

at night. This was my first trial; next, about nine o'clock, a dreadful explosion of gunpowder took place in a house adjacent to the brewery; eight lives were lost, and great damage done. For a long time it seemed beyond hope to expect to keep the fire from the premises. The morning changed me from affluence to competence, and the evening was likely to have converted competence into poverty.

“To finish all, at night my house was robbed. This, if we had heard it, might have seriously alarmed my wife, in her present delicate state of health. How easily can I bear the transitions of fortune, and see without murmuring, and even with cheerfulness, my golden hopes blighted! but ‘bitter indeed and intimately keen,’ would any wound be that affected *her*. I have often repeated these lines of Shakspeare:—

—— “ ‘ Steep me in poverty to the very lips,  
Give to captivity me and my utmost hopes,  
I still can find in some part of my soul  
A drop of patience—  
But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,’ &c.

“On the following Tuesday I went to Weymouth, and found the affairs of a friend, in whom I am sincerely interested, in a very bad state. This is to me a subject of much anxiety; but on my return home I had another and a deeper trial. I found it was necessary to investigate ——’s business, which seems involved in much difficulty. These two events together have been very mortifying to me, but I have endeavoured to meet them with submissive fortitude. Yet I find that I can suffer my own misfortunes with comparative indifference, but cannot sit so easily under the misfortunes of those that are near to me; but in this I hope to improve, and to be enabled to look upon trials, in whatever form they appear, as visitations from the merciful hand of God. I hope my late uneasinesses have not been entirely thrown away upon me: they have brought me to feel the poverty and unsteadfastness of all human possessions, and to look upon life as a flower that falleth, while the grace and the fashion of it perisheth — as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. It has made me too (though still sadly deficient) more earnest and more frequent in my appeals and entreaties to God, that he would give me his wisdom to direct me, and his strength to support me; and, above all

that he would emancipate my heart from the shackles of the flesh, and fix my hopes beyond all that is in the world, 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.' Turn my heart to thee, O Lord; make me to feel, daily and hourly to feel, as well as know — to act upon the persuasion, as well as to be persuaded — that only in thee I can rest in peace, and only in thy service I can act with wisdom."

*To Mrs. Buxton, at Earlham.*

"Hampstead, Sunday, Oct. 29. 1815.

"\* \* \* I have all the week set my mind on writing to you to-day; but this is not the only temptation that operates at present, for if I have not your company I must have ——'s, who is in the next room and seems very desirous of improving my Sunday by edifying converse on shooting. I have been quite comfortable since I returned to town, found things in tolerable order, and have been as busy as a bee. I do not know when I have had so many things of some importance to manage or when I have spent my time in business more to my satisfaction. My mind and heart have been instantly engaged in it, and I have thought as little of shooting, since I returned to business, as I did of business while I was shooting. I know you would not like the unsettlement of the plan I have in my head, which is, after a few years, to live somewhere quiet in the country, and go to town for one week in a month. I think that with strict unsparing rules, this is all that would be necessary: the unsettlement would be no objection to me, for I do not find that change from one employment to another quite different produces it; and I fancy that I could brew one hour, study mathematics the next, shoot the third, and read poetry the fourth, without allowing any one of these pursuits to interfere with the others. This habit of full engagement of the mind has its advantages in business and other things, but is attended with this serious disadvantage, that it immerses the mind so fully in its immediate object, that there is no room for thoughts of higher importance and more real moment to creep in. I feel this continually, — the hours and hours that I spend in utter forgetfulness of that which I well know to be the only thing of importance. How very great a portion of one's life there is in which one might as well be a heathen!"

“ Spitalfields, Nov. 1. 1815.

“ I went this evening to a general meeting of the adult school. I was very much interested by it, and made a speech, which was received with shouts, nay, roars of applause! The good that has already been done is quite extraordinary: exclusive of one hundred and fifty persons who have improved in reading, eighty-nine, who did not know their letters, can now read well. We had five exhibited, and their performance was grand; but the effect upon their *lives* is still better than on their *literature*. Then we had a variety of fine speeches. I do not much admire meetings of ladies and gentlemen, but the tradesmen speaking to the mechanics is a treat to me: first, it is so entertaining to hear them, such sublimity, such grandeur, such superfine images; one fine fellow harvested a rich crop of corn off a majestic oak, and the simile was received with a burst of applause. But if this is entertaining, the zeal and warmth with which they speak and *act* is very interesting; and I really prefer their blundering heartiness to the cool and chaste performances of more erudite orators.”

Writing in February, 1816, after being engaged at a distance from home in settling the affairs of some near connections: —

“ So ends my history; and I ought, and I do, feel thankful that circumstances have made me the instrument of doing some good, and communicating so much pleasure there. I found them all sad, and I believe they each felt that my visit had been a kind of blessing. So far, so good; but do not imagine that I take the credit, or am elated at my own achievements. I have felt thankful to be the agent, but I do not forget that I am only the agent. I often wonder at the slow progress I have made of late years in religion, but in this one respect I feel different, I see the hand of a directing Providence in the events of life, the lesser as well as the greater; and this is of great importance to me, for the belief that your actions, if attempted aright, are guided and directed by superior wisdom, is to me one of the greatest inducements to prayer: and I do think that the little trials I have met with have materially contributed to produce with me a habit of prayer.”

Long before that period, to which he, at least, referred his first real acquaintance with the truths of Christianity, the peculiar features of his disposition had been cast in strong and permanent relief; and the religious acts of his mind are deeply stamped with the fashion of its native character. It possessed one element which beyond all others gave shape to the development of his religious principles. This was his power of realising the conceptions of his mind and imagination with scarcely less force and vividness than that which realised external objects. Thus he grasped the idea of a future state, not with a mere passive belief, but with a strong effective conviction, as *a matter of fact* of startling plainness, and which gave him to a remarkable degree a consciousness of the hollow vanity of all earthly pleasures and interests. But what chiefly marked his religious character was the absolute childlike confidence with which he clung to the guiding hand of his heavenly Father, wherever his path might lie. There was, in fact, no event in his life which he did not attribute to His immediate direction. "I do not want," he said, "to have religion proved to me: a superintending Providence is clear to demonstration. *There* is a proof of it," holding out his hand, and showing how perfect was its mechanism. This led to a constant habit of communicating his cares to his heavenly Father. "Prayer is throwing up the heart to God continually," he said, "not always using words, but casting up the thoughts to Him. Every thing leads me to prayer, and I always find it answered, both in little and great things." When anticipating that a material improvement would take place in his circumstances, his prayers were constant and fervent that the proposed advantage should not be granted him, unless it would be good for him and his family. "If it be denied

me," he observed, " I can only say and feel that I still thank God ; and if it is appointed for me, I am sure it will be safe and good. I am as easy to leave it as if it concerned only a 5*l.* note." No one that ever attended his family prayers could avoid being struck by the intense earnestness with which he poured out his feelings upon his public undertakings before God. He spread the subject before Him, wrestling with Him in prayer for aid and guidance ; and though he spared no exertions of his own, he always felt that God alone could give the increase. Nor when success had followed his efforts did he forget Him from whom that success had been derived. Indeed, he habitually received the will of God, not only with submission, but thankfulness.

Again, and again, and again, in his papers of religious meditations, does he recur to the different events of his life, and trace with grateful pleasure the moulding hand of Providence. " The clusters of mercies received " are enumerated repeatedly in careful detail, and his appointment to the advocacy of the oppressed and neglected is always included as a source of deep thankfulness and wonder that such as he should have been permitted thus to labour in his Master's service. This strong reliance on the presiding care of God grew with him year by year, as his experience widened, and he loved to count up the instances in which, as he firmly believed, he had seen the ways of himself and others directed by the hands of Providence to its own great ends. An unfinished paper, detailing various providential escapes he had met with, refers, after alluding to many earlier ones, to one that occurred in the winter of 1815 : —

" Mr. Back and I," he says, " went into the brewery to survey the repairs which were going on ; we were standing upon a plank, with only room for two, face to face ; we changed places in

order that I might survey a spot to which he was directing my attention ; his hat was on, I was uncovered : as soon as we had changed places, several bricks fell from the roof, and one struck his head ; his hat in some measure averted the blow, but he never recovered the injury, and died shortly afterwards of an oppression on the brain."

*To Joseph John Gurney, Esq.*

"Hampstead, April 12. 1816.

"It is very true that I have been worried of late, but not about the Malt Tax, for that is only a question of profit, of one that I could not regulate, and I find no disposition in my mind to regret what is irremediable. The thing which has given me uneasiness is the discovery of what I consider errors in the management of the department of the brewery which has fallen to me lately ; and these errors I am determined to cure. Now this involves much labour — but labour I do not regard — and some anxiety, considering my inexperience upon many points connected with it ; but I cannot say that I have felt this much. The true cause of my disquietude arises from a certain feature in my own mind, which I can hardly describe ; a kind of unregulated ardour in any pursuit which appears to me to be of great importance, which takes captive all my faculties and binds them down to that pursuit, and will not let them or me rest till it is accomplished. I hate this ; it is so unpleasant to wake, and to go to sleep with your head full of vats and tubs ; and I disapprove it more than I hate it. No man, I think, can have more abstract conviction of the folly and futility of such engagement of heart upon objects so utterly trifling and undurable. I see that it is an infirmity : I deeply feel that it chokes the good seed, and is a most pernicious weed, and I feel the breaches that it makes in my own quiet : yet so much am I its slave, that it will intrude into the midst of such reflections, and carry me off to my next gyle.\* How sincerely I do often wish that I could direct this fervent energy about temporals into its proper channel — that I could be as warm about things of infinite importance, as I am about dust and ashes !

"If I cannot accomplish this, I wish we could divide it — I

\* A "gyle" is the technical name for a brewing.

keep half for my business, and give you half for your book.\* How can you, my dear brother, be languid and spiritless, with such a thing before you, and with such a capacity for doing it excellently? Are you not ashamed that I should be more anxious about making porter than you are about making Christians? At it, my dear fellow! at it with vigour; but when you find your mind unsuited for it, write me another letter, for the last was a great pleasure to

“Your affectionate brother,  
“T. F. BUXTON.”

