

T H E
N E G R O C O N V E R T
A P O E M ;



Being the SUBSTANCE of the EXPERIENCE
Of Mr. J O H N M A R R A N T,
A N E G R O,

As related by himself, previous to his Ordination,

A T T H E
C O U N T E S S of H U N T I N G D O N ' S
C H A P E L,

I N B A T H,

On S U N D A Y the 15th of M A Y, 1785;

T O G E T H E R

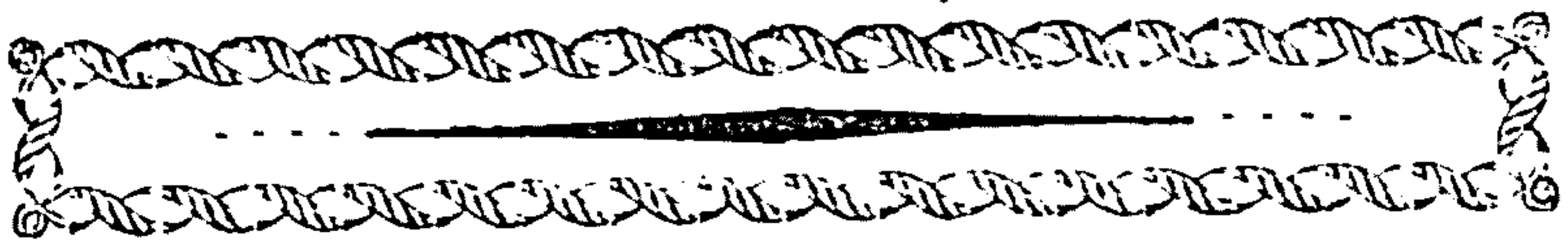
*With a concise Account of the most remarkable Events
in his very singular Life.*

By S. W H I T C H U R C H,
Author of the *Monody* on Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, Bart.

B A T H;

Printed and Sold by S. HAZARD; Sold also by HUGHES and
WALSH, Inner-Temple-Lane, LONDON; MILLS, Wine-
Street, and BULGIN, Broad-Street, BRISTOL.





P R E F A C E.

TH E Hero of the following Poem having, altho' unassisted by education, preached much to their satisfaction before some of the most numerous and respectable congregations in Bath and Bristol; and the Author having taken down in short-hand his experience, with that of the other young Ministers who were lately Ordained with him, at the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel in Bath, has availed himself of that circumstance, and by selecting the most striking parts of Mr. Marrant's relation, and interspersing therewith some of the most remarkable events of his life, has compos'd a poem, which is now submitted to the inspection of the public.

It may be premised—that should the Reader expect to find in this Poem, any of those reflections which were but too frequently pointed at any other religious sect, and which the most fiery zeal for the cause he was engaged in, and the disadvantages he labour'd under of not having had his mind sufficiently expanded by a liberal education, could hardly justify in Mr. Marrant, he will be disappointed, the Author having carefully omitted every expression which appeared to have been the offspring of bigotry, or party spirit, and which he deems inimical to that brotherly love which the Gospel inculcates.

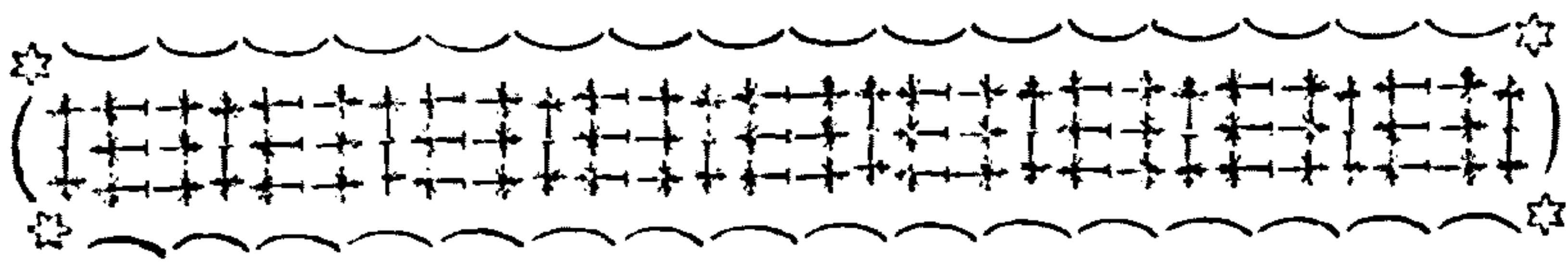
inculcates, and to that unanimity and harmony which ought to subsist between those Christians, who, whatever Order they may follow, or however they may vary in other parts of their spiritual building, yet are studiously careful to make choice of the same ROCK, on which to lay the foundation.

