



Memorials
OF
MR. THOMAS LOWE,
OF RUSHOLME.

BY THE
REV. EDWARD STRUTT.



“Amid all life’s quests
There seems but worthy one—to do men good.
It matters not how long we live, but how.”

P. J. Bailey.

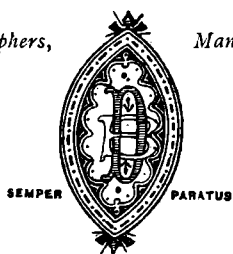
—
1892.



DARRAH BROTHERS,

Typographers,

Manchester.



CONTENTS.

Ancestry	5
Boyhood and Conversion	15
Early Christian Life	24
Rusholme and its Progress ...	30
Intellectual Pursuits	38
Business and Home	54
Church Work ...	62
Closing Days	80





MEMORIALS OF MR. THOMAS LOWE, OF RUSHOLME.

CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY.

“ My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth,
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,—
The son of parents pass’d into the skies.”

Cowper.

“ A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s
children.”

Proverbs xiii. 22.



FOR fully two hundred years the Lowes can be traced in the parish registers of villages in the South East of Cheshire. Mr. Lowe’s great-grandfather was in Brereton Church in 1745 when the Highlanders who had rallied to “Bonnie Prince Charlie” came into the neighbourhood. Their presence did not tend to devotion on the part of the assembled congregation, who seem to have dispersed without waiting for the benediction. A day or two afterwards this same great-

grandfather was accosted by some of the rebels, who demanded a pair of boots which he was carrying in his hands. Instead of standing and delivering he showed the rebels "a clean pair of heels" and got safely away with the coveted boots.

John Lowe, the grandfather, was a man of great vigour and determination. He was employed as farm-servant with the Nodins, an old Cheshire family. Martha Nodin, a daughter of the house, and John Lowe fell in love with each other. Probably they despaired of gaining the consent of Martha's parents; they certainly did not ask for it, but ran away to some convenient "Gretna Green" where the twain could be made one. This offence was never forgiven by the bride's parents, and the youthful couple began their dogged strife for a competence. They took a small farm of about twenty acres near Betley. Rent-day was often an anxious time for them in spite of extreme thrift and industry. On some occasions they had to sell flowers to raise the amount for the landlord. Macadam had not been heard of at that time and roads were in a deplorable condition; they carried their produce to the Potteries in panniers; but no difficulties daunted them; they were resolved to "get on." After twelve years they took a larger farm and had £500 ready to invest in this new venture. The land rented was rough and needed a resolute yeoman like John Lowe to conquer it. In their first year they made fifteen cwt. of cheese, but in a few years they had so improved their farm that their annual yield was five tons.

As the father had borne "the yoke in his youth," so his numerous sons were made to tread in his steps. The rhythmic thud of their flails might have been heard at five o'clock on a winter's morning as they threshed out the corn by candle-light. If Christmas

festivities should keep them up until the small hours of the morning, their work must begin at five o'clock just the same; such was the Spartan rule of that laborious home.

The war-spirit was abroad, and agricultural produce was at famine prices. Mr. John Lowe had a field of wheat thirty acres in extent, and he was offered £1,000 for it just as it stood, unreaped, in the field. To his after regret he did not accept this offer. His grandson writes:—

“In harvest time he would get the Kids Grove colliers in the corn field on a Sunday, and have a barrel of beer in the field, giving them free access to it, thus getting his work done cheaply. No wonder that he saved money fast until he had realised £10,000! *But it did not wear well.* God's blessing did not rest on this violation of the Sabbath. What he laboured so hard to gain melted away in the succeeding generation, and now there is none of that £10,000 left among his posterity.”

Side by side with this clear-sighted worldly prudence was a “gross darkness” as to things that are spiritual and eternal. His life-motto was “This one thing I do;” he served Mammon; he could not serve God. It was not unnatural that the starved spiritual nature should have its revenge in developing a great capacity for belief in ghosts, fairies, elves, pixies, and the like. Thomas Lowe has preserved stories illustrating the credulity of his toiling superstitious grandmother.

When we come to the next generation we find that the Evangelical Revival has won its way into these remote Cheshire villages, and a new life, like a blessed leaven, begins to move upon the mass of dead formalism and irreligion.

Joseph Lowe was born November 24th, 1782. One evening, when he was a youth of twenty, as he was standing on the highway with a number of his companions, a band of singing Methodists passed

them and went into a cottage to hold a prayer meeting. One of his friends said, "Joseph, I'll go in if thou wilt;" both went in. They within were singing these militant if not very musical lines:—

"We're soldiers fighting for our God,
Let trembling cowards fly;
We'll stand unshaken, firm, and fix'd,
For Christ to live and die."

Joseph shrunk behind the door, but he could not hide from his conscience; the convicting Spirit was there, and a voice that seemed almost audible spoke within him—"You may try to be brave now, but you will be a coward at the last!" A few weeks after, in the still night, in his own bedroom, came the changed voice speaking peace to the troubled heart and conscience.

Witness-bearing followed instantly. The change was so marked and so blessed to himself that he thought he needed but to tell it out in order to set his friends rejoicing with him; but instead of this, some pitied him; some charitably hoped that he was not deceiving himself; others openly laughed at his incipient craziness, as they deemed it; and the new convert returned home bitterly disappointed by this unexpected lack of sympathy. But "the root of the matter" was in him, and the storms that shook, could not uproot what God had planted in his heart.

Little learning could he boast, but the great change had quickened his whole nature, and he threw himself with great ardour into the study of "the truth as it is in Jesus." His profiting speedily began to appear, and labourers being few indeed, it was not long before he was sent forth to proclaim the gospel that he loved. He became a local preacher in the Burslem circuit. In those heroic days Methodism made large demands upon her lay preachers: long weary journeys on foot, and two, or possibly three,

services in the day made it hard for them to speak of Sunday as the Day of Rest. On one occasion Joseph Lowe was returning home after his exhausting toil for God; the summer day had been hot, and he was wearied out with his efforts; he sat down upon a stile to rest in the least uncomfortable posture the stile permitted; sleep stole over him, and he did not wake until a passing carter cracked his whip on the morning of the next day.

In 1807 Joseph Lowe preached one Sunday at Weston. In his congregation was a certain Miss Bernard, who had come in fear and trembling to hear the Methodist preaching. From a child she had known something of the fear of God, but no friendly hand had sought to lead her from "the fear which hath torment" into the "perfect love" which "casteth out fear." Miss Bernard (or Barnett according to popular usage) mentions in her diary one hymn which the Methodist local preacher had chosen for that service; the verse which would have best described her own heart-yearning is this:—

"If I have only known Thy fear,
And followed with a heart sincere
Thy drawings from above,
Now, now the further grace bestow,
And let my sprinkled conscience know
Thy sweet forgiving love."

The following is her own account of that service:—

"Last Sunday I went to hear upon speculation, for I had very great fears that the Methodists were not right, as they were not permitted to preach in Churches. I thought if I turned Methodist I must give up my good name, which I feared I was not willing to do. Mr. Lowe happening to preach, I really thought some one had told him the state of my mind; for he completely answered all my objections, and subdued all my fears. He gave out the hymn,

‘And am I born to die?’

and when he came to that verse,

'No matter which my thoughts employ,
A moment's misery, or joy ;
But O ! when both shall end,'

he explained it in such a manner that I saw clearly that I was not right, and I determined to join the Society, which I did as soon as the Chorlton class was formed."

But the struggle was not over. Certain truths were clear enough ; reformation would not avail without regeneration ; good works alone would not win acceptance with God ; heart-impurity seemed deeper and blacker than ever. Though fears about the Methodists had been temporarily subdued, they returned again. In reading Burkitt's *Notes on the New Testament* she came upon certain animadversions upon preaching without ordination which greatly troubled her. Her diary continues :—

"Yet I loved the people, and believed they preached the gospel. I again besought the Lord if they were not right to keep me from amongst them. He graciously heard my prayer and gave me strong assurance that they were His, and I felt determined to continue with them. Here the enemy was defeated, and the Lord graciously answered for Himself. On Easter Monday, at night, in the year 1807, He liberated me from all my fears, by setting my soul at liberty, and filling me with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost through believing. Praise His name for ever."

The two preachers whose ministry was most blessed to her were Rev. William Hill, the junior minister in the Congleton circuit, and Mr. Joseph Lowe, the local preacher from the Burslem circuit. Miss Bernard kept a most jealous watch over her own heart, lest some of the honour which was due to God should be given to His servants ; she loved them for their works' sake. Speaking of these and other heralds of the Cross, she says :—

"When I find that they manifest by their life and conduct that they are God's people, and that their preaching is what they practice, I soon am so beset that I idolize them. Oh may the Lord ever guide my unsteady heart !"

Miss Bernard had her own house and gladly opened it for the preaching of the word. She read diligently, and in spite of the fact that she says truthfully, "My constitution seems to be made up of timidity and fear," she began to pray publicly, to speak in love-feasts as well as in the class; she was urged to lead the class when the appointed leader was absent, and when the preacher failed to come she conducted the meetings in her own house. She was also faithful in reproving sin and diligent in visiting the sick. All these exercisings unto godliness caused her prolonged heart-searching; Satan plied her with temptations almost numberless; they were a heavy cross to one naturally so reserved and retiring; but the passion for saving some burnt with such ardour in her breast that she was compelled to this painful prominence, and she thankfully records how graciously the Lord Whom she served rewarded her by an inward joy and peace when she was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

In 1810 Joseph Lowe and Jane Bernard were made one, and began their married life in Liverpool, whither Mr. Lowe had gone some time before. That "flame of fire," Rev William Bramwell, was then superintendent of the one Liverpool circuit. He called on the newly-married couple, and indeed often invited Joseph Lowe to his house. The man of God took the young local preacher into his study, and *all the time was spent in prayer*; all his visits to Mr. Bramwell's house were of this kind. It was about this time when Mr. Bramwell wrote to one of his brethren and described his own life thus: "Continual prayer, and turning all into Christ, in every house, in every company, all things by Him, from Him, and to Him!" Joseph and Jane Lowe never lost the impress made upon them by this mighty evangelist.

Their stay in Liverpool was only short. Mrs. Lowe's health suffered and they came back again to the sweet country air of Cheshire, fixing upon Wybunbury as their home.

There was no Methodism in the village until the Lowes came, but it was not long before a letter might have been written to "the church which is in thy house." After seven years a village chapel was built, chiefly through the instrumentality of Joseph and Jane Lowe. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

During the fourteen years of residence in Wybunbury seven children were born to this devout couple, of whom Thomas was the third. They were laborious and fruitful years. Mr. Lowe's ministry in the word was "sealed" by many conversions; and among others, Rev. Nathaniel Turner, a pioneer missionary in the southern hemisphere, found in him a spiritual father.

In 1824 they removed to Biddulph in Staffordshire, where their youngest son was born, and where the devoted wife and mother laid down the burden of the flesh. It was a long illness, stretching through many weary months. The old habits of self-distrust and self-examination, of communion with God and tender concern for others, had strengthened with the years. Clearer views of sin's heinousness, and fuller trust in Him who became dead and is alive for evermore, marked those last days. It was specially hard to leave eight motherless children, but the all-conquering grace of God triumphed, and in full assurance of hope she commended her spirit into the Father's hands.

It was a heavy burden that Joseph Lowe had to take up and carry without the dear companionship that had brightened seventeen years of happy married life. His eldest child was only fifteen, and the

eighth and youngest was not two years old. In 1831 Biddulph was left and a farm was taken at West Heath, near Congleton. After four years in this cottage it was exchanged for a cottage in Park Lane, just outside Congleton, to which about twenty acres of land were attached. The next change was back to Wybunbury, where for a short time he was employed as a Home Missionary in the Nantwich circuit. He was known in Wybunbury as the Lad-Catcher; an honourable title truly. Would that every village had its Lad-Catcher, to turn its careless yokels into disciples of Christ. Failing health compelled him to retire from this congenial sphere and work, and his next home was with his son Thomas, in Rusholme.

At this time he had four sons settled in Australia, and they longed to have him with them. It was hoped too that the change of climate might rid him of his asthma, or at least alleviate his sufferings. So "the pillar of the cloud" was followed, and at Christmas in 1843 he embarked for Australia, together with his "Benjamin," who had been called Matthew Henry by the wish of his departed mother. The brightest hopes of those who loved him were fully realized. When he landed in Sydney no trace of his old distressing malady remained. The prematurely aged man renewed his youth, and threw himself with all the old energy, and far more than the old wisdom and experience, into the work of preaching the gospel which he passionately loved. The family chronicle, from which all this information is gleaned, says:—

"He travelled thousands of miles in the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia; and once went overland from Sydney to Melbourne, about 600 miles, in eight weeks, and seemed no worse for the journey at its end, though sometimes put to great straits for want of water. He

embraced every opportunity that presented itself of preaching the Lord Jesus to his fellow men."

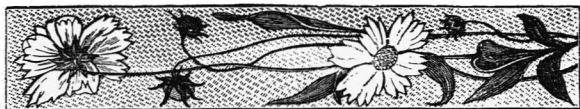
He visited the convicts and spoke, not in vain, of the "uttermost" Saviour to them. For nineteen years he toiled on in that Britain beyond the seas. He longed to visit the dear old land he had left and lay his bones to rest in England's soil; but it was not to be. In the last service he conducted he gave out his favourite hymn—

"God of my life, through all my days
My grateful powers shall sound Thy praise;
My song shall wake with opening light,
And cheer the dark and silent night."

He was universally beloved. A lady visiting England bore this testimony to his son:—"Your father is the happiest old man living: everybody who knows him loves him, and calls him 'grandfather.'" He was listening to Rev. William Taylor, of California fame, when he was seized with paralysis. He lingered a few days and then his long and happy pilgrimage ended, and he joined her who had gone before to the true homeland of the soul:

"And oh, the joy upon the shore
To tell our voyage perils o'er."





CHAPTER II.

BOYHOOD AND CONVERSION.

"The childhood shows the man,
As morning shows the day."

Milton.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

St. John iii. 7.



WYBUNBURY, where Thomas Lowe first saw the light on May 17th, 1815, is a village of about 500 inhabitants, where life moves to-day much as it must have done in the second decade of this century. The turnpike roads are doubtless in better condition ; some arable land may have been turned into grass ; a new market has sprung up in Crewe, which then had no existence ; but these are the chief changes that have taken place. There is a quiet pastoral beauty about the landscape, but the striking and romantic are altogether wanting.