\* On the Evidences of the Christian Religion. See the Works of Joseph John Gurney.

## CHAPTER V.

1816, 1817.

ADVENTURE WITH A MAD DOG. — DISTRESS IN SPITALFIELDS. — MR. BUXTON'S SPEECH. — LETTERS. — ESTABLISHMENT OF PRISON DISCIPLINE SOCIETY. — DEATH OF CHARLES BUXTON. — JOURNEY ON THE CONTINENT. — LETTERS. — INCIDENT AT THE BREWERY. — BOOK ON PRISON DISCIPLINE.

AN incident which occurred during the summer of 1816 is thus mentioned by Mr. Buxton in a letter to his wife, who fortunately was absent at the time: —

“ Spitalfields, July 15. 1816.

“ As you must hear the story of our dog Prince, I may as well tell it you. On Thursday morning, when I got on my horse at S. Hoare's, David told me that there was something the matter with Prince, that he had killed the cat, and almost killed the new dog, and had bit at him and Elizabeth. I ordered him to be tied up and taken care of, and then rode off to town. When I got into Hampstead, I saw Prince covered with mud, and running furiously, and biting at every thing. I saw him bite at least a dozen dogs, two boys, and a man.

“ Of course I was exceedingly alarmed, being persuaded he was mad. I tried every effort to stop him or kill him, or to drive him into some outhouse, but in vain. At last he sprang up at a boy, and seized him by the breast; happily I was near him, and knocked him off with my whip. He then set off towards London, and I rode by his side, waiting for some opportunity of stopping him. I continually spoke to him, but he paid no regard to coaxing or scolding. You may suppose I was seriously alarmed, dreading the immense mischief he might do, having seen him do so much in the few preceding minutes. I was terrified at the idea of his getting into Camden Town and London, and at length considering that, if ever there was an occasion that justified a risk of life, this was it, I determined to catch him myself. Happily he ran up to Pryor's gate, and I threw myself from

my horse upon him, and caught him by the neck : he bit at me and struggled, but without effect, and I succeeded in securing him, without his biting me. He died yesterday, raving mad.

“ Was there ever a more merciful escape ? Think of the children being gone ! I feel it most seriously, but I cannot now write more fully. I have not been at all nervous about it, though certainly rather low, occasioned partly by this, and partly by some other things.

“ I do not feel much fit for our Bible meeting on Wednesday—but I must exert myself.

“ P.S. Write me word whether Fowell has any wound on his fingers, and if he has one made by the dog, let it be cut out immediately ; mind, these are my positive orders.”

He afterwards mentioned some particulars which he had omitted in this hurried letter.

“ When I seized the dog,” he said, “ his struggles were so desperate that it seemed at first almost impossible to hold him, till I lifted him up in the air, when he was more easily managed, and I contrived to ring the bell. I was afraid that the foam, which was pouring from his mouth in his furious efforts to bite me, might get into some scratch, and do me injury ; so with great difficulty I held him with one hand while I put the other into my pocket and forced on my glove ; then I did the same with my other hand, and at last the gardener opened the door, saying, ‘ What do you want ? ’ ‘ I’ve brought you a mad dog,’ replied I ; and telling him to get a strong chain, I walked into the yard, carrying the dog by his neck. I was determined not to kill him, as I thought, if he should prove not to be mad, it would be a great satisfaction to the three persons whom he had bitten. I made the gardener, who was in a terrible fright, secure the collar round his neck and fix the other end of the chain to a tree, and then walking to its furthest range, with all my force, which was nearly exhausted by his frantic struggles, I flung him away from me, and sprang back. He made a desperate bound after me, but finding himself foiled, he uttered the most fearful yell I ever heard. All that day he did nothing but rush to and fro, champing the foam which gushed from his jaws ; we threw him meat, and he snatched at it with fury, but instantly dropped it again.

“The next day, when I went to see him, I thought the chain seemed worn, so I pinned him to the ground between the prongs of a pitchfork, and then fixed a much larger chain round his neck. When I pulled off the fork, he sprang up and made a dash at me, which snapped the old chain in two. He died in forty-eight hours from the time he went mad.”

He writes to his wife a day or two afterwards: —

“I shot all the dogs and drowned all the cats. The man and boys who were bitten are doing pretty well: their wounds were immediately attended to, cut, and burnt out.

“What a terrible business it was! You must not scold me for the risk I ran; what I did I did from a conviction that it was my duty, and I never can think that an over cautious care of self in circumstances where your risk may preserve others is so great a virtue as you seem to think it. I do believe that if I had shrunk from the danger, and others had suffered in consequence, I should have felt more pain than I should have done had I received a bite.”

The winter of 1816 set in early, and with great severity: the silk trade was almost stagnant, and the weavers in Spitalfields, always trembling on the brink of starvation, were plunged into the deepest misery. It was increased by the constant influx into the parish of the poorest class of London work-people, who could find no lodging elsewhere. A soup society had been long before established, but the distress far exceeded the means provided for its alleviation. Under these circumstances it was determined to hold a meeting on the subject at the Mansion House. Mr. Buxton and Mr. Samuel Hoare delayed their usual visit to Norfolk, in order to explore and assist in relieving the sufferings of the Spitalfields poor.

*To Mrs. Buxton, at Earllham.*

“Spitalfields, Nov. 9. 1816.

“\* \* \* S. Hoare and I came from Hampstead to attend a committee this morning, and afterwards visited the poor. The

wretchedness was great indeed, but I felt most compassion for a poor old creature of eighty, living alone without a fire or blanket. She seemed quite bewildered by the sight of silver; her twilight of intellect lost in gratitude and amazement. Poor old thing! that she, with all the infirmities of age, and without one earthly consolation, should look upon the prospect of a good meal as a cause of extravagant joy and real happiness, and that we, with the command of every comfort, in full strength, without a bodily want, should ever repine at trifling discomfitures, is, I hope, a lesson. We are going to have a public meeting, and I trust a profitable one, for without a large supply of money we must suspend our operations. George Kett sent me 50*l.* to-day."

"Spitalfields, Nov. 22. 1816.

"I did not write to you yesterday because really I had not a moment's time; the committees and my own business occupy every moment. I had a pleasant journey up to town. I had much upon my mind—our conversation about the eclipse. The vastness of the creation is indeed a subject for meditation. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork.' 'When I consider the stars which thou hast made, and the heavens which are the work of thy hand, what is man that thou art mindful of him?' How truly do these words describe the thoughts to which the vast spectacle of nature, especially the heavenly bodies, rolling in their appointed orbits, give rise! What a sermon these are upon the mightiness of the Creator, and upon the insignificance of man! and yet that we, who are truly dust and nothingness, should have the presumption to defy the power of the Almighty, to resist his commands, and to place our whole souls and hearts upon that which he tells us is but vanity; this is (if nothing else were) a demonstration that the heart of man is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' On the other hand, that a Being so infinitely great should condescend to invite us to our duty, and to call that duty his service, proves as strongly that he has crowned us with loving kindness and tender mercy.

"I am well, and our proceedings about the poor prosper;—but oh, my speech! When shall I be able to think of it? I fear that I shall go to the meeting with it all in a jumble, and

this would be wicked, as it would injure the good cause. I do try, I hope, not to mingle too much of self in my earnest desires for its success, and I am not forgetful of my usual resource in difficulty—prayer.

“I am now going to the workhouse. I shall reach Earlham on Tuesday. S. Hoare and Abraham Plastow will be with me, and I hope the latter will be treated with deserved distinction, as he was for the first twelve years of my life the dearest friend I had.”

“Nov. 27. 1816.

“Well, our meeting went off capitally. I felt very flat, and did not go through the topics I meant to touch upon, and upon the whole considered it as a kind of failure; but as I had entertained that what was best might be done, I did not feel at all disheartened; but, to my great surprise, all others took a very different sense of it.

“Tell dear Priscy I send her the ‘Morning Chronicle,’ that she may read Papa’s speech, and I hope it will make her desirous of serving the poor.”

A brief extract may be given from this speech. After mentioning the causes which had produced, he says, “a degree, an expanse of distress utterly beyond my powers to describe,” he continues—

“I could detain you till midnight with the scenes we have witnessed. From these rough minutes which I hold in my hand, taken on the spot, in the very houses of the poor, drawn not from the fictions of a warm imagination, but from scenes of actual life—from the sad realities before us, I could disclose to you a faithful though a faint picture of such desperate calamity and unutterable ruin, that the heart must be stony indeed that did not sicken at the sight. First, I would lead you to the roof of a house hardly deserving the name of a garret; there sat three human beings, each seventy years of age—each with the ghastly lineaments of famine; a few bricks were their only chair and their only table; a little of our soup their only provision; a little straw and some shreds of an old coat their only bed! Next, I would show you a family of nine; the father disabled—the mother sickly—their furniture, their bed, their looms—every article of present use, the very implements of future labour, had

been surrendered to the demands of hunger! I will not exhaust your feelings by further recitals of what has met our eyes, but hasten to a larger topic. \* \* \* \* \*

