

JOHN NEWTON

BY

WILLIAM JAY

Mr Newton, once the vicar of Olney, and afterward the rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, is well known by his remarkable conversion, his various writings, and his usefulness to the church of God at large.

During my first visit to London to supply Mr Hill's chapel, one Friday morning, after hearing me, he came into the vestry. I did not then know his person; but he introduced himself, and, to my surprise, intimated a wish to retire into the house with me. I led him into the study; and I have never forgotten the condescension and kindness with which he addressed me. Taking me by the hand, he said, "Some of us are going off the stage, but we rejoice to see others rising up, and coming forward. But, my young friend, you are in a very trying situation, and I am concerned for your safety and welfare. I have been so many years in the ministry, and so many years a minister in London; and if you will allow me to mention some of the snares and dangers to which you are exposed, I shall be happy to do it." How could I help feeling, not only willing to receive, but grateful for, such a seasonable warning? And how useful might the aged servants of God be to the younger, if they would privately and freely communicate of their experiences and observations! Some of the things he mentioned seemed for the moment rather strange and needless; but I confided in his wisdom, and time has fully shown me that they were all words in season.

Contrasts strike us; and it is curious and useful to observe the different qualities and manners of good men themselves. A week after this interview, one of his very attached followers (a Mr B_y) wished to introduce me to Mr Romaine. I can truly say I shrunk back from modest timidity; but he urged me and prevailed; and one Tuesday morning, after the service at Blackfriars Church, he took me into the vestry, and, with a few words, mentioned my name. But Mr Romaine noticed me in no other way than, as immediately leaving the room, he said very audibly, *There was a Sir Harry Trelawney.*" I inferred that some faithful caution was intended, but, a mere youth from the country, and little acquainted with the religious world, I had never heard of the person by whose errors or fall I was to be warned, until I inquired. I have no doubt of the aim of both these admonishers, and I ought to have been thankful to the latter as well as to the former; but severity does not actuate like affection; and "he that *winneth* souls is wise." [Proverbs 11:30].

Mr Newton also invited me to call upon him, and to his kind of open breakfast I soon repaired; and for years afterward, whenever I was in town, I availed myself as often as it was in my power of this invaluable privilege. On these occasions one met with ministers and Christians of all denominations; for he loved all who loved the Saviour, and all, while they were with him, felt themselves to be "one in Christ Jesus." [Galatians 3:28].

In the family worship, after reading a chapter, he would add a few remarks on some verse or sentence, very brief, but weighty and striking, and affording a sentiment for the day. Whoever was present, he always prayed himself; the prayer was never long, but remarkably suitable and simple. After the service and the breakfast, he withdrew to his study with any of his male friends who could remain for a while, and there, with his pipe (the only pipe I ever liked, except Robert Hall's), he would converse in a manner the most easy, and free, and varied, and delightful, and edifying.

Much has been published concerning this excellent man, and it is possible, that some of the few things I would gratify my readers with, may have been reported by others who witnessed them; but I shall mention nothing underived from my own personal knowledge and observation.

There was nothing about him dull, or gloomy, or puritanical, according to the common meaning of the term. As he had much good-nature, so he had much pleasantry, and frequently emitted sparks of lively wit, or rather humour; yet they never affected the comfort or reputation of any one, but were perfectly innocent

and harmless. Sometimes he had the strangest fetches of drollery. Thus, one day, by a strong sneeze, he shook off a fly which had perched upon his gnomon, and immediately said, "Now, if this fly keeps a diary, he he'll write, 'To-day a terrible earthquake!'" At another time, when I asked him how he slept, he instantly replied, "I 'm like a beef-steak — once turned, and I 'm done."

"Some people," said he, "believe much better than they reason. I once heard a good old woman arguing in favour of eternal election. 'Sir,' said she, 'I am sure if God had not chosen me before I was born, he would never have chosen me after.'"

At another time he mentioned facetiously, and with his peculiar smile, the language of a poor good woman when dying:—"I believe His word, and am persuaded, notwithstanding my unworthiness and guilt, that my Lord Jesus will save me from all my sins and sorrows, and bring me home to Himself; and if He does, He will never hear the last of it!"

