensation—the rule that determines the degree of greatness by the amount of good accomplished.

For a superintendent his qualifications were of a very superior order. He was thoroughly acquainted with human nature as developed in every-day life. He understood every part of the work committed to his care, and easily acquired, as by intuition, a thorough knowledge of the men associated with him in the ministry. In his integrity, his prudence, his conscientiousness, and his devotion to the interests of the Church, the preachers and the people had the highest confidence. He was too wise often to err, and too firm ever to be unduly influenced by the officious and designing,

Thirty-two Years a General Superintendent.

in the administration of affairs. Seldom would any attempts be made, and if made, more seldom still would it prove successful, to induce him, by incorrect representations, to overrate or underrate any man in the conference.

It would seem providential, that, in the infancy of the Church, such a man was spared so long to mature and perfect the system of Church government which the Methodists had adopted. For thirty-two years, a period forming a cycle in human life, he presided unquestioned and unrestrained over the destinies of the Church. He lived to see the system, which had been hastily adopted in 1784, amended, modified, and better adapted than it could reasonably be expected to be on first trial to the circumstances and wants of the Church. The Discipline adopted at the organization of the Church in 1784 was substantially the same with that of the English Methodists. It had grown up in England under the Wesleyan regime by custom and usage, forming a kind of common law. The original rules of the Wesleyan conference were few, brief, and general. Others were added, one at a time, as circumstances required. The regulations added at the yearly conferences were published in the

Larger Minutes.

Revises the Discipline.

Minutes of the conference. After some time all the regulations, which had been from time to time adopted, were collected and published in a pamphlet called the Larger Minutes. The American Methodists, at the General conference of 1784, adopted these regulations so far as they were applicable to the Church in this country. Often as a new rule was needed, Asbury would propose it in each of the annual conferences. If sanctioned by all the conferences, it became a rule of the Discipline. In 1787 Bishop Asbury, while confined several weeks by lameness, undertook and completed a thorough revision of the Discipline, arranging its matter under appropriate heads. He did not, however, assume to alter any old or to add any new rule. At the General conferences of 1792, 1796, 1800, and 1804, many alterations in the constitution of the Church were made, in order to render its influence more efficient for the purposes of its existence—the spreading “of Scriptural holiness over the land.” For the greater part, if not all, of these modifications were made by the suggestion and sustained by the influence of Asbury. In 1808 an entire change was made in the constitution of the General conference. The conference had been

General Conference since 1808.Asbury's Piety.

an assembly of all the elders of all the annual conferences. From 1808 it became a representative body, with general powers, under certain limitations and restrictions. This was what Asbury had long desired, and he was happy in seeing it accomplished. He lived till he saw the constitution of the Church modified and amended to meet the wants which experience had developed, and till he saw other men rising up capable of leading on the sacramental host to victory and triumph.

To a careless observer in the history of Asbury, the man might seem lost in the minister and the bishop. But, in truth, he had qualities of mind which might have made him eminent in any station in life. We need not say he was eminent as a *Christian* man. The history of his life, of his labors, his travels, his sacrifices and zeal, prove him a man of most active religious benevolence. No man, unsustained by the hopes and unblest by the joys of pure religion, could or would endure for half a century the physical sufferings and mental anxiety which Asbury voluntarily sustained. He was a purely-pious and deeply-devoted man. He was a man of faith and of prayer. His notices, however, of his religious emotions

Appreciation of Natural Scenery.

and feelings are few and brief. He seems never to have been obtrusive of his own exercises of mind. Nor did he ever fall into a merely-contemplative and mystical state of mind, forgetting that the spirit of Christianity is an active, not a quiescent spirit. Like his divine Master, he "went about doing good." Holiness of heart and sanctification of soul in him produced their natural fruits—zeal and active benevolence.

He was a man of very delicate and highly-refined sensibility. He was alive to the impress of the beautiful in nature, in art, and especially in moral phases. His notices of natural scenery, though brief, are often highly poetic. Passing through a southern forest in early spring, he exclaims, "Hail, ye solitary pines! the jessamine! the redbud! the dog-wood! how charming in full bloom!" Traveling along the shores of Long Island Sound, he says, "This country is a continuous landscape; the fields in full dress, laden with plenty; a distant view of Long Island and the Sound, and the spires of the steeples seen from the distant hills." Rambling along the sea-beach, on the Atlantic coast, he says, "The sea reminds me of its great Maker, 'who stayeth the proud

Remarks made while Journeying.

waves thereof.' Look at its innumerable productions; the diversified features of its shores; the pimeta, tall and slender; the sheep and goats frisking in the shade or browsing in the sun. Or let the eye be directed to the waters and behold the rolling porpoise; the eagles, with hovering wing, watching for their prey; the white sail of the solitary vessel tossed upon the distant wave: how interesting a picture do all these objects make!" Again he exclaims, while journeying along in New England, "How sweet to me are all the moving and still life scenes, which surround me on every side! The quiet country houses; the fields and orchards, bearing the promises of a fruitful year; the flocks and herds, the hills, and vales, and dewy meads, the gliding streams and murmuring brooks. And thou, too, Solitude, with thy attendants, Silence and Meditation! how dost thou solace my pensive mind after the tempest of fear, and care, and tumult in the noisy, bustling city!"

No man ever had a finer range of beautiful scenery than he. What an endless variety of landscape must have flitted before him—hills crowned with verdure and mountains capped with perpetual snow, valleys blooming with

An Endless Variety of Landscape.

Delicacy of Feeling.

beauty, plains stretching away in evergreen loveliness, brooks leaping and running over their pebbly bed, rivers flowing stately on their oceanward way, and lakes spread out in summer serenity over the earth? The White Mountains of New Hampshire, the Green Mountains of Vermont, the Blue Mountains of Virginia, and the magnificent Alleghanies rose in grandeur along his annual path. The evergreen plains of the Saco, the magic cities of the Merrimac, and the lovely intervalles of the Connecticut; the Highland banks of the Hudson, the fairy glens of the Susquehanna, and the misty mountains of the Potomac; the terraced plains of the Ohio, the luxuriant forests of the Cumberland, and the broad plantations of the Savannah, all lay within the purview of his eye, as he, like the sun, pursued his annual round.

He was keenly sensitive to the proprieties of life. If on calling, in his journeyings, at any house for refreshment and entertainment, he happened to observe any indications of an inhospitable spirit, and if he did not meet a cordial welcome, he could neither eat nor sleep under the roof, but, however hungry and weary he might be, he would ride away for miles to

An Incident in the Virginia Conference.

some more congenial quarters. He had often to pass the night at public taverns, where he was usually exceedingly annoyed by the presence of drunken loafers. Whenever it was convenient, he chose in his travels to visit for refreshment and entertainment the house of the widow and the orphan. With them he was ever welcome—with them he ever felt at home.

He met sometimes strange people, and he occasionally makes shrewd remarks on incongruous traits of character he may have observed. Having sat patiently for a long time, while the Virginia conference were discussing some small matter, without coming to any decision, he exclaims, "Strange that such an affair should occupy for so long the time of so many good men. Religion will do great things, but it does not make Solomons." He found one community whom he describes as renowned for two remarkable practices—"talking about religion and stealing horses." One would think a religious horse-thief rather a rare character.

He was often oppressed, as any one in his circumstances must be, with a sense of loneliness, almost of desolation. With as warm a

Loneliness of Heart.

Regard for Friends.

heart as ever beat with the pulse of domestic affection, he found himself in age homeless and utterly alone in the world. His father and his mother were dead; his only sister had died in childhood; and he, for the sake, as he hoped, of being more useful to the Church, had formed no family connections. While seeing in the family of a friend the children playing, he felt sad at the thought that with him "it was the evening of life," and there were no children to climb his knee, to amuse his weary hours, and to perpetuate his name among men. He had none to love, but those whom he had met as strangers, but who proved to be friends. And them he loved intensely.

His love ceased not during the life, and terminated not at the death of his friends. He would, even in his hurried journeys, go often ten or twenty miles out of his way to visit an old friend, or even the surviving family of a friend. Nor could he forget the dead. He never would pass heedless the grave of a friend. He would turn aside from the busy walks of official duty to a solitary walk in the graveyard. He would lean in sorrow over the marble that might mark the resting-place of the loved one of his heart. "Within sight of

Mary Tiffin.

Old Age

this beautiful mansion," says he, at the residence of General Worthington, in Ohio, "lies the precious dust of Mary Tiffin. It was as much as I could do to forbear weeping over her speaking grave. How mutely eloquent! Ah, the world knows little of my sorrows—little knows how dear to me are my friends, and how deeply I feel their loss." To such bereavements was he often subject. During the forty-five years of his ministry in America he had formed a great many pleasant acquaintances, and had acquired numerous friends in every section of the American Union. But he outlived nearly, if not quite, all his early friends. When weary and sick he now might arrive at some hospitable mansion, whose inmates had long ago bid him a hearty welcome, he misses the familiar faces he had been wont to meet, and he could only look on the grave that had received into its cold and cheerless bosom the friend he had loved. Asbury was not one of those oblivious philosophers who easily forget the dead, nor one of those transcendental religionists who see nothing sacred in the grave of a loved one. He never undertook the hopeless task of reasoning himself out of the spontaneous sentiments of his own nature.

Asbury's Bachelorship.Reasons for it.

Asbury was a man who might have highly enjoyed the exquisite pleasures of *home*—of home sanctified by the presence of “wife, children, and friends;” yet such a home he never had. It has been generally supposed that he was averse to marriage. This opinion derives some plausibility from several of his remarks, occasionally sarcastic, and indicating impatience, in relation to some of the preachers, who committed matrimony, and soon after retired from the itinerant connection; yet the public impression on this matter is incorrect. It is not strange that he should sometimes, in the midst of the perplexity he often suffered from the want of men to supply the stations, inveigh against the matrimonial propensity, which had deprived the Church of the “services of more than two hundred of the best men in America.” But he was not constitutionally an incorrigible bachelor. The reasons why he never married are given by himself, and are very honorable to his heart. In 1804, when he was nearly sixty years old, he says, “If I should die in celibacy, which I think quite probable, I give the following reasons for what can scarcely be called my *choice*. I was called in my fourteenth year. I began my public

Autobiography.

exercises between sixteen and seventeen. At twenty-one I traveled. At twenty-six I came to America. Thus far I had reasons enough for a single life. It had been my intention to return to Europe at thirty years of age, but the war continued, and it was ten years before we had a settled, lasting peace. This was no time to marry or be given in marriage. At thirty-nine I was ordained Superintendent Bishop in America. Among the duties imposed on me by my office was that of traveling extensively, and I could hardly expect to find a woman with grace to induce her willingly to live but one week out of fifty-two with her husband. Besides, what right has any man to take advantage of the affections of a woman, make her his wife, and by a voluntary absence subvert the whole order and economy of the marriage state, by separating those whom neither God, nature, nor the requirements of civil society permit long to be put asunder? It is neither just nor generous. I may add to this, that I had little money, and with this little I administered to the necessities of a beloved mother till I was fifty-seven. If I have done wrong, I hope God and *the sex* will forgive me. It is my duty now to bestow the pittance I

may have to spare upon the widows, and fatherless girls, and poor married men.”

Asbury lived to see vast and wonderful changes in the state and the Church. He had seen the people of the American states increase in number from two millions to eight millions. He had seen them victorious in two wars with England. He had seen them rising rapidly in wealth and power, and he had learned to entertain a magnificent conception of the future extent and power of the republic.

When he landed on the American shores, the number of Methodists did not exceed six hundred, with some six or seven preachers. Before his death the number of members had increased to two hundred thousand, and the number of preachers to seven hundred—an increase of one hundred fold of preachers, and of more than three hundred fold of members. And he had faith in the future success and triumph of the cause to which he had devoted his life. He believed the Methodists would yet become a great and a powerful people. In this faith he lived, in this faith he triumphantly passed away.

It is, however, doubtful whether he had ever conceived of the degree of greatness and of

Asbury's Opinion of M'Kendree.

glory to which his adopted country, and the Church to which he had devoted his life, would arrive in the course of one third of a century after his death; yet to such a mind as his there must often have opened prospects of surpassing beauty, extending through all the future. He must have seen, by faith, the embattled hosts of the Lord, marshaled under the bold and fearless leader who had been raised up by his own ministry, marching forth "conquering and to conquer" over all the mountains, and valleys, and plains of the American continent. He had been long anxious to see, before his death, the superintendence of the Church committed to some one of American birth—some Elisha, on whom might fall the mantle of Elijah. The Lord granted him the desire of his heart. In M'Kendree Asbury saw all he could hope, all he could desire. To the hands of such a one was he willing to resign the scepter of ecclesiastical authority over the Methodist Episcopal Church. Nor did he overrate the virtues of that excellent man, the noble, the magnanimous, the chivalrous, the devout, the eloquent M'Kendree. And could he have seen the eloquent George, the amiable Roberts, and the learned Emory, to say nothing of the wor-

Is Attacked with Disease.

Personal Reflections.

thy men yet living, occupying the episcopal chair, he would have said, like the saint of old, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

The disease by which Asbury was attacked, in New Jersey, in the spring of 1814, continued with violence for three months. He then so far recovered as to be able to ride in a little wagon, though he had to be lifted into it. No sooner could he sit up in his carriage than he started on his annual tour. He says on the occasion, "I look back on a martyr's life of toil, and privation, and pain, and I am ready for a martyr's death. The purity of my intentions, my diligence in the labors to which God has been pleased to call me, the unknown sufferings I have endured, what are all these? The merit, the atonement, and the righteousness of Christ alone make my plea." He moved on over the mountains to Pittsburg, down the Ohio to Steubenville, across the country to the Muskingum, at Zanesville, thence to the Scioto at Chilicothe, and down the Miami to Cincinnati. The Ohio conference met at Cincinnati early in September. He was present, but unable to preside. Bishop M'Kendree having been severely wounded by

Tennessee Conference.Preaching in a Wagon.

a fall from his horse, was unable to arrive; so John Sale, of blessed memory, presided. Asbury was pleased to discover that the conferences "were out of their infancy, and that their rulers could be called from among themselves."

Leaving Cincinnati, he passed diagonally across Kentucky to Logan county, on the southern border, where he met the Tennessee conference. Feeble in health, as he was, he would have attempted a journey to Mississippi, had not the injury received by Bishop M'Kendree been so great as to render his attendance at the South Carolina conference doubtful, and therefore to require the presence of Bishop Asbury. He journeyed along toward the seat of the conference, at Milledgeville, Georgia, preaching as he went, sitting in his wagon—for he could not stand up—and often in the midst of his sermon coughing violently, and expectorating blood. On the first of January, 1815, he left Georgia for the north, preaching whenever he was able, and arrived at Albany about the middle of May. He was able to enter the conference-room at Albany only occasionally for an hour at a time. On the first of June he left Albany for Unity, New Hampshire, to meet the New-England conference.

George Pickering.Asbury's Journal.