“ My Lord, I feel more and more that I cannot do justice to the distress. I wish I could prevail upon you to see it with your own eyes. Come when you please, select almost your own street, almost your own house in that street, your own room in that house, and I undertake that in that room you will find a proof that our picture is faint and feeble. Come amongst us, and we will show you the father of a large family, whom we found in the act of pulling down his stove, to exchange it for food. The dread of future cold was less violent than the cravings of immediate hunger. Come by day, and we will lead you to a widow in the last stage of illness, yet—the only blanket of the dying wretch has been sent to procure bread! Come by night, and we will show you the baskets and the sheds of our markets filled with these wretched creatures—there they find their nightly lodging, and there amongst its scraps and refuse they pick out their daily food. \* \* In ordinary times the poor are the best friends of the poor. There is (and happy is it) a sympathy in affliction (we find it as a ray of light amid the gloom), a fellow-feeling in distress, a kind of benefit society to which all the wretched are free,—a society not indeed enrolled and registered by Act of Parliament, but by higher authority, and with more awful sanction, by the instincts which Providence has implanted in the human heart; but this is a virtue for better times. The poor man can hardly support himself, and therefore can hardly assist others. I do not mean to say that he does not. We have met with instances which have exalted our respect for human nature—instances which recall the widow recorded in the New Testament, who ‘ out of her want gave all her living;’ and the widow of Sarepta in the Old Testament, whose whole possession was ‘ a handful of meal in a barrel, and a drop of oil in a cruse,’ yet she was willing to share them with the afflicted stranger. But if this prove that the poor are not bereft of every ordinary support, is it not a lesson to us? If the poor man who is obliged to deny his unsatiated appetites,—who, having divided sufficient from his only loaf to support life, but not to satisfy hunger, hides the remainder for the next day’s meal,—if he yet find some place for mercy in his soul, and, miserable himself, is

yet impelled to share his remaining crust with the more miserable,—if the strong impulse of humanity urges him to so dear a sacrifice, does it not teach the man who is clothed in soft raiment and fares sumptuously every day, to give something more than the crumbs that fall from his table to the wretchedness that surrounds his gate? But why this superior mercy in the poor? Because he has learned it in the school of affliction. He knows what it is to want bread, and this has opened his heart and enlivened his affections for those who are exposed to the rigour of the season and the craving importunities of hunger; but the rich man cannot feel this. He can experimentally know nothing of what it is, when the poor man, willing to strain every nerve in labour, is denied the employment which might stanch the tears of his wife and appease the cries of his children,—when, like the wretch I have mentioned, he is willing to suffer, if he might suffer alone, firm against his own afflictions, but, when he looks around him, sunk to the effeminacy of tears.”

He might fairly be surprised by the universal attention which this speech received. Nothing could be more commendatory than the mention made of it in the newspapers; and letters of congratulation poured in from all sides. One from Mr. Wilberforce, the first written by him to his future ally and successor, may be deemed almost prophetic.

“ My dear Sir,

“ Kensington Gore, Nov. 28. 1816.

“ I must in three words express the real pleasure with which I have both read and heard of your successful effort on Tuesday last, in behalf of the hungry and the naked. \* \* \* But I cannot claim the merit of being influenced only by regard for the Spitalfields sufferers, in the pleasure I have received from your performances at the meeting. It is partly a selfish feeling, for I anticipate the success of the efforts which I trust you will one day make in other instances, in an assembly in which I trust we shall be fellow-labourers, both in the motives by which we are actuated, and in the objects to which our exertions will be directed.

“ I am, my dear Sir,

“ Yours sincerely,

“ W. WILBERFORCE.”

The speech reappeared in publications of the most widely different character. It was republished by the Spitalfields Benevolent Society, as the best means of creating sympathy with their exertions; it was republished by Hone and the democrats, as the best statement of the miseries permitted under the existing government; and it was republished by the friends of that government, "because," said they, "it forms so beautiful a contrast to the language of those wretched demagogues, whose infamous doctrines would increase the evils they affect to deplore."

"By this one meeting at the Mansion House," says the report of the Spitalfields Benevolent Society, "43,369*l.* were raised." Two days after it had been held, Lord Sidmouth sent for Mr. Buxton, to inform him, that "the Prince had been so pleased by the spirit and temper of the meeting, and so strongly felt the claims that had been urged, that he had sent them 5000*l.*"

With these exertions for the poor around him, Mr. Buxton's public career may be said to have commenced. He was now launched upon that stream of labour for the good of others, along which his course lay for the remainder of his life. His letters show the eagerness of his desire to be employing his energies in warring against the evils around him. "I want to be living in a higher key," he remarked, "to do some good before I die." His prayers were incessant that God would employ him as an instrument of spreading his kingdom, and of doing good to mankind. He had great delight in the service of his Lord and Master; nor did he ever forget to thank God with deep gratitude when any opportunity, however trifling, was afforded him of exerting himself for others. To one of his relations, who had

entered upon a benevolent undertaking which required considerable personal sacrifices, he writes,—

“For my part, I cannot lament for and pity those who make great sacrifices in compliance with conscience; such dedication of self is, in my view, much more a matter of envy. Assuredly, if we could look at such sacrifices throughout their whole extent, in their consequences here to others, and hereafter to ourselves, we should perceive that the permission to be so engaged is a privilege of inestimable value. I am certain that you are only actuated by a conviction of duty, and shall I repine and grieve because you are enabled to follow so high a director? Or shall I not rather heartily rejoice that you are called to such a service, and that the call is not resisted? I often think of those verses in the Acts, ‘rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name; and daily in the Temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.’ And so I am half inclined to envy you, and more than half to wish that, somehow or other, I were as well engaged.”

It was no part of his character to indulge in vague desires without a bold struggle for their accomplishment. Having done what he could in relieving the miseries of his poor neighbours, he soon entered upon a wider field of benevolence.

One day, while walking past Newgate with Mr. Samuel Hoare, their conversation turned upon the exertions of their sister-in-law Mrs. Fry, and her companions, for the improvement of the prisoners within its walls; and this suggested the idea of employing themselves in a similar manner. They soon entered into communication with Mr. William Crawford, Mr. Peter Bedford, and other gentlemen who were also anxious to improve the condition, at that time deplorable to the last degree, of the English jails.

The exertions of Mrs. Fry and her associates had prepared the way; public attention had been drawn to the subject; and in 1816 the Society for the Reformation of

Prison Discipline was formed. In the list of the committee, Mr. Buxton's name stands between those of Dr. Lushington and Lord Suffield (then the Hon. E. Harbord), both of whom were afterwards so closely associated with him in the attack upon negro slavery.

On January the 5th, 1817, he writes from Hampstead to Mrs. Buxton,—

“ After I had written to you yesterday, I went with Peter Bedford and Charles on a visit to Newgate. I saw four poor creatures who are to be executed on Tuesday next. Poor things! God have mercy on them! The sight of them was sufficient for that day. I felt no further inclination to examine the prison. It has made me long much that my life may not pass quite uselessly; but that, in some shape or other, I may assist in checking and diminishing crime and its consequent misery. Surely it is in the power of all to do something in the service of their Master; and surely I, among the rest, if I were now to begin and endeavour, to the best of my capacity, to serve Him, might be the means of good to some of my fellow-creatures. This capacity is, I feel, no mean talent, and attended with no inconsiderable responsibility. I must pray that I may at length stir myself up, and be enabled to feel somewhat of the real spirit of a missionary, and that I may devote myself, my influence, my time, and, above all, my affections, to the honour of God, and the happiness of man. My mission is evidently not abroad, but it is not less a mission on that account. I feel that I may journey through life by two very different paths, and that the time is now come for choosing which I will pursue. I may go on as I have been going on, not absolutely forgetful of futurity, nor absolutely devoted to it. I may get riches and repute, and gratify my ambition, and do some good and more evil; and, at length, I shall find all my time on earth expended, and in retracing my life I shall see little but occasions lost, and capacities misapplied. The other is a path of more labour and less indulgence. I may become a real soldier of Christ; I may feel that I have no business on earth but to do his will and to walk in his ways, and I may direct every energy I have to the service of others. Of

these paths, I know which I would most gladly choose: 'but what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I.' In short, the cares, and the pleasures, and the business of this world choke the good seed, and we are perpetually deceived. We would sow to the spirit, and we sow to the flesh; we desire heaven, and we are chained to earth."

He now began to entertain thoughts of entering Parliament, and at the election of February, 1817, he went down to Weymouth, at the invitation of Mr. W. Williams, to stand on the same interest. He did not, however, offer himself as a candidate.

"Weymouth, Feb. 1817.

"I am far from regretting that I came, as I do not doubt it will secure me an independent seat next election: that word 'independent' has been the obstacle upon this occasion. I intend to spend a good portion of the next two years in preparation for the House. I hope I shall either do good, or receive pleasure, when I get there: as yet, I have had in politics neither one nor the other. I am pining for home: nothing suits me worse than this kind of busy leisure; too much to do to have time to myself, and too little to do to occupy my time."

"Hampstead, April 5.

"Last Sunday I was at Fakenham, with Charles, who is very unwell. God grant he may recover! I have much to thank God about with regard to him, his increased and increasing piety and seriousness. For myself, I sometimes fear my treasure is too much in my business, it is too much my amusement, the topic to which I turn with pleasure. South says, 'Whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, that he places his whole delight in: it entertains his eye, refreshes his fancy, feeds his thoughts, and affords him a continual feast.' God grant that I may so meditate in his law, and so dwell within the walls of his spiritual temple, that He, and my duties towards Him, may be my chief delight."

Soon afterwards he became absorbed in anxiety about his brother Charles, who had shown symptoms of a de-

cline, which at length proved fatal. A more grievous calamity could scarcely have befallen Mr. Buxton. Though their characters stood far apart, the two brothers had some points of strong and endearing resemblance. The lively gladness of heart which threw a constant sunshine over the countenance of the younger, would often relax the graver brow of the elder brother; and, indeed, though the pressure of care and business gave Mr. Buxton an habitually grave aspect, and though it was a part of his character to be so absorbed by the pursuit he had in hand as to seem abstracted, yet there was in him throughout life a vein of playfulness which showed itself often when least expected. Even when he himself was somewhat silent and oppressed, he courted the cheerfulness of others, and delighted in it. But the friend that could best enliven him was lost when his brother sunk into the grave.

*To Mrs. Buxton.*

“ My dearest Wife,

Weymouth, July 4 1817.

