

A MEMOIR
OF
JOHN FERNLEY, Esq., J. P.,
LATE OF CLAIRVILLE, SOUTHPORT.



*Yours very aff^{ly}
John Evelyn*

Engraved by J. H. EAKER from a photograph

A. MEMOIR

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LATE OF CLAIRVILLE, SOUTHPORT.

BY THE

REV. W. B. POPE.

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MEMOIR
OF
MR. JOHN FERNLEY.

THE late Mr. Fernley has left his own memorial of his name : and that in two senses. He has written it largely and indelibly on more than one institution that will keep it permanently in the remembrance of the world and of his own people. This will be his most honourable record. He has also left a Diary of the leading events of his course : very complete in respect to his earliest and his latest days, and stamped throughout with every note of being a faithful transcript of his inner life. Though this was not intended for publication, it affords ample matter for such a brief sketch as that which I have been requested to draw up. It is only right to premise that I am indebted to the careful judgment of Mr. T. Walton Stead, to whom Mr. Fernley committed his private papers, for the selection of my materials ; he has indeed left me little to do but weave the whole into a narrative, and to connect with it some observa-

tions based on my own familiar intercourse with the deceased during his later years. I may add that wherever quotations are introduced without any intimation to the contrary, they are in Mr. Fernley's words.

JOHN FERNLEY was the second son of Thomas and Mary Fernley, of Stockport, "religious people in the Methodist Society." He was born on April 12th, 1796. The course of his early life, as he describes it, is that of one who was always under strong religious convictions, alternately yielded to and resisted, though, on the whole, constantly tending to personal decision. In his nineteenth year, every trace of vacillation ended. "For these two years," he writes, "I have wanted some person to invite me to the class-meeting, but never succeeded. Knowing Mr. Thomas Smith, a leader, I resolved to ask myself as nearly as I could; but he saved me the trouble by inviting me to come." From that time the young man's religious life began in earnest. His Diary gives abundant proof that a good foundation was laid. It tells of incessant prayer for a deeper sense of sin, and for the spirit of more assured adoption; it reveals a keenly sensitive conscience, trembling, after making public profession of the work of God in his soul, lest "he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost;" and it gives many other tokens of a thorough

change of heart, which showed itself at first rather in an entire conversion from sin than in an enjoyment of confidence and peace. In July, 1815, he seems to have been impressed with the importance of entering into a formal covenant with God as revealed in the Redeeming Trinity. In private, and without the incentive and inspiration of the public annual solemnity, he wrote out the full form of the Covenant Service, which he most solemnly signed with the attestation: "Done this day in the presence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." There is every reason to believe that the bond of this sacred transaction was never afterwards broken; though his settled assurance of personal salvation was for some time liable to interruption.

After this follow the plentiful signs of a constraining love of Christ. Though Mr. Fernley was naturally diffident and reserved, the Methodist or rather the Christian zeal of a convert shows itself in many a record in the Diary. He feels "a fervency and devotion in class that he never felt before;" "broke out in prayer for the first time;" has a "presentiment upon his mind that he is called to be a preacher, and can think of no secular employment with pleasure;" begins to write down an account of the memorable prayer-meetings and lovefeasts he attended, as also of the sick whom he visited, and especially of the persons he was successful in bringing to class.

On entering his twenty-first year, his mind was drawn very strongly towards the ministry. He made a beginning in his theological studies with Mr. Wesley's sermon on "Original Sin," and forthwith determined "to read by God's help every doctrinal sermon and treatise in his writings": a pledge redeemed in after life to the very letter; few men having acquired a better acquaintance with John Wesley's theology. Presently he makes "an engagement with Mr. Parker, the Unitarian minister, to teach him Latin;" and promises soon to add Greek to his acquirements, "as I really believe it is God's will that I should preach, for I cannot think of any secular concern." It may be noted in passing that Mr. Fernley did not in subsequent life keep up these classical studies: he was always a diligent reader, and his reading extended over a wide area, though mainly theological; but his Latin and Greek gradually faded from his memory, and any reference to his early enthusiasm for these tongues was replied to by a very significant smile.

Twelve months afterwards, in 1817, the record shows that the writer had a strong bias towards the ministry of the Established Church. This was not the result of alienation from Methodism: on the contrary, he speaks of Dr. Townley and Mr. M'Nicoll as giving him great encouragement in his studies, and thus securing his lasting gratitude. But he was introduced to the Rev. Legh Richmond,

through whose influence he was led to place himself for a short time under the training of a clergyman in Northampton. He did not remain there, however, many days; he "felt that the Church of England atmosphere was most uncongenial with his training and habits." The fact is, that Wesley's sermons had pre-occupied his mind, and he was, though he knew it not, a Methodist for life. Moreover, his sense of vocation to the ministry was of a very indeterminate kind. With reference to this turning-point, Mr. Fernley writes, fifty years afterwards: "I was led to give up for ever the idea I had cherished. For some two or three years I remained at home, endeavouring to improve my mind. But there was no prospect of usefulness before me, nor any opening in business. I remember well the deep depression of spirit this occasioned." There is no hint, however, that he regarded himself as having missed his way. It is a grievous thing to mistake one's vocation; a very grievous thing to mistake in the case of a vocation to the ministry; but it does not seem that Mr. Fernley made that great mistake. He mentions his entrance into business as never having troubled or even clouded his conscience. He dwells also on his proved inaptitude for the special studies required of him; and certainly he never gave evidence of possessing any of those peculiar talents of public influence and address which are found in those whom the

Spirit seals with this vocation. But, after all is said, it remains a circumstance not altogether explicable that so strong an impression concerning a call to the ministry should have so entirely been effaced as to keep him from every grade of it among his own people. Suffice, that, having given up all thought of the sacred office, he remained to the end in the conventional meaning of the word a layman : his ministry was altogether private, and limited to the leadership and the various administrative offices of the Church.

In June, 1818, Mr. Fernley entered into partnership with his brother, Mr. Thomas Fernley, and Mr. Martin Swindells, twist spinners. Here his own words must be quoted : "An excellent opening presented itself, (after I had made it subject of prayer,) which I considered it my duty to embrace. From that time I have found my conscience applauding the undertaking. I have determined by the help of God (if He prosper me in it) that I will not be unwilling 'to communicate.' I am determined to set apart a considerable portion of time to cultivate the graces of the Holy Spirit, that with them my character may be adorned. I see the danger of pursuing business inordinately : my idea is to get a comfortable living, and, if God is willing to trust me with more, I hope to act as a wise steward, which by the assistance of God I will be." After a year's experience of com-

merce, he found, as many besides have found, how difficult it is to receive large gains suddenly acquired without surrendering the heart to the bondage of Mammon and becoming reckless in speculation. But a still sorer trial of his religious simplicity was adherence to the Christian maxim of "doing to others as we would they should do to us." Many who read these lines will well understand what the following words mean : "It is so consistent with the depraved appetite of gain, and so consonant with the common examples that I witness weekly, to overrate every article when I sell and underrate it when I buy, that I see great necessity to watch and pray lest I be overtaken." There are many indications in the Diary that the responsibility of possessing wealth pressed heavily, or rather with due weight, on the mind of the young man, with whom business evidently prospered. For instance, there is a record to this effect : "Since our commencement in business (eighteen months) we have realized about £ [the blank must be left to imagination, remembering that those were money-making times,] which will leave £ . . . for me. This I shall consider as being put in my hands to use for the good of my fellow-creatures as soon as opportunity serves. I feel thankful that I can give of my substance, according to my poor power, as willingly as if I were only a steward, and had only to account for it at the reckoning-day. For this disposition I

hope to be grateful, and, according to circumstances, to increase in it."

