

L I F E
OF
SIR THOMAS FOWELL BUXTON,
BART.

CHAPTER I.

1786—1802.

NOTICES OF THE BUXTON FAMILY.—MR. BUXTON OF EARL'S COLNE.
—BIRTH OF THOMAS FOWELL BUXTON.—CHILDHOOD.—SCHOOL
DAYS —HIS MOTHER'S INFLUENCE.—ABRAHAM PLASTOW.—BELL-
FIELD.—EARLHAM.—LETTERS FROM EARLHAM.

THE family from which Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton was descended, resided, about the middle of the 16th century, at Sudbury in Suffolk, and subsequently at Coggeshall in Essex. At the latter place, William Buxton, his lineal ancestor, died in 1624. Thomas, the son of William Buxton, claimed and received from the Heralds' College, in 1634, the arms borne by the family of the same name settled before 1478 at Tybenham in Norfolk, and now represented by Sir Robert Jacob Buxton, Bart.

Isaac Buxton, a merchant, and the fifth in direct descent from William, married Sarah Fowell, an heiress; connected with the family of the Fowells, of Fowelscombe in Devonshire.* From her was derived the name of Fowell, first borne by her eldest son, who married Anna, daughter of Osgood Hanbury, Esq., of Holfield Grange in Essex. The first Thomas Fowell Buxton

* See Burke's Extinct Baronetage.

lived at Earl's Colne in the same county, but was residing at Castle Hedingham, when his eldest son, Thomas Fowell, the subject of this memoir, was born, on the 1st of April, 1786.

Mr. Buxton was a man of a gentle and kindly disposition, devoted to field sports, and highly popular in his neighbourhood, where he exercised hospitality on a liberal scale. Having been appointed High Sheriff of the county, he availed himself of the authority of his office to relieve the miseries of the prisoners under his superintendence, visiting them sedulously, notwithstanding the prevalence of the jail fever. He died at Earl's Colne in 1792, leaving his widow with three sons and two daughters.*

The eldest boy, Thomas Fowell, was at this time six years old. He was a vigorous child, and early showed a bold and determined character. As an instance of this it may be mentioned, that when quite a child, while walking with his uncle, Mr. Hanbury, he was desired to give a message to a pig-driver who had passed along the road. He set off in pursuit; and although one of his shoes was soon lost in the mud, he pushed on through lonely and intricate lanes, tracking the driver by the footmarks of his pigs, for nearly three miles, into the town of Coggeshall; nor did he stop until he had overtaken the man, and delivered his message.

One who knew the boy well in his early days said of him, "He never was a child; he was a man when in petticoats." At the age of only four years and a half,

* Anna, afterwards married to William Forster, Esq., of Bradpole in Dorsetshire.

Thomas Fowell.

Charles, married Martha, daughter of Edmund Henning, Esq., and died in 1817.

Sarah Maria, died in 1839.

Edward North, died in 1811.

he was sent to a school at Kingston, where he suffered severely from ill-treatment; and his health giving way (chiefly from the want of sufficient food) he was removed, shortly after his father's death, to the school of Dr. Charles Burney, at Greenwich, where his brothers afterwards joined him. Here he had none of the hardships to endure, to which he had been subjected at Kingston, and he found in Dr. Burney a kind and judicious master. Upon one occasion, he was accused by an usher of talking during school time, and desired to learn the collect, epistle, and gospel, as a punishment. When Dr. Burney entered the school, young Buxton appealed to him, stoutly denying the charge. The usher as strongly asserted it; but Dr. Burney stopped him, saying, "I never found the boy tell a lie, and will not disbelieve him now."

He does not appear to have made much progress in his studies, and his holidays spent at Earl's Colne, where his mother continued to reside, left a deeper trace in his after life, than the time spent at school. Mrs. Buxton's character has been thus briefly described by her son: "My mother," he says, "was a woman of a very vigorous mind, and possessing many of the generous virtues in a very high degree. She was large-minded about every thing; disinterested almost to an excess; careless of difficulty, labour, danger, or expense, in the prosecution of any great object. She had a masculine understanding, great power of mind, great vigour, and was very fearless. With these nobler qualities were united some of the imperfections, which belong to that species of ardent and resolute character." She belonged to the Society of Friends. Her husband being a member of the Church of England, their sons were baptized in infancy; nor did she ever exert her influence to bring

them over to her own persuasion. She was more anxious to give them a deep regard for the Holy Scriptures, and a lofty moral standard, than to quicken their zeal about the distinctive differences of religious opinion. Her system of education had in it some striking features. There was little indulgence, but much liberty. The boys were free to go where they would, and do what they pleased, and her eldest son especially was allowed to assume almost the position of master in the house. But, on the other hand, her authority, when exercised, was paramount over him, as over his brothers and sisters. On being asked by the mother of a large and ill-managed family, whether the revolutionary principles of the day were not making way among her boys, her reply was, "I know nothing about revolutionary principles: my rule is that imposed on the people of Boston,—'implicit obedience, unconditional submission.'" Yet the character of her son Fowell was not without some strong touches of wilfulness. He has described himself, in more than one of his papers, as having been in his boyhood "of a daring, violent, domineering temper." When this was remarked to his mother, "Never mind," she would say; "he is self-willed now—you will see it turn out well in the end."

During one Christmas vacation, on her return home from a brief absence, she was told that "Master Fowell had behaved very ill, and struck his sister's governess." She therefore determined to punish him, by leaving him at school during the ensuing Easter holidays. Meanwhile, however, some disorderly conduct took place in the school, and two boys, who had behaved worst in the affair, were likewise to remain there during the vacation. Mrs. Buxton was unwilling to leave him alone with these boys, and on the first day of the holidays

she went to Greenwich and fairly told Fowell her difficulty ; ending by saying that, rather than subject him to their injurious influence, she was prepared to forfeit her word and allow him to come home with her other sons. His answer was, "Mother, never fear that I shall disgrace you or myself ; my brothers are ready, and so is my dinner." After such a reply the resolution of a less determined parent must have given way ; but she undauntedly left him to his punishment.

Her aim appears to have been, to give her boys a manly and robust character ; and, both by precept and example, she strove to render them self-denying, and, at the same time, thoughtful for others.

Long afterwards, when actively occupied in London, her son wrote to her :—"I constantly feel, especially in action and exertion for others, the effects of principles early planted by you in my mind." He particularly alluded to the abhorrence of slavery and the slave trade, with which she had imbued him.

His size and strength well fitted him for country amusements ; and he early acquired a strong taste for hunting, shooting, and fishing, under the auspices of the gamekeeper, Abraham Plastow. This gamekeeper was one of those characters occasionally to be met with in the country, uniting straightforward honest simplicity with great shrewdness and humour. He was well-fitted to train his three young masters in those habits of fearlessness and hardihood, which their mother wished them to possess. His influence over them is thus described by Mr. Buxton, in a letter dated

"Cromer Hall, August 23. 1825.

"My father died when I was very young, and I became at ten years old almost as much the master of the family as I am of this family at the present moment. My mother, a woman

of great talents and great energy, perpetually inculcated on my brothers and sisters that they were to obey me, and I was rather encouraged to play the little tyrant. She treated me as an equal, conversed with me, and led me to form and express my opinions without reserve. This system had obvious and great disadvantages, but it was followed by some few incidental benefits. Throughout life I have acted and thought for myself; and to this kind of habitual decision I am indebted for all the success I have met with.

“My ‘guide, philosopher, and friend,’ was Abraham Plastow, the gamekeeper; a man for whom I have ever felt, and still feel, a very great affection. He was a singular character: in the first place, this tutor of mine could neither read nor write, but his memory was stored with various rustic knowledge. He had more of natural good sense and what is called mother-wit, than almost any person I have met with since: a knack which he had of putting every thing into new and singular lights made him, and still makes him, a most entertaining, and even intellectual companion. He was the most undaunted of men: I remember my youthful admiration of his exploits on horseback. For a time he hunted my uncle’s hounds, and his fearlessness was proverbial. But what made him particularly valuable were his principles of integrity and honour. He never said or did a thing in the absence of my mother of which she would have disapproved. He always held up the highest standard of integrity, and filled our youthful minds with sentiments as pure and as generous as could be found in the writings of Seneca or Cicero. Such was my first instructor, and, I must add, my best; for I think I have profited more by the recollection of his remarks and admonition, than by the more learned and elaborate discourses of all my other tutors. He was our playfellow and tutor; he rode with us, fished with us, shot with us upon all occasions.”*

* This faithful servant died in 1836. “The tears,” said Mr. Hanbury, who visited him on his death-bed, “trickled down his goodly countenance while speaking of his rides long ago with his young master.”

The following inscription on a mural tablet, in Earl’s Colne churchyard, erected by the contributions of his neighbours, speaks their sense of his worth:—

“To the memory of Abraham Plastow, who lived for more than half a century, servant and gamekeeper, in the families of Thomas Fowell Buxton and Osgood Gee, Esqrs.:—

To face page 7.



From a Sketch by Priscilla Buxton.

B E L L F I E L D .

One among many anecdotes remembered of this man may be recorded. The young Buxtons had been sent out hunting, and, as usual, under Abraham's care. As they were approaching the scene of sport, Fowell made use of an improper expression, upon which the game-keeper insisted upon his returning home at once, and carried his point.