“ How difficult it is to pour out all the feelings of this day; memorable as it will be to me, for as bitter pain on the one hand, and as strong and joyful gratitude on the other, as ever I passed through! After such a tumult of feelings, I am now quite dull and confused, hardly crediting that it is anything but a dream, or that he that was my earliest friend, and so very near my heart, and with whom the ties of friendship were so exquisitely tender, should be passed away for ever, or rather for the short period of this pilgrimage; but if I feel the grief of having these ten thousand links of brotherhood snapped asunder, I hope and I think that I do more strongly feel the strong and sufficient consolations that surround us. Dear as he is to me (and there is an inexpressible fondness over his memory), I would not recall him to earth. If this world be a state of probation, he has passed through it, and is, I am persuaded, with the Saviour on whom he depended. I cannot say the satisfaction I feel in his state of mind of late — the deepest humility as to

himself, mixed with the firmest confidence in the sufficient merits of Christ. \* \* \* I will now tell you events as they have passed. At Andover I found a letter from Anna, saying he was worse; and that I might be too late. I shall not easily forget the ride between Andover and Salisbury. I could only see the dark side, the deep and irreparable loss, and one chief joy of my life gone for ever. The remainder of the journey to Dorchester was rather anxious than any thing else. I particularly desired to see him once more, and I strongly hoped to have that comfort, but at Dorchester I heard of his peaceful end. Poor dear fellow! Between that and Weymouth, after indulging for a short time in groanings for us who remain, I felt the deepest gratitude on his account. I was so happy in his fate, and so sensible of the all-righteous hand which directed it! \* \* \* Infinitely beyond all, how merciful and gladdening it is that those words, 'in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection,' are not at all too strong to express my convictions about him! He is bound to the very inmost recesses of my heart, when I recall and call up in my heart a thousand endearing recollections, his tenderness towards me, his playful manner, his ready sympathy in all that touched me, his nice sense of honour and delicate feelings. When all these rush into my mind (and they are twined round all the events that are past), I should be a mourner indeed if I had not an unfailing sense of consolation, 'a present help in time of trouble,' in the conviction of his happiness, and in the earnest hope of being again restored to him, in a state free from the impurities and imperfections of this world. Oh! how I do long to take to the warning of his example, to detach myself from the frailties and vanities of this world, to become a disciple and soldier of our Lord Jesus Christ, to remember 'righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come!' and how I do feel that this admonition, like other deep ones which I have had, may pass away, and that I may be one of those of whom it may be said, 'it would have been better for him never to have known the ways of righteousness!'

"His being now in the land of Spirits before his Maker, and in the company of his Redeemer, in whom he so fully believed, and whom he loved, gives to me a familiarity with death which I never experienced. There is, I have almost thought, a community and sameness of feeling between brothers which is only

equalled by that between husband and wife. Oh! how I feel that this is gone! but I do not forget that I have others left who are perhaps as dear to me, besides yourself, my love. I went into the room by myself, wishing to return thanks, with his remains before me, for the inexpressible mercy displayed to him, and to pray that we who are left may be preserved from evil.

“Martha told me that Charles, on Tuesday, could not swallow; when she observed how sorry she was, he answered by repeating the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, and concluded by saying ‘Though I cannot eat, and though I cannot drink, yet if I can but drink one glass of cold water at that living spring, I shall never thirst any more.’

“When somebody said to him, ‘We must repent and then we shall be forgiven by Christ,’ he said, ‘You begin at the wrong end: we must first seek Christ, then He will give us repentance and forgiveness.’ He was fully aware the last moment was approaching, and his soul seemed at times as if it were already in heaven. Send this to my aunt Gurney and Anna; with my dearest love to all.”

“July 6. 1817.

“If we only consider the loss we have sustained, we must go mourning all the day long; if we consider the gain to him, it extracts the anguish from the wound. I cannot help following him in his present state. He, with whose views, and prospects, and feelings, and joys, I have till within a few days been so conversant, is now in a scene so new, so grand, so inexpressible, so infinitely beyond the rags and vanities of earth.”—“I do not expect to feel Charles’s funeral much,” he says in another letter; “I have dwelt so much upon him as ascended to heaven, that I cannot, or rather do not so very closely connect the idea of him and his remains. I mean, in committing *them* to the earth, I do not feel as if I were committing *him* there.”

Twenty years afterwards, in reviewing the leading occurrences of his life, he thus refers to this event:—

“I know of no tie, that of a husband and wife excepted, which could be stronger than the one which united Charles and me. We were what the lawyers call ‘tenants in common’ of every thing. He was, I think, the most agreeable person I ever knew.

A kind of original humour played about his conversation. It was not wit; it was anything rather than that species of humour which provokes loud laughter: it was not exactly naïveté, though that comes nearest to it; it was an intellectual playfulness which provided for every hour, and extracted from every incident a fund of delicate merriment. He died at Weymouth in the year 1817;—and Thou knowest, O Lord, and Thou only, how deeply I loved, and how long and how intensely I lamented him.”

His brother's widow and children were the objects of his tender care. He took a house for them near his own at Hampstead, and as his brother-in-law, Mr. Samuel Hoare, resided in the same place, the three families became united in habits of the closest intercourse.

In the winter of 1817, Mr. and Mrs. Buxton and Mr. S. and Mr. J. J. Gurney went over to France, with the Rev. Francis Cunningham, who was anxious to establish a branch of the Bible Society at Paris. Mr. Buxton and his brothers-in-law took a great interest in this undertaking, and were also desirous to procure information, as to the excellent systems of prison discipline adopted in the jails of Antwerp and Ghent.

In crossing over to Boulogne the party met with an adventure which might have turned out seriously. Soon after leaving Dover, they were surrounded by a dense fog, in which they drifted about for two days and nights, without being able to conjecture what course the vessel was pursuing. To this anxiety actual suffering was soon added, for the packet contained many passengers, and there was no sleeping accommodation, and scarcely a morsel of food on board. A few mouldy biscuits and a piece of cheese were furnished at a high price by one of the sailors, with which the hungry party were obliged to be contented. In the course of the second night the braying of an ass warned

them of their near approach to land, and having narrowly avoided running the vessel ashore, a short dispersion of the fog at length enabled them to enter the harbour of Calais. After referring to this incident, Mr. Buxton proceeds in his diary:—

“I would not willingly forget the lesson taught of the value of food—of the pain of being restricted in it; these lines will recall my feelings:—

‘ Take physic, Pomp,  
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
That thou mayest shake the superflux to them.’ ”

The following are extracts from his diary:—

“ Nov. 1. 1817.

“One cannot pass over from Dover to Calais without being struck with the immense expenditure which has been lavished upon the animosities of the two countries. We hear with astonishment of some hundred thousand pounds raised in England for the dispersion of the Bible through the world; of 20,000*l.* per annum raised to send missionaries to communicate to heathen nations the blessings of Christianity. Such exertions excite our admiration, elevate our country in our eyes, and even exalt our nature. But turn for a moment to the opposite picture, and observe ten times these enormous sums expended upon twenty acres of land at Dover, and as many at Calais,—not to promote civilisation or happiness, but for purposes of mutual hostility, defiance, aggression, and bloodshed. I do verily believe that the true, genuine, valorous, military spirit, is the true and genuine spirit inspired by the enemy of man, and I hope that I shall never refuse or be ashamed to avow these strange, extraordinary sentiments.”

“ Paris Nov. 10.

“ Thus far I have thoroughly enjoyed my journey; the people are civil and engaging, and full of life. What an odd thing it is that our mutual rulers should have deemed it expedient that we should have spent the last twenty-three years in cutting each other's throats; and that we should so often have illuminated at the grateful intelligence that ten thousand of these our lively friends were killed and twenty thousand wounded! Surely we

must now think this a strange reason for rejoicing. Seeing the natives is an antidote to the pleasure of destroying them. If it be our duty to love our enemies, the military preparations are an extraordinary mode of displaying our affection. In truth it is a sad thing, that

‘ Straits interposed  
Make enemies of nations, which had else,  
Like kindred drops, been melted into one.’

“11th.—We went to Versailles to breakfast. Almost every bush has its statue. The fauns, tritons, Neptunes, heroes, Venuses, Dianas, mixed with the statues of Louis le Grand and Louis le Désiré (whose features defy all meaning), present an assemblage of fiction and fact, much to the advantage of the former.

“After visiting Versailles, we went to St. Cloud. This is a very comfortable and splendid abode, the furniture very beautiful and costly, and as much surpassing Versailles in cheerfulness as falling short of it in melancholy grandeur. It is the second record of departed glory which we have seen to-day: the third comes more home to our hearts. We this night, on our arrival at Paris, heard of the death of our Princess. We have all felt it as if she were bound to ourselves by the ties of kindred.

“12th.—We went to the Palace of the Luxemburg, and there saw Talleyrand;—a bishop in the reign of the King—an abjurer of Christianity when reason was deified—prime minister of Buonaparte till his Spanish expedition—one of the first to betray him—on his return offering his insidious assistance again to betray him—and now in full power!

“15th.—Went to the Legislative Assembly, and saw the rooms for the Peers. Wonderfully smart—too much so. Very different, indeed, are both these chambers from the negligent grandeur of the British Parliament.

“16th.—Francis Cunningham and I went to various persons, for the purpose of establishing a Bible Society. We found only M. Juillerat at home, with whom we had some encouraging conversation. His description of the state of religion in the country is truly deplorable. The Protestants are sadly indifferent, and the Roman Catholics are either quite philosophically careless or thoroughly bigoted.

“Baxter says, in his *Life*, something of this kind: — ‘I did not know till now what a great sin tyranny is, which thus prevents the propagation of the Gospel:’ and the difficulties we have this day felt in the establishment of the Bible Society from the restraints of Government, have united me in the same feeling.

“Went again to the Louvre, and greatly admired the Italian paintings; and, particularly, some of Claude’s. I cannot like Rubens’ great, sprawling, allegorical Deities.”

His diary contains very full particulars relative to those prisons at Ghent and Antwerp which it was one purpose of his journey to examine. He was especially struck with the admirable management of the *Maison de Force* in the former town, and he determined to lay his account of it before the Prison Discipline Society in London.

“At Ghent we were told that when Buonaparte was emperor he demanded of the Roman Catholic College an approbation of his marriage with Maria Louisa, which they steadily refused. Soon after, he sent them a bishop, who was not properly ordained by the Pope, and they refused to obey him. On this he ordered a detachment of soldiers to surround the college, and to take every priest and student. He then sent them all off to his armies as soldiers; and of 330 thus sent but fifteen returned alive!”