In 1821 Mr. Fernley became a housekeeper: a circumstance which he refers to with no small exultation. His habits were very orderly and exact; and he seems to have at once established those precise rules which marked his household to the end. What he most emphatically notices, however, is the joy with which he set up what is already called his "family altar." "I pray God that the fire may burn clear and bright, and that constant sacrifice may be offered thereon while He lends me breath." For more than half a century the vows of that first evening were remembered: the worship of his household was always conducted with much solemnity and reverent devotion. During the few years that he kept up this bachelor establishment in Stockport, Mr. Fernley led a very active life in the Society. In 1823 he was made a leader: an office in which he took great delight, down to the period when infirmity of hearing prevented his efficient discharge of it. He was much solicited to become a local preacher; but after some alternations of judgment and feeling on the proposal, he seems to have passively let the question drop from his thoughts. This was one of the few instances of indecision that are apparent in his life: he brooded over the subject, was "almost convinced," until the course of events decided for him. It does not appear

that he ever came to a perfect understanding with himself on the matter. Meanwhile, these were years of quiet mental and religious culture. He was evidently becoming acquainted with his weaknesses, and striving to overcome them. The following record is only a specimen of his self-communing. "My birthday : O that as one succeeds another I may become a more established Christain ! As far as I can judge, my class bids fair, under the immediate blessing of God, to be of spiritual service in the neighbourhood. There is a prayer-meeting established in our warehouse on Sunday morning at seven o'clock. In these my spiritual engagements, I am desirous of doing good to others, and getting good to my own soul. I feel very often jealous of my motives and intentions, lest there should be a seeking after self-exaltation or a wish for personal influence. On this ground I *feel* there *is* danger, and I earnestly pray, 'O Lord, do Thou influence my motives and intentions, so that Thy glory may be my only aim!'" Throughout the Diary there are tokens of a stern conflict going on with self; like all true Christians, especially such as have the opportunity of doing or giving more than others, he found by painful experience how exceeding hard it is to maintain the single eye and perfect purity of purpose : whether conquering, or sometimes conquered, in this solemn warfare, he never gave up the hope of uniting his own will

absolutely with the will of God ; and the victory, as will be seen, was at last complete.

In 1825 Mr. Fernley's immediate connection with Stockport ceased. Long afterwards he records that one of his chief sources of regret in leaving, was the separation from the prosperous class which he had raised, and which was bound up with his religious life. Removing to Grosvenor Square, Manchester, he began to take a still more prominent part in Methodist affairs. Besides gradually forming a new class, he gave himself to other work. A note in the Diary mentions, with evident pleasure, his having been appointed "Secretary to the Wesleyan Sunday-School." His good habits of business, and proved devotion to the interests of his own community, marked him out for posts of financial trust and responsibility : of which more hereafter. But there was a family link that bound him to Stockport. His parents were still living there ; and his mother's state of health was such as to give him anxiety. The following extract is in evidence of the strength and Christian purity of his filial sentiments ; and as such adds a very important element to the sketch of his life. No man ever gave more ample proof of being a good son and a good husband ; and these things are of great price in the estimation of character. "I am just returned from Stokport . . . to see my mother, who now appears very near her home.

... On Saturday morning, March 18th, my dear mother departed this life. She died in the sixty-first year of her age, and in the thirty-eighth of her Christian profession, which she adorned with so much meekness, quietness, and humility, as to be esteemed by all who knew her. Her piety was genuine; her benevolence unwearied; her family arrangements, prudence, thoughtful economy, and consistent liberality, were unimpeachable. In her, all that is pre-eminently excellent in the character of a Christian, a mother, and a friend, was most distinctly combined." Meanwhile, his father was also the object of his filial regard, which, in his case, was mingled with some anxiety to see him a good Methodist before he died. Speaking of the opening services of the Tiviot-dale chapel, which excited much attention, and have an enthusiastic report, there is nothing which is more earnestly noted than the following: "I was very thankful that my father took such interest in the opening. I pray that it may be the means of bringing him through the right door into connection with the people of God. He certainly appears to me better disposed on this point than I have known him for upwards of twenty years. It may be the way of Providence first to soften and prepare his heart by the death of my dear, dear mother. O that this may be the case!" The father lived many years longer. He was a man whose force and eccentricity of cha-

racter were very marked : a lover of good men, and always purposing to be himself good, there is reason to believe that his end was that of a penitent and accepted Christian. The only reference to him afterwards made is this : " On March 26th, 1843, my dear father died in a peaceful state of mind, fully relying on the efficacy of the Atonement, and leaving a pleasing testimony of his spiritual safety."

In 1827 the Diary betrays signs that its writer was in pursuit of a wife, and in no small degree anxious as to the probabilities of success. He had set his heart on Eliza, daughter of Mr. James Wood : to enter such a family was an object of honourable ambition. He seems to have met with a first reception which taught him that he must use his utmost legitimate arts. The young suitor used them, but did not forget Providence and prayer. This sentence from the Diary has in it a touch of nature that many can understand. " Sometimes I am yet fearful lest I may not be accepted. But it is my most earnest prayer, that I may be entirely guided by the ' wisdom that cometh from above.' Yet I should be much affected by a disastrous result ; and here I leave it." A few months later the record brightens ; yet a few more months, and we have the bridegroom returning thanks to God, with a simplicity of devotion the privacy of which it seems wrong to betray.

Not very long after this event, and partly in conse-

quence of it, Mr. Fernley retired from business. His income was sufficient for his wants and tastes and charities ; and he had never been anxious to acquire an enormous fortune. But here again he shall speak for himself. "I thank a beneficent Providence for my comfortable circumstances, and do earnestly pray that I may be preserved from an undue estimate of them or dependence upon them. I feel the deceit of my own heart. I cannot trust even in my own good intentions. Nothing but the direct grace of God will enable me so to use the property committed to me as to give a good account of my stewardship. It is a talent committed to my care ; and woe to me if I either hide it or misuse it. I pray that God may give me right dispositions and views, so that both with respect to my time and influence, and property also, all may conduce to the glory of His name !"

In harmony with this prayer, Mr. Fernley gave his time to the public service, and took his part in all those enterprises of religion and charity for which that part of the century was remarkable. He was never in the very front, never in the very rear ; but held on a steady course, placing his measure of gifts at the disposal of men wiser and stronger than himself, and contributing of his substance, if not with a large benevolence, yet with the anxious care of one who knew that it was his duty to give. Offices multiplied on him, of course : a young and intelligent man, wealthy and connected

with the best Methodist society, having all his time at his disposal, and desirous to do good, would be certain to find abundant employment.