He, however, on arriving, was unable to preside. George Pickering occupied the chair, much to Asbury's satisfaction. He had projected, it seems, a tour of sixteen hundred miles through the northern and eastern states, but reluctantly he had to abandon it, and return directly to Philadelphia. On his way from Philadelphia west, he spent some time at York correcting his journal. On this occasion he remarks, "As a record of the early history of Methodism in America, my journal will be of use. Accompanied by the Minutes of conference, it will tell all that will be necessary to know. I have buried in shades all that will be proper to forget in which I am personally concerned. If truth and I have been wronged, we have both witnessed our day of triumph." In this passage he speaks like a Christian and a philosopher; yet we can but regret that he did not, in his journal, enter more largely into the history of the times, and of the events in which he was "personally concerned." Had he thus done we might have been able to produce a more interesting sketch of his life and times than is now possible.

From York he proceeded west over the mountains, down the Ohio, and across to the

Ohio Conference.Marks out five Conferences.

Miami, to meet the Ohio conference at Lebanon. He preached frequently on the way, attended several camp meetings, and, though feeble in health, appeared unusually cheerful in temper and happy in mind.

After conference, "Bishop M'Kendree and myself," says he, "had a long and earnest talk about the affairs of the Church and my future prospects. I told him my opinion was that the western part of the empire would be the glory of America for the poor and pious; that it ought to be marked out for five conferences—Ohio, Kentucky, Holstein, Mississippi, and Missouri—in doing which, as well as I was able, I marked out lines and boundaries. I told my colleague that having passed the allotted period of human life—seventy years—and being, as he knew, out of health, it could not be expected I could visit the extremities every year, sitting in eight, it might be twelve conferences, and traveling six thousand miles in eight months. If I was still to keep up with the conferences, I could not be expected to preside in more than every other one. As to the stations, I should never exhibit a plan unfinished, but still get all the information in my power so as to enable me to make it perfect, like the painter,

“Western Part of the Empire.”

Feeble Health.

who touches and retouches till all parts of the picture are pleasing. The plan I might be laboring on would always be submitted to such eyes as ought to see it; and the measure I meted to others I should expect to receive.” In less than thirty years from the time this passage was written, the “western part of the empire” was “marked out” for some seventeen conferences, and was become the abode of five hundred and fifty thousand Methodists.

From Cincinnati he proceeded through Kentucky to the center of Tennessee to meet the conference. At this conference he, for the first time, relinquished the business of stationing the preachers to Bishop M’Kendree. Though so feeble in health, yet he says, “My mind enjoys great peace and divine consolation. Whether health, life, or death, good is the will of the Lord. I will trust him, yea I will praise him. He is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.”

From Tennessee he went to the south. The roads were very bad, yet he rode one day forty-three miles. Yet says he, “This will not do. I must halt or order my *grave*.” He reached South Carolina on the first of December. About Christmas he was attacked by influenza,

Consumption.

Last Sermon.

which was followed by almost the entire loss of appetite, and the formation of ulcers on the lungs. Consumption proceeded on its rapid and fatal work. He, however, was slowly wending his way north to meet the General conference at Baltimore, on the first of May, 1816. On the 24th of March he arrived at Richmond, Virginia, where he preached his last sermon. Being too feeble to walk he was borne in the arms of his friends from his carriage to the church, and placed on a table. There he sat and preached for nearly an hour, pausing at intervals to recover breath. To the hearers the scene must have been one of solemn grandeur, of moral sublimity—the old apostle of Methodism, feeble, pale, trembling in body, yet in mind strong, brilliant, and firm, proclaiming in deep and solemn tones his last message to mortal men.

After preaching he was borne back to his carriage, and passed on his way toward Baltimore. When he had arrived at the house of his old friend, Mr. George Arnold, about twenty miles south of Fredericksburg, in Virginia, he was found unable to proceed. It was on Friday evening, the 29th of March, when he who had traveled, during half a century, nearly three

Last Sickness.

Death.

Burial.

hundred thousand miles, was taken from his carriage for the last time. He lingered in much distress till Sunday, the 31st of March. On that day, at the usual hour of religious service, he requested the family to be called together. Rev. John W. Bond, who had been for some two years his traveling companion and faithful attendant, prayed, and read, and expounded the twenty-first chapter of Revelation. During these exercises the venerable dying man appeared calm and much engaged in devotion. A few minutes after the close of the religious services, as he was sitting in his chair, with his head reclined on the hand of his beloved attendant, without a struggle or a sigh, he fell asleep in death,

“Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

He was buried in the family burying-ground of Mr. Arnold, at whose house he died. But the General conference, at its session on the first of May, 1816, at the request of the people of Baltimore, ordered his remains removed and deposited in a vault prepared for that purpose, beneath the pulpit of the Eutaw-street Church. The reinterment of the great and good man was a scene of most solemn and

Funeral.

Epitaph.

thrilling interest. The body was followed from the Light-street to the Eutaw-street Church by a vast concourse. At the head of the procession marched M'Kendree, the colleague of the departed Asbury; next followed the members of the General conference; last came the people in countless thousands. M'Kendree pronounced the funeral oration amid the tears of weeping multitudes, and the mortal body of the renowned and venerable Asbury was laid to rest in its sacred bed. Over the vault is inscribed the following epitaph:

SACRED

To the Memory of
REV. FRANCIS ASBURY,
Bishop of the
Methodist Episcopal Church.

He was born in England, August 20, 1745;
Entered the Ministry at the age of seventeen;
Came a Missionary to America 1771;
Was ordained Bishop in this city December 27, 1784;
Annually visited the Conferences in the United States;
With much zeal continued to "preach the word"
For more than half a century;
and
Literally ended his labors with his life,
Near *Fredericksburg*, Virginia,
In the full triumph of faith, on the 31st of March, 1816,
Aged 70 years, 7 months, and 11 days.
His remains were deposited in this vault May 10, 1816,
By the General Conference then sitting in this city.
His journals will exhibit to posterity
His labors, his difficulties, his sufferings,
His patience, his perseverance, his love to God and man.



THOMAS COKE.

THOMAS COKE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE OF COKE.

Early Boyhood.

THOMAS COKE was born in South Wales, on the 9th of September, 1747. Being an only child, he received the most unremitting care and delicate attention from his parents, who determined to give him all the advantages education could afford for rising to eminence and usefulness. The father, however, was soon called from the theater of time, and the child was left with the sole protection and guidance of his mother. As soon as he was of age sufficient to prosecute his studies, he was placed at a preparatory school, and at the age of sixteen he was admitted to the University of Oxford.

While at home under the care of his mother, and while at the preparatory school, in his native town, he was under such religious influence as was common in respectable families and well-regulated schools of the established

University Students.

order of things. He was educated in the observances, forms, and usages of the Established Church. He understood, however, little of the theory of Christianity, or of the nature of true religion.

When he entered the University he found himself surrounded by unfavorable influences. The greater part of the students were decidedly skeptical, and few of the Faculty were much better than the students. The state of morals was lamentably bad. Dissipation in every form ruled supreme among the students. Idleness was the order of the day, and drinking, reveling, and gambling of the night. Religion was not merely disregarded; it was assailed by sophisms, and ridiculed by witticisms. Every thing tended to undermine and overthrow the moral and religious foundation of human character.

Coke was at first shocked at the impious opinions, and disgusted at the depraved conduct of his classmates. Having, however, no knowledge of the theory and evidences of Christianity adequate to the exigencies of debate, and no experience in evangelical piety, he soon fell a victim to infidelity and dissipation. He imbibed the skeptical opinions, and

Falls into Bad Habits.

adopted the vicious habits of the times. He did not, however, fall into the grosser habits of dissipation which disgraced the students and the institution; yet in all the fashionable follies, card-playing, dancing, and moderate drinking, he soon became an adept. Indeed, nothing else than ruin could be expected in a young man thrown, without the safeguard of experimental piety, among such influences. The very atmosphere being tainted with poisonous miasm, how could he escape breathing the baneful spirit?

Though exceedingly impressible and impulsive, and easily led astray from truth and virtue, yet Coke was not an eligible candidate for confirmed affiliation with infidelity or immorality. He had too many generous impulses to become a reckless rowdy; too much conscience to become a libertine; too much love for truth to become an incorrigible infidel. He often had strong convictions of the error of his opinions, of the folly of his habits, and of the waywardness of his life.

While in a state of doubt and anxiety, he happened to hear, on a visit to Wales, from a clergyman of some distinction, a sermon written in a masterly style, and delivered in an

Hears a Gospel Sermon.

Acknowledges his Skepticism.

eloquent manner, on some of those doctrines of the Gospel which constitute the essential elements of evangelical and orthodox faith. The young listener was deeply affected. His better nature began to predominate. His auspicious star began to emerge from the mist and clouds that had obscured its light. He began to see the unreasonableness of the objections which infidelity brings against Christianity, and the strength of the arguments by which the Gospel system is sustained. He began to perceive the excellence of those doctrines which he had denied, and at which he had scoffed.

In an interview with the clergyman, Coke alluded, in terms of high commendation, to the discourse. Not doubting but the minister was both able and willing to enlighten his mind, and relieve him from the thralldom of skepticism, he opened all his heart. He frankly confessed he had become skeptical. He acknowledged that the sermon which he had just heard had convinced him of his error. He said, however, that there were yet in the Christian system difficulties which he, from his youth and want of knowledge and experience, could not solve. He then ingeniously mentioned some of the subjects of divine revelation that troubled and

Implores Aid.A Curious Minister.

embarrassed him. He finally implored the minister to aid him in breaking the last link in the chain which infidelity had bound around him, and in rising emancipated and disenthralled into the perfect liberty of truth and righteousness.

The clergyman had it thus in his power to aid a generous spirit in wrenching open the doors of the prison in which Satan had bound him, in rising from his deep and dark dungeon, and in gaining access to the pure air of heaven, and to the full light of the glorious Gospel. But he did it not. Instead of rendering the assistance so much needed, and so frankly asked, he reriveted the chain, reclosed and rebolted the door, and left the prisoner in hopeless darkness. He laughed at the honest simplicity of the young man, in seriously troubling himself about religion. He avowed that he himself was a skeptic, and did not believe any of the doctrines of the sermon he had just read. What a specimen this of a Christian minister! Here was a man without religion, without even common faith in the theory of Christianity, placed by the authorities of the land over a Christian people, supported by taxes on their earnings, and yet an avowed

Church and State Religion.Coke Chagrined.

unbeliever in the very doctrines he was required by the Church to preach. He could go every Sunday into the pulpit, say the prayers written down for him, read a sermon he had purchased or pilfered from some other man, and then go to the tavern to drink beer, or to the field to hunt foxes, or to the saloon to play cards, and leave his people in their ignorance and sins. And such is the legitimate result of a Church and religion established by law.

Coke was most deeply chagrined at the treatment he received from this minister. He considered it dishonorable in any man holding such opinions to affect the ministerial character, and assume the sacred office. The discourse, however, in spite of the disclaimer of the minister, had made a deep impression on his mind. Nor could he well resist the convictions of his own heart and conscience. He determined, therefore, on his return to Oxford, to study and examine for himself the whole subject of Christianity. He would read such books as might afford him the means of judging honestly and correctly of the claims of Christianity to divine authenticity. To an ingenuous mind, to a lover of truth, such examination as he proposed could result only in

Reads Sherlock.Studies Theology.

good. He need only read, and receive and follow the suggestions derived from the contact of the thoughts of the writer with his own thoughts. One of the first books he read on his return to Oxford, was the "Discourses and Dissertations" of Bishop Sherlock. By the arguments of Sherlock he became convinced of the truth of Christianity. All his skeptical mysticism was dispelled, his objections were answered, his doubts vanished, and he rested in full assurance of faith in divine revelation. While to Sherlock he was indebted for confirmation in the theory of the general system of divine truth, to another good man, Wither-
spoon, he was indebted for a knowledge of the nature and necessity of personal religion.

Having thus become settled in his religious opinions, he applied himself to the study of theology, with the intention of devoting himself to the service of the Church. After the usual preparation, he received ordination, and held himself ready to occupy some place of preferment, which had been promised him by the politicians, who in England have the control of the clerical *livings* in the parishes. But the politicians of England, as well as those of America, have a much better faculty of mak-

Pether-ton.Accepts a Curacy.

ing promises before election, than of fulfilling them after they have gained the office which they solicited. Coke waited long and patiently for the appointment which had been promised, but waited in vain. At last, despairing of the promised preferment, and weary of standing in the market-place all the day idle, he resolved to accept a curacy in the parish of Pether-ton. He seems prompted only by an honorable ambition, and a strong desire to do good. Having a fortune of comfortable independence, he had no need of seeking for a *living*. But he could not remain contented in a position of idleness. He was generous, enterprising, and benevolent. He desired to be active, to go about, like his Master, doing good. Since he could not obtain from the authorities any place of preferment, he was willing to take the curacy, the most humble place in the ministry.

When he entered on the duties of his office, he had a good knowledge of the theory of religion, and was blameless in all the rites, services, forms, usages, and ceremonies of the Established Church. But he knew nothing of religion by experience. He had never felt the strugglings of regeneration. He had never known the joys of pardoned sin. He had

His Preaching.

His Zeal.

never believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior, with that faith which brings salvation to the soul. Yet he preached well, preached truth, Gospel truth. Though not by experience, yet by reason, he knew the way to God. He had correct theoretical notions of the new birth, of justification by faith, and of sanctification. Being sincere, of single eye, of pure intention, of honest heart, of godly zeal, and of philanthropic temperament, he applied himself ably and successfully to the preaching of that truth which he sincerely believed, but whose power he had not yet experienced in making his own spirit free from the bondage of depravity and sin.

So vehement was his zeal, and ardent his desire to do good, that he availed himself of every means to render his discourses profitable to his people. Not satisfied with his own ability to present, expound, and enforce evangelical truth, he selected from the discourses of eminent and pious men of past ages those most spiritual and evangelical, and best adapted to the condition of his people, and read them instead of his own. He did not do this to acquire thereby for himself the reputation for talents that belonged to other men. No, he

His Views of Preaching.Great Interest Excited.

never thought of such an object, nor felt the slightest influence of such a motive. But he only desired to furnish his people the best religious instruction possible, whether derived from his own resources, or from the labors of other men.

The first and the natural result of his zealous mode of preaching was a great increase in his congregation. People who had seldom attended Church, were induced by the interest aroused in the parish by the new curate to go and hear for themselves. The seriously disposed were gradually drawn from the dry and parched pastures of the neighboring parishes to drink of the refreshing streams of truth, that flowed along the vale of Petherton. The congregation became at last so large, that the parish church could no longer accommodate the people. Coke then requested the trustees to erect a gallery. But they did not sympathize with the zeal of their pastor, and so they refused. On this he proceeded to construct the gallery at his own private expense.

The course of the curate seemed very strange to the parish authorities. While all former curates had limited their labors to the fewest possible objects, Coke, not content with preach-

Coke Suspected.

Thomas Maxfield.

ing zealously, and visiting from house to house, had, even at his own expense, enlarged the church to accommodate the people. Nothing of the kind had ever been heard of in those parts. No neighboring clergyman had ever been known to labor one hour, or spend one farthing more than sufficient just to answer the law. They therefore gravely deliberated on the matter, and wisely concluded their curate was becoming tinctured with Methodism.