“Sunday, Calais.

“Here we arrived at ten o’clock this morning, being compelled by the regulations of the fortified towns to travel some distance on this day. We regret this, as we would not willingly lend even our feeble countenance to the violation of the Sabbath, which this country everywhere presents.

“We all felt grateful for the encouraging intelligence that a Bible Society had been formed in Paris. I ardently hope that it may be the means of much direct good by the circulation of the Scriptures, and of much indirect good by causing intercourse between the Protestants of France and England. France, indeed, needs everything that can be done for her religious welfare. Religion is, as it were, almost abolished. I speak

generally, but I trust, and indeed I am persuaded, that this generality admits of very many exceptions; but altogether, there is little appearance of religion. The amusements and businesses of the Sunday — the utter absence of the Scriptures — the perpetual reiteration of ‘*Mon Dieu*’ in every sentence — the indifference as to truth — in short, all that strikes the eye and the ear, indicates the absence of any spiritual understanding.”

Upon Mr. Buxton’s return to England he communicated to the Prison Discipline Society the information which he had acquired with respect to the *Maison de Force* at Ghent, and this led to a request from the committee that his description of it might be published. “When I sat down to this task,” he says, in the preface to his book, “the work insensibly grew upon my hands. It was necessary to prove that evils and grievances did exist in this country, and to bring home to these causes the increase of corruption and depravity. For this purpose repeated visits to prisons were requisite.”

Accordingly, accompanied by Mr. Hoare, Mr. William Crawford, and others, he visited at different times the principal London jails, and examined with the utmost care into every part of the system pursued in them.

*To the Rev. Francis Cunningham.*

“Spitalfields, Dec. 1817.

“Since my return I have been much engaged in the London prisons, and my inquiries have developed a system of folly and wickedness which surpasses belief. A noise must be made about it, and (will you believe it?) I am going to turn author, and am preparing a pamphlet upon the subject of prisons.

“The recollection of our journey acquires new charms in my eyes, and I heartily rejoice we were induced to take it.

“Tell C — that if the result should in any way diminish the quantum of misery that is endured, and of vice which is hatched in our prisons — if it should be the means of encouraging the Protestant ministers of France, and of dispersing the Bible

through its forlorn population — I shall think we were almost repaid for the terrible, monstrous, shocking dangers we incurred when exposed to all the horrors of a *calm*.

“Can you give Major Close the name of the regiment at Mont Cassel which had no Bibles? If so, they will be immediately supplied.”

*To a Friend.*

“Dec. 18. 1817.

“I never enjoyed my home more. I hardly ever was so sensible of enjoyment in it as since my return from France. To be happy I must be employed, and on a useful object, for between ourselves (but this is a profound secret) I am sick of having my heart in my vats.”

He closed the year 1817 with the following reflections in his common-place book: —

“This year has been chequered with events of deep interest — some joyful and some dressed in the darkest sable. But how encouraging is it to be able to recognise in all, and especially in the mournful circumstances of the year, the hand of a merciful Providence! This day last year I spent with my beloved brother; together we went to our usual place of worship, to hear our (especially his) beloved minister\*, and together we wandered through the future.

‘But God has wisely hid from human eyes  
The dark decrees of Fate.’

“Very soon afterwards I was called to Weymouth to the election. I need not now enter into the reasons which induced me not to stand; suffice it to say, I would not be dependent. With my determination I have been well satisfied. I fancy my election at a future period is very probable: if it will tend to my real good or the good of others, I believe it will be so determined by Providence; if not, I earnestly pray God to avert the fulfilment of my wishes. I am too well aware of my own blindness to have my heart much set on it. \* \* \* While I was at Weymouth, my sweet boy, Harry, got through the bars of his nursery window, and was discovered merely holding by

\* The Rev. Josiah Pratt.

his hands with the utmost unconcern. What was not his mother — what was not I spared! \* \* \* What shall I render to the Lord for all his mercies to me, of which (next to his inestimable love in the redemption of the world) my wife is far the greatest? \* \* \* I often wonder at the goodness of God, in giving to one so unworthy so rich a treasure.

“Soon after my return from Weymouth began the heaviest affliction of my life—the illness, the gradual and perceptible decay, alas! the death of my dearest brother. No day passes in which something or other does not recall his beloved image, his lively manners, his unity of heart. I trust that few days pass in which I forget to thank God for this dispensation, and to rejoice that he has, as I doubt not he has, ‘for this corruptible put on incorruption.’

“His widow and her three children have been staying with us for some time,—much to my comfort, and, I hope, somewhat to hers. I have read and heard of acts of faithful affection; but I never heard, or read, or saw anything to compare with the affection, kindness, attention, and generosity displayed by S. Hoare to her.

“On Saturday last, in consequence of an almost obsolete promise to sleep in town when all the other partners were absent, I slept at Brick-lane. S. Hoare has complained to me that several of our men were employed on the Sunday. To inquire into this, in the morning I went into the brewhouse, and was led to the examination of a vat containing 170 ton weight of beer. I found it in what I considered a dangerous situation, and I intended to have it repaired the next morning. I did not anticipate any immediate danger, as it had stood so long. When I got to Wheeler-street chapel, I did as I usually do in cases of difficulty,—I craved the direction of my heavenly Friend, who will give rest to the burthened, and instruction to the ignorant.

“From that moment I became very uneasy, and instead of proceeding to Hampstead, as I had intended, I returned to Brick-lane. On examination, I saw, or thought I saw, a still further declension of the iron pillars which supported this immense weight; so I sent for a surveyor; but before he came I became apprehensive of immediate danger, and ordered the beer, though in a state of fermentation, to be let out. When he arrived, he gave it as his decided opinion that the vat was

actually sinking, that it was not secure for five minutes, and that, if we had not emptied it, it would probably have fallen. Its fall would have knocked down our steam-engine, coppers, roof, with two great iron reservoirs full of water,—in fact, the whole Brewery.

“How the new year may pass who can tell? I may not see the end of it; but these are the active objects I propose for myself:—

“To write a pamphlet on Prison Discipline.

“To establish a Savings Bank in Spitalfields.

“To recommence the sale of salt fish in Spitalfields.

“To attend to the London Hospital, and to endeavour to make the clergyman perform his duties, or to get him superseded.

“To establish a new Bible Association.

“May the grace of God assist me in these objects; may He sanctify my motives, and guard me from pride, and may I use my utmost exertions, making His will mine.”

In February of the ensuing year he published his work entitled ‘An Inquiry whether Crime be produced or prevented by our present System of Prison Discipline.’ While composing it, he always began his writing with prayer that he might “be guided aright, and that he might do his duty without any regard to self, but simply for the service of God.” The work was received with a degree of attention to which he had never aspired, running through six editions in the course of the first year; and a very considerable impulse was given to general feeling upon the subject of which it treated. The work was thus alluded to in the House of Commons by Sir James Mackintosh.

“The question of our penal code, as relating to prison abuses, has been lately brought home to the feelings of every man in the country by a work so full of profound information, of such great ability, of such chaste and commanding eloquence, as to give that House and the country a firm assurance that its author could not embark in any undertaking which would not reflect equal credit upon himself and upon the object of his labours.”

Mr. Wilberforce wrote to him on the same subject, and, after warmly congratulating him on the weight it appeared to carry, he adds,—

“May it please God to continue to animate you with as much benevolent zeal, and to direct it to worthy objects! I hope you will come soon into Parliament, and be able to contend in person, as well as with your pen, for the rights and happiness of the oppressed and the friendless. I claim you as an ally in this blessed league.”

The good effects of this book were not confined to England: it was translated into French, and distributed on the Continent. It even reached Turkey; and in India, a gentleman of the name of Blair, having chanced to read it, was induced to examine into the state of the Madras jails. He found them in a wretched condition, and did not rest till a complete reformation had been effected.

## CHAPTER VI.

1818, 1819.

ELECTION, 1818.—LETTER FROM MR. J. J. GURNEY.—THOUGHTS ON ENTERING PARLIAMENT.—FIRST SPEECH ON CRIMINAL LAW.—COMMITTEES ON CRIMINAL LAW AND PRISON DISCIPLINE.—LETTERS.—DEBATE ON THE MANCHESTER RIOT.

IN the spring of 1818, a dissolution of Parliament took place, and Mr. Buxton now offered himself as a candidate for Weymouth. He did not take this step without much prayer for guidance in the matter. "It appears to me," he said, "to be the sphere in which I could do most for my Master's service, but I am perfectly willing to fill a lower place. It is only that I shall be as a common soldier instead of an officer: if I can but serve Him, let Him choose what work I shall do." While upon his canvass, he thus writes from Bellfield:—

" June 4th.

"I think we shall have a contest and a sharp one, and the result is doubtful; however, I am very comfortable, and not at all anxious. If it is right for me to succeed, I do not doubt I shall; and if it is not right, I hope I shall not. I should return to privacy and the dear enjoyments of my own family without disappointment or vexation, and I think personally as well content with little as with great things. Joseph, in our ride from Hampstead to London, mentioned a text which has been a very comfortable companion to me. 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths.' This text and another, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose heart is stayed on Thee,' are constantly in my thoughts. My continual prayer is, that the Lord would work that termination which his infinite wisdom knows to be the best; which is, I think, very probably praying against my own success."

“June 8.

“I am easy in my mind, leaving the event to Him who knows whether the busy engagements of a public life will draw me nearer to, or separate me further from Him; and who also knows whether He chooses me as an instrument of good; and if He does, He will bring the means used to a successful issue.”

Elections at this time presented very different scenes from what they now afford; and, very frequently, the voters were anxious to decide the matter, as Irish counsel used to decide their causes, by fighting it out. This was so much the case at Weymouth, that Mr. Buxton was obliged to entreat his friends to use moderation towards their opponents. “Beat them,” said he, “in vigour, beat them in the generous exercise of high principle—beat them in disdain of corruption, and the display of pure integrity; but do not beat them with bludgeons.”

Four days before the election terminated, he writes:—

“June 26. 1818.