Occasionally the holidays were passed by the children with their grandmother, either in London or at Bellfield, her country-house, near Weymouth.* The formality of her life in town was rather unpalatable to them: even the exceptions to her rules were methodically arranged; her Sunday discipline, for example, was very strict, but on one (and only one) Sunday in the year she gave the children the treat of a drive in the park. A visit to Bellfield was more attractive, and there young Buxton spent many of the happiest hours of his boyhood. The house, which, at the death of his grandmother, became his own, (though till lately inhabited by his uncle Mr. Charles Buxton,) is beautifully situated, commanding fine views of Weymouth Bay and the Island of Portland. To this spot he ever continued much attached, and his letters from thence always mention his great enjoyment of its beauties. He thus refers to an incident which occurred when he was a lad at Bellfield:—

“ Of humble station, yet of sterling worth,
 Awaiting Heaven, but yet content on earth,
 Quaint, honest, simple-hearted, kind, sincere
 Such was the man, to all our village dear!
 He liv'd in peace, in hope resigned his breath
 Go—learn a lesson from his life and death.”

* Soon after her marriage with Mr. Isaac Buxton, they had visited this estate together, and she incidentally remarked to him, what a beautiful spot it would be for a country-seat. The next year, when she accompanied him thither again, she found, to her astonishment, instead of mere fields and hedges, an elegant country-house, surrounded by lawns and gardens.

“In passing with my brother Edward in a very small boat from Weymouth to Poxwell, a sudden storm came on and the boat filled. We turned to the shore; he could not swim, I could. I placed him in the front of the boat and rowed with all my force through the surf; the boat overturned, threw him on shore, but I went down. I swam to the boat, and after considerable difficulty was also thrown on shore through the surf.”

Weymouth was at this period the favourite resort of George III., and the King and royal family frequently visited Mrs. Buxton. Her grandchildren always retained a vivid impression of the cordial kindness of their royal guests.

At the age of fifteen, after spending eight years at Dr. Burney's, without making any great advances in learning, he persuaded his mother to allow him to reside at home; and there he remained for many months, devoting the chief part of his time to sporting, and the remainder to desultory reading. When no active amusement presented itself, he would sometimes spend whole days in riding about the lanes on his old pony, with an amusing book in his hand, while graver studies were entirely laid aside. At the same time his friends attempted to correct the boyish roughness of his manners by a system of ridicule and reproof, which greatly discouraged and annoyed him. It was indeed a critical time for his character; but the germ of nobler qualities lay below; a genial influence was alone wanting to develop it; and, through the kindness of Providence, as he used emphatically to acknowledge, that influence was at hand. Before this period he had become acquainted with John, the eldest son of Mr. John Gurney, of Earham Hall, near Norwich, with whose family his own was distantly connected, and, in the autumn of 1801, he paid his friend a visit at his father's house.

Mr. Gurney had for several years been a widower. His family consisted of eleven children; three elder daughters, on the eldest of whom the charge of the rest chiefly devolved, the son whom we have mentioned, a group of four girls nearer Fowell Buxton's age, and three younger boys. He was then in his sixteenth year, and was charmed by the lively and kindly spirit which pervaded the whole party, while he was surprised at finding them all, even the younger portion of the family, zealously occupied in self-education, and full of energy in every pursuit, whether of amusement or of knowledge. They received him as one of themselves, early appreciating his masterly, though still uncultivated, mind; while, on his side, their cordial and encouraging welcome seemed to draw out all his latent powers. He at once joined with them in reading and study, and from this visit may be dated a remarkable change in the whole tone of his character: he received a stimulus, not merely in the acquisition of knowledge, but in the formation of studious habits and intellectual tastes; nor could the same influence fail of extending to the refinement of his disposition and manners.

Earlham itself possessed singular charms for their young and lively party. They are described at the time of his visit as spending the fine autumn afternoons in sketching and reading under the old trees in the park, or in taking excursions, some on foot, some on horseback, into the country round; wandering homeward towards evening, with their drawings and the wild flowers they had found. The roomy old hall, also, was well fitted for the cheerful, though simple hospitalities which Mr. Gurney delighted to exercise, especially towards the literary society, for which Norwich was at that time distinguished.

A characteristic anecdote of Mr. Gurney has been recorded. He was a strict preserver of his game, and accordingly had an intense repugnance to every thing bordering on poaching. Upon one occasion, when walking in his park, he heard a shot fired in a neighbouring wood—he hurried to the spot, and his naturally placid temper was considerably ruffled on seeing a young officer with a pheasant at his feet, deliberately reloading his gun. As the young man, however, replied to his rather warm expressions by a polite apology, Mr. Gurney's wrath was somewhat allayed; but he could not refrain from asking the intruder what *he* would do, if he caught a man trespassing on his premises. "I would ask him in to luncheon," was the reply. The serenity of this impudence was not to be resisted. Mr. Gurney not only invited him to luncheon, but supplied him with dogs and a gamekeeper, and secured him excellent sport for the remainder of the day.*

Mr. Gurney belonged to the Society of Friends; but his family was not brought up with any strict regard to its peculiarities. He put little restraint on their domestic amusements; and music and dancing were among their favourite recreations. The third daughter, afterwards the well-known Mrs. Fry, had indeed united herself more closely to the Society of Friends †; but her example in this respect had not as yet been followed by any of her brothers or sisters.

Such was the family of which Fowell Buxton might be said to have become a member, at this turning point of his life. The following letters were written to his mother during his visit to Earlham.

* This anecdote, which is still fresh in the memory of several of Mr. Gurney's children, was borrowed by Hook, in his tale of Gilbert Gurney.

† See *Memoirs of the Life of Elizabeth Fry*. Charles Galpin, 1847.

“ My dear Mother,

“ Earlham, Oct. 1801.

“ I was very much pleased with all your last, excepting that part in which you mention the (to me at least) hateful subject of St. Andrew’s.*

“ It gives me pain to write, because it will you to read, that my aversion is, ever was, and ever will be invincible; nevertheless, if you command, I will obey. You will exclaim, ‘How ungrateful, after all the pleasure he has had.’ Pleasure, great pleasure, I certainly have had, but not sufficient to counterbalance the unhappiness the pursuance of your plan would occasion me; but, as I said before, I will obey.

“ If you think fit, I shall return to Cromer on Wednesday. Northrepps is perfectly delightful. I have dined many times with Mr. Pym: a letter he has received from his brother in Ireland says, ‘Nothing but speculation, peculation, and paper, exists in this unhappy country.’ I am going to Lord Wodehouse’s this morning, and to a ball at Mr. Kett’s at night.”

“ My dear Mother,

“ Earlham, Nov. 24. 1801.

“ Your letter was brought while I was deliberating whether to stay here or meet you in London. The contents afforded me real joy. Before, I almost feared you would think me encroaching; yet Mr. Gurney is so good-tempered, his daughters are so agreeable, and John is so thoroughly delightful, and his conversation so instructive, which is no small matter with you I know, that you must not be surprised at my accepting your offer of a few days’ longer stay in this country. Whilst I was at Northrepps, I did little else but read books of entertainment (except now and then a few hours Latin and Greek), ride, and play at chess. But since I have been at Earlham, I have been very industrious. The Prince † paid us a visit this morning, and dines here on Thursday.

“ Your affectionate son,

“ T. F. BUXTON.”

“ My visit here has completely answered,” he says with boyish enthusiasm, in his last letter from Mr. Gurney’s house. “ I have spent two months as happily as possible; I have learned as much, though in a dif-

* His mother had proposed to send him to the College at St. Andrew’s.

† Prince Wilham of Gloucester.

ferent manner, as I should at Colne, and have got thoroughly acquainted with the most agreeable family in the world."

In December 1801 he returned to Earl's Colne; but his mind never lost the impulse which it had received during his stay at Earlham. Many years afterwards he thus refers to this early friendship, which he places first in an enumeration of the blessings of his life.

"I know no blessing of a temporal nature (and it is not only temporal) for which I ought to render so many thanks as my connexion with the Earlham family. It has given a colour to my life. Its influence was most positive and pregnant with good, at that critical period between school and manhood. They were eager for improvement—I caught the infection. I was resolved to please them, and in the College of Dublin, at a distance from all my friends, and all control, their influence, and the desire to please them, kept me hard at my books, and sweetened the toil they gave. The distinctions I gained at College (little valuable as distinctions, but valuable because habits of industry, perseverance, and reflection, were necessary to obtain them), these boyish distinctions were exclusively the result of the animating passion in my mind, to carry back to them the prizes which they prompted and enabled me to win."

CHAPTER II.

1802—1807.

EDUCATION IN IRELAND. — DONNYBROOK. — EMMETT'S REBELLION. — DUBLIN UNIVERSITY. — CORRESPONDENCE. — ENGAGEMENT TO MISS H. GURNEY. — HISTORICAL SOCIETY. — ESCAPE FROM SHIPWRECK. — CORRESPONDENCE. — SUCCESS AT COLLEGE. — INVITATION TO REPRESENT THE UNIVERSITY IN PARLIAMENT. — HIS MARRIAGE.

As there were reasons for expecting that her son would inherit considerable property in Ireland, Mrs. Buxton deemed it advisable that he should complete his education at Dublin; and accordingly, in the winter of 1802, he was placed in the family of Mr. Moore of Donnybrook, who prepared pupils for the university. It was shortly before the Christmas holidays that he took up his abode at Donnybrook, and he then found himself inferior to every one of his companions in classical acquirements; but he spent the vacation in such close study, that on the return of the other pupils, he stood as the first among them.