If Coke at that time was affected with Methodism, he must have taken it naturally, for there appears no evidence that he had ever seen a Methodist or read any of the Methodist writings, or even heard of the people. He soon, however, met Thomas Maxfield, an early Methodist—Mr. Wesley's first lay preacher—and from him learned something of the principles of the Methodists. He met Mr. Maxfield frequently, and conversed with him on the nature and necessity of conversion, on experimental religion, and on the witness of the Spirit. From these interviews he obtained clearer notions of the plan of salvation by faith, and of the nature and evidences of regeneration.

His religious convictions were rendered

Coke reads Methodist Books.

more efficient by reading "Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted." He became, after reading this work, a sincere and broken-hearted penitent, earnestly seeking salvation. While he was diligently inquiring the way, he received from a friend Fletcher's Appeal and Checks to Antinomianism. These clear and beautiful writings of the saintly Fletcher opened before him the whole system of doctrines and measures of the Wesleyans. He was so pleased with the principles of the Methodists, as explained by Fletcher, that he determined, on the first opportunity, to visit Mr. Wesley in person. While in this state of mind he received a letter from a pious dissenting minister of the neighborhood, Rev. Mr. Hull, who had heard him preach, and who understood the peculiar process of religious excitement through which he was passing. The correspondence thus opened was continued to the mutual advantage and pleasure of both parties. At last Mr. Hull proposed a personal interview, that they might talk over freely the subjects in which they had become so much interested. Coke was glad enough to adopt the proposal; but, then, how should they manage the matter? He was a rigorous Churchman, zealous for reg-

Mr. Hull.

The Devonshire Class-Leader.

ularity, and Mr. Hull was an avowed dissenter. He could not, as he conceived, consistently with Church order, either invite Mr. Hull to Petherton, or go himself to his house. Finally they resorted to *compromise*. They agreed to meet on neutral ground, at a farm-house half way between their own residences. It was supposed a Churchman might meet a dissenter without defilement on neutral territory. They accordingly met, and their congenial sympathies mingled so freely that they forgot, for the time, all questions of dissent, and conversed only on Christian experience.

Soon after the interview with Mr. Hull, he had occasion to visit a family in Devonshire, where he met, among the laborers on the farm, a poor pious Methodist class-leader. With him he conversed largely on the nature of Christian experience and the evidences of pardon. They then—the learned clergyman and the poor laborer—kneeled and prayed together. Delightful was the interview. Their hearts became united; their spirits mingled in sweet communion; their souls were tuned in harmony. Coke was in ecstasy of pleasure, and besought the poor man to tell him more about Wesley and the Methodists. He returned to

Renews his Zeal.

Publicly Tells his Experience.

his parish more zealous in the cause of evangelism, and more desirous to become acquainted with the Methodists.

On returning home he plied his exertions with renewed energy in the discharge of his ministerial and pastoral duties. He preached with more spirit and power; he visited his parishioners at their houses; he instituted weekly evening lectures in various parts of the parish; and he watched diligently for every opportunity to do good. One evening, as he was preaching at one of his appointments, in a distant part of the parish, suddenly the love of God was shed abroad in his heart, and his mind was filled with peace. Ineffable emotions of joy welled up from the deep fountains of his regenerated soul. He felt conscious of the change wrought in him; he had the witness of the Spirit; he knew he had passed from death unto life.

On the next Sabbath, during his sermon, he told the people what he had experienced. His soul was full of joy. His fervor of manner increased. His written words appeared too cold for his zealous emotions, too feeble to express his feelings. He threw the manuscript away, and proceeded in terms of unusual per-

Extempore Preaching.Is Persecuted.

spicuity to expound the doctrines of grace, and in strains of simple and holy eloquence to exhort the people to repent of their sins and turn to the Lord.

No sooner had he added extemporaneous preaching to his other irregularities, than the whole multitude of bigots began to cry out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." An appeal was made to the rector of the parish. The curate was charged with having established evening lectures, and having preached without the book. The rector at once became a party to the persecution, and took measures not only to dismiss Coke from the parish, but to do it in such a manner as to add indignity to persecution and insult to injury. On the Sabbath, before the whole congregation, as the services were just commenced, the amiable, accomplished, and pious curate was peremptorily dismissed, and escorted out of the church with the chiming of the bells. He had not received the slightest notice to quit, nor had he the least suspicion of the plot to insult and disgrace him. Had he received reasonable notice, and been permitted to preach a farewell discourse to the people, whom he might never expect to address again, he would have been

Dismissed from Petherton.Continues to Preach.

affected less severely; but to leave the people among whom he had labored for three years, without one parting word, was a sore grievance. There were among them those who would pine for his return. He could not leave without a farewell word the aged, who had hoped to be buried by his hands; the sick, who had looked to him for consolation; the poor, whose wants had been often supplied from his bounteous charity; and the children, whom he had instructed in the elements of Christian faith. He determined, therefore, he would be again heard in Petherton. On the next Sunday he took a position in the churchyard, and just as the people were leaving the church, whose services had been conducted by the new curate, he began to preach. The people gathered around him, and he delivered his discourse without interruption. On concluding he made an appointment at the same hour, and the same place, for the next Sabbath.

In proceeding to the summary dismissal of Coke, the parish authorities had acted not only ungenerously, but unwisely. There is in the human heart inherent sympathy for the persecuted. Reaction is sure to follow summary proceedings. The dismissal of the curate

The People Protect Him.Farewell Discourse.

seemed to the people of Petherton cowardly tyranny on the part of the rector, and of the parish authorities. Those who had been his friends became more attached to him. Those who had been indifferent became aroused, and determined he should have a chance to be heard. They assembled the next Sabbath, determined to protect him. A gang of ruffians had collected a heap of stones, threatening to throw them at him, but not one of them was bold enough to throw the first stone. So he proceeded again in undisturbed peace to make his defense, and deliver his message. In this, his last discourse, he bade a final farewell to his people. It was a time of deep interest. There were many among the people to whom he had become greatly attached. He expected to see them no more. He therefore gave them his last testimony, and bade them farewell forever.

Being now dismissed from the curacy, and having no longer any hopes of preferment, he seriously deliberated on the course he should pursue. He had no need to do any thing for his own maintenance, for the income of his private fortune was sufficient to meet all his wants. But he could not be idle.

Wesley Preaches in a Dissenting Church.

God had given him a talent, which he must improve.

He had long desired to see Mr. Wesley, and he now determined to go immediately to meet him at Taunton. It would seem that he was yet strangely in bondage to the prejudice of Church bigotry. Though he rode twenty miles on purpose to see Mr. Wesley, yet he would not go to hear him preach, because he did not preach in the *Church*. He could not so far violate the order of the Church, as to hear even John Wesley preach in a dissenting meeting-house. Such views of order seem strange to us in America, and at this time, though they seem to have been common among good men in England in the time of Wesley. As Coke could not conscientiously hear Wesley preach in an uncanonical place, he went to the house where he lodged to spend the night with him.

The interview must have been one of deep interest. The parties were educated, pious, and zealous ministers, one nearly seventy years old, the other about thirty. Wesley had been led by a remarkable train of providences to adopt a system of measures, which, contrary to his own intention, gave rise to a new denom-

Coke's Mission and Character.

ination of Christian people, whose influence on Anglo-Saxon civilization has been inconceivable. Coke had been led, by circumstances over which he had no control, to adopt the doctrines of Wesley, and had been for his zeal proscribed in his parish, and thrown out of employment in the work to which he had devoted his life. He felt that he had a mission to accomplish, a work to do, nor could he rest till he found the place for which Providence designed him. He was not ambitious of fame, nor avaricious of gain. But he was emulous of doing good. He had hoped he might obtain some place of preferment and influence in the Established Church, that he might therein accomplish his destiny. But he had been disappointed through the faithlessness of those in power. He had accepted a curacy, that he might, though in an inferior position, accomplish some good to the people of the parish. From that office he was dismissed with indignity. And now he was in doubt what to do. He felt not at liberty to engage in any secular employment. God had called him to the work of the ministry. But his plans for accomplishing good in that calling had all been defeated by the evil workings of

Interview with Wesley.

Coke goes to London.

the mischievous. His last resort was to open his heart to Wesley and take counsel of the venerable man, who had seen more of the wonderful ways of Providence in religious matters than any other man living.

Of the interview between him and Wesley we have the briefest possible account. Probably Wesley developed his plans for "spreading Scriptural holiness over the land," and invited Coke to cast in his lot among "the people called Methodists." The result was, that Coke placed himself at the disposal of Wesley, and was sent to London. On his arrival at London, he was cordially welcomed by the Methodist societies. They had heard of his talents, of his finished education, of his conversion, of his dismissal from Petherton, of his visit to Wesley, and they were determined to receive him with demonstrations of approbation. His first public performances in the city confirmed the impressions in his favor. His very handsome person, his fine voice, his amiable spirit, his sprightly talents, his zeal, his energy, all contributed to his success. His congregations increased, the houses swarmed, and he had to resort to the public squares and the open fields. Thus

His Field of Labor.

was opened to him a field of success and usefulness broader and more fruitful than he had even hoped.

CHAPTER II.

COKE'S FIRST MISSION TO AMERICA.

WESLEYAN Methodism was introduced into America in 1767, by Philip Embury, an emigrant from Ireland. In 1769 two Wesleyan missionaries—Boardman and Pilmoor—were sent by Mr. Wesley to organize into societies the few and scattered American members and converts. In 1771 Francis Asbury was added to the devoted band of missionaries. Others followed, and societies were organized in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and in some parts of the south. These societies were considered, as were the Wesleyan societies in England, in connection with the Church of England. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper were administered, not by the Methodist preachers, who were not ordained, but by the regular clergy of the Church of England. Thus matters went on till the commencement of the war of the American Revolution. During the war, the English missionaries, all but Asbury, fled for home, and the

Church Difficulties.Wesley Appealed to.

societies were greatly distressed. On the close of the war, Asbury and his American coadjutors found their circumstances peculiar and embarrassing. They were not authorized by ordination to administer to their people the holy sacraments. The Episcopal clergymen, on whom they had relied for these services, had, like the English Methodist missionaries, abandoned their flocks in the wilderness, and returned to England. All connection between the Church of England and the Episcopal, as well as the Methodist societies of America, was forever severed. In this emergency the preachers and societies of America appealed to Mr. Wesley for some provision to meet their wants. Wesley, after much study, thought, and prayer, became fully convinced that Providence had called him to devise a plan of Church government for the American Methodists. He determined to select some man well qualified for the office, and appoint him superintendent of the American societies, with power to ordain elders and deacons, who might administer the ordinances to the people. On looking over the whole list of men in connection with him, he could find none more available for the mission than Thomas Coke. He

Wesley wishes Coke to Visit America.

was a man of finished classical and theological education, having been admitted to the degree of Doctor of Laws at the University of Oxford. He was a regularly-ordained presbyter of the Church of England; he was young, healthy, and active; he was pious, devout, and emulous of doing good. Wesley, therefore, decided to appoint him to this important mission. Accordingly he invited Coke to his private room, and explained to him the position of matters in America, and developed his plan for meeting the emergency. Coke had no objection to the enterprise, but he had some scruples concerning the ecclesiastical legality of the proposed plan. He and Wesley, and all the English Methodist ministers and societies, were yet regular members of the Church of England, nor had they any intention of ever separating from the Establishment, or of assuming a position of dissent or independence. The plan proposed by Wesley must effectually place the American societies in a position of absolute independence of the Church. He, therefore, asked time to reflect on the subject.

After a few months of serious reflection and close examination of the ecclesiastical and providential bearings of the whole case, Coke

Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey Ordained. Coke Reaches New York.

coincided in opinion with Wesley. He therefore informed him that he was ready to enter on the expedition. Accordingly Wesley, with the assistance of Rev. Mr. Creighton, a regular presbyter of the Church, set apart and ordained Dr. Coke as superintendent or bishop of the Methodist societies in America. He also ordained Mr. Whatcoat and Mr. Vasey—worthy men in connection with the Methodist ministry—as elders for America. He then wrote to the Methodists in America a letter expressing his views, and assigning the reasons for the course on which he had determined to meet the necessities of the case.

Dr. Coke left England on his American mission, on the 18th of September, 1784. After meeting with the incidents of alternate storm and calm, usually attending a voyage over the Atlantic in a sailing vessel in autumn, he landed at New York on the third of November. He immediately found the way to the house of a Methodist, and was introduced to the societies, to whom he preached with great zeal and success. After remaining in the city a few days, he proceeded south in order to meet Asbury at Philadelphia or Baltimore. Not finding Asbury at Philadelphia, he pro-

ceeded to the house of Mr. Bassett, near Dover, in the state of Delaware, where he expected Asbury would surely meet him. On the Sabbath he was conducted to a Methodist chapel in a vast forest. He wondered at finding a meeting-house in such a wilderness, where he could not, of course, expect many people. But to his surprise an immense concourse was gathered to hear him. The scene to him was new, and the occasion one of deep interest. Threè thousand miles from his early home, in the depths of a grand old forest, exceeding in beauty and grandeur the admired parks of old England, he stood before listening multitudes to preach the glorious doctrines of redemption, of justification, and of salvation. When he had finished his discourse, the scene became one of intense moral sublimity. A man of venerable appearance, of noble bearing, of dignified demeanor, of simple and plain dress, was seen entering the door. While every eye was turned toward him, he walked boldly up the aisle, ascended the pulpit stairs, and without speaking a word, threw his arms in a fond embrace around the neck, and imprinted a kiss on the fair forehead of Coke. It was Asbury! He had just arrived, weary and hungry, from

a long and fatiguing journey, and without stopping for rest or refreshment had hastened to the chapel to greet with a hearty welcome the messenger of Wesley and of Christ to the new world.

Immediately after the close of divine service, Asbury and Coke retired to a private room, where the whole of Wesley's plan for the organization of the American societies was developed and explained. The arrangement met the cheerful and decided approbation of Asbury. The next day there was a meeting of all the Methodist preachers in the neighborhood, and the matter was more fully discussed. It was determined to call a conference of all the preachers in America, to meet at Baltimore on the ensuing Christmas.

To collect together at that day a body of men scattered over several states was a difficult matter. There were no telegraphs, nor even mails to communicate information of the time and place of the meeting. Nor were there railroad cars, or steamboats, or even stage-coaches for means of conveyance. Special messengers had to be dispatched to various parts of the middle and the southern states to give notice of the conference to the preachers.

Sixty Preachers in Conference.

M. E. Church Organized.

The journey had to be performed on horseback, over a roadless country and bridgeless streams. By great exertions, however, they raised a conference of about sixty preachers, being three-fourths of the whole number in America.

At this conference, known in the history of American Methodism as the Christmas conference, the plan of Mr. Wesley was submitted to the American preachers, discussed, and unanimously adopted. The Church was regularly organized, and took the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Coke and Asbury were elected superintendents, or bishops, of the Church; elders and deacons were ordained among the preachers; a form of discipline was adopted. The American Methodists became, therefore, from this time, a regular and independent branch of the Church of Christ, with a ministry ordained to administer the ordinances, and with a form of government and discipline wonderfully adapted to the requisitions of the circumstances and the times.