This flat, open, and somewhat featureless country had one clear advantage ; it seems to repress itself that your gaze and thoughts may go upwards to the heavens. In tropical lands, where giant trees crowd together, always having their interlacing boughs thickly covered with foliage, it is not easy to "discern the face of the sky," but in Wybunbury there is a sort of compulsion to look above the level meads

into the overarching firmament, and Thomas Lowe, the imaginative, impressionable boy, may well have laid the foundation of his after love for astronomy by entranced star-gazing when a Wybunbury boy.

Better than imagining what that boyhood must have been is it to listen to the words of the boy himself, written when he was an old man. When he was born his father's house held the only church Methodism had in the village, but when he was two years old the first chapel, built mainly through his father's instrumentality, was opened. The family chronicle contains this record of his boyhood :—

“The first nine years of my life were spent in my native village, and I still retain a clear recollection of some events that occurred during these opening years of my life. I remember the church bells tolling at the death of George III. in 1820. I also remember being at a prayer-meeting in the little Wesleyan Chapel on a Good Friday evening; father, an old man named John Kelsall, Thomas Bayley, and several others were present. They were having what in after years I learned to understand, *a very good time*, and I remember that during the meeting I was very happy. I have no doubt but that it was the drawings of the Holy Spirit causing my young heart to feel a love to the Saviour.

Very early in life I had a happy, sympathetic appreciation of the beauties of nature. I remember when I was about seven years old, standing in the churchyard, late in the spring, admiring the beauties of the scene before me, and listening to the singing of the birds, when a pensive feeling came over me as I thought how soon all this beauty would pass away. But then I thought of the pleasure of harvest-time yet to come: I was always delighted with the scent of the newly mown grass, and the sound of the mowers whetting their scythes. Thus early did I begin to feel a love for the beautiful in nature, a love which has often since then been a source of great delight to me.

How permanent are early impressions! To this day I would rather hear a peal on the bells at Wybunbury than on any other bells I have ever heard since. The last time I heard them I could not repress a falling tear: I was thankful I was alone, so that I could revel in the thought of my early days.”

When he was seven years old the Delves' School was opened in the village, and he was enrolled among its first pupils. The head master was Mr. Pankhurst, whose grandson, Dr. Pankhurst, has attained to some notoriety in the civic life of Manchester. The opening was fitly celebrated by a dinner to the newly enrolled scholars, and one of Thomas Lowe's vivid recollections was standing up with the rest at a given signal and shouting, "We thank Sir John Delves for this good dinner. Hurrah!"

After two years with Mr. Pankhurst came an eventful change; the Lowes left Wybunbury for Biddulph, in Staffordshire. It was a never-forgotten day to Thomas Lowe. A visit to Gonsley farm, where his uncle James lived, had hitherto been one of the most exciting events of his life; but now the whole family were on pilgrimage towards a new home in another county. The outline of Mow Cop had been familiar to him from the time he had begun to scan the face of nature, but now the heavy country cart was toiling towards it, and at last ascending the hills, and looking back, he saw, as he had never seen before, the lightly timbered, well cultivated, breezy plains of Cheshire, where he had spent his happy childhood; and beyond these he saw for the first time the Welsh hills. His soul expanded and he was a child no longer; the dear delights of that day formed one of the turning-points of his life. When the crest of the hills had been surmounted, they looked down into the lovely valley where Biddulph nestled peacefully between its sheltering hills. About five o'clock on a May afternoon they reached "The Hurst," which was to be his home for the next seven years.

With what eager delight did this true nature-lover and his brothers explore the wonders of their new surroundings. The first morning in Biddulph

found them climbing up the Troughstones on the opposite side of the valley from Mow Cop. They came to a rock which they judged would not weigh less than a ton. It was marvellous! Nature had presented them with no boulder bigger than a man's head in the Wybunbury days. But climbing higher still they came upon rocks which they calculated must weigh from ten to fifteen tons each. Language was too weak to express their amazement at such sights as these. Then there were the new beauties of the landscape which their ascent revealed; their cup was full, and they returned home with an exuberance of delight such as only the favoured few can know.

Of course they were boys, and the spirit of mischief could hardly forego its claim to possess them at times. In their wanderings they came upon a bit of gorseland which seemed just ready to be fired. They decided that night was the best time for cheap illumination of this kind. When they had about a dozen fires blazing away they were suddenly stricken into awful terror by hearing above the crackling gorse "the most unearthly screams *up in the air!*" It was as though they had burnt out a colony of dryads, who took their revenge upon those who had desolated their homes in this blood-curdling way. That it was something supernatural they did not doubt for a moment. Their grandmother's weird fairy tales came surging through their memory to intensify their fears. The bonfire had lost its charm and like guilty things surprised they slunk down into the valley, picking their way with the lanterns they had brought. Before reaching home the mystery was solved. They discovered that *a flock of wild geese* in their nocturnal flight had been attracted by their fires and had circled round them with that horrid cacophony which had made the blood run

cold ; but they did not return to their sport ; they went home sadder and wiser boys.

The work begun in the Delves' school at Wybunbury was continued at Biddulph. The advantages were not great. No child in village schools of those days was likely to die from undue brain pressure. There was a completely successful exorcism of the spirit of emulation from those seminaries of learning. The system, or want of system, seemed to say to the village Hampdens and Cromwells and mute inglorious Miltons of those days, "Please yourselves"; and their pleasure did not as a rule carry them beyond reading, writing, and the simple rules of arithmetic. Thomas Lowe bears witness:—

"I never saw a book on grammar, geography, or history—except the Bible—during the whole time I went to school at Biddulph."

The reading book in use was called *The Pleasing Instructor*, and the boy whose mind and heart had been taken captive by Nature's charms, responded loyally to the fragments of true literature which that long-forgotten book contained. Addison's *Vision of Mirza* was remembered and received honourable mention after a lapse of sixty years ; and there were other extracts from English classics which were like old friends in after years.

Thus early in life he developed that love of reading which grew into the absorbing passion of his later years. Village libraries were then unknown and books were comparatively scarce in spite of what the Methodist preachers had done by means of their saddle-bags to supply the growing demand for mental and spiritual food. A lay-preacher's library had not much that was attractive to the mind of a growing boy. The too solid divinity had to wait for the appreciation of more mature days : but the *Methodist Magazine* was ransacked by the

voracious reader, and every anecdote, bit of natural history, or adventure by sea or land was greedily devoured.

The darkest shadow that fell upon those happy years was the loss of his mother before he was twelve years old. The unfeigned faith, the unmurmuring patience, the zeal in good works of that gentle mother had made a deep impression upon her tender-hearted boy. He could never forget one conversation they had together. It was a glorious summer evening, and as mother and son stood together enjoying the golden beauty of eventide, the rich full notes of a thrush or blackbird began to stir the air. The boy's delight ran over in words of admiration. Then the mother lifted the conversation until the goodness of the Creator was her theme, and she ended by saying, "O Thomas, you have an immortal spark within you which will never die." The loving solicitude of those words left an ineffaceable mark upon the life and character of Thomas Lowe.

Slowly the mother's strength ebbed away. One of her parting charges was that her husband should read the Sermon on the Mount to the children, and urge them to seek the blessedness of a pure heart without which there could be no vision of God. (Ten years afterwards Thomas Lowe learned by heart the whole of that sermon in deference to that dying wish.) One day whilst Thomas was at school the end came. He saw a cousin coming towards the school and a girl received and conveyed the cousin's message to Thomas, "Your mother is dead!" This was the first time he had been thus shadowed by that Presence: but a Christian had met the muffled figure, and death was thus the gate of life. Again there was a journey between Wybunbury and Bidulph, but how different! Then it was May, and

May was in their hearts; now it was February and the hard frozen earth seemed dead as they carried what could die to the old "God's acre" at Wybunbury. The distance was about sixteen miles, and about twenty relatives and friends rode on horseback. Thomas remembered how he bestrode a little black pony on that sad day. Sympathising friends came from Nantwich to pay the last mark of respect to one whose Christian character had commanded their affectionate esteem, and as these headed the procession they sang to the tune *Sicilian Mariners* that triumphant hymn of Charles Wesley's:—

"Hark a voice divides the sky,
Happy are the faithful dead!
In the Lord who safely die,
They from all their toils are freed;
Them the Spirit hath declared
Blest, unutterably blest;
Jesus is their great reward,
Jesus is their endless rest."

It was fitting. The "people" who know how to "die well," should sing thus when one of their number passes within the veil after living the life, and dying the death, of the righteous.

So the lights and shadows chased each other across the childhood and youth of Thomas Lowe. He had unalloyed delights in natural beauty, in reading, and in the friendships of those early years. He lived in a home which was dominated by a simple, happy, heartfelt faith. He listened not only to the itinerant and local preachers of the Congleton circuit, but occasionally to great preachers like Dr. Adam Clarke. His mother's illness and death, his father's sorrows and struggles, must have tended to chasten his heart and cause him many serious thoughts, and in God's own time and way, that birth from above, of which our Saviour spoke to Nicodemus, came to him. We may have the story in his own words:—

"I was now sixteen years of age, and I remember now, with shame and regret, how sinful habits were creeping over me, and sinful companions trying to allure me into paths of sin. When I think of this period of my life, I compare it to a vessel being gradually drawn into the outer circles of the Maelstrom. But through the mercy of God I was arrested before I was drawn into the inner circles of that vortex.

I had many struggles against the power of evil which I felt working within me; and often, under a faithful sermon, did I resolve to live a better life: I would lop off this sin, break off this and that bad habit: then I would wake up to the consciousness that these resolves were all broken, to my discomfiture and misery. This was my state during the year 1831, and until the autumn of 1832, when the great change in my life took place.

This was brought about chiefly through the instrumentality of a young man (still living) who was three years older than myself, named Joseph Steele. He was converted May 2nd, 1832. He often came up to the farm to see us, as he was fond of fishing, and so were brother Will and myself. I well remember on one occasion, when we were dragging a net through a pond, Will said to him in an offhand way,—‘Joseph, why don’t you make us *fishers of men*?’ He made no immediate reply; but the question seemed to arrest him, as from that time he attended chiefly to the work of effecting our conversion.

On the last Sunday in September, after hearing Dr. Clarke’s funeral sermon preached by the Rev. James Millar, Will and I went with Joseph to a prayer-meeting; I somewhat unwillingly; but during the meeting a sudden fit of trembling came over me; I had a deep conviction of my miserable state as a sinner, and that without a Saviour I must perish. On the Wednesday following, at Joseph’s earnest invitation, Will and I went to Mr. Buckley’s class. We regularly attended this class, and after about five weeks I gave in my name among the people of God.

About a week afterwards Joseph came one afternoon as usual: he invited us to go with him into an outbuilding for prayer, where he prayed with us for about half-an-hour. At the same time I cried to God for deliverance: but all was darkness: I could not see the simplicity of trusting on the word of the Lord Jesus—‘Come unto Me . . . and I will give you rest.’ We went to our work in the adjoining field, Joseph with us. He repeated two portions of scripture: ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word *shall not*

pass away ;' and ' By two immutable things, in which it is *impossible for God to lie* ;' thus showing the solidity of the foundation on which we were invited to trust. We both saw it in a new light. There was to me no great burst of joy, but a sweet consciousness of rest.

It was astonishing how this inward change seemed to affect external nature. It was a gloomy November day (the 13th) without any natural sunshine, and yet all nature seemed to sympathize with me in this great change from distressing doubt and uncertainty to calm assured peace."

It was in this fashion that Thomas Lowe became one of the happy souls who could sing :—

" 'Tis done, the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's, and He is mine ;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine."





CHAPTER III.

EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE.

“All may save self : but minds that heavenward tower
Aim at a wider power,
Gifts on the world to shower.”

Newman.

“We must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day ; the night cometh when no man can work.”

St. John ix. 4.



THE conversion spoken of in the last chapter took place at Congleton, where Mr. Lowe had taken a small farm in the preceding year. Its genuineness was swiftly and enduringly attested. This is the light in which it was regarded :—

“Now that the ‘great transaction’ was done, I determined by Divine aid to maintain my decision, and not to treat it as a passing fancy, but to make it my *life business*.”

The italics are his own ; and that sentence is the key to his whole after life. From that naturally dull but spiritually bright November day, right onward to the end, religion was the “*life business*” of Thomas Lowe. Spiritual and eternal things became to him

the nearest and greatest realities; he lived in the Spirit, and walked in the Spirit.

In the month that followed this decisive change the young convert sat at the feet of William Dawson, "the Yorkshire farmer," for two memorable days. On Sunday, Dec. 9th, he heard him twice in Burslem, and on the following day in Congleton. The last service dealt with Sowing and Reaping, in Dawson's inimitable fashion. He pleaded with the young especially to begin early to sow to the Spirit. The Congleton chapel became a "valley of decision" that night; there were twenty who sought and found peace with God. The effect of that service was abiding upon him who had just put his hand to the plough, and in writing an account of that service he utters this devout heart-breathing, "Oh may I thus sow to the Spirit!"

The following Christmas Day was one which "Father Lowe" delighted to remember and describe in his latest years. Their Christmas celebration began with a prayer meeting at five o'clock in the morning; and as they sang "Christians awake," their hearts were melted and their eyes overflowed as the Holy Spirit revealed the love of Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, to them. With brief intervals for meals the whole day was occupied in prayer and praise, in testimony and preaching of the gospel, and in pointing penitent, troubled hearts to the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" and it was not until ten o'clock that their closing prayer meeting ended. To many hearts that was "a day of the Son of Man with power."

The young converts in the joy and freshness of their first love sought to help and quicken the village churches of the circuit. Lovefeasts drew them and special services of various kinds were sure to find them present. They were willing to walk long

distances to hear the pulpit masters of those days ; their keenest delights were connected with the House of God.

Thomas Lowe's diary reflects the inward struggles even more than the outward service of those eventful days. In the name of Jesus he was seeking and finding the grace of self-mastery. The carnal mind did not rule, but it did rebel, and looking into Romans vii. he found portrayed his own inner strife. The work of a true sanctification was not ended on November 13th, 1832 ; that was the beginning, not the end ; and he would have subscribed to the words of a modern poet who says—

“ Let no man think that sudden in a minute

All is accomplished and the work is done ;—

Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it,
Scarce were it ended with thy setting sun.”

At times the overwhelming power of God came down upon the earnest suppliant ; and then, a little later, he writes bitter things against himself, charging himself with a trifling spirit, with indifference, with lethargy, with parleying with foes and lack of self-knowledge. But amidst the painful swayings and tossings of those early days the anchor of his hope held. He hated every evil way, and could always look up into his Saviour's face, and say, “ Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

In August, 1835, Congleton was left for Manchester. It was a painful wrench to leave his spiritual birthplace and the dear companions of his religious life. A Manchester warehouse has not always proved the best school for a young Christian. He saw the perils, and writes :—

“ I am now residing in the town of Manchester, a place where wickedness abounds : oh that I may have grace to stand in the evil day ! ”

It was a source of strength and gladness to be asso-

ciated with his brother Will, who was employed in the same warehouse. In thought, taste, feeling, and purpose, they had much in common.