One of the presiding spirits of Methodism, Dr. Bunting, was then in Manchester ; and his eye was upon any person likely to be useful. He requested Mr. Fernley to accept the office of Treasurer of the Chapel Fund ; and the appointment was at once acceded to by him. "Being earnestly desirous," he says, "to be usefully employed in some active duty for Methodism, and not having been intrusted with the qualification necessary for taking a prominent part in any public service, this was a suggestion which fully accorded both with my inclination and my ability." Our Diarist did not use these last words vainly : both his inclination and his ability fitted him perfectly for this office. For many years he attended and watched over the Committee with a feeling very much deeper than that of mere official interest. If he was not the originator of the schemes which have successively brought Methodist chapel affairs far towards perfection, he was their ever-ready supporter. Even his caution and obstructiveness were of no small value. Perhaps it was this institution of Methodism that he called more particularly his own ; it was his first public enthusiasm, and it lasted to the end. His will proved his deep devotion to it ; and the tribute paid to him by the resolution of the Committee is

so complete as to render any further reference superfluous.

Mr. Fernley was one of the promoters of the establishment of the Theological Institution. It will be seen hereafter that this cause was also dear to him to the last. At the outset his relation to it was mainly through the Building Committee. This had the benefit of a taste which, though far as yet from ripe, was considerable. He lived, indeed, to see that some of the arrangements which he indefatigably superintended were not of the most desirable kind. But let that pass. It may be mentioned, that he was an active Trustee and Treasurer of the Oxford Road and Ancoats chapels; the reduction and liquidation of debts being an object of great concern to him. On the decease of Mr. J. Daniel Burton, he became Treasurer of the Oldham-Street Trust; the complicated affairs of which long occupied much of his attention. In all these matters, as well as in many similar relations to the municipality, he laboriously occupied his time. It is not enough to say that he conscientiously did his duty, and was faithful to every interest intrusted to him. He threw his whole soul into the details of every department of business. Though always showing a preference for the "Committee of One," as he used long afterwards facetiously to call himself, he was a good Committee-man. Sometimes his scrupulosity and anxiety about trifling details

joined to much tenacity of purpose, made him a difficult colleague ; but generally his judgment was much relied on ; and even those who were not eager to work with him had full confidence that he was doing the right thing alone. All these services, continued through years, must be taken into account in the estimate of the value of a life like his. They represent in his case, as in the case of a great many others, a large amount of usefulness that cannot be connected directly with spiritual results, but is not on that account of less importance. We may be sure that this kind of indefatigable care in things pertaining to the material and external interests of the Church will not be forgotten by Him who makes us all stewards of our diversified talents.

The Diary about this time is peculiarly rich in daily records of the progress and issues of the "Warren" agitation. No man was more deeply interested in this important Methodist crisis than Mr. Fernley. His notes of private conferences and public meetings, of the prolonged excitement and suspense of the legal proceedings, of the ardour with which ministers and laymen, laymen especially, celebrated the victory, might be valuable to the historian of those times. To us they have no other interest than as showing that Mr. Fernley was loyal to the constitution of Methodism. This taste of the bitterness and wretchedness of religious strife gave him a lifelong hatred of the

very name of agitation. From that time forward he was conservative almost to excess, and appeared to some unreasonably opposed to change of every kind. The immediate result of his personal interest in the defence of Methodism was his Treasurership of the Fund for the liquidation of Chancery expenses.

He had for four years been gaining experience as Secretary to the Stockport Dispensary and Fever Hospital: a service which gave him a decided taste for the administration of public charities. In due time he became Deputy Treasurer, and one of the House Stewards of the Manchester Royal Infirmary: the erection of the present building he superintended from the foundation to the top-stone, and exulted over it as "one of the noblest buildings in Manchester." This was true enough when he wrote, but Manchester has wonderfully improved its architectural taste since that time. He was also connected with the Manchester Fever Hospital, and mainly brought about its union with the Royal Infirmary, an Act of Parliament having been obtained for that purpose in 1852. This was not all. "At the time I joined the Infirmary, a new Lunatic Hospital was in course of erection. I was requested to become one of the Deputy Treasurers, and gave particular attention to its completion. I undertook, with Dr. Dickson, to prepare a Code of Rules, and wrote out the manuscript copy. The same also with the Revised Code

of Rules for the Infirmary." But upon this part of Mr. Fernley's course it is not necessary to enlarge. Suffice to say, that his devotion to the interests of society was of the most catholic character. Every object which claimed his service had his undivided attention, and his whole life was occupied in carrying out either his own schemes or the schemes of others for the benefit of his fellow-citizens.

But it is right to turn from these public details to those which are of a more private character. While Mr. Fernley was devoting himself to his official duties, his home was the scene of events which deserve record as having greatly tended to mature his character, and to determine his future course. His residence, Stanley House, was one of those centres of Methodist life to which much of the history of Manchester Methodism may be traced. It was not, indeed, the chief centre ; that perhaps was to be found in the house of his father-in-law, to which for a number of years the leading men of the Connexion were in the habit of resorting as a kind of common home and meeting-place. Many who have passed away, and some who are now becoming gray-headed, owed much of their training for public life to those gatherings under Mr. James Wood's hospitable roof. Perhaps no one profited by them more than young John Fernley. His opinions and tastes were insensibly moulded by the private conversation of the Buntings

and Watsons, and others, whose public ministrations tended much to form his religious character. Methodists of his generation and that which followed hard on it are usually enthusiastic when they speak of those days. Some of them mourn over the degeneracy of later times. Mr. Fernley had in his reminiscences a touch of both sentiments, but not much of the latter. His heroes were doubtless the men of that generation, and those who were created by it. He did not think that their successors were in all respects worthy of their fathers, whether as preachers, or as legislators, or as administrators. But he was not slow to appreciate the points in which those successors do not fall behind. At any rate, his traditional reverence for a great past never disabled his judgment as to the learning and culture and gifts of younger men. And, as to young Methodism in general, he was on the whole sanguine: while firmly believing that individual men and individual influence were but feebly reproduced in later days, he saw in the movement of the system as a whole signs of healthy expansion, development, and adaptation to the wants of the age which he was always ready to acknowledge. But this is digression.