Immediately after the conference, Dr. Coke proceeded to travel, preach, and attend to all matters judged useful for the edification of the

Perilous Traveling.

infant Church. During the six months he remained in America his travels were extensive, and his labors abundant. His journeys from place to place were performed on horseback, often amidst imminent peril, especially to one unacquainted with the country, and unused to such a mode of traveling. He was often exposed to violent winds and storms, and to danger from crossing streams suddenly raised by freshets. Attempting, on one occasion, to ford one of the streams flowing into the Potomac, he found a drifted tree lying directly across the landing place. The water was very deep, and running so swift that he could not urge his horse up stream around the tree, nor dare he venture down. In this emergency he leaped from his horse on to the tree, intending to wade ashore. But the tree, the moment he touched it, broke loose from its moorings, and floated down stream. He clung to it till it lodged against a small island. Before he could land on the island, another tree drifted down and lodged directly on his back. He was thus confined between two logs in the midst of a deep and rapid stream. By great exertion he disentangled himself, and landed on the island. With much danger he

The Quarterly Meetings.

Founding a College.

waded and floundered to the shore. Wet, cold, and exhausted, he finally reached a house, where he found shelter and restoration. In the course of the evening a traveler found the horse wandering about, and brought him to the same plantation.

As he traveled over the country, he preached wherever he found it convenient. The quarterly meetings on the circuits were occasions of deep interest. The people came together from distances of thirty or forty miles in every direction. All the preachers, traveling and local, would take part in the exercises of prayer, preaching, and exhortation. The love-feast, preaching, exhortations, and sacramental services of the Sabbath would often occupy six or seven hours, during which the people would patiently remain, and devote their listening attention to the exercises.

The founders of Methodism knew the value of education. Coke and Asbury took measures, immediately on organizing the Church, to found a college. A lot of ground was selected some twenty-five miles from Baltimore, and on it was erected a noble college edifice. Money was collected to the amount of several thousand dollars by the personal solicitations of

The College Burned Down.Fifty Thousand Dollars Lost.

Coke and Asbury among the people for the erection of the building, and the support of the institution. A respectable number of students was collected. Every thing was going on prosperously, when the buildings took fire and burned down. An attempt was made to resuscitate the institution in the city of Baltimore. A large building suitable for a college edifice was purchased and the school recommenced with hopes of success truly flattering. Scarcely, however, had they got fairly under way, when fire again rendered all their enterprise abortive. The college, together with a Methodist church near it, was burned to the ground. By these two accidents the Methodists, in their feebleness and poverty, lost fifty thousand dollars.

The attention of Dr. Coke was also directed to another enterprise of Christian benevolence. During the Revolutionary war there were many Americans who remained loyal to the British Government. They were known as loyalists, or tories. On the close of the war, and on the establishing of American independence, the property of the adherents to England was confiscated, and they were driven from the country. Most of them found refuge in the

Nova Scotia Refugees.Coke Sails for England.

province of Nova Scotia, which still adhered to the British rule. They were poor, destitute, and without the means of religious instruction. Dr. Coke had pity on these poor unfortunate refugees, and by his appeals in their favor induced many Americans to contribute to their relief. He also projected a plan for sending them Christian missionaries. In taking an interest in these people he seems to have been prompted wholly by motives of Christian philanthropy.

On the first of June, 1785, Dr. Coke left America on his return to England, and after a short and pleasant voyage, arrived in safety.

CHAPTER III.

COKE'S SECOND MISSION TO AMERICA.

THE investigations that Coke had made in ecclesiastical matters, in order to justify and defend the proceedings in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, had greatly shaken his confidence in the Church of England. He did not impugn the purity of the doctrines, nor object to the form of government of the Church. But he had discovered indications of great corruption and depravity among the clergy, especially the American clergy of the Established Church. So startling were some of the facts, that he seriously deliberated on a plan of final separation of the English Methodists from the Establishment. But while traveling over England, during the year, he discovered, as he thought, that the Episcopal clergy of England were not quite so bad as those of America. Therefore he abandoned the plan of separation.

It is a little remarkable, that the same Dr Coke, who, in 1785, was maturing a plan for

A Separation from the Episcopal Church Desirable.

the final separation of the English Methodists from the Church of England, was found in 1791 proposing a plan for the union of the American Methodists with the Episcopal Church of America. In both movements he stood alone. The projects were each as unpopular as any projects could well be. The Methodists of England would not listen to any proposition for separation. The Methodists of America would not for a moment entertain any proposition for union.

In both cases Dr. Coke was governed by impulses, generous and benevolent impulses. In 1785 he was deeply affected at the developments he had discovered of the corruption of the American clergy of the Church of England, and thinking it inexpedient for the Methodists to remain in connection with a Church allowing such depravity in its clergy, he had contributed to a final separation in America, and had become convinced that it was his duty to bring about a separation in England. In 1791 he had become acquainted with Bishop White and other estimable men of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America. For reasons which unquestionably appeared satisfactory to him, he thought the interests of the work of

God in America might be greatly promoted by the union of the Methodists and Episcopalians. Acting from the sudden impulse of this thought, he actually made advances toward such a consummation, regardless of the questionable position in which such a proposition must involve him with the Methodists. His course in these and in many other circumstances indicate a generous, benevolent heart, an impulsive temper, a confiding and unsuspecting spirit, but a want of prudence, discretion, and an adequate knowledge of human nature. The peculiarities of character, which these circumstances develop, diminish in no degree our love for him, but they do detract something from our estimation of his qualifications for a leader of a great enterprise.

Providence, however, seems to have raised up Coke for another work, than the delicate and momentous one of leading the armies of Methodism in America. Previous to 1769 the Methodists seem never to have thought of the missionary enterprise. By extraordinary circumstances their attention was then directed to America, and a few missionaries were sent over the Atlantic. By the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784, the

The Organization of 1784.

The Refugees Again.

American societies ceased to be under the care or patronage of the British Methodists. The missionary work, therefore, of the Methodists seemed accomplished. Had it not been for Dr. Coke, they might have thought no more of missions. But Coke was the man, whom Providence appointed to lead off in that great enterprise of foreign missionary work, which has rendered the name of the British Wesleyans familiar in the four quarters of the globe.

During his residence in America, Dr. Coke had learned, as we have already said, of the destitute and pitiable condition of the refugees in Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, they had been found, during the war of the Revolution, on the wrong side. They had, therefore, to suffer the penalty of confiscation and exile. Their pleasant homes on the banks of the Connecticut, of the Hudson, of the Delaware, and of the Susquehanna, were abandoned to strangers and enemies. They took up their line of march for the east. After many a weary day, they arrived, destitute and sick at heart, on the cold and misty banks of Nova Scotia. They had left behind not only their homes, but the school-house, the church, and all the privileges of the sanctuary. The heart of the generous Coke

Coke Pleads for the Refugees.

was moved in pity toward these poor people. His chief purpose in returning to England was to call the attention of Mr. Wesley, and of the British conference, and of the British people to the duty of sending missionaries to Nova Scotia. For the purpose of obtaining funds for the enterprise, and for charitable distribution among the suffering and destitute, he spent the year in traveling over England and Scotland. He every-where appealed to the benevolent for aid. In eloquent words he depicted the misfortunes of the people, driven houseless and homeless into the wilderness, without the comforts of life or the means of grace. To his moving appeals the people of England nobly responded. By the beginning of autumn, 1786, he was ready with missionary funds and three missionaries to sail for Nova Scotia. It was his intention to proceed to Halifax, explore the peninsula, and station the missionaries at such points as might seem most eligible. After that he would make a tour of the United States.

Leaving England the latter part of September, he hoped to arrive at Halifax by the first of November. But his expectations were utterly disappointed, and his plans all thwarted

A Fearful Ocean Storm.

by such a series of storms and disasters as seldom happen in crossing the Atlantic. At the end of ten weeks the ship was still a long distance from Halifax; the water of the sea was oozing in at every joint; the sails were nearly used up by repeated storms and tempests; the ropes were washed white by the rain and the waves, and the water and provisions were nearly exhausted. In this condition it was impossible to make headway along the misty, stormy coast of Newfoundland. A council was held, and the opinion was unanimous, that Halifax could not be reached in safety. The only hope of saving passengers, crew, and ship lay in the chance of reaching some port in a milder clime. It was, therefore, determined to steer the ship for some of the West India islands.

The annoyances of this disastrous voyage were greatly aggravated to Coke and his companions, by the superstitious vagaries of the sailors and captain. The alarm of the sailors was first excited by a strange light, which appeared one night during the raging of a dreadful storm. The light appeared much like that usually hung by night on the bow of vessels to give notice of their approach to smaller crafts.

A Strange Light.Coke Taken for a Second Jonah.

The captain thought it was the light of a ship approaching, and took his trumpet to hail her. But suddenly the light disappeared, nor was it ever seen again. It might have been a meteor, or it might really have been the light of some distressed and sinking ship, which the waves forever overwhelmed. But the sailors received it as a presage of calamities about to befall the voyage; nor was it possible to eradicate the superstitious notion from their minds. The captain, equally superstitious as the sailors, charged all the disasters of the voyage on Dr. Coke, who he took to be another Jonah. Once in the midst of a terrific storm he paced the deck for a long time, saying to himself, "We have a Jonah on board, we have a Jonah on board," till, becoming wrought up to monomania, he rushed into the cabin, snatched from the hands of Coke his papers and books, threw them overboard, squeezed and shook the Doctor himself, and with many curses and oaths threatened if he ever caught him praying or preaching on board that ship, he would send him to Davy Jones's locker after his papers.

As the shattered and weary ship left the stormy banks of Newfoundland and moved south, the storms grew less violent, the sea

The Tropics.

Reaches Antigua.

Mr. Baxter.

became smoother, and the climate milder. At last they saw before them painted on the sky pillars of summer clouds, from which muttered thunders, and flashed lightnings, betokening their approach to the region of the tropics. Then there came sailing along over the ocean surface, a bird known to belong to the tropical seas. Finally there loomed up in the far distance the blue mountains of the West Indies. Another day brought them to land.

It was on the morning of Christmas, when, after months of dangers and disasters, Dr. Coke stepped from the weather-beaten and disabled ship upon the verdant shores of Antigua. Bud and bloom, verdure and fruit, fertility and beauty were seen on every hand. The whole landscape presented a glorious, a gorgeous scene. Coke stood for some time entranced with the beauty of the scene, and then walked up the street of the town. One of the first men he met was Mr. Baxter, a lay preacher of the Wesleyans, who had some years before removed from England to Antigua. Mr. Baxter had emigrated to Antigua not as a preacher, but as a ship-carpenter. On his arrival he had found the remnants of a small Methodist society, collected some twenty years before, by a

Mr. Gilbert Converted.Instructs his Slaves.

peculiar train of providential events. In 1758 Mr. Gilbert, Speaker of the House of Assembly in Antigua, which, as is well known, is one of the British West Indies, had visited England, taking with him some negroes. While in England he became converted under the preaching of Mr. Wesley. The negroes also appeared renewed in heart and in life, and received baptism at the hands of Wesley. On his return to Antigua, Mr. Gilbert, seeing the religious destitution of the white population, and lamentably-neglected condition of the blacks, determined to act the part of a true Wesleyan. He invited his neighbors to his house, prayed for them, and exhorted them to flee from the wrath to come. He also went among the slaves, and instructed them in the holy Scriptures. He soon raised up among the whites and the colored a society of about two hundred members. By his sudden death the little society was left without a leader. A remnant, however, of the black population was kept together by the piety of two negro women, who, for some years, held among them meetings for prayer and exhortation. When Mr. Baxter arrived, he found in these poor women and their adherents the nucleus of a society. He was received by the

Labors of Mr. Baxter.A Large Congregation.

lovely band as a messenger from heaven. He began to instruct them by exhortation and preaching. After having finished his day's work in the ship-yard, he would walk often some miles to the plantations to preach to the negroes in the evening. In the course of five years he was able to erect, principally from the contributions of the black population, a convenient house of worship. He continued his labors of Christian benevolence till he had collected a society of two thousand souls.

Such was the man whom, on Christmas day, 1786, Dr. Coke met in the streets of Antigua. He was even then on his way to the chapel, to preach to his people. Dr. Coke did not delay to turn his steps toward the island sanctuary. He found a congregation of some two thousand, principally blacks, neatly dressed, and of serious demeanor. To them he preached. In the evening, news of his arrival having spread, the house, at an early hour, was filled with the white people of the island, while the negroes, who built it, cheerfully gave up their right, and took a stand outdoors.

So pleased were the people with Dr. Coke, that they invited him to settle with them, offering him a salary of two thousand dollars; but

Coke is Offered a Settlement.Returns to the States.

money could not induce him to abandon the more enlarged field of operation which, as he thought, Providence had pointed out to him. He, however, consented to leave one of the missionaries whom he had designed for Nova Scotia. From Antigua he made excursions of observation to several other islands—St. Vincent, St. Christopher, St. Eustatius, and Dominica. At Dominica he concluded to leave another missionary. From the observations he made, he became satisfied that the Lord had opened a fine field for missionary enterprise in the West Indies. He saw, as he thought, that Providence had directed, in the storm and tempest of the voyage, the ship to Antigua for good.

Having acquired all the information he could obtain, relative to the condition of the islands, of the people, and of the prospect of success in missionary enterprise, he left Antigua for the United States, and arrived at Charleston on the first of March, 1787. He spent about a month in South Carolina, and then proceeded through Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, to New York. On the way he preached and attended conferences, every-where observing the increase

Primitive Congregations.

and extension of the work since his first visit.

In traveling in America he was often deeply interested in the peculiar scenes that opened before him. In the midst of a grand old forest of oaks, or on an illimitable plain of pines, he would find a Methodist chapel. About it might be seen many hundreds of horses hitched to the branches of the trees, and within the house, and about the door and windows, would be gathered thousands of people waiting to hear the Gospel. For hours would they listen to the word preached with the most enthusiastic attention. Such vast congregations, assembled in such places, reminded him of the accounts he had heard of Kingswood, Moorfield, and Kennington Common, in the early days of Whitefield and Wesley. He was encouraged and delighted at the change for the better, in the prospect of spreading Methodism throughout America.

After having, by inquiry and by personal observation, collected all facts accessible relative to the condition of the North American continent, and the islands of the West Indies, he determined again to return to England, that he might lay before Mr. Wesley his facts and

Coke Sails for Dublin.

plans, and call on British Christians for aid to carry on the missionary work he had projected. Accordingly, on the 27th of June, he sailed from Philadelphia, and after a short and pleasant voyage, arrived at Dublin.

CHAPTER IV.

THIRD MISSION TO AMERICA.

