

BIOGRAPHY: MEMOIR OF MR WILLIAM FIDDIAN, OF BIRMINGHAM; BY HIS SON-IN-LAW, THE REV. J. E. MOULTON.

It is with a desire to preserve, in the records of the worthies of Wesleyan Methodism, the name of one who, for half a century, was connected with that section of the church of God, and actively endeavoured to promote its interests, while he felt that he was thus, at the same time, advancing his own spiritual welfare, that the writer of the following statements has undertaken his task. Although he is aware that no incidents of a very striking nature can be adduced in connexion with the history of Mr Fiddian, yet a conviction that there were in him certain moral qualities, well deserving of notice and imitation, has induced the attempt to gather up the scattered reminiscences treasured in the breasts of his relations and religious friends, and to exhibit them as illustrative of a very important class of character - that of the Christian citizen.

Mr Fiddian was born at Halesowen, Shropshire, May 13th 1773[2]. Of his parentage little can now be remembered that is worth recording; nor is anything known of his own early history, save that he resided with his parents, in the place of his birth, till he was about twelve years of age, when he was apprenticed in Birmingham. Soon after his arrival in that town, he strayed into the Methodist chapel one Sunday evening, and was powerfully arrested by the singing. The melody, simplicity, and devotional character which marked that part of the religious service riveted him to the spot; and when, at length, he reached his master's house, he relieved himself by a flood of tears; not daring, however, to mention the cause of his weeping, as his master was violently opposed to Methodism. This also prevented him, for some time, from renewing his visits to the chapel; but, at length, the failure of his master in business put an end to William's restriction and bondage. Being removed to another situation, he found that one of his fellow apprentices was in the habit of attending the Methodist ministry; and was, indeed, joined to the society. On account of his religion, this youth was assailed, by those around him, with every annoyance they could inflict; but he met the whole with a patience and meekness which made a deep impression on the mind of his new comrade, who said to him one day, "Joseph, your religion is better than mine; if they were to serve me as they do you, I should fight for it. I should like to accompany you to chapel." The following Sunday morning they repaired together to Bradford Street, and heard the Rev Andrew Blair, who that day was preaching his farewell sermon in Birmingham, being about to leave the Circuit. In the former instance he had been most impressed by the singing; but now he found the whole service to be affecting, and "the word preached" came with power to his heart. His companion, on their leaving the chapel, sought to ascertain whether any effect had been produced on William's mind. He replied, that he had never heard such preaching; and said, that it was his fixed determination to cast in his lot with this people; a resolution to which he was enabled to adhere for a period of fifty-four years, and the comfort and advantage of which he repeatedly realized, especially during his last unusually severe and protracted affliction.

When he joined the Wesleyan society, his mother upbraided him with being the first who had brought disgrace upon the family, by forsaking his old religious connections, and becoming a Methodist; but she lived to alter her opinion; and he himself often stated his conviction, that, but for this union with the Methodist body, it was not likely that he would have attained that stability in religion, and maintained that consistent deportment, which he, whilst deeply sensible of his own deficiencies, was devoutly and thankfully aware had procured for him that esteem which enabled him to exert an influence conducive to God's glory, and the good of his church. But fidelity to the truth requires that it should be stated, that, for a short time, soon after he had first joined the Methodist society, he was induced, by the representations of one in whom he reposed great confidence, to think that something was wrong in the ecclesiastical constitution of Methodism; and that he should be more advantageously situated under the pastoral care of some who were then very assiduous in their efforts to withdraw persons from the Wesleyan Connexion, by describing the peculiar excellencies of the new system of church government which had been recently devised. The Leader of the class in which Mr Fiddian met, being dissatisfied with the manner in which some act of discipline had been performed, determined not only to secede from the Wesleyan body himself, but to use his influence to persuade his members to follow his example. Being then young, in the faith, Mr Fiddian was easily persuaded; but he soon found that he had taken a wrong step, and returned, therefore, to his former religious friends, from whom he was never again for a moment alienated; but retained through life the conviction, that, for his connexion with them, he should have reason for ever to bless God. This temporary secession was, however, productive of a salutary effect on his mind. From the recollection of it, he sometimes deduced arguments to guard his friends from being led astray, when, at subsequent periods, strife and agitation were rife in the church.

