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THE
FIRM PATRIOT,
A
SERMON.

[Price 1s.]

E R R A T A.

Page 16. line 15. *for war read wars.*

29. — 10. *after laws, add and establishments.*



THE ^{3,}
FIRM PATRIOT,

AND

*Principal Qualities which mark that fair and
illustrious CHARACTER, at the present
Juncture, in these Realms.*

A

S E R M O N,

FOR THE FAST DAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1795.

By ALEXANDER HEWAT, D. D.

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A

S E R M O N, &c.

PROV. XXIV. 21.

*My son, fear thou the Lord, and the King,
and meddle not with them that are given to
change.*

IN these words we have a serious admonition to a son, from a King famed for good sense, and knowledge of human nature. His dominions were extensive, and for the government of them, God had given him not only "exceeding much wisdom and understanding, but uncommon enlargement of heart." So happy and glorious was his reign, that it is impossible to view the state of affairs during his life, without a mixture of pleasure and admiration. "From Dan even to Bethsheba," it is said, "Judah and Israel dwelt in safety; every man under his vine, and under

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his fig-tree, all the days of Solomon." What a delightful picture of national peace and happiness! Yet, notwithstanding this very general order and tranquillity, it would seem that the wise King could discern symptoms of discontent, and persons dissatisfied with their condition, however calm and settled, and with the civil government, however mild and indulgent. Hence the caution subjoined, "meddle not with them that are given to change."

Indeed every nation that has long known the benefits of a free government, and the advantages of a stable and flourishing condition, should certainly be cautious of changes and innovations. They always prove either a blessing or a curse; and men given to strange doctrines in religion, and fond of revolutions in civil government, have been justly marked as the common pests of society. Admitting that some may have entertained too great a reverence for the opinions of their forefathers, and placed too implicit confidence in ancient systems and venerable establishments in church and state; are we therefore warranted to set at nought the wisdom of past ages, and turn the world upside down? Because the fear of God may, in some parts of the earth, have degenerated into superstition, and respect for the

the King into fervility and non-resistance; are we therefore justifiable in running blindfolded into the contrary extreme, and saying, Who is the Lord, that we should fear him? or the King, that we should regard him? These questions merit at least serious consideration; and no time can be more proper than the present, solemnly set apart for that important purpose.

It is no uncommon thing for persons, in avoiding one extreme, to rush headlong into the contrary; but by such transitions, we exhibit to the world an example of folly. If superstition be an error, as must be allowed, surely every well-wisher to a reformation, before any change be attempted, ought to consider, whether irreligion be the proper means of correcting it, and of retrieving the lost privileges of rational beings. Supposing that all regal governments were tyranny, as some bold projectors of the present age have confidently asserted, surely all friends of liberty would do well before they engage in revolutions, to think whether anarchy be the best remedy for the evil. By violent means we are almost sure of defeating our end, however just and desirable. Even in the most hopeless state poison is a dreadful cure; what

then shall we think of the physician, who prescribes this remedy to persons in a sound and healthful condition? Solomon, who had studied the nature of man, and was well acquainted with social life, could foresee the dangerous consequences from innovations, especially those of irreligion and rebellion; and therefore gives this wholesome advice and caution to his son, "Fear thou the Lord, and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change."

In these words, three principles of a steady and virtuous conduct are suggested, Piety, Loyalty, and Integrity; which we propose to illustrate and recommend, as essential ornaments of a fair and irreproachable character. They are nearly allied one to another, and in common life often found inseparable companions. If we view the history of man since the first transgression, of what do we find it composed, but of breaches of faith and allegiance to Heaven and Earth? What are all the errors into which we are betrayed by the propensities of corrupt nature, but deviations from the sphere assigned us in which we were destined to move? Indeed they who can, on any occasion, renounce their faith in God, will not have much scruple in abjuring
fidelity

fidelity to their Prince: and persons of such convenient consciences, as can with changing times and circumstances break loose from sacred and civil obligations, will not hesitate long in the days of temptation to remove their integrity from them, and lead corrupt and disorderly lives.

