

R I L L S

FROM THE

FOUNTAIN OF WISDOM,

OR THE

BOOK OF PROVERBS

ARRANGED AND ILLUSTRATED.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Book of Proverbs is, for the most part, a collection of independent sentences or apophthegms, and not a connected treatise. The author does not expatiate on the subjects which engage his attention, but in a sententious manner presents the results of his observation and reflection. These condensed sentences evince a profound knowledge of human nature, and, as constituting a portion of its history, are admirably adapted to all times and places. The arrangement of them under separate divisions has been suggested by the circumstance, that the same subject is presented, with some difference of aspect or bearing, in more than one proverb. It is not presumed that the classification is complete, or that it embraces every part of the text; but as it is, it affords a very desirable variety of subjects, which, in this

method, may interest the serious reader, and suggest to his mind trains of salutary and instructive thought. To assist this exercise on the part of the reader, the Reflections, which accompany each separate division, were written. They do not pretend to be an exposition of the Proverbs, nor do they profess to bring out all the points suggested by the inspired writer; but keeping in view the general subject proposed in the section, they offer hints relating to it, not amplified into treatises, but briefly expressed, and accompanied by an attempt at a personal application of the topic treated. The writer has one simple object in view, which he would be most happy to attain, and that is, to render the perusal of the Proverbs a matter of personal interest and practical benefit to the reader.

The proverbs under each section should first be deliberately and seriously read, and then the accompanying reflections, as showing, by way of example, what kind of thoughts they are calculated to suggest. A single section might with advantage be read in the morning, and made the subject

of thought during the day. The mind would thus be stored with sound rules of conduct, and fortified against daily occurring temptations.

Let the reader bear it in mind, that the inspired portions of this volume are incomparably the most important. *They* are the "Rills from the Fountain of Wisdom." The rest has little pretension, and may greatly need the kind indulgence and forbearance of the reader.

FOUNTAIN OF WISDOM.

INTRODUCTORY.

WHEN Solomon succeeded to the regal honours of his father David, God submitted to him the choice of a gift, with which he should be endowed on his accession. "Ask," said the Lord, "what I shall give thee." The youthful monarch, with singular sagacity, instead of asking for long life, princely wealth, or great military renown, selected as the highest gift, "an understanding heart." His choice pleased the Lord, and his petition was answered; "and God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding, exceeding much, and largeness of heart; and Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt, for he was wiser than all men, and his fame was in all nations round about." Thus excellently endued, he was qualified to become the instructor of others. A part of his wisdom is sententiously expressed in the Book of Proverbs, and it has lost none of its value by transmission. The aged may be made wiser by studying its maxims, and youth may derive from it the most salutary rules, for the establishment of their principles, and the government of their conduct.

We have selected and arranged under particular heads, some of the sage instructions of this incomparable teacher, in hope that those who taste the

stream, may be induced to go with greater relish to the fountain, from which it is derived.

The WISDOM of which Solomon so frequently speaks, is that which is from above. Summarily, it is the knowledge and practice of the will of God as revealed to us in his word; and the most sagacious and learned can attain it only in an imperfect degree, unless they have received spiritual illumination from heaven. He may have the reputation of being a wise man who conducts his worldly affairs with discretion; but the religion of the gospel is the only true wisdom, as it supplies the best principles of action, and the most correct rules of life; as it teaches us how to live and how to die; how to attain happiness here, and immortality beyond the grave. It should ever be remembered that the instructions of Solomon derive great additional value, when received through the medium of the gospel. The latter furnishes the motives and requisite ability for reducing to practice those rules of conduct, which, however they may commend themselves to the understanding, will, without such aid, be comparatively inoperative on the heart. It is in this view, that the proverbs of the wise man instruct us "to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtlety to the simple, to the young man, knowledge and discretion."

The man thus enlightened, is the "wise man who will hear and will increase in learning; and the man of understanding who shall attain unto wise counsels." Let the reader of this little book, in order to derive from it the greatest advantage, accompany it with the earnest prayer to God for "a wise and understanding heart."

When the infinitely wise God condescends to teach through the lips of inspired men, there should be, on our part, a disposition to sit at his feet and learn. However responsibility may be diminished by unavoidable ignorance, that is not the predicament of those who possess abundant and well adapted means of instruction. The revealed will of God is unfolded before us, and its teachings are illustrated by his providence, and enforced by the operations of his Spirit on the heart.

This is beautifully described by Solomon.

Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?

She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.

She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.

Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.

O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.

Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.

For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is

nothing froward or perverse in them.

They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold.

Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:

She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,

How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

Wisdom lifts up her voice in public places, that she may be heard by the simple and uninstructed, and proposes to impart a knowledge of divine things more precious than silver and choice gold. This proffer is accompanied by a promise to the docile, of supernatural aid from the Spirit of the Lord.

Divine goodness has provided a peculiar means of instruction, which may be compared to wisdom cry-

ing "at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors." The ministers of the gospel are a class of men consecrated to the work of public instruction, who are required to go into the highways and public places to communicate to the people saving knowledge; "to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine," "that the simple ones may no longer love their simplicity, nor scorers delight in scorning, nor fools hate knowledge." Blessed are they who receive the heavenly lesson with a teachable temper, for upon them shall the Spirit be poured as a "spirit of wisdom and a sound mind."

On the other hand, it is not a mere matter of indifference that men reject the counsel of the Lord. As they sow, so must they expect to reap. The kind invitation of God being declined, and his proposal rejected, his favour shall be withdrawn, and his benignant face be clouded with wrath. No audience shall be given to the agonized prayer of the sinner when reduced to extremity, but the most appalling calamities shall thicken round his path. This result, to the incorrigible, is delineated in the following startling language of the wise man.

Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord:

They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

To prevent so fearful a catastrophe, the most winning representations are made to awaken in the bosom of man a love for heavenly wisdom. Who can read Solomon's description of its advantages, both in a temporal and spiritual point of view, without being convinced in his own judgment of the importance and necessity of giving immediate heed to the things which belong to his peace?

My son, forget not my law ; but let thine heart keep my commandments :

For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Let not merey and truth forsake thee ; bind them about thy neck ; write them upon the table of thine heart :

So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart ; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Be not wise in thine own eyes ; fear the Lord, and depart from evil.

It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

She is more precious than rubies : and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Length of days is in her right hand ; and in her left hand riches and honour.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her : and happy is every one that retaineth her.

My son, let not them depart from thine eyes : keep sound wisdom and discretion :

So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid ; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Get wisdom, get understanding, forget it not ; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee : love her, and she shall keep thee.

Wisdom is the principal thing ; therefore get wisdom : and with all thy getting get understanding.

Exalt her, and she shall promote thee ; she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace : a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings ; and the years of thy life shall be many.

I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.

When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.

Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

So that thou incline thine ear

unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding:

Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

In view of this representation, how truly has it been said by another inspired writer, that "godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." In a merely temporal point of view, it is "heaven's best gift to man." It is indeed "the principal thing." Man is never so ennobled as in its possession. It is life, not subject to sudden termination; it is health, not liable to decay; it is wealth, far more precious than rubies; it is happiness, ever tending to a glorious consummation. In sanctifying the heart, it prepares a place for the exercise of those gracious affections, than which nothing can more adorn and beautify the character; in controlling the passions, it removes many of the causes which disturb our own peace and affect our friendly relations with others; and in enforcing right principles of action, it makes us consult the interests of others in consulting our own. How

sweetly it tranquillizes the mind that reposes in God! Enemies cannot wrest it from us, nor dangers affright its possessor. Grace enables us to say, "whether I live, I live unto the Lord, or whether I die, I die unto the Lord, so that whether living or dying, I am the Lord's." He that has this heavenly wisdom and uniformly obeys its dictates, shall find "its ways pleasantness, and all its paths peace."

Having premised these things in relation to the great principle of heavenly wisdom, we will follow the wise man in his exemplifications of it in practical life, that we may not only hear, but learn to do the will of God.

THE FEAR OF GOD.

THE fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children have a place of refuge.

The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

The fear of the Lord is the in-

struction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.

By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.

WE distinguish between a reverential and a slavish fear of God; the one, awakened by a profound sense of his majesty; the other, by an apprehension of his inflexible justice. The one, consisting with admiration and love; the other, associated with distrust and hatred. The reverential fear of the Christian does not repel him from God, but powerfully induces him to renounce every feeling and act, which would oppose the divine purity or provoke the divine displeasure. That which is slavish, on the contrary, has no influence in purifying the heart, although by its presence, it mars the enjoyment of the pleasures of sin.

Our first and best knowledge commences in a reverential fear of God, which operates as a restraint upon our lusts, and incites us to a fulfilment of the duties, resulting from our moral relations to God. He that thus fears will hate sin and love holiness; and thus it

becomes a "fountain of life," a source of spiritual blessings, and "prolongeth days," by inducing the avoidance of those sins, which are so inimical to the temporal, as well as the eternal well-being of man, as to make it true of the wicked, who practise them, that they do not "live out half their days."

My soul, the God to whom thou art accountable is a great God, holy, just, omniscient and almighty! Sin is the object of his abhorrence, and shall not go unpunished. Stand in awe of him and sin not. Study his will, obey his commandments, and this will be thy best security against the fate of those who while they fear God as a judge, and hate his perfections, still cling to their sins and perish in their folly.

THE FEAR OF MAN.

THE fear of man bringeth | his trust in the Lord shall be
a snare: but whoso putteth | safe.

THE principle here condemned is one which is prolific of much mischief to the souls of men.

One manifestation of it is in seasons of personal danger, when the alternative is presented of adhering to our principles at all hazards, or securing personal safety by their sacrifice. When persecution rages, there may be strong temptation to secure life at the sacrifice of a good conscience. It was in such circumstances that Peter denied his Lord; and many have been frightened from their steadfastness, by the sight of the gibbet and the stake. Thus, of two evils, they have chosen the greater;—fearing man who, although he had power to kill the body, had no more that he could do; and forgetting to fear God, who had power to cast both body and soul into hell.

Another manifestation of this principle, still more common and insidious, is when religious obligations are disregarded from fear of incurring the displeasure of our fellow men, or the ridicule of the ungodly. When life is not in jeopardy, cowardice may dictate silence where there should be an open avowal of our principles; or such a modified expression of them, as will do violence to our convictions of duty. How many, too, from fear of ridicule, have been led to resist those salutary convictions, which, if cherished,

might have resulted in their eternal salvation! To them, of a truth, the fear of man has been a snare, from which their soul will in vain struggle to escape.

The criminality of this fear of man consists in the distrust of the Divine care and goodness which it implies. Our heavenly Father never places us in a situation in which the renunciation of principle becomes imperative. The evil apprehended is often more imaginary than real, and with the temptation there is a way of escape that we may be able to bear it. Even in the most difficult and trying cases, the Divine promise, of strength sufficient for our day, is an ample support.

My soul, cast off the fear of man which bringeth a snare, and put thy trust in the Lord that thou mayest be safe. Regard no temporal advantage, not even life itself, as an equivalent for the loss of the Divine favour. Remember that what may be gained by proving unfaithful to God and his truth, will be transient and unsatisfying, whilst in the sacrifice of a good conscience, thou mayest expect future remorse and eternal self-accusation.

DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

COUNSEL is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.

By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.

By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

Man's goings are of the Lord;

how can a man then understand his own way?

The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.

Many seek the ruler's favour; but every man's judgment cometh from the Lord.

THERE is one Lord and Supreme Governor of the universe. By his almighty word the world was created, and to his continued care it is indebted for its preservation. His providence or government extends to objects and events the most minute, as well as to concerns the most grand and magnificent. It is he who imparts motion to the orbs of heaven, and the light dust which floats in the air; by him alike, the destiny of empires and the fate of a sparrow are decided. His providence rules over all.

Human governments are subordinate and subsidiary, while the great pervading Spirit which directs and controls all human affairs, is God. Mysterious and incomprehensible as many things may be, both in the history of the Church and the world, yet of this we may be assured, that nothing happeneth by chance; but every thing is in accordance with a superior and controlling agency, developing and perfecting the plans of the great Creator and Governor of the

world. Rulers and subjects; the righteous and the wicked; events calamitous and prosperous, have all their subordinate places in his scheme of providence. When he has a purpose to accomplish, the means are ever at hand; he rules and overrules; human improbabilities become certainties, and certainties, impossibilities; the counsels of the most sagacious statesmen are converted into follies, and the victory is wrested from the hand of the most skilful and heroic captain.

When he wills it, the ungodly may triumph, and the virtuous be oppressed. Those whom he has called and chosen with a holy calling, and who are dear to him as the apple of his eye, may endure many and grievous afflictions, and the Church, his peculiar heritage, may be made to pass through the fiery ordeal; yet the mystery will soon be solved, and when his purposes are unfolded, their wisdom will be displayed.

Solomon was a wise and powerful sovereign, to whom millions were subject; and yet he was aware, that his elevation was from God, and that all the acts of his government, in which his will seemed supreme, were dependent on an overruling Providence. How important that all, both rulers and subjects, should be impressed with the same truth, that they might see the futility of their wisest arrangements, when made without reference to the divine will!

Remember, my soul, that thou art a subject of a divine government, and that he who manages thy affairs, is the all-wise God. Art thou in covenant with him, and canst thou address him as Abba, Father? If thou canst, neither life nor death, nor things present nor things to come can separate thee from his love. Fixed on this rock, convulsions may shake the world; empires may decay and crumble into ruin;

poverty may bring its discomforts, and pain its restless tossings; friends may prove false and enemies conspire thy ruin; and even death, the last enemy, may execute his commission, and yet all shall be well. The Lord thy Saviour, the holy one of Israel, who possesses the treasures of everlasting might, will so overrule all events, that instead of harming thee, they shall work together for thy good. Rejoice then and be glad, for the Lord reigns!

CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

THE king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.

The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.

It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.

If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

They that forsake the law

praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.

When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.

To have respect of persons is not good: for, for a piece of bread, that man will transgress.

A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.

It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.

It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

How much wisdom is compressed in these brief sentences! Civil government is an ordinance of God, and the duty of reverence and obedience to rulers is explicitly taught in his word. It is a peculiar blessing to live under that form of civil administration which best secures the liberties and rights of the people; and such a government, in a preeminent sense, is that under which we live. Still it may be readily conceived, that the general principles of a government may be unexceptionable, and its administration prove subversive of those rights. Not only under monarchical and despotic, but even republican governments, those entrusted with the execution of the laws may be corrupt and venal, and, by their partial or sordid dispensation of justice, fail to extend protection to the people. In these circumstances the people are made to mourn. There is ground for apprehension that

those who occupy the chief places of power, are, for the most part, men of aspiring ambition or covetous of gain; who are less solicitous for the welfare of the community, than for their own aggrandizement. They study the politics of party rather than the code of morals; they are more intent on place, than on the principles which confer dignity on official station. How much more honourable for themselves and beneficial to the community, if a pure sense of justice dictated every official act, and their high aim was, to "rule in the fear of God." If in the civil compact, the people are required to render encouragement, support, and obedience to their rulers, they, in turn, have a right to expect protection of property and person, and security in their religious worship. A good government will protect both classes of rights.

If a ruler be selfish and ignorant; if he be venal; if, in judgment, he have respect to persons rather than principles; if he be influenced by falsehood or flattery; if he tolerate the wicked and suffer crime to go unpunished; then it must be, as it always has been, even before the days of Solomon, that the people will be oppressed, and the prosperity of the nation retarded, if, indeed, its existence be not endangered.

It is a high privilege, my soul, to have thy lot cast in a land of gospel light and liberty, and "to sit under thine own vine and fig tree, there being none to make afraid." Religious liberty is an inestimable privilege, and so is the right of worshipping God according to the dictates of an enlightened conscience. To secure and perpetuate such rights, let thy constant prayer to God be, that the rulers of the land may be men after "God's own heart," who shall rule in righteousness, and in full view of the account which they are to render to the Judge of all the world.

DOCILITY.

Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.

Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways.

Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.

Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.

But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste:

So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou

hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in the latter end.

Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.

Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

FOOLS hate instruction. This is their characteristic. However ennobling the acquisition of knowledge; whatever sources of intellectual and spiritual enjoyment it may open up; or however salutary it may prove, it has no charms for them, and no influence in arousing them to exertion.

Docility, on the other hand, as it implies a willingness to be taught, is the evidence of a better state of mind and heart. Neither human nor divine knowledge is to be acquired, unless there be a disposition to submit to instruction, and a patient and persevering application of the faculties with which the mind is endowed. Difficulties are to be encountered and overcome by resolute determination, and the toils of learning are to be endured, before the treasures of

knowledge can be acquired. In matters of human science, no one can expect to become learned, but by patient study; and the sphere of knowledge is to be enlarged only by gradual accessions. It is equally true, although in this case not so generally understood, that a knowledge of spiritual things is not to be acquired by intuition or inspiration, but by the blessing of God as the reward of the diligent.

There must first be an humble and teachable disposition, and then a sedulous use of the means which the providence of God has placed within our reach. The intelligence of a Christian must bear some proportion to his assiduity. He must "apply his heart," hear God, "watching daily at his gates," "love instruction," "search the Scriptures," and withal seek for heavenly illumination, before he can attain to a just self-acquaintance, extract the precious ore from the inexhaustible mines of the written word, and acquire that excellency of wisdom, which consists in the saving knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

Thus, my soul, thy Creator and Benefactor, instead of leaving thee in impenetrable darkness and ruin, has caused the true light to shine, by which thy pathway to heaven may be clearly discerned. Sensible of thy ignorance, and willing to be taught, apply thyself to instruction, and with a docile spirit sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from his lips. He can disperse the clouds which overshadow thy understanding, remove the film which obscures thy vision, and make thee wise unto salvation. Listen to his gracious word, attend on his ordinances, follow the dictates of his Spirit, and in heart commune with him constantly, and then shall thy path be like that of the just which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

AFFLICTION.

My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:

For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

THE lot of man is checkered. The streams of human happiness and misery flow side by side. Now we glide on the placid surface of the one, and then are tossed on the threatening billows of the other. Sin has produced a sad change in our original destiny, and the frowns of God have blighted the creation which owed all its charms to his smile. Man was the sinner and he is the sufferer, and now there is no clime so favoured as to be a refuge from human wo. Mental disquietude, vicissitudes of fortune, the corrodings of conscience, the pains of disease, and the groans of death are the allotment of those who have fallen from their original holiness. Affliction is the expression of the divine displeasure against sin; yet we are to distinguish between the afflictions of the righteous and of the wicked. The one are punitive, the other disciplinary; the one are sent in wrath, the other in mercy; the one are forerunners of that hopeless ruin which awaits the lost, the other the severe, but merciful means of effecting that purification which is a preparation for heaven. The wicked suffer and are without hope; the righteous are assured that "their light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh

out for them a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.”

The Christian, as he is not exempted from the sorrows of life, should so fortify himself as not to faint in the day of adversity. Even when tasting the bitterness of the cup which is placed to his lips, he may be filled with a joy with which the stranger cannot intermeddle. The curse of sin is removed from his soul, the anger of God is appeased, and therefore he may well endure with patience these seeming ills, which have been graciously commissioned to wean him from his earthly loves; assimilate him to his suffering Saviour; and prepare him for a keener relish of those enjoyments which are reserved for him in heaven.

How wonderful, my soul, are the dealings of thy covenant God, who makes all things work together for thy good! His love is displayed even in the chastisements which he inflicts; and not to receive these chastisements would be a proof that thou wast not a son. It is in this way he would purge away thy dross, and bring thee from the furnace, like pure gold tried in the fire. Does God *punish* the wicked? he only corrects thee as a father, the son in whom he delighteth. Is death an unmingled evil to the ungodly? it is to thee a happy deliverance. Faint not then, nor be weary under his corrections; for if thou hast reason to bless him for other mercies, thou hast special reason to bless him for the afflictions, which make thee wiser, holier, more obedient, and more heavenly minded. Soon shall these sorrows have an end, and then shall succeed that glorious state where there shall be neither sorrow nor crying, and where all tears shall be wiped from thine eyes for ever.

RIGHTEOUSNESS.

HE that followeth after righteousness and merey, findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die.

He that walketh uprightly walketh surely; but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.

When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

The labour of the righteous tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.

The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

THERE is a righteousness which justifies the soul in the sight of God. It consists in the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. This being received by faith, is reckoned to the sinner's account, and constitutes him a righteous person. Such a righteousness can be achieved by no human effort, in consequence of the wreck to which sin has reduced our moral faculties. Hence we become indebted for it to the interposition of Him "who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

There is a righteousness, too, which consists in personal holiness, and to which the law of God, as a rule of life, still obliges us. As the first constitutes our title to heaven, so the latter constitutes our meetness for it; and hence sanctification becomes as necessary to salvation, as justification.

The passages above quoted, while implying the first kind of righteousness, principally refer to the latter, and are designed to enforce and display the obligation and advantages of conforming our principles and conduct to the law of God.

It is important to understand that the religion of the Bible, so far from relaxing the obligations of morality, insist upon it in its highest sense, not as consisting in mere abstinence from sin, but in the positive performance of all duties. More is required than a moral exterior. A right state of the affections is equally essential; or in other words, there must be right principles, as well as right actions. It is not enough to possess faith in the gospel; we must be able to authenticate our faith by our works. God has indissolubly connected the two, and at our peril, we attempt to disunite them. Our obedience must have respect to all God's commandments, and must adorn all the relations of life.

The advantages of such a righteousness are many and distinguishing. It is acceptable to God. Honour, happiness, and safety are found following in its train. It disarms the enmity of our fellow men, and is a preventive of many of the ills of life. It brings us into nearer and holier intercourse with God. It secures the approbation of conscience. Youth is dignified by its possession, and the hoary head, when found in its way, is a crown of glory.