Of the circumstances, under which Mr Fiddian obtained peace with God, no record has been preserved; nor can the precise time be now ascertained, when he was enabled to lay hold of d. promise of salvation. At one time it would appear that it was his intention to keep a diary, and note down the results of his self-examination at successive periods; but, for some reason or other, he abandoned the intention - at least, only one brief entry can now be found: this is dated, "May 8th, 1809." In this he expresses his gratitude that he had been for twenty years united to the Methodists, and his feelings of humiliation on account of conscious unfaithfulness, with renewed determinations of more entire devotedness to God; but there is no reference to his early religious experience. All that is known, therefore, is, that he persevered in seeking the Lord, till at length he found what he sought; and that the fruits of his faith in Christ were soon exhibited in active endeavours to serve the church, and extend the kingdom of his God and Saviour. In his career of usefulness he would often observe, with exultation, "I began at the lowest point, as a candle-snuffer and door-keeper." But he was led, by degrees, to fill the highest offices that a layman can sustain in the Wesleyan body; and whilst the various duties connected with these engagements, often not a little onerous, were discharged to the full satisfaction of the church, he felt honoured by the confidence reposed in him, and was thankful that he had the opportunity of serving the cause he loved.

For some time it was his practice to attend at Solihull, six or seven miles distant, early on a Sunday morning, for the purpose of holding a prayer-meeting. He was also one of the zealous band who formed the first Sunday School in Birmingham. This was conducted in a poor woman's garret, hired for the purpose. The only accommodation for sitting was furnished by the bedstead. Here, however, he and his associates spent many an hour in this self-denying, but useful, employment; and in his latter days he often expressed his thankfulness that, from so humble a commencement, such glorious results had arisen. At the time of his death, there were no fewer than a dozen Wesleyan schools in Birmingham, comprising between three and four thousand children, and four or five hundred teachers; besides a large number under the direction of the other religious denominations. Not unfrequently, also, would he accompany the Local Preachers in their visits to the villages in the neighbourhood; stand by them whilst they were preaching out of doors; and assist them in singing the hymns which they gave out. On these occasions he often had to share the ill-treatment which they received. At one place, some rude person attempted to disturb the congregation by driving a number of cows amongst them. A meek and patient perseverance, however, was ultimately, by the blessing of God, successful; and the opposers, finding their unhallowed attempts unavailing, desisted from them; and in several of these villages societies were established, and chapels built, which are still the resort of attentive worshippers.

Mr Fiddian himself never preached; but his son, the Rev S Fiddian, in a letter to the writer, thus speaks on the subject: "I have heard my father say, when in health, that his Class Leader, old Mr. Parsons, had often expressed his opinion, that God had called him to preach, but that he himself had thought differently." However, in reviewing his life on a nearer approach to eternity, he told me that he then felt that he ought to have yielded to the impressions which he experienced at the commencement of his religious course. He stated, that often, when attending prayer-meetings on the Sunday morning, he had felt strongly inclined to address an exhortation to those who were assembled together; but that his diffidence had prevailed. His solemn conviction on his death-bed was that, had he yielded and taken up his cross, God would have strengthened him, and made him thus directly instrumental in promoting the salvation of souls. He connected this with a modest and grateful acknowledgment indeed, that God had employed him in other paths of usefulness; but still, not so directly as would otherwise have been the case.