Late in life he thus recalls this period in a letter to one of his sons, then under the roof of a private tutor:—

“You are now at that period of life in which you must make a turn to the right or to the left. You must now give proofs of principle, determination, and strength of mind,—or you must sink into idleness, and acquire the habits and character of a desultory, ineffective young man; and if once you fall to that point, you will find it no easy matter to rise again.

“I am sure that a young man may be very much what he pleases. In my own case it was so. I left school, where I had learnt little or nothing, at about the age of fourteen. I spent

the next year at home, learning to hunt and shoot. Then it was that the prospect of going to College opened upon me, and such thoughts as I have expressed in this letter occurred to my mind. I made my resolutions, and I acted up to them: I gave up all desultory reading—I never looked into a novel or a newspaper—I gave up shooting. During the five years I was in Ireland, I had the liberty of going when I pleased to a capital shooting place. I never went but twice. In short, I considered every hour as precious, and I made every thing bend to my determination not to be behind any of my companions,—and thus I speedily passed from one species of character to another. I had been a boy fond of pleasure and idleness, reading only books of unprofitable entertainment—I became speedily a youth of steady habits of application, and irresistible resolution. I soon gained the ground I had lost, and I found those things which were difficult and almost impossible to my idleness, easy enough to my industry; and much of my happiness and all my prosperity in life have resulted from the change I made at your age. It all rests with yourself. If you seriously resolve to be energetic and industrious, depend upon it you will for your whole life have reason to rejoice that you were wise enough to form and to act upon that determination.”

From Donnybrook he writes to his mother,—

“Tell my Uncle Hanbury that no two clerks in his brew-house are together so industrious as I am, for I read morning, noon, and night.”

During his stay at this place, the country was disturbed by the breaking out of the “Kilwarden rebellion,” instigated by the unfortunate Robert Emmett. To meet the danger, volunteer corps were hastily organised, one of which Mr. Buxton joined as a lieutenant. The current reports of the day are thus sketched by him in his letters to his mother:—

“Everybody abuses the Lord-Lieutenant. He received information from all parts of the kingdom that the rising was to take place on Saturday night, and all the preparation he made was to send 2500 men to take care of his house and family at

the Park. The soldiers in Dublin had no ammunition. Colonel Littlehales, Mr. Marsden, and every officer of the Castle, were away from their posts; and for two hours after the rising began, and while the rebels were murdering Lord Kilwarden, Colonel Brown, and all the soldiers they could catch, nothing was done by government.

“After the first alarm, however, had subsided, the soldiers collected in small parties, and the rebels were soon put to the rout; before morning, 10,000 pikes were taken, all the prisons in Dublin were filled with rebels, and from 200 to 300 are supposed to have been killed. Isaac and I watched last night at Donnybrook, with our pistols loaded, for it was expected that they would attack the outskirts. However, they did not come. A great many Lucan people were found dead in Dublin. Every noted rebel was seen going to Dublin on Saturday evening. The gardener and workmen say there were 600 rebels at Mr. North's gate that night. Only two mails came into Dublin on Sunday—one was stopped at Lucan and another at Maynooth.”

“Dublin, August 7. 1803.

“Dublin is in appearance perfectly quiet again, but the *minds* of the people are in rebellion. Pym, who goes by the name of Lord Sage, says this is by far a more dangerous rebellion than the last, as it is more concealed. The plan was for three bodies of 6000 men each to enter Dublin; one party to take the Castle, another the barracks, the other to spread about the city and murder every Protestant. Luckily, the hearts of all but about 6000 failed. The attack was to have commenced at two in the morning, but whisky, which was given to keep up their spirits, made them begin their outrage the evening before at nine. They were opposed by seventeen yeomen, and these brave rebels, who were ready to sacrifice their lives for their liberty, after four rounds of firing, all ran away from this small body!*

“The Lord-Lieutenant is abused by every loyal person. People who slept in the Castle on the night of the rising say it must have been lost if the rebels had come.”

* See Annual Register, 1803; and Maxwell's "History of the Irish Rebellion," which gives an interesting account of Emmett's conspiracy, p. 410.

Another incident of his stay at Donnybrook is thus mentioned. "A companion of mine, not knowing it was loaded, presented a pistol at me and pulled the trigger. It had often missed fire before, and did so then: immediately afterwards I pulled the trigger; it went off, and sent the ball into the wall."

After remaining a year at Donnybrook, he paid another visit to Earlham. "We are most completely happy here," he writes to his mother; "every thing goes on well, and you need not fear that I am losing my time, for being with the Gurneys makes me ten times more industrious than any thing else would."

In October, 1803, he returned to Dublin, and entered Trinity College as a fellow commoner. At that time there were four examinations annually in the Dublin University—making in all fourteen during the college course of the fellow commoners. At each of these a Premium was given to the successful candidate in every division or class, if he had not already received one in the same year, in which case a certificate, which was equal to it in honour, was given instead.

At the end of the college course a gold medal was also presented to those who, at each examination, had distinguished themselves in every subject (one failure being allowed).

Mr. Buxton at once commenced his studies with great vigour, and in his first examination obtained the second place. This success appears to have surpassed his expectations, and he thus writes to his sister:—Feb. 24. 1804. "I suppose you know how the examinations have ended—very much indeed to my satisfaction, and I am now reading away for the next. My mother is in ecstasies about my being so near getting the premium." And in a letter to his mother he tells her, he is reso-

lutely bent on getting it next time. He succeeded, and this being his first triumph, he was not a little elated; and he mentions as "an exceeding addition to the pleasure" that he was the first Englishman, as far as he could ascertain, who had gained a premium at the Dublin University.

Before the autumnal examination, he writes to Mr. J. J. Gurney, who was then reading with a private tutor at Oxford: —

"College, Dublin, Sept. 9. 1804.

"Your suppositions about my getting a certificate are, I am afraid, very unlikely to be realised. My antagonists are very tremendous. In the first place, there are North and Montgomery. I hardly know which of them I ought to dread the most; they are both excellent scholars, and men of the most unwearied application: next Wybrants and Arthur, both of whom I have had the pleasure of beating already. So far for college business; I only wish you were hear to beat everybody."

In a postscript to this very letter he mentions with boyish glee his having gained the certificate in question. A close friendship soon afterwards sprang up between Mr. Buxton and Mr. John Henry North, one of the "tremendous antagonists" to whom he refers; and who afterwards distinguished himself both at the Irish Bar, and in the House of Commons.

Their course at College was nearly parallel, and as they did not on this or any succeeding occasion happen to be placed in the same division, they were never brought into competition. This friendship, maintained during Mr. North's life, was one of the circumstances to which, in recollections of his college days, Mr. Buxton always recurred with the most lively pleasure. His mention of his friend at this early age is interesting: —

"His temper is cheerful, his taste remarkably elegant, and adapted to receive pleasure from the beauties of nature. His

manners so captivating that you must be pleased by them; and his heart so good that you must love him."

Whenever Mr. Buxton could escape from Dublin, he visited Earlham; and an attachment, which he dated from the first day they met, gradually ripened between him and Hannah, fifth daughter of Mr. Gurney; till in March, 1805, they were engaged to be married.

But while in this direction a bright prospect opened before him, in another the clouds appeared to be gathering about his path. Other claimants* had come forward to contest his right to the Irish property; his mother had undertaken an expensive lawsuit regarding it, and her hopes of success were already growing dim. At the same time the family property had been materially diminished by some unsuccessful speculations in which she had engaged.

Her son's letters, however, (addressed for the most part to Earlham), bear little trace of anxiety:—

"April, 1805.

"The examinations are over, but alas! I cannot describe the disasters that have befallen me. Think how disagreeable a circumstance it must be to me to have all my hopes disappointed, to lose the certificate, to have my gold medal stopped, and, what is worse, to know that my Earlham visit, as it was the cause of my idleness, was the cause of my disgrace. Think of all this, and fetch a *very, very* deep sigh,—and look very grave, and then think how happy I must be to have to tell YOU, that my utmost examinationary hopes are realised,—that I have the certificate and 'Valde bene in omnibus,' and, what is better, that I can ascribe my success to *nothing but my Earlham visit!* I am sure that, if I had not thought that I was partly working for you, I never should have been able to read so much during this month. The examiner told five of my opponents that he was sorry he had not a premium for each of them. I was not 'cut up' (as the college phrase is) during the whole examination;

* Of the Yorke family

and if I have been the trumpeter of my own praise a little too much, you must remember that one slight word of approbation from Earlham would be more grateful to me, than the loudest applause of the whole world besides."

He mentions in a letter, dated May 15. 1805, that he had been spending the preceding fortnight "chiefly in reading English poetry;" and he adds,—

"I went yesterday, for the first time, to a schoolmaster who gives lectures on reading. I have long felt my deficiency in that most useful qualification, especially when I was last at Earlham; and I then made a firm resolution to conquer it. However, it was with difficulty I could keep my determination, for my companions have entertained themselves very much at the idea of my going to school to learn to read. But I expect to gain two very material advantages by this plan; the first is, that perhaps it may afford you pleasure, and secondly, that, as I go immediately after dinner, it will furnish an opportunity for avoiding, without openly quarrelling with, a party of collegians, into whose society I have lately got, and whose habits of drinking make me determine to retreat from them."

"College, Dublin, Sept. 29. 1805.