His passion for hearing the great preachers of that age had far larger scope in Manchester than in Congleton. He mentions Jabez Bunting, W. M. Bunting, Robert Newton, Theophilus Lessey, John M'Lean, Robert Young, Gideon Ouseley, Joseph Beaumont, J. F. Jobson, James Dixon, and other of the notable Methodist preachers of that generation. Outside his own church he listened with delight to such men as Drs. Harris and McAll, Robert Aitken (the father of the present Mission Preacher in the Church of England) and Robert Montgomery. The two men who moved and moulded him most were William Dawson and George Steward; these were to him the brightest stars among the angels of the churches, and he never ceased to acknowledge his unspeakable indebtedness to these servants of Christ.

At this time Longsight was Thomas Lowe's dwelling-place; three brothers, Thomas, Will, and James Lowe lived with their cousin in what was then rural Longsight. News came to these young men of a remarkable conversion which had just taken place; a bricklayer named Robinson, a coarse, drunken fellow, had been made anew in Christ Jesus, and the fame of it had gone abroad. Thomas and Will Lowe determined that they would call and see this signal trophy of Divine Grace, and they would ask him if he were willing to have a prayer-meeting held in his house. The bricklayer was in his working clothes, unwashed, and absorbed in reading a book which proved to be *John Nelson's Journal*. They opened their plan to this son of toil and met with the encouraging response—"Yo' may cum every neet i'th wick if yo' like." Here was an "open door," and eager heralds of the Cross were ready to enter

in. Help was sought from Levenshulme, and two young men, Matthew Knight and Roger Albiston, joined with the Lowes in sustaining these cottage services. It was an admirable training-ground; they began to expound the hymns they sang, and the Scripture they read, as well as to plead with God for blessing upon themselves and others. They now began to remember and understand "the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Matthew Knight especially was as a flame of fire, and scores were turned from their sins to their Saviour through his instrumentality. He died in his nineteenth year, and his memoirs were written by John and Thomas Lowe. Roger Albiston was without the spark of genius which his friend possessed, but he had the other kind of genius, which is a capacity for taking pains. He determined to read the Old and New Testaments in the original, and dinner-time found this beclugged, fustian-clad youth retiring with his Hebrew Bible for study and prayer. Ultimately he entered the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America.

The efforts of these young men were so crowned with God's blessing that in September, 1836, Rev. Joseph Roberts admitted into the Methodist Society seventeen members on trial as the result of their work. This was the re-introduction of Methodism into Longsight, and the present spacious and beautiful chapel is lineally connected with the cottage services held in the house of the converted bricklayer. The Sunday School in "The Crescent" (the building where this was held has long since disappeared) also claimed the services of Thomas Lowe, and every spare minute was devoted rigorously to self-improvement.

In September, 1836, John Lowe, who was now

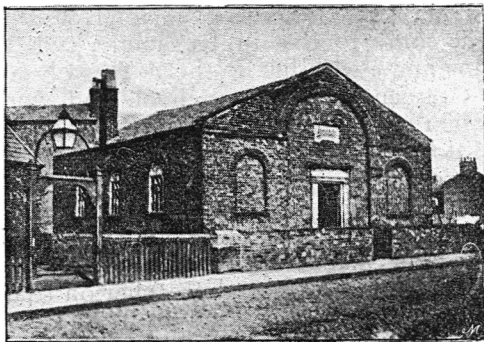
married, came to live in Rusholme, and Thomas made his home with his brother. He still taught in "The Crescent" Sunday School, and worked in connection with the Longsight cottage service, but in addition to these labours of love he began tract distribution in Rusholme.

After two years in Longsight and Rusholme he returned to his father in Congleton, and in September, 1837, his name appeared on the plan of the Congleton Circuit as a local preacher on trial: Will Lowe shared this honour and also two other young men, one of whom, George Pedley, was a life-long friend.

A Theological Class was formed; essays were prepared; Scripture was committed to memory; their vocabulary was increased by their writing out at least four words every week the meaning of which was before unknown: and thus they girded on the harness for their great conflict with the hosts of darkness. About the reading of those days more must be said in a succeeding chapter.

Once again the pillar of cloud moved, and Thomas Lowe came back to Rusholme on the 20th of April, 1839, to begin a practically unbroken residence of fifty-two years.

The seven years with which this chapter deals were formative years indeed. The lines of character were deepening; his life-work was growing clearer to him and to others; the convictions which would abide with him to the end were beginning to possess him in full strength; his special aptitudes became easily recognizable; his tastes and habits were formed and fixed during this apprenticeship in the art of Christian living. All that he became by God's grace may be traced back to this plastic period during which the seal of Christ was being pressed closer and closer upon heart and life.



OLD WESLEYAN CHAPEL,
Erected 1829.

CHAPTER IV.

RUSHOLME AND ITS PROGRESS.

“How often have I loitered o’er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm.”

Goldsmith.

“Every advance has been beyond the last, and every retrograde movement has been an imperceptible trifle less than the last.”

Robertson.



T needs an old inhabitant to see any appropriateness in Goldsmith’s lines as applied to Rusholme; but when Thomas Lowe first came here, “The Green” was perhaps the most charming feature of the village. It extended from Dickenson Road to what is now Thurloe Street. A low stone bridge crossed the clear sparkling brook and “children coming home from school” leaned over the parapets to see the water rippling over its pebbly bed. This same bridge was the favourite resort of farm-labourers, hand-loom weavers, and

others, who foregathered here to discuss politics, or perhaps the gossip of the village.

Education in Rusholme was represented by one dame's school, whose curriculum comprised reading and sewing; if ambitious parents wished their children to master the art of writing, or learn the simple rules of Arithmetic, they had to send them to the day-school at Withington.

The chief excitement of the day was to see the stage coach pass on its way to or from Manchester; the pleasant jingle of its trappings, and the cheerful notes of its "echoing horn," drew the simple village folk, and especially the children, to watch this picturesque link uniting Manchester to the world beyond. A milder excitement was occasioned by the omnibus, which started from an old farm-house which stood a little way back from the road in what is now Victoria Park. This somewhat lumbering vehicle made several journeys to Manchester and back in the day, and carried passengers, if it could get them, at sixpence per head.

At the census of 1831 the township of Rusholme contained 179 houses and a population of 1,078. It was then emphatically a *village*, and depended chiefly upon its agriculture and its hand-loom weaving, which was carried on in most of its thatched cottages, the click of the shuttle being one of the most familiar sounds in the quiet rural life of those days. Provision for worship was made at three centres—Birch Chapel (which has since been superseded by the Church of St. James), Platt Chapel, and the old Wesleyan Chapel in Dickenson Road, which was opened in 1829.

The first Sunday School was opened in 1826 by Charles Beswick, who came from Grosvenor Street to try and civilize and christianize the rough untaught children of the village. He took a cottage in

what was then Granny Lane, now Monmouth Street ; friends gave him benches and books, and he began to " sow the seed of eternal life " in many hitherto neglected hearts. When the Wesleyan Chapel was built in 1829, the school found a new home. James Fernley joined Charles Beswick, and in 1833 they had 178 scholars in the one Sunday school of the village.

A new era for Rusholme began with the laying out of Victoria Park. The promoters of the Company suffered over their enterprise, but the village reaped the benefit of this new development. The population grew rapidly. Merchant princes, men of enterprise and public spirit, brought into their rural retreat a new life of intelligent helpfulness, realizing their responsibility for the community that was growing up at the doors of their suburban homes. At one time no fewer than four members of parliament lived in Victoria Park, the most famous of whom was Richard Cobden, and a fifth had his home at Rusholme House.

In 1840 the Congregationalists opened a little chapel in Moor Street. Five years later the present churches of St. James and Holy Trinity were built. Good schools were attached to each of these places of worship in the course of time, and the days of the one dame-school seemed to recede into ancient history. In 1862 the old Wesleyan Chapel was superseded by the present beautiful structure, and in the same year the Roman Catholic Chapel was built in Thurloe Street. The Congregationalists dedicated their new chapel in 1864. In other parts of the township the churches of St. John, St. Agnes, and St. Chrysostom, have been opened for the ever increasing population. Day schools were also sustained in connection with the Wesleyan and Roman Catholic Chapels.

The Rusholme Public Hall and Library began its career in hired rooms in 1850, and ten years later the present handsome building was opened as the home of that Institution for more than thirty years. Then followed the People's Institute and the Working Men's Club.

Sanitary improvement was largely secured by the formation of the Local Board in 1849. Rusholme then began to "mend her ways," and muddy streets and open drains and cesspools gave place to paved roads and a complete system of drainage. Gas and water came in to sweeten village life, and thus in the course of a few years the transformation was completed, and the Sleepy Hollow of 1831 became a part of the City of Manchester in 1885.

In all reforms and improvements Mr. Lowe took a deep interest, and in many of them he may be said to have taken a leading part. His work in the Church must be dealt with later on, but no record of him would be complete without mention of his civic duties and the way he discharged them.

His political convictions were the result of wide reading, careful thought, and patient observation. He belonged to the advanced school, and worked hard for the return of members who, as he believed, would help to place upon the statute-book laws for the amelioration of the lot of the working classes, and for their social and moral uplifting. Gladstone was his *beau idéal* of a statesman, and no sudden change of front on the part of that chosen leader could shake the confidence of his faithful henchman, Thomas Lowe. Apart from political sympathies there was another tie that bound the humble and exalted veterans together. In his later years Mr. Lowe began to collect autographs and autograph letters. The fascination grew upon him, and his success emboldened him to write to Mr. Gladstone.

Whilst the newly-elected member for Midlothian was resting after his arduous campaign in 1880, he received a letter from Thomas Lowe stating that the writer had just read with great interest *Juventus Mundi*, and had been reminded by it of his youthful delight in Cowper's version of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Then came, what many would have thought the sting of the letter, a request for the autograph of the author of *Juventus Mundi*. By return of post came this message in the well-known handwriting, "With Mr. Gladstone's compliments and cordial good wishes to Mr. Thomas Lowe." Several pamphlets on Homeric Literature came by the same post. This unexpected kindness was suitably acknowledged, and four days later came another book from the facile pen of the coming premier, *Homeric Synchronism, or the Time and Place of Homer in History*. What enhanced the value of the gift in Mr. Lowe's eyes was the fact that on the very day before he was summoned by the Queen to form a new ministry, he found time to send off this book and his autograph to an unknown admirer in Rusholme.

Not only in parliamentary elections but also in local struggles he took his place in the front rank of combatants. He never shirked the responsibilities of his citizenship, and his voice, his time, his energy, were freely placed at the disposal of that candidate who commanded his sympathy and confidence. It could not be a matter of indifference to him who represented the ratepayers on the Local Board or Board of Guardians: to be entrusted with power was to be weighted with responsibility, and so he voted, and used his influence with others, after a most conscientious sort.

But his best work was always done in the highest spheres. He saw what might reasonably be expected from legislation and rejoiced in what could be ac-

completed in that direction ; but he also saw clearly the limitations and impossibilities of legislation. With all his heart he believed in the need for, and the possibility of, a moral and social leavening of the people, and with all his might he entered into this work. He would influence the legislature if he could, but nothing could supersede the work of convincing a man's judgment, enlightening his understanding, moving his heart, strengthening his will. By all means secure the Sunday-closing of public-houses, Local Option, and other good things, if you can ; but meanwhile do what in you lies with your neighbours, and try to make them sober, and withdraw them from the sphere of peril : these were his beliefs and he lived according to them.

As a temperance worker he will be long and affectionately remembered. In 1837 a friend put into his hands a tract on *Total Abstinence from all Intoxicating Drinks as a Beverage* ; he read it and was so convinced of the evils arising from the use of intoxicants that he resolved never to touch them again, as a beverage, as long as he lived ; not that they had ever been a snare to him, but he was determined they never should be. This determination was never shaken, and he was so increasingly satisfied with the results of such total abstinence that he worked unceasingly, whilst health lasted, in this cause. Abstainers were not viewed with favour in those early days. Even Bands of Hope did not always create enthusiasm in the Church, and an earnest temperance propaganda was sure to encounter opposition from the world. Mr. Lowe was the very man for a pioneer in this enterprise. He could be at once firm and yet conciliatory ; he could hold on with quiet persistence when conditions were unfavourable ; and when the need for energetic action arose he could manifest a muscular Christianity in

dealing with rowdyism at their meetings.

It was about 1845 when the first Band of Hope was formed in connection with the Wesleyan School, Dickenson Road. About a year later the Rusholme Total Abstinence Society was founded by Mr. Lowe. This continued in active operation for over twenty years. The meetings were held in the little chapel in Moor Street, and it was here that many stormy scenes were witnessed.

When the Rusholme Gospel Temperance Association was formed Mr. Lowe was made a vice-president, and many temperance workers of to-day owe their inspiration to his able advocacy and unflagging zeal. Many hearts and homes have been made better and brighter as the direct result of his example and loving persuasion.

Mr. Lowe was a determined foe of ignorance, and as he sought to widen his own area of knowledge, he also loved his neighbour as himself, and did what he could to bring the joys of the intellectual life within the reach of others. He would have subscribed to Carlyle's *dictum*, "That there should one man die ignorant who had capacity for knowledge, this I call a Tragedy." In 1850 Rev. G. H. G. Anson, Mr. E. Wilde, Mr. Lowe and others opened the Rusholme Library and Reading Room in the premises now used as a coffee tavern. After about a ten years' sojourn in these hired rooms a bolder step was taken, and the commodious building in Dickenson Road, specially built for the purpose, was opened as the Rusholme Public Hall and Library. Mr. Lowe was one of the original directors, and he greatly rejoiced over the added facilities for self-improvement which this Institution afforded. One feature which delighted his truly Catholic soul was the blending together of men of different religious denominations and political parties in this united

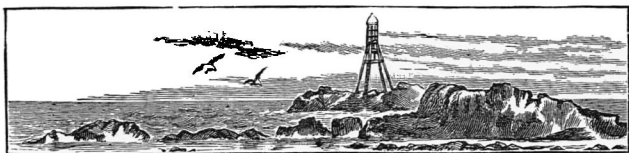
effort for the intellectual welfare of Rusholme. He held firmly his own Church preferences and political convictions, but he was devoid of sectarian and party bitterness, and he could not help seeing, and rejoicing in, goodness wherever it existed.

He was also one of the founders of the Working Men's Club. He always regarded himself as a genuine working man, and his sympathy with toilers was intelligent and deep. The generosity of Philip Goldschmidt, Esq. and Mrs. Langworthy in providing this club deeply touched Mr. Lowe's heart, and though he could not give as they gave, yet the working men of Rusholme never had a truer friend than Thomas Lowe.