Hast thou realized, my soul, the extent and spirituality of the divine law, and is it thy constant aim to meet its requisitions? As without holiness no man shall see the Lord, dost thou bring every thought and feeling and action into subjection to Christ? Is it thy meat and drink to do the will of thy heavenly Father?

and is his law the man of thy counsel, and sweeter to thy taste than honey and the honey-comb? Lest there should be any hidden iniquity within thee, pray for the searching eye of God, that sin may be detected and excluded. Encourage the visits of the Holy Spirit: nay, prepare thyself as a holy temple, where he may constantly abide. Cultivate the graces he implants; follow after righteousness, and, leaving the things which are behind, press onward towards the things which are before, that thou mayest become perfect in holiness, and meet for the society of the blessed.

A GOOD NAME.

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.



SOME aim at the reputation of being learned, and others, of being brave. The scholar, the soldier, and the politician, disregard the toil and self-denial which may be necessary to secure their favourite objects. It is even possible that men may be proud of their infamy and seek notoriety in wickedness. Above all others, it is the prevalent desire of men to secure the distinctions of wealth, and to have their names associated with hoarded thousands.

All these may attain their objects of pursuit, but does the acquisition secure happiness? Alas! no. The learned, the brave, the affluent, and the great, are the marks at which envy and malignity aim their shafts, and their distinction often becomes the source of their bitterest annoyance. Besides, none run in the career of mere worldly ambition, without sinning against God; and this entails self-accusation and painful disquietude.

A good name, however, that is, a reputation founded on benevolence and goodness, is rather to be chosen than great riches. It is a high and ennobling distinction for a man, that "he does justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with his God." How much more fragrant the name of a Howard or a Wilberforce, than that of a Cæsar or a Napoleon! Even in the humbler walks

of life, a good name may be acquired by him, whose heart overflows with love for his neighbour, and whose conduct is ever governed by principle. The upright, compassionate, benevolent, disinterested, and sincere, secure an esteem, which all the hoarded treasures of the covetous could not purchase. Wealth may be acquired by accident or fraud, but a good name only by virtue. How sweet the possession! It implies virtues which must be associated with tranquillity of mind, and a conscience void of offence to God and man. O, how should youth strive to lay the foundation for such a reputation! How should they avoid every thing which might bring on it the slightest tarnish! It would be to them a priceless treasure, and yet, one false step may for ever put the acquisition beyond their reach.

My soul, let thy distinction be that thou lovest God supremely and thy neighbour as thyself. Pity and relieve the wretched; walk circumspectly towards them that are without; in thy slightest actions be careful to furnish no occasion for gainsaying or reproach; avoid the imputation of meanness, selfishness, and covetousness; secure the approbation of conscience in all things, and whilst a sojourner on earth, let it be seen that thy absorbing desire is to promote the glory of God, and the best interests of thy fellow men. Let it be thy aim to be a lover of God, and a lover of man. Then shall thy name be as precious ointment poured out.

HUMILITY AND PRIDE.

BETTER is it to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Before destruction the heart of man is haughty; and before honour is humility.

The Lord will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.

By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life.

THERE is no grace more frequently inculcated in the word of God than humility—no vice more pointedly condemned than pride. The one supposes a low, the other an exaggerated estimate of our own attainments, and hence the first is founded in truth, and the latter in ignorance. There is no state of mind in which men are so little disposed to be taught of God, or to recognize their dependence on him, as that of pride. It leads to self-confidence, engenders a haughty and overbearing spirit, suppresses sympathy for others, and the gentle charities of life, and is utterly at variance with every sentiment and emotion suitable to the Christian character. A proud worshipper of God, or a proud follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, are contradictory terms.

On the other hand, humility is the first feeling of the heart when regenerated by the Spirit of God, and it becomes deeper and more habitual in proportion as

the soul perceives the excellent glory of God and its own depravity. "Mine eye seeth thee," said Job, "wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and in ashes." David, in contemplating the external works of the Creator, "the heavens, the work of his fingers, and the moon and the stars which he had made," was constrained to exclaim, "what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" Infinitely insignificant in comparison with the Almighty, and unspeakably impure in comparison with the most Holy, man may well exclaim, Behold, I am as nothing before thee! The blessed Jesus taught his disciples "to learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart," and the most eminent of his followers have always been distinguished by this temper of mind. Guilty and ruined as we are, we have nothing of which we can be justly proud.

Solomon, from his elevated position, had peculiar opportunities of observing the divine procedure, and he has given us the result of his observation in the passages above quoted. He had uniformly noticed that pride was the precursor of destruction, while humility preceded exaltation; and with this experience he had learned that "it was better to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."

Remember, O my soul, that thy God, while he contemns the proud, has promised to dwell with them who are of an humble and contrite heart, and tremble at his word. What reason hast thou to be humble! How grievously hast thou dishonoured thyself and thy God by thy sin! Does not the remembrance of thy lowly origin, "the degenerate plant of a strange vine," humble thee? Canst thou be uplifted when

thou recallest thy unthankfulness, unfruitfulness, and short-comings in duty? Does not the recollection of the ingratitude with which thou hast requited thy merciful and loving Saviour, produce in thee lowly thoughts of thyself? Is it not sweet for thee to walk in the valley of humiliation? Is it not most congenial with thy feelings, most suitable to thy condition? Thou hast no ground of boasting; thy best righteousness is imperfect; thou hast fallen infinitely below the holy standard of God's law. And is there indeed honour and exaltation for thee? Bless the Lord, for it is of his rich, unmerited grace that thou art invested with the dignity of a son of God, and shalt hereafter be glorified as an heir of his kingdom.

LIBERALITY AND BENEVOLENCE.

THE liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.

He that hath pity upon the

poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

THE gifts of Providence are unequally distributed in this world. Some are affluent, some have moderate possessions, and some are poor. This difference in condition cannot always be attributed to industry and thrift on the one hand, and indolence and improvidence on the other; but is often the result of circumstances, in which the overruling providence of God may be clearly seen. The industrious are not always rich, nor the indolent always poor; wealth is not always the proof of merit, nor poverty the result of crime. As the distinction exists among men, it is safe in all cases to say that God has made us to differ. The designs of Providence are often inscrutable, but one intent of this difference in worldly condition is obvious—it is to furnish scope for the exercise of the sweet charities of life. “The poor ye have always with you,” that you may cultivate the benevolent affections, and minister to their necessities. A brother may be sick, or infirm, or reduced by a reverse of for-

tune to utter destitution; and is he to be hungry, and are we to give him no food? naked, and we to furnish him no raiment? sick, and we refuse to minister to him? While we have enough and to spare, shall he perish at our doors? When he asks for a little of our superfluity to cheer his desolate condition, shall we heartlessly refuse him?

Men may be poor in a still more emphatic sense, when destitute of the means of grace, and ignorant of the way of salvation. This is a penury which affects the well-being of the soul, and carries its blight into eternity. If we pity and relieve the man who is perishing for bread, how much more urgent the call upon us to extend our charity to those who are perishing for the bread of life! If our sensibilities would be shocked by the death of a fellow man at our doors by famine, how much more deeply should we feel for those who are dying around us without hope! The eye of charity cannot be closed on the fearful ravages which sin is making in the world, or on the countless victims it is heaping up for the fires of Tophet. Shall our eye refuse to pity or our hand to relieve?

In either case the Lord has entrusted the poor to the benevolence of those more highly favoured, and however ingenious and plausible the excuses for a neglect of duty, they will avail us nothing in that day when Christ the Judge of the world shall say, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." "Forasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

Ponder the sayings of the wise man. How pointed

and emphatic, and how amply confirmed by the whole spirit of the gospel! Not only do our Christian principles become questionable by the absence of charity, but we thereby cut ourselves off from some of the most precious promises. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself," and so far from being losers by ministering to the wants of others, we thus "lend to the Lord," and that which we give shall be repaid with interest. On the other hand, "whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, and shall not be heard." He may shut up his bowels of compassion, and for the sake of hoarding treasure, may withhold more than is meet, and yet it will tend to poverty.

O my soul, thou hast thyself been a petitioner at the door of mercy, and if thou hast found favour, wilt thou refuse thy sympathy to a poor fellow-sufferer? Has the compassion of Jesus relieved thee in thy sore straits, and wilt thou turn a deaf ear to the moaning cries of thy indigent brother? Suffer not the cold and calculating excuses which some may urge for their niggardliness, to blunt thy sensibilities, and to close the fountain of kindly feeling. Devise liberal things; let thy charity embrace the world; regard each man as thy brother, and for humanity's sake, nay, for Christ's sake, run to his relief. Canst thou expect mercy, if thou showest none? Can the spirit of a compassionate Saviour dwell in thee, if thou canst with cold indifference look on human suffering? Surely not. Love thy neighbour as thyself, and esteem it thy privilege, and make it thy delight, to minister to his temporal and spiritual wants.

FRIENDSHIP.

OINTMENT and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man

sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.

He that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.

A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

ONE of the sweetest charms of life is human friendship. To have even one, to whom we can at all times open our heart with confidence, upon whose fidelity we can rely, and who, we are sure, will never withhold his kindly aid or desert us in distress, is a great acquisition. In a selfish world where most men are eager to serve themselves, and regardless of the interests of others, it is pleasant to find heart thus beating responsive to heart. We should expect of a friend sympathy in our sorrow, joy in our prosperity, counsel in trouble, aid in difficulty, and rebuke when it is deserved; for "faithful are even the wounds of a friend." The men of the world have their friendships, but they are often the compacts of wickedness, in which one encourages another in the way of ruin. How often too are they pretended rather than real, specious rather than solid. They flourish in prosperity, but will not bear the test of adversity; they are founded in selfishness and not in love. The friendship of the world worketh death.

They, however, who have an identity of interests, who have selected the same pursuits, have imbibed the same principles, because baptized by the same Spirit and united to the same Saviour, are best fitted for this relation. True Christian friendship can alone be relied on: for he that is faithful to God, is not likely to prove unfaithful to his friend.

The rich perfume of a precious ointment but imperfectly symbolizes the sweetness of this relation between brethren in Christ, as they pursue their journey together, encouraging each other by their hearty counsels, and pressing on towards their heavenly home.

My soul, suffer no feeling of jealousy or envy or ill will to alienate thee from thine own or thy father's friend. To such show thyself friendly. Where the sources of human happiness are few, be careful that none of them be obstructed through thy fault. Reciprocate the kindness of others. Repel the suggestions of suspicion or distrust; and yet remember that human friendship is only subsidiary to thy happiness, not its ultimate ground. Thou must look to the available friendship of Him "who sticketh closer than a brother." Is he not thy friend? Did he not seek thee when a wanderer, kindly restore thee to his paths, and even die for thy redemption? Let him not be ungratefully requited, or "wounded in the house of his friends." Thou needest him more than he needs thee, and the day is approaching, when he will be all in all to thee, as a friendly intercessor at the bar of judgment.

NEIGHBOURS.

DEVISE not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee. | piseeth his neighbour : but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.

Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause ; and deceive not with thy lips. | Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house ; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.

He that is void of wisdom des- | bour spreadeth a net for his feet.



IN an enlarged sense, as intimated by our Saviour in the parable of the kind Samaritan, all men to whom we can render kind offices, may be regarded as our neighbours ; but in a restricted sense, the term is applied to those who dwell in our more immediate vicinity. In most cases, this nearness of residence leads to association, which if sustained on friendly principles, becomes a source of pleasant intercourse and mutual comfort. If, on the other hand, it be interrupted by feuds and collisions, it becomes a source of grievous annoyance. Individuals of different dispositions and characters, and not unfrequently of different forms of religion and pursuit, and strangers to each other, except so far as accidental residence has made them acquainted, need special rules for the regulation of their intercourse.

Where intimacy may not be desirable among neighbours, there should at least be respectful behaviour and civility. Pride and superciliousness offend and provoke enmity, while politeness and kindness disarm it ; and surely it is worth while to secure the good will of the most obscure, when it can be obtained at so little cost.

The feelings of good neighbourhood are essentially

promoted by a mutual disposition to perform good offices. Many occasions will occur in which our inclination in this respect will be tested; and if we never suffer such to pass by without evincing a readiness to assist those who need our aid, we will most likely awaken a desire to return the good will we manifest.

Forbearance too, in this relation, is a virtue which may often be exercised with good effect. There may possibly be those around us whose temper is unsocial and hostile, and whose acts towards us are injurious. To meet them in the same temper will only aggravate the evil. It is better to suffer injury than to retaliate it. Wrath soon cools when met with mildness, and hostility loses its edge when opposed only by kindness. . If every little affront is to be indignantly resisted, and if every act of injustice is to create litigation, neighbourly harmony must be for ever sacrificed. Forbearance is true economy, as it saves the expenditure of feeling, time, and money.

The peace of a neighbourhood is often sacrificed by giving currency to idle gossip and detraction. An evil report against our neighbour should never be lightly entertained, and our efforts should ever be employed to repress the love of scandal in others.

Each of the maxims of the wise man recited above, may be pondered with advantage. They are the result of experience, and inculcate that friendly feeling which is, in fact, the great preservative of harmony in neighbourly intercourse.

May I ever keep it in mind that those by whom I am surrounded, are, like myself, weak and sinful, from whom perfection is not to be expected. As I need forbearance, so may I extend it to others, and in all things may I do to others as I should wish them to

do to me. Let it be my invariable rule to do all the good I can to those around me, and never incur their ill will when I can win their esteem. Even, if my enemies, I should sympathize rather than exult in their calamities; and if they should revile, defame and persecute me, it is my duty to pray for them. May the recollection that they and I are soon to stand before the tribunal of God, repress every bitter feeling, and induce an imitation of the gentleness and meekness of Christ. Religion is to be recommended by example as well as by word, and so acting, if I shall fail to secure their regard, I shall at least escape self-reproach.

FORBEARANCE.

SAY not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.

Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.

The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

THE reader of the New Testament must, in a particular manner, be struck with the frequency and emphasis with which the grace of meekness is inculcated. The whole demeanour of our blessed Lord in all the variety of situations in which he was placed during his personal ministry, was a practical exemplification of the precept, "avenge not yourselves;" and his explicit teaching, as well as that of his immediate disciples, was, "resist not evil, but overcome evil with good." When our Lord "was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously," and in so doing he set us an example that we should follow in his steps. Infidelity has paid the highest compliment to Christianity in alleging, that this is a morality too pure for the state of the world.

To revenge injury is the natural prompting of the unsanctified heart; and on the contrary, forbearance towards the injurious, both in spirit and act, is a virtue of most difficult attainment. What a powerful curb must we impose on our passions! With what vigilance must we guard against the first symptoms of their ebullition! How fervently must we pray for

strength from on high to help our infirmity! And yet withal how often will we be called to deplore our ill success in learning of Him who "was meek and lowly in heart!" Still there is no grace which is more needed, and upon the exercise of which there will be more frequent calls. Between the open and insidious assaults of enemies, and the imperfections of friends, the spirit will be tried to the utmost, and we will find how difficult it is to imitate the suffering Redeemer, or him who was the first martyr in his cause. Yet to this we should attain; for this we should discipline ourselves, not merely on account of the great temporal advantages resulting from this spirit, but because we thus resemble the Lord, who makes it indispensable that the disciple should be as his Master.

Remember, my soul, that thou art placed in a world of trial, where thy graces are to be matured by triumphs achieved over opposing vices. Injuries will be inflicted, that thou mayest have an opportunity of showing forth thy meekness and forbearance. Others will have occasion to exercise forbearance towards thee; learn then to exercise it towards them. When thou art tempted to resentment and retaliation, call to mind the infinite obligations thou art under to God for his long suffering to thee. How often hast thou provoked him, how greatly hast thou dishonoured him, how ungratefully hast thou requited his kindness! and yet he has been slow to anger and of great mercy. If he has forborne so long with thee, under extreme provocation, canst thou not forbear with thy brother under comparatively slight injury? It is God's prerogative to avenge; it is thy duty to recompense evil to no man, but to wait on God who is able to save thee.

GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

Who so keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles.

He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.

The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.

In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.

The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.

Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

So comprehensive, explicit, and forcible, are the Proverbs of Solomon on this topic, as almost to supersede the necessity of amplification. Let them be seriously pondered and read in connexion with the equally vivid description of the apostle James, (James iii.) as they furnish in a brief compass the substance of all which need be written on the subject.

The tongue, as the principal organ of speech, is employed to express the thoughts of the mind and the emotions of the heart, and hence its efficiency in the production of good and evil. According to the internal disposition, it may be used to abuse or conciliate, to provoke to wrath or to pacify, to tempt to evil or to dissuade, to misrepresent or to speak truth, to destroy

reputation or to defend, to blaspheme or to pray, to dishonour God or to celebrate his goodness. An evil tongue, which is not under the government of sound principles, is a mischief of incalculable magnitude. Words are inadequate to portray the havoc it may bring on families, neighbourhoods, and even nations. False, insidious and malignant, it may fatally wound the objects of its attack, and destroy peace, character and life. It is the devil's favourite agency for scattering firebrands, arrows and death, through the world.

The tongue, when properly regulated, is equally potent for good. Its words of truth enlighten; its words of kindness are an excellent oil to mollify and soothe the feelings. It is best employed when engaged in celebrating the praises of God, and in promoting his glory.

How is the tongue to be regulated? is a question of no ordinary importance. The remedy for its unruliness must be radical; no system of rules will be available, unless the fountain of thought and feeling be purified. It is the instrument of the passions, and hence it can be controlled only by first controlling *them*. Grace in the heart will soon evince itself by grace on the lips. When wrath, envy, and every evil feeling of the heart are kept in proper subjection, the tongue will not err. When those graces, which the Spirit of God infuses, receive a cordial welcome in the soul, the tongue will speak peace and good will to men. Rules, even to the most gracious person, may also be of use. Let there be a determined purpose to control our speech, let there be vigilance in guarding its movements, let caution and deliberation mark our words, and especially let us learn when to be SILENT.

Solomon insists upon this latter as among the most important directions for the government of the tongue.

I would desire always to remember that the wonderful faculty of speech has been communicated to me, not to render myself and others miserable, but happy; not to be an instrument of evil, but of good. May it be my aim to have my conversation always seasoned with grace, speaking lovingly and kindly to my fellow men, and not provokingly or resentfully. I should avoid both foolish and hurtful words. When I can do good by speaking, let me not refrain; when I cannot do good, let me be silent. O for grace to eradicate every feeling from my heart which would prompt vain or sinful words, and which may be in me a fountain sending forth only sweet waters. I am as accountable to God for my words as for my actions; let me remember this, and set a watch on my lips. Above all, may my tongue be employed in celebrating the praises of God; and when, at the resurrection of the just, I shall be clothed with a new body, may I have a seraph's tongue to praise Him to all eternity!

MODERATED DESIRE.

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.

Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith.

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

“LET your moderation be known unto all men,” is a divine precept, designed to repress the extravagant expectations and unlicensed indulgences to which human nature is prone. The passions run riot unless restrained, and “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” exert a dominant influence over the life. There is no sensual enjoyment of which the heart is ready to say, “it is enough;” and wealth, as the means of obtaining them, is sought for with avidity, until its pursuit becomes an engrossing passion. The necessities of our nature are comparatively few and easily provided for; but not content with this, the desire grasps after more than is necessary and which can only be hoarded, or expended in the gratification of artificial wants. It is in the very nature of earthly possessions not to satisfy, and however large and cumbrous they may be, the cupidity of the heart still demands more. “Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.”

In opposition to this general trait of character, the Christian is admonished to repress covetousness, to moderate his desires, and to rectify his views of the

power of the world to produce happiness. "Having food and raiment," that is, the ordinary comforts of life, "be therewith content." It is not the amount possessed, but the spirit in which it is enjoyed that has an influence for good or evil. Wealth may only be a cause of trouble, while a little with the fear of the Lord, may satisfy every wish. Poverty is not desirable, for it brings many discomforts, and wealth should not be desired, for it exposes to many dangers; but there is a golden mean, in which we are provided with things convenient for us. He is the wise man who, instead of being the slave of the world, is only indebted to it for a passing hospitality.

I would call thee, my soul, to a strict account, and ascertain if thou holdest thy passions in subjection. Thou hast learned that the world has little to impart, why then should thy desires be turned towards it? Should it be so liberal as to give thee all it possesses, thou couldest safely do no more than satisfy those wants, which may be satisfied with very little. Many gain the world and lose their souls, and wherein are they profited? Take warning by their fate, and moderate thy desire for earthly things. Hast thou godliness? that, with contentment, is great gain. If thou art covetous, be only covetous of what is good; build not below the skies; grasp after eternal things, and indulge unlimited desire of heavenly happiness, for such wishes, large as they may be, are acceptable to God, and shall be satisfied.

EARLY PIETY.

I LOVE them that love me, and they that seek me early
shall find me.

How encouraging the declaration, and how unambiguous the promise! God loves the offering of the youthful heart, and the steps which are early directed in the way to Zion he will surely guide. Happy youth! whose first affections are given to God whose worldly aspirations are repressed and supplanted by aspirations after heaven; who dost resolve to turn back from the way of sin, before thou hast had a long and painful experience of its ruggedness.

It is a very peculiar encouragement to early effort in religion that it *shall be* successful. It is possible that God may be propitious to the sinner who comes to him at the eleventh hour, but the application *may*, when long delayed, utterly fail. The foolish virgins who were aroused out of their slumber by the midnight cry, were shut out, and could hear no favourable response to their importunate entreaties for admission. Where God's invitations have long been despised, his grace may be finally withheld, and the hope of the sinner be cut off. Not so with those who seek God in their youth—they "shall find" him. It is his own gracious promise.

To none does the world present such fascinations as to the young. Taking advantage of their inexperience, the great adversary pictures to their imagination a thousand unreal and unsubstantial scenes which have all the semblance of truth; a captivating view

spreads out before them, and flowery paths invite their feet, and the numberless evils which have unexpectedly sprung up in the way to disappoint their predecessors, are artfully hidden from their view. Thus are multitudes deceived to their ruin; they dream not of disappointment and sorrow, and disregard all warnings; and although they soon find that their hopes are not realized, they press on, still relying on the deceitful promises of sin.

Some, however, are from their childhood inspired with the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom. They search the Scriptures, bend the youthful knee in prayer, give their affections to their heavenly Father, and ask him to be the guide of their youth. Their prayer is heard and answered, and they are redeemed from the pollutions of the world.