"My mind has lately been very much occupied with the consideration of the lawfulness of taking oaths, because my College pursuits would lose a great deal of their stimulus if I thought I should not go to the Bar, for the information which I may acquire here would be comparatively of little use to any but a lawyer. To remove or strengthen my doubts I have been reading 'Paley's Philosophy,' and, indeed, he has almost convinced me that taking oaths is not the kind of swearing that is prohibited. I have endeavoured to free my mind from prejudice on one side, and interest on the other; and I think that if I felt a bias at all, it was against swearing, which arose from the fear of being actuated by my wishes, rather than by reason."

In October, 1805, he and his friend North took their seats together in the Historical Society.* In one of his

* This was an association established by the students of the University, with a view of promoting the practice of elocution and the study of history, and was an object of great interest among them. Debates were held

letters he speaks of the dread with which he looked forward to "such a tremendous thing" as addressing so large an audience. His first speech, however, met with unexpected success. One of his fellow collegians still remembers "its producing quite a sensation among the under-graduates," and he himself thus writes to Earlham : —

" November, 1805.

"I did not answer your letter before, because I wished to state the result of my speech, which is beyond my utmost expectations. Five persons spoke besides myself: ninety-two members gave Returns, of which eighty-five were for me. A law exists in the Society, that if any one should get eighty Returns for a speech, he is to receive the '*remarkable thanks.*' There has never been an opportunity of putting this law in force till now."

" Wednesday, Dec. 25. 1805.

"I made a speech last night in the Historical Society, and, contrary to my former determination, I intend to speak once more. I am induced to do this by getting a great many more Returns than I had any reason to expect.

"I have, I fear, very little chance of getting the premium; however, if I do not, I am perfectly satisfied with the result of my studies this term. I have taken very little sleep, amusement, or exercise lately, the consequence of which is that I have been very unwell."

His hopes were more than realised; not only did he again carry off the premium, but the silver medal of the Historical Society was awarded him, of which he subsequently gained the other three prizes. At College, indeed, nothing but good fortune attended him. His

every week during the last term of the year. After each debate, every member present named the one who in his opinion had spoken most effectively, and at the end of the year the under-graduate who had gained the largest number of suffrages received a silver medal. Another medal was the prize at the annual examination in history. No one was admitted into the society until the end of his second year of residence at the University, and, consequently, two medals for eloquence, and two for history, were the largest number that any one could obtain.

exertions were uniformly crowned with success ; his mind found scope for its unceasing activity ; his circle of friends was choice, yet large ; and a zest was added to all enjoyments, by the bright prospect afforded him at Earlham. The gradual overcasting of his hopes of wealth but little affected his spirits. He says in a letter to a friend :—

“ I am very sorry to hear of your unhappinesses ; I wish I could do any thing to alleviate them. I think I might very well spare happiness enough for a moderate person, and still have enough left for myself.”

He some years after referred to his success in college as having “ produced this amount of self-confidence.”

“ I was, and have always been, conscious that though others had great talents, mine were moderate ; that what I wanted in ability I must make up by perseverance ; in short, that I must work hard to win, but withal a sense that by working hard I could win. This conviction that I could do nothing without labour, but that I could do anything, or almost anything which others did, by dint of vigorous application ; this, coupled with a resolved mind, a kind of plodding, dogged determination, over which difficulties had little influence, and with considerable industry and perseverance ; these have been the talents committed to my trust.”

From the dissipation then too prevalent in the University he was happily preserved, partly by his close and incessant occupation, partly by his Earlham connection, and partly by his previous education ; for although his letters up to this period contain no direct mention of religion, yet the Christian principles which his mother had instilled into his mind retained a certain influence ; while his natural firmness of character enabled him to disregard the taunts to which he was exposed. He found more difficulty in sacrificing to his academical pursuits the strong inclination for

field sports, which had been cherished at Earl's Colne, and which accompanied him through life. In a letter to Earlham, dated May, 1806, he says, —

“ One of the various advantages I have derived from our connexion is the check it has been to my sporting inclinations. I am thoroughly convinced that, had my mind received another bent, had my pursuits been directed towards sporting, its charms would have been irresistible. A life dedicated to amusement must be most unsatisfactory. . . . I think you need be under no apprehension in regard to — having too much influence over me : as to my being member for Weymouth, it is a totally chimerical idea, for were I ever so willing, it is quite impracticable, so you may lay aside all fears of my becoming a *great man*.”

His letters to his mother at this period are chiefly confined to matters of business ; one trait in them is, however, too characteristic to be passed over without notice. Nearly all of them conclude with inquiries and directions about his horses, in which he always took so lively an interest, that it almost might be called *personal friendship*. “ I mean,” he tells his mother, “ to visit Weymouth before returning to Ireland, to see how my horses and relations do.” He was, however, obliged to hasten his return to Dublin, and on his way thither he had a remarkable escape, the particulars of which he thus describes :—

“ In the year 1806, I was travelling with the Earlham party in Scotland. I left them to return to the College of Dublin. In consequence of some conversation about the Parkgate vessels, with my present wife, then Hannah Gurney, she extracted from me a promise that I would never go by Parkgate. I was exceedingly impatient to be at Dublin, in order to prepare for my examination : when I reached Chester, the captain of the Parkgate packet came to me, and invited me to go with him. The wind was fair ; the vessel was to sail in a few hours ; he was sure I should be in Dublin early the next morning, whereas a place

in the Holyhead mail was doubtful, and at best I must lose the next day by travelling through Wales. My promise was a bitter mortification to me, but I could not dispense with it. I drank tea, and played at cards with a very large party. About eight or nine o'clock they all went away, on board the vessel, and of the 119 persons who embarked as passengers, 118 were drowned before midnight.*

The account in the newspapers of the loss of the Parkgate packet, was seen by his late travelling companions, on their way into Norfolk ; and it was not till after a day of anxious suspense that they heard of his safe arrival in Ireland. At Lynn they received the following letter from him :—

“ Have you heard of the dreadful accident which happened to the Parkgate packet? You will see by the newspaper the particulars. I have been talking to-day with the only passenger who was saved ; he says that there were 119 in the vessel, and mentioned many most melancholy circumstances. Had I gone by Parkgate, which I probably might have done as we were detained some time at Chester, and expected to be detained longer, I should have been in the vessel, but I declared positively that I would not go. Can you guess my reason for being so obstinate? ”

It was during this tour in Scotland that his attention appears to have been drawn, with increased earnestness, to the subject of religion. When at Perth, he purchased a large Bible, with the resolution, which he steadfastly kept, of perusing a portion of it every day ; and he mentions in a letter, dated September 10. 1806, that quite a change had been worked in his mind with respect to reading the Holy Scriptures. “ Formerly,” he says, “ I read generally rather as a duty than as a pleasure, but now I read them with great interest, and, I may say, happiness.”

* See “ Gentleman s Magazine,” September, 1806.

“I am sure,” he writes again, “that some of the happiest hours that I spend here are while I am reading our Bible, which is as great a favourite as a book can be. I never before felt so assured that the only means of being happy, is from seeking the assistance of a superior Being, or so inclined to endeavour to submit myself to the direction of principle.”

The college examination was now again approaching, and he was not so well prepared as usual, having given, as he feared, too much time to Optics, of which science he speaks as “the most delightful and captivating of studies.” He writes to the party at Earlham,—

“I do not, however, feel discouraged, but in a most happy, quiet mind; more determined to work, than anxious about the result; desirous of success for your sakes, and able to bear defeat alleviated by your sympathy; but, if reading can avail, I *will* be prepared.”

After the examination was over, he says,—

“I never had such a contest. The examiner could not decide in the Hall, so we were obliged to have two hours more this morning; however, I can congratulate you once more. . . . I venerate Optics for what they have done for me in this examination.”

In the course of this examination, he gave an answer to one of the *vivâ voce* questions, which the Examiner thought incorrect, and he passed on to the next man; but to the astonishment of the other under-graduates, Buxton rose from his seat and said, “I beg your pardon, sir, but I am convinced my answer was correct.” The Examiner, after some demur, consented to refer to a book of authority on the subject, and it proved that Buxton’s answer was the one given in the latest edition of the work

“ Nov. 1806.

“ I was strongly pressed to play at billiards yesterday, which of course I refused*, and was successful enough to persuade the person to employ his evening in another way. He is a strong instance of their injurious effects. He told me that when he was in town he went regularly three times a day to a billiard table, and that playing at 4*d.* a game, on an average, cost him 10*s.* a day. It is the most alluring, and therefore the most destructive, game that ever was invented. I have heard it remarked, and have indeed remarked it myself, that if any collegian commences billiard playing, he ceases to do anything else. . . . I have been employed all this morning in reading history. I find that this study is useful, not only in itself, but also in giving a habit of reading everything with accuracy. . . . Every day brings us new accounts of disturbances in the remote parts of the country; I am almost inclined to fear there will be a rebellion. I have been thinking a great deal lately of what I should do in case the corps were again established in college. There is to me no question so dubious or perplexing, as whether resistance against danger from an enemy is allowable: however, if I can trust my own determination, I shall not be at all swayed by the example of others, or by the disgrace which would attend a refusal to enlist.”

A day or two later, he continues :

“ I was extremely tired at the Historical Society on Wednesday night. I was made president, and you cannot imagine the labour of keeping a hundred unruly and violent men orderly and obedient. The all-engrossing subject here at present is the prospect of a rebellion, if I may say the *prospect* when I think there is the reality. Every day we hear of fresh murders; and the Bishop of Elphin, who is of the Law family, declared openly in the Castle-yard, that in the five-and-twenty years he had resided here, the people in his diocese were never in so desperate a state of rebellion.”