His work in connection with the People's Institute was of lasting value. The weekly meetings for promoting Gospel Temperance found in him an unwearied helper.

His public work in connection with the village was fitly recognised on the occasion of the local celebration of Her Majesty's Jubilee in 1887. The united Committee unanimously requested him to preside over the meeting that was held, and his deliverance from the chair was worthy of the occasion and the man. "The old man eloquent" discoursed of the Rusholme of fifty years before, and they who heard his racy speech will not readily forget it.

The long full life was not lived in vain. He has left a deep mark upon the community whose interests he so faithfully served; and though others now occupy, in some sense, his place and carry on his work, yet when each man's life-work is revealed at the last, it will be found that few have done so much for the real advancement of Rusholme in all that is highest and best as Thomas Lowe.



CHAPTER V.

INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS.

“The wish to know—that endless thirst,
Which even by quenching is awaked,
And which becomes or blest or curst,
As is the fount whereat ’tis slaked—
Still urged me onward with desire
Insatiate, to explore, inquire.”

Moore.

“I have never pretended to be a learned man or a scholar, but God has given me a great love for books.”

Sir David Dundas.



IN giving an account of his conversion and describing its effects, Mr. Lowe wrote :

“Almost the first fact I woke up to was a deep sense of my ignorance. I seemed to know scarcely anything which I ought to know. But the new-born love to the Saviour was indeed a leaven hid in my breast, and soon produced in me an intense desire to know more than I did. The love of reading good books became an absorbing passion. . . My mind, hitherto almost dormant, began to expand under the genial influence of the Sun of Righteousness.

I remember a somewhat amusing incident in connection with my early Christian life. As a consequence of this ardent desire for knowledge, both divine and human, I soon found that *all* these aspirations could not be satisfied in the present

life, and I built my hopes of future attainments in the next world on that passage—‘What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.’ But for a while I was perplexed with a fear that this passage was in the Apocrypha: what was my joy when in the regular course of my reading the Scriptures, I found it in St. John’s Gospel! I was like one who had found great spoil!”

Mention has already been made of his boyish delight in reading; he had followed Captain Cook’s *Voyages*, and had been enthralled by *Robinson Crusoe’s Adventures*, which were just as real to him as Captain Cook’s veracious histories. He had pored over Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which was taken as literally as Robinson Crusoe; but now new tastes, and deeper joys, and nobler aims were his; he began to read with a purpose; he strove to fit himself for a life of usefulness to his fellow-men. To be good and to do good became the uppermost desire of his heart.

The first book read through after his conversion was the *Life of Mrs. Fletcher*; the next was that Christian classic, Baxter’s *The Saint’s Everlasting Rest*: this was read through “more than once,” as the Family Chronicle affirms. Then followed the *Life of Rev. William Bramwell*, the man of God to whom his father owed so much, and one of the holiest men which this century has seen.

This choice of books was significant. Thomas Lowe did not believe in the necessity of low levels in Christian life and attainment. The sunny uplands wooed his spirit, and from the very first he sought to know something of that “perfect love” which “casteth out fear.” No babe in Christ could read those three books without perceiving that there was a maturity of Christian character to which even the “babe” was called. Faith’s victories are as real as any other victories, and more real, as he would have witnessed. If every young convert to-day would

devoutly read the three books which he read, we should witness more fervour, steadfastness, aspiration, and attainment, than we commonly see.

Another habit of the man is indicated by the "more-than-once" reading of a good book. He read carefully the first time, and for twenty-five years of his life he wrote his impressions of all books read, but he did not consider that he had dealt finally with any worthy book when it had been once perused. That book became a friend, and he wished to hold converse with his best friends "more than once."

Poetry cast her spell over Thomas Lowe and found in him a willing thrall to the end. His vivid imagination and thrilling susceptibilities made him respond to this form of literature with a completeness that but few natures know. He read Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the whole inward man was set ablaze by that peerless epic. He *lived* through its scenes, and in its quickening effect upon his whole mental life the reading of that book was equal to "a cycle of Cathay." Milton was henceforth one of his masters and he did not rest until he had diligently studied all his works, as far as written in the mother tongue. *Comus* he had read again and again: its scorn of "sensual folly and intemperance," and its praise of

" . . . divine philosophy!

Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,"

exactly chimed in with the hate and love of Thomas Lowe.

After Milton came Homer, read in Cowper's version. There are translations that approach far nearer to the ideal than those of Cowper, but even in this dress the genius of Homer could not be hid, and as he had revelled in the great English epic of Milton, so he rejoiced in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. He has recorded his devout thankfulness that man is not left to the dim gropings of earth's greatest

thinkers; God's Revelation of Himself and man seemed doubly precious after seeing what the world's wisdom could, and could not, accomplish.

Young's *Night Thoughts* and Pollok's *Course of Time* had also a marked effect upon the development of Thomas Lowe. He learned by heart choice extracts from the former work. No author was more lavishly quoted by the "popular preachers" of those days, and Mr. Lowe followed them in this. It is not too much to say that his mind was saturated with the thought of Edward Young, and he was delighted if he could persuade anybody to read the *Night Thoughts*. The *Course of Time* made a powerful but a less abiding impression. Its attraction was strong enough to draw the young student from his bed at five o'clock in winter; all the finer passages in that unequal work were read and read again: the "Miltonic flavour" of certain portions made its powerful appeal to the lover of *Paradise Lost*. Thomson's *Seasons* were also read and enjoyed.

As the work of preaching grew the need for fuller equipment was keenly felt. Mention has already been made of the theological class formed in Congleton in 1837, and of the course pursued by the young lay preachers. More than twenty years later the Rusholme Wesleyan Theological Class was formed. The meetings were held at six o'clock every Monday morning. The second volume of the minutes is extant, and "honourable mention" should surely be made of those present: their names stand thus:—T. Lowe, A. Lowe, G. E. Bartlett, John Bolsover, Wm. Lowe, H. Turner, J. Binyon, Wm. Oldham and J. Baguley. These were present at the opening meeting of the second session, September 2nd, 1861. Other names appear in connection with later meetings:—A. Pedley, G. Chappell, J. Royle, A. Wright; and the regularity of attendance on the

part of all these members is enough to shame the present generation who choose to meet at hours which involve less self-denial than that chosen for the study of Theology.

Mr. Lowe's theological reading embraced the *Life and Works of John Fletcher* of Madeley. His controversial works breathe a spirit of love not often found in polemical writings, and in tracing character back to its causes it is not difficult to see the impress of the saintly Fletcher on Thomas Lowe. He had not studied those eight goodly volumes for naught. Watson's *Institutes* was his favourite text-book in Theology: that was at the base of his cherished beliefs, and there is little doubt that the solid substratum of his preaching was laid in these four closely-reasoned volumes.

Dr. Adam Clarke was one of Mr. Lowe's heroes, and every life published of that distinguished scholar was eagerly read; Everett's *Adam Clarke Portrayed* satisfied him most. He read through the *Commentary* consecutively to the end of Ezekiel. This is the only instance of his not finishing any work which he had begun to read, so far as the Literary Register bears witness. The explanation is simple: the volumes were borrowed and the owner asked for them back. Of course he read Wesley's *Sermons* and other of his *Works* too. He specially mentions Wesley's *Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation; or, a Compendium of Natural Philosophy*. This work taught him to see God in all His works, and his natural delight in the beauty of created things was heightened and intensified by the never-absent thought—"My Father made them all!"

Butler's *Analogy* was another prime favourite. The argument from analogy seemed to him to approach so nearly to demonstration that he wondered how any fair and candid man could evade its force.

Another book to which he felt himself greatly indebted, although he confessed that it had "no great literary merit," was Dr. Wharton's *Death-bed Scenes and Pastoral Conversations*. Here he met, for the first time, a clear statement of the *a posteriori* argument for the being of God, and he felt its full force, and believed that no proof could be clearer and more satisfying to the mind of man; every advance of science he welcomed as affording new illustration to support an irrefragable conclusion.

Dr. Harris was another author in whom he greatly rejoiced. His *Pre-Adamite Earth* and *Man Primeval*, with their majestic sweep of thought and unflinching loyalty to the Cross, were returned to again and again. One of his latest efforts in connection with the Mutual Improvement Society was to give a synopsis of the argument in *Pre-Adamite Earth*, and make an appeal to the members to read the book for themselves.

The works of Fénelon and Madame Guyon were carefully studied. The nobler side of Quietism had an enduring charm for Mr. Lowe, and he stood in no danger from a subtle Antinomianism: Fletcher's *Checks* had effectually guarded him from that peril.

Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* was a pocket companion for some months, and was read whilst he was out walking in the country. Baxter's *Saints' Rest* was read through *three* times with growing thankfulness to God that the Church had been enriched by a work which so lifted into prominence "the reality and importance of heavenly things."

"More than once," too, he read Robert Hall's *Modern Infidelity*, and greatly admired the "vigorous thought, beautiful style, and masterly reasoning" of that book. Drew's *Essay on the Immortality of the Soul* seemed to him so valuable a work that he pre-

pared a synopsis of the argument for the Mental Improvement Society of those days.

But the time would fail to tell in this manner all his reading, even in a single department of his studies: a bare enumeration of his theological reading must suffice, and even that must not travel beyond 1860, when his Literary Register ceased to be posted up, mainly because it took up time from actual reading. These are *some* only of the books he delighted in, dealing as they did with Theology and kindred subjects:—Kershaw's *Human Redemption*, Barrow's *Discourses*, Dick's *Christian Philosopher* and *Philosophy of a Future State*, Finney's *Lectures on Revivals*, Watson's *Conversations for the Young*, Powell's *Apostolical Succession*, Martin's *Christian Philosopher*, Dixon's *Works of Rev. David Mc.Nicoll*, Isaac's *Refutation of Universalism*, Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants*, Chalmer's *Astronomical Discourses* and *Natural Theology*, Erskine's *Internal Evidence for Revealed Religion*, Goodwin's *Redemption Redeemed* and *Treatise on Justification*, *Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation*, White's *Life in Christ*, Steward's *Principles of Church Government*, Newton's *Dissertations on Prophecy*, Read's *Hand of God in History*, Lowth's *Isaiah*, *Works of Andrew Fuller*, Wylie's *Scenes from the Bible*, Fuller's (Thomas) *Holy and Profane State*, Robert Hall's *Sermons, Essays and Reviews*, Guthrie's *Christ and the Inheritance of the Saints* and *Gospel in Ezekiel*.

It must be remembered that these various works were not consulted here and there, lightly skimmed over and laid aside as read. They were dealt with in the most painstaking way, Father Lowe being a *painful* reader, in the old sense of that word; he had the faculty of concentration in a high degree, and when he had read and pondered, he *wrote*, so that what he read he made his own.

Biography of the best kind gave him peculiar pleasure. It was one of the reasons for wishing to live a little longer that he might revel in the *Recollections* of Dr. Gregory, now appearing monthly in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine. His face fairly shone when reading some delicate and masterly delineation of a preacher at whose feet he himself had sat in the olden days. He greatly delighted in Everett's *Village Blacksmith* and *William Dawson*, Priestley's *Memoirs of Rev. John Hessel*, the *Life of David Stoner*, Strachan's *Recollections of the Life and Times of Rev. G. Lowe*, the *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright*, the *Life and Letters of Mrs. Adam Clarke*, and Jackson's (T.) *Life of Dr. Newton*.

But it was not merely the men and women of his own Church whose records he loved to study; his was a genuinely Catholic soul for all that was good. The following list will prove his appreciation of true worth in any Church-fold:—*Life of Felix Neff*, M'Crie's *Life of John Knox*, Hood's (E. Paxton) *Life of Andrew Marvell*, Edmonds' *Life of John Milton*, *Memorials of Captain Hedley Vickers*, Russell's *Life and Works of Thomas Fuller*, *Memoir of Sir Henry Havelock*, *Autobiography of Robert Flockhart*, Hanna's *Life and Writings of Dr. Chalmers*.

The great bulk of his reading under this head was undoubtedly religious biography, but not exclusively so, as the following books testify:—Somerville's *Autobiography of a Working Man*, *Life of Kaspar Hauser*, Bamford's *Early Days and Passages in the Life of a Radical*.

Missionary literature set his soul all aglow for the extension of the Saviour's kingdom. In his estimation missionaries of the Cross formed the Legion of Honour in the Christian host, and in collecting autographs he kept them apart from all others, just as Deborah singled out for special praise the tribes

of Zebulun and Naphtali because they had "jeoparded their lives unto death . . . upon the high places of the field." He read Young's *Suggestions for the Conversion of the World*, Williams' *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, *Private Journal of Rev. C. S. Stewart in the Sandwich Islands*, Young's *Kaffirs, Hottentots, Fingoes, &c.*, Ellis's *The Missionary*, Medhurst's *China*, and Livingstone's *Travels and Researches in South Africa*.

In the study of history of all kinds he was an enthusiast. The supreme revelation of God was in the written Word, and in the Incarnate Word; but next to the Bible came the unfolding of God's will in history. He would have agreed with all his heart to that noble utterance of Oliver Cromwell—

"What are all our histories but God manifesting Himself, that He hath shaken, and tumbled down and trampled upon everything that He hath not planted?"

He read these among other works on this fascinating subject:—*Works of Josephus*, Goldsmith's *History of Greece* and *History of England*, Bigland's *Letters on the Study and Use of Ancient and Modern History*, Adams' *Flowers of Human History*, Wilson's *Oliver Cromwell and the Protectorate*, Cary's *Herodotus*, Fuller's (T.) *History of the Holy War*, Niebuhr's *Roman History*, Arthur's *Italy in Transition*.

In Church history he read Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Mrs. Parker's *Annals of the Christian Church*, Roscoe's *Life and Pontificate of Leo X*, Tomlin's *Monastic and Social Life in the Twelfth Century*, D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation*, and Milner's *History of the Christian Church*. The history of his own Church was not neglected: he read in this period Jackson's *Centenary of Methodism*, Everett's *History of Methodism in Manchester*, Dixon's *Methodism in America*, Dyson's *History of Wesleyan Methodism in the Congleton Circuit*. He had, of course,

special reasons for taking interest in this last named book. His great work in this branch of knowledge was the reading through the *Pictorial History of England* in eight volumes, each one containing about 1,000 pp. This task occupied him nearly three years, and during that time he read comparatively little else. He never regretted this; he says—

“I have long thought it not only desirable, but absolutely necessary for a right discharge of all those duties which devolve upon me as a rational being, in all the varied relations of social life, to be well acquainted with the history of my own country.”