He one day told of a countryman who said to his minister, "You often speak of our FORE-fathers; now, I know only of three—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Pray, sir, who is the *fourth*?"

He also more than once mentioned, that he knew a good man and woman, who read the Scriptures morning and evening in their daily worship, to whom a gentleman gave a folio commentary to aid them. But after they had tried it for some time, the husband said to the wife, "I think we did better before we had this great book. When we read the Bible itself only, it was like a glass of pure wine; but now it is like a glass of wine in a pail of water."

One day, speaking of the various effects of affliction, he said, "I lately visited a good woman who had just had her house and goods destroyed by fire. I said to her, 'Madam, I am come to congratulate you.' 'What!' she replied, 'upon the destruction of my property?' 'No, but to hail you on your possessing property which nothing can destroy.' This awakened a surprise and a smile in her tears, like a sunshine in the showers of April. 'What enabled the Hebrew believers to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, but knowing in themselves that in heaven they had a better and an enduring substance?'"

When I one day called upon him, he said, "I am glad to see you, for I have just received a letter from Bath, and you may know something of the writer," mentioning his name. I told him I did, and that he had been for years a hearer of mine, but he was a most awful character, and "almost in all evil." "But," says he, "he writes now like a penitent." I said, "He may be such; but, if he be, I shall never despair of the conversion of any one again." "Oh," says he, "I never did, since God saved me."

I recollect a little sailor-boy calling upon him, with his father. Mr Newton soon noticed him, and, taking him between his knees, he told him he had been much at sea himself, and then sang part of a naval song. Was this beneath him? Would not the lad always favourably remember him?

One morning in the family worship he read 2 Peter 3:1—9, the last words being, "but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He began his exposition thus: "These words, I suppose, are a hard bone for a Calvinist to pick." He was aware that one in the company required some moderating. This person, a little too forward, as well as too high, afterwards, as we were at breakfast, rather abruptly said, "Pray, Mr Newton, are you a Calvinist?" He replied, "Why, sir, I am not fond of calling myself by any particular name in religion. But why do you ask me the question?" "Because," he replied, "sometimes when I read you, and sometimes when I hear you, I think you are a Calvinist; and then, again, I think you are not." "Why, sir," said Mr Newton, "I am more of a Calvinist than anything else; but I use my Calvinism in my writings and my preaching as I use this sugar"—taking a lump, and putting it into his tea-cup, and stirring it, adding, "I do not give it alone, and whole; but mixed, and diluted."

Another morning a forward young man said, "Pray, Mr Newton, what do you think of the entrance of sin into our world?" "Sir," said he, "I never think of it. I know there is such a thing as moral evil, and I know there is a remedy for it; and there my knowledge begins, and there it ends."

Another morning there was, with several other preachers, sitting in his study, a Baptist minister, a very good man, who had appeared to some disproportionately zealous in making converts to his own opinion. The conversation was turning upon the choice of texts. "Ah," said Mr Newton, "Brother S_n, there is one text I can preach from, and which *you* cannot." "Sir," said he, "what can that be?"—Mr Newton replied, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." [1 Corinthians 1:17]. Mr S_n took the hint without the least offence, and no one laughed more heartily.

As my brother-in-law was vicar of Olney, I sometimes visited that hallowed spot; and as, of course, I could not minister in the church, I always went, when I was going to engage in the meeting, and studied my sermon in the pew where Cowper heard, and in sight of the pulpit where Newton preached. "Superstition!" say some. But I found it good to be there. And how was I struck, when at the parsonage-house I went up into the attic, which was the study of this man of God, and saw, over his desk, on the wall, in very large letters, "REMEMBER THAT THOU WAST A BONDMAN IN THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND THE LORD THY GOD REDEEMED THEE;" [Deuteronomy 15:15] and "SINCE THOU HAST BEEN PRECIOUS IN MY SIGHT THOU HAST BEEN HONOURABLE, AND I HAVE LOVED THEE;" [Isaiah 43:4] and—"UNUS PRO OMNIBUS!" [One for All and All for One].