I. With respect to the fear of God, the great and fundamental principle of religion, little need be said in the way of illustration. All acknowledge the extensive influence which this principle hath upon life. Fear, in general, is a passion implanted in the human heart, which excites men to be upon their guard against the dangers, and to make provision for the many evils and wants inseparable from our natural condition. The fear of God is a mixture of filial love and reverence, arising from our relation to him as our creator, preserver, and benefactor, and from a sense of the glorious excellencies and perfections of his nature. All the divine attributes, taken in one connected view, are the object of this affection. Not only the paternal love, goodness, and mercy, but the infinite power, holiness, and justice of the Supreme Governor of the universe, all unite in constituting God the proper object of devout homage and veneration.

ration. He who first said, " Let there be light, and there was light ;" and who can say, Let there be darkness, and universal darkness shall return ; he who first called the vast system of nature into existence, and who can by a word reduce it to non-existence ; he who commands the celestial bodies to move, each in its order, and who is the preserver of that general harmony and perfect arrangement subsisting among the whole ; he is the God whom all ought to fear and adore. It is impossible that any man can have right notions of this great Sovereign Lord, and not stand in awe of his Majesty. A being of perfect knowledge, of almighty power, of unerring wisdom, and of impartial justice, who is ever present with us, the constant witness of our conduct, and who will be our judge, what man can contemplate without silent reverence and profound humility. Holy and reverend is his name. Great and marvellous are his works. Just and righteous is he in all his ways. From him we derived life, breath, and all things, upon him we depend for every blessing. As he is the former of our bodies and the father of spirits, so at what time soever he withdraweth his hand, in which our breath is, we fall again to the dust whence

whence we were taken. Honour and majesty are before him, who sitteth in the army of heaven, superintending the affairs of the world, and disposing of all events according to the purpose of his will. Of him therefore ought all mankind to stand in awe, and sin not. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil, a never failing proof of understanding.

But, doth this soveraign Lord and Governor of the world always receive that filial homage, submission, and obedience from his offspring, to which he is so justly entitled? Do none of the nations of the world turn aside, and instead of serving God make to themselves idols, some of one kind, some of another, before which they blindly bow the knee, and ignorantly worship? At different times the perverseness and corruption of human nature may indeed assume different shapes, and discover themselves in new ways; but always prompt men to acts of rebellion against God, and deviations from the path of duty. It matters little whether our idols be "the images of gold, of silver, or stone, of ancient ages graven by art and man's device*," or the word

* Acts, xvii. 29.

Nature,

Nature, vain philosophy, trees of liberty, or shadows of equality and independence of modern times; undue honour shewn to any creature is disrespect to the Creator, and a tacit declaration that we will not have him to reign over us. But are the nations safe in this state of rebellion? While they are going astray, “revolting more and more, building them high places, and images, and groves, and serving strange gods on every high hill, and under every green tree* ;” they ought to remember, however determined they may be to follow the devices and desires of their hearts, that nevertheless the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; that he is a jealous God, and that justice and judgment, as well as clemency and mercy, minister to the purposes of his will. He hath various ways of humbling the proud, correcting the stubborn, and recalling the wicked from the error of their ways. When Israel of old would go after strange gods, God said that he would leave him to himself, and let “his own wickedness reprove him, and his backslidings correct him †.” When Ephraim was joined to his idols, the command of Heaven was, “Let him alone ‡,” and by

* 1 Kings, xiv. 23.

† Jerem. ii. 19.

‡ Hosea, iv. 17.

and

and by troubles and misfortunes will convince him of his folly. Should the inhabitants of the earth at any time forsake their Heavenly Father, and their beneficent friend and protector, forgetting their dependence upon his providence, and disowning their obligations to his goodness; the Most High can suspend the genial influences of the sun, or the refreshing showers of heaven, and the earth shall soon become a parched desert; or he can let loose "the locust, the palmer-worm, the caterpillar," or some other minister of justice, and reduce the people to a sense of their duty and dependence. Should any nation grow wanton, self-sufficient, and ungovernable, God either can suffer the passions to domineer; the demons of war, "these destroying angels," to go forth to scourge them for their iniquity; or leave them to smart under the correcting hand of guilt and misfortune. Should any of the sons of men become cool and indifferent to the divine pleasure or displeasure, saying, in the day of their fulness and prosperity, "our mountain standeth strong, we shall never be moved;" then adversity of some sort or other stands at no great distance. God hideth his face and the nations are troubled. All the elements are at his command,

mand, and stand ready to execute the purposes of his will. Fire and hail, snow and vapour, wind and storm, fulfil his word. While the Lord of Hosts hath so many ministers of justice for the punishment of the workers of iniquity, shall any individual or nation remain fearless, or, presumptuously persisting in rebellion, promise themselves success? Nay, rather let them awake to righteousness, and to order. Before God's throne, let the rulers of the earth bow the knee. His kingdom ruleth over all, and endureth from generation to generation; therefore return unto the Lord, ye men of unclean and violent hands, "and of a revolting and rebellious heart*." Learn to fear and adore him, all ye inhabitants of the earth.