The advantages of a piety thus early commenced are manifold. How many painful reflections and remorseful self-accusations are thus escaped! Although they will have much to deplore as the inheritors of a corrupt nature, yet they will not, like the aged penitent, be compelled to travel back through long years of rebellion, to be pained at every step, by the apparition of murdered time, the ghosts of abused and lost opportunities, and the recollection of innumerable and flagrant sins. How extensive too will be their religious attainments! Those who soonest enter the school of Christ and are diligent in study, will learn most of God's will, his government, his providence, his love and faithfulness, and will be most likely to obtain that full assurance of faith and hope, which is an infinitely richer inheritance than the world has in its offer. What increased pleasures in religion will they also enjoy! This will be a result of their attain-

ments, for the more that is known of the divine excellency, the more exquisite will be the joy of the soul. The perfection of blessedness in heaven consists in the perfection of the knowledge which the soul there has of God; hence the more of that knowledge which is acquired here, the greater the happiness. Many Christians walk in doubt and apprehension, and through fear of death are subject to bondage; but he that has run in the Christian course from his youth, is most likely to be skilled in the Christian warfare, most likely to bring his heart under the influence of the graces of the Spirit, and to have such discoveries of the divine love, and such familiarity at the throne of grace, as to be assured that he is a son of God and an heir of glory. And O, what sweet experience may he have of God's love, and of his interest in Christ; what foretastes of heavenly happiness, what confidence that neither life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate him from his holy and happy connexion with his divine Redeemer.

Many, when advanced in years, have bitterly lamented that their hearts were not given to God in youth; but none, that they have devoted the prime of their days to this most excellent service. The young, therefore, should remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and those who would increase the amount of human happiness here, and multiply joy in heaven, will use their best efforts to instruct, to guide and persuade the young to escape from the pollutions of the world, and to set out early in their heavenly journey.

My soul, hast thou been early called to remember thy Creator and to keep his law? how many Satanic

snare hast thou thus escaped, and how much bitter repentance hast thou thus avoided ! Never canst thou be sufficiently grateful for an early acquaintance with God,—with his love and faithfulness. But if unhappily thy childhood and youth were vanity, and a Saviour's love was long resisted; for this let thy repentance be sincere, and let present opportunities be more diligently improved. Thus redeem squandered time; make thy calling and election sure, and run with alacrity the remainder of thy race. At least, in the fervour of thy love and in the devotion of thy life, compete with those who have earlier entered the course.

FILIAL OBEDIENCE.

My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother :

For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother :

Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

When thou goest, it shall lead thee ; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee ; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son : but he that is a companion of riotous men, shameth his father.

Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

A wise son heareth his father's instruction : but a scorner heareth not rebuke.

A wise son maketh a glad fa-

ther : but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

A wise son maketh a glad father : but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice : and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.

Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.

A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

THE parental relation ! How full of sweet associations and tender reminiscences ! Hast thou a father—a mother ? They are thy natural guardians, thy dearest earthly friends. They joyfully smiled at thy introduction into the world. Towards thee their affections gushed forth as from a fountain newly opened. Through prattling childhood and thoughtless boyhood, they tenderly watched over thee. Their anxieties were awakened and their sedulous care was on the alert, if sickness clouded thy brow. Thy open-

ing manhood was watched with intense solicitude, and into all thy plans for future life, they entered with a feeling in which none others could fully participate. Thy joys were their joys, thy sorrows their sorrows. In every adversity, however the world might frown, their bosom was thy sanctuary; and is it a hard duty to render them filial reverence and obedience? Canst thou ever fully recompense their care and kindness? Thy sacred duty to them should be accounted thy sweetest privilege.

Filial reverence is one of the ten subjects which Jehovah signalized when he delivered his law from Sinai. To this he especially appended a promise: "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long on the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." If peculiar blessings are insured to the obedient, peculiar judgments are threatened against the disobedient. The holy Scriptures insist on this subject, and characterizing the flagrant ingratitude and wickedness of unfilial conduct, mete out to it a punishment proportionally great.

The actions of a child which bring shame and dishonour on a parent, are a violation of this commandment, as palpable as if those actions were personally undutiful and disrespectful. He that shames his father by being a companion of the riotous, or is a heaviness to his mother by his folly, is under a similar condemnation with him who mocketh at his father or despiseth to obey his mother. As a natural guardian, the directions of a parent should be followed; as a counsellor, his opinions should be treated with deference; as a progenitor, affection is due to him from his offspring. In all things lawful and proper his commands should be law. Even where a parent is not

all he should be, the duty of a child is not diminished, but should be cheerfully rendered. Attention and affection to a parent should be uniform, and protection and support extended when necessary; he should be revered through life, comforted in old age, and encouraged and sustained in his passage to the tomb. O, never, never should a father's care and a mother's enduring love be forgotten or ill-requited. Living they should be honoured, and their memory cherished when they are dead.

O my soul, if thou art indebted to earthly relations, if thou hast received kindness from them, and perhaps those early impressions, which have led thee to choose the one thing needful, for this thou shouldst be thankful. If love and duty should be cheerfully extended to an earthly parent, thou occupiest a higher relation, thou art a son of God, and to thy heavenly Father is due a still purer love, a holier obedience. Grieve Him not by thy perverseness; forfeit not his favour by thy rebellion, but when he says, "seek ye my face," let thy reply be "thy face, Lord, will I seek." Let his service be thy delight, his glory thy aim; and as he can do thee no wrong, but ever in his chastenings, corrects thee as a son whom he loveth, be submissive to his dispensations. Now he permits thee to call him Abba, Father, and receives thee by adoption into his household—wait, and thou shalt be made a member of his one glorious family in heaven.

DISCIPLINE.

A WHIP for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

The rod and reproof give wis-

dom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.

WE are the "degenerate plants of a strange vine," and the earliest buddings of life but too sadly prove the corruption of the stock from which we spring. "We go astray as soon as we be born," and although the passions may be in their infancy, yet they furnish unequivocal evidence of their evil nature and tendency. Youth, childhood, and even infancy, need restraints to keep in subjection the unhallowed propensities, which are innate, and which would otherwise break forth in acts of misrule and violence. A child is supposed to possess little knowledge and less discretion to guide its own steps; it must therefore be indebted for salutary restraint to its elders, and especially to those who are entrusted by God with its training. The duty is at once delicate and difficult. Many err in it, and the sad consequences of their error may be traced in the moral and spiritual ruin of their offspring. In a charge so precious and responsible, parents need to be endued with heavenly wisdom.

They must act upon fixed principles; their authori-

ty must be felt and acknowledged, and while their discipline is kind and affectionate, it must be uniform, firm, and decided. How many, to escape trouble, or in the exercise of a false kindness, suffer tempers which might be nipped in the bud, to grow up beyond the reach of control! Injudicious treatment has not only entailed misery on children, but brought the gray hairs of parents in sorrow to the grave.

All admit the necessity of early and careful instruction, as well as of persuasion and entreaty, to induce children to walk in the right way; but it is to be feared, that many have discarded from their theory of education, those sage maxims of wisdom and Scripture, which enforce the necessity of chastisement. Children are by nature perverse, wayward, and lawless, and they early commence the struggle for the mastery. If not seasonably checked; if not taught to respect the authority of their parents and to fear power, the consequences may easily be foretold—they will become disobedient and disrespectful, and grow up the pests of the community. Where the law of reason will not avail, the rod of correction must be substituted. There should not be undue severity; correction should never be administered on slight occasions; the child should be made to see that it is resorted to from a sense of duty and not in an ebullition of passion; to do him good, and not to gratify angry feelings; and in a word he should be made to associate his sufferings with his faults.

The wisdom of such inspired maxims, as those quoted above, has been verified in the experience of many, who have had reason to be thankful for the results of their application.

Let me remember, if a parent, that the souls of my

children shall be required at my hand. If I unduly indulge, I may ruin them; if I pass by their faults, I may confirm them in evil. To train them for usefulness here and immortality hereafter, I must not only commend them to God, and impart to them sound counsel; but repress their lawless desires and curb their rebellious feelings, by punishment judiciously inflicted. It is false kindness to abstain from just severity, for "he that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes." My heavenly Father scourgeth every son he receiveth, and when he chastens, it is not for his pleasure, but their good. Surely I may safely follow his example. Have I not experienced the benefit of a parental love which could sacrifice its own feelings in correcting me for my faults? and shall I not deny myself, in chastening my child, while there is hope, and before evil habits become too firmly fixed to be eradicated?

DUTY TO ENEMIES.

REJOICE not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:

Lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.

IF the blessed Jesus, who was a living exemplification of all the virtues and graces of human character in its purest state, could not pass through the world without enemies, who hated both his doctrine and his person, and reviled, defamed, and persecuted him even to death, how can his disciples expect to be exempt? It is enough that the disciple should be as his Lord.

Men may be our enemies causelessly through misapprehension of our character, or in consequence of some supposed injury; and their hostility may be more or less bitter and unrelenting, and lead them to acts affecting our peace, reputation, property, or life.

Under these circumstances what should be our conduct? Should we retaliate, wish them evil, or seek their injury? The gospel forbids it. The true temper of the Christian revolts at it. On the contrary, we should endeavour to appease their anger, disarm their hostility, and win their esteem and love. True magnanimity, so far from saying "an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth," dictates a conciliating course. How much better to triumph over an enemy by love, than by revenge! How much better to assuage, than to add new exasperation to, his feelings! It was said of

an eminently good man, who was habitually controlled by the spirit of the gospel, that there was no surer way of obtaining from him acts of kindness than to do him an ill turn. It would indeed be difficult to continue to be the enemy of such a man.

To return good for evil is the Christian's maxim. If an enemy is in want, minister to his necessities, and let the veil of charity shade from remembrance the injuries he has inflicted. If in the course of providence, calamities befall him, so far from triumphing in his disasters, be the first to extend to him sympathy and a helping hand. Should such a temper as this prevail, how soon would the fires of rancorous hate and deadly feud be extinguished!

My soul, keep before thee the example of the blessed Jesus at all times, that thou mayest be able to cherish feelings of universal good will to men. Under the contradiction and persecuting hate of sinners, he was mild, patient, uncomplaining, and forgiving. Aim to be like him. The world that hated him, he loved, and died for their redemption; and why canst thou not pray for those who despitefully use thee? In a slanderous world thou mayest not expect that all men will speak well of thee; in a selfish world thou mayest not hope to enjoy the friendship of all; in a sinful world thou canst not escape collisions and injuries; but thy best policy and truest wisdom will be, to love thine enemies and to do good to them that hate thee.

TEMPERANCE.

WINE is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

It is not for kings, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:

Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.

Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.

He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

Be not among wine-bibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:

For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and

drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.

Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

IN an enlarged sense, temperance relates to the moderation of all the sensual appetites; and in its more common acceptation, it is opposed to gluttony on the one hand, and to the excessive use of intoxicating drinks on the other.

The appetite for food, with its attendant gratification, has been wisely ordained by the Creator, to induce us to use the means for the preservation of life; and it is abused and perverted from its right end when we minister to it solely for the sake of animal gratification. The art of man has been taxed in the invention of luxuries to regale the palate; and many, reversing the rule, live to eat, instead of eating to live. Immoderate indulgence in eating, instead of invigorating, enfeebles the constitution, which God has given us; and is a sin against nature, as well as an

express violation of the divine command. It is irrational and immoral, inasmuch as it sensualizes the whole man, obscuring and impairing the intellect, and entailing the most fearful bodily diseases. Nature demands a simple and moderate diet; with more than this, its wonderful and complicated machinery is disordered and eventually ruined.

Intemperance in drinking, if not a more common vice, is perhaps more directly injurious. Intoxicating drinks are first resorted to for the exhilaration they produce, and frequent indulgence confirms a habit, which imperiously demands gratification. Nature may be so accustomed to act under artificial stimulants as to refuse to act without them. Where this disease or vice in the system is superinduced, drunkenness is the result, under the influence of which the most terrible ravages are committed on the human system. The land has become loathsome from the effects of this vice. The bloated visage, the staggering gait, the imbecile intellect, with a long array of fatal diseases, are its prominent results, so far as the physical frame is concerned; and in its moral influence, it disqualifies the mind for serious thought, stupefies the conscience, inflames the passions, hardens the heart and becomes an inlet to all the other vices. The drunkard, while he becomes a hateful object on earth, necessarily cuts himself off from the hope of heaven. His ruin is total, involving both body and soul.

Now as no man deliberately resolves to become a drunkard, but is gradually seduced into the habit, through a vain self-confidence that he can restrain his indulgence within proper limits; and as those who fall, may attribute their ruin to the insidious nature of

the vice, which makes its approach by almost imperceptible advances, self-preservation dictates the propriety of TOTAL ABSTINENCE. No one can become a drunkard who wholly abstains, and no one can be sure that he will not become a drunkard, if he indulges. The maxim may well be accommodated to the subject—"touch not, taste not, handle not."

May I remember that He who hath created me, hath called me to higher objects and pursuits, than the mere indulgence of animal appetites. Having food convenient for me, may I therewith be content; and may I never resort to a dangerous beverage to repair exhausted energies, or to obtain oblivion for my woes. I am accountable to my Maker for every injury which I may inflict on the nature he hath given me; and I grievously sin when I so indulge my appetites as to unfit me for his service. May I be temperate in all things, and avoid those convivial scenes in which I might be tempted to transgress the rules of moderation. While I pity those who are slaves to their appetites, may I strive to awaken within them the determination to act as rational and immortal beings, and to avoid those vices of gluttony and drunkenness, which will otherwise bring upon them the double ruin of body and soul.

HONESTY IN BUSINESS.

A FALSE balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight.

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

A just weight and balance are

the Lord's: all the weights of the bag are his work.

Divers weights are an abomination unto the Lord; and a false balance is not good.

It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

FROM the very constitution of human society there must be producers and consumers, sellers and buyers; and it is in this way that the various grades of the community are interlinked and become mutually dependent on each other. The intercourse thus established, must be based on fixed laws, the infringement of which will necessarily endanger its continuance. All business transactions should be conducted on the principles of truth and honesty. It is alike the law of the land and the law of God. The desire of gain often interferes to violate this law, bringing in its train innumerable evils. When strict principle is laid aside, ingenuity devises innumerable schemes of fraud; and fair and honest dealing is interrupted by overreaching on the one hand, and distrust on the other.

Even setting aside those, who, regardless of character, will defraud on every favourable occasion; there is a large class of the business community who act more cautiously, although not less dishonestly. Besides the false weights and measures, to which only the more unprincipled resort, there are tricks in trade, which although sanctioned by custom, are equally criminal, because leading to the same results. He is

a dishonest man, who, in driving a bargain, will impose on the ignorance, simplicity and credulity of a customer, in palming on him worthless commodities, in exacting from him exorbitant profits, in making him a sufferer, by first making him a dupe. He is dishonest who praises his goods beyond their well known value, and who secures their sale by affecting that he is selling at an actual loss. He is equally dishonest who, in purchasing, will depreciate the commodity he wants, and the true value of which he knows. Every artifice in trade which, by innuendo or positive assertion, sacrifices the truth, is dishonest. Yet these expedients are so common as to create general distrust where there should be mutual confidence; and it is only by superior dexterity, that they are made to answer their purpose. It is a sad state of things when the confiding are laughed at for their simplicity, and overreached because they are not adepts in the tricks of trade. To say that these arts have become necessary, is to justify an evil on the ground of its prevalence. For all the purposes of general trade, they are useless; for while they may impose on some, their very existence puts most men on their guard, and thus they defeat themselves.

Not to dwell on the enormity of the sin of dishonesty, how much better, in all points of view, would it be, if men of business would speak truly and act fairly. In the long run, honesty is the best policy; and many a bitter self-accusation, and many a pang of remorse would be saved, if its dictates were strictly obeyed. Let all remember that the curse of God rests on dishonest gains; they are often blasted in this world, and bring an everlasting blight on the

soul. How can a man be profited in gaining the world at such an expense!

In all my transactions with men, may I do to others as I would wish others to do to me; and may it be my determination to possess little, with a pure conscience, rather than much by fraudulent arts. If tempted to dishonesty, may I remember the great day of account, when every minute concern of life will pass in review before the Judge of the world; and may I spurn the action, which, however it might enrich, would degrade and demoralize.

SURETYSHIP.

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| <p>HE that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure.</p> | <p>surety in the presence of his friend.</p> |
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|---|---|
| <p>A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh</p> | <p>Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.</p> |
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A SURETY is one, who becomes responsible, by bond or promise, for the debts of another, putting himself, in the eye of the law, in the place of the principal, in case of his failure to meet his obligations. We are not to suppose that Solomon meant utterly to condemn the principle of suretyship, because in some cases, it may be entered into with entire safety to ourselves and with great advantage to our neighbour; but his maxims are directed against rash and inconsiderate engagements of this nature. Before an individual becomes surety for another, he should reflect that he thus becomes responsible for the consequences, not only of the misfortune, but the neglect, extravagance and dishonesty of his principal; for in either of these cases the principal may fail and the bondsman become liable. Prudence dictates, that before such an engagement is made, the ability and general good character of the individual to be served, should be well considered. From want of this forecast many have not only exposed themselves to bankruptcy, but inflicted serious injuries on their families, by exposing them to the privations of poverty.

It is a good rule seldom to ask such favours of others, and to reciprocate them in like proportion;

and it is a rule which justice and honesty demand, that suretyship should never cover a larger amount, than can be jeopardized without injury to our families and creditors. If we go beyond this we act rashly and unwisely, and consequent suffering is the result of our folly. Trade can be more safely conducted on the basis of real than supposititious capital, and if our gains be less, they are at least more sure. It is the desire for rapid acquisitions that has rendered suretyship so common, in which the ruin of one involves the interests of many. In the case of a poor neighbour, a gift or loan, according to our ability, is better than a bond.

While I am reminded that I may not rashly endanger the property, which the providence of God has bestowed on me for the support of those dependent on me, I should not suffer a too rigid prudence to steel my heart against the misfortunes of others. There is a use as well as an abuse of the principle. Paul's suretyship for Onesimus may be to me an example of the use, and the too common practice of the world affords examples of the abuse.

I would desire to be reminded too by this subject, of Him who became my great surety in a much higher sense. As a spiritual bankrupt, I was exposed to eternal imprisonment, from which there was no release, until I had paid the uttermost farthing; but Christ took my place, assumed my obligations, paid my debt, and thus delivered me from the disastrous consequences of my failure to meet my engagements. Blessed be his name for this act of disinterested favour, by which the claims of God, my great Creditor, were fully satisfied, while I was restored to my forfeited honours and possessions.

INDUSTRY.

SEEST thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.

For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?

He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

The hand of the diligent shall

bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.

Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty: open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.

The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

WE are so constituted by the God that formed us, that fixed employment tends to the invigoration of mind and body, and is thus promotive of our personal happiness. The disuse of our faculties, whether intellectual or corporeal, prepares the way for their premature decay; and the divine providence has benevolently designed, that our means of subsistence should mainly depend on our own exertions, that we might thus have an adequate motive for calling our faculties into healthful exercise. It is a real unhappiness to be without employment, as experience eventually proves; and the life of leisure, at which so many aim as the chief good, is always more agreeable in anticipation, than in actual possession. Time that hangs as a burden on the shoulders of the indolent, passes along with sprightly steps and cheerful smiles to him that is usefully employed; so that it may be said, that industry is not only a good medicine, but an agreeable pastime.

Whatever may be our calling, in that we should labour diligently; this is the intimation of reason, as well as the requirement of Scripture.

It is a Christian duty; for he that provides not for his own household is worse than an infidel; and it is an absurdity to expect that God will provide for those who will not exert themselves; for if a man will not work neither should he eat. The Christian should, in his industrious habits, be a model to all around him, since to all other motives, he may be presumed to have the superadded one, that thus he honours God, who has required him to be diligent in business.

The duty being manifest, the Christian should remember that it is not an exclusive one. If we are to be diligent in our secular vocation, we are not to suffer it so to preoccupy the mind and absorb the attention, as not to leave a full measure of time for those duties which more immediately bear on our spiritual well-being. Some seem to regard honesty and diligence in business as the sum and substance of true religion, and if they neglect those duties which more immediately relate to God and their own souls, they, with evident self-satisfaction, urge in excuse, that they cannot spare the time from their ordinary occupation. This is to convert duty into sin, and to reverse the divine rule, "seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." No one is justified in giving his whole attention to even lawful occupations; and He who best knows the superior value of the soul to the the body, sanctions no engagements of a secular kind which preclude attention to the welfare of the soul. "Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the

Lord," are consistent duties, and should not be discontinued.

In all situations, as a Christian, I am required to be an example to others. As I should not eat the bread of idleness, I am bound to give attention to my peculiar calling and work that I may eat. Far be it from me, however, to be so absorbed in these earthly pursuits as to neglect my higher destiny. I have to work out my own salvation, and this requires industry. If I only labour for the body, I am laying up riches in bags with holes; there is more enduring wealth, the acquisition of which requires my best and freshest efforts. Lord, may I principally labour to lay up treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

SLOTHFULNESS.

Go to the ant, thou sluggard: consider her ways, and be wise:

Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.

As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.

The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.

The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

And lo, it was all grown over

with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.

The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

THE opposite of the virtue just treated, is here most strikingly and graphically portrayed. Solomon dwells emphatically on the vice of slothfulness, as if his soul had been disgusted with numerous examples of it in practical life around him. It is the besetting sin of oriental countries, which is, in a measure, to be attributed to the enervating influence of climate; but

even under these circumstances it is inexcusable. To their inhabitants, rest and inaction constitute the chief luxury of life, and it requires determination of mind to shake off this indolence of disposition. Numerous examples of it are not wanting even where the influence of climate cannot be pleaded as an apology. The occupations of regular business are to many an intolerable burden; and did not necessity compel exertion, they would doze away existence in doing nothing.

Slothfulness is not merely a negative quality, but a positive vice. Its example is pernicious to the community, and its prevalence would loosen the bonds of society. The work-shops would be deserted, the fields lie untilled, commerce cease, and literature have no ardent students; and the ultimate consequence would be, that the supply of the necessaries and comforts of life would be cut off.