He became early a Visitor for the Benevolent Society, and was distinguished by his attention to the duties connected with that office, never allowing the fear of disease to prevent him from visiting the cases which were entrusted to him. For several years this connexion continued; and though subsequently his increasing engagements in the church obliged him to desist from these regular and systematic visitations, yet, whenever he had opportunity, it was his delight to repair to the chambers of the afflicted and dying, and point the sufferers to Him who "bare our infirmities, and carried our sicknesses." By those who were not in church-communion with himself, he was long and well known as the friend of the poor. For several years he was chosen by his fellow-townsmen as a Guardian and Overseer, at a period when there was a great

prevalence of distress. He cheerfully devoted a large portion of his time to the duties which thus devolved in him; and the judicious plans he suggested tended materially to relieve the sufferers. Regarded by the poor as one who was truly interested in their welfare, they often applied to him in cases of difficulty; and he readily interposed his influence, both for their protection and relief, whenever he judged it to be necessary. With a considerate concern for their feelings, he was always prompt in affording the aid which he had to administer; and not infrequently, when the cases requiring attention were more numerous than usual, he would rise even at an hour greatly inconvenient to himself, that the very appearance of delay might, if possible, be prevented.

With several chapels Mr Fiddian was connected as a Trustee, and had thus the opportunity of manifesting, practically, his anxious desire that the public services of God's house might be conducted decently, and the comfort of the worshippers promoted. During many years he made a regular sacrifice of time, very valuable to him as a man of business, that he might superintend the financial affairs of the chapel where he and his family were accustomed to worship; and by promoting the convenience of the persons composing the congregation, contribute to secure their regular attendance, and preserve the trust-concerns from embarrassment. For these services he felt himself well rewarded by the successful results of his assiduity and zeal. He was for many years a Class-Leader; and his fulfilment of the duties of his important office was characterized by great fidelity and affection. No secular engagements, though these were often numerous and pressing, were allowed to keep him from meeting those who were entrusted to his care; and only sickness, or a necessary absence from home, prevented him from being found in his place at the appointed time. He was much beloved as a Leader, his manner being kind and sympathizing; and his instructions, marked as they were by great simplicity, were particularly suited to the weak and timid of the flock, who were encouraged to confide their fears and anxieties to him, assured that these would find a response in his feeling heart. He was also a careful observer of Mr Wesley's direction to Class-Leaders, that they should "see their members at least once a week." When any were not present at the weekly meeting, he did not fail to call at their houses, and inquire into the reason of their absence. Knowing, too, that a resolution similar to that of David, "I will not offer unto the Lord of that which doth cost me nothing," is not only conducive to personal piety, but that it tends to promote the prosperity of the cause of religion itself, which always, more or less, suffers from the pressure of pecuniary difficulties; and aware how much the performance of this branch of Christian duty among the Methodists depends on the example of the Leaders of classes; he contributed to the uttermost of his own ability, and stimulated others to copy the pattern which he thus conscientiously set them. To the suggestions and conduct of Mr Fiddian, and of those who on this subject were like-minded with him, may be attributed, in a great degree, the comparative financial prosperity which the Birmingham Circuit has enjoyed for many years. There was one point, likewise, to which, though regarded by some as of small moment, and therefore, it may be, overlooked by them, he attached considerable importance, and paid regular attention. He was persuaded that the observance of the plan of systematic weekly contribution could never be infringed without some degree of injury; he was, therefore, carefully attentive to that ancient custom of Methodism which requires that the weekly subscription be laid

down at each meeting of the class, and in the presence of the members. He did this especially that he might encourage those whose ability to contribute might be smaller than his own, and prevent them from falling into a snare which, although it may seem to be trivial, has been proved by experience often to possess great power, and to have occasioned the gradual withdrawal of many from religious society. They have allowed their class-money to fall into arrears; and then unable to give at once that which, spread over a larger period, and divided thus into a number of smaller amounts, they could have given with comparative ease, they have felt a growing reluctance to meet their religious associates, and have at length "forsaken the assembling of themselves altogether." Mr Fiddian could never regard that as a trifle which had been shown in so many instances to produce such serious mischief.