The second duty recommended is respect to the King. Submission to lawful authority, is a duty which is clearly enjoined and strongly enforced in scripture, and from which no citizen or Christian can claim an exemption. The sacred volume makes provision for the happiness of mankind, both in a present and future life. The highest powers are of God; the higher powers are of men, but ordained of God; and

* Jerem. v. 23.

those

those who are sincere and conscientious in the observance of their sacred and primary duties, are seldom defective in those of a civil and secondary nature. To the divine authority all men owe unlimited submission; but to human authority, only that measure of obedience, which may be proportioned to the excellence of that constitution under which we live. Hence that exhortation, "render unto all their dues, fear to whom fear is due, and honour to whom honour*." Hence also the command of our Saviour in answer to the question, Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? "Render," saith he, "unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God, the things which are God's †."

Whoever pays due reverence to the Supreme Governor of Heaven and Earth, will not be apt to treat subordinate rulers with disrespect and contempt. Though all are under the highest obligations to God, for the many blessings which we enjoy under the divine government, it follows not, that man is under no obligations to the King and constitution of his country; whence he derives protection to both person and property. Happy indeed is that nation in which few evil-doers are to

* Rom. xiii. 7.

† Math. xxii. 21.

be found. But while there is a mixture of virtuous and vicious members in the community, not only the well-being, but the very existence of society, requires government and the impartial administration of justice. In every nation, whether smaller or greater, where the good and bad meet together, there must be a power lodged somewhere for the encouragement of virtue and the punishment of vice: and to that person, it matters not what his title be, in whose hands the constitution has lodged this power, great respect is due from the community. Protection and allegiance are always reciprocal duties; and if some draw the cords of allegiance too tight, others may suffer them to hang too loose upon them. To the virtuous prince who is just, ruling in the fear of God, and rejoicing in the happiness of the people, suitable returns of duty and affection are no more than his due and our reasonable service. To look for perfection, either in a prince or people, were equally absurd. This is what belongs not to human nature or the present state; and all that can be expected by the people from the best of rulers is, to keep the perfection of the divine government always in view, and strive to resemble it as nearly as possible.

Of

Of power usurped, as well as power abused, this nation has had its trial; and both were such yokes, as our illustrious forefathers were unable to bear. Indeed oppression under every shape is fierce and odious; and to human nature, both extremes of tyranny and anarchy are grievous and repulsive. But between the two there is a mild, just, and paternal authority, to which the wise and virtuous in all ages have yielded a voluntary and cheerful obedience. Of this kind is the authority conferred on rulers by our excellent constitution, which has long been the object of very universal admiration. To a part indeed it gives power to frame and execute laws, but it gives this power only for the good of the whole; and, whenever this power happens to be abused, or employed to other purposes than those for which it was originally delegated, then the constitution interposes with restraints and corrections, such as are friendly to the interests of the people. "Monarchy limited like ours," says an English writer, "may, for ought I know, be placed in the middle point, whence a deviation leads, on the one hand, to tyranny, and on the other, to anarchy." Towards one or other of these two extremes affairs are always apt to take a turn; but to which of them the
current

current at present runs, every one may easily perceive, and from which of them our greatest dangers are likely to arise, no wise judge can be at a loss to determine.