* He had given a promise at Earlham not to play at billiards while at college. His scruples respecting oaths and the use of arms were derived from his intercourse with so many members of the Society of Friends.

On his return to England for a short holiday, he says, —

“ London, Jan. 23. 1807.

“ It is a very great pleasure to me that I can tell you some news, which I think will delight you. In the first place, I have arrived here safe and sound. In the second I have for the twelfth time secured the premium, and ‘valde bene in omnibus.’ ”

On the 14th of April in the same year he received his thirteenth premium, and also the highest honour of the University—the Gold Medal. With these distinctions, and the four silver medals from the Historical Society, he prepared to return to England. At this juncture a circumstance occurred which might have turned the whole current of his life. A proposal was made to him by the electors to come forward as candidate for the representation of the University, and good grounds were given him to expect a triumphant return. No higher token of esteem than this could have been offered to one without wealth or Irish connexion, and without the smallest claim upon the consideration of the University, except what his personal and academical character afforded. Such an offer it was not easy to reject, and he was, as he says at the time, “extremely agitated and pleased by it.” He weighed the pleasure, the distinction, the influence promised by the political career thus unexpectedly opened before him; and he set against these considerations the duties which his approaching marriage would bring upon him. Prudence prevailed, and he declined the proposal. His friend Mr. North writes to him:—

“ I think all hearts would have been in your favour, if you had made your appearance—and still they cannot convince themselves that you intend to go boldly through with your

resolution—‘Come then, my guide, my genius, come along.’ You were mistaken in thinking fortune (in one sense) a necessary qualification; there is an honourable exception for the Universities.”

Mr. Buxton, however, had come to a deliberate decision, and it was not to be shaken. He reached England at the end of April, and in the following month his marriage took place.

In one of his papers he thus alludes to the closing circumstances of his academical career:—

“On May 13. 1807, I obtained the object of my long attachment — having refused, in consequence of the prospect of this marriage, a most honourable token of the esteem of the University of Dublin. The prospect was indeed flattering to youthful ambition — to become a member of Parliament, and my constituents men of thought and education, and honour and principle—my companions, my competitors — those who had known me and observed me for years.

“I feel now a pride in recollecting that it was from these men I received this mark of approbation — from men with whom I had no family alliance, not even the natural connexion of compatriotism, and without high birth or splendid fortune or numerous connexions to recommend me. I suspended my determination for one day, beset by my friends, who were astonished at the appearance of a doubt, and, having closely considered all points, I determined to decline the intended honour; and from that day to this, thanks to God, I have never lamented the termination.”

CHAPTER III.

1807—1812.

ENTERS TRUMAN'S BREWERY.—OCCUPATIONS IN LONDON.—LETTER FROM MR. TWISS.—CORRESPONDENCE.—DEATH OF EDWARD BUXTON.—EXERTIONS IN THE BREWERY.

THE first few months of Mr. Buxton's married life were passed at a small cottage close to his grandmother's seat at Bellfield, and in the neighbourhood of his mother, who had contracted a second marriage with Mr. Edmund Henning, and had left Essex to reside at Weymouth.

His expectations of wealth had been disappointed, and he found that his fortunes must depend upon his own exertions. After deliberate consideration, he relinquished the idea of following the profession of the law, and entered into negotiations in different quarters, with a view to establishing himself in business. For a while these were unsuccessful, and during this time he suffered severely from the pain of present inaction, and the obscurity that rested on the future. In after life when referring to this period, he said, "I longed for any employment that would produce me a hundred a year, if I had to work twelve hours a day for it." Nearly a year passed away before his anxieties were brought to a conclusion. The winter was spent at Earham, where his first child was born. Soon afterwards, in a letter to his wife from London, he says, "I slept at Brick Lane; my uncles Sampson and Osgood Hanbury were there, and revived my old feelings of good nephewship, they treated me so kindly. This morning I met Mr. Randall and your father. I think that I shall become a Blackwell Hall factor.

This intention was prevented by an unexpected turn in his fortunes, resulting from his friendly interview with his uncles. Within a few days Mr. Sampson Hanbury, of Truman's Brewery in Spitalfields, offered him a situation in that establishment, with a prospect of becoming a partner after three years' probation. He joyfully acceded to the proposal, and entered with great ardour upon his new sphere of action. He writes, July, 1808, to his mother, "I was up this morning at four, and do not expect to finish my day's work before twelve to-night—my excuse for silence. I have not neglected your business." At the close of the year he succeeded Mr. Hanbury in the occupation of a house connected with the brewery, in which he continued to reside for several years.

During these years his correspondence was not extensive. Among the few letters which have been preserved is the following, addressed to his wife, who had accompanied one of her brothers to the Isle of Wight. Mr. Buxton had arranged to join them there; but on arriving at Southampton, he found that all communication with the island was interdicted on account of the secret expedition then about to sail from Cowes, as it afterwards proved, to Walcheren.

"Southampton, June 15. 1809.

"Now that I have finished my coffee, I think I cannot employ my time more profitably or more pleasantly than in sending a few lines to you. I am afraid the embargo has been a great trouble to you. It was so to me when I first arrived, as the idea of spending some time with your party was particularly pleasant: however, either by the aid of 'divine philosophy,' or, from finding that the misfortune was irremediable, in a short time I was reconciled to my fate, and began to consider how best to enjoy what was within my reach. As I could not have the living companions that I most wished for, I went to a book-

seller's shop to endeavour to find some agreeable dead ones, and having made choice of 'Tristram Shandy' and a 'Patriot King,' I proceeded in their honourable company to the water side, took a boat, and went off to Netley Abbey. I thoroughly enjoyed this excursion. First I went all over the interior, and then walked leisurely round it at some distance, stopping and reading at every scene that I particularly liked. Then I went up into the wood, to a spot which seems to have been formed for a dining room. While the boatman was at dinner, I went over into the next field to a higher ground. I hope this did not escape you. The four ivy-covered broken towers just below, a party dining on the grass-plat, the intermediate distance of trees, and the sea behind, made it, I think, the finest view I ever saw. I only hope you have sketched it; and next to it, I should wish for a drawing of the nearest window from the inside — I mean the one that is tolerably perfect, with a great deal of ivy over the middle pillar. I had a pleasant row home, and have since been thinking about your party with the greatest pleasure; and, amongst other thoughts connected with you, it has forcibly struck me how beneficial it is sometimes to be amongst strangers, it gives such a taste and a relish for the society of those one loves."

To Mrs. Henning.

"My dear Mother,

"Dec. 3. 1809.

"I am very much obliged to you for your letter, which furnished me with several useful hints, though not upon the particular subject on which I wanted information.

"As to the general propriety and duty of introducing Christianity into India, there cannot be, I imagine, a question; but is this the proper season? is not our empire in India too unstable to authorize such an experiment? In short I wished to determine its political propriety, to examine it with the eye of a statesman, not of a Christian, and to inquire, not what Fenelon, but what Machiavel, would have said of it. The result which I have come to is, that it would be *highly expedient*, and perhaps the only measure which could reinstate our declining power in the East.

"Your letter shows powers of which I may make eminent use, but observe, I must qualify this praise by saying that it

wanted method throughout the whole, and greater pains bestowed upon the parts.

“The Poor Laws is the next question I shall consider, and I expect great assistance from you. The only restrictions that I would suggest are a parsimoniousness of Scripture quotations, and a care against negligence in the dress of the parts, for, after all, appearance and style are more than matter; a diamond is but a dirty pebble till it is polished. Virgil and his translator Trap only differed as to dress. The images, the incidents, the characters are the same in both, yet the one is the best poem in the Latin language, and the other perhaps the worst in the English.”

To Mrs. Burton.

“July 14. 1811.

“I hope to take a long walk with——, whose company is a great treat to me. I agree with you that he is a striking instance of the superiority of a domestic religious education. To be sure, to please my fancy, I should like a more *robustious* son; but I should be most happy to insure to my boy ——’s principle, and I would willingly resign all those sterner and more manly qualities which from inclination I am apt to wish.”

Although, during his term of probation at the brewery, he was closely occupied in making himself master of his new vocation, he yet found time for the study of English literature, and especially of political economy. “My maxims are,” he writes, “never to begin a book without finishing it; never to consider it finished till I know it; and to study with a whole mind.” He admitted, in after-life, that even at this early period he had indulged a distant idea of entering Parliament; and in consequence of this he continued to practise the art of public speaking in a debating club of which he was a member.

“I must tell you,” he writes to Mr. North, December 1810, “of a signal reformation which has taken place. I have become again a hard reader, and of sterling books. In spite of your marriage cause, I hold myself your equal in Blackstone and in Montesquieu, and your superior in Bacon, parts of whom I have

read with Mallettian avidity. I have not been much at 'The Academics,' but it goes on famously; your memory is held in the highest estimation—even our oracle Twiss speaks well of you. Grant and Bowdler are, I fear, gone from us."

His former schoolfellow, Mr. Horace Twiss, thus describes meeting him at this time:—

"We had been at school together at the celebrated Dr. Burney's, of Greenwich, and were very intimate.