The various offices in the church to which he belonged, to which he was appointed, were regarded by him as supplying so many additional motives to that circumspection of behaviour which he knew to be binding on every Christian, but especially on those who were providentially called to occupy those public stations which made propriety of conduct so much the more important, as conduct itself was rendered more observable. He was careful so to live, that his conversation in all things might be such "as becometh the Gospel of Christ;" and he was enabled, by the grace of God, to exhibit throughout his whole course a pattern of religious consistency, sacrificing his own predilections and most favourite pursuits rather than violate his conscience, or give the adversaries of truth the slightest occasion for reproaching his religious profession. He was strongly attached to devotional singing, and few could possess a keener relish for music than himself. It was by the singing of the Methodists that his heart was first drawn towards them; and after his union with them, he often assisted in conducting that important branch of their worship. In the earlier period of his religious life he frequently attended the meetings for practice, which the singers were accustomed to hold; but, knowing how easily and how soon such meetings may degenerate, and even become occasions of much harm, he was never satisfied unless they were connected with such Christian exhortation and prayer as should correct every evil tendency, and preserve the mind in purity and peace. His caution, in this respect, led him to leave an association of young men, who had united for the purpose of practising music. "But I found," he once said, referring to this circumstance, "that I was sustaining injury, and so I left them; for they were beginning to sing catches and glees; and I knew not where it might end. It was hard work, for I enjoyed the meetings; but I saw that I must take my ground, and deny myself; and it did me good. If I lost the pleasure, I escaped from the temptation, and was kept in the right way." He acted on the same principle when, some years afterwards, he was strongly solicited to take a part in the performances at the musical festivals which were held in Birmingham. He steadily refused. He could not for a moment allow his love of music to interfere with his Christian consistency. He felt that he would be altogether out of his place, as professing godliness, to associate with persons who were one day singing, verbally, the songs of Zion and the praises of God, and the next, with equal earnestness, singing the songs which attracted the multitude to the theatre. On all such occasions, Mr Fiddian's inquiry was not, "What is pleasant?" but, "What is profitable, what is right?" By no one could the sublime strains of Handel, or the sweet tones of Mozart and

Beethoven, have been more completely enjoyed than by himself; but he saw the necessity of adopting a decided part, and shunning the very appearance of evil. Even had the question been doubtful, he felt that for its solution he must refer, not to his own tastes and pleasures, but to his conscience, and his sense of duty as a member of the church of Him "who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." He therefore not only refused to take any part in the singing, but though he attended one of the meetings held in a church, he resolved that his first attendance should be his last. He loved the music, and he loved the words; but he knew there was much more than the music and the words. On mature reflection, he believed that he should not be abstaining from the appearance of evil, unless he denied himself in this particular respect. Even though the matter were only doubtful, he believed that the principle on which he ought to decide should have respect to conscience and character, and the claims of the church that her members should preserve an unblamable consistency; and as against this he had only to set his own gratification, his resolution was taken, and ever after faithfully kept.

The various offices which he was appointed to fill, furnished him with so many additional arguments for the preservation of this religious consistency. That he might walk unblamably, he constantly endeavoured to walk circumspectly. In all the services of the house of God he took great delight. This was conspicuous in the punctuality of his attendance. Because he loved the courts of the Lord, and would not even appear to be a reluctant attendant in them, he was always in time; and his example administered an impressive reproof to those late-comers, whose practice both exhibits such weakness of devotional feeling, and disturbs that of the persons who have assembled themselves from the first, and whose hearts are already engaged in the solemn and, to them, delightful services. Mr Fiddian was one of those whose conduct says, in effect, "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion." To this punctuality as to time, regularity as to place must likewise be added. He sought not for amusement in worship, and therefore never allowed himself to wander about as one having "itching ears." Such habits, he thought, betrayed great unsettledness of mind, and were injurious in their influence both on the individuals themselves, and on others also, who are led by the example thus afforded them, from step to step, into a general instability in religion. Mr Fiddian went not to hear any particular Minister, but to worship God, by whomsoever the worship was conducted, and to hear his word, by whomsoever that word might be spoken.