While thus actively employed in the Society, Mr. Fernley in private diligently cultivated the measure of talent that had been given him. He gradually collected a very valuable library; books, rather than

paintings or other articles of virtù,—though not quite to the exclusion of these,—being the objects of his expenditure. The selection, binding, and arrangement of his books displayed a refined taste. But they were not merely ornaments of his house; he read them with care, especially his historical and theological authors; and thus formed a habit which was of the utmost value in later life, when deafness and comparative seclusion shut him out from more active engagements. His love of music amounted to a passion. He played on his own organ with considerable skill; and made a fine collection of the best sacred music of British and foreign composers. As a young man, this was his favourite relaxation; afterwards, he turned it to good account in the improvement of the psalmody of the public service; but for many after years, his chief delight in it sprang from the consolation it afforded to his afflicted wife. The real benefit conferred by Mr. Fernley on Methodist psalmody,—of which the volume, “*Tunes, New and Old*,” compiled by himself and his friend Mr. Dobson, of Oxford-Road Chapel, remains a monument,—justifies the following extract from his Journal: “My dear wife became in a short time as much interested and benefited as myself; and could not afterwards tolerate the common run of sacred music heard in private circles. During the early part of our residence in Stanley House, we invited occasionally a few musical

friends, and indulged ourselves with selections from La Trobe, Novello's Motets, Haydn's and Mozart's Masses, Purcell, etc. . . . All this, however, was as nothing compared with the real spiritual advantage we mutually derived from another class of very elevating music which at that time it was our constant practice to pursue. I allude particularly to the pathetic compositions by Jowett, and a fine selection of hymns to them in his '*Musæ Solitariæ*;' to many of those found in Gardiner's Sacred Melodies; Petit's Collection, where some fine minor tunes by Sir William Herschel are found; to my friend Mr. Shore's Adaptations; to La Trobe's Selections, where there are several of Michael Haydn's (brother of Joseph), of the very highest class of sacred music; to the Devotional Harmony, some of the pieces being taken from German composers. We thus anticipated the advance in the taste and solid compositions of modern hymnology and psalmody, such as 'Mercer,' 'Monk,' 'Chope,' 'Turle,' etc., by very many years. The organ was in the dining-room; and, after inventing the water-wheel, it was my habit to engage in some of these compositions, my pleasure being heightened by knowing how much my wife partook of the benefit. It was my uniform practice to play and sing every Sunday evening a beautiful Sanctus, concluding with M. Haydn's 'Love Divine, all loves excelling:' Mrs. Fernley, having retired, participated, as she could in her bedroom

very distinctly hear the organ. Every Sunday morning, also, I played and sang appropriate hymns, and was rejoiced to hear her allude to the benefit it gave to her lonely mind. . . . I am now on reflection most grateful that, while I had the opportunity, I engaged in this elevating, cheerful and profitable music for her sake and my own. I have now very much less inducement to continue this musical pleasure, and at present feel no inclination to resume it; the consciousness that I could contribute to her pleasure was a sufficient motive to its pursuit."

There are many readers who will feel a deep interest in this extract. Besides the evidence it gives of the writer's devotional warmth and genuine tenderness of spirit, it will remind them in particular of pleasant hours gone for ever, but leaving their fragrance behind. It may be added that the beautiful organ, with its accompaniments and much of the music, are now in Didsbury College, by a bequest, the motives and conditions of which will not be forgotten.

When Mr. Fernley wrote the above there was something in his mind which was not expressed: the solace of sacred music at a time when his wife and himself were smitten with their life-long sorrow. Of that sorrow the Diary thus speaks, after an interval of thirty-five years: "Our dearly-lamented boy was born March 17th, 1836. We were permitted to see his

angelic features only thirteen months : April 16th, 1837, in the greatest agony, we were called to give him up. It is impossible for a stranger to such a loss to estimate the poignancy and severity of this most mysterious dispensation. My faith in the loving Providence of God was tried to the very utmost, as all our cherished hopes for a happy future were at once, and for ever, uprooted : we were left desolate and childless." The place of this child was never taken by another. Christian resignation and the healing benefit of time wrought their effects ; but this loss gave a new tone and direction to life. It was sanctified to both parents, and was always, to the last hour, a common remembrancer of the supreme claims of a jealous God, and a common link with another world. As a disappointment this event threw its shadows upon the remainder of his days ; it, perhaps, had its effect in shutting out many cheerful influences and imparting a tone of reserve and exclusiveness : this is often the unconscious result of such a dispensation. But as a discipline it wrought out finally its best design. None could have heard the two parents speaking unreservedly on the subject without being sure of this.

Mr. and Mrs. Fernley spent the winter of 1854 in Southport. This being found beneficial, "Clairville" was built, and occupied during each of the next two winters. After these reconnoitring visits the salubrity

of the place overcame every remaining reluctance. In 1859 the establishment at Stanley House was broken up, and Mr. Fernley entered on the last and most memorable decade of his life, in a new sphere, with which his memory will be always, and in many important respects, associated.

Mr. Fernley created for himself a beautiful residence, which, with its surrounding land, he made all that heart could wish. The change had a good effect upon his health ; and, as he always thought, tended to the lengthening of his days. Mrs. Fernley, also, though a confirmed invalid, and afflicted with a disease that admitted no cure, was greatly benefited. "Clairville" soon became to both a very happy home. Mr. Fernley delighted in his books, and kept up a course of reading that might almost be called systematic : he went slowly and steadily over again through several of his old classics, and made himself familiar with a good deal of the current literature, especially in theology, and more particularly in sermons. His hospitalities were, in a quiet way, rather distinguished, embracing the best society of the neighbourhood. His establishment was ordered by Christian rule ; and it was his privilege to have servants around him who were deeply attached and faithful. The great law of his private life, to which everything else gave way, was devotion to the welfare of his sick wife, the sharer of many joys and sorrows. His tenderness to

her was a feature that ought not to be omitted in a sketch like this. He considered her feelings in all his arrangements and plans, was never weary of her society, and made her comfort his religious care. She was able to give him the best return : by lively appreciation of every act of affection, by a general flow of good spirits, and union of heart with him in all spiritual exercises.

It would have been scarcely to be wondered at if Mr. Fernley had retired now into his own circle : especially as his old infirmity of deafness had lately grown upon him. But it was far otherwise. He was a public man, and kept up that character to the end. The local interests of Southport soon had much of his attention. He took part in the admirable Strangers' Charity and Local Dispensary, encouraging the liberality of others by the presentation of a site. As member of the Committee of the National Life Boat Society he was actively useful ; and this institution he effectually remembered by the posthumous presentation of a life-boat, now about to be brought to Southport, and to bear the name "Eliza Fernley." The drinking-fountain and barometer also showed his interest in the seafaring population. In course of time he erected a meteorological observatory in Hesketh Park, a situation well adapted to give a scientific value to the building. His regard for public charitable institutions was not confined to Southport. He

remembered his early charge at Stockport, and gave liberal help on occasion of the enlargement of the Infirmary. Still more liberally did he aid the Royal Albert Asylum in Lancaster. He was the chief promoter of the Religious Institute in Manchester, a common depôt for the Bible and Tract Societies, the City Mission, and Ragged School Union. The site of this increasingly useful building was purchased by public subscription; the handsome structure itself was contributed by Mr. Fernley, being erected as it were under his own supervision. It may also be stated that, in 1864, his name was added to the Commission of the Peace for the county of Lancaster; and that no Justice on the Bench was more assiduous and conscientious. In this capacity he won and retained the high respect of the gentlemen with whom he was associated.

