

LIGHT ON "OLD PATHS" FROM THE
MEMORIES OF "OLD WORTHIES."

Rev. Wm. Bramwell.

Ministry of the Gospel continued.

It was the opinion of Luther that prayer, temptation, persecution and study are necessary to make a Christian minister. We observe frequently that those whom the Lord intends for extensive usefulness are called to pass through severe mental exercises, and endure sore buffetings from the enemy of souls. The soldier of the cross has to wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." On this account he needs 'the whole armour of God.' So Mr. Bramwell found it. He was often grievously assailed respecting his call to preach, and sometimes spent a considerable portion of the night in wrestling with God for direction in this important matter. His agony in prayer on these occasions was great, the sweat frequently pouring down his face. In allusion to this exquisite perplexity of mind, he often exclaimed to an intimate friend, 'Robert, Robert, what shall I do??' One day walking with some friends over Preston Moor one of them asked him if he knew the place where the Rev. Isaac Ambrose was accustomed to spend a month in retirement every year and employ himself in meditation and prayer. Mr. Bramwell replied, 'No, but under a hill near this place, where there was a large sand hole, I once spent thirty-six hours together in retirement and prayer to the Lord that I might know His will concerning me.' Thus qualified for his work he could not labour in vain. The weapons of his warfare were not carnal, but were mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. God was with him in his work of faith and labour of love. By his ministry multitudes were convinced of sin and converted to God. Ann Cutler was one of the earliest fruits of his labours. She became a woman of uncommon piety, zeal and usefulness. During the period of four years after the expiration of his apprenticeship he had a strong persuasion that he was called by the Head of the Church to the exercise of the Christian ministry. It is probable that this was the chief subject of the strong mental exercises and conflicts before named. However he purposely abstained from going into business on his own account, although he had opportunity of doing so to great advantage. In the meantime he did not bury his talents, but was 'instant, in season, out of season,' and was chiefly occupied in preaching the Gospel and introducing the doctrines and discipline of Methodism into many of the destitute districts around Preston. In consequence of several new places having been added to the Liverpool circuit, an additional preacher was needed, and Mr. Bramwell having been recommended to Mr. Wesley by the Superintendent he was appointed to go and occupy this field of labour till the following conference. With this appointment he immediately complied, and was engaged there for several months. His friends, however, who felt his loss in the Preston circuit, made such strong representations of their case to Mr. Wesley, and of the loss likely to re-

sult by Mr. Bramwell's removal from them, that Mr. Wesley acceded to their request and permitted him to return to Preston. He was received with great joy and his parents were exceedingly gratified in the prospect of beholding him settled there in business. The interference of these affectionate but injudicious friends might have proved a great snare to him had not the Lord overruled all for good. Considering it his duty to commence business he took a house and shop in Preston, and had every hope of ease, honour and prosperity. His worldly prospects were flattering. He had formed an honourable matrimonial engagement with Miss Byron, a pious young lady in Preston, who had been converted to God under his preaching. He was surrounded by his family connections. His father and mother had lost many of their early prejudices against Methodism, and evinced some esteem for it. Thus all things appeared to concur and invite him to pursue his worldly calling, acquire a fortune and enjoy the fruits of it. But it was the will of God to frustrate all the hopes of his friends and honour His servant with abundant labours and singular ministerial success.

His experience of Entire Sanctification. In a few months after he had entered upon business Dr. Coke wrote to him several times earnestly requesting him to give up his business, become an itinerant preacher, and travel in the Kent Circuit. This call proved no common exercise. His perplexity was deep and almost overwhelming. What things were gain to him he had to count loss for Christ. It was a most important crisis; but he diligently sought to know the will of God by earnest prayer. And after consulting his Christian friends and being convinced that God called him to the work of the ministry, he no longer conferred with flesh and blood, but immediately settled his affairs, purchased a horse, and in the winter of 1785 rode to the Kent Circuit, a distance of about three hundred miles. After he had resolved to relinquish his temporal pursuits and devote himself entirely to the work of the ministry, when in the house of a friend at Liverpool arranging some temporal affairs previously to his going out to travel, Mr. Bramwell was made a witness of entire sanctification. Such a baptism of the Spirit was a rich preparation for the various trials and privations which a Wesleyan minister was called to endure in those days. The following is his own account of the manner in which he was made a witness of this great salvation: "I was for some time deeply convinced of my need of purity, and sought it carefully with tears, entreaties and sacrifice, thinking nothing too much to do or suffer if I might but attain this pearl of great price. et I found it not; nor knew the reason why till the Lord showed me I had erred in the way of seeking it. I did not seek it by faith alone; but as it were by the works of the law. Being now convinced of my error, I sought the blessing by faith only. Still it tarried a little, but I waited for it in the way of faith. When in the house of a friend at Liverpool arranging some temporal affairs previously to my going out to travel, while I was sitting, as it might be on this chair,"

(pointing to the chair on which he sat) "with my mind engaged in various meditations concerning my present affairs and future prospects, my heart now and then lifted up to God, but not particularly about this blessing, heaven came down to earth—it came to my soul. The Lord for whom I had waited came suddenly to the temple of my heart, and I had an immediate evidence that this was the blessing I had for some time been seeking. My soul was all wonder, love and praise. It is now about twenty-six years ago. I have walked in this liberty ever since. Glory be to God! I have been kept by His power. By faith I stand. In this as in all other instances I have proved the devil to be a liar. He suggested to me a few minutes after I had received the blessing that I should not hold it long: it was too great to be retained, and that I had better not profess it. I walked fifteen miles that night to a place where I had an appointment to preach, and at every step I trod, the temptation was repeated: 'Do not profess sanctification for thou wilt lose it!' But in preaching that night the temptation was removed and my soul was again filled with glory and with God. I then declared to the people what God had done for my soul, and I have done so on every proper occasion since that time, believing it to be a duty incumbent upon me; for God does not impart blessings to His children to be concealed in their own bosoms, but to be made known to all who fear Him and desire the enjoyment of the same privileges. I think such a blessing cannot be retained without professing it at every fit opportunity, for thus we glorify God, and with the mouth make confession unto salvation."

(To be continued in next issue)

SOUL TRAVAIL

"Give me souls or take my soul."—Geo. Whitfield.

"My greatest desire is for the salvation of sinners, Oh! for souls; the salvation of souls. Oh, could I always live for eternity, preach for eternity, pray for eternity, and speak for eternity. I want to lose sight of man and see God only."—Robt. Waller.

"I would think it a greater happiness to gain one soul to Christ than mountains of silver and gold to myself."—Matthew Henry.

"I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."—Paul.

OUR WAR WITH SELF

If a man is not willing to go to Heaven by the way of Calvary he cannot go at all. Many men want a religion in which there is no Cross, but they cannot enter Heaven that way. If we are to be disciples of Jesus Christ we must deny ourselves, and take up our Cross and follow Him.

Do not think you will have no battles if you follow the Nazarene; many battles are before you. But men do not object to a battle if they are confident that they will have the victory, and, thank God, every one of us may have the victory if he will.—D. L. Moody.