For a long period, the Wesleyan Ministers found at Mr Fiddian's house a home, and a welcome reception; and though in later years he was glad to behold a widening circle of friends rejoicing to exhibit their hospitable regards to those whom they recognised as the servants of God, who made known to them the way of salvation, yet he often adverted with pleasure to the period when he had been honoured with the society and friendship - for he felt it to be an honour - of such men as Bradburn, Benson, Thompson, Taylor, Brettell, Wood, Edmondson, Entwisle, and others of the elders that outlived Joshua, whose names are still as a sweet perfume, and will always hold a distinguished place in the recollections of those who love our ecclesiastical

history. But he did not so admire our ancient worthies as to undervalue their successors. He rejoiced in those proofs of the divine presence in that branch of the church of Christ with which he was connected, which are afforded by a continued line of godly Ministers, sent forth by the Head of the church for the perpetuation and extension of his work. If he looked on the past generation with very pleasant recollections, on the present he likewise looked with thankfulness and hope. The same kindly regards which had been manifested in his earlier associations with the Ministers whose services had contributed to the formation of his Christian character, were extended to those who now occupied their places; and where he had formerly expressed the attachment and veneration of a son, he now exhibited the more mellowed affection of a father in Israel.

It was a source of high gratification to Mr Fiddian that the Methodist Conference, in 1836, held its sittings for the first time in Birmingham. He had long desired to see the town with which he was connected occupying as honourable a position in Methodism as, through its commercial importance, it occupied in the country at large. Some years previously, Dr Taft, then stationed in the Birmingham Circuit, had laboured assiduously, and employed all his influence, for the accomplishment of this object. Mr Fiddian, as like-minded with him, was also in this respect his fellow-labourer; and at one time their expectations of success were sanguine. But though circumstances, which they could not control, produced a temporary disappointment, Mr Fiddian still cherished the hope; and it would not be easy to describe the joy which he experienced when it was at length realized. During the Conference session, he had the opportunity both of renewing and forming valuable friendships, and also - and to him this was the best of all - of attending numerous religious services with which the divine blessing was abundantly connected; so that he was ready to give utterance to his own feelings in the language of good old Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Esteeming the Ministers of the Gospel "very highly in love for their work's sake," he held their character as sacred, and would not allow them to be spoken of disrespectfully in his presence. One of his family, well remembers receiving a severe rebuke for some slighting remarks he had made on one whose talents were thought to be but small. He thought - and did he not think rightly - that if his family should grow up accustomed to hear, in the domestic circle, the depreciation of the ministry under which they sat, they were not likely to value it, and to continue to sit under it, in subsequent life. Indeed, he was most conscientiously opposed to all backbiting. He never spoke to the disadvantage of absent individuals, and was always ready, when occasion was given, and he could do it with due regard to that truth from which he knew he must for no reason swerve, to urge the circumstances which might be pleaded in extenuation of the fault which could not be denied. The thirteenth chapter of the first of Corinthians was not with him an overlooked portion of Scripture, or one on which he only speculated. It furnished him with rules by which he sought to govern both, his thoughts and feelings, his words and his actions.

And this leads us to another feature in his character, his love for the sacred volume. He gave diligent heed to the public reading of it in the sanctuary, and he perused it regularly and

frequently in private; thus seeking that "the word of Christ might dwell" in him "richly in all wisdom." Indeed, to give attendance to reading was with him a pleasant as well as a profitable practice. He did not think that he had been sent into the world merely to labour for food and raiment, or for secular accumulations. He had a mind to improve, and a soul to save, as well as a body to feed and clothe; and in planning his time, according to his providential circumstances, he endeavoured to include all these objects. With him leisure did not become indolence, nor produce mental or spiritual sluggishness. He found especial pleasure in religious biography, as he loved to trace the movements of grace in various individuals; but in other volumes, presenting him with other aspects of the vast works of God, he likewise found both advantage and delight. At the time of his first connexion with the Wesleyan society, a fellow-workman lent him a few volumes of the Methodist Magazine; and from these he derived so much benefit, that he himself became a subscriber, and throughout the remainder of his life always welcomed its monthly issues. Nor was his love less for prayer. He had his stated seasons for private converse with God; and in these he found the strength enabling him to persevere in the course of public duty. His son says, that in his last illness he frequently referred to the gracious support he had received, in answer to prayer, under severe worldly trials; and that he added that without this he could not possibly have stood under the heavy pressure.