SOON after the discovery by Columbus of the beautiful islands of the West Indies, the natives were conquered in battle, or subdued through treachery, by the Spanish. Each tribe was required to pay tribute to the Spanish Government. After a few years the system of oppression was changed for the worse. Instead of tribute each Indian chief was required to furnish a number of men, either to work the government mines, or to work the plantations of the Spanish colonists. There was assigned to each Castilian, according to the dignity of the family, or the pleasure of the governor, a certain number of Indians. They were doomed to intolerable labor under the cruel infliction of the lash. They were furnished only the smallest possible quantity and the poorest possible quality of food. If, exercising their natural right to freedom, they escaped from this incessant toil and barbarous treatment, they were pursued, hunted like wild beasts,

Suicide Prevails.Las Casas.

brought back, unmercifully scourged, and compelled to labor in chains. So intolerable became their condition, that many in despair killed themselves. Even mothers, to save their children from such a life of wretchedness as the fathers were leading, with their own hands destroyed the children at the breast. Under accumulated sufferings and horrible oppression the whole race was fast melting away.

There was, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, at the University of Salamanca, pursuing the studies of an ecclesiastic, an amiable young man—Bartholomew Las Casas—whose father had been one of the companions of Columbus in his first voyage. The attention of Las Casas had been called to the condition of the Indians by seeing some of them sent home to Spain as slaves. His sympathy was excited, his Christian benevolence aroused, and he determined to devote his fortune, his talents, and his life to ameliorate their condition. He left Spain, and went to the new world of the west as a missionary. He traveled in every direction, seeking by all means in his power to do them good. Seeing the wretched state of bondage to which they were reduced by the Spanish colonists, being an eye-

Las Casas Labors in Behalf of the Indians.

witness of their dreadful sufferings, and of the cruel torture to which they were subjected, he endeavored in vain by appeals to the local authorities to mitigate their condition. Finding all efforts with the colonies fruitless, he returned to Spain, to lay the case before the government, and obtain, if possible, relief for the suffering natives. But on his arrival in Spain, he found great difficulties in accomplishing his mission. The good Isabella was dead, and the king, Ferdinand, also was dead. The government of Spain was transferred to the young Emperor, Charles V. He had just arrived, accompanied by various Flemings of his court, particularly by his Grand Chancellor, Selvagio, whom he consulted on all affairs of administration and justice. To the Chancellor Las Casas made known the object of his mission. He depicted the sufferings of the Indians in colors most dark and terrible, and earnestly pressed on the Chancellor the demands of justice and humanity for redress of the grievances. But he found every means he could use, for procuring any relaxation of the rigorous bondage of the natives, wholly ineffectual. The spirit of the age was the spirit of tyranny and oppression. Even the Church

itself sanctioned the worst forms of despotism. The most learned theologians had pronounced all barbarous nations, who refused to be converted to Christianity, as fair objects of war and rapine, of captivity and slavery. It was also alleged, that Europeans could not endure labor under the heat of the West India climate, and that it was, therefore, necessary to enslave the natives, or the operations of mining and farming must be abandoned. Las Casas then suggested an alternative, which has proved a Pandora box to the new world. He proposed that the Spaniards residing in the colonies, should be permitted to procure negroes from the coast of Africa for the labor of the farms and the mines. He said that the negroes were much better able than the Indians to endure the toils and sufferings of slavery. Indeed one negro could do as much labor as three Indians. It would, therefore, require a less number of negroes than of Indians to supply the demand, and the amount of human suffering might be lessened.

Thus was negro slavery introduced into the new world, and entailed with all its indescribable evils on coming generations by a Christian bishop, one, indeed, of the most learned,

A Sad Mistake.

Condition of the Slaves.

most pious, and most benevolent men that ever honored the Roman Catholic communion. Most sadly, most grievously, did he err in consulting the *expedient*, rather than the *right*, in presuming that the end would justify the means, in doing what he must know to be wrong, that what he judged good might come.

From the history of this case, we, who have seen, who have felt, who deplore, but know not how to extirpate the evils of negro slavery, should learn that it is never safe, even for the purpose and with the fair prospect of accomplishing an enterprise of great apparent good, to depart from the immutable principles of truth and righteousness.

Amid the revolutions of Europe, that had occurred between the time of Las Casas and of Coke, the most of the West India islands—passed from the dominion of Spain to that of England. Slavery, however, remained unmitigated. By importation from Africa, and by the natural increase, the number of slaves, when Coke visited the islands, greatly surpassed that of the white population. The most of the slaves were kept on large sugar plantations. They were wholly neglected, and destitute of religious instruction. They were urged,

The West India Mission.

under the lash of the overseer, to the utmost exertion of which physical nature is capable, to promote the profit of the master. They were regarded as animals, beasts of burden, machines of labor, beings for whose souls no man cared.

For such a class of population, neglected, degraded, oppressed, the amiable Coke projected a grand system of missionary operation. On arriving at Dublin, he proceeded at once to the Irish conference, and laid before Mr. Wesley and the preachers the result of his observations, and explained his plans. The conference approved of his measures, and requested him to travel throughout the kingdom to collect funds for the support of the West India missions. He, therefore, proceeded at once to solicit contributions to the enterprise. At that day missionary collections had not been reduced to the admirable system which has become so efficient in our day. There were no missionary societies, no missionary meetings. It was not usual to deliver a missionary discourse and take up a collection. The agent went about from place to place, from house to house, and from person to person. He had to explain to every one his plan, and solicit indi-

Coke's Arduous Toil.Sails for the Indies.

vidual aid. The business was laborious, and, to a sensitive mind, exceedingly unpleasant. It seemed like becoming a common beggar. Dr. Coke, however, submitted to all the labor, toil, travel, and talk necessary to bring the subject to the notice of all to whom he could have access. He appealed to all, the high, the low, the noble, the peasant, the rich, and the poor, to contribute to send the Gospel to the poor slaves, suffering and perishing in the West India colonies. He did not, though his attention was directed to the West Indies, wholly forget the refugees of Nova Scotia. Arrangements had been made for sending to that country missionaries from the American Methodist Church. By his advice a missionary was sent from England to Newfoundland. But the affections of his heart mostly clustered about the islands of the new world.

Immediately after the session of the British conference for 1788, he sailed with three missionaries for the West Indies. After an agreeable passage, he landed at Barbadoes. On landing, he supposed himself wholly among strangers. But Mr. Pearce, one of the missionaries, happening to recollect that a regiment of soldiers, among whom he knew sev-

Meetings in a Warehouse.Coke Goes to St. Vincent's.

eral pious men in Ireland, was stationed in Barbadoes, went in search of them, and soon returned with a soldier who still maintained his religious character. Soon after, a sergeant coming in and recognizing Mr. Pearce, clasped him in his arms for joy at meeting so unexpectedly his former pastor in the very ends of the earth. Learning from the soldiers that a merchant of the island had afforded the religious soldiers facilities for holding religious meetings in his warehouse, Dr. Coke called on him, and to his surprise found him an old acquaintance from the United States. The Doctor at once took up his quarters with the merchant. At evening he preached to a very large audience. He was received most politely by the merchants, the planters, and the governor of the island. His project of establishing missions for the slaves was approved, and he was much encouraged.

Leaving Mr. Pearce at Barbadoes, Dr. Coke went to St. Vincent's, whither the other missionaries—Mr. Lamb and Mr. Gamble—had already gone. Here he met Mr. Baxter, whom he had met on his first visit at Antigua, and had induced to give up his trade, and become a regular missionary. On meeting and con-

Visits Various Points.

sulting they resolved to visit a tribe of natives—the Caribs—living in the mountain districts of the island.

The visit resulted in leaving Mr. Baxter and his wife among the Caribs to establish a school for the instruction of the children, and to introduce among the tribe the Gospel. Returning from the Carib country, Dr. Coke visited several plantations, and preached with success. Leaving Mr. Gamble on this island, he proceeded with Mr. Lamb to Dominica, where he was received most cordially by the people and the governor. Having preached on the island several times, and formed a society of twenty-four members, he proceeded to Antigua, where he found an addition of eight hundred members had been made to the society, which had consisted, on his former visit, of about two thousand. At St. Christopher's, to which he went from Antigua, he found a society of seven hundred members collected by one of the missionaries he had left on his former voyage. He next visited St. Eustatius. This island was a colonial possession of the Dutch. Dr. Coke had visited it in his excursions among the islands the year before, and had found a small society of negroes collected by a pious slave

Pious Harry.A Curious Law.

named Harry, who had been imported from the continent of America. Harry had been in the habit of preaching to his fellow-slaves under the indirect sanction of the governor; but a revival occurring among the slaves, the planters had procured from the governor an order for him to desist. Dr. Coke on this first visit was received politely, and requested by the authorities to preach. He organized the colored people into classes, appointed the most suitable persons among them leaders, and left them to do the best they could among themselves; but on his second visit he found things in a most trying situation. A law had been passed, "that if any white person should be found praying with his brethren, he should for the first offense be fined, for the second fined double, and for the third suffer confiscation of property and banishment of person; that if any free colored man should be found praying, he should for the first offense receive thirty-nine lashes, and for the second be whipped and banished; but if a slave should be found guilty of praying he should be whipped for every offense." Under this law Harry had, for being guilty of *praying*, been most unmercifully whipped, and then sold into banishment. Not-

St. Eustatius.

Threats against Coke.

withstanding this barbarous treatment, a society of some two hundred and fifty was found by Dr. Coke on the island. Having privately baptized the greater portion of the members, he left St. Eustatius with no very favorable sentiments toward the Dutch Government.

The ship in which he embarked had scarcely left the wharf, when she was run by the drunken crew against another ship and disabled. Dr. Coke deemed the unexpected detention an indication of Providence for him to remain on the island and preach. He thought that the Dutch authorities would hardly venture to enforce the penalties of the law on him, a British subject. To prevent any of the people from incurring the penalties, he hired, on his own account, a large room, and invited the people to attend. The law prohibited *preaching*, but forgot to say any thing about *hearing* preaching. He was permitted to finish his first sermon without disturbance. Scarcely, however, had he finished, when the governor sent word to him that if he repeated the offense he should most surely suffer the vengeance of the law, even to arbitrary punishment and banishment. Dr. Coke was too much of a hero to fear the Dutch; but he considered that

Desists from Preaching.Goes to Santa Cruz.

by persisting in preaching, he might provoke the government to break up, after he was gone, the class meetings which the people had secretly held, and that there were calls for more preaching than he and all the missionaries could do on the islands in possession of the British; and therefore concluded to give up the attempt to establish a permanent mission on this intolerant soil. So, he went to other places, where he was more kindly received.

Having touched at St. Christopher's and at Hevis, he proceeded to Saba, another Dutch island, where he was most generously received by both the people and the governor. On the earnest request of the inhabitants, he left among them Mr. Brazier, a preacher who had been raised up in the West Indies among the first-fruits of missionary labor. But the governor of St. Eustatius being Governor-General of all the Dutch islands, interfered at Saba, and Mr. Brazier had to leave, much to the regret of the people. From Saba Dr. Coke went to Tortola, an island of about ten thousand people, who appeared earnestly desirous to receive a missionary. After preaching a few times at Tortola, he went to Santa Cruz, a Danish island of thirty thousand people, who received

Jamaica.

Georgia Scenes.

him so cordially that he determined to leave among them the only missionary he had left, although he had designed to leave him at Jamaica. He then went on to Jamaica alone, where he found three hundred thousand people, among whom he received as many civilities as in any place he ever visited in Europe or America. He found at Jamaica every thing ready for missionary enterprise. He only lacked a man for the work, and him he hoped to obtain on his next visit to England.

Having thus thoroughly explored the missionary ground in the West Indian Archipelago, and established missions in several places, he sailed for the continent, and landed at Charleston, where he expected to meet Asbury. Finding Asbury had left for Georgia, he instantly followed, and overtook him on the road. Traveling with Asbury, he passed through scenes new and strange to him—riding in the woods, sleeping at night on the floor, in a very airy log-house, crossing unbridged rivers, wading through swamps, plunging through mud, dashing through burning pine forests, and preaching to large congregations in the woods, in the midst of wild animals and flocks of birds.

Having attended the Georgia conference, he turned his face north, and passed through South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, attending all the conferences held that year, preaching and attending to every thing which he thought might promote the interests of religion. At the New York conference he and Asbury projected the first missionary enterprise of the Methodists among the Indians. It was agreed that Bishop Asbury should visit a tribe of Indians near Pittsburg, and make arrangements, if possible, to furnish them religious instruction, and to establish a school for their children.

Coke had thus accomplished the object of his second voyage to America. He had established missions on several of the islands of the West Indies, and had obtained the information necessary to a judicious system of missionary operation. He had visited all the American conferences, and all the southern and middle states. He was thus ready to return to England, that he might lay his information and his plans before Mr. Wesley and the British conference, and obtain the men and the means for his philanthropic and Christian

Sails for Liverpool.

enterprise. Accordingly he sailed from New York on the first of June, 1789, and after a short and pleasant voyage, arrived at Liverpool.

CHAPTER V.

VARIOUS MISSIONARY ENTERPRISES.

ON his return to England from his third voyage to America, Dr. Coke hastened to lay before the Wesleyan conference a statement of the condition, wants, and prospects of the transatlantic work, particularly the West Indian missions. The cause of the slaves on the plantations, deprived not only of liberty, but of all religious instruction, he pleaded so earnestly, that the conference became deeply moved with Christian sympathy. Missions among them must be sustained. But whence should come the funds? To keep up the home-work in England, Scotland, and Ireland, would require all the ordinary means at command of the connection. In this emergency, Coke was ready, as usual, to volunteer to go from house to house, and from man to man, to beg for contributions to the enterprise.

The rebuffs, repulses, and insults he met would have disheartened any common man, but they only made him the more diligent and

Result of Coke's Efforts.

Intrigues of Catholic Priests.

earnest in pressing the claims of humanity. He not only succeeded in collecting large contributions, but by his recitals of facts respecting the oppressed and suffering condition of the slaves, he produced in the minds of the British nation a revolution, which resulted in the utter abolition of slavery throughout all their colonial possessions.

After having spent about sixteen months, traveling, preaching, and soliciting aid throughout the kingdom, he sailed, in the autumn of 1790, on his fourth voyage over the Atlantic. On arriving at Barbadoes, he learned that the missionary whom he had left there on his former visit, had been abused by the baser sort of fellows. The small society which had been collected, had been ridiculed under the name of "Halleluiahs." "Even the little negroes in the streets," says Coke, "call the Methodists Halleluiahs as they pass." Even when the abuses and disturbances became outrageous, the government afforded no redress.

At St. Vincent's he heard of the utter failure of the attempts to civilize the Caribs, owing to the Roman Catholic French priests of Martinico, who told the Indians that the Methodist missionaries were spies, whom the King of

England had sent to explore their land, and that as soon as they had finished their errand they would retire, and an army would be sent to conquer the country. The Caribs had treated the missionary as an angel sent to them to do them good, but after this they behaved so rudely, that he thought it best with his wife to make his escape. When Mrs. Baxter, wife of the missionary, took leave of the poor savages, to whose instruction she had devoted herself, she wept bitterly, and prayed that God would open the way for her return. At Grenada Dr. Coke was most kindly received by the people and by a pious clergyman, Rev. Mr. Dent, of the Church of England. A flourishing mission was established on this island. After visiting Antigua, where he found the condition of the mission prosperous, and touching at Montserrat and St. Christopher's, he visited, for the third time, St. Eustatius, hoping to find the new governor more tolerant than his predecessor. But he was received with such ungentlemanly rudeness by the petty tyrant, that he determined, on returning to England, to go to Holland and appeal directly to the government for religious liberty for St. Eustatius, and for Saba. In spite of the

Jamaica.