And now lest any one should censure this performance, as favouring too much of enthusiasm; let it be remembered, that some men, whose bosoms glowing, as it were, with an holy ardor, are evidently more zealous in the cause they are engaged in than others—and that while some are sinking into a state of Laodicean lukewarmness, others are enabled to adopt the language of the Sweet Singer of Israel, by declaring that—“the zeal of the Lord’s House hath eaten them up.”—Let no one therefore, on the perusal of the Negro Convert, deem that enthusiasm, which candour would conserue into a fervent and praise worthy zeal—for

“On such a theme, ’tis impious to be calm.”

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
S E L I N A
COUNTESS DOWAGER
OF HUNTINGDON,
THIS POEM
OF THE *NEGRO CONVERT*,
IS WITH ALL DUE RESPECT
INSCRIBED,
BY
HER LADYSHIP'S
MOST OBEEDIENT,
TRULY DEVOTED,
AND VERY
HUMBLE SERVANT,
S. W H I T C H U R C H.





T H E

NEGRO CONVERT.

I Sing, “no Indian whose untutor’d mind,
“ Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind,
“ Whose soul proud science never taught to stray
“ Far as the solar walk, or milky way.”
More grand my theme—for lo! my daring muse,
With the young Negro shall extend her views;
His notions of a God are not confin’d
To flying clouds, nor to the whistling wind!
His soul has Heav’nly wisdom taught to stray
Beyond the solar walk, and milky way;
His heart enlighten’d, warm devotion fires,
And pure religion all his soul inspires;
Cheer’d by the sunshine of a Saviour’s love,
E’en Pisgah’s lofty top he soars above;
No middle skies can bound his future views,
His happier soul sublimer heights pursues,
For faith in Jesus to his hope has giv’n
Beyond uncertain life—a certain Heav’n.—

Yet

Yet ere my muse pursues her destin'd way,
 To great *Selina* I would homage pay ;
 To you, blest ornament of Heav'nly grace !
 Whose bounteous deeds are known in every place ;
 Proud your firm zeal, your actions to rehearse,
 To you I'd sing—to you direct my verse !
 But since too low the highest of my lays
 To sound your worth—to celebrate your praise,
 The noble task alas ! I must decline,
 And for *effects*, the honor'd *cause* resign ;—
 Yet wheresoe'er the Gospel banner flies,
 Myriads your worth, your gen'rous zeal shall prize ;
 Yet wheresoe'er the Gospel trump shall sound,
 Dear shall the name of *Huntingdon* be found !—

Lo ! Christ its head—its nursing mother you,
 On distant shores a rising Church I view,
 Where with commission sent, the sable youth
 Shall to Barbarians preach the Word of Truth,
 Shall in those gloomy corners of the earth
 Spread the glad tidings of a Saviour's birth !
 His blameless life shall paint, and to them shew
 His painful death, and resurrection too ;
 Shall warn the sinner from his evil way,
 And preach the blessings of the Gospel day ;
 Shall paint a Christ triumphing o'er the grave,
 To anger slow, and ready still to save ;

He like a Paul of righteousness shall treat,
 Of temp'rance, reason, and the judgment seat!—
 Their bosoms smote with reverential fear,
 The joyful news, shall happy Negroes hear.—
 Thus, thus great Lady shall the truth be known,
 In climes remote, and in a distant zone;
 'Midst savage plants thus SHARON'S ROSE shall rise,
 And Eden smile beneath inclement skies!
 Thus shall the *Negro Convert* publish still
 To fellow blacks, the great Jehovah's will;
 And num'rous hearts can from experience tell
 A task so great befits our hero well.—

And now fam'd Patroness of saints below,
 In whose great Master's cause my numbers flow,
 O! deign t'attend—while gladly I display
 The solemn grandeur of that sacred day,
 When in your Chapel, lo! each pious youth,
 Receiv'd the charge in godliness, and truth,
 By rev'rend hands ordain'd—when each declar'd
 What grace, what favor, his experience shar'd.—
 And now the eighth in conscious wisdom bold
 His pious tale had eloquently told,
 His honey'd tongue the congregation charm'd,
 And in his cause each feeling bosom warm'd;
 His melting accents so had pleas'd the ear,
 That still they listen'd—still they seem'd to hear—