“I am very nearly sick of the bustle, and my expectations of success are considerably diminished this morning: but this is only my own opinion. I am exceedingly popular with my party, except as to one point. We (that is, the party, for I have had nothing to do with it) have made some most bitter attacks upon Sir —— for his conduct in Spain. But when I heard from a private friend of his, that he was quite sunk and wretched, I expressed in my speech yesterday the disdain I felt at promoting my cause by slander, and said, that as he had been acquitted by a competent tribunal, he must be considered as innocent. The violence of my party could hardly bear this, and for the first time they gave some indications of disapprobation. I told them plainly that I would do what I considered an act of public justice, though it offended every friend I had in the town.”

*To Mrs. Buxton.*

“June 29. 1818.

“The election is over. I am now going to the Hall to return thanks to my constituents. And so I am a member of Parlia-

ment. Well, I have not yet wished to decide the matter myself. My only feeling has been, if it is right, I trust it will take place; and if not, I equally trust it will be prevented. I wish you were here to see me chaired. The town is in an uproar. The bugle-horn is at this moment playing, and hundreds of persons are collected on the Esplanade. Everybody has blue ribbons. I hope the children at Hampstead wear them."

Mr. J. J. Gurney writes to him on this important point in his career:—

"Norwich, 7. mo. 8th, 1818.

"My dear Brother,—My congratulations come late, which has arisen from want of time, not of interest. I have seldom felt more interested in anything than in thy parliamentary views. Many years have passed over our heads since I first expressed my opinion to thee, that Parliament would be thy most useful and desirable field of action. My wishes are now accomplished; and, till the Parliament meets, I shall indulge myself freely in pleasing anticipations of thy usefulness and thy success. Not to flatter thee, thou hast some qualities which fit thee admirably well for this station. \* \* \* Nor have I any fears of the effect of a public career upon thy own soul. It is undoubtedly true that so extended a field of action will require at thy hands increased watchfulness and *great fidelity*; but I am sure thy judgment is too sound, and thy heart too much alive to the dictates of plain truth, ever to allow thee to be puffed up for those things in which thou hast a stewardship indeed, but *no fee*.

‘Not more than others thou deserv’st—  
But God has given thee more.’

"Let the five talents become ten, and the ten, twenty, and let them be rendered up at last from hands pure and undefiled, to Him from whom they came!

"Nothing is more beautiful in the world of morals than the great man in talents, who is the little child in religion. \* \* \* With regard to a political course I have only two things on my mind. I believe that one great object taken up upon safe, sound, and religious grounds, and pursued with unabating and unabatable vigour, is a much better thing for a man of talents, who is willing

to be of some service in the world, than many objects pursued without accuracy, without perseverance, and without effect. Thou wilt, of course, be considered by everybody as the representative of the prison cause. To that cause thou art pledged. But in itself it will not afford thee sufficient scope. I fully believe that thy chief aim cannot be directed to any object so worthy of all thy efforts as the amelioration of our Criminal Code. It is a glorious cause to take up. My monitions are, I dare say, very pragmatical; nevertheless, I shall add one more. Do not let thy independence of all party be the means of leading thee away from *sound Whiggism*. I may shortly express my opinion that there is *a great work going on in the world*: that the human mind, under the safeguard of *religious education*, is advancing to the shaking off of many of its trammels, and many of its prejudices; that society is at present in a state of much corruption, but that, if this work goes on, generation after generation will become more enlightened, more virtuous, and more happy; that *the liberty of truth* will prevail over every obstruction. I consider this progress of the human mind perfectly safe, as long as it takes its spring from the unchangeable and most reasonable principles of the Christian religion. I am sure that these principles must ever prevent, in those on whom they act, any steps towards wicked innovation and licentious change. But let us not admit any check to the progress of true light, whether moral, political, or religious; and let us take especial care to avoid *the spirit of Toryism*; I mean that spirit which bears the worst things with endless apathy, *because they are old*; and with which reason and even humanity are nothing, and the authority of creatures, as fallible as ourselves, everything."

*To Mrs. Buxton.*

"Hampstead, Dec. 6 1818.

"\* \* \* I have passed a remarkably comfortable Sunday; after breakfast I sat down to Law's Spirit of Prayer. I wonder why his writings are not more popular; there is about them a warmth and a liveliness of persuasion, combined with a force of reason, which makes them very attractive to me. We then went to Wheeler-street Chapel, where Mr. Pratt gave us one of his best sermons. I dare say any other person of the party

would have complained of their distractions if they had only been as attentive as I was; but compared with myself in general, I had my mind much fixed on the service, and was much struck with many things in the Prayer Book which I have read a thousand times without notice. S. Hoare and I stayed the sacrament, which I entered into more I think than I ever did before. When I returned to my seat, I went through a kind of service of prayer, which I by practice have formed; first for myself, that I may press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of Christ, and that I may be enabled to count all things but loss in comparison; next that I may be led to useful objects—that I may be allowed to do something for the service of mankind; then, that my motives in this may be cleansed and purified, and that I may act as unto the Lord and not unto men. Next for protection and health, and the blessings of this life—that is, if they are to conduce to my good, for I am afraid to ask for anything absolutely. \* \* \* The point, however, which has been all day most upon my mind is a desire that I may work for others in Christ; that is, that His Spirit may actuate me to do what good I can, that I may have the high privilege of being His servant, and that the performance of His will, and not the applause of man, may be the wages I seek. This verse has been very forcibly before my mind,—‘Never turn away thy face from any poor man, and then the Lord will never turn away his face from thee.’

“You will hardly believe that, at the beginning of the day, I had a kind of longing for Norwich Meeting. In the shape of religious service, a Friend’s Meeting, with Joseph and Priscilla for teachers, is the most congenial to my mind, more so I think than anything else. \* \* \* I saw Mr. Pratt after church, who is in high spirits, and says that a hundred Blacks in Africa are true Christians, and some of them are even missionaries.”

“Dec. 9.

“I rode to Upton to breakfast this morning, since which I have been engaged in some important calculations. These, however, have been interrupted by a visit from the manager of the Friar’s Mount School. He gives the most satisfactory account of the expenditure of the money I raised for them last year; two new schools have been established, and two, which were about to be given up, are revived. He has formed a plan by which six

thousand children, now uneducated, will be instructed. The money is all that is wanting, viz. 4500*l.*, and I think I shall try. You will suppose I am mad, but this is not the case. Certainly nothing of a charitable nature, in which I have ever been engaged, has given me so much satisfaction as these Sunday Schools; and I feel, I hope, some gratitude for the great favour of being allowed to be an instrument of good to some hundreds of children during the past year. I never think of these schools without pleasure. With dearest love to you and the children, and with a joyful heart at the expectation of meeting you and them,

“ Yours,

“ T. F. BUXTON.”

It will be remembered that at the commencement of the year 1818 he had determined to carry out several plans for the benefit of the poor in Spitalfields, and for other purposes of a similar character. In a paper written on New Year's day, 1819, he enters very fully into the details of his exertions on each of the five tasks he had set himself, not one of which had been neglected. The first of them had been “to write a pamphlet on Prison Discipline,” and after alluding to the unexpected success of his work on that subject, he adds,—

“ It has excited a spirit of inquiry on the subject, which I trust will do much good. I only hope that what has benefited others has not injured *me*. I cannot render myself insensible to the applause it has received. In my heart, however, I know that it is no work of mine, but that the Lord has been pleased, in great mercy, to make me one of His instruments in this work. Lord, I entreat thee, in this and in all things, to purify my motives, and to enable me to act as unto thee, and not unto man. Oh! guard my heart from the delusions of vanity. Make me to know how frail and powerless I am in myself, and to cherish with gratitude, but with humility, the inestimable privilege of being in any way thy servant.”

The paper closes with the following reflections upon the burden of responsibility which he had lately under-

taken. It is interesting to see in what spirit he entered that arena, on which he was for twenty years to fight the battle of the oppressed.

“ Now that I am a member of Parliament, I feel earnest for the honest, diligent, and conscientious discharge of the duty I have undertaken. My prayer is for the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit, that, free from views of gain or popularity,—that, careless of all things but fidelity to my trust, I may be enabled to do some good to my country, and something for mankind, especially in their most important concerns. I feel the responsibility of the situation, and its many temptations. On the other hand, I see the vast good which one individual may do. May God preserve me from the snares which may surround me; keep me from the power of personal motives, from interest or passion, or prejudice or ambition, and so enlarge my heart to feel the sorrows of the wretched, the miserable condition of the guilty and the ignorant, that I may ‘ never turn my face from any poor man; ’ and so enlighten my understanding, that I may be a capable and resolute champion, for those who want and deserve a friend.”

Upon first taking his seat in Parliament, his attention was exclusively directed to the different forms of judicial punishment. In the beginning of 1819, he took part in two or three debates upon the subject of convict transport ships, the state of which was proved by Mr. Bennett and other members to be horrible in the last degree; still the reformation of prisons was the subject nearest to his heart.

*To J. J. Gurney, Esq.*

“ Feb. 25. 1819.

“ When I last spoke (on the state of convict ships) there was no cry of question, but, on the contrary, marked attention; but alas! most undeserved, for, like a blockhead, I rose, having nothing to say, without a moment’s premeditation. This has mortified me, which proves that my motives are not purified from selfish desires of reputation; and that all my anxiety is,

not eagerness for the reform of prisons and the penal code, but, in truth, debased and alloyed by a desire for the reputation of T. F. B. I despise this vanity. On Monday next comes on the question of prisons; on Tuesday, the question of the penal code. On the latter I shall speak with my arguments and facts clearly before me. If I then fail, the failure is final — I may serve the cause as a labourer, but neither this, nor any other, as an advocate — and *we* must be satisfied. I endeavour to divest my mind of too much carefulness about the matter, persuaded that, whatever the event may be, that event is right both for me and for the cause.”

On the 1st of March, Lord Castlereagh’s motion for a committee to inquire into the state of Prison Discipline, was carried, and on the next evening a motion for a committee on the Criminal Laws was made by Sir James Mackintosh, and seconded by Mr. Buxton, whose speech met with success abundantly sufficient to dispel his fears of uselessness in the House of Commons.