Another passion was the reading of books of travel. He was a true cosmopolitan and longed to gain at least a mental picture of all lands and all civilizations. The overflowing sympathy of his heart made “man and his dwelling-place” objects of intense interest to him. The list of books of this class is so long that a selection only can be made:—Dana’s *Two Years before the Mast*, Anson’s *Voyage Round the World*, Laing’s *Voyage to Spitzbergen*, Clarke’s *Travels in Russia, Tartary and Turkey*, Captain Beechey’s *Voyage in Search of the North-West Passage*, Catlin’s *Letters and Notes on the North American Indians*, Stevens’ *Travels in Egypt, Arabia and the Holy Land*, Lamartine’s *Travels in the East*, Stephens’ *Travels in Greece, Turkey, Russia and Poland*, Tomlin’s *Journal of a Nine Months’ Residence in Siam*, East’s *Western Africa*, Bourne’s *Life among the Giants* (Patagonia), Ward’s *India and the Hindoos*, Young’s *Wayfarer’s Notes in the Levant, &c.*, Layard’s *Discoveries at Nineveh*, Cheever’s *Island World of the Pacific*, Russell’s *Ancient and Modern Egypt*.

In addition to the poetical works previously named, Shakspeare, Dante, and Tasso were laid under contribution to supply him with their choice

fare for mind and heart. The old favourites were never displaced, and after a third reading of Young's *Night Thoughts* he records how this work led him at one period of his life to retire seven times a day for private prayer.

Fiction claimed an infinitesimal portion of his time. He was so eager for knowledge that the reading of ephemeral romance seemed to him a waste of precious opportunity. He read, however, Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*; these were sermons against that "execrable sum of all villainies," slavery, and he could not but rejoice in any blow struck for freedom. He also fell under the charm of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, and was much interested in Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. He thus criticises the socialism of that famous book :—

"The principle of equality, as applied to property, is, I think, fatal to the whole scheme, unless there was amongst all mankind *equality of disposition*, equally intelligent, moral, and industrious; were it not so it would soon come to this, that the enterprising and industrious would have to support the vicious and the indolent."

Yet he who wrote this was practically among the "have nots" all his life.

Self-improvement was one of the master aims of Thomas Lowe's life. The following books will shew how he sought it with all diligence :—Todd's *Student's Manual*, *Young Man's Own Book*, Watts' *Logic and Improvement of the Mind*, Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

There was a witchery about the physical sciences to which he was peculiarly susceptible. He read Joyce's *Scientific Dialogues*, Somerville's (Mary) *Connexion of the Physical Sciences*, Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*, Carpenter's *Scripture Natural History*, Liebig's *Organic Chemistry* (edited by Lyon Playfair), Ellis's *Chemistry of the Creation*, Solly's *Rural Chemistry*.

Geology was long a favourite study, and the ultimate reconciliation of its teachings with Scripture was ardently believed. Very early in the controversy he held the now familiar theory of the vast epoch signified by the creative "day" in Genesis; the Bible, thus interpreted, presented in bold, broad outline the main conclusions of geological research, and science thus became the hand-maid to faith. These are some of the works read on this great subject:—Wood's *Mosaic Creation*, Silliman's *Wonders of the Earth*, Pye Smith's *Relations between the Scriptures and Geology*, Richardson's *Introduction to Geology*, and the following works of Hugh Miller, whose writings gave him intense delight, *The Old Red Sandstone*, *Footprints of the Creator*, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, *Testimony of the Rocks*, *First Impressions of England and its People*.

So far back as July 18th, 1843, Mr. Lowe wrote in his Literary Register:—

"The study of Astronomy is, at present, my darling theme." It remained his "darling theme" to the end, and no inconsiderable part of his hope with regard to that fuller, future life, upon which he has now entered, had to do with an increasing knowledge of the vast universe revealed by the telescope. With reference to this science he would have quoted the words which he was so happy to find in St. John's Gospel—"What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter,"—as the expression of a devout and confident hope. In those far off days he read Bonnycastle's *Introduction to Astronomy*, Carey's *Astronomy*, and Mitchell's *Planetary and Stellar Worlds*, and, of course, he never ceased to read all he could lay hands on that dealt with his "darling theme."

His eagerness to impart was equal to his eager-

ness to absorb, and in dealing with his work in connection with the Mutual Improvement Society evidence of this will be forthcoming. One incident may fittingly find place here. He was visiting at his eldest son's home in Portadown. He was pouring forth his treasures of knowledge in conversation according to his happy wont, and one of his hearers insisted that he should lecture to the people of Portadown on "The Missing Planet," referring to that portion of the heavens where the Asteroids are found. He says:—

"We got a Diagram, and I scraped a few notes together, and the affair came off apparently to the satisfaction of a sympathetic audience."

But a "chiel" was among them "takin' notes," and the local newspaper made more of the lecture than the lecturer himself did. The said local newspaper travelled to New York, and the paragraph about the "Missing Planet" was copied into the *Nation*, and a copy of that paper found its way back to Portadown, so that in a very emphatic way his voice was taken up into "the murmur of the world."

One bright spot in Mr. Lowe's memory was a two hours' conversation with Dr. Dallinger in 1884. It was not often that he could have the privilege of talking with a Fellow of the Royal Society; indeed it was his one opportunity, and he made the most of it.

A French Astronomer had discovered, across one of Mars' many isthmuses, a straight bright line, and he held that as Nature did not work in lines of that description, it must be an artificial canal, like the Suez Canal, and proved therefore that Mars was inhabited. Mr. Lowe was inclined to suspect that this was a bit of romancing, *à la* Jules Verne, but to his amazement Dr. Dallinger concurred both in observation and inference, declaring that there were

several such straight lines, and that there could be no reasonable doubt that Mars was inhabited.

It is impossible to deal fully with so wide a subject as Mr. Lowe's intellectual pursuits. He began the study of Greek under the stimulating example of Matthew Knight and Roger Albiston. He plodded away with the grammar and had mastered the adjectives, though their manifold terminations had been a weariness to the flesh; English adjectives seemed so simple and reasonable by contrast; but Roger told him he must not talk of difficulties until he had to wrestle with the verb; all that he had done so far was mere child's play. Then Thomas Lowe says that he turned coward and said—"If that is it, *I will give it up!*" He thought in after years that if a more excellent way had been followed, and he had been allowed to take his Greek Testament in one hand and his Grammar in the other, he might have done something; but an unmixed diet of Greek grammar was more than he could bear.

In passing away from this subject two or three remarks seem to be required.

Thomas Lowe was a *cultured* man though he knew no language save his mother-tongue. He was a noble specimen of what may be achieved in the absence of a classical education. "Higher education" as we know it, even on its "modern side," was out of his reach; but he was an educated man, nevertheless. There was a beautiful refinement, an old world courtesy, a conversational charm, about the sturdy democrat, which made him welcome in all circles. He had disciplined himself in the great art of living, and every power of his being had been used to the utmost to fit him for a life of usefulness, which was also a life of singular beauty.

This wonderful store of knowledge was gathered

during a busy toilsome life by the most conscientious redeeming of the time. We have seen how he read as he walked in the country, and he also read as he went on with his daily work : a book was like the breath of life to him. With most men it is the bodily appetites which thunder at the man, whilst the mental appetites only feebly whisper and subside into quiescence at the rustle of the daily paper. The reverse of all this was true of the subject of this memoir : the bodily appetites dared only faintly whisper and were swiftly overborne, but the mental appetites filled his being with an imperious and insistent clamour to which he must give heed. The words of the Master—"Man shall not live by bread alone" were always sounding in his ears and moulding his conduct.

Through all his reading he maintained an independent judgment. He was not weakly swayed by the very latest book ; he was no mimetic creature catching the precise hue of his literary surroundings ; he could see and reprobate "serious faults," even in John Milton, calling attention to his "intolerant spirit as seen in his prose works, which I have recently read." But when he disagrees he has his reasons for that disagreement, and can state them clearly and forcibly. Combined with this independence was the precious faculty of keeping an open mind upon subjects on which he felt himself incompetent to pronounce a decided opinion ; he could wait, and read more widely, and ponder more deeply, until at last he could say, "I am convinced, I believe, I know !"

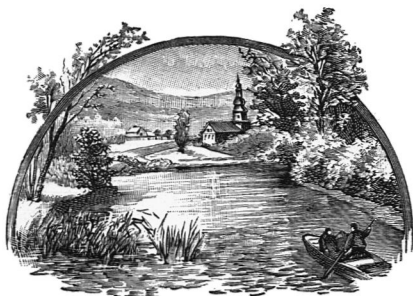
Of one thing he was impatient. If men professed to be expounding Christianity in their books, and yet ignored the Cross of Christ, that was something he could not bear. That Cross was central to him, dominating both heart and intellect, and he would

have said with Vinet—"Without expiation, and the ideas connected with it, what is Christianity?"

The purpose to do good, to benefit others, to be as extensively useful as possible, was always with him, deciding for him both what and how he should read. He did not consider that he knew anything unless he could *teach* it to others; and that he might be able to bless others he chose good books and resolutely mastered them. He loved both God and man with the whole of his *mind*, and one of the greatest blessings that could come to the community in whose midst he lived and died would be that the young men whom he loved should catch his spirit and follow in his steps in their intellectual pursuits.

It should be distinctly borne in mind that this rough classification of books read only deals with the period 1836-60.





CHAPTER VI.

BUSINESS AND HOME.

“Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit, nor stand, but go !
Be our joys three-parts pain !
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge
the throe.”

Browning.

“The first sure symptom of a mind in health,
Is rest of heart, and pleasure felt at home.”

Young.

MANY who knew Mr. Lowe best and loved him most, thought that his true vocation was the ministry of the Word, and not business. He was much more a man of books than a man of affairs, but he himself never felt that he was one of those of whom “the Holy Ghost said, Separate me for the work whereunto I have called them.” Hard experience would have compelled him to admit that business was not exactly his *forte*.

The truth is he was too sanguine, too trustful, too easily persuaded, to become a successful man of business.

Opportunities came to him as to most, but he had not learned the art of taking the tide at the flood. There was a sort of "irony of fate" in the hard struggles of his business life. He seemed made for such an opposite career. He was fitted by nature and disposition to take his place among those of whom Gray writes:—

"Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way."

Mr. Lowe believed heartily in the view of suretiship contained in the Book of Proverbs, and with luminous wisdom he would have warned *you* against the thoughtless folly of becoming surety for a debtor; but he himself fell into the snare more than once. Someone wished to emigrate—prospects were brilliant in Australia: could Mr. Lowe lend the money? it would be quickly and certainly repaid; he had not the money to lend, but he could borrow it and so help this worthy person; the money was borrowed and lent, but the only repaying was done painfully by Mr. Lowe himself.

It is not too much to say that this pressure upon his honourable and sensitive soul was a long-drawn agony for him to endure. An occasional respite would be found in the tours which this nature-lover made. He would explore Wales, or go to Scotland and delight himself at Staffa and Iona, or journey on to Shetland, or visit the Emerald Isle and forget his difficulties in viewing the scenes of Adam Clarke's boyhood. These were bright oases in the dry desert of business life.

When poultry-farming became a rage and "incubators" were to take the place of the mother-hen

and lay golden eggs for their proprietors, it was not difficult to persuade Mr. Lowe that after long years of stormy buffetings the snug harbour of a competence was in sight at last. Three friends and Mr. Lowe agreed in the Autumn of 1866 to establish a poultry-farm at Barton Moss. In the following Spring Mr. Lowe purchased the interests of the three, and became sole proprietor of this sure-to-be-lucrative business. Of course the Rusholme home had to be kept on as well, and thus two establishments had to be provided for. The experiment was a failure in spite of the brilliant paper-promises. The chickens did not seem satisfied with only a makeshift, mechanical mother, and of all that were hatched only two survived the perils of chickenhood under these conditions. If the chickens were obstinate and determined to die, the hens were obstinate also and would not be coaxed into laying, so that with four hundred fowls practically producing neither eggs nor chickens for the market, prospective profits became actual losses.

Market-gardening succeeded poultry-farming and proved both more toilsome and more remunerative. In 1870 a large shed was burned to the ground; it was believed to be the work of thieves, as certain fowls could not be accounted for when both cooked and uncooked were numbered. When Barton Moss was abandoned in 1873 the property had been so improved that it realized a sum equal to the outlay; and so a new beginning had to be made in Rusholme, Mr. Lowe being "neither better nor worse," financially, for the seven years' sojourn at Barton Moss.

For three months there seemed to be "nothing to do but *trust* and *wait*," as the Family Chronicle says. In December, 1873, Painsley House was to-let, and, as it was convenient in many ways, it was taken. Through varying causes relief came

at length from the long and galling burden; little by little "the cares of this world" fell away from him. Character had not been blackened by the fire but only purified. One who is seeking to tread in his steps was speaking not long ago about the struggles and fears of his own boyhood, and said, "My sheet anchor was this—'Well, if the worst comes to the worst, I am sure Mr. Lowe will always give us a loaf!'" That was a wonderful impression to have been produced by one who oftentimes did not know how to keep his own head above water, and it speaks volumes for the "charity" which "never faileth" which dwelt in the heart of Thomas Lowe.

In the home, especially in the early years, there was a good deal of sternness. Discipline was maintained firmly, although corporal punishment was almost wholly unknown. The family altar was one of the immovable bases of home life, and the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, the importunate pleadings, the prevailing intercessions offered there, will never be forgotten by those who listened to this true "priest in his own house."

Little children held a large place in the child-like heart of Thomas Lowe. In his Family Chronicle, written in 1885-6, there is this record:—

"I must not omit to record here an incident which deeply affected me at that time: the death of brother John's second son, named Alfred. This was in the Spring of 1840; he was seventeen months old when he died. I loved that child with a passionate fervour which no words can describe, and he returned that love with all the warmth of his child's heart. Writing of it now brings it all back again as though it had only recently occurred. I resolved then that if it should ever please God to give me a son, his name should be Alfred. That resolve was carried out: my eldest son being named Alfred after this dear child."

His latest days at Rusholme, like his earliest,

were bound up with childhood's winning ways. It was a picture worth going far to see, when the silver-haired grandfather and the delicate, flaxen-haired grandson were together at Painsley House, or "The Cottage." The sensitive boy dreaded the moon at one time, wondering how it could be "held up," and fearing lest it might fall. Then the old man sought to banish his fears by telling him that God's hand sustained all things, and that if he were spared he would come to understand *how* God upheld all things according to His own laws. Under the spell of the old man's gentle wisdom the childish terror faded, and he dared to look at the splendour of the midnight sky. Jupiter was visible, and out of his ample stores the old man spoke of that wonderful planet and its moons. When little Bertie went away from "The Cottage" he was amazed to find that Jupiter "followed him" from "The Cottage" too. The old man was delighted that his astronomical lesson had not been in vain, and he wrote the following letter to his dearly-loved grandson :—

"Old Hall Lane,
Fallowfield,
Nov. 3rd, 1891.