But the charities already mentioned, however catholic, were not large. Mr. Fernley was a wealthy man, and wealth in his hands accumulated. His Diary, discontinued in Manchester for some years, but resumed in Southport with more minuteness than ever, bears witness that he was deeply solicitous to do good with his resources. From the time when his solitary musings began in the picturesque wilderness of sand-hills around his house, he seems to have brooded over a variety of plans, revolving them silently in his mind until the time of their execution was fully

come. The extent and massy proportions of these schemes were never known to any but himself: it is probable that they were not all accomplished. Suffice, that they were projected mainly for the benefit of Methodism, which he loved unwaveringly to the last: not indeed with a blind devotion,—for he was a keen observer and censor of many things that he thought declensions from the Methodism of his youth,—but with a loyalty that gave the utmost pledges of his sincerity.

Trinity Chapel was the first-fruits of these meditations. His own account is as follows: “Erected Trinity Chapel in connection with scheme for reducing debt on Mornington Road Chapel, and obtaining a second resident minister; and took part in erection of day-schools and minister’s house. The erection of this temple engaged the whole of my attention, and was the object of great anxiety for two years. It was a free-will offering, and I trust accepted as such,—as an evidence of my love to Him who redeemed me by His blood, and gave me by His grace the heart to be of some use in His Church. The foundation was laid May 20th, 1863; it was opened September 15th, 1864. If there was one point on which I was more solicitous than another, it was that the spiritual Liturgy now introduced should be conducive to the edification and conversion of the regular congregation; carefully avoiding formalism on the one hand, and overstrained ceremony on the other.”—A

few comments may be made on this simple statement, which is all that the Diary contains on this the great work of his life.

Mr. Fernley, when he took up his abode in Southport, found himself in a centre of Methodist activity and generosity which have never been surpassed, and rarely equalled. Mornington Road Chapel stood as a monument of God's blessing on the faith, zeal, and enterprise of a few men, among whom Dr. Peter Wood, Mr. Fernley's brother-in-law, and Mr. Fishwick Stead were prominent. These two gentlemen, of whom the latter contributed the daring and the former the caution necessary to great movements, were equal to the responsibilities of the cause in Southport, whether as it respects the past or the future. But Mr. Fernley saw the necessity for a new chapel at his end of the town. He was stimulated by the zeal of younger allies, whose example expanded if it did not prompt his liberality. He projected in faith an establishment far larger than any apparent necessity demanded, and gave himself heart and soul to the accomplishment of his project. One part of his theory of benevolence,—an element in it that was sometimes more fruitful in results than agreeable in its method,—was to connect with his own doings the condition that others should join with him. Moreover, he never liked the strain upon a few, and the comparative relief of the many. Hence he blended

his own chapel scheme with that more enlarged one to which he refers : thus making his gift a costly one to many besides himself. The result, however, was a great success.

The feeling of exultation that glows under the other quiet sentences of the extract is evident to all who read. But those will understand it best who were near enough to watch the course of events. Mr. Fernley had long been educating his taste in ecclesiastical architecture. He saw much in the modern style of chapel-building that offended him ; and he remembered some of his own earlier failures. Hence he spared no pains nor cost to procure the best designs ; he superintended the growing work himself ; and to watch the fabric, as it too slowly realised his idea, was for many months the joy of his life. Not that it was always a diffusive joy : many a venial infirmity betrayed itself if his will was thwarted or interfered with ; and sometimes in things very trifling he would show how exacting was his devotion. When the house was dedicated there was hardly a happier man in the world. But afterwards, when sparse congregations met his wistful eye, he harassed his mind much with the fear that he had "run before he was sent." When this feeling acted upon a morbid tendency which was not as yet finally suppressed, he gave way to a certain impatience that demanded his utmost watchfulness. No disparaging criticism of

anything in the chapel from its topmost finial downwards was easily tolerated. These, however, are trifles which the pen is tempted to strike through as soon as they are written: but they must stand as illustrating a character that was not—as yet at least—above the infirmities of doubt. In due time both the need and the success of his chapel were so amply demonstrated that he had no feeling about it but that of supreme contentment. He took unbounded delight in the service. And when the preacher was one whom he could hear, and the sermon glowing with the Gospel, and, as sometimes happened, his poor sufferer was seated by his side, there was nothing left on earth to be desired. If at such times the preacher went home with him, he would open his heart as it was seldom opened, and exhibit a very deep fund of simple Christian feeling.

Within a very few years necessity arose for another place of worship not far off. The old system was adopted on a smaller scale. A large sum of money was raised for all kinds of needs, Mr. Fernley's share of the general movement being the building and presentation of Wesley Chapel for the Ecclesfield neighbourhood. He also helped to discharge the debt, £1,500, upon the minister's house at "Trinity;" others contributing at the same time to free the minister's house in Church Street from pecuniary encumbrance. In the building of Wesley Chapel his personal supervision

was given from the foundation to the topstone. He entered into the scheme all the more heartily because he had been before unduly prepossessed against any operations that might tend, however distantly, to interfere with the consolidation of the Society and the prosperity of Trinity Chapel. In fact, he had withheld his countenance of the smaller building charities of the vicinity. Little chapels, with services not controlled by ministers or intelligent conductors, did not command his approval; and legions of applications from such places in their poverty met with a very cold reception. Ecclesfield with a third resident minister was a very different thing from the Ecclesfield that appealed to him of old in vain. It is not necessary to decide as to the propriety of his policy; nor to speculate as to the result if all adopted it. Suffice that it was his policy; and that he never scrupled to avow and act upon it.

No sooner was this effort accomplished than the programme of another project was sketched. Mr. Fernley determined to erect schools for the education of the daughters of Wesleyan-Methodist Ministers. The beautiful building was in due time included in the number of his benefactions; and the pleasure of superintending this structure, crowned by seeing it filled with young people who were added to the "Trinity" congregation and Society, was perhaps his last earthly satisfaction. How pure and deep this

was there is abundant evidence in his papers, which, however, it is needless to quote.

The "Fernley Lecture" was established as the result of many years of consideration : the object of the Founder being to secure an annual expression at the Conference on some leading topic of theology. There is every reason to think that the effect will be, as years roll on, an addition to Methodist divinity of very valuable Sermons, Essays and Treatises. The scheme was original and striking. Before success proved the contrary, there seemed to be very much against it. But its wisdom has been justified by the interest, and even enthusiasm, always increasing too, with which the Lecture on the eve of Conference is attended. It is indeed so successful, and so well understood, that nothing more need be said about it here. It may not be so generally known that, for some years past, Mr. Fernley gave annually £15 to be distributed in prizes for the best theological Essays written by Didsbury students. For this gift he intended to make permanent provision : and there is reason to believe his intention will be carried out. He cherished a deep regard for the Theological Institution, and never failed to show an intelligent and kind interest in its working. With Didsbury, in particular, he had been connected from its commencement, and his liberal contributions to its library, and to its general funds, besides the annual prizes

referred to, place him high among the benefactors of the College. But it is time to close this detail, which seems almost like a mere catalogue of good deeds.