Where this disposition is indulged it soon brings its just reward. Solomon graphically depicts the estate of the sluggard which has run to waste, while he folds his hands to sleep. Did its consequences stop there, it would be a limited evil, as its effects would be chiefly confined to the delinquents themselves; but it is a diffusive poison, and as the encourager and promoter of all other vices, it becomes seriously hurtful to the community. Those who cast away the restraints of regular occupation are the devil's readiest instruments for every evil work. The slothful would rather beg and steal than work, and the mass of those who crowd the alms-houses and jails, as paupers and felons, may trace their degradation and ruin to their disinclination for industrious habits. Let the words

of the wise man be pondered, and from the fate of the sluggard let us receive instruction.

If bodily sloth is so injurious, how much more, my soul, is spiritual sluggishness! Thou hast a great work to perform; there are impetuous lusts to be crucified, an ensnaring world to be overcome, and a heaven to win, and canst thou afford to be idle? Cease to be vigilant, and thou wilt be surprised; neglect the work of God, and the great adversary will seduce thee into his service. Remember that here is not thy rest, but thou lookest for one to come. Whatever then, thou findest to do, do it with thy might, for the night cometh when no man can work. To the faithful steward alone shall the welcome be given, "well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

RICHES.

RICHES profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.

In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.

The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

There is that maketh himself

rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase:

So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

IT is possible, and perhaps not uncommon, for those who possess no wealth, to moralize on its vanity, from mere chagrin; but here we have the reflections of one who could be influenced by no such motive. Solomon "made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plentiful as stones;" and he had the most ample experience of all the pleasures, power, and dignity, which their unlimited use could confer. He was not only

the wisest, but wealthiest monarch of the East; and yet when he contemplated his overflowing treasury, he could emphatically say that wealth was vanity and wisdom better than gold.

Riches are not to be contemned, for they are often the gift of a kind providence, and may prove a blessing to their possessor. They become an evil only by perversion. The Scriptures do not affirm that money is the root of all evil, but the love of it, which, in fact, is too generally associated with its possession. Even when lawfully acquired, it requires a strong counterpoise of grace to keep the affections from resting on it.

The desire for wealth is almost universal. It is looked on as a talisman by which all the ills of life are to be expelled; and in its acquisition, no toils are too severe to be endured, no dangers too threatening to be encountered, and truth requires us to say, no vice is too odious or flagrant to be perpetrated. Treachery, fraud, robbery, and murder, have often been the means of acquiring it. Some seek it that they may spend it on their lusts, and others, that they may hoard it with a miser's jealousy. Worthy motives may impel to its acquisition, but oftener it is sought for, under the most artful and self-deceiving pretenses.

Wealth unlawfully acquired is always a curse to its possessor; and generally a curse entailed upon his family. The revenue of the wicked is trouble, and it eats like a canker. How many are hurried by it into vice! For how many does it prepare a premature grave! Alas! how many are sunk by it into the regions of remorse and despair!

Even when acquired by honest industry, undue at-

tachment to it may lead to similar disasters. Devotional habits are exchanged for worldly ones, the fires of the household altar are extinguished; the children of high promise become worthless, and that which has been so eagerly sought after, as an antidote to the ills of life, becomes its bane. Often do we see men, who seemed to live for heaven, become groveling and lost to those finer and more dignified feelings which once animated them; and not unfrequently are we called to contemplate the miserable spectacle of a man who, when possessed of little, lived in joyful confidence on the promises of God, shrinking, amidst his crowded coffers, in imaginary dread of a coming poverty; ill used wealth, being thus deprived, by the judgment of God, of even the insignificant power of securing its possessor against the apprehensions of starvation.

The true use of riches is to employ them rightly, as the stewards of God. Whether there be one talent or ten, the eternal Judge will exact a strict account of their use, and wo to the rich man who deals unfaithfully with his trust. Money religiously employed in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, carrying comfort to the poor, and spiritual illumination to the destitute, never acquires that rust which eats the flesh as it were fire. On the contrary, it does good to the giver and receiver; it meets the divine approbation, and secures the divine blessing. If it be extremely difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and we are assured on the highest authority that it is, it is not because riches necessarily oppose an obstacle in the way of salvation; but because they are so generally in the hands of unfaithful stewards, who, surrounded by innumerable opportunities of

doing good, are still heartless idolaters of their wealth, and look with cool indifference on the calamities of a sin-stricken world. Infinitely better is it to be poor, than to be rich with such a disposition. To comprise all in a word, repress the love of money, let not its acquisition be the master aim of life, and if, in the providence of God, it be sent, be solicitous so to use it, that God may be glorified, mankind benefited, and your own souls uninjured.

My soul, let thy prayer be that thou mayest not love the world nor the things of the world. If riches increase, set not thy affections on them, but ask for heavenly wisdom to direct in their proper distribution. They are not thine, but only lent, and God will require his own with usury. Be not dissatisfied if thou art poor in this world's goods, for thus art thou freed from many temptations; and be not uplifted if rich, for either thy riches may suddenly wing their flight from thee, or thou mayest be called hence and leave them behind. Rest not thy hope in wealth; the fire may consume, the floods drown, the earthquake ingulf, or fraud strip thee of all thy possessions. But there are enduring riches; seek for them, and let thy affections be with them in heaven. They alone are secure against the fires of the final conflagration.

THE POOR.

ALL the brethren of the poor do hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.

Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all.

Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:

For the Lord will plead their

cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker, but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

The poor is hated, even of his own neighbour, but the rich hath many friends.

He that has mercy on the poor, happy is he.

POVERTY is a condition in life, which is not necessarily connected with any particular grade of moral character; in itself it is neither a reproach nor a merit, and it may be associated with the highest worth or the greatest turpitude. A man can no more be entitled to heaven on account of his poverty, than he can on account of his wealth; although we have reason to believe that the former condition is more favourable to the cultivation of the Christian temper. Both conditions have their peculiar temptations, but those of wealth are the most formidable. We should, however, distinguish between the poverty which has resulted from vice, and that which befalls a person in the ordinary course of the divine providence. Whilst the former is ordinarily the worst possible condition of human life, the latter may prove the most favourable to virtue. We say this in full view of the usual attend-

ants of poverty. The poor are generally neglected, often despised, and, as Solomon says, even "hated by his own neighbours;" their opinions are little regarded, their friendship unsought, and their fate contemplated without concern; but all this may prove eminently serviceable in weaning them from the world and fixing their thoughts on heaven. Although wealth may confer artificial distinctions, it cannot purchase happiness; but poverty may be dignified by virtue, and consist with true enjoyment. It is not the privilege of the rich to despise the poor, nor is it justifiable in the poor to envy and hate the rich. Differing, as they do, in outward circumstances, in the sight of God they meet together on an equality, and "He is the ruler of them all."

For the poor there should be sympathy, not of that kind which expends itself in words of condolence, and which merely says, "be ye warmed and be ye filled;" but that which, while it consoles and lightens the sorrows of the poor, more substantially aids in diminishing their burdens. It is our sacred duty to minister to the wants of the needy; and perhaps one of the heaviest items in the account of the rich, will be their indifference and heartlessness towards their suffering brethren, who would be satisfied with the crumbs of their superfluity.

That is a noble charity which deviseth liberal things and penetrates into the recesses of human wo, to carry relief to the wretched. How many are the sons and daughters of poverty, whose pangs would be mitigated by the sympathy of the benevolent visitor; and whose beds of sickness and suffering would be softened by cheaply purchased comforts.

If to neglect the poor be a sin, to oppress them

is a crime of deeper die. It is both unmanly and base to trample on those who are already prostrated, and to impose on those, who are incapable of self-defence. To grind the faces of the poor by exacting labour without suitable remuneration, is a heinous crime. The cry of the poor labourer, who is defrauded of his wages, will be heard by the Most High; and especially will unprotected and destitute females, who abound in our large cities, and are suffered to pine away in poverty, while ceaselessly toiling to minister to the comforts and luxuries of the rich, find an almighty Advocate, who will defend their cause, and "spoil the soul of those who spoiled them."

Remember, my soul, that He that was rich in all the attributes of Godhead, became poor that thou, through his poverty, mightest become rich. During his earthly ministry, he chose to be poor; the poor he sought as his companions; from them he selected his disciples; to them he most graciously ministered. Imitate his example. Despise not those whom he regarded with favour; oppress not those whom it was his delight to relieve. If thou wouldst have self-satisfaction, have mercy on the poor; if thou wouldst lend to the Lord, freely disburse thy charities. Thou wast poor, when Jesus enriched thee by his grace; and it is thy duty not only to relieve the bodily wants of the poor, but to instruct them in the way of salvation, that they may become heirs of the kingdom. If thou shouldst be reduced to want thyself, repine not at thy lot; but aim more steadfastly at that inheritance which is incorruptible in the heavens. Be poor in spirit, and rich in faith and every good work.

MERCY AND CRUELTY.

THE merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;

If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he

know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.



A BEAUTIFUL exemplification of a humane and merciful disposition is presented to us in the conduct of the Samaritan towards the Jew, who had been robbed and wounded on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. The Priest and Levite had unfeelingly deserted their hapless countryman to his fate; but the Samaritan, notwithstanding the bitter feud subsisting between his own nation and that of the Jews, no sooner beheld his condition, than, extinguishing every feeling of national hostility, he ran to his succour, and left him not until he had placed him in a situation of comfort and safety.

As an extreme example of the contrary disposition, we adduce the horrid cruelties perpetrated by the Spanish Inquisitors, than which, nothing can better illustrate the atrocious barbarity, of which the heart of man can become guilty, under circumstances favourable to its development.

Under suitable cultivation, the finer sensibilities of the heart may be preserved and improved; and by a different treatment they may easily be blunted, and

ultimately obliterated. Cruelty may be traced back, through various gradations, to an unfeeling disregard of another's welfare. In its first acts, it may be scarcely noticed, in its maturer exhibitions it is frightful and appalling. The man who has become a monster of iniquity, with a heart dead to every generous impulse, was once a child, playful and comparatively innocent; then he would shrink instinctively at an act of cruelty, now he can without compunction imbrue his hands in the blood of his fellow-man. Cruelty to inferior animals is often the precursor of that which is of a darker hue.

Such is the virtue, and such its opposite vice. To possess the first, every humane feeling must be carefully cherished, and the heart be made to respond to every cry of misery. Repeated acts of benevolence will impart vigour to a merciful disposition; while every feeling of inhumanity will tend to foster the opposite disposition.

It is a characteristic trait of heathenism that it is cruel, and its spirit is observable not only in the social relations, but in the character of its gods and the bloody rites of its religion. The spirit of Christianity, on the contrary, is merciful; and the institutions of pure benevolence, which spring up under its fostering influence, as a refuge for the poor and suffering, are an exemplification of its benign character. Those who have imbibed most of its spirit are most intent on mitigating human suffering, and most assiduous in ministering to the miserable. He that can causelessly inflict pain on another, or triumph in his calamity, has not the spirit of Him who wept over the miseries which were about to befall his relentless persecutors.

While humanity is shocked at the career of a Cæsar

or a Napoleon, who purchased their fame at the expense of slaughtered millions; or of a Nero or a Robespierre, who delighted in acts of cold-blooded murder; our better nature admires the spirit of the dauntless Howard, whose life was sacrificed to his philanthropy; or of the gentle Cowper, who could not inflict pain on the meanest of God's creatures; or of the self-denying missionary, who, in imitation of his Master, goes on his errand of mercy to distant climes to seek and restore the lost.

Do I expect mercy of God? I must myself be merciful. Those acts should delight me most, which relieve the distressed and wipe away the tear of sorrow. The world is full of suffering. Sin has desolated its fairest scenes; in every direction we hear the cries of distress and the wail of broken hearts; and is not this a field in which I am called to act my part, in soothing the disconsolate? I must not only be careful not to add to this amount of misery, but strive to diminish it. If others can sport with the calamities of their fellow-men, let me regard every man as a brother, and run to his relief. This is my duty; it should be my privilege and pleasure. Thus will I best honour my Master and profit myself; for "the merciful man doeth good to his own soul."

PRUDENCE.

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| <p>A PRUDENT man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.</p> | <p>knowledge; but a fool layeth open his folly.</p> |
| <p>Every prudent man dealeth with</p> | <p>The simple believeth every word; but the prudent man looketh well to his going.</p> |



PRUDENCE is only another name for wisdom carried out into practice, in the various relations of life. It implies both intelligence and self-control. In the management of worldly business, in the conduct of domestic affairs, and in the regulation of general social intercourse, it is a quality of inestimable value. There is no relation of life from which it can be safely excluded. Without the counsels of prudence, the ruler would involve his government in inextricable confusion; without prudent plans, the man of business, instead of gathering in his profits, would squander his capital; in its absence, the affairs of the household would run into disorder and waste; and in our intercourse with others, unless prudence be observed, friendship would be broken, and the peace of neighbourhoods destroyed. In influencing our conduct, it suggests the best way of acting, and the right and safe way of speaking. By prudent management a newly married couple who start in life together, with little or nothing to depend on from others, will soon be seen emerging from their straitened circumstances into competency, if not wealth; while, on the contrary, the largest inherited fortunes are melted down and lost, not merely by profligacy, but from a

simple want of this quality. A prudent person, who knows when to speak and when to remain silent, who is careful to discriminate between what ought to be said and what should be withheld, will not only save himself much trouble, but prove eminently serviceable to his fellow-creatures. Even religion may be rendered repulsive, by a disregard of prudential considerations in those who advocate it. A minister of the gospel may, by an imprudent remark from the pulpit, effectually alienate the affections of his flock; and parents often defeat their best hopes, in relation to their offspring, by not wisely considering the times and modes in which they may most favourably impress religious truth on their minds and hearts. An imprudent remark, made without intentional evil, will often prove as injurious in its results, as a hostile or slanderous one; and an imprudent determination not unfrequently brings in its train, effects as detrimental to our own interests, or those of our fellow-men, as positive dishonesty. This defect of character, which is rather looked on as an infirmity than a vice, is thus not only productive of the evils which are the natural results of vices, but is, in some respects, less easily guarded against; for a man will encounter less danger from the hostility of an avowed enemy, than from the imprudence of a well-meaning friend.

While we thus by no means exaggerate the advantages of prudence, both in a secular and religious point of view; we should be careful to distinguish it from an over cautious, calculating, selfish, and cowardly spirit, which often takes shelter under its name. A man will often refuse to make any trivial sacrifice for a friend, decline contributing to objects unquestionably excellent and charitable, and even stand

aloof when the claims of religion are calling him to action, and excuse himself under the plea of prudential considerations. No rule can be laid down for discriminating between the true and counterfeit in this respect, but that which is dictated by an enlightened conscience. A man must have blinded his own mind, if he be not conscious when he acts from genuine prudence, or those selfish feelings, which are so odious in themselves, as to require an assumed name to appear respectable.

My soul, how necessary is it that thou shouldst be as wise as the serpent and as harmless as the dove. Not only thine own interests, but those of thy fellow-men, and, in a measure, those of the kingdom of Christ, are entrusted to thee. How necessary, therefore, that thou shouldst have wisdom from above, for the regulation of thy conduct. Seek heavenly direction, that neither in speech or behaviour, thou mayest do that which will injure thyself or thy neighbour, disturb the kindly relations thou sustainest to others, or bring reproach on the cause of Christ.

CHEERFULNESS.

A MERRY heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.

A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

THERE is an unspeakable difference between profane mirth and Christian cheerfulness. The libertine will exclaim, "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die; let us seize the pleasures which present themselves, casting care to the winds; and if our life is to be short, at least let it be a merry one." How many insanely act on this maxim, and give a free scope to their sensual indulgences, regardless alike of the dictates of reason and Scripture; and, as if they had no higher destination than the brutes that perish, close their eyes upon the retributions of eternity. Of such it may be truly said, "wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall lament." Their hilarity is soon to be clouded by sickness, and as the shades of death gather around them, the light of hope will be extinguished, and the brief season of fitful pleasure will be succeeded by "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Not so the Christian. His cheerfulness illuminates his countenance, refreshes like a feast, and is as salubrious as a medicine. Religion when viewed at a distance, through the discoloured medium of this world, may wear a repulsive aspect; and like a sweet landscape in nature, seen through a haze or by a de-

fective eye, may seem divested of every charm. It enjoins self-denial, requires rigid adherence to strict rules, makes a light estimate of the most valued possessions of earth, is much in converse with death and judgment, and these are the only features of it which are discernible by the mere spectator. He accordingly infers that it is unfriendly to enjoyment and enshrouded in gloom. Pretenders to religion, and even Christians, who are ill-informed and weak in faith, not seldom give countenance to this false impression by repelling cheerfulness, as a temptation of Satan; and imagining that a habitually clouded brow is the most appropriate index of a right state of heart. Need we say how mistaken their opinion?

It is true there is a mirth that is unseemly, and a jesting which is not convenient in the Christian. Frivolity ill becomes his character, as one who is in daily expectation of a summons to the tribunal of God. Still it is the privilege of every heaven-born soul to "rejoice always." Even when weeping in penitence, he may rejoice in hope; when mourning over the ruined condition of the world, he may be glad at his own deliverance. Who has a right to be cheerful, if not the Christian? All valuable things are his by divine legacy. If he cannot command the luxuries which pamper the appetite, he has, besides the hidden manna, food convenient for him; and these necessaries are made sure to him by promise. If he cannot boast of gay and costly apparel, he is clothed with the pure white raiment, which renders him beautiful in the eyes of heavenly beings. If he cannot stretch forth his hands and point to his rich domains, he can lift them up and exultingly point to the skies, where is his inheritance, incorruptible, unde-

filed, and that fadeth not away. He can look within and behold the temple of the Holy Ghost, and rejoice in the presence of his peace-inspiring influence. Conscience, which ceaselessly tracks the footsteps of the sensualist, and mars his enjoyment by its dark auguries for the future, is his friend and counsellor. Hope buoys him up amidst the adversities of life; faith points out to him glorious visions yet to be realized, and love brings him into sweet communion with heaven. The bitterness that mingles the cup of the worldling is converted into sweets for him; the thoughts which trouble others cheer him. Affliction is to him a blessing; death lays aside his character as a ruthless executioner, and becomes his pioneer and guide to the land of endless delights.

Should not a Christian be cheerful? Should he not have a song in the house of his pilgrimage? He travels on his own King's highway under a safe escort; no muttering thunder alarms, no lurid lightning flashes dismay; in God he has a friend, in the Son of God an elder brother, and he is hastening towards a possession, where his joys will be unspeakable and full of glory. Happy, thrice happy the man that is in such a case as this!

My soul, does the candle of the Lord shine upon thee, and does light beam in upon thy soul from the face of a reconciled God? If so, be glad in the Lord. Let the joy of thine heart shine out on thy countenance, as an index of the happiness that reigns within. Redeemed by the precious blood of the cross, thou hast overcome the fears and escaped the pains of hell. How wonderful thy deliverance, and how joyfully should it be celebrated! The angels of heaven held a jubilee when thou didst repent, and since thou art turned to the

Lord, thou mayest well participate in their gladness. Honour thy Master and his glorious work, by joyfully recalling to thy mind all the way in which the Lord has led thee. Go to his house and partake of his ordinances with joy. Fulfil his commands, and endure his chastisements with joy. Receive his daily favours and submit to his blessed will with joy. Contemplate death, as thy joyful release from all remaining infirmities and sins, and lay thy body in the grave in the joyful hope of a glorious resurrection and immortality.

KEEPING THE HEART.

KEEP thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are
the issues of life.

As the heart is the seat of all the principles of action, which give form and tone to the character of man, it may, with great propriety, be said, that as is the heart, so is the man. A right state of the affections will issue in life, while a contrary state will have a totally opposite issue. The Christian religion justifies its claim to the reverence of men, from the very circumstance that it deals with the motives and principles of action, as well as with the actions themselves; that it demands more than an exterior correctness, and determines character upon better data than mere outward appearance. It may be a sufficient recommendation to men, that an individual is unimpeachable in his deportment; but in our relations with God, the state of the heart is the matter of chief consideration. It is true that the life is generally a very fair index of the inward feeling, but it is quite possible that a mere worldly policy may induce a person to conceal the real sentiments of his heart, and even to act in opposition to them. Thus, to all appearance, a man may be our friend, while at heart he cherishes a spirit of implacable enmity; or he may be ceremoniously religious, while his heart is not right in the sight of God. Christ, who is the true expositor of the divine law, traces all genuine obedience to right principles, and insists that no outward conformity to the law will avail, unless it proceeds

from sanctified affections. The tree must be good before the fruit can be so, and, in like manner, there can be no genuine religion, unless the heart feels and acknowledges the teachings and restraints of divine grace. There is much implied in the expression, "God looketh upon the heart;" and he does it that he may see whether its thoughts are holy, its feelings spiritual, its passions controlled, its inclinations heaven-directed. Whose experience does not corroborate the declaration of Christ, "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies?" These are the deadly issues of an unsanctified heart; and it is only by going to this polluted fountain and correcting it, that there can be issues of life.

Hence we see the force of the injunction, "keep thy heart with all diligence." Great pains are requisite to success, for the very reason that the heart is not easily kept. It is deceitful, it is desperately wicked. Its natural inclinations are evil, they resist subjection to the law of God; and hence the necessity of supernatural aid, to change their direction. The thoughts are to be kept from wandering; the desires from being worldly; the passions from being sensual. We are to keep the heart in the fear of God, in the love of God, and in all holy obedience. To use the language of another, "we must maintain a holy jealousy of ourselves, and set a strict guard accordingly, upon all the avenues of the soul; keep our hearts from doing hurt and getting hurt; from being defiled by sin and disturbed by trouble; keep them as our jewel, as our vineyard; keep a conscience void of offence; keep out bad thoughts, keep up good thoughts; keep the affections on right objects and in due bounds."

And to all this carefulness and strictness, we should be impelled by the consideration, that only from a heart well kept can come the issues of life.