The Mission Establishment.

oppressive laws against religion on this island, Dr. Coke found the Methodist society in a highly-prosperous condition. They could have no preaching, but there had been raised up among them no less than eight exhorters, who had been very useful among the people.

Having held a conference with the little band of missionaries at St. Christopher's, Dr. Coke proceeded to Jamaica. Landing at Montego Bay on the north-western shore of Jamaica, he proceeded by land diagonally over the island, a distance of more than one hundred miles, to Kingston, on the south-eastern shore. The journey was most romantic. He passed over mountains, across valleys, along defiles, and through forests of the most luxuriant vegetation. The whole country presented alternate scenes of picturesque beauty and grand sublimity.

On his former visit to Jamaica he had made arrangements for a mission establishment, which had been supplied by Mr. Hammet, whom he had at first left on another island, but who afterward removed to Jamaica. The success of the mission, however, had not answered reasonable expectations. The same spirit of persecution which annoyed Wesley when he first

A Long and Disastrous Voyage.

began to preach in England, seems to have prevailed against his followers in most places, especially those cursed with the incubus of a religion established by law. The efforts of the missionary at Jamaica to accomplish what he and his friends intended, had been rendered abortive by the outrageous opposition of those whose craft was in danger from Methodist preaching. Mr. Hammet had become discouraged and sick, and as there was little prospect of accomplishing much good on the island, in the condition things had assumed, Dr. Coke sailed for Charleston, South Carolina, taking Mr. Hammet with him. The voyage proved long and disastrous. The ship got entangled among the rocky islets on the coast of Florida, was driven close upon the dangerous coast of Cuba, and finally went aground in the fog on a sand-bar, on the coast of South Carolina. She was finally abandoned, and the crew and passengers escaped in the boats to the shore near Edisto Island, from which Dr. Coke found his way by land to Charleston.

While he was traveling through the southern states, preaching and attending the conferences, intelligence of the death of Mr. Wesley reached him. Such was the condition of the Wesleyan

Wesley's Death.Attempts a Parisian Mission.

connection in England, that he thought it indispensably necessary for him to return immediately, in order to be present at the next British conference. Accordingly he proceeded to New Castle, Delaware, from which he sailed to England.

Although on arriving in England he suffered much unpleasant feeling from the illiberal, suspicious, and ungenerous remarks of some, who would insinuate that he had returned in order to become successor to Mr. Wesley, as head of the Methodists, yet he had the pleasure of seeing at the conference a satisfactory adjustment of all matters growing out of the peculiar ecclesiastical affairs of the Methodists. The deed of settlement made by Mr. Wesley was found sufficient for the emergency, and all fears for the perpetuity of Methodism were dismissed.

After having written, in connection with Rev. Henry Moore, the life of Mr. Wesley, which occupied his time nearly two years, Dr. Coke made an attempt to establish a mission in Paris. The Revolution had made wonderful changes in France. The Bastille had been demolished, and Roman Papacy had been abolished. Dr. Coke thought the time had

Goes to Paris.Great Disappointment.

come to introduce into France the pure doctrines and simple forms of Protestant Christianity. He was the more inclined to make an immediate effort in the enterprise from a letter, written by some residents of Paris to Lady Huntington, requesting her to send a missionary, and assuring her that the prospect of abundant success and eminent usefulness was very great. As Lady Huntington had departed this life, Dr. Coke determined, in answer to the letter, to proceed himself to Paris with a missionary, and occupy the place so inviting. Procuring from the Norman Islands a missionary who could speak French, he went to Paris and made at once arrangements to commence the work. He hired a room in one of the most public portions of the city, fitted it up, advertised extensively, and expected an overwhelming congregation. By the utmost exertions he raised at the first appointment an audience of thirty-six persons, and at the second only six. This was discouraging, and the mission was abandoned. It appeared, on inquiry, that the letter to Lady Huntington was written by two English schoolmasters, who hoped there would be sent from England some great orator, who would so cap-

His Leave of Paris.Fifth Voyage to America.

tivate the Parisians as to turn public attention to their school, for the purpose of learning the English language.

Dr. Coke left Paris with no very great opinion of the religious susceptibilities of the French. He had not fully learned how difficult it is to introduce pure Christianity among a people who have been cursed with a system corrupt in form, or false in doctrine. Such a people have usually to pass a crisis in the worst stage of infidelity before they can readily become orthodox Christians.

On his return to England from his unsuccessful mission to Paris, he attended the British conference, after which he sailed on his fifth voyage to America. He visited on this voyage the United States, traveled the usual round, attended the conferences, and then proceeded to the West Indies. At St. Eustatius he found intolerance still predominant. At St. Vincent's, a British colony, he found a law had been passed prohibiting any one, except the rectors of the parishes, from preaching, under a penalty of a fine of one hundred dollars, and imprisonment for three months, for the first offense, and whipping and banishment for the second offense.

Goes to Holland.Poor Success.

Having visited several other islands, on which he found things more favorable, he sailed for England, resolving to appeal to the King of England and the Government of Holland for toleration in their colonies. His appeal to his own Government was effectual. The King refused to approve the obnoxious law, and it became, therefore, void.

His success with the Dutch was less encouraging. He went to Holland, and appealed directly to the Government, explaining the condition of the people in the West India islands, and asking for the abrogation of the oppressive law, and for toleration; but the stadtholder of Holland proved as mulish as the governor of St. Eustatius, and not the slightest mitigation of the law could be obtained. The people, therefore, of the Dutch West Indies, remained deprived of all religious liberty till 1804, when the Governor-General, of his own accord, annulled the disgraceful law, and granted the free exercise of religious services.

Having done what he could to secure religious liberty to the West India missions, he turned his attention to a new field of enterprise. He had learned that in the interior of Africa there dwelt a tribe called the Foulahs,

Projects an African Mission.

Encouragement.

who were remarkable for their mild temper, gentle demeanor, and susceptibility of civilization. He supposed it might be no difficult task to introduce among them the Gospel and the arts of civilized life. Through them the blessings of Christian civilization might be diffused over the whole continent of Africa. Here, then, was a fine field for Christian enterprise—a field worthy of engaging the interests of British philanthropy. Having consulted Mr. Wilberforce, who was deemed authority on all matters connected with the interests of Africa, he determined to engage in so philanthropic and promising an enterprise. He at first intended to proceed himself immediately to Africa, but Mr. Wilberforce advised him not to go at the time he intended, as he would arrive during the sickly season. Afterward he thought he might do more for the cause in England than in Africa; so he again besieged the kingdom of Great Britain for funds for the African mission. Funds in abundance were forthcoming. Having secured the funds, the next thing was to find the men. Young men fond of adventure offered themselves in any number, but care and discretion were necessary in selecting those to whom should be confided an

Six Missionaries Appointed for Sierra Leone.

enterprise involving great expense and many interests. At last a selection was made of six men with families. They were supposed to be the right kind of persons for the enterprise—intelligent, pious, industrious, and discreet. They were furnished with a handsome outfit for themselves, and all things necessary for the success of the mission. Tools for mechanical work, and implements of husbandry, and a large supply of clothing and other necessaries were furnished, so that nothing might be wanting to success in teaching the Foulahs the arts of civilized life. The company left England in a ship for Sierra Leone, where they arrived in perfect health. But the whole company, except one man, proved wholly worthless and unfit for the business in which they had engaged. The women were quarreling continually, and the men amused themselves in calling each other hard names. They proved to be destitute of religion, honesty, and common sense. Had they ventured among the negroes of Africa, they would have become objects of ridicule and contempt, and would have been soon hooted out of the country. Fortunately, they went no further than Sierra Leone. Having rendered themselves utterly contemptible

Failure of the Mission.

Superstitious Opinions.

by their mean conduct, and disgraceful bickerings, they returned by the first opportunity to England.

Thus this enterprise, projected in benevolence and conducted at vast expense, proved a total failure. The superstitious deemed the failure designed by Providence to indicate that the duty of the Methodists was only to preach the Gospel, and that they should have nothing to do with introducing the arts of civilization. A similar conclusion was drawn from an accident in America. When Cokesbury College burned down, some concluded the Methodists were thus warned by Providence to have nothing to do with education. Such a course of policy, as these people would pursue, or would have the Methodists pursue, might do for the English Methodists in the time of Coke, who were content to remain a mere appendance to the Church of England, having no independent organization, and the ministers having no authority to administer the ordinances to their own people, but being dependent for the holy sacrament on some fox-hunting, beer-drinking, card-playing clergyman of the Established Church. But American Methodists, having a separate and independent

organization, find a great deal besides preaching necessary to maintain their own self-respect, and to command the influence they deserve. They find all the advantages of education, and all the appliances of civilization necessary to the work in which they are engaged. The Methodist minister who should content himself with preaching the Gospel only, would be about as wise as the man who should sow his seed by the wayside. Coke did not reason thus. Though his first attempt to establish the African mission failed, yet he did not give up the design till he found a society in Scotland preparing to send missionaries to the same country, when he relinquished the enterprise to them.

Soon after learning of the utter failure of the Foulah mission, Dr. Coke left England on his sixth voyage to America. The passage was most grievously unpleasant. The accommodations were poor, and the captain was one of the meanest fellows that ever walked the quarter-deck. During the whole voyage, Coke and his fellow-passengers were continually subjected to contemptible insults.

Having remained in the United States about four months, visiting the conferences, and trav-

Sails for Scotland.A Curious Incident.

eling over the country, he sailed from Charleston for Scotland, intending, as soon as he could settle up his affairs in Europe, to return, and make his permanent residence in the United States. On the voyage from South Carolina to Scotland, the ship was driven by a tempest for twenty-five days, and then fell into a calm, which lasted sixteen days. The captain wisely attributed the calm to Dr. Coke's reading a large book. He began at first to hint a wish that the book was finished. At last he exclaimed in doleful tones, that "we shall have no wind till that book is finished." The Doctor told him that he would quit reading the book. "No, no," said the captain, "we shall never have any wind if you lay it aside. It must be finished." So the Doctor read on as fast as he could, and sure enough, the very day he finished the book there sprang up a fine breeze. No doubt the philosophic captain religiously believes to this day, that Dr. Coke's big book bewitched the weather.

Arriving in Scotland, he spent some time traveling over the country, and then visited Ireland and England. Intending to return to America for a final residence, he expected this would be his last visit to his friends in the

The People's Love of Coke.He is Captured.

British kingdom. He every-where found the people reluctant to part with him. On meeting the conferences in Ireland and England, he found the preachers still more distressed than were the people at the thought of losing his services. The care of the missionary work had wholly devolved on him, and they knew not how to do without him. So earnest were the entreaties of people and preachers that he would not leave them, that he agreed to continue to divide his labors among the various branches of the Methodist family, if the American conference would release him from the promise he had made to take up his permanent abode in the United States. After negotiation between the British and American conferences on the matter, it was agreed that he might remain in Europe, visiting America, as he had done, occasionally.

The latter part of August, 1797, he sailed on his seventh voyage, to America. He took passage on an American ship, which, near the end of her voyage, was captured by a French privateer, and directed toward Porto Rico. The privateers only wanted the ship and cargo. They had no use for a Methodist missionary. So, after taking from him most of his clothing,

Released.An Odd Sight.

they put him ashore with his books and papers on the coast of the United States. I find no mention of the part of the coast on which he landed, nor of the means by which he found out where he was, or how he found the way to his friends. The first information I can find of him after his release is contained in a brief notice in Asbury's Journal, of a meeting wholly unexpected in Virginia. It was a bitter cold November morning. Asbury was journeying along to a quarterly meeting, very early, with Jesse Lee and William M'Kendree, when they suddenly met Dr. Coke "with a borrowed horse, and a large white boy riding behind him on the same horse." The Doctor must have appeared in a sad plight. A very little man, on a very cold day, with very scanty clothing, on a very old horse, with a very big boy riding behind, presented a scene sufficiently amusing to make Asbury, grave as he usually was, and a bishop in the bargain, indulge in a quiet laugh.

In the spring of 1798 he returned to England, and busied himself, as usual, in visiting the societies, and begging funds for the missions. Not content with the missions already established, he formed a plan for sending the

A Sailor's Trick.

Gospel to the degraded peasantry of Ireland by means of missionaries, who should travel in the unfrequented districts, and preach to the people in the Irish language. His plan was generally deemed impracticable, but he persevered and succeeded. The mission has proved very useful and prosperous.

In the course of the summer he made a visit to the island of Guernsey, when, as he was about to return, he met with an accident somewhat amusing to the spectators, though not particularly interesting to himself. He wished to go on board a ship in the harbor to take passage home. The ship's boat was sent on shore for him, but could not, on account of shallow water, reach the landing. Being a very little man, a sailor, with apparent kindness, offered to carry him on his shoulders to the boat. So the little Doctor mounted the shoulders of the brawny sailor. This of itself was sufficiently funny, but the scene which followed was still more so. The sailor, sidling off into deep water, purposely stumbled and fell, plunging himself and the Doctor into the sea. The Doctor, being essentially drenched, had to return to town to dry himself. In the mean time the ship sailed without him.

Projects a Welsh Mission.Last Visit to America.

In 1799 he sailed on his eighth voyage to America, pursuing his usual rounds to meet the American conferences, and visiting the West Indian missions. In the latter part of 1800 he returned to Europe, and began to meditate the establishment of other missions. He first projected a mission among the Welsh in their native tongue. The scheme was at first deemed by all but himself utopian, but by tact and perseverance he succeeded most wonderfully. In the space of ten years there were erected in the country sixty Methodist chapels, and raised up thirty-six native preachers.

In 1803 he made his ninth and last excursion to America, where he remained till the next year, when he returned to England, and immediately made arrangements to establish a mission at Gibraltar. He succeeded in raising the means and in finding the missionary; but scarcely had the missionary arrived when both he and his wife fell victims to yellow fever, leaving an infant daughter among strangers. The child, however, was returned to England, and found a protector in Doctor Coke. He next projected a system of home missionary enterprise. There were in England many small towns, villages, and hamlets, where few of the

Coke Preaches to some French Prisoners.

people ever thought of entering a church. To these places he proposed to send missionaries. Many of his friends opposed his project for reasons of economy; but he found means to meet the expense. From these missions have been formed some of the most flourishing circuits in the Wesleyan connection.

During the war between England and France, in the time of Napoleon, there were often large numbers of French prisoners on board the British prison-ships. A preacher who understood the French language, being appointed to a circuit on the banks of the river Medway, where were a great many prisoners, was invited one day by the captain of one of the ships to preach to the prisoners on board. He complied, and so great was the interest of the prisoners that Dr. Coke proposed a regular mission to embrace all the stations. Objection being made by the conference on account of the expense, he voluntarily assumed the personal responsibility of the whole enterprise. The mission was provided for and kept up during the continuance of the war.