When Solomon enjoined the fear of God and of the King, he had doubtless a royal government in view; but as the common safety and happiness are the ends of all kinds of government, resistance of law and rebellion can be tolerated under none. If the chief magistrate be a person of exemplary virtue, making religion the object of his care, and the public good the study of his life, then such a character ought to be counted worthy of double honour. Of this respect and submission to rulers we have a remarkable instance, in the little community of bees. They have their governor, whose presence gives union, life, and energy to the whole society; to whose person the inferior members pay particular deference, and to whose authority all yield a voluntary obedience. The idle and consuming drone is punished; the active and provident labourer encouraged. Among the whole, what order, what harmony reigns! It is dangerous to approach their place of habitation in a hostile manner. None can provoke or injure them with impunity. All unite
against

against the common enemy, and, as if animated with one soul, all are in arms, and ready to risk life in the public defence. Though instinct be the director of all their councils and operations, yet reason cannot contemplate their œconomy, good government, and wonderful works, without admiration.—Hence let the nation derive a useful lesson, especially in times of public danger. A free, industrious, and public-spirited people, under a good ruler, and firmly united in interest and affection, are strong and respectable in the eyes of their neighbours; but, when divided, become an easy prey to their enemies. Do bees shew such submission and obedience to ruling authority, union, courage, and even a contempt of life in defence of the common interest? and shall the rational race treat civil governors with levity and disrespect, divide against themselves, become indifferent to public virtue and dead to the love of their country. Even the very insects would upbraid us with folly and error. “Let every soul,” saith St. Paul*, “be subject to the higher power;” “whether it be,” adds St. Peter†, “to the King as Supreme, or unto governors as unto them

* Rom. xiii. 1.

† 1 Peter, ii. 13.

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that are sent by him :—for so is the will of God.”

Solomon, having recommended piety and loyalty to his son, as steady and excellent principles of conduct, to render the character yet more complete, to them, in the third place, adds integrity. During his peaceful and glorious reign, this caution is subjoined with peculiar propriety, “ meddle not with them that are given to change.” Nor is it unnecessary or improper in our own days. There may be circumstances when a change, from confusion to order, from adversity to prosperity, may be for others ; but well may we say with Job, “ changes and war are against us.” It is common with the wise men of the world, before they begin to build, to count the cost, and, ere they engage in any new project, to calculate the profit and loss. In other concerns he is most likely to attain his end, and secure a happy issue, who acts upon some prudential grounds. By changes of many kinds in our present free and flourishing state, but especially in religion and civil government, there is reason to fear that in the end we shall be losers. Having so many invaluable privileges both sacred and civil, and being under no fear of

oppression from rulers, or persecution for conscience sake, we should pray for wisdom to preserve them, and peace to enjoy them. Blest with religion in its purity and perfection, equally free from the errors of idolatry and the dross of superstition, who but fools would meditate changes big at least with hazardous, if not with bad consequences? Favoured with every advantage which can be desired, every opportunity, by means of revelation, of coming to the knowledge of God and Christ, who but evil-doers would wish to recur to a state of nature, or prefer the darkness to the light? After Christ hath come to seek and to save those that were lost, after his religion has so long had many friends and votaries among us, and shewn by its fruits how well it deserved them, who but the unstable and corrupt would meddle with a race of overweening philosophers, bent on nothing less than the abolishment of Christianity? We are taught that there have been fractious spirits, angels of darkness, who were so much given to change, that they could not rest contented, but must excite rebellion even in heaven. On earth, we all know that there have been men, whom nothing could please, neither the best of benefactors, nor the best of blessings. Of this perverse spirit, which undervalues the
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greatest advantages, and neglects to improve them, we have a remarkable instance in the ancient Jews. After God by a mighty hand had delivered them from Egyptian bondage, led them through the wilderness like a flock, driven out the Amorites from Judea, and seated his peculiar people in that land of promise flowing with milk and honey; might it not be expected that they would have rested perfectly satisfied, and served God in sincerity all their lives? But, instead of this, so prone were they to error and idolatry, that, notwithstanding all he had done for them, they forsook the Lord, the rock of their salvation, and hankered after strange Gods. Upon which Joshua their leader was grieved, and, assembling all the tribes, declared his abhorrence of such changes and backslidings, and his firm purpose of soul to cleave unto the Lord with all his family. "If," says he, "it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served in Egypt, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord*."