O my soul, engaged as thou art in conflict with the law in thy members, art thou not persuaded of the necessity of diligently guarding thyself against the intrusion of thy enemies? Thought is subtle, and thou must restrain its wanderings; thy appetites and desires are lawless, and thou must hold them in check. Thy foes are numerous and artful, and thou must guard every avenue against their entrance. Wouldst thou have life and peace, thou must have holiness; and holiness thou canst not have unless thou art vigilant, diligent, and faithful. Keep thyself in the fear of God; keep aloof from sin; keep near thy Saviour, and let the life which thou livest be by the faith of the Son of God. Forget not, that, in thus keeping thyself, thou art kept not by thy own strength, but by the power of God through faith unto salvation. This is for thy encouragement, as well as for thy security.

STEADFASTNESS OF PURPOSE.

| | |
|--|--|
| LET thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. | let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil. |
| Ponder the path of thy feet, and | |

THE experience of every man will teach him, that while there is much facility in sinning, difficulties are to be surmounted in the accomplishment of every virtuous purpose. Hence the necessity for decision and steadfastness of purpose. To the indolent and undecided there is ever "a lion in the path," and the apprehension of difficulty paralyzes their efforts and makes them content with inglorious inactivity. Most men float with the tide, and as it is easy, they unconsciously glide onward until, when too late for rescue, they find the placid stream converted into the dashing rapids and engulfing cataract. Resistance to this natural indolence is essential if we would live to any good purpose. We must resolve, we must decide, we must unappalled encounter every obstacle, and persevere until we find the difficulties in our path, one after another, triumphantly surmounted.

In ordinary worldly pursuits we discover that they only reach the goal who set out with steadfastness of purpose. In religion it is still more necessary. Besides all the unfriendly circumstances from without, which conspire to retard our course, we have a corrupt nature which is fiercely hostile to the dominant influence of religion. The contention with the latter is more severe than with the former. Were the heart

right, we might with comparative ease overcome the opposition from without ; but the necessity for resolution becomes obvious, when we have to watch the traitors within the fortress, as well as the assailants without.

It need scarcely be said, that under such untoward circumstances we should hazard nothing on a determination made in our own strength. We must have help from God. He must strengthen and sanctify our purposes. He must infuse vigour into our plans, and for his aid, earnest and importunate prayer should be offered. The stake is invaluable ; its security is worth a struggle.

It is a characteristic of some that for a time they run well, and are then hindered ; their religion is as evanescent "as the morning cloud and early dew which passeth away." The secret of their failure is the unsteadiness of their purpose. They have not sufficiently appreciated the object at which they aim ; they have not reckoned the difficulties of the enterprise ; and hence their infirm purposes give way under the first pressure. Others go through the warfare with a heroism which is not to be daunted, and they dream not of relaxing, until the crown of victory is achieved. What is the secret of their success ? They feel the value of heaven ; they know the salvation of the soul is precious ; they are persuaded that all the enticements of sin, however painted to deceive, are enemies in disguise ; they know the prize may be lost by compromising, parleying or hesitating, and hence for their lives they press toward the mark, with their backs to the world and their faces directed heavenward. With such determination failure is impossible. The most formidable antagonist quails and retires before

the Christian, who encounters him in the strength of the Lord, and with a firm purpose to conquer.

My soul, thou hast many enemies watching for thy destruction. They are vigilant, powerful, and not to be despised. Propose no conditions of amity with them. They will deceive. Resolve to resist them unto death. Accomplish thy warfare manfully. Jesus overcame, and in him thou mayest triumph. He can impart strength to thy weak arm, and courage to thy failing heart. Persevere, for thy contest will be soon over. A few years at most will close thy warfare, and then thou wilt be elevated above all adverse influences, and as Christ overcame and is set down with his Father on his throne, so thou shalt overcome and sit down with the Saviour on his throne.

TRUST IN GOD.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.

He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife; but he that putteth his trust in the Lord, shall be made fat.

The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.

How emphatically does the word of God dissuade against a misplaced confidence; and how necessary the dissuasive, since it has become one of the most striking features of our apostasy, that we are disposed to trust in any thing but God. The rich trust in their wealth, the wise in their wisdom, the subject in his ruler, the sick in his physician, and in short, whatever may be our circumstances of want or danger, there is always some false refuge to which we are disposed to flee. Why should it be so? Has experience justified such expedients? On the contrary, is not the world strewed with the wrecks of human expectations and hopes, which have been built upon the sand? He that leans upon the world in any of its multifarious contrivances, will, sooner or later, discover that he leans upon a broken reed, which will pierce, but not sustain him.

Driven from this alternative, are we left unsupported in our weakness and infirmity? We are not necessarily so, for there is One, in whom we can trust without reserve, and without apprehension of disappointment. Turn over the pages of Scripture, and

on every page you may see it written, as a direction for the weak, weary, and fainting pilgrim—**TRUST IN THE LORD.** Are you in bodily or spiritual danger? Are you in perplexity and uncertainty, are you poor and friendless, are you in pain or trouble, does the world deceive, Satan tempt, and death and hell threaten you? Still this is the simple and effectual direction, which meets your case, **TRUST IN THE LORD.** How comforting, how exhilarating! In the Lord is everlasting might, and therefore he is greater than all that can be against us; he has all knowledge, and cannot therefore be ignorant of our circumstances; he has infinite pity, and therefore will not repulse the humble and confiding heart. Besides, has he not invited our confidence? nay, has he not promised to accept and reward it? His word, which is sure and infallible, abounds with encouragement. It contains, too, the record of the experience of the saints in all ages, who have trusted in the Lord, and have not been put to shame. He is not a God so high that he will not condescend, nor is he so glorious, as to be unapproachable; for he has constituted his own beloved Son the way of access, through whom if any man come unto him, he shall in nowise be cast out. Commit thy ways, therefore, unto the Lord; trust him with all thy heart and be safe.

O my soul, how sweet thy privilege and how great thy security, in trusting in the Lord! Thou mayest well appeal to thy experience for evidence of God's faithfulness, for hitherto he has never disappointed thy confidence. In despondency he has comforted thee, in doubt relieved thee, and to thy troubled conscience he has spoken peace. He hath delivered and will yet deliver thee. Difficulties and trials are

yet to be expected, but they cannot be too many or too severe, for thy Father in heaven to relieve. Neither the complicated ills of life, nor the terrors of death, can wrest from thee the unspeakable comfort of a filial trust in him. Well mayest thou exclaim, "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, he is also become my salvation."

A GOOD WIFE.

A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

She perceiveth that her merchandize is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her

household are clothed with scarlet.

She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

Her children arise up and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praiseth her.

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the Lord.

A gracious woman retaineth honour.

THE most honourable and endeared of earthly relations, is that formed by the marriage contract. It was devised by God himself for the promotion of human happiness; and when entered into with discre-

tion, and with right qualifications, it fully and happily answers its original design. Among heathen nations, its chief benefits have been defeated, by the degradation of the female character; and even in nominally Christian ones, it is often abused by imprudent and mercenary connexions. Woman is designed to be the charm of the domestic circle, and on her is mainly dependent its happiness.

Although the customs of Eastern life are not well adapted to the duties and rational enjoyments of the marriage relation, still the author of the preceding description evinced a just apprehension of the qualities which constitute a good wife. He delineates a home-scene with inimitable grace, and brings into relief many leading traits of character, which, in any age or country, would adorn the matron. In his enumeration, he comprehends her virtue, wisdom, benevolence, industry, kindness, faithfulness to her children, regard for her husband's happiness, and just management of her household concerns.

On a topic where much might be suggested, a few hints must suffice. In accommodating herself to her husband, the wife should not imagine that she lowers her dignity or abridges her independence. It is her prerogative to rule in the domestic circle; and she never forfeits her ascendancy, but through her own faults or defects.

Possessed of a cultivated mind, blest with bland and gentle manners, governed by prudence, and endowed with a warm and confiding heart, she cannot fail to secure, not only the love and esteem, but the respect and confidence of her husband; and while he regards her as his truest friend, he cheerfully resorts to her as his safest counsellor. Without such qualities of heart

and mind, it is vain for a woman to aim at a controlling influence. The throne of man's heart may be won by gentleness, and retained by virtue and intelligence; but cannot be carried by storm; and the wife never commits a more fatal mistake, than when she supposes she can secure ascendancy by dictation, irritating demands, or angry discussion. These are so opposite to the *beau ideal* of female loveliness, which one is apt to form, as to repel the heart and diminish its confidence. A good wife must possess sterling qualities; such as will wear well and improve by use, and more than supply the place of exterior attractions, when they begin to fade or lose their charm.

A temper amiable and equable, a quiet and gentle manner, industrious habits, prudence and economy, a love of home, a conciliating disposition, right and fixed principles, are, in a sense, indispensable. A good wife should ever greet her husband with smiles; his happiness should be her study; and when exhausted and harassed by attention to his secular concerns, at home he should find a sweet refuge; and in her, one ready to soothe and cheer him. Her cheerfulness may dispel the cloud from his brow, and her placidity smooth the rufflings of his temper. Her industry should never degenerate into noisy bustling, nor her neatness into that fastidious nicety, than which nothing is more annoying to others. A wife is never less beautiful than when angry, never less interesting than when scolding. In the management of children and domestics, she should pursue a uniform plan, that all may know their duties, and be fully apprized that obedience will be required; this once settled, there will be less necessity for the repetition of authoritative commands.

In expecting these and similar qualifications in a wife,

nothing more is required, than is requisite for her own respectability and happiness. How many homes are rendered wretched by their absence! A wife who devotes herself to fashion; who is never less happy than when at home; who, in domestic duties, is peevish and fretful; who exacts more from her husband than she is willing to concede; whose demeanour to domestics is overbearing, and to her children harsh, or what is equally injurious, criminally lenient; who is wanting in discretion and common sense, converts home into a *paradise lost*. A wife who knows what a wife should be, will not fail to perceive the necessity of divine guidance, and will pray earnestly for the wisdom which is profitable to direct.

Do I stand in the marriage relation? How important my position! The world is composed of families; and as are the families, so is the world. Thus I am entrusted with the training of at least a portion of the great world, and as the head of a family, their good conduct and final destiny materially depend on my management. As a steward of God I am required to occupy until he comes. My sphere may be limited, nevertheless it is important. The dear ones with whom I am connected, look to me for counsel and example; and shall I not feel my responsibility, and study the duties of my station? Shall I not so learn to improve and control myself, that I may exert a happy influence with the members of my household? How greatly do I need the grace and teachings of God! Without them I can do nothing efficiently. Let me settle it then in my own mind, that I must begin with the fear of God, and in every succeeding step feel the necessity for divine help.

R E P R O O F.

A REPROOF entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.

The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.

He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.



BLAME-WORTHINESS is the just ground of reproof. It may be administered by superiors, equals, or inferiors; its poignancy depending principally on its relevancy, and not wholly on the character of him who administers it. There is certainly more propriety in the reproof of one who is careful of his own conduct, and whose general correctness exempts him from reproof; and yet occasions may exist in which the righteous may incur the reproof of the wicked. As all men are imperfect, all are exposed to reprehension; and they are generally most deserving of it who most bitterly complain and most fiercely resent it. To imagine that there is nothing in us worthy of blame, is a strong proof of ignorance and self-conceit.

Reproof may be administered by actions as well as words. The example of a good man is a lively reproof of the wicked. No language of rebuke could have more deeply entered into the soul of Peter than did the look of his Lord. Gentle, yet reprimanding,

it spoke in a voice not to be misunderstood, to the conscience of the backslider, and brought his sin to painful remembrance. Reproofs given in anger are seldom efficacious, but when conveyed in kindness and faithfulness they may prove eminently serviceable. Pride may render them unpalatable; but like a nauseous medicine they may reach and counteract the disease.

The state of the heart is best tested by the effect produced on it by just reproof. To be restive, indignant, and retaliatory under reprehension, is good evidence that it is deserved. The good man whose mind is in an holy and humble frame, will be submissive, if not thankful, when his faults are reprehended. It will afford him some hint to be improved; induce closer self-examination, and lead to greater circumspection. Where, however, reproof is most needed, it is generally least acceptable. They whose faults are most manifest, hate the vigilance that detects and the boldness that rebukes them. The friendly advice and warning are interpreted as officious intermeddling; and where kindness is intended, they pretend to see only hostile feeling. Thus transgressors harden themselves, and while they hasten to the dangerous precipice, they repel those who would interpose a barrier between them and ruin. It is a mark of their mad infatuation to hate reproof, and a sad prognostic of their inevitable fate. It is the special duty of the ambassador of God to reprove the wicked, and to do it with all long-suffering; in hope that the arrow may sooner or later reach the mark and induce the sinner to reflect and amend his ways.

My soul, remember that while he that hateth reproof shall die, he that heareth it, abideth among the

wise. If called to administer it to others, do it from affectionate concern for their interests; if exposed to receive it, know that it is well to be corrected for thy faults. Especially when God reproveth, reverently submit and turn from the sin which awakens his displeasure. Thou hast greatly erred from thy youth until now, and yet, through divine forbearance, thou hast escaped the just desert of thy sins. Wilt thou not therefore receive with docility the reproofs of God's providence and word, which are designed for thy good? Remember and be warned by the fate of those, who harden themselves in their sin and will not be admonished to forsake it. Earthly friends and counsellors advise, and the Lord from heaven rebukes; but although often reproveth, they harden their neck, and then they are suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

FALSEHOOD.

LYING lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight.

A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it: and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

SOME have made it a grave question in morals, whether falsehood can, under any circumstances, be justifiable. The suggestion of such a possibility is itself an absurdity, inasmuch as the God of truth has settled it beyond dispute, that a falsehood is a violation of the law of rectitude, and can therefore be only a wrong, which admits of no justification. Extreme cases have been supposed in which a momentary departure from truth might prove a security to life; but if in the providence of God such cases do occur, a direct infringement of the divine law would be a singular mode of invoking God's protection. There is an eternal and unchangeable distinction between truth and falsehood; and plausible sophistry, however it may obscure, cannot destroy it. God is a God of truth, and the dignity, happiness, and safety of the creature depend on his conformity to this high standard.

A sacred regard for truth should be a fixed principle in every mind, and whatever approaches to a deviation should be vigilantly guarded against. Independently of the divine penalty which is incurred by the falsifier, there is a forfeiture of the confidence of his fellow-men, who justly regard him as setting

aside the only safe rules of social intercourse. Falsehood is always designed to deceive, sometimes for amusement, but more frequently from motives of self-interest. All fiction is not falsehood, for there are cases in which it may be resorted to for the purpose of illustrating right principles and inculcating good morals, as in fables, allegories, and tales; but all falsehood is fiction, assuming the semblance of truth, for purposes of deception. In the word of God, lying is presented as one of the incontestable evidences of human depravity. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray speaking lies." Early evidence of this is given in children, who, to hide a fault or to escape punishment, will readily invent a lie. Wise and careful instruction may counteract this propensity, but when neglected and overlooked, "it grows with the growth and strengthens with the strength." Where the influence of moral restraint is not felt, falsehood becomes familiar, and is without compunction resorted to on all convenient occasions, when temporary interests seem to be subserved by it. How fearfully prevalent is this vice in affairs of business! It becomes the art of traffickers by which bargains are made and gains secured. In trade, every one is taught to be wary, on account of the commonness of the practice; and it is to be feared that it is the few and not the many, who are to be credited on their simple word.

Lies sometimes originate in vanity as well as in worldly interest, and then they are made the vehicle of self-glorification. It is a contemptible fame which a man acquires by pretension to qualities which he does not possess; or by boasting of achievements which he never performed.

Another class of lies springs from malice. The tattler and slanderer present melancholy examples, when they engage in their diabolical work of damaging the reputation of others. With just so much foundation in truth as to give a colourable aspect to their tales, they accomplish by inuendos or exaggerations their base purpose; and, without enriching themselves, impoverish others, who, in the loss of character, lose their all. In a moral point of view, the malicious liar is unspeakably more odious than the vain or mercenary one.

A lie is ordinarily expressed in words; but it may be as effectually told by a look, the pointing of a finger, or the suppression of some part of the truth. Examples of these will readily suggest themselves to the reflecting reader.

There is one form of lying, however, which is peculiarly offensive in the sight of God; it is that which relates to a false pretence in religion, and is a lie of hypocrisy. Religion may be professed where the reality does not exist, from sheer ignorance and without intention to deceive; this is properly called self-deception; but religious character is often assumed in form from unjustifiable motives, and with the view of deceiving others; and this is hypocrisy. He that will thus lie, not only to man, but to God, who cannot be deceived, incurs a fearful responsibility. The cases of Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, are placed on record to show God's abhorrence of the wilful hypocrite.

Falsehood, in all its modifications, is opposed to the divine law; and in the holy Scriptures, the displeasure of God is, with remarkable frequency, pronounced against it. It is certainly accompanied with great inconvenience and loss of reputation *here* to those who prac-

tise it; but its heaviest punishment is yet in reserve, for "liars shall have their portion in that lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," and "there shall in no wise enter into heaven any thing that defileth or worketh abomination or that maketh a lie."

My soul, learn to abhor the lying lips. Let no motive of worldly interest induce thee to deceive thy neighbour. Honour and safety are alike connected with truthfulness, and every temptation to deviate from the simplicity of truth should be studiously resisted. How much dost thou need the grace of God, to purge out from thee the dispositions which naturally incline to falsehood! It is the love of the world that leads to mercenary lies; it is self-conceit which induces lies of self-glorification; it is envy and malice which originate slanderous lies; it is unbelief which leads to lies of hypocrisy. A pure heart will be accompanied by guileless lips. Aim, therefore, to cleanse the fountain, that the streams may be pure. Above all, maintain truth between thyself and God. Resort to no vain disguises before Him, who knoweth the secrets of all hearts. Let all thy professions of love, duty, and obedience, be sincere; and let thy conscience be void of offence to God and man, that thou mayest ever be able, with conscious rectitude, to make thy appeal to the Searcher of hearts.

DECEIT.

HE that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him;

When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart.

Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation.

As a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death,

So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?

He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

DECEIT and falsehood are closely allied, bearing the same relation to each other, as the fountain to the stream. The one implies the other. The deceitful are always false, and falsehood is designed to conceal deceit, a vice which none are willing to avow. Deceit supposes a fair and plausible exterior, which has no correspondence with the inward feelings. While the manner is friendly, the heart is hostile; while honeyed words drop from the lips, hate dwells in the soul. The whole life of a deceitful person is a practical lie. With some sinister purpose to accomplish, he will disguise his real sentiments; and by strong professions, bland and winning manners, and a display of seeming interest, completely hoodwink and impose on others. How many have thus won confidence, which they afterwards betrayed! Common and despicable as the vice is, we should not suppose that sincerity and friendship are extinct; because some have proved false, all are not to be distrusted. De-

ceit, sooner or later leads to its own detection. The most consummate art will at times so relax its watchfulness, as to let the true character be seen through the disguise. A man may speak fair, dissemble with his lips, and cover the hatred of his heart; but his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation. In the domestic relations, how often is deceit resorted to, to cover crime between husband and wife, parents and children, employers and domestics! Its detection is often the cause of domestic strife, and of alienation and disunion.

Never does this vice wear a more odious aspect than when found in professed religious teachers, who assume an air of sanctity, and by flattering speeches, propagate their errors to the ruin of the souls of men. The word of God frequently refers to such as "deceivers and deceitful workers, who transform themselves into apostles of Christ, and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple." Heretics in all ages of the church have proved themselves to be masters in the art of deceit; and the success of their efforts, in no small degree, depends on the skill with which they personate the ambassadors of God. Verily they have their reward. The more successful here, the more terrible their retribution hereafter.

My soul, let sincerity characterize all thy social intercourse with thy fellow-men, and all thy intercourse with God. As thou prayest against a false tongue, so pray against a deceitful heart. As a Christian, thou shouldst imitate the blessed Jesus, who was never obsequious in courting the favour of the great, was free from guile, ever appeared in his

true character, and who was so constant in his affection, that having loved his own, he loved them to the end. With him profession and practice were coincident, and so it should be with thee. Let thy words ever be the echo of thy sentiments; and aim at that holy state of heart in which thou wilt not be afraid that the world should pry into the secret recesses of thy bosom.

A N G E R.

A STONE is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.

Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous.

He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go.



ANGER may be regarded as a temporary insanity; for, when in excess, it imparts to the face the hue, to the voice the violence, and to the conduct the fury of the madman. There is, however, this difference, that the emotion in the one case is controllable, but not in the other; and hence the angry man is criminal, while the insane, in his paroxysms, is not held morally responsible. Some temperaments are more excitable than others, and require more watchful care to suppress the first ebullitions. The tendency to anger may be nurtured by indulgence, or restrained by Christian discipline. To the latter duty, we should be constrained by two considerations; the first is, that anger can be indulged only in the face of God's express prohibition, and consequently incurs his displeasure; the other arises from a view of the consequences into which it may betray us in this life. There are few more frightful sources of crime. It is murder in conception, and oftens impels to the actual perpetration. It always inclines to violence; and the angry man is not in a fit mood to say, within what

limits such violence shall be restrained. His reason becomes impaired, his moral perceptions blunted, his conscience blinded; and thus, for the time being, he disqualifies himself for cool and rational conduct. What a curse to a neighbourhood is such a temper, and how still more intolerable in a household! It poisons every comfort of life, and counteracts the best arranged plans for domestic felicity.

Irritability is so excessive in some persons as to be regarded as an infirmity, which may be attributed more to physical constitution than to moral perversity. For the most part this is an error, as, in general, the nervous condition, on which it is supposed to depend, is superinduced by habit and criminal neglect of early restraint. If, like a stringed instrument, the passions are accustomed to vibrate to the slightest touch, it may be an infirmity, but certainly not an innocent one. It is extremely difficult to "be angry and sin not;" and hence when the justest occasions for indignation occur, the Christian man should be anxious and watchful lest a sinful emotion should be indulged under a false name. In situations most trying to the temper, even when others by insult and injury aim to exasperate, it is the duty of the rational man to pause and ask himself, "dost thou well to be angry?" The world is replete with trouble, which need not be increased from this cause. Those against whom our angry resentment might be excited, like ourselves, are mortal dying creatures, who are soon to stand before the dread tribunal of God. Why then quarrel by the way? Would the recollection of our anger add to our tranquillity, if we or they were engaged in the last struggle, or standing before the bar of God? Why then impart to the grave an additional gloom, or to

the judgment an additional terror, by the indulgence of unhallowed tempers?