"My dear little Bertie,

Before you went to Aunt Mostin's I promised to write a letter to you, and I do so now with great pleasure.

I always enquire whether they have heard from you and how you are getting on. I think about you many a time every day. I was greatly pleased when you sent me word that you had found the planet Jupiter : if it should please God to spare you and me a while longer, I hope we shall have many a big talk about Jupiter and the other stars when you get older.

Well, now I must tell you how we are getting on at the old Cottage. Well, we are very quiet sometimes ; you see we have no little boy to talk to us, and that makes us quiet ; but I should like to hear your prattle sometimes.

I must also tell you that the chickens go to roost in

the tree opposite the window yet, and sometimes the big ones are very unkind to the lesser ones, and push them down, but they fly up again, and as it goes dark they all settle down quietly.

Now I must also tell you that I got a man to help me, last Saturday, to cut down the old apple-tree just below Mr. Taylor's garden. We fastened a rope to one of the boughs, and when we had cut and sawed at it for a while, we both of us pulled at the rope, and down it came with a big crash. Would you not like to have seen it tumble over?

I have not much more to tell you, only that we are about as well as usual, and we shall all be very pleased to see you when you come again, and we all unite in sending our best love to you, to Uncle Edwin, and Aunt Mostin. You must get Uncle Edwin to write a letter for you to me, only you must tell him what to put in it.

From your loving Grandfather,

THOMAS LOWE."

The following sketch will also be read with interest:—

"One of the first things I can remember about my father was his reading Shakspeare to my mother during the evenings, when we lived at Barton Moss. Barton Moss was then, as it is now, sparsely populated, and the long Winter evenings were very quiet, with no sound to be heard but the whistling of the wind outside and the crackling of the fire on the hearth. It was at these times that my father used to take down his beloved Shakspeare (Chambers' Household Edition) and fleet the time by reading aloud. The only adult present besides the reader was my mother, as the dwellers on the Moss cared for none of such things, and so these two formed a small intellectual island to themselves. This edition of Shakspeare from which my father read was incomplete. It was an often-expressed wish of his to obtain the remaining volumes, but he never did so. The play I can remember the most of was *The Twelfth Night*. Of course we youngsters understood very little of it, but we used always to laugh when the others laughed. I can remember very well the illustrations of Sir Toby Belch, and Malvolio with the gartered hose.

This incident of the reading aloud marks the most prominent feature in my father's home life, which was his keen sympathy with all that was going on in the home. He was always most pleased to hear about any book which any of us had been reading, and as to the books which he read,

he used to read aloud those passages which pleased him most. He did not like to keep to himself things which he thought good. His reading was marked by a wide catholicity of taste. He could enjoy almost anything, from a good breezy sea-tale up to his beloved *Paradise Lost*.

All through life, so far as his means allowed, he was a keen traveller and saw as much as possible of the beauties of Britain. His outings not only afforded him pleasure and gratification whilst they lasted, but he made them a source of pleasure to others in his old age by often recounting the holiday tours of youth. We frequently heard about the trip to Shetland, and the various London trips; and he not only delighted to give, but was as ready to receive on such topics. Any of us who had been away from home on returning always found in him a ready listener. In late years one of his great daily pleasures was the morning newspaper. He was a keen politician, and followed the course of public events closely. He devoted two hours or more to the paper every morning. He commenced with the summary, then the leading articles and the political speeches, especially speeches of Mr. Gladstone, whom he idolized. This order of reading was very seldom departed from, so that if there had been some notable event on the previous day and he was asked how it had terminated, his answer would perhaps be 'I don't know; I've not come to it yet.' He used generally to read aloud the most interesting parts of the paper, and most of the family acquired their stock of the morning's news from my father's reading rather than from their own. In late years, when old age prevented him undertaking any laborious tasks, he used regularly to assist in the lighter work of the household. He was in his particular element when any work required doing in the garden. He was unable to work himself—stooping caused his back to "punish" him—but he was in his glory "scheming" how things were to be done, and superintending the carrying out of his scheme.

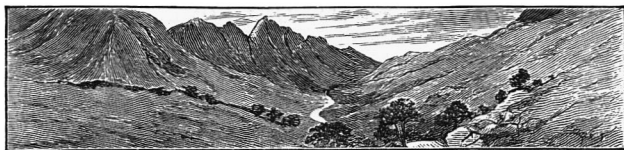
He was a good story-teller, and delighted to exercise the ancient art, especially when friends were present. It was very seldom he gave utterance to an original joke, but he was possessed with a story, either grave or gay, for every possible occasion; and if he did not give the company the benefit of a story, he had some remark ready to hand. When we were little ones he had a never-failing stock of stories suitable for our age. One of the favourites was *Androcles and the Lion*. This we heard very often, but although we knew perfectly well every time what was coming, it did not in the least

lessen our enjoyment of the story. These stories were all furbished up again for the second edition of youngsters, who were, of course, the grandchildren. One of the grandchildren was specially fond of this story-telling, and used often to ask for the same story. 'But you've heard it before, darling,' my father would say. 'Never mind that, grandpa,' would be the answer, 'please tell it again.'

From the foregoing it will be seen that my father's most notable characteristic in the home was his readiness to instruct and entertain, and to be instructed and entertained by others. He was very readily entertained by simple things. Some six months before he died an old tree was cut down in the garden, and my father (then 76) marked out the trunk into portions and chopped up so much every day for firewood. He was immensely proud as he accomplished each day's tale of wood-cutting.

My father was very thoughtful for all his children, and even when on his death-bed his brain was busily at work thinking about their interests. He did not leave to us much in the way of material possessions, but he did leave us a far more precious heritage—that of 'a good name,' which the wise man tells us 'is rather to be chosen than great riches.'"





CHAPTER VII.

CHURCH WORK.

“Think truly, and thy thoughts
Shall the world’s famine feed;
Speak truly, and each word of thine
Shall be a fruitful seed;
Live truly, and thy life shall be
A great and noble creed.”

Bonar.

“Unspeakably touching is it, however, when I find both dignities united; and he that must toil outwardly for the lowest of man’s wants, is also inwardly toiling for the highest. Sublimar in this world know I nothing than a Peasant Saint. . . . Such a one will take thee back to Nazareth itself.”

Carlyle.



IN a former chapter mention was made of Mr. Lowe’s first activities in the Christian life, and this chapter has to do with the continuance of those efforts in Rusholme.

On April 26th, 1840, he received his appointment as teacher in the Wesleyan Sunday School. Messrs. James Fernley and Thomas Cooper were the conductors, and Mr. Frederick Ogden was the secretary. In the following year he was accredited as the representative of the Teachers on the circuit Sunday

School Committee. So long as health permitted he kept to this sacred work, delighting in it, and putting his whole soul into the teaching which he gave.

About twenty years after Mr. Lowe's first appointment as a Sunday school teacher in Rusholme, he was "translated" to the teachership of the select class of young women, a post which he held for nearly thirty years, to the great advantage of those who thus came under his powerful and abiding influence. One of them writes thus :—

"I was privileged to be in Mr. Lowe's class for over twelve years. We were then in the old school, and the class met Sunday by Sunday in the ministers' and later in the school vestry.

We all felt that he loved us, and his hearty grip of the hand, and the 'Aye bless you' which greeted us every Sunday as we met, will not soon be forgotten.

Mr. Lowe's extensive reading, and his scientific knowledge, in addition, of course, to his thorough knowledge of the Bible, made him a very acceptable teacher. I cannot say that he always kept to his subject, the glories of the heavens often drew him away from the topic in hand. He was very fond of Old Testament lessons, and seemed to be familiar with almost every character in that great gallery of portraits. He rarely gave a lesson without bringing in the Methodist worthies in whom his soul specially delighted; such as William Dawson, Dr. Newton, Dr. Adam Clarke, &c. Again and again did he urge us—I am afraid with little success—to read such books as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Pollok's *Course of Time*, &c.

His scholars are now widely scattered, but we look back with joy to the happy days when we were in Father Lowe's class."

Happily the maidens whom he taught did not content themselves with mere posthumous praise. In 1871 they presented their teacher with an album containing their portraits; this rejoiced his heart greatly, as he was some times tempted to think that he was labouring in vain and spending his strength for nought. Mr. Lowe in return promised to give

each member of the class a photograph of himself. This went on for several years until in 1879 he thought it would be good to invite all the members to tea, and then he could give the promised photograph to all those new members who had not as yet received one. They, on their part, resolved that their teacher should not monopolize the blessedness of giving, and the Family Chronicle preserves this record:—

“In the meantime, quite unknown to me, they decided upon giving me another proof of their kindly regard towards me. They had by some means got to know that I was very anxious to procure a copy of Rev. George Steward’s *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, in two volumes, being the embodiment of all that great and good man’s teachings during his ministerial life. So well did they keep their secret that I knew nothing whatever of their intentions until after tea on that interesting night, when it was presented to me, on behalf of herself and the rest, by Miss Wilson, at that time our day school teacher, with a beautiful inscription in the first volume, very artistically done, and full of expressions of kindly feeling, followed by twenty-four names. To me this was as affecting as it was unexpected. These two volumes were accompanied by a third, entitled *Myths and Marvels of Astronomy*, by Procter; as they knew I was an ardent admirer of that noble science. These books are precious heirlooms to me, and are great ornaments to my library.”

Mr. Lowe was an excellent friend to the Secretary when the latter was hardly put to it for an address to the whole school. He was never known to refuse to help in this way, and sometimes the interval between the request and the address was painfully brief. Nobody would have called him a lively speaker on these occasions; he had the keenest appreciation of humour, but was not himself humorous, and he was too much in earnest to seek to provoke laughter. His addresses were thoughtful and often exceedingly impressive, but there was a Johnsonian quality about his style which was rather

ponderous for little children. The Sunday which follows the distractions of Whit-week in Lancashire is known as *Sleepy Sunday*, and it was a real compliment to our friend that he should always be asked to give the address on that day. He recognized the honour and strove valiantly to be both short and interesting.

The Family Chronicle contains this modest reference to an important part of his work for God and man :—

“During this year (1848) the Rev. T. A. West appointed me to the office of class-leader, with no class to lead : I had to gather up members as best I could. That office I have sustained to this day ; with, I hope, some measure of success to others and profit to myself.”

He was eminently fitted for this pastoral charge. His mind and heart were full of the truth as it is in Jesus ; he overflowed with deep, genuine sympathy ; and by an abundance of familiar illustration he shed light upon the difficult places of the Christian's pathway. His prayers meant benedictions for those who knelt and pleaded with him.

Nowhere did Mr. Lowe win more admiration than in the mutual improvement societies to which he felt himself so much indebted, and which were so much indebted to him. It is not a little significant that his first essay before a society of this kind was on *Knowledge*, and was read in Congleton, the date attached to it being September 14th, 1837. The young local preachers of Congleton inclined naturally to the study of Theology, but Mr. Lowe has a note upon this earliest Society which is worthy of a place here :—

“This was the first class for mutual improvement which I joined ; and from that time to the present, with two or three intervals, I have been connected with such classes, not aiming so exclusively at the study of Theology as this first, but at

the study of subjects of general interest, such as history, biography, and scientific subjects generally. And here I would record the fact of *the immense benefit* these societies have been, and still are, to me (as I do not consider myself too old to learn) especially as regards the study of astronomy: a science in the study of which I have taken great delight. I have always succeeded best when acting under the compulsion these societies imposed on me, helping me to overcome the natural indolence of my mind."

Mental indolence is about the last thing we should have attributed to Mr. Lowe. If he had any enemies—and we do not know of one—even lynx-eyed enmity would not have been likely to discover this trait in his character. He seems to have felt the tendency and to have striven against it all his life, but so completely was he victor in that strife that his most intimate friends never saw the enemy which he routed. When business burdens were loosed from shoulders weary of that load, it was no uncommon thing for him to spend eight hours a day in reading. In later years he admitted some lighter elements into his reading, but it was prevailingly *solid* to the last, and we should have said that if he were distinguished for one thing more than another it was mental *industry*.

Mr. C. H. Bellamy, an old and valued friend of Mr. Lowe's, who was associated with him in the work of the Rusholme Mutual Improvement Society for over seventeen years, has contributed the subjoined sketch. The two were exceedingly intimate, and were heartily at one in their efforts to promote intellectual growth in the church:—

"Mr. Lowe's connection with the Mutual Improvement Society at Rusholme was of a unique character. No one more thoroughly believed in the principle of 'mutual improvement,' and no one was more ready to take his part in this 'mutual' arrangement. Any scheme which had for its aim the improvement of the Society or its members, was sure to receive his commendation and hearty co-operation. It is

not too much to say that for years he was the life and soul of the Society, and it was only for reasons of the gravest importance that he would consent to absent himself from any of its meetings.

Not only had he been a moving spirit and active worker in the Society since its establishment on its present basis in 1874, but he had been connected with previous Societies of a similar character—though not always of the same name—which had been its precursors, and no doubt if the facts were fully known we should find that he was the original founder or suggester of the parent Society of all in 1841. In a most interesting paper entitled *A Retrospect*, which Mr. Lowe prepared for the Society's Manuscript Magazine in 1889, he describes this first Society, but treats the part which he took in it so modestly that it is difficult to determine the exact position he held in respect to its foundation. It is, however, clear from the account he gives of the vicissitudes of that Society and its successors, that he played a very active part in their meetings, and took perhaps more than his share of the work connected therewith.

Coming down to the commencement of the Society in its present form in 1874, it is well known that Mr. Lowe was one of those who were most anxious for its organization, and who promised it all possible assistance. It is noteworthy that after the President's inaugural address, Mr. Lowe occupied the first evening with an interesting paper, thus showing in a practical manner his sympathy with the Society, and his readiness to help. From that period up to the time of his death, not a session passed without his name appearing on the syllabus, and his assistance being fully rendered in a variety of ways. The list of papers which he has read or prepared during that time, shows a variety most remarkable in character and catholic in selection, the subjects dealt with comprising various branches of science, Biblical and theological subjects, travel, biography, and all shades of literary matters.

It was a custom with Mr. Lowe to write an essay on subjects which interested or pleased him, not with a view to its immediate delivery, but simply for the pleasure of writing, and to preserve his views and thoughts. It thus generally happened that he had it in his power to offer a selection of subjects to the secretaries when they were preparing the sessional syllabus. It was this generous, free-handed manner of his in intellectual matters which made his influence so marked and made it so great a treat to listen to

the unfolding of his stores of knowledge. He was full of information on the majority of the subjects brought before the society, and it was only on some of the severest technical character that he took the position of a learner. When he did take such a position it was always with great meekness, evincing profound interest in the subject, and an evident desire to learn all about it that he could. Another noticeable feature in his character in this connection was that even when speaking or reading upon a subject in which he was deeply versed, he never treated it in a dogmatic manner, but expressed a willingness and desire to hear opposite views. It must be confessed, however, that he often was so impressed with the force of his own argument that it was difficult for him to give due weight to these opposite views. It was a remarkable feature in his utterances that they were always full of information, and so absorbed would he be with the subject in hand that if ever there was a pause in the discussion he was always ready and anxious to fill it up with another contribution from his treasury. It often fell to his lot to commence the discussion, for the members had learned to expect his well-worn formula—'It is a pity to waste time, so I will say a few words,' and knowing his willingness to speak, they were generally willing to allow him to have his 'say' first.