Nor is a revolution in our civil government more devoutly to be deprecated than a change in our religion. Times were, we confess,

Joshua, xxiv. 15.

when

when the circumstances of this country rendered a reformation of religion, and a change in civil government, no less just than desirable; and good cause have we to be thankful to Heaven for such invaluable and unmerited blessings. These, indeed, were changes which necessity required, and utility warranted; changes to which time, as well as experience, has long since fixed its seal of approbation. But surely, it is not every circumstance that can warrant our having recourse to revolutions, far less to such as are effected by means of violence. It is not every bold and visionary projector that is qualified to judge of their usefulness and expediency. It is not every state of body sound or unsound that renders amputations necessary, especially by rough and unskilful hands. Nor in any case is it prudent and advisable to cut off the head in order to save the body. To remove grievances, reform errors, and correct abuses, is certainly the business of the rational world, but not by cruel and unjustifiable means; and horrible is that reform or revolution, purchased for one half of the nation by the destruction of the other. Though oppressed nations, groaning under the weight of arbitrary power, may, beyond doubt, seek relief, yet no end

can justify such barbarous and bloody means. After all, it may be asked, what has the free state, the rich and prosperous people to expect from changes? They have nothing to add to liberty and prosperity, but the wanton abuse of them; and when changes cannot be of any advantage, they are sure to be prejudicial. It is true, free states are more liable to innovations than others, because in them, partly through the lenity of government, and partly through our freedom of discussion, more opportunities are given to persons disposed to turn liberty unto licentiousness, and licentiousness unto crimes. But certainly, of all others, such states ought to be most vigilant against revolutions; every change with them is not for the better, but the worse. No person in good health should be tampering with his constitution, by idly dabbling in medicines, and trying needless experiments; for when they cannot create better health, they are sure to occasion sickness and trouble.

To prevent popular clamour and complaints, much always depends upon a good administration of public affairs. Great is the trust reposed in the ministers of the crown, and other high officers of state. The honour of the King, the stability of government, and the

the prosperity of the nation, in a great measure depend upon their diligent and faithful discharge of their duty. Nothing evinces the wisdom of a prince, more than his selecting for public servants, men of principle, talents, and virtue. In vicious and profligate characters no confidence can be placed. They seldom fail to render government weak and unstable, and to bring governors into disrepute and contempt. With persons devoid of integrity, words, promises, and oaths all go for nothing. To-day they swear fidelity and allegiance; to-morrow they violate their sacred obligations. Gold is the idol of every traitor, and he that proves faithful to his superior for a great reward only, will betray him for a greater. What was the method which Constantius Chlorus took to try the souls of his public servants, both civil and military? Being friendly disposed towards the Christian religion, and sensible how hard it was to know the human heart; we are told, that he assembled his officers and judges, and proposed to them this condition, either to sacrifice to demons, or leave the court and their places to others, giving each liberty of choice. By this device, he divided his servants into two parties, into men of principle, and men of the world.

world. Some accordingly, rather than abjure the faith of God and Christ, immediately resigned their places: while others of more convenient principles, in order to retain their posts of honour and profit, renounced their religion. In consequence of which discovery, what did the sagacious emperor? He dismissed the base idolators, and time-serving apostates, but retained the men of principle and probity; judging, that such men as had proved perfidious to their God and Saviour, could not be expected to prove steady and faithful friends to their emperor. Whereas, those who refused to part with God, and relinquish their religion for any earthly consideration, were men that might be depended on, trusted as the confidential servants of their prince, and considered by him as the fittest persons, in all emergencies, to be protectors of his person and guardians of the empire*.

To be yet more particular, let the nation be upon its guard against three evils of great consequence, which seem to be gradually creeping into society; I mean perfidy, under the mask of liberality of mind; licentiousness, under the cloke of liberty; and irreligion, under the form of universal toleration. Upon such enemies, clothed in the specious garb of

* Euseb. Life of Constantine, Chapter xvi.

friends,

friends, let all firm adherents to the King and constitution keep a vigilant eye. Such intruders as augur little security to the national interest, and less tranquillity to the world, deserve general discountenance. That spirit of fraternal friendship, which has gone abroad in the world, and which makes no distinction between those that are for us, and those who are against us, appears in such a questionable shape, that it is impossible to be too watchful against its insinuations. Even charity, which thinketh no evil, pronounces such friendship with all mankind, to be enmity against our King and country. Such liberal minded men, as strive to loosen the ties of natural affection, to dissolve the reciprocal obligations of parents and children, of sovereigns and subjects, cannot be deemed good members of the community, even in times of peace. But, in time of war, they are the enemy's best counsellors, the stars which shine but to enable him the more unerringly to shape his course. That liberality of mind, which is constantly dwelling upon the weak side of our country, until it is exposed fully to the view of her enemies; that liberality of mind, which extols the valour of military foes, and damps the courage of our armed protectors; that liberality of mind which

studies to give countenance to discontents and tumults, and to weaken the hands of those who hold the reins of government; renders the most essential services to our enemies. Detested be that liberality of mind, where the love of our native land lies farthest from the heart. It has laboured long, and but too successfully, in breeding distraction in one of the happiest of empires. Virtue and truth are always agreeable to men of real honour and public spirit; and no prince ever lost the affections of his people by discouraging treachery and vice, and rewarding fidelity and steadfastness.