My soul, peace is thy most favourable element for spiritual improvement; and as thou hast a great work to perform, and a heavy account to render, avoid the storms which would drive thee from thy course on thy heavenward voyage. Let not thine own temper be ruffled, for this will disturb thy tranquillity; and against thy fellow worm encourage no vindictive feeling, for if thou lovest not thy brother whom thou hast seen, how canst thou love God whom thou hast not seen? If God forbears with thee under great provocations, thou mayest well forbear with thy fellow-men under lighter ones. Vengeance belongeth unto God, he will repay. Although no infirmities of temper are properly ascribable to Him, yet his treatment of the wicked will be as terrible as if the result of an almighty wrath. Fear to offend him in thought, word, or deed; and kiss the Son lest he be angry, and thou perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.

INGRATITUDE.

Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

It was Job's affecting complaint, under the pressure of adversity, in allusion to the conduct of former friends, "When they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth, I humbled my soul with fasting, I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother, I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother. But in my adversity they rejoiced." Well might he be dejected at such flagrant ingratitude. Few afflictions are more difficult to be borne, than a requital of evil for good. The ill treatment of an enemy may be tolerable; but the base desertion of one's familiar friends falls upon the soul with stunning force. Happily, ingratitude is a vice which has a bad odour with the world; and striking instances of it are seldom palliated even by the irreligious. It has indeed features so repulsive, that its connexion with a bad state of the heart, is generally acknowledged. Let us suppose a case or two in illustration. A man of benevolent disposition sees a neighbour in distress. He visits and ministers to him in sickness, relieves him from the pressure of poverty, rescues him from the grasp of inexorable creditors, and provides him with the means of obtaining a livelihood. His hearth is no longer desolate; the tears of a dependent and suffering family are chased away with smiles, and the whole aspect of his fortune is changed. Surely love

and gratitude are due to such a benefactor. But suppose, in the course of events, the benefactor is, in turn, reduced to want, and his friendly acts being forgotten, he is neglected and coldly repulsed, even the crumbs of the other's superfluity being denied him; and we have a case, which too often occurs, to shame humanity and to revolt the sensibilities of the good.

Suppose again an anxious mother watching with intense interest her loved child; bending with sleepless eyes over him in sickness; anticipating his wants; defending him against every hostile attack, with a mother's fondness; and with unwearied solicitude, smoothing for him the path of life; and suppose again, this child, grown to manhood, despising her counsels, regardless of the wounds he inflicts on her tender spirit, and treating her with positive unkindness and neglect, and we have a case of still more flagrant iniquity, at which humanity shudders, and even angels might weep.

Under less aggravated forms, this sin is of such frequent occurrence in the world, as to justify, in a measure, the biting sarcasm, that if you do one a favour, you may be sure of an ungrateful return. The conduct of many in this respect is an injury inflicted on the whole community, as it tends to lessen the amount of human sympathy, and closes the hearts of the benevolent against the distressed. If a grateful sense of favours is not to be expected, favours will become scarce; and those who might be disposed to bless the hand of a benefactor, will not have the opportunity. As the sin is great, it is not unfrequently visited with the marked displeasure of God; and they that have received kindnesses without gratitude, are often left to suffer want without pity.

My soul, hast thou felt it to be thy pleasing duty to cherish the remembrance of every kind act from thy fellow-men? This thou shouldst surely do. The unkind treatment of others to thee should be written on the sand; their kindness engraved on the enduring tablet of thy heart. If thou hast been ungratefully requited, let not this chill thy charity, or cause thee to repress the benevolent affections. It is a higher degree of virtue, where thou canst persevere in doing good to those who reward thy good with evil. Thou mayest be spurned by those whom thou hast succoured, and treated with indignity by those, over whose calamities thou hast wept; but this should be no reason why thou shouldst not imitate the example of thy divine Master, who does good to the unthankful and unworthy. Benevolence is a part of thy religion, and thou canst always exercise it, at least for Christ's sake.

If, my soul, the ingratitude of man pains thee, how much more inexcusable is ingratitude to God! And yet does not conscience charge thee with this? Has not thy heavenly Father watched over thee with unwearied tenderness? has he not daily showered on thee his benefits? has he not, at unspeakable cost, provided for thy salvation? Still hast thou not refused him thy full homage? Thou hast ill requited thy Lord; and although thy Redeemer has wept over thee, suffered for thee, and given his precious life for thy redemption, how seldom dost thou melt into gratitude and praise. O, let it be so no longer :

Let past ingratitude
Provoke thy weeping eyes;
And hourly as new mercies fall,
Let hourly thanks arise.

ENVY.

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| WRATH is cruel and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy? | | A sound heart is the life of the flesh, but envy the rottenness of the bones. |
|---|--|---|

ENVY is awakened by desirable qualities or stations which one does not himself possess. It is a vice at once mean and cruel, as its chief occupation is to depreciate others, and its highest gratification their degradation and overthrow. Instead of inducing exertion, to rise to an equality with those above, it chiefly aims to reduce others to its own level. It is so blind as to see no charm in beauty, no excellence in virtue, which it does not itself possess; and yet so sharp sighted as to espy defects which do not exist, and to magnify those that do. Its judgments also are severe; for it denies merit to others, and is pained when they are applauded. It has poisoned arrows to shoot at those who dare ascend one step higher on the hill of fame than itself; and with remorseless cruelty would hurl them into the depths below. Well might the wise man exclaim, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy?" The first is like a storm which may be braved, but the latter like an atmosphere loaded with poisonous vapours, the fatal operation of which is insidious and unseen. How many have been defamed, betrayed, and ruined by it! The good, the great, and the successful, find in it their chief enemy. The Son of God himself was delivered to death through envy; and "when the Jews were

filled with envy, they laid hands on the Apostles and put them in the common prison.”

While injurious to others it is a corroding poison to its possessor. Like jealousy, to which it is akin, it drinks up the spirit, scares rest from the bosom, and is “rotteness to the bones.” Who would covet the feelings of the envious man? In depreciating others, he is conscious he does not exalt himself; in disturbing their peace he destroys his own; and, like a venomous serpent, if he fails to strike his fangs into the object of his attack, he infixes them in himself. Thus it brings its wretched reward with it even in this world. “Envy destroyeth the silly one.” Its dwelling is not exclusively among the openly wicked, but, from the Apostles’ days until the present, it has been the troubler of the church. Even those who minister in holy things are not free from it when surpassed by others in their gifts, graces, and success. Alas, how is religion discredited, the peace of Sion disturbed, and the progress of the gospel retarded, by the introduction of this feeling among those who profess to be sanctified by the spirit of Christ! Well might an apostle exclaim, “If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish; for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”

My soul, if thou wouldst have peace, and regard the favour of God, let not envy dwell within thee. It is true that others surpass thee in the gifts of providence and the endowments of grace, and in the success of their exertions; they receive more of the applause of the world and of the reverence of the good; but why shouldst thou on that account regard them with un-

holy envy? If they have done well, thou shouldst rejoice; and, in the spirit of John the Baptist, thou shouldst be willing that they should increase, although thereby thou shouldst decrease. If thy heavenly Father bestows gifts on them which he withholds from thee, wilt thou quarrel with God for making thee to differ? If virtue is promoted and religion triumphs more through the instrumentality of others than thine own; this is a good reason for humility and self-examination, but no ground for envy. Give credit where it is due, and strive thyself to deserve it. Esteem others better than thyself, let their good deeds awaken thy gratitude, and excite thy emulation, and if they should surpass thee in every thing else, at least resolve that they shall not surpass thee in love to God, and in lowliness of mind. Thou needest not envy others; the highway is before thee, and it will be thine own fault, if thou dost not inherit a crown, and become an heir of glory.

SELF-CONCEIT.

SEEST thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

The rich man is wise in his own conceit: but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

Every way of man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts.

It is a gospel injunction not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, nor by self-flattering partiality to form an exaggerated estimate of our own attainments. By self-conceit, a man not only forfeits the esteem of others, but renders himself an object of ridicule. When a man's own lips praise him, there is strong presumptive reason to believe that he is not worthy of praise; for the qualities or acts which are really meritorious never fail to speak for themselves, and are only brought into suspicion by self-commendation. Self-conceit may possibly, in some rare cases, consist with real merit; although it is generally the evidence of a weak mind, and found in alliance with mere pretension. It is a peculiar infirmity of youth, which maturer age ought to correct; for he that imagines himself to be very wise at *twenty*, ought at *fifty* to be convinced that he knows nothing as he should know it. He that has little comprehensiveness of view, may pride himself in his knowledge of the objects within his limited circle; but as his views become expanded, and the range of subjects which are not known increases, pride receives a salu-

tary check. Of how much are we entirely ignorant, and how imperfect the knowledge which we actually possess; and yet can we, in these circumstances, indulge self-complacency, and pride ourselves in a fancied superiority? Fools may plume themselves on imaginary qualities, and wonder that the world does not pay them homage; but the truly wise will be modest in estimating themselves, and, persuaded that their ignorance is greater than their knowledge, will shrink from the praises of others. Newton, whose wonderful mind penetrated into the deep and hitherto unexplored secrets of nature, and announced discoveries which astonished and enlightened the world, regarded himself as a child gathering pebbles and shells on the shore of a vast and unexplored ocean. It is in this way that true merit will ever be associated with humility. Self-conceit in children and young persons should be checked and exposed by those of superior knowledge, as it opposes no small barrier to improvement. He that foolishly supposes that he is wiser than his elders, will remain contented with his ignorance, and make no effort to advance in knowledge. If there, indeed, be any perceptible distinction between folly and self-conceit, the first is to be preferred, for "there is more hope of a fool than of one who is wise in his own conceit." This infirmity, which is merely ridiculous in the artist who imagines in himself the concentration of all skill, or contemptible in the literary pretender, is odious in the religious professor, who boasts of his spiritual attainments and experience, and looks upon others as at an immeasurable distance behind him.

My soul, when thou art tempted to pride, reflect upon thy ignorance, and the imperfection of all thy

attainments, that thou mayest be humbled. Esteem others better than thyself. There are many in advance of thee in knowledge and goodness, who have improved their gifts and opportunities better than thyself. Thou hast no ground for boasting of thy natural attainments, and still less of thy spiritual ones. When thou shouldst have been a teacher of others, thou needest thyself to be taught first principles. What limited views hast thou of the glory of God! How partially hast thou succeeded in subduing thyself, and obtaining a meetness for the kingdom of heaven! The sins into which thou art daily betrayed, and the infirmities of temper thou art constantly revealing, may well check self-conceit, and humble thee before God. Instead, therefore, of standing still to applaud thyself on thine attainments, leave the things that are behind, and press onward towards the things that are before.

INJUSTICE AND OPPRESSION.

An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.

He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.

A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:

But to them that rebuke him

shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.

The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refused to do judgment.

Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless.

If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

THE design of justice is to render to each man his due, and to prevent the oppression of the weak by the powerful. To secure its objects, it has been the aim of good governments strictly to define the rights of individuals, and to maintain them by laws properly enforced. The claims of justice would, in general, be maintained by the observance of one comprehensive scriptural precept, "to do unto others as we would that others should do unto us;" and the indisposition of men to regard this rule has rendered necessary that cumbrous apparatus of law which attempts to note each specific infringement of human rights, and to affix an appropriate penalty. Injustice is seldom the result of simple ignorance; it is rather a sin of intention. Men know better than they practice, and it is

only by perverting their judgment and silencing conscience that they become prepared to act unjustly. The desire for unlawful gain, and the indulgence of personal enmity, are the pregnant sources of injustice. Men covetously grasp at each other's property, restrict each other's liberty, and assail each other's reputation, to gratify malice or the inordinate love of gain. Loose principles lead to culpable conduct; and outward acts are only the embodiment of inward feelings. Injustice is always accompanied by oppression; it falls heavily on its victims, who are subjected to inconvenience, deprived of comforts, overwhelmed with grief, and sometimes driven to desperation by the injury inflicted.

The universal prevalence of religion is the only adequate remedy for the evils arising from this source; for this requires of us in all acts, respect to the dictates of conscience, love to our neighbour, and regard to His law, who will judge the motives and try the secrets of all hearts. Human laws furnish a very insufficient security. They are necessarily imperfect, cannot provide for all possible contingencies, and even when good are too often badly administered. Justice is not always a divinity in its own temples. The injured may find in his legal adviser a sharper who will betray his confidence and profit by his ignorance; and in his judge, one perverted by a bribe, and whose decision will only give additional reason for just complaint. Unless men are influenced by a sense of religious responsibility, it is not mere station, although the chief duty of that station is to secure human rights, that will make them the undeviating and zealous friends of justice. How melancholy the picture which our apostate world presents of men preying on one

another, and seeking gain in their ruined fortunes. Virtue stands amazed, as it gazes on the strife for pre-eminence, and the struggles for wealth and power, in which the successful, without sympathy or compunction, hasten to their object over the crushed hopes and rights of their fellow-men! Blessed Gospel, when shall thy triumph be complete! When shall the Spirit so imbue the hearts of men as to make them pitiful and fraternal to their fellows, and teach them to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God!

O my soul, in a world where so many contend for their own interests, regardless of those of others, let it be thy object to do good to all, and rather to suffer than inflict injury. Well dost thou know that a curse accompanies the gains accumulated by injustice and oppression. They will eat the flesh as if they were fire, they will sting as a scorpion, and bring in their train the curse of the Almighty. Avoid, therefore, the slightest approach to this vice, and for this end, banish every covetous desire, and suppress every unkindly feeling which might prompt to injustice. Remember that God is a just God, and he will be strict in exacting an account from thee. Thus has he revealed himself, "A God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is He;" and canst thou appeal to him while acting in opposition to his expressed will? Canst thou hope in his mercy if thou show no mercy? Canst thou die in peace while the cry of the oppressed rises against thee?

TALE-BEARING.

A TALE-BEARER revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth.

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.



SOME from a spirit of mischief, and some from sheer ignorance and idleness, are betrayed into the vice which is here condemned. When it springs from the first it is atrocious, and is identical with slander, making light of a neighbour's reputation and peace of mind, and caring little whether the evil report it circulates be true or false. When it arises from an idle spirit of gossip, it may have less atrocity, but is still criminal, and in its consequences may be equally injurious. The love of news is with many a besetting sin; the hearing or communicating of which constitutes with them the spice of life. In the neglect of personal and family duties they will gad about from neighbour to neighbour, and what is thus gathered, particularly if scandalous, will be as liberally retailed. Time and labour are freely expended in giving currency to an evil report. What havoc is made of reputation at little coteries of such people! With what zest will they proclaim the alleged failings of neighbours, feebly attempting to palliate the iniquity of the act by the qualification of hoping that the rumours are unfounded, or that they can scarcely be true! They care little about authorities, and as it is not a part of their policy to inquire into the truth of what they have

heard, the kitchen is as good authority with them as the drawing room, a notorious falsifier as good as a credible witness. Wo to the individual who falls into the hands, and is left to the tender mercies, of such inveterate newsmongers and gossips! He may expect his most innocent actions to be distorted, his motives misinterpreted, his most trivial failings magnified at each successive repetition, so that his own portrait as drawn by them, would frighten him. Every village and neighbourhood embraces persons of this character, with whom it is unsafe to have intercourse. Tale-bearers seldom have much regard for truth, and freely draw on their imaginations for the embellishments of their stories. Never entrust a secret to such persons, for "a tale-bearer revealeth secrets, although very friends are thereby separated." A domestic or social strife is to them a rich treat, and the fire will not go out while they can feed it with fuel. Reader, would you stand aloof from so pestiferous a vice? Be a keeper at home, no busy body in other men's matters, but attentive to domestic duties, and the cultivation of the social affections.

My soul, avoid the mean and dangerous vice of talebearing. It would be iniquitous to spread a false report to the injury of thy neighbour, and it should pain thee to hear a true one to his discredit. Flee the society of tattlers, that thou mayest escape the infection of their discourse. Remember the scriptural warning, "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." Repulse the tale-bearer, and admonish him to cast the beam out of his own eye, that he may be able to detect the mote in that of his neighbour.

FALSE WITNESS.

A MAN that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.

A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness: but a false witness, deceit.

An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

A MAN may be guilty of bearing false witness when he inconsiderately repeats what is not true, to the disparagement of others; but of this we have already treated under former topics. The species of the sin to which we now refer, is perjury, or the giving of false testimony under oath. Assuming that the administration of oaths under proper legal forms is scriptural, the testimony which is given under their sanction, must be regarded as the strongest possible confirmation of a fact. The appeal is made to God, the searcher of hearts, for the truth of what is declared; and it is to be presumed that the witness will have such reverence for the divine Majesty as not to call on him to attest a falsehood. Yet alas! such is the depravity of the human heart, that perjury is a common vice, and it is to be apprehended that the irreverent manner in which oaths are administered in the civil courts, and still more strikingly in custom-houses, contributes to its frequency. Not only is this solemn appeal to God required on the most trivial occasions, but the administrator seldom evinces in his manner the slightest sense of the solemnity of the

duty in which he is engaged, and repeats the formula with a rapidity and indecent haste, which render its terms almost unintelligible. Conveying the impression, by his manner, that the whole proceeding is an idle ceremony, it is not wonderful that the ignorant and the irreligious should in witness-bearing, have but little sense of their obligation. Experience would seem to indicate, that the frequency of oaths should be diminished, and that there should be greater impressiveness in their administration.

The crime of perjury justly exposes the transgressor to severe penalties. It is the worst form of violating the truth. It defeats the ends of justice. It deprives others of those aids by which their property, reputation, and even life, might be secured. It is a breach of the law of God, a gross insult offered to his majesty, and a braving of his terrible vengeance. How fearful then the position of that man who defiles and jeopardds his soul by this iniquity. A false and perjured witness shall surely perish, and those who would escape the temptation to the crime, should learn habitually to respect the laws of Him who is the God of truth.

My soul, may thy sense of God's terrible majesty be an all-sufficient restraint to preserve thee from the slightest deviation from truth. Especially be impressed with the sanctity of an oath. If thou wouldst ascend into the holy hill of God, thou must not lift up thyself to vanity, nor swear deceitfully. Stand in awe, lest thou shouldst be included among those concerning whom the Most High swears that they shall not enter into his rest. He cannot change, he cannot lie. When he proclaims the doom of the wicked with an oath, it is irrevocable. Neither will

he recall his word when it is a word of promise, confirmed by his oath, to inspire with confidence and impart strong consolation to those, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. Vow unto the Lord and pay thy vows; bind thyself to him in covenant to be his for ever.

THE SCORNER.

A SCORNER loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.

Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.

A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.

Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.

SIN presents itself under a diversity of aspects, and an exhibition of one form of it will often involve others with which it is blended. Scorn supposes pride, self-conceit, imperiousness, and it is the lofty disdain with which one regards whatever belongs to another. The scorner being too proud to learn, takes much for granted, and hence his judgments are harsh and his conduct precipitate. He disregards laws and customs; disdains the opinions and counsels of others; treats things sacred with contempt, and regards even the threats of God with defiance. When occupying high stations, so far from condescending to those beneath him, he holds them in contempt, cares not for their good opinion, and will not therefore strive to conciliate it. He despises reproof, holds himself superior to all accountability, and esteems himself wiser and better than those around him. Not only is his feeling haughty, but his bearing repulsive. With such a disposition he comes into contact with religion, not with the humility and tractableness of a learner, conscious of ignorance, but with the proud bearing of one who knows every thing already, and is above vulgar

prejudices. Nay, every thing sacred is treated as if fabulous, and adapted only to the ignorant. He scorns to be won by the invitations of the gospel; he scorns to be influenced by the threats of the law. To him the obligations of religion are a nullity, and hell a bugbear. Having walked in the counsels of the ungodly, and stood in the way of sinners, he reaches the point of hopeless iniquity by sitting in the seat of the scornful. How dangerous is such a man when entrusted with power! Pernicious in his example, and rash in his policy, he will endanger whatever is committed to him. As is his crime, so will be his punishment. As a despiser of God, God will despise and utterly blot out his name, and from his proud elevation will hurl him into degradation and ruin:

My soul, cultivate the temper which is furthest removed from that of the scornful. Respect thy fellow men, and reverence thy God. Distrust thyself; scorn not the counsels of the wise, and be ever impressed with the solemnities of religion. Thus shalt thou be in friendship with God, and escape the judgments which he has prepared for scorers.

FOLLY.

LET a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.

Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat

with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

ALL sin is folly, but the wise man seems here especially to refer to what is now usually intended by the term, namely, indiscretion, and want of practical good sense. There are none more capricious in their conduct, or less trust-worthy, than persons of this description. They may be compared to a flimsily constructed boat cast upon the waves, with sails set, and neither ballast nor steersman. They have not knowledge enough to steady them, nor discretion enough to manage the helm. The fool always supposes himself to be wise, and his presumption never fails to betray his ignorance. He has more glibness of tongue than activity of brain, and hence he deals more in words than ideas. Always prepared, in his own judgment, to express an opinion on all subjects, he exposes himself to contempt; and yet he has too little discernment to perceive the low estimate in which he is held. Silly thoughts, trifling conversation, and frivolous manners, are his chief characteristics, and with these he becomes the sport or the nuisance of the society into which he intrudes.