On September 15th, 1869, there is a record which bears every mark of having been written with much feeling : it refers to his final severance, on account of deafness, from his class. The closing sentences of a long narrative of his leadership, and the difficulties his infirmity occasioned, are as follows :—"I have been at the class this evening with the conviction that it will be my last visit there. I have sustained this honourable and responsible office from 1823 to 1869, forty-six years, and deeply regret that I am now compelled by a sense of duty to relinquish it. 'The will of the Lord be done,' is my constant desire. All this time I can testify to the great benefit I have myself experienced in this form of the communion of saints. I owe much to its salutary influence silently exercised every day, giving a deeper tone to my piety, and producing a solidity of character, neither of which I should otherwise have possessed or manifested. The advantage of class-meetings is not now duly estimated. I thank God this neglect has never been my case ; but that I have been always grateful for the weekly privilege of this particular Methodist form of Christian union and fellowship."

Mr. Fernley's life was very monotonous, varied only by a few regular journeys to Manchester and London,

and an occasional trip to the Continent. During the last four years he was sorely tried, partly by personal infirmities steadily increasing, but much more by the final sickness and the death of Mrs. Fernley. Among his papers there is a very long document, the most elaborate production of his pen at any time, devoted to the preservation of reminiscences of their long married life and domestic fellowship, and to a faithful record of her last illness and dying experiences. It would be wrong to quote much from this touching memorial, which was obviously written under an affectionate impulse that took no thought for the eyes of others; but it would be equally wrong to omit such sentences as the following, which will pay the best possible tribute to Mrs. Fernley's memory :—

“Since Wednesday, the 22nd of December, I have been unable to occupy my thoughts with any other subject than the irreparable loss I have sustained by the dissolution of my dear wife. An affectionate union of more than forty-one years was then severed for a time,—to be soon resumed in the presence of God and the Lamb for ever and ever. I had no idea of the tenderness and strength of my love, nor of the light and cheerfulness she shed over my house and my life, nor of the repose and confidence I felt in her opinion and judgment on such points as she understood. All this is ended, and I am left for a few years again to myself, without her to care for and

comfort by every attention which earnest love could dictate. The whole of the affliction, from its commencement after the birth of her child in 1837, has been to us most mysterious, but we have been always persuaded that it was permitted for some wise purpose, to be known hereafter. I never heard a murmur escape her lips at the lot appointed by her Heavenly Father. The deepest regret she ever expressed was, that she was unable to attend the service in 'Trinity' Chapel oftener. The remembrance of the preciousness of the few opportunities she had was amongst the most cherished joys of her later life. Another feature most prominent was her unselfishness, manifesting itself in numerous little acts of forbearance, and sometimes of self-denial, known only to myself. At one period of our married life it was mutually agreed quietly to reduce the current expenses of our establishment. On this occasion this feature of her character, combined with her noble loyalty and loving devotion to her husband, came out with a force and tenderness never exceeded. . . .

"In her subsequent religious life she was very timid and retiring, and reticent on the subject of any experience of her own. For forty years, however, she uniformly exhibited a remarkable love for the Holy Scriptures; every morning she devoted a considerable portion of time to the careful study of them, as the copy she constantly used proves. . . . She spoke

with much thankfulness of our Sunday evening devotions together, when kept at home. Her conscientiousness, humility, and self-abasement were such prominent features in her fine character, that she uniformly shrank from confident expressions of peace and joy. But that there existed a deep well-spring of Divine love in her soul was clearly manifested, especially lately, in an unbounded love to her dear Redeemer, and the work and mission of the Holy Ghost." Here the quotation must be suspended: suffice that Mrs. Fernley's keen sufferings were borne with great patience, that her last thoughts were of her Saviour, and that her last words were words of prayer.

And now we have to follow the Diary when it again makes the writer himself the subject. Three years have passed away, and the following extract, the last entry in the book, will give its own summary. It shall be quoted in its unabridged words, written very shortly before his end: "December 22nd, 1872. The dawn of this day brought again the sad remembrance; and, although I ought not to repine at the bereavement I then suffered, nor at the subsequent desolation I have experienced, I must confess that I have lately more poignantly felt that stroke and visitation than I expected to do at a distance of three years; I yet sing rather of mercy than of judgment; for, in reviewing the last twelve months, I am astonished at innumerable proofs of His tender mercy and provi-

dential care. I suffered from another attack of intermitting pulse and exhaustion, from March 25th to April 20th, and was in a very critical state for some days. Gradually, by the blessing of God, I recovered my strength. The same penetrating and alarming complaint seized me, and I was laid aside from July 1st to August 3rd, and suffered very severely. . . . At one time I did not entertain the hope of recovery; and am thankful to add that I was able to leave the result in the loving hands of my reconciled Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ my blessed Redeemer.

“Again, I had a sharp attack of another sort, from October 30th to November 5th, which yielded soon to the prompt measures adopted. I am thankful to add that, although wearisome nights and days were my portion, I experienced, ordinarily, a confiding recumbence on Christ as my only Saviour and in the blessed power of the Holy Spirit as my present Comforter, and was thereby freed from much of the anxiety which is the ordinary lot of humanity. I felt in truth that I wished to be as clay in the hands of Him who knew best what to order for me. As I had yet some work to complete, He most graciously restored my health in a measure, and enabled me to do that which was the chief cause of any anxiety I had in my afflictions: viz., to complete Wesley Chapel, Trinity Hall, and discharge all the accounts myself for the erection of both buildings. I am thankful to add that my wishes

have been accomplished fully in reference to Wesley Chapel, and in a few days will be in respect to Trinity Hall. . . . I have for some time past experienced a great nearness of access to the throne of grace in private ; and very often in family prayer, which has sometimes been attended by rich baptisms of the Holy Spirit, and a sweet union and communion with the Triune Deity. Were it not for the blessed promises and encouragements of His Word, I should not dare to write thus. I thank God, if I be only faithful, I may ask and receive, and my joy shall be full ! ”

Mr. Walton Stead has furnished the following notes for my use, which I shall not attempt to interweave with my narrative, but give in his own excellent words :—

“ The last time Mr. Fernley was at Trinity Chapel was on Christmas-day morning, 1873. On the following Sunday morning he set out for the chapel, but was unable to reach it : he returned home, and never left his house again. As he entered, he said ‘ I am come home to die ! ’ The next day he came down stairs, but after that did not leave his room. I saw him every day to the end. He never expressed a wish to get better, saying, on many occasions, ‘ My work is done : pray that I may go home. ’ This was a remarkable contrast to the feelings

he had intimated in former illnesses. *Then*, the request was, 'Pray that I may recover, and be spared a little,' but always with the addition, 'If it is the Lord's will : I have a little more work to do ; I may be of some use yet,' with other indications of the same spirit.

" During the first part of the final illness there was apparently an abiding 'desire to depart,' which was at times very strongly manifested. Then he would say, 'I am in the Lord's hands ; His time is best—perhaps He sees I am not quite ready.' Several times, when he seemed to be dwelling on this thought, he said, 'What a sinner I have been ! what an unprofitable servant ! I have done nothing.' On my replying to him by quotations, such as, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us,' he always responded with praise to the Saviour. I was often impressed with the *entireness* of his faith in Christ,—a perfect resting on the Atonement. His strong desires to depart seemed to subside into a patient waiting : no doubt there were times of restlessness which would colour his words, but I think his *conscious* state was that of *waiting*. In an early part of his illness, on my entering his room one Sunday morning, he asked me to read to him. I took a Bible and asked, 'Where?' to which he replied, 'The chapter in St. John.' I read some verses from the fourteenth chapter, when, on coming to the nineteenth and twentieth verses, he

said suddenly, 'O! what does that mean?' adding, after a short silence, 'I shall know soon—know perfectly.'