He began by demonstrating that the capital Code then existing was not a part of, but an innovation on, the ancient Common law; that, indeed, the great part of these capital enactments had been made within the memory of man. “There are persons living,” he said, “at whose birth the Criminal Code contained less than sixty capital offences, and who have seen that number quadrupled, — who have seen an act pass, making offences capital by the dozen and by the score; and, what is worse, bundling up together offences, trivial and atrocious, — some, nothing short of murder in malignity of intention, and others, nothing beyond a civil trespass, — I say, bundling together this ill-sorted and incongruous package, and stamping upon it ‘death without benefit of clergy.’”

His speech, the chief merit of which lay in the lucid and logical arrangement of a large mass of facts, tended

to show that the law, by declaring that "certain crimes should be punished with death, had declared that they should not be punished at all. The bow had been bent, till it had snapped asunder. The acts which were intended to prevent evil had proved acts of indemnity and free pardon to the fraudulent and the thief, and acts of ruin and destruction to many a fair trader."

*To J. J. Gurney, Esq.*

"Brick Lane, March 4. 1819.

"Well, the effort is over. Last night came on the grand question. I spoke for nearly an hour. I was low and dispirited, and much tired (bodily) when I rose. I cannot say I pleased myself. I could not, at first, get that freedom of language which is so essential, but I rose with the cheers of the House, and contrived to give much of what was on my mind. Everybody seems to have taken a more favourable opinion of the speech than I did. The facts were irresistible; and, for fear of tiring my auditors, I confined myself principally to facts. You will see by the papers that we obtained a victory. As for myself, I hope I did force myself into something like indifference to my own success, provided the cause succeeded."

*To the Rev. Francis Cunningham.*

"March 4. 1819.

"I made a long speech yesterday, with which the House seemed very well satisfied. I am on both the committees, for prisons and penal law, and so shall have enough to do. I however rejoice that I am in the House, for it is well worth while to sacrifice money, time, pleasure, everything except eternity, to such important objects. I often think of your advice, and wish for more of it. Last night I was meditating upon speeches, compliments, &c., and this reflection rushed upon my mind: 'And what of all these, if I forsake this book, the Bible?' I am writing in a little room full of about twenty members, all talking, so excuse errors, and everything else."

At the close of the debate many of the most distinguished members of the House came up and introduced

themselves to him; Mr. S. Hoare sat under the gallery, watching, with delight, the success of his friend. "I am sure," said he afterwards, "if I had been received in the House as he was, I should not have recovered from the elevating effect of it for twenty years."

But the opinion of an impartial observer may be more valuable. Mr. W. Smith (M. P. for Norwich) writes to Mr. J. J. Gurney:—

"You will see the result of last night's debate by the papers. Buxton acquitted himself to universal satisfaction. The House is prepared to receive him with respect and kindness; and his sterling sense, his good language, and his earnest manner, fully keep up the prepossession in his favour, so that I recollect very few who have made their *début* with so much real advantage, and seem so likely to maintain the station thus early assumed."

If we have dwelt at some length upon the success of this early effort in Parliament, it has not been from any wish to give his speeches more credit than they deserved. Their eloquence was less remarkable than their force; they were deeply stamped with his own character, which, as Mr. Wilberforce once remarked, was that of "a man who could hew a statue out of a rock, but not cut faces upon cherry-stones."

His speeches were not sparkling or splendid; their end was utility; their ornaments, clearness, force, and earnest feeling. He was not one of those orators, described by Lord Bacon, "that hunt more after words than matter, and more after the choiceness of the phrase, the sweet falling of the clauses, and the varying and illustration of their works with tropes and figures, than after the weight of matter, worth of subject, or soundness of argument." He usually bestowed much care in preparation; not in embellishing the style, but in

bringing together supplies of facts, and marshalling them in one strong line of argument. Speaking, as he did, from the heart, and for the most part on subjects which appealed to the feelings as well as to the judgment, he sometimes rose into passages of impassioned declamation; occasionally there was a burst of indignation, and not unfrequently a touch of playful satire; but the usual character of his oratory was a lucid and powerful appeal to the reason of his audience.

In accordance with the motions on the 1st and 3rd of March, two select committees were appointed, in both of which Mr. Buxton was included. The one was to inquire into the feasibility of mitigating the Penal Code, of which he writes, March 11th, 1819:—

“ I conjecture that no man on the committee goes so far as I go—namely, to the abolition of the punishment of death, except for murder; but all go a very great way, and if we merely make forgery, sheep and horse stealing, not capital, it is an annual saving of thirty lives, which is something, and satisfies me in devoting my time to the subject. I am confident that our opinions on prisons and Criminal law will ultimately prevail; in short, I am in high spirits on the whole matter.”

The other committee was appointed to examine the state of jails throughout the kingdom; and here we may briefly state the final result of the exertions made for the improvement of Prison Discipline. The committee published its first report in 1820, and the government was thereby induced to bring in a bill for consolidating and amending the prison laws then in existence. This bill was referred for revision to a select committee, of which Mr. Buxton was a member.

“ You will be delighted,” he writes soon afterwards to a friend, “ to hear that the Prison Bill is going on wonderfully well, beyond all expectation. I made a speech the first day, stating the principles on which I thought we ought to proceed,

and the committee have subsequently adopted almost all of them; so that I do believe that this part of the business of my life will be done effectually."

After much patient investigation, a bill was prepared by the committee, and immediately adopted by the two Houses of Parliament; and thus the English jails, instead of remaining "the nurseries and hotbeds of crime, the almost inevitable ruin of all who entered within their walls," have become, generally speaking, places where the improvement as well as the punishment of the criminal is attempted. Perfection, of course, is not yet attained; the new system has been of no avail in those prisons where exertions have not been used to enforce it; but no man can read the descriptions of the state of jails, from twenty-five to thirty years ago, and compare them with those of the present day, without being astonished at the extent of the evil and of the reform.

*John Henry North, Esq., to T. Fowell Buxton, Esq.*

"Dublin, April 14 1819

"During the whole of the last Circuit, which is just terminated, I was seized with an inexpressible longing to write you an interminable epistle, but the labours of *Nisi Prius* forbade, and, now that they are at an end, I have begun to think that, with the whole Criminal law upon your hands, your prisons, penitentiaries, and 'Colony of Antipodes,' you will be better pleased to receive a moderate letter than one of overgrown dimensions. I hope I need not tell you with what exceeding pleasure I read your admirable book, or how delighted I was with the praises that were everywhere bestowed upon it. It has done you infinite honour. The general language applied to it here is, that it is the most interesting book that has been published for many years. I had some satisfaction, too, in observing a few little traits by which the author discovered himself to me immediately. The zeal that your exertions have excited in this country, on the subject of prisons, is really sur-

prising. We have now a society in Dublin, for the improvement of prison discipline, of which I am an unworthy member. Here is a committee of ladies, who visit Bridewell in turns every day, and who have in a very short time effected considerable improvement, and their example has been followed in some of our country towns. At the last Galway Assizes, Judge Johnson, in his charge to the Grand Jury, recommended this plan, and alluded to your book and Mrs. Fry's exertions in terms of the highest approbation. It will gratify you to find that the seed which you have scattered has fallen upon good ground."

Mr. Buxton replies:—

*To J. H. North, Esq.*

" April 19. 1819

" A report has reached me that you are likely to get a seat in Parliament. Is there a bit of truth in it? Is there the remotest probability of so joyful an event? Pray do not conceal it from me a moment, for I speak only truth when I say it would materially add to my happiness. I have plenty of acquaintance, but hardly a familiar friend in the House, and this is a very needful thing. I much want some one with whom I can freely communicate, and who would honestly tell me when I am right and when I am in error; and I need not tell you how fully my wishes would be satisfied if we were there together. Perhaps you will like to hear the impression the House makes upon me. I do not wonder that so many distinguished men have failed in it. The speaking required is of a very peculiar kind; the House loves *good sense and joking*, and nothing else; and the object of its utter aversion is that species of eloquence which may be called *Philippian*. There are not three men from whom a fine simile or sentiment would be tolerated; all attempts of the kind are punished with general laughter. An easy flow of sterling, forcible, plain sense is indispensable; and this, combined with great powers of sarcasm, gives Brougham his station. Canning is an exception to this rule. His reasoning is seldom above mediocrity; but then it is recommended by language so wonderfully happy, by a manner so exquisitely elegant, and by wit so clear, so pungent, and so unpremeditated that he contrives to beguile the House of its austerity. Tierney

has never exerted himself much in my hearing. Wilberforce has more native eloquence than any of them, but he takes no pains, and allows himself to wander from his subject; he holds a very high rank in the estimation of the House.

“And now let me tell you a secret; these great creatures turn out, when viewed closely, to be but men, and men with whom *you* need not fear competition. I again, therefore, say, ‘Come among us,’ and I shall be greatly deceived if you do not hold a foremost place.

“My line is distinctly drawn. I care but little about party politics. I vote as I like; sometimes pro, and sometimes con; but I feel the greatest interest on subjects such as the Slave Trade, the condition of the Poor, Prisons, and Criminal law: to these, I devote myself, and should be quite content never to give another vote upon a party question. I am upon the Jail and Criminal law committees, and devote three mornings in the week to one, and three to the other; so I am contented, and feel as little inclination, as ability, to engage in political contentions. My body is strong enough, but any stress upon my mind, just now, deranges me instantly. ‘Indolent vacuity of thought’ is my only remedy; but it is not a very convenient medicine for one who has such a multitude of engagements. How fares the law? Is Ireland blessed with abundant litigation, or does poverty deny this, the chief of luxuries?