While residing at Olney, Mr Newton did much to liberalize and harmonize the religious parties; and one of his candid arrangements, I know, continued years after, and I hope does continue still. It was this:—At the beginning of the year, the Episcopalians [Anglicans], Independents, and Baptists blended their congregations three days following, and each minister preached in his own place a sermon to the young. I suggested the propriety of a little alteration, viz., for one sermon to be addressed to the young, and one to the middle-aged, and one to the old. As another proof and instance of his liberality and candour, though a beneficed clergyman of the Established Church, he drew up the plan for the Dissenting Academy at Newport Pagnell, which was placed under the superintendence of the Rev Thomas Bull, and supported by that great philanthropist, John Thornton, Esq.

In those days pious and evangelical clergymen of the Establishment were very few; and, owing to their sentiments and zeal, were often less regarded in their own communion than among many of the orthodox dissenters; and, therefore, when invited by them, they scrupled not to visit them, and even to make a considerable stay at their houses. Mr Newton for many years visited Portswood, near Southampton, a place from which many of his printed letters were directed. Here lived Walter Taylor, Esq, a dissenter in affluent circumstances, and blockmaker to the navy. Under his hospitable roof Mr Newton commonly spent five or six weeks annually, and while there he sometimes heard the Rev Mr Kingsbury, Mr Taylor's brother-in-law, and pastor of the Independent Church, and preached also frequently in his host's laundry to his family and workmen, and the neighbouring villagers.

Thus he speaks in one of his letters to Mr Campbell: "Here are five churches, but no pulpit open for me. But Mr Taylor has opened his house, and made room for about 300 hearers. I preach three evenings in the week while I stay. We are often full. My hearers are chiefly from the neighbouring villages, and seem willing to hear the Gospel, if they had any one to preach it to them. But, alas! in these parts, and in many parts of the kingdom, 'the hungry sheep look up and are not fed.'

Mr Romaine also for many years annually visited Mr Taylor for the same length of time; but he would never enter the meeting at Southampton with the family, nor speak in their, unconsecrated premises to the poor, and ignorant, and perishing, who would have hung upon his lips. But high-churchism had no scruples to

accept the accommodations about the house, and table, and carriage, and horses, for these were not schismatics, though their owner was. A Puseyite would have been more consistent. He would not have gone in with the uncircumcised and the unclean, nor had fellowship with them—"no, not to eat." [1 Corinthians 5:11].

I remember another instance of Mr Newton's candour and liberality. When Dr Buchanan, who had been much befriended by him, went out to India, holding a valuable ecclesiastical appointment, he seemed at first to have been shy of the Baptist missionaries. Upon hearing this, Mr Newton wrote him a kind but faithful letter, in which he said, (I had this from his own mouth,) "It is easy for you (little as yet tried in character, and from your superior and patronized station), to look down upon men who have given themselves to the Lord, and are bearing the burden and heat of the day. I do not look for miracles; but if God were to work one in our day, I should not wonder if it were in favour of Dr Carey." The admonition was well received, and this great and good man became kind and friendly.

The first year I went to London I heard two popular clergymen, who were going through the same epistle—the Epistle to the Ephesians. Both went on leisurely, and from verse to verse, till they came to the practical parts and relative duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, when one of them intimated he could not enlarge here, for the grace of God would teach them all this;¹ the other endeavoured to do as much justice to the preceptive, as to the doctrinal demands. I need not say this was Mr Newton.

Moderate and candid men are the most firm and unyielding with regard to their principles. Mr Newton exemplified this. In his letters to persons from whom he differed, we find him avowing his own convictions without the least hesitation or reserve; and not even sparing reproof when necessary, and without respect of persons. Dining one day with Mr Henry Thornton, I remember his speaking of Mr Newton's curate, Mr Gunn. He said, "I went to hear him, and was much dissatisfied with the lowness of his address, and the manner in which he spiritualized his subject, which was, 'I will make you fishers of men;' in the discussion of which everything, with regard to fishing and fish, was quaintly and facetiously explained and applied. Deeming it very objectionable, and likely to cause reproach, I wrote my complaint to Mr Newton; in reply to which here is his answer: 'My dear Sir,—I fear you did not go to hear my good man with a spiritual appetite, or you would have found food, as well as the many who hung on his lips,'" &c. Nor did the able and enlightened statesman (Mr Thornton), though not convinced, take it amiss, but admired his rebuker.