When

When on the throne, high rais'd above the rest,
His soul's experience thus the *Black* express—

Since here I'm brought by Providence to tell
What checquer'd scenes my christian life befell,
How wounded conscience stung with poignant smart
When saving grace had reach'd my stubborn heart ;
Dear list'ning brethren ! I beseech you pray
That God will own me on this solemn day !
O ! beg of Christ, my pious friends, to grant
A kind supply for every present want,
To check the fallies of impetuous youth,
And teach my falt'ring tongue to speak the truth.—

First on Columbia's shores my breath I drew
Where pleasing fast my years of childhood flew ;
Each art was try'd to please my vacant mind,
To pleasure prone—to vanity inclin'd ;
But grown to riper years, I soon began
To change from infant toys—to toys of man ;
On various instruments intent to play
To Charlestown now I eager bent my way,
There the French-horn I learnt with skill to blow
In lofty notes, or modulations slow ;
There at the midnight dance I oft was seen
To rouse to motion by the violin.—

Thus

Thus pass'd my days, and thus my nights would pass,
 Still charm'd by music, and the cheerful glass.—
 But O my friends, twas giv'n me soon to know
 That pleasures ways would terminate in woe,
 That down the fearful steep her footsteps led,
 To the dark regions of the second dead!—
 For lo! in proud rebellion now I rose
 Against my God, and deem'd his saints my foes ;
 In his own house I strove my horn to sound,
 To spread confusion thro' his flock around ;
 In vain I strove, for Heav'nly grace decreed,
 That in the black attempt my heart should bleed ;
 For lo! the trumpet of the Gospel sounds,
 My soul disarms—my every scheme confounds ;
 The champion *Whitefield* like an angel spoke,
 And from his lips this awful sentence broke,
 “ Prepare O Israel to meet thy GOD !”
 Fear seiz'd my soul—I felt the vengeful rod !
 Like Saul of Tarsus to the ground I fell,
 While in my conscience blaz'd a fiery Hell !
 Convictions barbed arrows pierc'd my heart,
 And conscious guilt, and shame increas'd its smart ;
 Thus see the wretch who dar'd with impious rage
 The great Ambassador of Heav'n t'engage,
 Who dar'd presume the sounding horn to blow,
 Now fearful sink beneath a load of woe !
 Trembling, and prostrate now upon the ground,
 I cry'd for mercy, but no mercy found ;

My crimes I thought too black to be forgiv'n,
 My sins against me shut the door of Heav'n!
 Stung to the inmost soul I roar'd aloud,
 And still around me press'd the list'ning croud;
 At length the service o'er great Whitefield came,
 At his approach I felt unusual shame;
 His Heav'nly presence work'd my soul's disgrace,
 I turn'd aside, nor dar'd to shew my face;
 When spoke the holy man I late defy'd,
 "And art thou caught at last?" he joyful cry'd,
 "Thy trembling limbs, and downcast looks declare,
 "That Christ has caught thee in the Gospel snare."
 Unfit to walk—almost depriv'd of sense,
 He bade some standers by to take me thence,
 Said he would see me ere from town he went,
 If leisure time should favor his intent.—
 Now to my home in misery convey'd,
 I loath'd myself—was for myself afraid!
 My sinful conduct star'd me in the face,
 No hope of mercy—none of Heav'nly grace!
 But black despair, and conscious guilt combin'd
 To light an *Ætna* in my tortur'd mind!—
 Ye chosen of the Lord!—tis ye have known
 The spirit wounded, and the contrite groan;
 'Tis ye alone can tell a man may stand
 When God afflicts him with a chast'ning hand,
 When dire disease shall rack his feeble frame,
 And dim the lustre of his vital flame;

That

That this he may sustain—nor shed one tear,
 But O! a wounded conscience, who can bear?—
 —Three days I sigh'd, and fed the growing flame,
 When to my room a *Baptist preacher came,
 He came to my relief—when lo! he found
 My room with various nostrums spread around;
 There too he found—fresh med'cine to prescribe,
 Two famous Doctors of the healing tribe;
 For them, my friends, mistaking my disease,
 Had sent to physic, bleed, and give me ease;
 But vain their art—their skill united vain;
 There was but *One* could heal my bosom's pain;
 There was but one Physician could be found
 To soothe my anguish, or to heal my wound;
He who for man resign'd his sacred breath,
 Alone could save my guilty soul from death!
These said the Preacher—these may now depart,
 They have no med'cine for a wounded heart;
 Then strove the holy man with anxious care
 To raise my hope—to brighten my despair;
 On bended knees, with fervency of soul,
 He begg'd of Christ my anguish to controul,
 Some Heav'nly grace—some mercy to impart,
 To check my grief, and ease my aching heart;
 In vain he begg'd—invok'd a Saviour's name,
 To my sad soul no ray of comfort came!