He had made one attempt to establish a mission in Africa and failed; he made another

The British Colony in Africa.

Coke as a "Beggars."

and succeeded. The African slave-trade had been abolished, and a British colony had been founded at Sierra Leone. Some negroes, who had been members of the Methodist society in the United States, and who had gone to Nova Scotia with the refugees, after the war of the Revolution, had emigrated to the British colony in Africa. On their arrival in Africa they introduced religious worship among the colonists, and succeeded in raising up a society, and in building a chapel. To these people Dr. Coke determined to send missionary aid. In this he succeeded, as he did in all his other missionary enterprises. His last great enterprise was a mission to India; but of that we will speak hereafter.

It must require incessant financiering to support so many missions without any organization of missionary societies. All the funds had to be collected by Dr. Coke himself, on personal application to individuals. He became so well known over the kingdom, that whoever saw him coming knew at once his errand, and prepared to get off as lightly as possible. There was no escape from the Doctor. When he got after a man for a missionary contribution he would have him, and only let him

A Gift of Two Hundred Guineas.

off for a liberal ransom. On one occasion he took not only the money but the body of the giver. It happened to be a lady, and a peculiarly-interesting case, especially to the Doctor, and, as it turned out, to herself. Being on a soliciting tour, he was advised at Bristol to call on Miss Penelope Goulding Smith, a lady pious, rich, and generous. He called, and making known his errand, solicited the lady's aid. With the utmost gentleness of manner, and with a smile of angelic generosity, she at once subscribed a hundred guineas, observing that she had not the cash on hand, but if the Doctor would call on her at Bradford in a few days, she would pay him the amount. The Doctor was astounded, absolutely astounded. *A hundred guineas* from a lady, and in so enchanting a manner! His astonishment was still greater when, calling on her according to appointment at Bradford, he received from her own hands *two hundred* guineas! He was taken all aback. Such a contribution to the missionary cause, so liberal, so generously given, exceeded all his expectations. He had never heard of such a thing. Surely, the lady must be an angel! On further personal acquaintance he found her a prize worth having.

Coke's First Marriage.Second Marriage.

She seemed his other self—his better half. Her soul appeared congenial with his own. She seemed affected by the same motives, and actuated by the same principles which had governed him all his life. He, therefore, as any sensible man should do, proposed to marry her, and she, like a sensible woman, without hesitation, accepted. The marriage was a most suitable and happy one. Mrs. Coke devoted all her ample fortune to the aid of her husband in his favorite enterprises. For six years they lived an example of connubial happiness, when she, after a short illness, died, leaving her husband most deeply afflicted. In the course of about a year after her death, Doctor Coke married Miss Loxdale, of Liverpool, an estimable lady, long a member of the Wesleyan connection. Scarcely had the year passed away, when she followed his former companion to the spirit-land. They were both buried at Becon, his native place. Over their remains he erected a neat and chaste monument, with beautiful inscriptions. He requested of his friends, in whatever part of the world he might die, to bring him to that place, and lay him to rest by the side of those he had loved so well.

Advances Mission Funds Himself.

Whenever, in the course of his missionary enterprises, he could not raise funds by solicitation among the people, he would use his own private fortune to meet the demands for supplies. Whenever objection on account of expense was made by the conference to any new mission, which he proposed, he would assume the personal responsibility of all the liabilities. Whatever was lacking, after getting what he could from the contributions of others, he would make up from his own pocket. To furnish the outfit for the Sierra Leone mission, the last but one which he projected, he advanced three thousand dollars. For the outfit of the East India mission, the last which he proposed, he voluntarily offered thirty thousand dollars, should so much be found necessary. It was not till a short time before his death, that any permanent and reliable organization for raising missionary money was devised by the Wesleyan Methodists. After missions had been established, and sustained for many years, by the personal influence of Mr. Coke, in the West Indies, Nova Scotia, the Norman Isles, Ireland, Wales, Gibraltar, and the destitute districts of England, the conference organized missionary societies, by

Conference Organizes Missionary Societies.

whose means they have been able to sustain a grand system of missionary operation throughout the world.

CHAPTER VI.

LATTER YEARS OF COKE.

IN connection with the missions, over whose interests Dr. Coke incessantly watched, there often occurred circumstances bringing him in collision with the colonial authorities. We have seen how he appealed successfully to the British cabinet against the intolerant law of the authorities of the island of St. Vincent. Laws conflicting with the rights of conscience, and with religious liberty, were frequently enacted in the colonial islands, but the appeal of Coke to the "higher law" of the British Government was always found successful.

In 1794 the municipal authorities of the island of Jersey required all the enrolled militia to muster for drilling on every Sunday. There were on the island many Methodists, the fruits of missionary enterprise. They deemed military training on Sunday a profanation of the day, and absolutely refused to obey the law. In their behalf Dr. Coke appealed to the King in council, who vetoed the law. In

The King and Sunday Training.

Bermuda.

1798 the local authorities re-enacted the law, prescribing banishment as the penalty for disobedience. So anxious were they to sustain the law, that they sent a special deputation to England to obtain the royal approval. Dr. Coke again appealed to the King and council in favor of the rights of conscience. He was willing the people should be trained in military exercise, but to require them to muster on Sunday was doing violence to the conscientious scruples of the religious portion of the community. Though many leading men of the council favored the law, yet the King, on the representation of Dr. Coke, unhesitatingly applied the veto.

In 1800 the colonial legislature of Bermuda, where a Methodist mission had been established, passed a law prohibiting, under a penalty of fine and imprisonment, any person, or missionary, not ordained according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, or the Church of Scotland, from acting as preachers or schoolmasters. The Methodist missionary refused to obey the law. The penalties were, therefore, inflicted on him. No sooner had Dr. Coke, who was in England at the time, heard of the law, and the prosecution of

Success of Coke's Appeals to the King.

the missionary, than he hastened to present a memorial to the King in council, setting forth the facts, and founding his demand for redress on the acknowledged principles of the British Constitution. He was again successful, and the iniquitous law was refused the royal sanction.

In 1807 the colonial legislature of Jamaica enacted a law, that no Methodist missionary, or preacher of any kind, other than of the Established Church, should presume to instruct the slaves, or receive them into their houses or chapels of any description. Under this law, the mission and societies in that populous island must have been inevitably ruined. Those interested in its favor used every means to obtain the royal sanction. They brought to their aid wealth, political considerations, and commercial interests. They dispatched an agent to England, with instructions to use every means in his power to secure the royal approval. Dr. Coke appealed again to the King in the most earnest manner, setting forth the moral advantages of the mission to the slaves, and the sad results of the breaking up of the enterprise, and of the dispersion of the societies. Again he was heard and the law was annulled.

Henry Moore.

Coke's Commentary.

In addition to his active labors he was, for the last few years of his life, much employed in literary pursuits. We have already mentioned his connection with Rev. Henry Moore in writing the life of Mr. Wesley. As the work was a joint one, we know not how much of it to attribute to each. If Mr. Moore wrote the greater portion, as he probably did, still Dr. Coke must have given more or less attention to it, as he was one of the men named in the will of Mr. Wesley, to whom all his papers should be submitted.

At the British conference of 1792, he was requested to prepare a commentary on the holy Scriptures. A work so important, so vast, might seem difficult for a man who had no abiding place, but who was constantly traveling either by sea or by land. Yet with a zeal and alacrity characteristic of the man, he undertook it, and labored diligently on it all the time he could spare from his active duties for fifteen years. The work extends through six large quarto volumes. It is a work of decided merit.

He wrote a history of the West Indies in eight volumes. It is partly a compilation, and partly an original account of the origin, prog-

ress, and success of the missions, which were established under his superintendence.

He prepared a history of the Bible, consisting partly of translations from Saurin, and partly of compilations from various writers, and of the results of much investigation and reflection.

He prepared the Cottager's Bible, consisting of the text and of practical reflections at the end of each chapter. He also wrote and published six letters to the Methodist societies on the doctrine of justification by faith, and the witness of the Spirit, four discourses on the duties of a minister of the Gospel, and lots of single sermons and detached articles on various subjects.

He was ever alive to the interests of the Methodist societies, and ready to do any thing and every thing to promote their prosperity. He entered cordially into the plan of Wesley for providing ministerial services for the American Methodists. So well was he pleased with the success of Methodism in America independent of the Church of England, that on his return to Europe he proposed a separation of the English Methodists from the Established Church. This plan he afterward gave up,

Strange Subserviency to the Established Church.

though still we find him advocating in the British conference such a degree of independence as to admit of having preaching during church hours, of introducing baptism and the Lord's supper, and of burying the dead. It is strange that influential preachers of the conference should hesitate to claim for themselves, as Methodist ministers, such rights, and that Coke, by advocating the measures, should so compromise his popularity with his own brethren, for whose rights he contended, as to hedge up his way in soliciting missionary funds. It is marvelous that the English Wesleyans, pursuing such a course of subserviency to the Established Church, have ever succeeded in making any impression on the people. There must be an inherent vitality in Methodism to enable it to spring up and flourish under such a mass of useless rubbish and antiquated lumber as the Establishment would pile on it.

Yet even Dr. Coke, at least in two instances, through his veneration for the Establishment, and his fears that the Methodists of America might become divided among themselves, and those of Europe separated wholly from the Church, and dispersed among the dissenters, did hastily and unadvisedly propose plans of

Proposition to Bishop White.

union which, had they succeeded, would have utterly ruined Methodism in all its distinctive and useful elements.

In 1791, after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, but before the permanent settlement of the constitution by the provision for a regularly-returning General conference, and about the time of the secession of James O'Kelly, Dr. Coke, becoming greatly alarmed lest the American Methodists should be convulsed into fragments, or divided into parties, proposed to Bishop White, of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, a plan of union between the two Churches—the Methodist Episcopal and the Protestant Episcopal. No doubt Dr. Coke at the time, as he afterward averred, thought that the Methodist "connection would be more likely to be saved from convulsions by a union with the old Episcopal Church than in any other way." He did not intend "a dereliction of ordination, sacraments, and the Methodist Discipline, but a junction on proper terms." He ought, however, to have known that, however amiable and catholic-spirited might appear Bishop White, and other accomplished, gentlemanly clergymen, no union could ever be effected

The Proposition to Bishop White Fails.

between the Methodists and a Church of such pretensions as the Protestant Episcopal. His plan, so far as he divulged it, was hasty, crude, and wholly inexpedient. It was proposed to Bishop White without consulting Mr. Wesley, Bishop Asbury, or any member or preacher of the Methodist connection in America. It failed. The fact, however, of his having ever formed it did much mischief to his own popularity in America, and furnished occasion for much ecclesiastical scandal.

The facts respecting this whole matter were kept secret from 1791 till 1804, when the confidence on which Coke had relied was violated, and the correspondence made public. But, in the mean time, in 1798, he committed a similar blunder in England. He wrote to the Bishop of London, proposing a plan to "establish an indissoluble union between the Methodists and the Church of England." He suggested that if a given number of the leading Methodist preachers proposed by the conferences should be ordained, and permitted to travel through the connection, to administer the sacraments to those societies who were prejudiced against receiving the holy ordinances from the hands of immoral clergymen, all difficulty might be

Bishop of London.

Curious Episcopal Opinions.

removed, and every deviation from the Church of England would be done away.

This proposition was not very graciously received by the Bishop of London and his conferees. He thought it very unreasonable that persons of a religious and serious turn of mind should object to receiving the holy sacrament from the hands of ministers "who frequent card-tables, balls, horse-racing, theaters, and other places of fashionable amusements." "Persons of tender consciences, who have scruples in respect to any point of religious doctrine or discipline, should," the Bishop said, "be allowed all reasonable indulgence." But he seemed to feel indignant that the Methodists should require common morality and decent behavior in him from whose hands they were to receive the holy sacrament.

Being thus unceremoniously repelled in his advances for a more intimate union with the Established Church, Dr. Coke gave it up, and made no more attempts of the kind.

These unwise and inexpedient movements for a union of the new cloth with the old garment, betray in Dr. Coke some deficiencies in the elements, or some incongruous combinations in the composition of character. He was

Peculiarities in Coke.

not always a safe leader. He was too impulsive, too hasty, too ready to accede to any plan projected by himself or proposed by others, if it only were in itself not morally wrong, and if it promised success to any end he might think desirable. Though not doubting at all the validity of his own ordination by Mr. Wesley, yet he would have submitted to reconsecration by Bishop White, if thereby he could effect a union between the Methodist and the Protestant Episcopal Churches, and thus prevent convulsions among the Methodists. And he would have done this in 1791, when in 1785 he had been so disgusted at the scandalous character of the Episcopal clergy in America that he not only was a party to the dissolution of all bonds of union in the United States, but even proposed a similar dissolution of the connection between the Wesleyans and the Established Church in England. Even in his benevolent enterprises—his missions and his colleges—he was often hasty in his projects; and in many of them he would have failed for the want of means had not his indomitable energy and untiring industry saved him. However utopian might seem his projects, he would find means to accomplish them, either by soliciting

Coke as a Polemic.

As a Speaker.

from the people or by recourse to his own pocket.

His impulsive spirit often led him into embarrassment by involving him in questions of debate in the conferences. Whatever might be the question, if it were one of interest, he was sure to take an active part, either on one or the other side. The zealous manner, and piquant style with which he debated questions, often aroused in his opponents ill feeling, which they were not slow in finding opportunity to gratify. Yet no man was more ready than he to acknowledge an error, or confess a fault. He was generous and forgiving, never retaining unkindness, however much he might be provoked.

His talents were sprightly, and well adapted to active life. Yet he could not be deemed remarkable for profound thought, or for critical investigation. Indeed, action, not study, was his appropriate calling. He was a fluent and ready speaker. His voice was soft, clear, and pleasant. It, however, lacked the volume requisite for a successful orator among the backwoods settlers. His vivacity, however, and his ready and fluent manner made him passable among the sons of thunder, whose

Sincerity of Heart.

A Joint Superintendency.

voices could be heard amid the roarings of Niagara.

Whatever might be his deficiencies as a speaker, and as a leader, yet one of so magnanimous a temper, so liberal a spirit, so generous a soul, so pure a mind, and so kind a heart, could not be otherwise than popular. His person would be loved, while his plans would be rejected. None who knew him could doubt his sincerity of heart, his purity of motive, his philanthropy of design, and his uprightness of intention. Wiser men than he, but none more noble-spirited, and few more useful, have lived.

His connection with the Methodist Episcopal Church of America was anomalous. Mr. Wesley considered all the Methodists both in Europe and America as his children—children under age—children for whose spiritual interest and ecclesiastical government it was his right and his duty to provide. Accordingly he appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury *joint superintendents* over the Methodists in America. Both Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke, being, in education, in habit, and in association, Englishmen, seemed to consider an appointment from him, without consulting the American Meth-

Asbury Elected Bishop.

odists, sufficient authority to administer the affairs of Methodism in America, in the same manner as Mr. Wesley governed the societies in England. But Mr. Asbury, who, though by birth an Englishman, had become, in feeling, in habit, and in association an American, refused to serve as superintendent by virtue merely of the appointment of Mr. Wesley. He consented to serve as bishop, should the General conference elect him to that office. Accordingly, at the Christmas conference of 1784, the preachers, knowing the position of Asbury, unanimously elected him their bishop. At the same time, in order that Dr. Coke might stand in the same relation as Mr. Asbury to the American Methodist Church, they elected him also in connection with Asbury, probably by one and the same ballot. It was intended that Coke and Asbury should act jointly, having equal power, rights, privileges, and responsibilities.