Mr Newton's intimate connexion with Cowper is well known. Some have thought the divine was hurtful to the poet. How mistaken were they! He was the very man, of all others, I should have chosen for him. He was not rigid in his creed. His views of the Gospel were most free and encouraging. He had the tenderest disposition; and always judiciously regarded his friend's depression and despondency as a physical effect, for the removal of which he prayed, but never reasoned or argued with him concerning it. Hence, also, on the other hand, when his niece, Miss Catlett, was for a season in the public institution for mental disorders, in visiting her, he found two individuals there whose cases, he was persuaded, had been mistaken. He considered them merely as subjects of spiritual distress; and he not only conversed but corresponded with them; and I remember his reading some of their letters, and remarking that here the preacher, rather than the physician, was wanted; adding, that he "thought God sometimes placed persons there to keep them out of this mad world."

I can testify to a case in some measure confirmatory of this. I knew a female whose irreligious friends, misunderstanding the nature and cause of her complaint, had sent her to this place of confinement. Her distress and despair arose from a deep conviction of her state as a sinner, and an utter ignorance of the way

¹ How came the apostle not to know this? why took he the need less trouble of enforcing these duties?

of salvation. One day, therefore, seeing a gentleman passing by her ward, whom she had known at her father's house, she most earnestly pressed him to obtain her release for a few days, during which he could judge concerning her state, when he would find it was not derangement. He did so. The gentleman was Mr Wathen, the celebrated oculist. At his desire I immediately met her. After she had heard me at Surrey Chapel, on the narrative of the Syro-Phoenician woman, she retired to pass the remainder of the day in weeping, not tears of sorrow, but of joy; for now she had found the consolation of Israel, the balm in Gilead, the Physician there. She returned no more to her confinement, but some time after married, and I believe is now living, an excellent wife and mother. There are cases in which, in this respect, it is extremely difficult, yet very important, to distinguish things that differ, both as to ourselves and others.

Mr Newton's attachment to his wife, I was going to say, was extreme. Some have wondered at this, as she seemed to them to have few, if any, attractions. But neither strangers nor friends could have known her like himself; and we may be assured love and esteem so deep and durable were not expended on little worth. Besides, God had in many ways remarkably employed her, both as his preserver and benefactress. He has told the public what supports and frames the Lord gave him at her decease; and how he inferred from them, that it was the will of God he should not lie by from his official duties, but perform them as at other times, regardless of the opinion or censure of the world. Accordingly, the Reminiscent heard him preach, while she lay unburied, from "He hath done all things well;" a text which not every divine could safely have taken on such a trying occasion. He also, the following Sunday, preached her funeral sermon, from Habakkuk 3:17,18, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

This text, he said, he had never taken before, keeping it in reserve for his greatest affliction, should he be exercised with it. And here a curious thing was observed. "When he came to speak of Mrs Newton, (which he did with a voice rather tremulous at first,) he said, it might seem strange for him to speak of the excellences of his wife, but he hoped he might be permitted to mention candidly a few of her faults or failings. He then spoke of her excessive attachment to himself—of her judging and estimating others by their regard to himself, &c., which had the effect, (though in the simplicity of his character he meant not so,) of leading his hearers to think and ask,—"If these were her chief faults, what were her excellences?"

He always seemed to have a present and lively feeling of his obligation to Divine grace, in saving him from his former state. He often, therefore, adverted to it in his conversation. Perhaps, with regard to his *profligacy* in that state, from the subsequent spirituality of his mind, like Bunyan, and some other good men, he spake too strongly. Yet he must have gone great lengths in *guilt* to justify what I have more than once heard him say,—that he had so sinned away the advantages of a good education, and resisted and stifled all his convictions, that for a time he had no more conscience than a brute; that, do what he would, he felt no moral reproof; and that, when a disease had brought him apparently near to death, he had no terror, and would have died like a lamb.