"Buxton was then, as in after-life, extraordinarily tall, and was called by his playfellows 'Elephant Buxton.' He was at that time, as afterwards, like the animal he was called from, of a kind and gentle nature; but he did not then exhibit any symptoms of the elephantine talent he afterwards evinced.

"I myself very often did his Latin lessons for him; and, as he was somewhat older and much bigger than I was, I found him, in many respects, a valuable ally. When I was about twenty, I became a member of 'The Academics,' a society in London (like the 'Historical' in Dublin, and the 'Speculative' in Edinburgh), where the topics of the day were debated. There I heard, on my first or second evening of attendance, a speech of great ability from a man of great stature; and I should have been assured it was my old schoolfellow I saw before me, but that I could not suppose it possible so dull a boy could have become so clever a man. He it was, however; and I renewed my friendly intercourse with him, both at the society and in private.

"Our *chums* were poor North, afterwards distinguished in Parliament and at the Irish bar, who died at between forty and fifty; and Henry, the younger son of the great Grattan. We afterwards sat altogether in the House of Commons, with some others of our fellow-academics, the two Grants and Spring Rice. Horner had been an academic, but he was before our time. Of late years, Buxton was chiefly resident in Norfolk, but our mutual goodwill continued to the last."

From childhood the duty of active benevolence had been impressed on him by his mother, who used to set before him the idea of taking up some great cause by

which he might promote the happiness of man. On beginning to live in London he at once sought opportunities of usefulness, and in this pursuit he received great assistance from an acquaintance, which ripened into friendship, with the Quaker philosopher and philanthropist, William Allen. This good man had long been engaged upon objects of enlightened benevolence, and by him Mr. Buxton was from time to time initiated into some of those questions to which his after-life was devoted.

One of the most important of these had already dawned upon him. He writes to Mrs. Buxton, Dec. 1808 :—

“I have one reason for wishing to remain in town, which is, that I am going to become a member of a small society, now instituting, for the purpose of calling the public mind to the bad effects and inefficiency of capital punishments.”

And at a subsequent period he says—

“From the time of my connexion with the Brewery in 1808 to 1816, I took a part in all the charitable objects of that distressed district, more especially those connected with education, the Bible Society, and the deep sufferings of the weavers.”

All these labours he shared with his brother-in-law, Mr. Samuel Hoare, of Hampstead, between whom and himself there existed then, and through life, a friendship and close fellowship, far beyond what usually results from such a connexion. With them was also linked his own brother Charles, who was resident in London, and was the favourite companion of both.

Although Mr. Buxton was a member of the Established Church, circumstances had cherished in him a strong attachment to the Society of Friends, and to their silent mode of worship. He frequently spent the Sunday under the roof of Mr. and Mrs. Fry, at Plashet, in Essex; and even when at home, from the time of his marriage up to

the year 1811, he generally attended a Friends' Meeting. In a letter written on Sunday, Oct. 22nd, 1809, he mentions that he had been reading the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, "as a subject for reflection at Meeting," and adds,—

"I think I almost always have a good meeting when I read before it, without any intermediate occupation of mind. It was a great pleasure to me to be able to engage myself so thoroughly when there, as I had begun to think that I was rather going back in that respect. The verse that principally led me on to a train of thought was that 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' This text is always very striking to me. It is so serious a thing to be only on a par with the generality of those you see around you. This evening I have been thinking what I can do for the poor this winter. I feel that I have as yet done far short of what I ought and what I wish to do."

To Mrs. Buxton.

"Sept. 23. 1810.

"I have passed a very quiet and industrious week, up early, breakfast at eight o'clock, dinner near six, and the evenings to myself, which have been well employed over my favourite Blackstone. I read him till near ten last night, and then Jeremy Taylor till past eleven, and could hardly give him up, he was so very entertaining a companion. * * * This morning I went to Gracechurch Street meeting. I was rather late, which made me feel hurried, and prevented my having sufficient time to myself before meeting; however, I had made a little use of my friend Jeremy at breakfast, and this and last night's readings gave me occupation for my thoughts. I saw William Allen, who wants me to call upon him to-morrow, as he says he has found a place for the boys' school as suitable as if we were to build one. This, I know, will please you, but will alarm you also, lest we should forget the girls.

"And now you will expect to hear something about my return. I must tell you that you cannot be in a greater hurry for me to come to Earham than I am to get there; for I do not

think I have lately enjoyed anything so much as the time I spent there, and I hold it to be quite a treasure and a blessing to have such brothers and sisters; I hope and believe, too, that it may be as useful as it is agreeable. Still I do not feel altogether confident that the stimulus which they have given me will be of any duration; for it is not inducements to do our duty that we want—these we have already in abundance. They are, indeed, so many and so various, that if we were only as prudent and as rational with regard to our future, as we are to our present, none would utterly want religion but those who utterly wanted sense.”

It has been mentioned that Mr. Buxton was the eldest of three sons. Edward North, the third brother, a wayward lad, had been sent to sea as a midshipman in an East Indiaman, commanded by his relative Captain Dumbleton; but in his first voyage he left his ship and entered the king's service. From that time his family had received no tidings of him, and by degrees they became impressed with the painful conviction that he had died at sea. The suspense of five years was at last brought to an end by the arrival of a letter to Mr. Buxton from one of his brother shipmates, announcing that he had arrived, in a dying state, at Gosport, and was earnestly desirous to see some of his relations. He had been attacked by dysentery while on board ship at Bombay; and, feeling that his days were numbered, he became intensely anxious to reach home once more. He hastened to England in the first ship by which he could obtain a passage; and, on his arrival at Gosport, was carried to Haslar Hospital, whence he despatched a letter to his mother. This letter was unfortunately delayed, in consequence of its having been directed to the house at Earl's Colne, which had been parted with some years before, and the unhappy youth—he was only nineteen—in the morbid state of his feelings, became so strongly

impressed by a sense of his neglect in never having communicated with his friends, that he felt persuaded they would now refuse to acknowledge him. A second letter, in which he besought that some one of the family would consent to visit him on his death-bed, reached Mr. Buxton; and in two hours he and his brother Charles were on the road to Gosport, which they reached on the following morning. With mingled emotions of hope and fear they set out for the hospital. Having been directed to a large ward full of the sick and dying, they walked through the room without being able to discover the object of their search; till at length they were struck by the earnestness with which an emaciated youth upon one of the sick-beds was gazing at them. On their approaching his bedside, although he could scarcely articulate a word, his face was lit up with an expression of delight that sufficiently showed that he recognised them: but it was not for some moments that they could trace in his haggard features the lineaments of their long-lost brother.

A few days afterwards Mr. Buxton writes—

“Gosport, August 10. 1811.

“It is pleasant to be with Edward, he seems so happy in the idea of having his friends about him. This morning I thought him strong enough to hear part of a chapter in St. Luke, on prayer, and the 20th Psalm. Charles then went away, and I mentioned to him how applicable some of the passages were to his state; he said he felt them so, and that he had been very unfortunate in having been on board ship where religion is so neglected; that he had procured a Bible, and one of his friends had sometimes read to him, but not so often as he wished. That he had hoped and prayed that he might reach England, more that he might confess his sins to me than for any other reason; that, supposing at length that there was next to no chance of this, he had dictated a letter to me upon the subject, which is now in his box. When I told him that, as his illness had brought him into such a frame of mind, it was impossible

for me to regret it, let the event be what it would, he said he considered it as a mercy now, but that nobody could tell what his sufferings had been. I then entered into a kind of short history of what I considered to be inculcated in the Testament, 'that Christ came to call sinners to repentance.' He felt consolation from this; but again said that he had been indeed a sinner. I then told him that I hoped he did not ever omit to pray for assistance, and I added that Charles and I had joined in prayer for him last night. He seemed so much affected by this that I did not think it right to press the conversation farther. Does not all this furnish a striking proof how our sorrows may be converted into joys? I can look upon his illness in no other light than as a most merciful dispensation. It is most affectingly delightful to see his lowliness of mind, and his gratitude to all of us. I cannot help thinking that his mind is more changed than his body."

The letter above referred to, which was found in Edward Buxton's sea chest, was as follows :—

" My dearest Brother,

" H. M. S. ' Chiffonne.'

" As this is the last letter you will ever receive from me, as I am now on my death-bed, I write to you to comfort as much as you can my dearest mother and my dearest brother and sisters. As I have been sick and in misery a very long while, it will be easing me taking me from this troublesome world. I was on my passage to Europe, as only a cold climate could have cured me; but God, whose will be done, has ordained that I should not see England, though I should have died infinitely happier had I seen my dearest mother, Anna, and you, to have got your forgiveness for the irregularities I have carried on; yet I feel you forgive me; and though I have been a very great sinner for the small number of years I have lived, I die with the hope of being saved, by what I had been led to believe, and now wish I had much more followed, *through Jesus Christ*.

" Don't let the news of my death cast any of you down, as we all know it is a thing we must all come to; and as you are the eldest and support of the family, comfort the rest as much as you can, not forgetting to remember me to your dear wife. I have often thought of her kindness to me at Norwich before

your marriage. And don't forget poor Abraham Plastow and Betty; tell them I thought of them in my last.

"I can't say any more. The bearer of this, Mr. Yeates, is a truly good-hearted young man, and has been extremely kind to me while I have been sick, and while I was in the Bombay hospital. He will give you my pay and prize certificate, which you can get paid for at Somerset House; and any other information concerning me you want, as I am too weak to write more. Adieu to you all.

"EDWARD N. BUXTON."