Dr. Coke remained, at this time, but a few months in America. After he returned to Europe, he took the responsibility of altering the time and the place of the session of some of the American conferences. The American Methodists demurred to the authority of a

Dr. Coke's Pledge.A Five Years' Stay in Europe.

superintendent—at least while absent from the country—to alter either the time or the place, after it had been once fixed by the conference. On his return to America in 1787, Dr. Coke gave a written pledge never to exercise any government whatever, in the Methodist Episcopal Church, while absent from the United States. He claimed when present in America, only the privilege of ordaining according to the Discipline of the Church, of presiding when present in the conference, and of traveling at large. It would seem, from this promise, that he claimed no authority to station the preachers, leaving that prerogative to Mr. Asbury, whose knowledge and experience were more adequate for the judicious exercise of the power.

On the death of Mr. Wesley, in 1791, Dr. Coke sailed for Europe, and did not return to the United States till 1796. At the General conference of that year, it was proposed, on account of the great extension of Methodism, the feeble health of Bishop Asbury, and the long absence of Dr. Coke from the country, to elect another bishop. While they were discussing the expediency of the measure, Dr. Coke came forward voluntarily, and offered his

Coke and the British Conference.

entire services to the conference, to reside permanently in the United States, and to perform, in connection with Bishop Asbury, all the duties of general superintendent. The offer was accepted, and Dr. Coke, after traveling a few months as the active colleague of Asbury, returned to Europe to settle up his affairs, and make arrangements for his final settlement in America.

On arriving in England Dr. Coke, as we have said in a former chapter, found the British conference exceedingly reluctant to give him up. They greatly needed his influence to preserve union and peace in the connection in England, and his efficient services in the missionary department. They, therefore, prepared an address on the subject to the American conference, earnestly requesting them to consent to release Dr. Coke from his promise to devote himself wholly to America. At the General conference of 1800 the whole subject was discussed, and consent was given for Coke to be *lent* to the British conference for a season. It was understood that he should return to America as soon as he conveniently could, and, at any rate, be present at the next General conference.

General Conference of 1804.Coke's Proposition.

At the General conference of 1804 the request of the British conference for Dr. Coke to return to Europe was renewed. After discussion, the American conference decided that, in view of the reasons assigned by the British conference for his return—reasons founded on the necessity and utility of his services in the cause of missions—he might continue to labor in connection with the European department till the next General conference, unless, in the mean time, from any emergency that might occur in America, from the death of Bishop Asbury, or other exigency, he should be recalled by three of the annual conferences.

With this understanding Dr. Coke returned to England. But in 1806 he renewed his proposition to become resident in America, on condition that the continent should be divided into two parts, one part to be under his superintendence, and the other under that of Bishop Asbury. His proposition was submitted to the several annual conferences, and discussed, but the final decision was referred to the next General conference.

Dr. Coke was not present at the General conference of 1808. He, however, sent the conference an address, saying, that though his

Deference to the General Conference.

situation in the European connection was highly desirable, he being superintendent of the missions at home and abroad, and President of the Irish conference, and having all the Methodist pulpits in the United Kingdom open to him, and possessing many means of great usefulness, yet if the American General conference should signify by vote their judgment that his residence with them would assist to preserve their union, and would agree that he should have a full right to give his judgment in every thing in the General and annual conferences, on the making of laws, the stationing of the preachers, sending out missionaries, and every thing else which, as a bishop or superintendent, might belong to his office, he would settle his affairs with the utmost expedition, and remove to America for life. He seemed still, as in his youthful days, to be not ambitious of office or power, but emulous of doing good, and all the conditions which he prescribed were only such as to him seemed indispensable to his efficient and successful career of usefulness.

But about this time the negotiation which had occurred seventeen years before, between Dr. Coke and Bishop White, for the absorp-

The Union Scheme comes out.

Coke's Defense.

tion of the Methodist in the Protestant Episcopal Church, became publicly known. The affair struck the Methodists with surprise and consternation. They asked of Dr. Coke an explanation. He gave the explanation, saying that when he made that proposition to Bishop White the constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church was unsettled. There was no provision for a General conference; there were divisions among the preachers, and imminent danger of ruinous convulsions, and he saw then, though he afterward became convinced that he was in that respect in error, no way to place matters on a footing likely to be permanent but by a union with the old Episcopal Church. By such a union he thought the field of action for the Methodists would be greatly enlarged. He, however, never intended to favor any terms of union which would not secure the independence of discipline and places of worship of the Methodists. He frankly confessed that in all these conclusions he had erred, and he had long since ceased to think the union, if it could be effected, expedient or desirable.

This explanation satisfied the conference of what few, if any, had ever doubted that Coke

Coke Permitted to Remain in England.

had acted from pure and worthy motives ; but no explanation could restore full confidence in his discretion, judgment, and other qualities of mind indispensable in a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The conference doubted whether he ever could become fully Americanized, whether he ever could understand the American character, or appreciate the circumstances of American Methodism. "Give us," said Jesse Lee, "no more *English bishops*. Let us have *American superintendents*." While, therefore, they held Dr. Coke in great respect for his Christian character and his acknowledged talents, and in great regard for his services in America, they could not agree to recall him from Europe on the terms and conditions he had proposed. They, therefore, returned him an answer, thanking him for the services he had rendered them, and consenting that he might continue, in compliance with the request of the British conference, to reside in Europe till recalled by the General conference, or by all the annual conferences respectively.

His services to Methodism in America were great, very great, and rendered at his own expense in the infancy of the Church, when

Coke's Peculiar Sphere.

more than at any other time such aid as he afforded was necessary. The only errors he committed were the natural errors of an impulsive Englishman, who did not understand American character and circumstances. The effects of his errors were slight and only temporary. The results of his virtues were grand and enduring. In all circumstances he maintained an unsullied reputation for integrity, and an eminent character for piety.

Though his services in the United States and in the United Kingdom of Great Britain were highly valuable, yet he shone in the foreign missionary department most conspicuous as an eminent and successful laborer in the cause of his Divine Master. After seeing the foreign missions to the West Indies and to Africa, and the home missions in Ireland, England, and Wales in successful operation, he turned his attention to the condition of the far-famed land of the Indus and the Ganges, where

“ The spicy breezes
Blow soft from Ceylon's isle.”

As early as 1784, before his first visit to America, he had written a letter to a gentleman in India, making inquiries into the state of morals, the influence of idolatry, the difficulties to

India.Sails for that Country.

be encountered, the probable amount of expense, the prospect of success, and the best plan of procedure in establishing a mission in that country. Though the difficulties in the way of the enterprise seemed at that time too formidable to render any immediate measures judicious, yet he retained through all his busy life a deep interest in the project. In 1806 he met a gentleman who had spent twenty years in India, and from him he gained much useful information bearing on the enterprise. In 1813 he opened a correspondence with Mr. Buchanan, author of *Researches in India*, and from him received much additional information of great value.

His inquiries and deliberations resulted in fixing in him a settled determination to go himself to India. He hoped he might find others to accompany him, but if not, he would go alone. In the course of a few months he found seven men who volunteered to accompany him. He himself offered to bear, from his own private property, all the expense of the outfit, amounting to thirty thousand dollars. All arrangements being made, the mission party sailed from Portsmouth in two ships, on the 30th of December, 1813. The parting

Parting Scene.Dr. Coke's Death.

scene in the harbor of Portsmouth was one of grand sublimity. On the shore was collected an immense multitude of people, looking at the gallant ships as they spread their sails and turned their prows toward the ocean. On board there was an adventurous and philanthropic band, leaving friends and home, to carry the Gospel of Christ and the arts of civilized life to the distant regions of the east. Chief of that devoted band was the learned, the pious, the indefatigable Coke, now sixty-seven years old, going to a new climate, among a strange people of an unknown tongue, to spend his last days in leading the poor Hindoo to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

For four months after leaving port, the gallant ships sped along booming over the waters of the Atlantic, around the Cape of Good Hope, and into the midst of the Indian Ocean. All on board was life, alacrity, and hope. But on the morning of the third of May, 1814, there appeared floating at half-mast the flag of death. Dr. Coke was dead! He died suddenly and all alone, in the night, of apoplexy. On opening the door in the morning his servant found him lying on the floor lifeless and cold. Being

A Watery Grave.

a little unwell when he retired, he had probably arisen in the night to obtain some drink or medicine, and fallen never to rise again.

It had been the earnest wish of Dr. Coke, in whatever part of the world he might die, to be buried in his native village, by the side of his beloved wives, the pious and devout Penelope Goulding Smith, and the accomplished and affectionate Anne Loxdale. But to fulfill this request was deemed impossible. The ship was near the Equator, in the center of the Indian Ocean, and there were on board no means of preserving the body. So, as the sun of that melancholy day was setting, the mortal body of the man of God was committed to the deep, the unfathomable deep, where, over its watery bed "Ocean yet winds her funeral shell, and breathes her deep and long-drawn requiem."

RICHARD WHATCOAT.



RICHARD WHATCOAT.

LIFE AND LABORS.

Whatcoat's Birth.

His Father Dies.

RICHARD WHATCOAT was born in Gloucestershire, England, in December, 1736. His parents were members of the Established Church. They were pious and devout people, and enjoyed what was very uncommon in that day in England, the services of an evangelical, a devout, and pious pastor. The children being early instructed in the theory, the spirit, and the practice of true religion, grew up to maturity in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord," a comfort to their parents, and an example to those around them.

While the children were all yet young, the father died, leaving the mother with slender means to raise and educate her family. She managed, by industry, economy, and prudence, to keep together her family, consisting of two sons and three daughters, till the boys became of sufficient age to be put as apprentices to

Bound as an Apprentice.

Conviction and Conversion.

trades. At the age of thirteen Richard was bound as apprentice to Mr. Jones, of Birmingham. What was the species of trade to which he was put I find no means of learning. At the age of twenty-one, having fully accomplished the years of his apprenticeship, he went to Wednesbury and commenced business for himself. Here he began to attend regularly Methodist preaching, by which he learned that though he had led a sober and moral life, yet he needed renewal of the heart, and sanctification of the soul. Having labored some weeks under serious conviction, and being one day "overwhelmed with guilt and fear," he was reading the Bible in retirement, searching for light and comfort for his darkened and anxious soul, when he came to these words, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." As he fixed his eyes on the words, in a moment the darkness was removed, and the Spirit bore witness with his spirit that he was a child of God. He was filled with unspeakable peace, love, and joy. From that time he became a devoted Christian, of exemplary life and holy temper.

He continued to reside in Wednesbury for nearly ten years, during which he acquired by

Wednesbury.

Itinerant Labors.

his amiable spirit and excellent character much influence among the people, and became very useful as band-leader, class-leader, and steward in the Methodist society.

When a little rising thirty years of age, he began to hold religious meetings for exhortation and preaching in the country places adjacent to Wednesbury. Being encouraged by his success as a local preacher, he offered himself to the traveling connection, to which he was admitted in 1769. For fifteen years he traveled extensively, and labored successfully in England, Ireland, and Wales. To get around some of his circuits required eight weeks of travel, and he often had to preach three times a day. On one circuit, finding the people poor, and unable to support preaching, he, in order to obtain means of living, sold his horse, and walked all the year from one appointment to another on the circuit. Wherever he went he was useful, popular, and successful.

In 1784 he volunteered to accompany Dr. Coke to America. He was present at the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church at the Christmas conference of 1784. From the time of his arrival in America till the Gen-

Whatcoat Elected Bishop.

Dies.

eral conference of 1800, he labored as a faithful minister, most of the time in large districts. Such was the confidence of Mr. Wesley in his piety and talents, that in 1787 he signified to the American Methodists a strong desire that Whatcoat might be appointed bishop. But the General conference, not wishing to acknowledge the right of Mr. Wesley to govern the American societies, lest he might exercise that right in recalling Asbury to Europe, declined, at that time, to confer on Mr. Whatcoat the honor of the superintendency. In 1800, however, when no such reasons of expediency longer existed, they signified their estimation of his worth by electing him the colleague of the honored and beloved Asbury.

From his election as bishop in 1800 till his death, he traveled regularly over his vast parish, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Bay of Casco, preaching every day, visiting the conferences, and superintending, in connection with Asbury, the general interests of the Church. He died at Dover, Delaware, in July, 1806, at the age of seventy years.

We can give but a brief sketch of this good man. He kept no journal, and left but a meager record of his life. He wrote, a short

Summary of Whatcoat's Character.

time before his death, a short account of himself, that he might thereby "leave a trace of his experience and travels as a grateful acknowledgment of the unmerited mercies and favors he had received from his gracious God and the people among whom he had sojourned." This account, however, contains few incidents or facts of interest.

The uniform testimony of our fathers would induce us to believe Bishop Whatcoat a man of the most amiable temper, unassuming simplicity, and saintly piety. In the brief memoir found in the old Minutes, and undoubtedly written by Asbury, it is said, "We will not use many words to describe this almost inimitable man. So deeply serious—who ever saw him light or trifling? Who ever heard him speak evil of any person? Who ever heard him speak an idle word? Dead to envy, pride, and praise; sober without sadness; cheerful without levity; careful without covetousness, and decent without pride. Although he was not a man of deep erudition, yet probably he had as much learning as some of the apostles and primitive bishops, and sufficient for the work of the ministry. He professed the justifying and sanctifying grace of God,

Asbury's Opinion of Whatcoat.

and all who knew him might well say, "If a man on earth possessed these blessings, surely it was Richard Whatcoat."

Bishop Asbury says of him, in his funeral discourse, "I have known him intimately for nearly fifty years, and tried him most accurately in the soundness of his faith in the doctrine of general depravity, and the complete and general atonement; of the insufficiency of either moral or ceremonial righteousness for purification, in opposition to faith alone in the merit and righteousness of Christ; and in the doctrine of regeneration and sanctification. I have known his holy manner of life; his attention to duty at all times, and in all places, and before all people, as a Christian and a minister; his long-suffering and endurance in great affliction of body and of mind, having been exercised with severe diseases and in great labors. But this did not abate his charity, his love of God and man, in all its effects, tempers, words, and actions. He bore with resignation and patience great temptations, bodily labors, and inexpressible pain. In life and death he was placid and calm. As he lived so he died."

Having thus collected from every source we

His Reward in Heaven.

can all the light that may be brought to bear on the character of Bishop Whatcoat, we must leave him with only a few dim and misty rays of evening twilight lingering about his name; yet from his purity of character, his gentleness of spirit, his kindness to man, his love to God, and his saintly piety, we have no doubt but in that world to which he has gone he holds an exalted place among those who "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever."

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