Though, at his first awakening, owing to his being then engaged in it, and the force of habit, he was not struck with the evil of the accursed slave-trade—yet, when led to just reflection upon that subject, no one could think worse of its enormity, or bewail himself more for the share he had had in it. To this, also, he often referred; and one day, as a person told him that the Americans had dubbed him DD, he said, "I always resolved I would accept of no diploma, unless it came from the poor blacks."

Not long before his death, a minister I well knew visited him, to whom he said, as he shook hands with him, "I suppose you will expect some sentence at parting? Well, let it be this,—

"Beware of Peter's word,
Nor confidently say,

'I never will deny Thee, Lord;
But, Grant I never may!"²

Alas! that this kind of dying, oracular admonition was lost upon this person, for he fell under the power of temptation!

I saw Mr Newton near the closing scene. He was hardly able to talk; and all I find I had noted down upon my leaving him is this,— "My memory is nearly gone; but I remember two things: That I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour." And, "Did you not, when I saw you at your house in Bath, desire me to pray for you? Well, then, now you must pray for me."

Mr Southey says, and says truly, that "Mr Newton was a strong-minded man." He did not, indeed, *always* show this in his preaching; for, owing to his ease of address, and illustration, and enlargement, and on which he could lean, and the numerous claims upon his time from the poor and afflicted, and visitors, and correspondents, he often entered the pulpit with little preparation; and frequently, as Mr Cecil in his *Life* remarks and laments, (and which he himself owned,) got the substance of his discourse between his house and his church. Some of his published sermons are exquisitely natural, and simple, and intelligible, and easily remembered; and would be much better models for young ministers than such as abound with abstruseness, and elaboration, and pomp, and finery.

I always admired, not only Mr Newton's theology, which moulded doctrine, and experience, and practice so finely into each other, but also his composition. Not a few of my younger brethren were formerly surprised at my calling it elegant; but they now have a much better authority than mine. Cowper has expressed his preference of his style to that of either Gibbon, or Robertson, or Hume. His volume on ecclesiastical history is above all praise, and makes every reader lament that he was not enabled or encouraged to continue that work to our own times. But he is most known by his admirable "Letters."

I heard him one day mention the sovereignty of God, not only in the choice of his instruments, but even in the mode in which he used them, and which often did not correspond with their own wishes, or the expectations of others. "Hervey," said he, "who was so blessed as a writer, was hardly able to mention a single instance of conversion by his preaching, and nothing could exceed the lifelessness of his audience; and I rather reckoned upon doing more good by some of my other works than by my 'Letters,' which I wrote without study, or any public design; but the Lord said, 'You shall be most useful by *them*;' and I learned to say, 'Thy will be done! use me as Thou pleasest, only make me useful.'"—What thousands have derived repeated profit and pleasure from the perusal of these utterances of the heart! Nor ever will they cease to be found means of grace, whilst God has a church on earth. With regard to myself, I commonly had one of these letters read to me on every Sabbath evening, after the labours of the day; and what refreshment and profit have I derived from them!

As numbers of his letters are continually issuing in collections, and also appearing separately in periodicals, evincing how acceptable, and even called for, they still are, perhaps the Reminiscent will be more than excused, if he here introduces the two following, as they are very characteristic of the man and his manner.

The first was addressed to, and given me by, Mrs Wathen, wife of the celebrated oculist to King George III, and dated from Portswood Green, near Southampton, July 26th, 1799. It was as follows:—

"My dear Madam,—As you kindly engaged my promise to write, I need make no apologies; you will receive my letter in good part, and I am sure I shall write it with a hearty good will.

² *Olney Hymns*, Book 3, Hymn 74, 'Dependence', by William Cowper.

"But what shall be the subject? Indeed, properly speaking, I have, or ought to have, but *one*. This, however, is very comprehensive; I mean Jesus Christ and him crucified. It will at least help to fill up the paper, if I give you some account how I have in general managed it, as minister.