If folly always resulted from mental incapacity, it

might be pitied if not tolerated; but it is oftener voluntary as resulting from vain self-confidence, which despises instruction, and neglects the means of improvement. It refuses to study the proprieties of time and place, and hence is always impertinent. In company it sets itself before wisdom, and insists upon talking when it should be a listener. In deportment it is a harlequin, which is ever annoying those around it with its caps and bells. There are rich fools, and fashionable fools, and fools highly connected, and they remain fools under all circumstances; but of all the tribe, the irreligious fool is the most intolerable. He rashly ventures where angels fear to tread; he handles the mysteries of God with an irreverence that shocks; he is confident where wise men modestly hesitate; he is flippant and frivolous on themes most sacred and awful; in a word, he makes a mock of sin, and says in his heart, "There is no God."

Who has not met with such persons, and who ever wishes to meet with them a second time? Who wishes to be exposed to their tongue, and who does not wish to keep aloof from their mischievous influences? A cautious man had rather encounter a bear rendered furious by the loss of her cubs, than a fool in his folly. Solomon regarded this vice as among the most incorrigible. There is no reason to appeal to, no fulcrum on which to rest the lever by which they might be moved. Reproof reaches them not, correction does not improve them; and even if brayed in a mortar, the essential folly still remains. Even Solomon seemed perplexed to know precisely how to deal with them, and eventually came to the conclusion, that as fools were always capricious, so they were to be treated differently under different circumstances. There were times when a fool

should not be answered according to his folly, lest we should be like him; and there were times too when he should be answered according to his folly, lest he should be wise in his own conceit. Surely the father of a fool might rejoice in being childless.

My soul, let the frequent spectacle of folly render thee wise. As the character of a fool is contemptible to men, so it is provoking to God. Get wisdom and understanding, especially heavenly wisdom, that in conversation thou mayest be instructive, and in deportment an example of propriety. To adorn thy profession as a Christian, thou needest the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the harmlessness of the dove, "showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine, showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of thee."

EVIL COMPANY.

My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

For they sleep not, except they

have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:

Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.

IT is a well-considered maxim, that a man is known by his company; because intimacy implies a conformity of views and habits. Contraries repel each other; but things that are similar mutually attract. As all are born with depraved feelings, the tendency in all is to evil conduct. The most careful discipline in youth, and the most powerful religious restraints are necessary to counteract the downward propensity of our nature, and where these are wanting, there is feeble hope that the young will be preserved from debasement and ruin. The world abounds with allurements which charm the senses, and facilities are furnished on every hand to gratify the appetites. Besides the strong impulse to sin from within, Satan has appropriate instrumentalities to call it forth into action. His devices are numerous and artful; they are addressed to every evil desire; they appeal to every sense; they insinuate themselves by every avenue into the heart, and raise a tumult of passions not easily allayed. If sin were

presented in its naked deformity, it would disgust and repel; but it is tricked out in every imaginable charm, that it may the more certainly entice. It beckons its victim under the beautiful impersonation of pleasure; but when it gets him in its embrace, it is converted into a fury. The fair side alone is exhibited; the consequences are concealed in the back ground. Is it wonderful, then, that the inexperienced should be ensnared? Is it not more wonderful that any should escape?

The devices of Satan are seconded by his ready agents. The deceived become deceivers in their turn; corrupted themselves, they take a malignant pleasure in corrupting others. "They sleep not except they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall." The experienced in vice are forward to impart their knowledge to others. With art they approach their victim; they come under the semblance of friendship; they shock not his feelings by too sudden a revelation; they laugh away the fears of his conscience, and counteract the influences of his education. They glowingly paint the pleasures of their pursuits, lead him on step by step, point out the way to the haunts of vice, gather around him their toils, until he first tastes, and then becomes immersed in their vices, and as much a child of hell as themselves. How many credulous youth have been thus enticed, each false step preparing the way for further declension, until they find themselves hopelessly and helplessly hurrying down the precipitous descent!—Cursed is the art of the seducer, and awful will be his fate! Upon his withered soul must settle the remorse of having blighted many a fair hope, perverted many a right principle, and ruined many a precious soul.

“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” Trust not their pretended friendship, believe not their false representations; and be admonished, that it is not thy welfare, but thy destruction, which they contemplate. Their enjoyments are deceitful, pain and anguish are in their train; and if thou follow in their way, thou wilt inevitably find sorrows and regrets, which will infinitely counterbalance any temporary gratification which they may afford.

My soul, if thou hast escaped the contagion of corrupt companions, and the snares of the devil, it is a miracle of grace, for which thou shouldst be eternally thankful. Thou hast not subdued the lusts of the flesh by thine own power; thou hast not defeated the wiles of Satan by thine own vigilance; thou hast not frustrated the plans of evil seducers by thine own firmness and resolution. It is by the ever watchful providence of God, and through the influence of his grace, that thou hast been plucked as a brand from the burning. Rejoice that thy conscience has not been stupefied, that thy principles have not been subverted, nor evil habits formed to hold thee a captive of Satan by an iron grasp. While thy prayer is, that thou mayest not be gathered with sinners, take God’s chosen people as thy loved companions, and delightedly say,

These are the company I keep.

These are the choicest friends I know.

They will not lead thee into evil, but aid thee in thy duty, and encourage thee in thy spiritual conflict. Their God is thy God, with them thou hast an identity of hopes, interests, and pursuits, and thy intimacy with them on earth shall be perpetuated in heaven.

STRIFE AND CONTENTION.

STRIVE not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

He that passeth by, and meddeth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.

It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.

If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest.

It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman.

It is better to dwell in the corner of the house top, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.

A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.

Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.

ALAS! that there should be strife among those who so much need each other's sympathy and help. In the allotment of all, there is inevitable misery enough, without an increase from this cause. Separation from the friendship of God, with all its attendant sorrows, has converted this world into a vale of tears; and yet the unhappy sons of men, groping their dark path to the tomb, instead of cheering, contend with each other by the way. It is one of the evidences of human depravity—one of the proofs that the frowns of offended Deity rest upon our world. Strife and contention spring from unsanctified temper; and how do they embitter the social relations, putting into an attitude of hostility those who should be friends, and, either in the neighbourhood or domestic circle, destroying the harmony of those who should emulate each other

in kindness and love. Some seem to be in a peculiar manner born for strife—birds of the storm, whose chosen elements are the swelling surge and the roaring wind. To them, every occasion becomes a subject of quarrel; their anger is easily excited, and, if not actually hurried to acts of violence, their tongue becomes voluble with abuse.

We cannot conceive it to be possible, that persons thus characterized, should be subjects of divine grace. Religion may consist with infirmities of temper; but not, we conceive, with a contentious spirit, habitually indulged. The Holy Spirit flies from the scenes of noise and strife. If it is not consistent with personal piety, which implies self-control, neither can there be family religion, where there are continual family bickerings; nor spirituality in a church, whose members contend with each other in the spirit of the world. He that would cultivate intimate communion with God, will rather suffer unjustly than contend.

Beside the domestic discord which is unhappily so common, the world is full of strife and litigation. Thousands are slaughtered by their fellows on the field of battle; and even when disputes are not settled in a manner so inhuman, we find men, on the most trivial occasions, avenging their injuries by summoning each other before the civil tribunals. All the multifarious provisions of human laws have become necessary, through the prevalence of this disputatious temper; and for its suppression, our Lord directed his disciples to cultivate forbearance and meekness—"I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if a man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”

While we cannot be too earnest in dissuading men from personal strifes, or a too eager defence of themselves and property from slight injuries; we have no right to place the interests of God’s truth and kingdom in the same category with our own personal rights. The last may be waived and sacrificed for the sake of peace, but not the first. We are to contend earnestly, though not violently, for the faith once delivered to the saints, and we are to do it in the spirit of saints. It is possible for persons, under pretext of zeal for the glory of God, to indulge their own unhallowed passions. To contend for the faith is, on all suitable occasions, to manifest a firm adherence to the truth, engage in its defence, and cheerfully to suffer persecution, rather than by unwarrantable compliance and compromise, to sacrifice it. We insult God, if we suppose the safety of his cause requires the manifestation of an angry temper, or the use of reproachful language. Controversialists, even where they are in the right, as to the subject matter in dispute, may do infinite mischief to the cause of truth, by mingling their own unsanctified tempers in its defence; or by contending merely for victory, or in other words, for their own glorification. Let it be remembered, that a kind regard for the welfare of an adversary, may well consist with an unflinching opposition to his errors.

My soul, dost thou appreciate the divine rule to “follow peace with all men,” and impose a restraint upon thyself, lest thou shouldst be involved in the angry strifes of men? Be not too jealous of thy dignity, as if it would suffer by innocent compliance.

Strife cannot exist without parties to supply the fire with fuel; take heed that thou be not one of the parties. Under provocation, let thy tongue be restrained, and let the law of kindness be in thy heart. The more perfectly thou art sanctified, the less disposition will there be to contend; and as thou art a follower of the Prince of Peace, let the whole frame of thy temper evince this holy alliance. Did not thy Saviour leave his peace with thee? and wilt thou let it be disturbed by the petty broils of earth? Be a peacemaker, and strive to live in an atmosphere undisturbed by the storms of strife. If thou art called to contend for God's truth, do it faithfully, do it at a self-sacrifice, but without the intermingling of bad passions. There is one strife, my soul, in which thou mayest engage with feelings of implacable revenge against thy adversaries; it is the strife with thine own lusts. Here there should be no friendship, no compromise, no truce, nought but exterminating war. Thou must fight the fight of faith, or lose thy reward. One other strife awaits thee, it will be the last. Death is to be encountered; the struggle may be fierce and painful, but be not affrighted; thy Lord has conquered and ascended, and through Him thou also wilt triumph, and be enabled to exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory!"

GUILTY APPREHENSIONS.

THE wicked flee when no man pursueth : but the righteous
are bold as a lion.

THE richest inheritance on earth is “a conscience void of offence towards God and man,” and the most terrible, the apprehension arising from a consciousness of guilt. It was a satisfaction to the holy Apostle, that he could say, “we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man;” and with equal explicitness, “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” It is true, he had through “ignorance and unbelief” once been a persecutor of the truth; but he could acquit himself of intentional crime. This was no pharisaical boast; he did not pride himself in his goodness, or look to it as a ground of justification; on the contrary, he esteemed all that he had done as loss for Christ’s sake, and renouncing self, he gloried only in the cross. Still it was to him, as it would be to every other good man, a subject of gratulation and pleasing reflection, that he had uniformly aimed to maintain a good conscience. The saints, redeemed and sanctified as they are, enjoy a still sweeter tranquillity, if, in their unregenerate state, they were restrained from flagrant sins. Even in them joy receives a check if accompanied by recollections of heinous sins against God and their fellow-men.

How painful, on the other hand, is a guilty con-

science which has never been purged by the blood of atonement! If the remembrance of the past only brings scenes of transgression before us, and the images of those we have grievously injured rise up to haunt us, how can we enjoy peace of mind? How torturing, for instance, is the apprehension of one conscious of having committed a fraud, the detection of which would blast his reputation and make him an outcast from society! And how timid, shrinking, affrighted, the conscience which has upon it the guilt of murder! Suicide is often preferred, as an alternative, to such intolerable apprehension.

If guilt fears detection in this world, and unmans the spirit, how much heavier its burden, when the sinner is brought to realize his accountability to God, the righteous and terrible Judge, who will by no means clear the guilty! The impenitent sinner may, in the days of health, assume an air of indifference and defiance; but when the stern messenger of death approaches, what scorpion-lashes does conscience often inflict, what terrors hover over his dying pillow, and with what dismay does he look forward to the dread eternity into which he is soon to be hurried! Did he possess worlds, these worlds would be eagerly exchanged for a release from his guilty apprehensions. Surely not only the end, but the way of the transgressor is hard.

My soul, if thou hast been so far restrained in the years of thy impenitence, as to have escaped the grosser vices, for this thou shouldst be thankful; and still more so, if by the blood of sprinkling, conscience has been purged and its accusations silenced. Hast thou peace? See to it, that it is one which neither death nor judgment can disturb. Daily go to the

fountain filled with blood, which can wash all thy guilt away. Then shall thy peace flow as a river, then shall its heavenly influences fill thy heart and mind, in anticipation of that state of sinless perfection, from which all guilty apprehension shall be excluded.

FALSE CONFIDENCE.

A WISE man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble, is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

There is a way which seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

THE circumstances under which false confidence may be indulged are various, and the dangerous tendencies of it, both as it respects present and future interests, should excite caution. In avoiding it we should not, by general distrust, fall into the opposite extreme. It is no reason that we should confide in nothing because we cannot confide in every thing. Although David could not rely upon the professions of Saul, yet he could safely confide in the friendship of Jonathan; and so, while there are many cases in which a false confidence would betray us, there are many others, in which a true one would avail us. One who trusts in earthly riches, as possessing the power to impart happiness, will certainly be disappointed, as in no one instance has such expectation been realized; but there are "true riches" on which the soul may securely repose. Another, who trusts to the promises of earthly friends, may find them deserting him in adversity; but there is a Christian friendship which should inspire confidence, and there is a Friend in heaven who "sticketh closer than a brother." Calculations founded on the permanency of health and present outward condition may prove deceitful; but there are other things which form a safe basis of calculation.

The false confidence which involves the interests of

the soul, is much more to be dreaded than that which merely exposes to temporal disappointments and losses. Religion is man's first and great concern, and yet how few comparatively seriously regard it, and rightly understand it. Instead of diligently seeking from authentic sources a knowledge of its demands and prohibitions, its promises and threatenings, the multitude content themselves with vague and loose notions, by which they are fatally led astray. One maintains a decent exterior and relies upon his freedom from gross vice as a sufficient guaranty of his final acceptance; another, although regardless of every obligation, imagines that at the close of life he may escape the consequences of his sin by a hurried repentance; and still a third, by a perversion of divine truth, expunges hell from his creed, and trusts his soul to the fiction of universal salvation. Where these and similar errors are entertained, men become reconciled to their spiritual alienation from God, and heap up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. Few are so desperate as to have abandoned their hope of final salvation, and yet few put themselves to the trouble of ascertaining the soundness of their hope, and, by fervent piety, affording the evidence, that they are pressing towards the mark for the prize, which is promised only to the self-denied and humble, the holy and devout followers of Jesus. False confidence is indeed the master device of Satan, and his chief triumph is in seeing it swept away at a moment, when man most needs a steadfast faith. There are many ways which seem right to men, while the end of them turns out to be the way of death. They are self-confident, they disregard timely warning, are willing to be deceived, and thus they pass the brief season of

their earthly sojourn, hugging their errors, until the truth, too late, bursts upon their astonished view, and their ruin becomes inevitable.

Happy art thou, O my soul, if thy confidence reposes in the unerring promises of thy covenant God. The heavens may depart and the earth be removed, but the word of thy God endureth for ever. Hast thou built thy hope on the Rock of Ages? Hast thou made Christ all thy salvation and desire? Through his Spirit hast thou been sanctified? Then thy confidence shall not disappoint thee. Thou knowest in whom thou hast believed, and thou mayest well be persuaded of his ability to keep that which thou hast entrusted to him. What a blessed condition, which cannot be affected by the vicissitudes of time, and which shall be rendered permanent in eternity! Hear thou the word of the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

WARNINGS AGAINST LICENTIOUSNESS.

THE mouth of strange women is a deep pit; he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.

For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:

But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.

Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth.

Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house:

Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel:

Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger;

And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed,

And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof;

And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!

I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.

For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.

Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?

So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.

For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.

None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.

Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

IN eastern countries, where custom, instead of elevating woman to an equality with man, and regarding her as his endeared companion and adviser, in whose

sympathy and love he may find his sweetest solace, degrades her to be the minister of his sensual gratifications, it is not surprising that no high standard of morals should be observed by either sex. In Christian countries, just in proportion as the spirit of the gospel is infused into the laws and customs of society, and woman occupies her appropriate station, there is a higher reverence for virtue, the brightest examples of which are found in the gentler sex. Partaking, however, as they do, of a sinful and fallen nature, they may and often do fall from their high estate, and having once forfeited their place in society, and incurred the ban of excommunication, they become the tempters of others. Solomon refers to the abandoned woman, whose arts are employed to ensnare the unwary ; and who, being herself betrayed, becomes a betrayer in her turn. The loss of chastity is an evil not to be repaired, and from which the unhappy victim seldom emerges.

The dangers to which young men are exposed, in giving a loose rein to their licentious passions, are here strikingly portrayed, and the picture is one which suits all ages and countries. In large cities especially, how numerous are the temptations and facilities to vice of this kind ; and when youth, impelled by passion, and unchecked by the restraints of religion, come within the vortex, how seldom do they escape ! In such circumstances we can but raise the warning voice.

All the precepts of God's law, which require purity of heart, and the consecration of the body as an instrument of righteousness unto holiness, are violated by the unchaste. The soul which should bear the image of God, is defiled in its imaginations, and pol-

luted in its affections, and the body, which should be the temple of the Holy Ghost, partakes of the degradation and dishonour. This is a sin which perhaps more than any other, alienates the heart from God, and excludes it from communion with heaven. It is a sin against the best laws of human society, trampling upon the sacred relations of life, invading the peace of families, despoiling the heart of its best affections, and the mind of its noblest sentiments, creating discords and dissensions, and covering more than its perpetrators with shame and disgrace. To the soul it brings disquietude, anxiety, remorse, and the intolerable curse of God, and to the body, disease and death. It is a pregnant source of other flagrant crimes; drunkenness is its companion, and murder often stalks in its train; and what adds terrible emphasis to the description, it is a sin *which is seldom repented of*, and which more than any other damns the soul and peoples the regions of the lost! How dearly are its gratifications purchased! with what disquieting pains, loss of self-respect, injury to reputation, ruin to peace of mind! How terrible are the weapons it furnishes to conscience! what terrors does it gather around a dying bed! How deep the gloom it casts upon the future! It may for a season throw around itself a thousand fascinations, but sooner or later it will "a fury frown." O young man, be warned and flee the danger. Beware of the seductions of the already initiated, flee youthful lusts, and solicit the aids of religion to shield thee from the danger.

My soul, remember the source of this sin. It has its origin in the heart, and there it must be encountered. "Lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." If

thou wouldst avoid the deadly result, thou must contend against the impure beginnings. The inward chamber of imagery must be purged ; there must be no tampering with sin in thought, and a covenant must be made with the eyes. Appeal to a divine power for aid. God can preoccupy the mind with holy thoughts, strengthen every virtuous attempt, and deliver thee from the snare of the fowler. Others have triumphed, so mayest thou. Aim to be holy as the angels, holy as God, and to all the blandishments of vice give Joseph's noble answer, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

CONTRITION AND OBDURACY.

HE that covereth his sins shall not prosper : but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth always : but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

ALL men, by nature, are in the same condition of sin, but all have not the same sense of this condition. To some it appears in its true colours, as one of fearful responsibility and danger; whilst to others it is a source of no painful apprehension. According to the divine testimony, the whole race of man is apostate from God and exposed to his wrath and curse. Still most men are too insensible to be conscious of their guilt, too deaf to hear the thunders of Sinai, and too blind to perceive the terrible fate that awaits them. They will not be convinced that sin is their ruin, and they will not be persuaded to forsake it. Its false and deceitful pleasures have more charms for them than its punishment has terrors; hence they can turn a deaf ear to the expostulations of God and to the invitations of the gospel, and look without emotion on the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. Their conscience is perverted, and their heart, like an adamant, impenetrable. Such is the state of most men, and a truly awful one it is. They are surrounded by circumstances which might well awaken them, but they sleep on; and while the infinitely important concerns of eternity are disregarded, they indulge their lusts without compunction, and eagerly pursue the vanities of the world. Every thing is viewed by them through

a distorting medium, which magnifies temporal, and diminishes eternal things. They are not only indifferent but obdurate. The fate of such is certain. If the dying man obstinately refuses the only medicine that can heal him, he hastens his own doom, and the fault is his own; and if the sinner will not relent, but clings to his lusts, rejects the Saviour, incurs the forfeiture of heaven, and braves the wrath of God, must miserably perish and that without remedy.

Such, however, is not the character of all. The word of God finds an entrance into some hearts, the obstinacy of which becomes subdued by an humbling repentance. They obtain an insight into their own souls, and detect the deep depravity there; are convinced of the heinousness of sin, and become alarmed at their danger; turn their eyes to the cross, and seek an interest in the atoning blood of the Lamb. How different the light in which they now view themselves! They offer no vain apologies, and instead of covering, they confess their sins and forsake them. Repentance to be genuine must be founded on a conviction of the evil nature, as well as the evil consequences of sin; it must have respect to all sin, lead to its renunciation, and to a hearty endeavour after new obedience. As it implies on our part a return to God, so on his part it secures a restoration of his life-giving favour. A broken and a contrite heart is a sacrifice well pleasing in his sight; and while he beholds the proud and obdurate sinner afar off, he has respect to the lowly.

O my soul, thou hast reason for everlasting thankfulness, if thou hast been led to mourn over thy sinful condition and repent of thy sinful practice. The Spirit of God has made to thee the discovery, which has led thee to humble thyself. It is he that tore from

thy sins their covering; that exhibited to thy view Christ crucified; that touched thee with a sense of thy ingratitude, and brought thee down from thy towering pride to the dust of self-abasement. Pray for still greater discoveries, for still deeper humiliation; and for thy daily, hourly sins, prostrate thyself before God and ask his forgiveness. It is thy happiness that he can forgive without dishonour to himself, and that he has promised that they that confess and forsake their sins shall obtain mercy. Like David and Peter, repent and return to duty, with renewed alacrity and zeal; and expose not thyself to the hopeless and fruitless repentance of Judas, who, when ruin was impending, could only look on Christ as insulted and betrayed. Better to feel the sorrows of contrition now, than the despair and remorse of hell hereafter. As thou art always sinning, be always repenting; and hourly come for a fresh ablution in that blood which cleanseth from all sin.

UNACCEPTABLE WORSHIP.

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| <p>THE sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more, when he bringth it with a wicked mind.</p> <p>The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but</p> | <p>the words of the pure are pleasant words.</p> <p>He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.</p> |
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THERE is, it is probable, no nation under heaven, however rude or barbarous, which has not some form of religious worship. A sense of Deity, with whatever obscurity and perversion of view attended, impels men to recognize the existence of a superior being, and to render him homage. The abominable fancies and polluted rites of heathenism demonstrate how completely the native depravity of the heart may obliterate the true evidences of Deity which the works of creation furnish, and pervert the very nature and design of religious worship. Their imaginations being vain and their foolish hearts darkened, "they change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four footed beasts and creeping things." We need scarcely say that the worship offered to idols, must prove unacceptable to the true God.