In truth, though humanity be due to all mankind, yet friendship necessarily implies preference, and the friend of all nations cannot be the friend of his country. Nay, the Apostle has affirmed, "that whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*." Nor does any man of licentious principles and corrupt morals deserve to be styled the friend of the people. To every nation good morals are of more consequence, than just laws or great riches. The virtue of the people is always the strongest bulwark of the state, such virtue as rests upon the grounds of true religion, its only solid and durable foundation. The people, left to themselves, have seldom wavering

* Jam. iv. 4.

and

and unstable minds. They are in general sensible of their religious, moral, and civil obligations. Whenever they err, the error is commonly owing to crafty changlings and deceivers. Factious spirits always style rulers tyrants, but with what justice we presume not to say, unless to govern the nation according to law be tyranny. Outrageous tongues can easily pronounce any man a despot, whom a lawless combination wills to destroy. Whenever the wicked mean to sap the foundation of the altar, or the throne, they always address the people on the subject of rights and liberties, and persuade them, that because they have the power therefore they have the right to do what seemeth good in their own eyes. Hence come popular riots, daring and desperate undertakings, so destructive of public order and national security. The people, no doubt, have their natural rights; but, though the Author of nature may have given the power, he never gave any man a right to destroy himself, nor any body of men a right to spread destruction through society. The people have also their constitutional rights, but under no kind of government have they a right to substitute their will in place of law; and to cut off their neighbours, because they happened to be born

to fortune, and titles of distinction. Their civil and religious liberties, it is scarcely possible the people can too highly prize; but it is possible to have recourse to such violent means of preserving them, as will most effectually destroy them. Besides, to be constantly talking of rights and privileges to the people, as if they had never known what it was to be free, or had no constitutional guardians of their liberty, and in language too, which evinces the enjoyment of freedom, in the most extensive sense of the word, betrays a design to seduce the unwary, and plot changes and criminal projects. Happy were it for the sober and active, but simple and honest-hearted people, were they less apt to give ear to crafty and interested demagogues, who go about seeking by enticing words to draw them aside from the way of duty and allegiance. Thrice happy were it for the great multitude of busy and industrious people, who have always so much to do, and who are ever so well employed, in making provisions for themselves and families, if, instead of *liberty*, a term so undefined, which the designing always use as the watchword to acts of violence, they would substitute the word *duty*, which admits of no wrong; or *law*, which is a terror to evil doers, and a protection

to those that do well; or *religion*, which, when men have art enough to elude the obligation, and escape the penalty of all human laws, subjects them to those of divine authority, and the eternal punishment of crimes in a future world. Because, in such a case, busy bodies, and popular agitators, would receive less encouragement, and the world would enjoy more tranquillity and happiness.

There is still another source of public danger, on which all ought to keep a jealous eye, and national guardians to double their vigilant circumspection; that is, *irreligion*, which, like a serpent, creeps in among us under the appearance of universal toleration. Ecclesiastical zealots, bigots, and persecutors have had their day. Now all are reprobated as objects of abhorrence, and justly condemned as a reproach to former ages, and as a disgrace alike to humanity and Christianity. But, the world has seen that philosophers can persecute as well as priests, and that it is possible in leaving one extreme to run into another; and while we tolerate all kinds of religion, to give countenance to none. Allow me to ask, whence comes this spirit of universal toleration? Is it because we are become more warm and more hearty friends to the cause of God and the interests of religion, than our ancestors? Is it because the principles of religion