He was particularly kind and gentle in his appreciation and criticism of the efforts made by the younger members, and it was strange to notice how, even when controverting some such maiden effort, he did it in such a manner that the member concerned hardly felt that he was receiving a castigation. On the other hand it was an intellectual treat to hear him dealing with the production of some member to whom he knew criticism would be welcome, and who would receive even adverse criticism in a friendly spirit. At such a time his whole soul would seem full of emotion, and with great earnestness he would expose the weaknesses of his opponent's arguments and opinions. His affection for young people and interest in their welfare was manifested in many ways. Many years ago he and the writer spent an hour or two together, after the service on Sunday evenings, in reading and discussing some religious work—Young's *Night Thoughts*, for instance. Mr. Lowe's acquaintance with poetry of this class was unique; he fairly revelled in Milton, nor was his knowledge of the dramas of Shakspeare much less extensive.

Another remarkable feature in Mr. Lowe's character

which often struck the writer was the equanimity with which he suffered defeat when propounding schemes or proposing resolutions in committee. It sometimes happened that after unfolding a pet scheme before his fellow members of the committee, he received only such support as would have disheartened many other men, but to him it seemed to make no difference. One notable instance was when he so strongly advocated the acquisition of a telescope for the Society, so that the members might become amateur astronomers. On this occasion we believe he was in a minority of one, but all the same he was nothing daunted or grieved.

Mr. Lowe was an unflinching standard-bearer of Truth, and any unorthodox remark was sure to be detected by him. He would fight keenly when principle was involved, and would never surrender one jot to the opponents of righteousness.

It is quite certain that the meetings of the Society were a source of great joy to him, and sometimes when deeply touched or under the influence of music, he would describe himself as being in 'the seventh heaven.' Although at times his praise seemed to be somewhat extravagant, yet all knew it was thoroughly sincere, and was prompted by the fulness of his heart.

It is no departure from the strictest veracity to say that his loss to the Society is irreparable, and the Society will never be the same now that he has gone from our midst. His presence alone was an inspiration, his grip was an encouragement, and his approbation a stimulus. He was the very embodiment of an old and gracious type of Methodist, homely and amiable, fervent yet genial, shrewd but kindly, his honest English nature made radiant and beautiful by love of God and man.

But whatever difference his absence will make in future meetings of the Society, his influence will be felt there for many years to come. There are many who will consider it one of the blessings of their lives to have known Father Lowe and enjoyed his friendship.

We may fitly conclude in lines written by the poet of Methodism :—

' We gather up with pious care
What happy saints have left behind ;
Their writings on our memory bear,
Their sayings on our faithful mind.

Their works which traced them to the skies,
 For patterns to ourselves we take,
 And dearly love, and highly prize,
 The mantle for the wearer's sake.'

List of Essays and Subjects dealt with by MR. LOWE at Meetings of the Society between 1874 and 1892.

- The Culdees; their Origin and History.
 The Chemistry of the Atmosphere.
 Heat.
 Are the Planets inhabited? (*Affirmative in debate*).
 My Trip to Shetland.
 The Immensity of the Universe. (*Illustrated with diagrams*).
 Which is the greater poet, Milton or Shakespeare?—
 (*Milton*).
 This Dim Spot which Men call Earth.
 Socrates.
 The Connected History of the Gospel Narratives.
 A Red-letter Day in Ireland.
 Why is the Sea Salt?
 'Until Shiloh Come.'—*Genesis* xliv. 10.
 Steam.
 The Music of the Spheres.
 The Gradation of Animal Being.
 A Review of Hodder's "On Holy Ground."
 An Incident in Ancient History.
 An Exposition of the 12th Chapter of *Ecclesiastes*.
 The Two Anointings.
 Elysium.
 Summer Rambles in Cheshire, Derbyshire, Lancashire,
 and Yorkshire.
 Major General Worsley and the Commonwealth,—a
 Rusholme Celebrity.
 Prophetic Parallels.
 That Capital Punishment ought to be Abolished—
 (*Affirmative in debate*).
 'Give us this Day our Daily Bread.'
 Pythagoras: was he Indebted to the Prophet Daniel
 for the Superior Morals which he Taught?
 Review of 'The Autobiography of Rev. Asa Mahan,
 D.D.'
 A Visit to London.
 A Comparison between Moses and Christ.

Christ's Humiliation and Exaltation as Portrayed in the Psalms.

A Sail along the Antrim Coast.

Lunar Phenomena. (*Illustrated with Diagrams*).

Some Aspects of Lunar Scenery. (*Illustrated*.)

The Change of the Seasons.

Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.

Review of 'Thomas Cooper's Autobiography.'

A Sun in Flames.

Is the Doctrine of the Soul's Immortality Taught in the Pentateuch?

A Retrospect: being a history of the Mutual Improvement Society from its First Commencement.

Review of Dr. Smiles' 'Men of Invention and Industry.'

Review of Dr. Harris' 'Pre-Adamite Earth.'

Was Christ Born on the 25th of December?

A String of Pearls.

The material interests of Christ's Church, and the provision of suitable accommodation for both worship and work, were dear to the heart of Thomas Lowe. He loved the humble house of prayer which had been built in 1829; it was hallowed to him by recollections of many and mighty blessings received there, but that did not blind him to the imperative need for larger and better provision when Rusholme's population was increasing "by leaps and bounds." In 1844 a row of pews had been placed down the middle of the chapel, leaving the pewless sides for the scholars. In 1852 gas was introduced and the chapel beautified, the total cost being £14 14s. od. But these improvements seem only to have whetted the appetite for more, and in the same year the Sunday School Committee put this minute upon their book:—

"The number of scholars on the register, and the average attendance have increased. The Superintendents and Teachers are deeply impressed with the necessity, as soon as possible, of a larger place of worship; feeling assured that the Society, as well as the School, would be greatly benefited."

Four years pass, and then at a public meeting

Messrs. Hounsfield, Porteus, Lowe, and Smith, are appointed as "a Committee of Management, with power to add to their number, to confer together from time to time and take such steps as may be deemed necessary to raise the funds required for the erection of a new chapel."

That committee not only conferred, but took steps to raise the funds. This is Mr. Lowe's account of those toilsome years, 1856-1862 :—

"We were a 'feeble folk,' and could not do much ourselves. However in the year 1856 we resolved to make an effort, and began to subscribe small sums weekly according to our ability. This we invested at six per cent (*Tempora mutantur!*) and bided our time with what patience we could muster. The authorities at Oxford Road, for the time, withheld their sympathy, as they had other schemes in hand. Thus we plodded on for six weary years. During this time I used to collect small sums weekly, often as low as a penny per week, and never more than sixpence weekly from one subscriber.

At length, the other circuit schemes being in great measure accomplished, the authorities took our case in hand; and after much begging, and surmounting almost insuperable difficulties in respect to the building site, the long desired object was completed.

Brother John sent us £50 from Australia; I could not do much, but gave according to my ability, and almost beyond it, the sum of £10. Altogether, with Brother John's £50, and much hard begging, I got £100 towards the Building Fund."

Do the privileged worshippers of to-day think of those "six weary years"? The fair temple in which they meet Sunday by Sunday is bejewelled more resplendently than the Taj Mahal at Agra. "Precious stones" of loving self-sacrifice are built into its walls. When we think of this struggling man of business, this inveterate book-lover, toiling on through "six weary years," collecting sums varying from a penny to sixpence weekly, we may well remember that water from the well of Bethlehem which David poured out unto the Lord. That was a glorious hour of heroic daring on the part of the three mighty

men, but here we see the obscure "drudgery of begging," patiently taken up for "six weary years," that he might have something to offer to "Great David's greater Son."

It was a glad day when on December 3rd, 1862, the reverend Dr. Hannah, theological tutor of Didsbury College, preached the first sermon in the New Chapel, and if anybody had a right to rejoice in that House of God it was Thomas Lowe.

When the foundation stones of the recently opened School were laid it was a peculiar gratification to see amongst those honoured to do this work, Thomas Lowe. His heart was full of rejoicing over the suitability of the various rooms for the purposes of Sunday School work, and once more up to his ability, and almost beyond it, he gave and collected for the School in which he had so long laboured for Christ.

In the service of praise Mr. Lowe took a deep delight. He sat in the choir for many years, and when a stranger occupied the pulpit it was no uncommon thing for him to ask, at the close of the service, who the old man was who sat in the choir, whose rapt face had been an inspiration to him all through the service. He had sought to fit himself for this work also:—

"About this time (1841) I began to acquire a little knowledge of music. I had always, since my conversion, taken great pleasure in singing, but I was ignorant of the most elementary knowledge of music as a science. Now by joining a music class I succeeded in acquiring a knowledge of some of the elementary facts of the science. This was a source of great enjoyment to me. My voice was adapted for singing the bass part, and of course to that I gave my attention. I did not succeed so far as to be able to read music at sight, but only so far as that when I had sung a tune several times, the sight of the notes recalled the musical sounds to my mind. Many times I have gone to the weekly gatherings for practice, low-spirited, and under great mental depression, and I have returned light-hearted and joyous.

By the Divine blessing I owe very much to the soul-elevating influences of vocal music; and now, at the age of seventy, *I can listen*, and sometimes join in a soul-stirring tune with some of the ardour of forty years ago."

The seven years spent at Barton Moss would have been counted wasted by a mammon-worshipper, but one result of that chequered septennate caused Mr. Lowe heartfelt rejoicing to the end. We have seen how both his father and mother introduced Methodism into villages where it had not previously existed, at least in visible church-life. Their son trod in their steps when he took up his residence in Barton Moss. He believed that this type of "Christianity in earnest" would prove a blessing to every village in the land. Looking back upon this troubled period he wrote:—

"But the chief good that came out of it was this, it was the means of introducing Methodism into that locality. It might be truly said that prior to this time the place was like a little heathen colony. It was nearly three miles from the nearest place of worship or sabbath school.

Early in 1867 when part of our family resided there, I commenced a week-night service on Tuesday evenings. A dear friend of mine, Mr. Thomas Willshaw, who had a class of young men under his care, undertook by means of these young men to establish a Sabbath service there, in our little cottage (I spent my Sabbaths in Rusholme). There are men in the regular ministry now who first began preaching in that cottage.

These services so far succeeded as to lead us to decide on building a little chapel on some land I gave for that purpose: and with the help of the Wesleyan friends from Barton, Eccles, and Patricroft, this was accomplished. Mr. Willshaw, who was in that branch of business, built it about the year 1869. I begged among the friends on this side the city about £20 towards the erection. In this building a Sunday school was commenced which has been the means of much good, in preventing much of that wild lawless Sabbath-breaking which were so prevalent formerly."

Mr. Lowe's deepest and purest joy was to see a manifest revival of the work of God in the Church.

Such joy was his when he took up his abode in Rusholme in 1839. The membership of the Church was doubled within a few months. Mr. Brown, a godly local preacher, delivered what proved to be his last message, to the congregation worshipping in the Old Chapel, on Sunday, September 29th. His text was, "Woe to them that are ease in Zion," and many young people were deeply moved by his faithful warnings and earnest pleadings. The effect was deepened by his death eight days after, and from that time onward constant accessions to the Church were made. Scotch soldiers belonging to the 79th Regiment came and helped forward the good work, and among those whom the net enclosed were Mr. Lowe's first wife and she who now survives our departed friend.

Like joy filled his heart in the Autumn of 1858. On Sunday, October 3rd, an eccentric but most earnest student from Didsbury College was preaching special sermons in the old Wesleyan Chapel at Withington. He was mighty in prayer, and God guided his hand to touch chords in the hearts of his hearers which vibrated into unfeigned penitence and faith. Young people from Rusholme had walked over the fields that fine Autumn evening and found a blessing unexpectedly, like treasure hid in a field. They came back to kindle in Rusholme the fire which had begun to burn in their own heart, and all the elder children of Mr. Lowe were made "wise unto salvation" at that time. Peter Mackenzie was honoured of God to begin a work whose fruit remains unto this day.

Yet once again, in life's eventide, the old warrior's spirit was stirred by the conflicts and victories of the Church in Rusholme. Mr. and Mrs. Palmer-Stanton, from the United States, were privileged to do a great work for God in our midst. On the first

Sunday morning of that Mission, Mr. Lowe worshipped in the House of Prayer he loved so well for the last time. He believed that their work was the work of God, and that it must go on. When tidings of blessed success reached him he rejoiced exceedingly, and at the family altar he daily commended to God the young converts over whom his heart yearned unceasingly.

In the earlier years of Mr. Lowe's Christian life he was constantly engaged in preaching. Essay-writing was diligently practised all through his life, and goodly quartos of his writings are left behind, but there is no trace of a written sermon in them all.

Preaching must have come naturally to Mr. Lowe. Pulpit themes were always occupying his mind, and his stores of well-digested knowledge enabled him to deal with Christian doctrine and Christian life, with little or no *special* preparation. In his ordinary conversation there was a serious thoughtfulness that bespoke the preacher. His sentences were so solidly built that they might have been spoken by a bishop. When S. T. Coleridge asked his friend Charles Lamb if he had ever heard him preach, the genial wit replied that he had never heard him do anything else! In weightiness of utterance, in his constant selection of topics "wherewith one may edify another," Mr. Lowe was always preaching. There was no chasm between the man in the home and in business, and the preacher in the pulpit. "How like him!" would be the natural comment upon hearing him preach.

When the appointed preacher failed to come, Mr. Lowe, with no warning, was expected to go up from the choir to the pulpit, that he might preach as well as sing there; and he never refused. Most men would have rebelled, and many would have thought

about their reputation; he thought about nothing but serving his Master and feeding the flock of God. Even under such disadvantageous circumstances he would preach a solid, thoughtful, well-reasoned discourse. He might have prefaced every sermon with the apostolic word—"I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." But besides the never absent appeal to the reason, he knew how to touch heart, and conscience, and will; he not only saw truth in the dry light of the understanding, but he felt it in his inmost soul, bowed to its authority, and would fain bring others to embrace and obey it in the love of it as he did.