B

But

* Mr. Hall, a Baptist Minister at Charlestown, who at Mr.
 Whitefield's request, waited upon Mr. Marrant,

But all was dark, and doubt, and fell despair,
 And every horror reign'd triumphant there !
 As love his breast, and pity mov'd his tongue,
 An hymn of tuneful WATTS's now he sung ;
 But ah ! nor bard divine, nor music's charms
 Could quell my grief, could quiet my alarms !
 I deem'd myself beneath th'Almighty's curse,
 And told my pious friend—he made me worse—
 But he undaunted—to his Master true
 Resolv'd to try again what pray'r could do ;—
 He pray'd again, and O ! what Heav'nly love,
 What wondrous grace came smiling from above !
 My soul enlighten'd felt the saving pow'r,
 And mercy triumph'd in that happy hour !
 Like Bunyan's joyful pilgrim now I found
 My christian burden tumble to the ground !
 Before my faith, lo ! *Doubling-Castle* fell,
 And grim *Despair* sunk to his native Hell !

Thus my good friends—I have in truth confess'd
 How Grace divine reclaim'd this stubborn breast ;
 And now as time permits me, I shall tell
 What strange events my future life befell.—

The sin subdu'd that caus'd my bosom's smart,
 And all the venom rankling at my heart ;
 My former pleasures can no more delight,
 The daily pastimes, nor the dance by night ;

The violin that charm'd my soul before,
 My lov'd French-horn, can charm my soul no more !
 Pleasure that woo'd me in my wanton hours,
 Whose thorns I seiz'd, and vainly deem'd them flow'rs ;
 The gay companions of my youth, I shun,
 From all their snares, and from the town I run.—
 Now to my home, my friends, I bend my way,
 But they deride me, and deny my stay ;
 They know not *Christ*—their hearts with malice burn,
 And me a wand'rer out of doors they turn ;
 Yet still supported by a Saviour's love,
 Thro' dang'rous woods, and fearful wilds I rove ;
 Successive days and nights alternate shed
 Sunshine, and dews, obnoxious on my head ;
 In search of food I roam the sultry day,
 By night I'm chac'd by savage beasts of prey ;
 Now the tall tree presents its giddy height,
 Haunted—pursu'd, I climb with wild affright !
 I stride some trembling branch to shun the foe,
 While death, and devastation lurks below,
 While hungry monsters vent their rage around,
 Raise the loud yell, and vengeful tear the ground ;
 Yet still to me the Saviour's care was known,
 I still rely'd upon his strength alone ;
 Yet still the Lord was pleas'd to be my guide,
 He knew my wants, and every want supply'd ;
 Tho' hunger pinch'd—he staid my fleeting breath,
 Nor gave to taste the bitter cup of death ;

By his Almighty Arm sustain'd, I stood
 Unhurt amidst the dangers of the wood ;
 In my distress, I cry'd unto the Lord,
 Who did sweet comfort to my soul afford.—

Freed from the wilderness, at length I came
 To men who bore the injur'd christian name ;
 Christians by name—for savage beasts of prey
 I found more kind, more merciful than they.—

*Twas at the time when thunders from afar
 In lofty tone provok'd unnat'ral war ;
 When thro' our Colonies from man to man,
 Revengeful strife, and fatal discord ran ;
 When friends, and brothers 'gainst each other rose,
 And sons rebellious deem'd their fires their foes ;
 When the mad fire, by party rage misled,
 Aim'd the fell weapon at his offspring's head ;
 'Twas then, as wand'ring near the sea-beat shore,
 Where vessels ride, and waves incessant roar,
 A British party me by force detain'd,
 By which a tedious servitude I gain'd ;
 On board the warlike vessel now confin'd,
 Lo ! new distresses mortify my mind ;
 Here forc'd to bend beneath tyrannic sway,
 To haughty chiefs, I servile homage pay ;

†

Here

*Beginning of the American war.