For about a fortnight after his brothers reached him the young midshipman survived. He had the comfort, so earnestly desired, of being nursed by his mother and of seeing once more his whole family.

"When he was told by Charles that I was come," writes his eldest sister, "he clasped his hands and gave thanks, but desired not to see me till he was composed; a tear or two that appeared he wiped off with his arm. He is so reduced and altered that I should not have had the least idea that it was he: neither in his hair, eyes, nor voice can you trace a resemblance. He looks the skeleton of a fine young man, handsomer than Edward was, as tall as his brothers, and of a dark complexion. He has had much satisfactory conversation with Fowell, lamenting that he had not followed his advice, and expressing that he had been enabled to pray much in coming over. Fowell read to him in the Bible yesterday. He was much affected, but comforted by it, saying he did not deserve to be so attended by his friends; and to-day he said to my mother that it was a sign to him that he was partly forgiven, that his prayers were heard to see his friends again, and obtain their forgiveness. His mind is remarkably clear; indeed Fowell seemed not to know before how strong it was, or what serious feelings he had."

Edward North Buxton died at Haslar Hospital on the 25th of August, 1811. His last words were addressed to his mother, saying that he was prepared for death; that the prospect of it did not appear now to him what it had done formerly; adding, with a remarkable ex-

pression of countenance, that "he hoped God would soon be so very kind as to take him."

His sister Sarah, in describing the solemn, and yet peaceful, meeting round the death-bed of the returned wanderer, thus mentions her eldest brother:—"Fowell, the head of our family, is a strong support; and when religious consolation was so much wanted, he seemed most ready to afford it. The power of his influence we deeply felt: it was by far the most striking feature in the past remarkable month."

In 1811 Mr. Buxton was admitted as a partner in the brewery; and during the ensuing seven years he was almost exclusively devoted to his business. Soon after his admission, his senior partners, struck by his energy and force of mind, placed in his hands the difficult and responsible task of remodelling their whole system of management. It would be superfluous to enter into the details of his proceedings, though, perhaps, he never displayed greater vigour and firmness than in carrying through this undertaking. For two or three years he was occupied from morning till night in prosecuting, step by step, his plans of reform: a single example may indicate with what spirit he grappled with the difficulties that beset him on all sides.

One of the principal clerks was an honest man, and a valuable servant; but he was wedded to the old system, and viewed with great antipathy the young partner's proposed innovations. At length, on one occasion, he went so far as to thwart Mr. Buxton's plans. The latter took no notice of this at the time, except desiring him to attend in the counting-house at 6 o'clock the next morning. Mr. Buxton met him there at the appointed hour; and, without any expostulation, or a single angry word, desired him to produce his books, as he meant for

the future to undertake the charge of them himself, in addition to his other duties. Amazed at this unexpected decision, the clerk yielded entirely; he promised complete submission for the future; he made his wife intercede for him; and Mr. Buxton, who valued his character and services, was induced to restore him to his place. They afterwards became very good friends, and the salutary effect of the changes introduced by Mr. Buxton was at length admitted by his leading opponent; nor, except in one instance, did he ever contend against them again. On that occasion Mr. Buxton merely sent him a message "that he had better meet him in the counting-house at 6 o'clock the next morning,"—and the book-keeper's opposition was heard of no more.

We may add, that, among other points wanting reform, he found that the men employed were in many instances wholly uneducated. To the remedy of this evil he took a more direct road than exhortation or advice. He called them together, and simply said to them, "This day six weeks I shall discharge every man who cannot read and write." He provided them a schoolmaster and means of learning, and on the appointed day held an examination. Such had been the earnestness to learn that not one man was dismissed.

He was also very careful to prevent any work from being done in the brewery on the Sunday, and the strict observance of it which he introduced has been thoroughly maintained up to the present time.

The success which crowned Mr. Buxton's exertions in business materially paved his way to public life. He was gradually relieved from the necessity of attending in person to the details of its management, although he continued throughout his life to take a part in the general superintendence of the concern.

CHAPTER IV.

1812—1816.

FIRST SPEECH IN PUBLIC.—THE REV. JOSIAH PRATT.—INCREASING REGARD TO RELIGION.—DANGEROUS ILLNESS.—ITS EFFECT ON HIS MIND.—REMOVES TO HAMPSTEAD.—DISAPPOINTMENTS AND ANXIETIES.—REFLECTIONS.—NARROW ESCAPE.—LETTER TO MR. J. J. GURNEY.

MR. BUXTON was, of course, closely bound to his London avocations; but almost every autumn he spent some weeks at Earlham, enjoying the recreation of shooting, in company with Mr. Samuel Hoare. It was during one of these visits that he first addressed a public meeting. His brother-in-law, Mr. Joseph John Gurney, in September, 1812, insisted that for once he should leave his sport, and give his aid in the second meeting of the Norwich Auxiliary Bible Society, at which Mr. Coke and other country gentlemen were present.

His speech on that occasion is thus alluded to by Mr. J. J. Gurney* :—

“There are many who can still remember the remarkable effect produced, in one of the earliest public meetings of the Norfolk and Norwich Auxiliary Bible Society, more than thirty years ago, by one of his speeches, distinguished for its acuteness and good sense, as well as for the Christian temper in which it was delivered. His commanding person †, his benevolent and highly intellectual expression of countenance, his full-toned voice, together with his manly yet playful eloquence, electrified the assembly, and many were those on that day who rejoiced that so noble and just a cause had obtained so strenuous and able an advocate.”

* “Brief Memor.” Fletcher, 1845.

† Mr. Buxton was upwards of six feet four inches in height; but his powerful frame and broad chest rendered his height less apparent.

Some indications have been already given of the increasing power of religious principle in Mr. Buxton's mind ; but he had not yet been fully brought under its influence, nor had he acquired clear views as to some of the fundamental truths of Christianity. In 1811 he mentions that during a visit to Lynn he had met his friends the Rev. Edward Edwards and the Rev. Robert Hankinson, who recommended him to attend the ministry of the Rev. Josiah Pratt, in Wheeler Street Chapel, Spitalfields ; and to the preaching of that excellent clergyman he attributed, with the liveliest gratitude, his first real acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity. He himself says — “ It was much and of vast moment that I there learned from Mr. Pratt.”—He wrote to Mr. Pratt thirty years afterwards, “ Whatever I have done in my life for Africa, the seeds of it were sown in my heart in Wheeler Street Chapel.” And when asked what had first interested him about Suttees, he replied “ Mr. Pratt's preaching. Mr. Pratt used to mention them in his sermons, and ever after they rested on my heart.”

With him, indeed, there was no sudden change, as in many men of well-known piety. Both nature and education had tended to prepare him for religion. His mind, ever disposed (in Bacon's words) to “ prefer things of substance before things of show ”—with a strong love for truth, and susceptible of deep feeling—afforded, perhaps, a fit soil for the reception of those truths, which at length struck deep root there. On the other hand, he regarded his tendency to become wholly absorbed in the work before him as a great bar to his progress in higher things. Thus he writes to one of his relatives at Earham :—

“ Hampstead, March 21. 1812.

“ I had determined, before I received your last letter, to thank you, dear C——, myself, for much pleasure, and I think

a little profit (much less than it ought to have been), in observing the progress of your mind. It does indeed give me real joy to see you and others of your family striving in your race with such full purpose of heart; and the further I feel left behind—the more I feel engaged in other pursuits—so much the more I admire and love the excellence which I hardly endeavour to reach, and so much the more I perceive the infinite superiority of your objects over mine.

“When I contrast your pursuits with my pursuits, and your life with my life, I always feel the comparison a wholesome and a humiliating lesson, and it makes me see the ends for which I labour in their proper light; and my heart is ready to confess, that ‘Thou hast chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from thee.’ How is it, then, with this contrast constantly staring me in the face whenever I think seriously, that it has no effect, or next to none, on my practice? I see the excellence of the walk you have chosen, and the madness of dedicating myself to any thing but to the preparation of that journey which I must so shortly take. I know that if success shall crown all my projects, I shall gain that which will never satisfy me, ‘that which is not bread.’ I know the poverty of our most darling schemes—the meanness of our most delicious prospects—the transitoriness of our most durable possessions—when weighed against that fulness of joy and eternity of bliss which are the reward of those who seek them aright. All this I see with the utmost certainty—that two and two make four is not clearer; how is it, then, that with these speculative opinions, my practical ones are so entirely different? I am irritable about trifles, eager after pleasures, and anxious about business: various objects of this kind engross my attention at all times: they pursue me even to meeting and to church, and seem to grudge the few moments which are devoted to higher considerations, and strive to bring back to the temple of the Lord the sellers, and the buyers, and the money-changers. My reason tells me that these things are utterly indifferent; but my practice says that they only are worthy of thought, and attention. My practice says, ‘Thou art increased with goods, and hast need of nothing:’ but my reason teaches me, ‘Thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and, blind, and naked.’

* * * “I have in this letter divulged the train of thinking which is constantly recurring to my mind. * * * If I have said

too much in any part of it, I am sure I do not go beyond the truth in saying, that hardly any thing comes so near my heart as my love for my sweet sisters."

The period had now arrived from which may be dated that ascendancy of religion over his mind which gave shape and colouring to the whole of his after life.

In the commencement of the year 1813 he was visited by an illness which brought him to the brink of the grave. How momentous an era he felt this to have been, we may learn from the following paper, written after his recovery:—

" February 7. 1813.