"When the Lord, after he had mercifully given me some experimental knowledge of the Gospel for myself, was pleased to honour me with a commission to preach to others, I found myself possessed of an infallible medicine for the cure of all diseases, and I was surrounded with multitudes whom I saw were sick of a mortal disease, and, as we say, at death's door. I thought at first to do great things with my catholicon. But I soon observed the fatal disorder I wished to relieve was attended with one very discouraging symptom. Most of the sick people, though I could read death in their countenances, thought themselves well; they insisted on it that nothing ailed them, and were angry with me because I would not believe them. Some of them could scarcely hear with patience what I said of the power and skill of the Physician who gave me the medicine. Others thought they might apply to him when they were really ill, but at present they had no need of him. Oh, how I laboured with some, but all in vain, to convince them of their danger! Now and then I did prevail with one, who then thank fully took the medicine, and presently recovered.

"And as I and my fellow practitioners were daily praising the virtues and efficacy of our medicine, some of our patients learned to talk after us; they did not *take* the medicine, but they praised it. They would allow they had been sick once; but now, to be sure, they must be well, for they could say as much in favour of the medicine as we could ourselves. I fear many died under this mistake. They would not make such a mistake in common life. Many go to see the table spread at a Lord Mayor's feast, but the sight of the delicacies, which they must not taste, will not satisfy the appetite like a plain dinner at home. But, alas! our patients were not hungry.

"Some felt themselves unwell, but would not own it; they tried to look as cheerful as they could. These depended on medicines of their own contrivance; and, though they suffered many things, and grew worse and worse daily, they refused to try mine. It was judged by one *too simple*; like Naaman, who for a time, though he would have done some hard thing, disdained such an easy remedy as —'only wash, and be clean.' [2 Kings 5]. Others refused unless I could clearly explain to them all the ingredients belonging to my medicine, which I had neither ability to do, nor they capacity to comprehend. They said, likewise, that the regimen which I prescribed was too strict; for I told them honestly that, if they did not abstain from some things of which they were very fond, my medicine would do them no good. I was often grieved, though not so much as I ought, to see so many determined to die, rather than take the only medicine that could preserve their lives.

"There were more than a few who deceived both themselves and me, by pretending to take my medicine, and yet did not. None grieved me more than these; but they could not deceive me long. For, as the medicine was infallible, I knew that whoever took it, and observed the regimen, would soon show signs of convalescence, and that they were getting better, though they were not perfectly well; and, therefore, when these signs were wanting, I was sure the medicine had not been taken.

"I have not time to enumerate all the signs that accompany salvation, but I shall mention a few. First, a broken and contrite spirit. This is indispensably necessary, for by nature we are full of pride; and God resisteth the proud, but giveth his grace only to the humble. Secondly, a simple and upright spirit, free from artifice and disguise. It is said of the blessed man, whose sins are forgiven, in his spirit there is no guile. He is open and undisguised. Thirdly, gentle, gracious tempers. If a man like a lion takes my medicine, he presently becomes a lamb. He is not easily offended. He is very easily reconciled; he indulges no anger; he harbours no resentment; he lives upon forgiveness himself, and is therefore ready to forgive, if he has aught against any. Fourthly, benevolence, kindness, and an endeavour to please, in opposition to that

selfishness which is our natural character. Fifthly, a spiritual mind, which is the beginning of life and peace; a weanedness from the world and its poor toys, and a thirst for communion with God through Christ.

"I could go on, but let this suffice. These signs are at first weak, for a Christian is a child before he is a man; but grace grows by exercise, by experience, and by a diligent use of the appointed means. My medicine enlightens the understanding, softens the heart, and gives a realizing of what the Scriptures declare of the glorious person, the wonderful love, the bitter sufferings of the Saviour, and the necessity and efficacy of his death and agonies upon the Cross. When these things are understood by the teachings of the Holy Spirit (whose influence is always afforded to those that take the medicine), the cure is already begun; all the rest will follow, and the patient recovers apace; though there are sometimes transient relapses, and a spice of the old disorder will hang about them, until they are removed to the purer air of a better world.

"I hope, my dear madam, this medicine is your food, that you live upon it, and feel the salutary effects of it every day. Oh, what love! that such a Saviour should die for such sinners as we are; and what a marvellous mercy to me, that I should be brought from the horrid wilds of Africa to proclaim his goodness! That I, who was an infidel, a blasphemer, and a profligate, should be spared to stand as a proof that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners! You and I are far advanced in years; we know not what a day may bring forth. Perhaps we may never meet upon earth; but, oh, may we meet above, to praise Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood! to partake of that fulness of joy, and to drink of those rivers of pleasure, which are at His right hand for evermore!