But it was not merely in the church that Mr Fiddian was known and valued: he was also highly esteemed among his fellow-townsmen. For many years he was one of the Commissioners of the town of Birmingham, and took an active part in its municipal and parochial affairs. In these engagements he was extremely watchful over his own conduct, well knowing that the faults of religious professors seldom fail to be charged on religion itself. Nor was he less careful in reference to another source of danger. He never allowed necessary official connexion to lead to familiar social intercourse with persons of whose piety he had no proof. He had to avoid the austerity which would have been imputed to pride, and the familiarity which would have led him into temptation. And he was not unsuccessful. Firmness was combined with such urbanity and courteousness, that the religion which he was enabled to maintain in himself, was, at the same time, strongly recommended to others. This carefulness as to the character of his associates was not only manifested where danger was evident, (and he knew that the eyes of those were fixed upon him who would gladly have found in him any excuse for their own neglect of religion,) it was with him habitual and uniform. When some who had been his friends in early life imbibed wrong principles, no recollections of former intimacy could induce him to continue the connexion; but finding all attempts to reclaim them ineffectual, however painful to his feelings, and very painful it was, he at once gave up their society. At one time, when political feeling ran high, a number of his friends were accustomed to meet weekly for the discussion of their favourite subjects, and earnestly solicited him to join them; but, anticipating the injurious influence likely to be exerted on their religious principles, he firmly declined; and subsequently he praised God who had enabled him to adopt and maintain the resolution; for he lived to see many, both in his own town and elsewhere, who on this rock made shipwreck both of the faith and of a good conscience.

In the transaction of his own private business, he walked by the same rules which governed his conduct in more public life. When he was first appointed to be the manager of a trading concern on behalf of others, he exposed himself to considerable obloquy by refusing to allow to the workmen certain indulgences which had been granted to them by others who had occupied the situation which he then filled, and which, he believed, were seriously detrimental to the interests of their employer; but the uniform kindness with which, in other respects, he treated those who were under his superintendency, convinced them, at length, that he was acting from principle; and his integrity made so deep an impression, that though it was customary for all the parties in any particular employ to be distinguished by some familiar and, as it was thought, descriptive epithet, the respect in which he was held made him an exception to the usual practice, and he was never either addressed or mentioned otherwise than by his usual name. Whatever term was applied to others, he was always "Mr Fiddian;" and trifling as the circumstance may at first appear, yet all who know the independent boldness of the English artisan, and his strong sense of the real possession of true personal freedom, will see in it a valuable testimony, though perhaps somewhat quaintly manifested, to the uprightness and consistency of Christian character. When he became himself a master-manufacturer, and employed a considerable number of men, he always showed a kind regard for their welfare, giving them suitable advice, and suggesting plans for their comfort. Believing the labourer to be worthy of his hire, he always lowered wages with reluctance, and never did it hastily; and his sympathy led him not infrequently rather to submit to loss himself, than occasion it to those who were dependent on him. As might be expected from such conduct, he was much beloved by his men, and they generally continued a long time in his employ. One of these, who died not long before him, had been thirty-five years in his service; and one still survives who had been employed by him for thirty-eight.

On what Mr Fiddian was as a father, the writer dares not trust himself to dwell. It was not his privilege to enjoy acquaintance with him till most of his family had removed from the paternal roof. But though he does not attempt to describe the care bestowed on their early religious training, he well knows, from repeated opportunities of intercourse during the latter years of his life, the deep interest which he felt for their true welfare, and the earnest prayers which he offered on their behalf. And his prayers were not unheard. Pleasing reference might be made, were it proper, to the respect with which some living branches of his family are regarded both in the church and in the world. And of those who were taken from him in his own lifetime, it may truly be said that the memory is embalmed in the pious affection of survivors. They died in the Lord, and left the most cheering evidence that their death was but their removal "to the family above." [An account of his eldest daughter, the late Mrs (R) Peart, drawn up by Dr Melson, is inserted in the Obituary department of the Wesleyan Magazine for the year 1840, p 864.]