"Towards the close of his illness there was great prostration. He spoke little, and what he did say was almost inaudible: the words, 'Saviour,' 'Atonement,' 'Come, Lord Jesus,' were occasionally heard. In the morning of the day on which he died I think he did not recognise any of those around him. Dr. Wood and the Rev. E. E. Jenkins prayed, but there seemed no response. I repeated lines from 'Jesu, Lover of my soul,' 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me;' and, taking his hand, asked him if he heard me and knew me; but there was no sign; and in a very short time after he entered into rest, 'falling asleep.'

"Trinity Hall, Mr. Fernley's last work, was perhaps his greatest joy. He gave daily attention to every detail, from beginning to end; and the last business acts of his life were connected with it. The presence of the girls in Trinity Chapel appeared to make it more beautiful to him. His delight in the chapel was indeed always apparent,—he was proud, no doubt, of the building (and who can blame him?); but I feel sure his heart was much more in the service, especially the morning service: his all-absorbing aim was, according to his own ideal, to make it perfect. Many times he has said, after it, 'Now, have we not been as near Heaven as we can get in this world?' It was

to him very often, without doubt, 'the gate of Heaven.' He frequently deplored his impaired hearing (it was probably on this account, as well as from his love for the Liturgy, that he spoke so exclusively of the morning service); but who shall say how many times the Lord did send him 'help from the sanctuary, and strengthen' him 'out of Zion;' or how his hours of loneliness were gilded with the answer to his prayer, 'To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary'? The advantage to the young people of the Trinity Chapel service was frequently commented upon, and the hope expressed that it would help to attach them to Methodism, and that they would retain a love for it in their own circles in after life. He was loyal to Christ: his sympathies were not wanting towards the whole flock, but his heart's devotion was emphatically given to the Methodist fold.

"No true friend of Mr. Fernley would wish it to be supposed that his character was perfect: naturally, a certain hardness, self-will, and love of power would probably have predominated. He was well aware there was much of self to conquer; and as, from his own record, there are abundant evidences that he did not hesitate to enter upon this spiritual warfare, so it is certain that he did, with varying energy, maintain the fight. His early consecration to God was solemn and deliberate; and it does not seem too much to say that he never cast off the reverential fear of God, or sought

to evade the yoke of Christ's service. His sympathies were perhaps kept in curb so far as to lead to the undue repression of the emotional, but of the existence of deep feeling there can be no doubt. There were not wanting many occasions when this was disclosed, sometimes as the result of joy and gladness in religious worship and service, sometimes in the quiet home circle, when all that was lovely and loving welled up as it were by stealth. His deep, never-failing devotion to Mrs. Fernley is too sacred to be dwelt upon : the degree in which he lived for her, and in which he mourned her loss when she was taken from him, cannot be measured by words.

“The delicate state of Mrs. Fernley's health, extending over so large a portion of their married life, must have had its influence upon both Mr. Fernley's temper and character. The loneliness in which it left him for parts of every day,—often for many days or weeks together,—the limitation of social pleasures, the restraint upon giving or receiving hospitalities,—these things, mingled in his cup of daily blessing, were deeply felt. The quick acquisition of wealth, and its accumulation in his hands, were probably not without the usual effect ; but he strove to arm himself against this source of temptation. He regarded wealth as a talent which he was as much bound to take care of as to put to good account. All his habits were methodical, and planned with much detail ; no wonder that

the use of his money came under the same life-rule. This feature of his character made his fiduciary positions in the Church very valuable, though perhaps not always agreeable to colleagues in office or in committees. It must not however be supposed that he was penurious ; he was as much averse to that as he was to extravagance ; but perhaps there was wanting, at times, that large-heartedness which would have allowed sympathy with applicants to have dictated a favourable response, rather than a rigid estimate of the worthiness of their case.

“ But when his sympathies and his judgment could work together, his gifts were not only noble, but coupled with personal labour,—in which he did not spare himself,—to make them as effective as he could. In these schemes deliberation had a full part ; some of them, it is known, he had in contemplation for several years : his temperament would permit him to wait, but his faithfulness to his object did not fail. His large testamentary bequests are an example of this trait. They embrace religious and charitable institutions which have received the advantage of his gifts and labours, in some instances through life ; he deemed them worthy, and the bequests were made in intention years ago, waiting for the ‘set time’ to come. In some cases a ‘set time’ came in his life-time, and then he was his own executor.

“ Similar characteristics are manifested in his residu-

ary bequest to trustees for the furtherance of charitable and religious objects. Having distributed what he thought was right amongst relations, friends, and servants, and having completed his charitable bequests so far as his judgment concerning them had come to a conclusion, there remained a Residuary Fund to be disposed of; and it is well known, to those who had his confidence in these matters, how his deliberation on the subject was continued for years. The idea of stewardship (often reverted to throughout his journal) had become with him a fixed principle, but it must be practically applied by the guidance of his strong habits of caution, reserve, and prudence. No objects appeared to be ripe in his mind, though doubtless some were taking shape; and rather than bequeath large sums without—in his view—due consideration, he preferred to select a body of trustees to stand in his place, and do what he should leave undone.

“Whatever there may have appeared of repression or repulsion in Mr. Fernley’s character or manners, these less kindly aspects were lost at the last. During his illness he seemed indeed to acquire the spirit of a little child; kindness, thankfulness, lowliness, were the law of his lips. His abhorrence of any thought of self-righteousness or merit was abiding. The conviction that he was a sinner, without a plea or a refuge of his own, was stated in no uncertain words; and no less clear was his expressed assurance that he

was saved through grace by the faith of Jesus Christ."

This tribute to the last days and end of Mr. Fernley is confirmed by all who were either constantly or occasionally with him at the close. It is impossible to speak too highly of the Christian dignity combined with perfect self-renunciation that was manifest in his deportment throughout the final scenes. His unfailing patience under the pressure of sharp suffering was such as only a rich tide of grace could have given him. His gratitude for every office and act of kindness was most touching. His entire abnegation of self, and the spirit in which he determined that only Christ should be magnified in his death, taught a most impressive lesson. Nothing could be more absolute than his indifference, and more than indifference, to the thought of any good he had been the means of accomplishing: but in marked contrast with this was the tremulous eagerness with which he caught at every sound of the name of Jesus and His inexhaustible mercy. Indeed, the glory and sufficiency of the great atonement became at last literally his one thought: it alone had power to arrest unconsciousness and awaken him to life. It was evident to all that it was his blessed privilege to have a very clear vision of his Lord during those hours when nothing else can be the stay or support of the soul. The Lord came to him with all the residue of His power and goodness to

perfect His servant's meetness for heaven. Perfected love cast out fear : it cast out the fear of dying and the desire of living longer on earth. It filled his dying hours with unspeakable tranquillity and confidence, and stamped upon his Christian character its seal of perfectness.