"John Newton

"Portswood Green, July 26th, 1799."

The second was addressed to a sister of my wife, Mrs H_II, on a domestic bereavement; the date worn off. The following is a copy: —

"My dear Madam,—Upon returning home last night I found your favour, dated the 10th. I must begin to write immediately, as I am very busy; but other business must wait till you are answered. I have thought of you and yours almost continually since Monday evening, when I first heard the affecting news. I have felt for you, and your family, and Mr H_II. I called on him on Tuesday, and dropped my tear with his. I had proposed going on to G_ Street. but he told me you were gone to S_. And now, what shall I say? I *also* have seen affliction; I have been wounded where my feelings were most sensible; and I have found, as you now find, that the Lord is all-sufficient, and can bear us up under the severest trials. I congratulate you on the comfortable words she spoke before she went home. I longed to hear such language from my dear Mary. I thought it would be a great alleviation to the stroke, but it pleased the Lord to show me he could support me without it. I bless his name I have good reason to hope and believe she is now before the throne; but during the latter part of her illness her mind was overwhelmed with a black cloud of dark and dreadful temptations. They were mercifully removed before her departure, but not till she was brought too low to be able to speak. She could only wave her hand as a token that the bitterness of death was past. I often think how our Queen's parents felt when our King sent to demand her in marriage. I suppose when she left them they did not expect to see her again; in this sense she was dead to them. Yet it was not considered a subject of condolence; neither they nor their court went into mourning for her; on the contrary, there was much rejoicing; they thought she was going to be Queen of Great Britain, and the hope of hearing of her welfare and prosperity made amends for the loss of her company, and they gave their full and cheerful consent to her coming hither.—But if a woman were raised even from a dunghill to be a queen, it would be a small thing compared with the change Mrs W_ has experienced. Far superior to all the queens of the earth, she is now equal to the angels; yea, much more, nearly related to Him whom all the angels worship. We cannot hear directly *from* her, but we may hear *of* her as often as we please;

the good Word of God tells us *where* she is, and *how* she is; we know not the local spot, but she is with her Saviour; the Lamb that was slain has brought her home to himself, to see his glory; she has done with sin, sorrow, and pain for ever; she feeds upon the fruit of the tree of life, and drinks at the fountain-head of happiness; the glory of the Lord which she continually beholds has transformed her fully into the same image; she sees Him as He is, and by that sight she is become like Him, to the utmost measure of creature capacity. Is, then, her removal to be bewailed as a calamity? I know that as a mother you must feel; may all your painful feelings be sanctified! but I rather call upon you to rejoice; your daughter is daughter to the great King; she is now clothed with light and glory; it is but a short separation; you will follow her soon, and I trust that all your daughters will in due time follow you. May I meet you all there! Miss Catlett unites with me in cordial love to you, to them, and to Mrs P_, if with you.

"I am,
"Your very affectionate, and much obliged,
"John Newton"

Besides two or three volumes of his letters which he published himself, or left selected and arranged for publication after his death, there are before the public his letters to Cowper the poet, to Mr Wilberforce, and Mrs More (inserted in their Lives); his letters to the Rev Samuel Palmer; his letters to the Rev John Campbell; his letters to the Rev Mr Coffin; his letters to Mr Jones, a deacon of an Independent church; a volume of letters called "The Aged Pilgrim;" and his letters to the Rev William Bull. To all these we may add those that have appeared singly in the *Christian Observer*, the *Guardian*, the *Evangelical Magazine*, the *Congregational Magazine*, &c; and yet the letters in print are nothing to the number he wrote!

One star differs from another star in glory. True religion exists in various degrees. Nehemiah not only feared God, but feared God above many; and the good ground yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold. I deem Mr Newton the most perfect instance of the spirit and temper of Christianity I ever knew—shall I say—with the *exception*? —no, but with the addition of— *Cornelius Winter*!

Extracted from *The Autobiography & Reminiscences of William Jay* (London: 1855)