Here mock'd, and scourg'd for JESU's sake—I find
 The Boatswain cruel, and his mates unkind.—
 All this I bore—but O! my faithless heart,
 Oppress'd by ills, and griefs most pungent smart,
 Forgot its Lord, and doubt, and fell despair,
 And unbelief again found entrance there!
 And now the fiend who erst with impious rage,
 Dar'd the blest army of his God engage,
 Began his art, his cunning to employ,
 'To cause this hand its master to destroy;
 From the bow port I thrice essay'd to find
 A wat'ry grave to ease my troubled mind,
 But there as oft—so pleas'd the Power divine,
 Some person stood, and check'd my rash design;
 And still I liv'd, and still by fervent prayer,
 I triumph'd o'er the tempter, and despair.—

But O! my friends, 'twould tire you here to tell
 What various incidents my life befell;
 'Twould wound your tender hearts, 'twould make you
 weep

Did I recount the dangers of the deep;
 How big with rage the furious tempest roar'd,
 And threat'ned instant death to all on board!
 How the huge wave high mounting to the skies,
 Struck every soul with terror and surprise,
 Lest on the ship its monstrous weight should fall,
 And in one fearful ruin bury all!—

Hurl'd from the ship, and struggling with the wave,
 I once was sinking in the boist'rous grave,
 But then unto my Saviour God I cry'd,
 Who sav'd me from the fury of the tide ;
 He gave command, and lo ! the swelling main
 Hove me secure on board my ship again !—
 In perils oft—in num'rous battles try'd,
 I pray'd to God, and God was on my side ;
 All this he did, and more a God can do,
 He can afflict—but he can comfort too ;
 And with an heart-felt joy I can declare
 That he will hear, that he will answer prayer ;
 And though awhile his glorious face he hides,
 Though Satan buffets, and a Saviour chides,
 Yet, yet at last the Christian shall prevail,
 And find his God, whose mercies never fail !
 Yet shall at last like wrestling Jacob prove
 How vast his goodness, infinite his love !—

And now six years of tedious service past,
 I come to the decisive fray at last ;
 To me decisive—for from that I found
 My hopes of liberty successful crown'd.—

*To meet the foe, brave *Parker* spreads his sail,
 And soon the horrors of the fight prevail ;

The

*Alluding to the action on the Dogger Bank, between the
 English and Dutch Fleets, on the 5th of August, 1781,

The stubborn Dutch, though in their motions slow,
 Form the firm line, and wait their English foe ;
 Now swells the tumult—now each squadron fires,
 And rage, and fury every breast inspires !
 The battle's smoky clouds invade the sky,
 And big with death the balls impetuous fly !
 In this dread scene, my brethren, who could stand
 Unless supported by th' Almighty's hand ?—
 To God alone, my life, my all I owe,
 'Twas he alone could save me from the foe ;
 'Twas He, when war's tumultuous thunders rag'd,
 When fleet with fleet, and ship with ship engag'd,
 When all around me, death and horror spread,
 'Twas He, as with an helmet, screen'd my head ;
 'Twas God alone, by His Almighty pow'r
 Could me preserve in that tremendous hour !
 'Twas He preserv'd my life, but yet I found
 My body mark'd with many a gaping wound.—

And now had ceas'd the fury of the fight,
 And now each squadron in disabled plight,
 Their diff'rent havens anxious to regain,
 Shape diff'rent courses o'er the northern main ;
 And O ! how glad was every heart on board
 When in the Downes our shatter'd Fleet we moor'd.—
 And there arriv'd, and all our dangers o'er,
 I with the wounded was convey'd on shore,

Where

Where in a few months time I haply found
 My prospects pleasing, and my wishes crown'd ;
 My wounds were heal'd—my hateful bondage o'er,
 I saw no tempest—heard no cannons roar.—

Now safe on shore, and free from war's alarms,
 Anticipation paints her thousand charms ;
 'Midst her luxuriant scenes, I fondly find
 A thousand distant views, to please my mind !
 My wages paid—re-cross'd the western main—
 My native shores, my friends, I greet again !—
 But all was fancy, in whose flatt'ring glass,
 The scenes that please us, instantaneous pass !

To claim my share of captures from the foe,
 Elate with hope, to London now I go ;
 I urge my claim—but ah ! I urge in vain ;
 I plead my cause—but scarce a hearing gain—
 No wages there—no share of warlike spoils
 Reward the sailor for his num'rous toils ;
 In lieu of these—lo ! purse-proud Agents stand ;
 And Clerks in office, an imperious band,
 Perplex the Sailor by contriv'd delay,
 And with him share, the pittance of his pay.—
 All this I found, still JESUS was my friend,
 I look'd to Him—on Him I could depend ;
 His presence buoy'd my sinking spirits up !
 His lovingkindness sweeten'd sorrow's cup !