What Mr. Fernley's character was, as a whole, has been sufficiently indicated ; but a few final words are needful to sum it up as it was moulded by Divine grace. The very first note of it that strikes the mind of one who knew him well was his profound conscientiousness in everything that pertained to Christian duty. In everything great and small he acted, or strove to act, on Christian principle. In the great things he undertook, nothing was to him small. He concentrated his mind upon every the minutest detail of the large schemes of which his life was full. As to those large schemes themselves the foregoing record, and indeed the results of his life, bear ample testimony. He was one of the few men who are capable of projecting and carrying out great plans of benevolence. For many years such plans were the companions of his thought day and night ; and no man can long harbour such conceptions without feeling his soul expand with them. He would have been other than mortal if they had not to some extent engrossed his mind, and occasionally diverted his attention from the comparatively lesser plans of others around

him. And this deserves to be made emphatic, that Mr. Fernley was as resolute and tenacious in carrying out his plans as he was large-minded in framing them. Nothing ever turned him aside from a single project that he had well considered and finally determined on. There are no broken or unfinished schemes in his record : no schemes born in enthusiasm, and afterwards languishing through caprice or lack of heart.

Looking back over some years, while writing these lines, I remember with deep respect Mr. Fernley's quiet devotion to those plans and projects. Their range and variety appear now as they did not appear then. At one and the same time he was devising liberal things for his own community, for several more public religious organizations, and for the local interests of the place he lived in. He made no secret that he had such thoughts ; but he never allowed anyone to divine how comprehensive and large they were. Indeed it was not until after his death that his friends generally knew the extent of his benefactions. And the remarkable prudence of his arrangements, the happy adaptation of his plans to the good proposed, appears now most conspicuously. One instance of this, already referred to, may be noticed again. The Fernley Lecture had evidently been for many years a favourite idea, unrealized even on paper. At an earlier time he had a notion of founding a lectureship that should run parallel, at least in extent of

subject and treatment, with the Bampton and the Congregational Lecture. But he rightly saw that no such scheme could be carried out. Determined, however, to do something in this way, he finally resolved on an annual Lecture to be delivered in connection with Conference, and on some one cardinal topic of theology. There were many difficulties in the way, some of which, until the experiment was tested and crowned, appeared to all but himself insuperable. Yet he persisted, and his endowment needs only to be wisely administered to prove a lasting benefit to Methodist theology.

Justice would not be done to the late Mr. Fernley if no further reference were made to his cultivation of a theological taste. When in early life he resigned the hope of devoting his life to the ministry he did not renounce his desire to study the gospel as a system, and the Word of God as the foundation of that system. He read much and variously on theological subjects ; and trained his mind to a tolerably accurate perception of the shades of opinion through which the truth passes over into error that looks like truth. He was eminently catholic in his reading and in his appreciation of English divinity. But his fidelity to what he had been taught by Scripture to be the essence of the gospel—those few leading truths which decide man's relation to God—was as deep as it was sound. By this standard he judged everything he

read and everything he heard. His ministerial friends well remember the vigour and occasional pungency of his comments on the chief theological books which he read as they came out. For my own part, I have a fresh remembrance of the singular ability and discretion of his strictures on some authors whom in the main he greatly admired. During the last seven years of his life he read, and, to my knowledge, read carefully, the sermons of Manning, and Newman, and Wilberforce, and Liddon, and Robertson. It seemed sometimes rather anomalous to hear him praise these so highly as he was in the habit of praising them ; but it would soon become apparent that he perfectly knew where to place the limits of commendation. I have seldom heard an apter criticism than Mr. Fernley's of the first two of these writers. One day he favoured me with a little dissertation on a point that struck him very forcibly : the systematic depreciation or rather neglect of the office of the Holy Ghost in these sermons. The conversation that followed long left its influence on my mind, and conspired with other instances of the same kind to impress me with a deep sense of the value to himself and to others of his quiet theological reading. It was a source of endless joy to him. Nor was it of a miscellaneous character. He would give himself now and then a systematic course : for instance, his copy of Wardlaw's Systematic Theology is marked with such dates of reading and occasional

annotation as show that he must have studied it thoroughly. The same may be said of the leading Methodist divines ; of seven or eight of the Bampton Series ; of Pearson, and even Butler ; with many others. One of the fruits of this habit was of course a keen readiness of criticism under the pulpit. He was a good judge of a sermon. If, indeed, it was full of the truth and of the tenderness of the gospel, his criticism was merged in something far better. But if the preacher failed to give that certain sound, or glaringly trifled with the meaning of Scripture, he could have no severer critic than Mr. Fernley. This however refers chiefly to a time preceding his infirmity of partial deafness. After that came upon him it was his habit to resign himself not to hear what might tend only to chafe his mind.

Of Mr. Fernley's spirit and temper as a Christian man almost enough has been said. His religion was reverent and devout ; meditation and prayer occupied much of his time. He was a lover of good men ; and his house had no guests more honoured than Christian ministers. His conversation turned very often on the things of godliness, and the interests of religion. Whenever it had to do with personal experience it revealed in him a heart warm with devotion to his Saviour, and the love of God and man. He was a soldier of Christ who fought a good fight with the infirmities common to man and those proper to himself.

Whatever faults he discerned in his own character, he did not disguise: many of us remember how with what severity he was wont to judge them. He was an exceedingly affectionate friend, though the number of his intimate friends was small. He was also capable of a severe judgment upon those whose principles or actions he disapproved; and he was not easily persuaded to change his mind. But, as he was a man who never forgot a benefit, and anxious to requite it; so also he could and did, though sometimes slowly, conquer his resentments. Those who knew him well in his later years know how generously and warmly he was wont to speak of the abilities and excellence of some from whom his principles had long estranged him. When he approached his end his character, like that of every true Christian, beautifully brightened into perfection. Humility, tenderness, devotion, and charity were seen in a combination which showed that the Spirit was finishing the work of His own hands; while everything contrary to those disappeared and were as if they had never been.

Mr. Fernley was interred in the cemetery at Southport. The day of his funeral rites bore witness to the estimation in which he was held by all classes of the community. The service in his own chapel was deeply impressive. Dr. Jobson's address, which clearly and faithfully depicted the private and public

life of the deceased, was responded to as truth by a large and miscellaneous congregation, who glorified God in their departed friend and benefactor. The chapel which he loved so well, and the services of which he enjoyed as none but a true worshipper could enjoy them, has now lost his devout and earnest presence. The religious meetings, the schools, the charitable committees, with which he was so long and intimately bound up, have lost his familiar form. But the reality and value of his benefactions everywhere keep alive his memory, and a memory that grows more affectionate and reverent as time wears on. From the more public affairs of Methodism his presence is not so much missed, as for some years he had withdrawn from active engagement in them. But Methodism has great reason to revere his name, and will long remember it among those of its chiefest benefactors. What is best of all, the Master whom he served, and served most effectually at the close, has accepted him and his work. He has given His servant, we doubt not, what was the only reward he hoped for in death, the pledge of His mercy unto eternal life.