“Never mind discouragements. If you live and labour, you must stand in the front of that society in which you may be placed, be it in the Dublin Courts or St. Stephen’s. So I have always thought and said, and so I still think and say. I wish you were with us. I know you will be a Tory: you always were one in heart, and your wife will make you still worse: but we will contrive to agree together, for I am not a Whig. I am one of those amphibious nondescripts called Neutrals; but how can I be anything else? I cannot reconcile to myself the doctrine of going with a party right or wrong. I feel with you that my objects would prosper much better if I sat behind the Treasury Bench; but then I must often vote against my convictions; *i. e.*, do wrong that right may come; and I do not feel this to be my duty, even for prisons and Criminal law. Has Wyndham Quin’s business made much noise in Ireland? It occupied about a week of our time, and the House were so

amused they would do nothing else. Smith's evidence was excellent, and true; for Gould's there are more appropriate phrases. Plunkett made a speech which did not please the House; it was special pleading, which they hate."

*To Mrs. Buxton.*

"Weymouth, Aug. 15. 1819.

\* \* \* "I suppose M. has given you a full account of our travels. During the first ten miles I did not quite recover my composure, nor forget the horror I experienced at the rape of my apples. All the remainder of the journey was very pleasant. We read diligently, though with a few intervals for conversation. Our book was Lord Russell's Life. No wonder his friends admired him, and his wife adored him; he was the noblest of all the nobles I ever read of. His intrepidity and gaiety in the prospect of death are unrivalled. A man of the name of Rich, who packed the jury, and thus caused Lord Russell's condemnation, had formerly belonged to his party, and had deserted to the Court. He brought down the death-warrant to Newgate; when he was gone, Lord Russell said to Burnett, 'I felt a great mind to tell Rich (only it is indecent to joke in these matters) that he and I should never sit again together in the House of Commons to vote for the exclusion of the Duke of York.' Perhaps you will not much admire this anecdote, but it is quite charming to me: it shows a mind so entirely at ease.

"Here I am continually in the air, and certainly have already found the benefit of it. I rode this morning for two hours on the Wyke sands before breakfast. I have determined not to canvass, but to be constantly walking about: the worst of it is, I do not know above a third of their faces, and the names of about one in a hundred, so I am in momentary danger of grasping the hand, and inquiring with the kindest solicitude after the welfare of the wife and family of a man who never saw Weymouth before in his life. \* \* \* Weymouth is a striking place in one respect; it brings me into contact with some whose course is nothing short of tremendous, and this trying question always recurs: 'You know better things; by mercy you have been led into other society, and the truth has been discovered to your judgment upon the comparison of this world and eternity;

then is your course as much superior to theirs as your light is—in short, with all the instruction and knowledge given you, are you seeking heaven with your whole heart?"

In November the riot which had taken place at Manchester, and the severe measures to which the magistrates of that city had resorted, were brought before Parliament. Before the debate Mr. Buxton writes:—

*To his Uncle, Charles Buxton, Esq., at Bellfield.*

“Nov. 1819.

“I quite agree with you in reprobating the Radicals. I am persuaded that their object is the subversion of religion and the constitution, and I shall be happy to vote for any measure by which the exertions of their leaders may be suppressed, but I fear we shall much differ as to the nature of those measures. I most strongly condemn the conduct of the magistrates at Manchester, and I equally condemn the conduct of the ministers in giving them public thanks; and I think, in justice as well as in common prudence, that wretched affair ought to be strictly scrutinised, and it will be very awkward if it should turn out that these magistrates, having been thanked, deserved to be punished.

“You will believe that I did not pass over, without due attention, your remark—‘I shall feel much disappointed and vexed if you do not exert yourself, and I am sure you will give great offence to most of your Weymouth friends.’ I think you must know how sincerely sorry I should be to vex and disappoint you, and I am not indifferent to the good-will of my Weymouth friends; but it would be the most contemptible baseness in me, if I were to allow the fear of giving offence to operate on my conduct.

“When I entered Parliament, I determined to allow no personal consideration, of any description, to influence my votes; and on this occasion I do hope I shall not shrink from doing my duty, whatever may be the point to which that duty appears to lead.

“I go to London to-morrow, and I wish you could contrive to come there now. I doubt not we could manage to agree very well, in spite of Radicals and Ministers.”

*To J. J. Gurney, Esq.*

“Nov. 25. 1819.

“I must give you a line to tell you how things have gone on in the House. We have had a wonderful debate; really it has raised my idea of the capacity and ingenuity of the human mind. All the leaders spoke, and almost all outdid themselves. But Burdett stands first; his speech was absolutely the finest, and the clearest, and the fairest display of masterly understanding that ever I heard; and with shame I ought to confess it, he did not utter a sentence to which I could not agree. Canning was second; if there be any difference between eloquence and sense, this was the difference between him and Burdett. He was exquisitely elegant, and kept the tide of reason and argument, irony, joke, invective, and declamation flowing, without abatement, for nearly three hours. Plunkett was third; he took hold of poor Mackintosh’s argument, and griped it to death; ingenious, subtle, yet clear and bold, and putting with the most logical distinctness to the House the errors of his antagonist. Next came Brougham—and what do you think of a debate in which the fourth man could keep alive the attention of the House from three to five in the morning, after a twelve hours’ debate? Now, what was the impression made on my mind, you will ask. First, I voted with ministers, because I cannot bring myself to subject the Manchester magistrates to a parliamentary inquiry; but nothing has shaken my convictions that the magistrates, ministers, and all, have done exceedingly wrong. I am clear I voted right; and, indeed, I never need have any doubts when I vote with ministers, the bias being on the other side. Did the debate inflame my ambition? Why, in one sense, it did. It convinced me that I have the opportunity of being a competitor on the greatest arena that ever existed; but it also taught me that success in such a theatre is only for those who will devote their lives to it. Perhaps you will admire the presumption which entertains even the possibility of success. I am, I believe, rather absurd; but I hold a doctrine to which I owe—not much, indeed, but all the little success I ever had,—viz., that with ordinary talents and extraordinary perseverance all things are attainable. And give me ten years in age, ten times my constitution, and oblivion of the truth which paralyses many an exertion of mine,

that 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' and especially that fame is so,—I say, give me these things, and I should not despair of parliamentary reputation; but to one who cannot bear fatigue of mind, who loves sporting better than glory, who will not enlist under the banners of party,—to such a being fame is absolutely forbidden. I am well content; I cannot expect the commodity for which I will not pay the price.

"So far I scribbled yesterday, and then I went to the levée.  
\* \* \* The rooms were tolerably splendid; but, upon the whole, I never was less attracted by anything than courtiership, and would not be obliged to attend regularly for all the ribbons of all the colours of the rainbow. At dinner, afterwards, I had a great deal of conversation with the two Grants, Denman, and the Attorney-General, and then I went home with Wilberforce, and spent a most pleasant evening. His family prayers were nothing short of delightful. I hope I shall see him a good deal while I am in town.

"P.S. Bootle Wilbraham (who is a Lancaster magistrate) was defending his brethren in the debate, but did it in so low a tone of voice that nobody could hear him; somebody whispered about, that *he was reading the Riot Act.*"

The following letter was addressed to his sister, Mrs. Forster, whose husband was preparing to go to America, on what the Society of Friends term "a religious visit" to the members of their community.

"My dear Sister,

"Earlham, 1819.

"Your letter has been much upon my mind, and has raised a variety of feelings. The first impression was one of much sorrow, that your plans and prospects of home happiness should be interrupted, and for so long a time; but I must confess, I have been speedily almost reconciled to it; that is, I have brought it home to my own mind, and have considered, whether it would not really be the greatest of blessings, if by any means my duty would call me to such a sacrifice, and the call were not to be disobeyed. After all, it is a noble thing—it is the noblest of all things—to be permitted to be a servant of the Infinite Ruler of the world; and how low and earthly is that wisdom which could prefer any delights before the delights of such self-dedication! We know

but few things for certain ; but this is one of them ; — a promise is given to him, who leaves father or mother, or wife or children, for Christ's sake. How can I mourn then, that William should accept the terms of such a promise? I rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. I have always felt particularly interested with the vision of the man of Macedonia, calling Paul to come over and help him, comparing it with the Epistle to the Philippians. The discouragements at first were so great, and yet the Epistle describes such an abundant and happy produce. Who can tell how many may have eternal reason to rejoice at the obedience of the Apostle, and who can presume to limit the effect which Providence may please to produce by William's visit? We may differ on some points, but not on this — that his call is from above. I am persuaded it has been sought in the right spirit. I believe it is sent in mercy to others — in eminent mercy to him and to you ! and I am willing that you should undergo the pains of separation. But, my dear Anna, you must not imagine I am indifferent about this. Let me ask, Have you determined to remain behind? I do not give an opinion upon the subject. All I wish to express is, that you must not stay from motives of economy. \* \* \* Of course, we shall see you before his departure. I will hear of nothing else. With love to you both, and not without thankfulness that there is something of a missionary spirit among you,

“ I am,

“ Your affectionate brother,

“ T. F. BUXTON.”

## CHAPTER VII.

1820, 1821.

ELECTION. — DOMESTIC AFFLICTIONS. — LETTERS. — CROMER HALL. —  
PRISCILLA GURNEY. — CORRESPONDENCE. — SPEECH ON CRIMINAL  
LAW.

AT the commencement of the year 1820, Mr. Buxton thus enumerates the subjects which he hoped to accomplish in the course of the year — “First; to assist, to the best of my ability, in Parliament, to amend our Criminal Code; and, secondly, to amend our prisons. Thirdly; to obtain a return of the number of widows who burn themselves at their husbands’ funeral in India, preparatory to a law prohibiting such enormities. Fourthly; to establish a fund for supporting the Sunday-schools (on the plan of that at Friar’s Mount) in Spitalfields.” He then mentions, that his thoughts had been principally engaged upon the Criminal Code, till incapacitated for study by an attack of illness, his health having been indifferent for some months previously.

“Now what a lesson is this,” he says, “not to delay preparation for death till our death-beds; till our bodies, weakened and wasted, are unfit for every exertion!

“‘Let us work while it is called to-day.’ I have prayed for love to God, for faith in Christ, and for the spirit of prayer, constant and warm.”

The death of the King, and the consequent prospect of a dissolution of Parliament, occasioned some anxious thoughts. “I have felt some doubt,” he says, on the 6th of February, “whether I should stand;” and he