But

But since too fast for what I have to say,
 On rapid wing our moments fly away,
 I shall relate by aid of Grace divine
 My first acquaintance with this present line ;
 In humble diction, and in language weak
 Shall of my ministerial calling speak.—
 No pay receiv'd—by artful men detain'd,
 In Town, to claim my right, I still remain'd.—
 To learn what things our gracious Lord had done,
 To hear his word, from place to place I run.—
 Sometimes the great *Romaine* relieves my soul,
 When o'er my head the waves of trouble roll !
 Sometimes the Reverend *Willes* salutes mine ear ;
 My heart delighted—I with pleasure hear !—
 But still those friends I long since left behind,
 My dear connexions hang upon my mind ;
 To preach a Christ—to shew them all their wants,
 To teach their precious souls—my bosom pants !—
 One night, my mind, with thoughts like these impress'd,
 I laid me down to take my usual rest,
 When soon, as starting from a trance, I woke,
 For thus methought some Heav'nly Agent spoke—
 “ Go forth ! go forth ! ”—I hail the grateful voice,
 I hear—I tremble—yet I would rejoice ;
 But the dire foe to Eden's early bloom
 Said—“ 'Twas some person in a neigh'bring room.”—
 Lull'd by his artful wiles, mine eyes I close,
 And on my pillow sink to soft repose ;

'Till

'Till rous'd again—"go forth" assails mine ears,
 Creates new hopes—yet stimulates my fears!
 Still with suggestions would the foe deceive,
 Which still ungrateful I would fain believe!
 Like our first parents thus we frequent find
 The fiend invade with unbelief the mind;—
 But faith my shield—I now victorious rise,
 Each doubt cimmerian instantaneous flies!
 To my lov'd relatives abroad, I write
 'Till morning's dawn succeeds the gloom of night.—
 And now to God for counsel I apply,
 To him I look—on him I now rely;
 That he'd reveal his blessed Will I pray;
 Mark out my steps, and put me in the way!
 Then to my friends beyond the seas I send,
 And still I pray—God's blessing may attend.—
 My prayers were heard—the letter found its way—
 *An answer came—which you have heard to day.—
 But ere the answer came—my restless mind,
 As yet unsettled—anxious strove to find
 Some sweet society, where praise, and pray'r,
 And holy friendship rivall'd worldly care;
 And now, as if some secret impulse prest
 The happy thought which struck my panting breast,
To

*Alluding to a letter from Mr. Marrant's brother in Nova Scotia, giving him a most pressing invitation in the name of a great number, to go over there and be their Pastor, and which was read by Mr. Willes previous to the ceremony of Ordination.

To pious *Willes* my eager steps I bend,
 Who strait admits me as a christian friend ;
 In this connexion thus admision gain'd,
 In this connexion I have still remain'd ;
 And still I hope, as God shall be my guide,
 Firm in this faith to cross the raging tide.—
 But yet I trembled—still some doubts, and fears
 Deject my soul, and melt me into tears,
 Lest, when I haply cross the foaming main,
 Reach the far shore, and see my friends again,
 Lest then I should, unknowing what to say,
 Lead them bewilder'd from salvation's way !
 And fearing God, would in his day of fire,
 Of my foul hands their sinful blood require !
 But to God's Word these fears and doubts give place,
 For still—"sufficient for me is his Grace!"—
 And still I know, that when my stamm'ring tongue,
 Which oft God's holy praise had feebly sung,
 That when on earth its feeble accents cease,
 Angels shall waft me to eternal peace !
 That, with his saints I shall triumphant sing
 Perpetual praises to our Heav'nly King !
 Shall join his saints who now his Throne surround,
 And in his presence evermore be found !

And now my friends, let me beseech you pray,
 That God will guide me o'er the watry way !

O! pray, that I may in the lowly sphere
 Of meek humility continual steer!
 O! pray that distant Negroes soon may know,
 How pure the fountains of salvation flow!
 That they may for a Saviour's ransom sue,
 Whose cleansing blood can make them white as you.

O! may on us the Holy Ghost descend,
 And God's sweet presence all our lives attend!
 O! may my ministerial brethren find,
 A GOD their guide—a SAVIOUR ever-kind!

F I N I S.

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