In the troubled period of the Reform agitation his name disappeared from the Circuit Plan. It was not because he had looked back from the plough, not because he had wavered in his convictions, but he was asked not to preach for the "Reformers," and he said his commission was to preach the gospel to every creature, and he would not undertake not to help the "Reformers" if they were in need of a preacher. When he lay upon his death-bed the local preachers sent through their Secretary a resolution of sympathy with him; he had lived long enough to see that fratricidal strife well-nigh forgotten, and to hear frank brotherly speech between the generations succeeding the old combatants.

During his yearly visits to Congleton, his spiritual birth-place, it was his habit to accompany the son of his old friend Mr. George Pedley, who followed in his father's steps, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Sometimes one would preach, and sometimes the other, and sometimes both. On one occasion Mr. Lowe said to his friend—

"Now we must have two texts to-day. You shall take whichever you like, and I will take the other.

The first must be 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' and the second, 'This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.'

This was exceedingly characteristic. His first essay was on *Knowledge*, and "eternal life" he felt to be knowing God.

As Mr. Lowe approached his seventieth birthday the idea of recognising his long and faithful services in the Church occurred to somebody, and it had only to be bodied forth in words to meet with ready approval from a wide circle of friends and admirers. It will be better to let the story be told in his own words:—

"I must now record one of the most affecting incidents of my life.

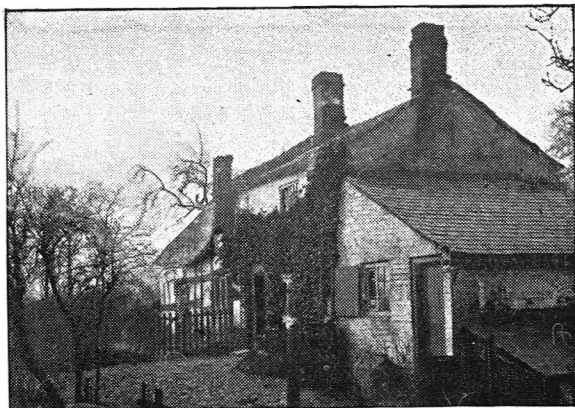
The dear friends at Rusholme, with whom I have the privilege of being associated in Christian fellowship, were aware that on May 17th, 1885, I should be seventy years old. They resolved to invite me to a friendly cup of tea, as with some of them I had been associated for more than forty years. I was invited to meet a few friends on this occasion: I expected to meet a dozen or two of the leading friends, and thought that probably they might present me with a good book, or some other small token of their regard. The 17th of May fell on a Sunday, so that the gathering took place on the Saturday evening preceding. I was greatly surprised to meet 130 friends in the Sunday school, all of whom had been actively concerned (so I was informed) in the presentation which was to follow, and some others who were there by invitation from other parts of the circuit; also all the members of my family (including my dear grandchildren, Harold and Hilda) with the exception of Alfred and his family, who, living so far away, could not be present; also the Rev. W. H. Finney and his good wife, the Rev. James Chalmers, and the Rev. Henry Bone.

It was no small trial to me to sit and listen to earnest affectionate talk about myself for three hours; but it had to be endured. My dear friend Mr. Willshaw was deputed to present to me a material proof of their kindness, which consisted of a massive Time-piece with the following inscription:—
'Presented to Mr. Thomas Lowe, on his 70th Birthday, by

the members of the Society, his Sunday School Class of Young Women, and other friends and fellow-workers, as an expression of their esteem and love. Wesleyan Chapel, Rusholme, May 17th, 1885.'

Then I had to say something in acknowledgment of this unexpected expression of their kindness, and I stammered out something. I have often felt the inadequacy of words to express the emotions of my mind, but never more so than on that occasion. My son William made a short speech, suitably acknowledging their kindness to me and through me to the family. Rev. George Hack, our resident minister, was in the chair, and the meeting was addressed by the Rev. Henry Bone, Rev. W. H. Finney, rector of Platt Church, who spoke in a spirit of beautiful Christian sympathy; Mr. H. E. Robinson, Circuit Steward; and Messrs. H. Turner, Thomas Willshaw, W. Royle, Bellamy, Smith, Withers, Swindells, F. Robinson and T. T. Burnett."





BIRCH FOLD COTTAGE.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLOSING DAYS.

"I will not say, 'God's ordinance
Of Death is blown in every wind ;'
For that is not a common chance
That takes away a noble mind."

"The great Intelligences fair
That range above our mortal state,
In circle round the blessed gate,
Received and gave him welcome there ;
And led him thro' the blissful climes,
And showed him in the fountain fresh
All knowledge that the sons of flesh
Shall gather in the cycled times."

Tennyson.

BUT little remains now to be told. A noble life was crowned by an ideal earthly close. Painsley House was exchanged for Birch Fold Cottage on June 10th, 1891. It seemed fitting that he who first saw the light in Wybun-

bury should close his eyes amid the country scenes which he had loved so well. In that picturesque cottage, with its old timbered walls and thatched roof, it was hard to believe that a huge city was so near.

Homely joys awaited him in this quiet retreat. Whilst he had strength he rejoiced to help in light household duties. He knew the shadows were lengthening across his pathway, and there were reasons that made him willing to live a little longer. He would have liked to see the Manchester Ship Canal open from end to end, bearing on its waters the argosies of a world-wide commerce; and there were other great movements in social and political spheres in whose development he took the greatest interest: and yet few lives end with so narrow a margin of unfulfilled desires. His life in its deep peace and contentment seemed to say, "I have all things and abound."

The following account gives us a vivid glimpse of the peace and glory of the eventide:—

"Prayer was an inspiration with him. Especially when children or grandchildren were going away from him, his heart overflowed in prevailing intercession for them.

When a son was going on business to the United States, the pleading patriarch asked, in mighty faith, that the voyage might be a safe one, and that God would bring the voyagers to 'their desired haven.' That prayer will always be remembered by his children. The ship thus encompassed by the 'prayer of a righteous man' was the S.S. 'Oregon.' She was lost, but by a wonderful providence no life was lost with her.

Only last August his eldest grand-daughter came to visit him on her way to Madras, where she is now engaged in Mission work. When the time for parting came, he gathered all his children within call and commended her to God's keeping, and never did he forget to mention her name at the family altar as long as he had strength to lead the family devotions.

During that period also the news of his brother William's

death in Australia reached him. They had been boys together; they passed into the Kingdom together, so that they were spoken of as spiritual twins; they had worked together in a Manchester warehouse; and though they had been separated for fifty years, they had been closely united in that spiritual kinship which defies time and distance. On opposite sides of the globe they could sing—

‘And mountains rise and oceans roll
To sever us in vain.’

The younger brother had gone home first, but the re-union was near. They ‘were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not (long) divided.’

But the summer brought joy as well as sorrow. Rev. Joseph Albiston, and his son Rev. Arthur Albiston, came from Australia to visit ‘the old country.’ Thirty-five years ago the father was a local preacher in Manchester. Tidings of his brother was as water to a thirsty soul, and the three visits of these ministers made the old man’s heart dance for joy. On leaving England Mr. Albiston wrote to say that they were returning to Australia by way of the Holy Land, and they expected to reach home by the end of February. During the last week of my father’s life he asked day by day if the vessel were telegraphed as having arrived, and on the Monday before he was taken from us we were able to tell him that the ship had arrived. ‘Thank God the vessel is safely in!’ he said.

My father was perfectly happy in his new surroundings. It was just what he had always longed for. Many have heard him say how when he was a schoolboy he read a book called *The Pleasing Instructor*, in which these lines occurred:—

‘And may I, in good old age,
Find out some peaceful hermitage.’

He had never forgotten the couplet, and never ceased to cherish the desire of which it spoke; and now the ‘peaceful hermitage, was his. Happy in his books, and still happier in the visits of his friends, he was released from care, and a deep content filled his soul. His cheery talk during those peaceful months will be long and gratefully remembered.

We had hoped that years of restful retirement might be his, but disease was silently doing its work, and the end was nearer than we thought. Paroxysms of pain were constantly occurring, and strength was fast ebbing away; but it was not till about five weeks before the end that we deemed him

seriously ill. The weakness became more marked, and at last the time came when he could sit up no longer.

His room was nevertheless the brightest in the house; it seemed a misnomer to call it a sick room. As each morning dawned he would say, 'Just draw up the blind and let the daylight in.' He took great interest in the birds that flitted about the trees near his window, and rejoiced greatly to hear them sing on the few warm days that February brought. His hold upon our daily life and all its concerns was unrelaxed right to the end.

We knew that he would like to see his children once again, and all were summoned to take their farewell. Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Lowe and their little son (the only grandchild he had not seen) came from Belfast, and the two sons from London. When we told him they were all coming, he said, 'I am very glad they are coming; I would have them every week-end if I could.'

It was his last earthly Sabbath, and it seemed to leave nothing to be desired. In the afternoon fifteen of those dearest to him gathered around his bed. His eldest son read John xiv. and prayed; then each one came separately and bade the dying saint adieu, and each one received a parting blessing. There are not many such meetings and partings on earth, even in the homes of God's people, and we are never likely to forget that hour of prayer and benediction.

When he had recovered his strength a little he said, 'You have your work to do in the world. Go home again. I have seen you; I have blessed you; I am satisfied!'

On Tuesday he requested some letters to be written to various friends. He was specially desirous to see one dear friend from Congleton, whom he loved for his own sake and for his father's sake. His friend came without delay on the following day. It was a memorable meeting between the veteran and the comparatively young soldier of Jesus Christ, making the onlookers think of Paul and Timothy. Mr. Pedley began to speak of what he owed to the example and counsels of his venerable friend, but the lowly saint said, 'I see things so differently now. I see so many things that I ought not to have done.' Then, after a pause, he added—

'And lo! from sin, and grief, and shame,
I hide me, Jesus, in Thy name.'

Yes, the trusted anchor held even 'in the swellings of Jordan.'

It was 'a time to weep' for those who loved him, but from

his eyes the tears were already wiped away, and his face was radiant with the light that comes from the Eternal.

All through that night there was much pain and restlessness. On the following morning he expressed a wish to see his minister once again. The pain had now gone and he dozed frequently. Opening his eyes at length he saw his friend and pastor at the foot of the bed. The old heart-welcome shone in his face, and he was thankful to have 'no pain' and to be 'perfectly comfortable.' He had said that he should not live through the day, but he was not self-absorbed; he still kept

'A heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize.'

Memory, and all the powers of the mind, seemed to be absolutely unimpaired. 'The enemy was as still as a stone,' as good John Bunyan says. He never missed his foothold in the river. No cloud for one moment shadowed the serene confidence of his childlike heart. It was as though he had been ready for this hour for more than fifty years; there was no need to 'make haste.'

Last messages had to be spoken, however. She who had the best right to speak to him at such a time said, 'What must Mr. Strutt say to the girls?' Instantly the old smile, which seemed to take all hearts captive, swept over the pale face as he said, 'Aye, bless them! All's well! all's well! I am trusting—entirely.' A little time afterwards he spoke another word intended for a wider circle—'You must tell them—at the Chapel—other foundation—I have none—and *I want none.*'

Later in the day his tried friend Mr. Bellamy came and commended him into God's loving keeping.

To those who watched it did not seem probable that he would be home before night, but he did not wish to spend another night on earth, and God fulfilled His servant's desire. As gentle hands were trying to give him a little ease, he said, 'I have fought a good fight'; then, speaking becoming more difficult, he added, '~~I—have—kept—the faith.~~' The shadows of evening were gathering as the two watchers waited for the end. He turned and said, 'Christ—uttermost.' The verse was repeated for him, and he smiled and moved his head. Once again he spoke: 'Wash—white'; and again the transfiguring smile came. He twice spoke in answer to the one he loved best on earth, and then the lips grew silent for the long silence. In this hush which preceded the end, the door

was softly opened and one of his oldest and dearest friends, Mr. Turner, joined the watchers. No words were spoken; they were not needed. The 'everlasting doors' were opening wide, and another ransomed soul passed through to mingle with those 'who have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

It was thus that Thomas Lowe fell asleep on March 3rd, 1892. He has not lived in vain, and by his fruitful life he "yet speaketh" to us. The spirit of the age is more or less frivolous, given over to exciting pleasures and distractions. We are hurried and driven hither and thither by whirling currents setting in upon us from many quarters. We do not wonder when Matthew Arnold asks mournfully—

"What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
What leisure to grow wise?"

and we are too apt to acquiesce and say, None! The "spirit of the age" breathed upon our friend but another Spirit possessed him. He lived among the realities of the unseen world, and they steadied, and dignified, and glorified his character.

It has been said that it is difficult to "grow old gracefully." God's grace in Thomas Lowe easily and perfectly accomplished this difficult work. Long years of struggle and painful discipline had brought in those *virtues* which formed the groundwork of his life. We knew they were there; we took them for granted, and almost forgot them in our admiration of the *graces* which adorned his character. A short interview was enough to send you away saying—"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance"; and fuller knowledge only led one more heartily to magnify the grace of God in him.

From the sheaf of letters received after his

departure one may be given here as typical of many others. It was from one of his oldest, one of his best friends :—

“ Holmrook,
Altrincham,
May 24th, 1892.

“ My dear Miss Lowe,

I must apologise for this long delay in thanking you for your late dear father's funeral card and your very kind letter.

I have been thankful to hear from your brother and his wife of the beautiful end of his noble life. It is forty-seven years since I made his acquaintance, and our intercourse has ever been of the pleasantest character. There was always an attraction for me in your home, and I felt the stimulating and healthful influence of your dear father's conversation.

He was an enthusiastic lover of good men ; a great reader of the best kind of literature ; a diligent student of the works and word of God ; a man of lofty aims, of pure motives, and one who revelled in regions of sublime thought. His simplicity of character, his truly Christian spirit, and his well-furnished mind, made the impression upon many of his friends that he was not only a good man, but a great man. He was also a true and faithful friend, and in his removal I have lost my oldest Manchester friend. I cannot but look back upon his noble life with thankfulness that the grace of God has been so beautifully displayed in a long and useful career.

Believe me, dear Miss Lowe,

Yours very sincerely,

T. WILLSHAW.”

The lessons which such a life enforces are worth our learning. His voice speaking from the heavenly places, seems to say, “ Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness ” : the pleasures of your higher nature are keener, more satisfying, more enduring than the pleasures of sense : Christian character can be achieved though a man's environment may appear to be unfavourable : equipment for God's service cannot be too painstaking, too thorough : “ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”

Whosoever thinks upon such a life, and such a death, having such blessed issues here on earth and there "behind the veil," will be prepared to say with the quaint but delightful Harry Vaughan—

"Oh! let me, like him, know my end,
And be as glad to find it;
And whatsoe'er Thou shalt commend,
Still let Thy servant mind it!
Then make my soul white as his own,
My faith as pure and steady,
And deck me, Lord, with the same crown
That has crown'd him already!"

THE END.