But "the time drew near that Israel must die." For many years Mr Fiddian had enjoyed uninterrupted health, and was often congratulated on his appearance, even when approaching the verge of his "three score years and ten." But, as hitherto he had been called to the performance of the more active duties of life, it pleased his heavenly Father to appoint to him trials which called

more particularly into exercise the graces which are necessary for the improvement of a period of suffering. By a peculiarly painful visitation, he was called to "glorify the Lord in the fires;" and he was enabled to do so: "the joy of the Lord was his strength." The affliction which ultimately brought him to his grave, was a cancer, commencing in the lower surface of the tongue, and gradually extending over the whole mouth. At length not only were the organs of speech so affected that articulation became extremely difficult, but the passage leading to the stomach was so nearly closed, that it was only with great and painful effort that he could take any sustenance. The slightest movement of the mouth was attended with pain; his strength was prostrated, and his sufferings frequently amounted to agony. But he was preserved in submission to the divine will. Only on one occasion did he experience a temptation to fretfulness; and fearing lest his patience should fail, he looked to the Strong for strength, and strength was given him. His own words were, "All at once I felt as though someone had spoken to me, and said, 'You are out of hell!'" The snare was broken; and throughout the remainder of his life he enjoyed the perfect love of a mind continually stayed upon God. His language, or, when prevented from speaking, his countenance, was always expressive not merely of submissiveness, but of gratitude. While thus confined to the chamber of sickness, from which it was not at all probable that he would remove in life, he frequently, with much seriousness, reviewed his past history, and repeatedly added his testimony to that of the people of God in all ages, that "hitherto God had helped" him. At one time he said, "I am satisfied that all is right. If the means used for my recovery should be successful, I only wish to be more useful: if not, God's will be done!" At another time, when suffering much, he was thankful that his pains were not the eternal ones, due to sin; and added the exclamation which has so often and so long served to express the joyous thankfulness of the spiritual Israel, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" He added, after a brief pause, evidently spent in mental devotion, "Through God's mercy, I cast my lot among his people, and gave them my name, when only sixteen years old. For six months, I had to bear plenty of sneering and scoffing from my acquaintance. But what was that? Old age is come on me, and I look back upon all with joy." On a subsequent occasion, he said, "I have now been a professor of religion for more than fifty years; and I declare, that even setting aside the hope of heaven, viewing the subject, so far as I am concerned, only in reference to the present world, I see no reason whatever to regret my choice, but abundant reason for the contrary. I have known," he added, "in my own time, some who have been more fortunate, as the world would term it, than myself; but none who have had a larger share of mercies." He then exclaimed, with emotion, evidently as strong and deep as it was sincere,

"How do thy mercies close me round! For ever be thy name adored!"

But whilst he was thus cheered by the remembrance of past mercies, immediate and present consolations were afforded to him. He not only rejoiced that God had been with him, but that He was with him still. This was once adverted to in conversation with him; and he endeavoured to reply, but could only articulate, "Wonderful!" His looks, however, declared the joy that he was unable in words to describe. An old friend calling to see him one day, when he was suffering much, he took a slate, and wrote, "I think even more of the steady comfort which I now experience, than of the more rapturous joys which I have formerly felt, when my strength was greater, and no sufferings interfered. I have a full, abiding conviction of my interest in Christ." And this was the source of his joy, this the ground of his confidence and support, a simple, entire dependence on Christ as his Saviour, through whose merit alone he possessed all the blessings of

grace, and looked forward to the everlasting possession of all the blessings of glory. With humble thankfulness, he acknowledged all that had been wrought in him, the death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness, followed by the inward life of holiness, and its blessed fruits; and so far as this was an evidence of the divine favour, he rejoiced in it: but, it was not his foundation; his peace, and joy, and abounding hope were the fruits of his faith in Christ. The language of his heart was,

“We have whate'er we ask of God, By faith in the atoning blood.”