" After so severe an illness as that with which I have lately been visited, it may be advantageous to record the most material circumstances attendant upon it. May my bodily weakness, and the suddenness with which it came, remind me of the uncertainty of life; and may the great and immediate mercy bestowed upon me spiritually, be a continual memorial that 'the Lord is full of compassion and long suffering,' and 'a very present help in trouble!'

" I was seized with a bilious fever in January. When I first felt myself unwell, I prayed that I might have a dangerous illness, provided that illness might bring me nearer to my God. I gradually grew worse; and when the disorder had assumed an appearance very alarming to those about me, I spent nearly an hour in most fervent prayer. I have been, for some years, perplexed with doubts; I do not know if they did not arise more from the fear of doubting than from any other cause. The object of my prayer was that this perplexity might be removed; and the next day, when I set about examining my mind, I found that it was entirely removed, and that it was replaced by a degree of certain conviction, totally different from any thing I had before experienced. It would be difficult to express the satisfaction and joy which I derived from this alteration. 'Now know I that my Redeemer liveth' was the sentiment uppermost in my mind, and in the merits of that Redeemer I felt a confidence that made me look on the prospect of death with perfect indifference. No one action of my life presented itself with any

sort of consolation. I knew that by myself I stood justly condemned; but I felt released from the penalties of sin by the blood of our sacrifice. In *Him* was all my trust.

“My dear wife gave me great pleasure by repeating this text—‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ Once or twice only I felt some doubt whether I did not deceive myself arguing in this manner:—‘How is it that I, who have passed so unguarded a life, and who have to lament so many sins, and especially so much carelessness in religion—how is it that I feel at once satisfied and secure in the acceptance of my Saviour? But I soon was led to better thoughts. Canst thou pretend to limit the mercies of the Most High? ‘His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways.’ He giveth to the labourer of an hour as much as to him who has borne the heat of the day. These were my reflections, and they made me easy.”

When the medical gentleman who attended him observed that he must be in low spirits, “Very far from it,” he replied: “I feel a joyfulness at heart which would enable me to go through any pain.” “From faith in Christ?” he was asked. “Yes, from faith in Christ,” was his reply; and, mentioning the clear view he now had of Christ being his Redeemer, he said, “It is an inexpressible favour beyond my deserts. What have I done all my life long? Nothing, nothing, that did God service, and for *me* to have such mercy shown! My hope,” he added, “is to be received as one of Christ’s flock, to enter heaven as a little child.” A day or two afterwards he said, “I shall never again pass negligently over that passage in the Prayer Book, ‘We bless thee . . . for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;’” and he broke forth into thanksgiving for the mercy, “the unbounded, the unmerited love,” displayed towards him, in having the Christian doctrine brought home to his heart. When Mr. S. Hoare entered the room where he lay, Mr. Buxton

fixed his eyes upon him, and emphatically said, "Sam! I only wish you were as ill as I am!" When he recovered, he explained that he so greatly felt the effect upon his own mind, that he could not but wish his companion to share in the advantage. Again and again he declared how glad and thankful he was for his illness, and, at the same time, how anxious he felt lest the impression it had made upon him should become effaced.

After his recovery he thus writes to Earlham:—

"Perhaps you might think that your letters were not sufficiently valued by me if they remained unnoticed; they were both truly welcome, especially where they described your feelings at the prospect of the termination (I earnestly hope only the earthly termination) of our long and faithful union. My wife tells me that she said in her letter that I mentioned you all in my illness. This was but a languid description of the extent and force of love I felt towards you, and of gratitude to you, to whom I owe so great a portion of all that has been pleasant to me in my past life, and perhaps much of that which was consolatory to me at that awful but happy period. C—— calls it a chastisement, but I never felt it as such. I looked upon it when I was at the worst (and have not yet ceased to do so) as a gift and a blessing, and the choicest of my possessions. When I was too weak to move or speak, my mind and heart were at full work on these meditations, and my only lamentation was that I could not feel sufficiently glad or grateful for the mercy, as unbounded as unmerited, which I experienced. This mercy was, to know the sins of my past life, that the best actions of it were but dust and ashes, and good for nothing; that, by the righteous doom of the law, I stood convicted and condemned; but that full and sufficient satisfaction had already been made by Him who came to save sinners; and such was the ease and confidence with which this conviction inspired me, that death was not attended with a terror."

Fifteen years afterwards* he thus refers to the impressions made upon his mind during this illness. "It

* Cromer, 1828.

was then," he says, "that some clouds in my mind were dispersed; and from that day to this, whatever reason I may have had to distrust my own salvation, I have never been harassed by a doubt respecting our revealed religion." As his health and strength returned, he engaged with increased earnestness in supporting various benevolent societies, especially the Bible Society; and his common-place books during the years 1813—1816 are chiefly filled with memoranda on this subject. He came prominently forward in the controversy between the supporters of the Bible Society and those who united with Dr. Marsh* in opposing it.

These occupations filled up the short intervals of leisure afforded by his close attention to business; and while he continued to reside at the brewery few events occurred to vary his life. Some glimpses into the state of his mind are given in the following letters:—

"Spitalfields, Dec. 25, 1813.

" * * * I have often observed the advantage of having some fixed settling time in pecuniary affairs. It gives an opportunity of ascertaining the balance of losses and gains, and of seeing where we have succeeded and where failed, and what errors or neglects have caused the failure.

" Now, I thought, why not balance the mind in the same way—observe our progress, and trace to their source our mistakes and oversights? And what better time for this than Christmas-day followed by Sunday? And what better employment of those days? So it was fixed; and consequently I refused invitation after invitation—to Upton, Doughty Street, Plashet, Hampstead, Coggeshall, and Clifton. And now for a history of my day. After breakfast I read, *attentively*, the 1st of St. Peter, with some degree of that spirit with which I always wish to study the Scriptures. To me, at least, the Scriptures are nothing without prayer; and it is sometimes surprising to me what beauties they unfold, how much even of worldly wisdom

* Afterwards Bishop of Peterborough.

they contain, and how they are stamped with the clear impression of truth, when read under any portion of this influence; and without it how unmoving they appear.

“ I also read Cooper’s first Practical Sermon, the text— ‘ What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’ This is a subject which, of all others of the kind, most frequently engages my thoughts. * * * Well, I went to church: we had one of Mr. Pratt’s best sermons, and I stayed the Communion. I could not but feel grateful to see so many persons who at least had some serious thoughts of religion—especially that Charles and his wife were of the number, and I may add, that I was also. I am not so ignorant of myself as to think that I have made any suitable advances. No. Every day’s experience is a sufficient antidote against any such flattering delusion; for every day I see, and have reason to condemn, the folly, the insanity which immerses me—the whole of my mind and powers—in so trifling a portion of their interest as this world contains. But yet I feel it an inestimable blessing to have been conducted to the precincts and the threshold of truth, and to have some desires, vague and ineffectual as they are, after better things.

“ In the evening I sat down, in a business-like manner, to my mental account. In casting up the incidental blessings of the year, I found none to compare with my illness; it gave such a life, such a reality and nearness, to my prospects of futurity; it told me, in language so conclusive and intelligible, that here is not my abiding city. It expounded so powerfully the Scriptural doctrine of Atonement, by showing what the award of my fate must be if it depended upon my own merits, and what that love is which offers to avert condemnation by the merits of another: in short, my sickness has been a source of happiness to me in every way.”

In the autumn of the following year he again alludes to that “ one religious subject which most frequently engaged his thoughts.” After speaking of the death of his early friend, John Gurney, as “ a loss hardly admitting of consolation,” he adds,—

“ But it is surely from the shortness of our vision that we

dwell so frequently on the loss of those who are dear to us. Are they gone to a better home? Shall we follow them? These are questions of millions and millions of centuries. The former is but a question of a few years. When I converse with these considerations, I cannot express what I think of the stupendous folly of myself and the rest of mankind. If the case could be so transposed, that our worldly businesses and pleasures were to last for ever, and our religion were to produce effects only for a few years, then, indeed, our, at least my, dedication of heart to present concerns would be reasonable and prudent; then I might justify the many hours and anxious thoughts devoted to the former, and might say to the latter, ‘The few interrupted moments and wandering unfixed thoughts I spare you, are as much as your transitory nature deserves.’ * * * Alas! alas! how is it that as children of this world we are wiser than as children of light!”

In the summer of the year 1815 he removed from London to a house at North End, Hampstead, that his children, now four in number, might have the benefit of country air. The following extract is from his commonplace book:—

“North End, Sunday, Aug. 6. 1815.

“Being too unwell to go to church, I have spent the morning (with occasional wanderings in the fields) in reading and pondering upon the Bible: viz. St. James’s and St. John’s epistles. How much sound wisdom and practical piety in the first, how devout and holy a spirit breathes through the second!—the one exposing, with a master’s hand, the infirmities, the temptations, and the delusions of man; the other, evidencing the love he teaches, seems of too celestial a spirit to mingle much with human affairs, and perpetually reverts to the source of his consolation and hope: with him, Christ is all in all, the sum and substance of all his exhortations, the beginning and end of every chapter.

“I now sit down to recall some marked events which have lately happened. First then, Friday, July 7th, was an extraordinary day to me. In the morning I ascertained that all the hopes we had indulged of large profits in business were false. We were sadly disappointed, for I went to town in the morning some thousands of pounds richer in my own estimation than I returned