Our reference, at present, is more particularly to another class of worshippers. Many who are surrounded by the light of Christianity, and have a clear and explicit revelation of the will of God on this subject, may err as fatally as do the heathen. Our Lord has assured us that they who would worship

God acceptably, must do it in spirit and in truth. They must have intelligent views of his character, approach him by the way which he has constituted, cultivate the right frame and temper of mind, and present the sacrifice which he requires. All these particulars are fully explained and insisted on in the Holy Scriptures. Now can we suppose that God will accept as a substitute for this worship, an empty form or lip service in which the heart has no interest? Will he accept the words of thanksgiving where there is no gratitude; or the tender of homage where there is no reverence; or the expression of desires which are not felt; or the professions of love which are insincere? Has he required such a sacrifice as this? When he demands humility, will he accept pride? or when he requires contrition, will he be satisfied with impenitence? or will he accept cherished impurity for holiness? If it be essential to acceptable worship, that the heart should be sincere; that it should have an humbling sense of its sinfulness and dependence, and that it should not only express a gratitude that is felt, but solicit further favours as being truly desired; then what becomes of the offering of the hypocrite? What will avail all the empty ceremonies of the formalist? If the throne of grace be accessible only in one way, how can God look with complaisance on those who set aside the only Mediator, or rely on mediators who have no power to press their suit? We profanely mock God if we profess adoration for his perfections, and yet secretly wish that his nature were not so holy, nor his law so strict; if we confess sins without any wish or intention to forsake them; or ask for salvation without approving his plan, or having any disposition

to walk in that narrow way through which alone it can be obtained.

Not only is the sacrifice of the wicked and their very prayer an abomination to God, but even the worship of true Christians may be vitiated by carelessness and inattention, and especially by the entertainment of any improper feeling or disposition. The single case referred to by our Lord, may sufficiently indicate the state of mind in which the Christian is to appear at the mercy seat. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come offer thy gift." The holy fire of devotion cannot burn brightly in an impure and foul atmosphere. We rise to God only in proportion as we lay aside our weights and especially easily besetting sins.

O my soul, thou canst live and be in health only in close proximity with God; and how canst thou approach him if uncrucified sin obscures thy faith, chills thy love, and obstructs thy path? Thy God is holy, and he requires a holy worship, a spiritual worship, a heart worship. Satisfy not thyself with a regular attention to forms; but strive to infuse life and feeling into them. It is thy privilege to be much in the divine presence, and it should be thy pleasure to adore his matchless perfections; to thank him for his mercies; to confess with contrition thy sins, and to ask him to bestow, in covenant love, the things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul. Thy God is a hearer of prayer; let him therefore often hear thy importunity. Thou hast a glorious High Priest, who has passed into the heavens; be therefore

emboldened to come in his name to obtain grace to help in time of need. Here, thou must necessarily worship God amid many imperfections; but look within the veil, behold the angels and the spirits of the just made perfect, hear their enraptured strains of praise, and be encouraged to believe that thou shalt soon join their glorious assembly and mingle in their worship, without any of those sinful hindrances which now repress thy aspirations.

O glorious hour! O blest abode,
I shall be near and like my God;
And flesh and sin no more control
The sacred pleasures of the soul.

CHARACTER AND FATE OF THE WICKED.

Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.

A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.

Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death.

The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.

The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

The wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out.

IN the nomenclature of the world, the term "wicked" is almost exclusively applied to those who are abandoned in principle and practice. The bold and impious blasphemer, the mad atheist, the perpetrator of such vices as endanger the lives and property of the community, would, by common consent, be thus classed. It is too common, however, to employ a softening and exculpatory phraseology to designate vices which are equally heinous in the sight of God; but which, in some degree, may be divested of their repulsive grossness. A *gentlemanly* profligate will often escape censure, where a *vulgar* one would be condemned without mercy; because vice in the one

instance is accompanied by a certain air of refinement, of which, in the other, it is destitute. It is astonishing with what facility an irreligious world strips the law of God of its prohibitions, and how adapted to the inclinations of the libertine is the code of morals which it prescribes in its stead. If they admit the sanctions of the divine law at all, they would confine their application to outlaws alone.

Still the word of the Lord is immutable. All unrighteousness is, in his sight, sin, by whomsoever committed; and under the general head of wickedness are included not only the more flagrant vices, but sins of every grade, and the unbelief of the heart from which they all proceed. The first great characteristic of a sinner is his unbelief, which more openly or secretly discredits whatever God has revealed, respecting human duty and its sanctions. Connected with this, and of which it is a principal part, is a native depravity, every feeling of which is in opposition to God and holiness; and then, to crown all, the overt acts of transgression which are the development of the inward principles. A wicked man, therefore, is one whose heart is alienated from God; who makes light of the doctrines and precepts of the gospel; who disregards his moral obligations; obeys the impulses of an unsanctified heart; and who daily breaks the commandments of God in thought, word, and deed. All the irreligious who have not abandoned their sin and returned to their allegiance to God, are embraced under this character, although they may not publicly be chargeable with profanity, licentiousness, fraud, falsehood, or cruelty. A mere restraint imposed on the outward conduct has no effect in changing the moral condition of the heart. There are certainly

different degrees of guilt and blame-worthiness, and due credit is to be accorded to the outwardly moral, in comparison with the abandoned; still it is not to be concealed that all unregenerate men, in despite of these differences, are, in the sight of God, the wicked upon whom abideth the wrath of God. The wickedness of which we speak is universally diffused. There is no favoured spot on earth where its polluting traces may not be detected. If we do not see it breaking forth, at every step we take, in shocking acts of depravity, we still observe it in the general disregard of men for religion, and in their engrossing devotion to merely temporal pursuits. Believers in Jesus are the exception to the general rule. They are few in comparison with the whole mass.

Now there is nothing more true than that every sin deserves God's wrath and curse; and except by a special intervention, such as the gospel provides, it shall be thus visited. The world is already under condemnation; and its righteous Governor is even now expressing his abhorrence for sin by the sufferings, in mind and body, which are inflicted on our race. Man is not permitted to go onward in his career of sin, even for the very limited period of his present life, without interruptions. He has disquietude of mind, bitter disappointments, sad bereavements, painful and loathsome diseases, and the certainty ever staring him in the face, that he must soon bid adieu to all the loved scenes of earth, and make his dwelling in the grave. Even amidst his most exquisite enjoyments he is subject to the check, that they must soon end, and that in sorrow. He knows not what a day or even an hour may bring forth. Did death close the scene and put a period to his existence, it might still be tolerable;

but conscience tells him there is an endless futurity. The soul never ceases to exist, and the wicked cannot promise themselves even the wretched hope of annihilation. The anger of God, which is known here only in very partial exhibitions, is an eternal anger, and it will be inflicted by an omnipotent hand. All human language must fail to portray the intensity of that suffering which awaits the finally impenitent. Who can conceive of an immortal soul suffering under an eternal anguish; always dying and yet never permitted to die! A man on earth, excruciated by acute pain, may count his sufferings by hours, but the lost soul, as it cries out, "when shall a moment of respite come?" hears no response but ETERNITY! The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. O could human eyes pierce the dark abyss; could human ears catch the notes of wailing and wo; could the indescribable scenes which are at this moment transacting in that dark prison house be disclosed; the world would stand mute with dread—its business and its pleasures would in a moment be cast aside as impertinent. Still it is all as real as if seen; the immutable God has avouched its truth; and if men will not believe him, speaking in his word, neither would they believe a messenger from the invisible world. What madness in men to defy God, and brave the terrors of his unquenchable wrath!

O my soul, thou mayest well tremble when thou rememberest the hole of the pit whence thou wert digged; and thou mayest well be sad when thou reflectest, that many of thy fellow-creatures, and perhaps dear kindred, are still exposed, in their impenitency, to all the fury of the divine anger. Thou hast deserved hell, and yet by a miracle of grace thou hast

escaped. Forget not all his benefits who has plucked thee as a brand from the burning; and if thou art now enabled to rejoice in thy deliverance, still remember those who are yet exposed. With earnestness plead with them to flee from the wrath to come; and with importunity plead for them with thy God and Saviour. Pity their condition, for they have eyes but see not, ears but hear not, neither do they understand. They go on as the ox to the slaughter, little dreaming of the fate which awaits them. Let them not sleep in such peril, if thou canst disturb their slumber; suffer them not to hasten to their dreadful doom, if thy tears and entreaties can prevail with them. How blessed to be instrumental in saving a soul from death, and in covering from the judgment to come the multitude of its sins!

THE WICKED NOT TO BE ENVIED.

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| <p>BE not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.</p> | <p>men, neither be thou envious at the wicked;</p> |
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| <p>For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.</p> | <p>For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.</p> |
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| <p>Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.</p> | <p>Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.</p> |
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| <p>Fret not thyself because of evil</p> | <p>the Lord all the day long.</p> |
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THE Psalmist, in one of his divine songs, expressed the extreme perplexity of his mind, in solving the providence of God, by which the wicked were permitted to enjoy great outward prosperity. There were in his day, as there are at present, instances of ungodly persons who possessed as much of this world as the most covetous could desire; and who, in finishing their career, were exempt from the apprehensions, which, to the dying sinner, are often the precursors of the wrath to come. In other words they lived in the enjoyment of prosperity, and met death with insensibility. The contemplation of this fact staggered his faith, and his "steps had well nigh slipped." Not only this, but, comparing their exemption with his own peculiar sorrows, he confesses that he was "envious of the foolish." His doubts, however, were soon rebuked, and he was convinced that he had no reason to envy the wicked. "When I thought to know this," says he, "it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down into destruction.

How are they brought into desolation as in a moment, they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image—so foolish was I, and ignorant.” In another psalm, he alludes to the same subject, without, however, expressing any of this perplexity. “Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.”

It is true that the wicked often prosper. As they have no thought or desire beyond the world, and devote themselves to its acquisition, they obtain a large share of its wealth, honours, and political influence. This is their inheritance—alas, their only one. On the contrary, Christians are taught to expect tribulations, and are forbidden to set their affections on earthly treasures; and hence the contrast between their outward condition, and that of the wicked is often remarkable. There are seasons when a weak faith may be staggered by this unequal distribution, and it becomes a problem of difficult solution, why the providence of God should thus enrich the wicked, and apparently render their allotment in life so much easier and more comfortable, than that of the righteous. Even dissatisfaction and envy may spring up in the heart, to arraign the wisdom and justice of God. Eminent saints, who have passed through this ordeal, have recorded their experience for the instruction of those who are to succeed them. They have told us that God is the interpreter of his own mysterious

providences, and will eventually make them intelligible.

There are various considerations, which should satisfy the people of God that it is unreasonable in them to envy the prosperity of the wicked, and they are such as these: 1. Outward prosperity is by no means an infallible mark of God's favour, for it is often bestowed on the wicked that it may destroy them. 2. It does not realize its promises; and, however imposing its appearance, it may be attended with great personal unhappiness. 3. In the experience of Christians, it has been found to be a hindrance, rather than a means of promoting their ultimate and chief good. 4. As it is temporary at best, and liable to sudden changes, it is a miserable inheritance for an immortal man, if it be his only one. Now, if it is no evidence of the divine favour, if it exposes to the most dangerous temptations, if it assists not the soul in its heavenly flight, if, in most instances, it is succeeded by the ruin and despair of the soul, should its possessors be envied? "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What would not the most prosperous sinner, when he sinks into perdition, give in exchange for his soul? If permitted to begin his career anew, would he not form a very different estimate of things, and willingly prefer poverty, obscurity, contempt, and pain, with the fear of God, to the pride, ostentation, and carnal enjoyments of his former condition? Surely he would. The wicked are to be pitied, rather than envied. All their wealth and splendour are but the gaudy trappings of the victim which is destined to be sacrificed.

My soul, wilt thou envy sinners? They have

made a sad choice in preferring the world to heaven, and soon will they be awakened to the full consciousness of their folly. Their enjoyments are fitful, and will soon terminate, if not by sudden reverses, at least in death. Their sun will go down in endless night, a night never to be cheered by the star of hope. And canst thou envy them their short-lived happiness? Shouldst thou not rather mourn over their infatuation? Be thou content with little of this world, for thou hast a better portion. As a traveller, thou shouldst not wish to be incumbered on thy journey; and thou mayest cheerfully encounter the little privations of the way, as there is a glorious recompense of reward and joy waits thee on thy arrival at thy heavenly home.

To confirm the contrast which has been drawn between the righteous and the wicked, we subjoin an additional selection from the remarks of Solomon, which are recommended to the prayerful consideration of those who would “know wisdom and get understanding:”—

THE righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.

The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.

An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.

By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

A good man obtaineth favour of the Lord: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

The way of the Lord is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.

Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repaid.

For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the Lord: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.

For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous.

Frowardness is in his heart, he

deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.

Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.

There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF TIME.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow ; for thou knowest not what
a day may bring forth.

THERE is nothing which forms a more uncertain ground of calculation than the continuance of time, and yet there is nothing on which more extravagant calculations are based. The scheming and ambitious confidently look forward to the object of their desires through a long vista of years. The scholar, while exhausting the midnight oil, and, in the intensity of his application, imperceptibly, but fatally undermining his health, is sustained by the expectation that, in coming years, he will receive the meed of applause. The soldier, with his eye fixed on the highest rank in his profession, presses towards it through fields of blood and slaughter, as if he himself were invulnerable to the stroke of death. The agriculturist, in his successful operations, lays down his plans for pulling down his old barns and building larger ones, unmindful, that in the midst of his preparations, his soul may be required of him. The merchant, forgetting the casualties of long voyages and journeys, makes his arrangement to go to a distant city and there to abide a year, buying, selling, and getting gain, although he knows not what may be on the morrow. The young man and the maiden, in the commencement of their career, behold in long perspective, the prosperous and happy scenes through which they expect to pass, little imagining that the shadows of death

may settle on the brow in which age has ploughed no furrows. Thus men, in all situations of life, are engaged in trading on an imaginary capital.

“What is our life? It is even a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Human life is of such brief continuance, that it is numbered by days, months, and years, and not by centuries. The Holy Scriptures so beautifully, and yet so affectingly describe the brevity and uncertainty of our earthly sojourn, as to supersede the necessity of all other language. “Man that is born of woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down, he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” “Our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.” “Our days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.” “Our days are swifter than a post, they fly away. They are passed away as the swift ships, and as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.” “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am. Behold thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.”

In view of this, may we not well say, “Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” Stake nothing on those calculations which involve the probability of life’s continuance; but whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. There may be for us time in reserve, but there may not be. Our mortal frames may, for a long series of years, withstand the shocks which fall upon it. It may escape the flood and earthquake, remain unscathed amidst the pestilence, triumph over

disease, and be destined to sink under the gradual decays of age; but—it may crumble into ruins under the first rude assault, and in its prime and vigour, the decree may be executed, “dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” The point of observation from which we now, in fancy, view the scenery of future years, may be the last we shall reach. The next step may be a descent into the dark valley and shadow of death. Is it so? The experience of the world, confirming the testimony of Scripture, assures us that it is.

Yet how much is dependent on this vapour, which may vanish in a moment! The eternal destiny of the soul! Its salvation or ruin! Life, brief and uncertain as it is, is the only period allotted for preparation to meet the great Judge of quick and dead. If squandered, the injury is irreparable. No work or device is to be found in the grave. No future opportunity will be afforded for further trial,—for the correction of mistakes. Irreligion then is madness. It places the unhappy sinner on a brink, from which, at any moment, he may be precipitated into ruin. Who that desires the salvation of his soul can remain indifferent to the motives which press him to an immediate decision? God is merciful, Christ is gracious, the Holy Spirit is ready to pour forth his influences. The Holy Trinity calls upon the sinner to awake to a just concern for his soul, the open grave utters its warning, and death keeps suspended his poised javelin before he strikes! The present moment is the sinner’s opportunity, the promise waits, but death is ready to affix his unalterable seal on the character and destiny of the soul.

My soul, thou art connected with a frail tabernacle

which is every moment liable to fall into ruin. When this connexion fails, thou wilt return to God, to be judged according to the deeds done in the body. Employ the time allotted to thee in making thy calling and election sure. This done, thou hast nothing to fear; death is despoiled of its sting, and the grave of its victory; and although a voice from heaven shall soon declare, "time shall be no longer," thou mayest rejoice that to them that believe in Jesus, it shall be succeeded by an eternity of blessedness.

THE CONCLUSION.



ALTHOUGH in the preceding selections we have confined ourselves to the Book of Proverbs, we cannot part company with the reader, without, for a moment, directing his attention to *Ecclesiastes* or the Preacher, another production of the wise king of Israel, which may be regarded as a suitable companion to the Proverbs.

It has been supposed, and not without reason, that it was written by Solomon in his old age, and was designed to exhibit his views, on a serious and deliberate review of life. Succeeding to the throne of his father David in early life, under peculiar marks of divine favour; in the enjoyment of youthful vigour; possessed of princely wealth and power, all the sources of earthly happiness were open before him. His situation exposed him to peculiar temptations, and he was not proof against their insidious power. He drank too deeply, for his own peace, of the captivating, but poisoned chalice. From this dream, however, he was awakened, and reviewing the past with regret, he has left to the world the advantages of his experience. The spectator of his outward glory might have been led to pronounce him a truly happy man and to envy him his estate; but his own heart pronounced the vanity of all earthly enjoyments, while it approved only of the heavenly wisdom which he commended to others. How forcible and graphic

his description of the inanity of the world's pleasures, and of their sorrowful results!

I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any

joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.

Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.

The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.

For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

He depicts the agitations and conflicts of his own mind, and, with great probability, his own unbelieving doubts and conclusions, when thus immersed in

sensual pleasures, dissatisfied with himself, and disappointed in his hopes, until he imagined that "man had no preeminence over a beast," and "praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive," and concluded that the negative condition of the unborn was to be preferred to that of either.

He was a monarch, rich, admired, and courted, and yet these were some of his deliberate conclusions :

Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.

He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?

The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand.

As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?

All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:

A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger,

For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor that knoweth to walk before the living?

Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?

For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

Such was the estimate which Solomon formed of the world after he had thoroughly gauged it; and

then he reverted to those more rational sources of enjoyment which his judgment approved, and to which he directed the attention of those who were to follow him.

A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.

Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

Wisdom is good with an inheritance; and by it there is profit to them that see the sun.

For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence; but the ex-

cellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider.

I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:

And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:

But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

As a man standing on that point of observation, from which he looks back upon the world, whose pilgrimage he has almost accomplished, and forward, to inevitable death, he most tenderly admonishes the young, who, from their susceptibility and inexperience are peculiarly exposed, to avoid the allure-

ments and temptations with which they are beset,
Hear his admonitions:

“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.

“But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”



In closing our little volume we may most appropriately do it in the language of him whose *Fountain* has furnished these refreshing *Rills*.

“LET US HEAR THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER: FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS; FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN. FOR GOD SHALL BRING EVERY WORK INTO JUDGMENT, WITH EVERY SECRET THING, WHETHER IT BE GOOD, OR WHETHER IT BE EVIL.”

WISDOM.

Proverbs viii. 22—31.

ERE God had built the mountains,
 Or raised the fruitful hills;
 Before he filled the fountains
 That feed the running rills;
 In me, from everlasting,
 The wonderful I AM
 Found pleasures never wasting,
 And Wisdom is my name.

When, like a tent to dwell in,
 He spread the skies abroad,
 And swathed about the swelling
 Of ocean's mighty flood:
 He wrought by weight and measure,
 And I was with him then;
 Myself the Father's pleasure,
 And mine the sons of men.

Thus Wisdom's words discover
 Thy glory and thy grace,
 Thou everlasting lover
 Of our unworthy race!
 Thy gracious eye surveyed us,
 Ere stars were seen above;
 In wisdom thou hast made us,
 And died for us in love.

And couldst thou be delighted
 With creatures such as we,
 Who, when we saw thee, slighted
 And nailed thee to a tree?
 Unfathomable wonder,
 And mystery divine!
 The voice that speaks in thunder,
 Says, "Sinner, I am thine!"

COWPER.

VANITY OF LIFE.

Ecclesiastes i. 2.

THE evils that beset our path,
Who can prevent or cure?
We stand upon the brink of death,
When most we seem secure.

If we to-day sweet peace possess,
It soon may be withdrawn;
Some change may plunge us in distress
Before to-morrow's dawn.

Disease and pain invade our health,
And find an easy prey;
And oft, when least expected, wealth
Takes wings and flies away.

A fever or a blow can shake
Our wisdom's boasted rule,
And of the brightest genius make
A madman or a fool.

The gourds from which we look for fruit,
Produce us only pain;
A worm unseen attacks the root,
And all our hopes are vain.

I pity those who seek no more
Than such a world can give;
Wretched they are, and blind, and poor,
And dying while they live.

Since sin has filled the earth with wo,
And creatures fade and die;
Lord, wean our hearts from things below,
And fix our hopes on high.

NEWTON.

VANITY OF THE WORLD.

Ecclesiastes i. 2:

God gives his mercies to be spent;
Your hoard will do your soul no good;
Gold is a blessing only lent,
Repaid by giving others food.

The world's esteem is but a bribe;
To buy their peace you sell your own;
The slave of a vain-glorious tribe;
Who hate you while they make you known.

The joy that vain amusements give,
O! sad conclusion that it brings!
The honey of a crowded hive,
Defended by a thousand stings.

'Tis thus the world rewards the fools
That live upon her treacherous smiles;
She leads them blindfold by her rules,
And ruins all whom she beguiles.

God knows the thousands who go down
From pleasure into endless wo;
And with a long despairing groan,
Blaspheme their Maker as they go.

O fearful thought! be timely wise;
Delight but in a Saviour's charms;
And God shall take you to the skies,
Embraced in everlasting arms.

COWPER.