He had the “new heart” and the “right spirit;” but he was not accepted with God because he had these; he had them because he was accepted with God, and he was thus accepted only for the sake of Christ his Saviour. He had peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, as being justified by faith. On this he rested during the activity of a healthy life, and on this he rested while passing through the painfulness of the disease by which his life was brought to a close. He asked a friend one day if he had ever read the little tract, “Poor Joseph;” and observed, “My feeling is that of poor Joseph. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners:

“I the chief of sinners am, But Jesus died for me.”

He delighted to anticipate the closer communion with God that he should enjoy when his spirit was set free from the burden of the flesh. A friend had been conversing with him on the resurrection, and on the glorious scenes which should then be realized. He exultingly exclaimed, “Better than that, ‘absent from the body, present with the Lord: after this, the resurrection.’” These specimens of observations made by him in the midst of the trials of what he knew was mortal disease, will show the correctness of what was said by one who had known him long and intimately, and who had frequent opportunities of seeing him in his last illness. “He had strong consolation in his affliction, and especially in seasons of extraordinary pain; but the most impressive fact was, his uniform fortitude, evident even when the animal spirits were quite exhausted; fruits of the Spirit, indeed, but such as might have been expected from his previous character. We saw in him the established Christian, resting on first and long-tried principles, principles drawn from God's word, and wrought in his soul by the power of God's Spirit, and which led him, in all circumstances, whether of doing or suffering, to refer himself to God's will. They had borne the tests of half a century, and they failed him not in his dying hours.”

During this period of confinement, the Quarterly Meeting of the Birmingham Circuit was twice held, and each time a resolution was passed, and sent to him, expressive of the regard of the members for one who had so long occupied a place among them. He was much gratified by these marks of Christian remembrance. One of them we now copy, as showing the estimation in which he was held. “Resolved, - That this Meeting expresses its filial and most affectionate sympathies with our friend and brother, Fiddian, on his severe and continued affliction; and accompanies this expression of sympathy with earnest prayer that his soul may be abundantly blessed and supported under his present very painful circumstances, and that, if consistent with the divine will, his life may yet be spared to the church of which he has been so long a consistent member, and an ornament.” His peaceful frame continued undisturbed to the last; and nature being at length worn out, he fell asleep, and entered into rest, June 4th, 1842. That he had lived respected, and died regretted, was affectingly manifested at his funeral, when so great a number

of persons attended, that entrance into the churchyard was obtained with difficulty. The occasion of his death was improved in a sermon by the Rev Charles Prest. Some friends of the deceased, from an adjoining Circuit, arriving at the chapel early, found a number of poor persons, waiting for the opening of the gates. The question being casually asked, "Is there anything particular at the chapel this evening?" "Yes," was the immediate reply; "there is to be a funeral sermon preached for a good man. Everybody says that he was a good man. If all men were but like him, we should have a happy world." After the above notices were written, a letter was received by the writer from the Rev Charles Prest, a few sentences of which are subjoined, as furnishing valuable testimony to the correctness of the delineation of Mr Fiddian's character which has been attempted. "During my ministerial connexion with Birmingham, I had constant opportunities of observing the spirit and conduct of Mr Fiddian. His piety was unobtrusive, enlightened, and devoted. All his habits were orderly; and this, together with his punctuality, his honourable principles, and great integrity, secured him the good opinion and respect of all who, either in the church or the world, had the pleasure of his acquaintance. He was a consistent, a firm, yet a truly catholic, unsectarian Methodist. Where he had first experienced the blessings of God's gracious call, there did he abide to the last; never meddling, though often tempted to do so, with them that are given to change.

"I saw him repeatedly in his last illness; and while it was distressing to witness his sometimes agonizing sufferings, it was an instructive privilege to observe his patience, his cheerful submission to the hand of God, his thankfulness for past and present mercies, and his abounding hope of approaching glory. His death was eminently Peaceful, and such a one as might have been anticipated as the close of a long life of ardent, steady, and practical piety."