ligion are now better understood and its precepts more generally practised, than in former ages? Or is it because religion is now esteemed a matter of little or no consequence, and that the sooner it is abolished, the better for the world? Certain it is, that the love of many waxeth cold. Individuals and nations grow careless, lukewarm, and indifferent. In the scale of public opinion, religion daily loses weight. The profane have declined the service of God, and give no attendance at any places of public worship. The dissipated, "like Gallio deputy of Achaia, care for none of these things*." To the indolent such acts of duty are burdensome. The ignorant know not God, and therefore have no fear of him before their eyes. The proud philosopher scorns all religious offices, deeming them an occupation for the vulgar, but below his notice. The lovers of pleasure, and the men of the world, when summoned to serious duties, are always otherwise engaged; and the farther God is removed from their thoughts, the less interruption they meet with in their fordid and criminal practices. Hence arises universal toleration. In idea, heaven and earth are separated. We lose sight of our relation to God, and our connexion with a

* Acts, xviii. 12-17.

future

future world. We shut our eyes to the distinction between religious and irreligious men, and treat all with equal civility and complaisance. Our indignation of vice gradually abates, and in a good cause we become "less zealously affected." When men claim the privilege either to fear God, or to fear him not, either to serve him in sincerity, or not to serve him at all, to break down all fences and trample upon all laws, civil and ecclesiastical, little knowledge of human nature is requisite to foresee that society approaches towards a state of dissolution.

At present it is the business of all ranks and conditions to turn their attention to a reformation of manners. Here is much room for improvement. Nothing is more to be dreaded than that increasing relaxation of principles and morals, which makes mankind fearless towards God, faithless to their King and country, and indifferent to the cause of virtue and religion. He that is insensible to personal honour and shame, and regardless of what is blameable or praise-worthy in moral conduct, changeable as the winds, and assuming any form that suits present interest and convenience, though in the shape of a man, is a base and hollow-hearted wretch, and can never be trusted. Though eloquent as Apollo, without principle
and

and probity, his eloquence avails nothing. Fluctuating between good and evil, right and wrong, he may be the idol of to-day, but to-morrow he is forgotten and neglected. Like the double minded man, " he is unstable in all his ways," and ready to turn to the right hand, or to the left, as the tide of folly and corruption happens to run. Whereas the man of integrity changeth not; he cleaveth to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and abhorreth every false and crooked way. Whatever others do, he is inflexible from the direct path of honour and rectitude. He is faithful to his King and country; and, with the revolting multitude, swerves not from his duty and allegiance. His invariable rule of life, is to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. He walketh uprightly, worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth. His conduct in general being open, uniform, and consistent; every one knows upon what ground he stands, and consequently, as a father, a friend, a patriot, and a Christian, he is beloved of God and man, and his memorial is blessed.

Thus have we endeavoured to recommend three excellent principles, Piety, Loyalty, and Integrity, as essential ingredients of a complete character; and when united in the same person, commonly render him an object of universal

universal esteem. If we suppose any one of the three absent, we leave a deep defect in the character. It ought to be remembered, that God, the Supreme Governor of Heaven and Earth, "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without any variableness or shadow of turning;" that the nature of things is his appointment, that the course of providence is subject to his direction; and that under his righteous moral government there is no safety for impiety, perfidy, and profligacy. It is impossible to say what misfortunes men may create for themselves, what dangers the subjects of his government may incur by apostacy and rebellion. "When the wicked did not like to retain God in their knowledge; is it not said that he gave them over to a reprobate mind*?" When philosophy, falsely so called, presumes to exclude the Creator from his works of creation and providence; is it not just with God to smite such philosophers with the greatest infatuations? When sceptics believe not the truth that they may be saved, is it not written, "God shall send them a strong delusion, so strong, that they shall even believe a lie †?"

Great indeed is God's goodness, patience, and forbearance towards offenders; but woe

* Romans, i. 28.

† 2 Thess. ii. 11.

unto

unto them that turn his grace unto wantonness, and take encouragement to do evil because he is good. Sinners always walk in a vain shew. They may for a while prosper, and in the end their prosperity may destroy them. Now the ways of God to man may appear mysterious; yet "when they hear of wars and rumours of wars, let not the upright be troubled, for all these things must come to pass; but the end is not yet*." "Here we know but in part;" hereafter the divine counsels and plans shall be complete, and the wisdom, justice, and goodness of all God's ways displayed in perfection. Say not, therefore, in thine heart that all things come alike unto all, and that there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked, to them that fear God, and them that fear him not; but in patience possess your souls until the season of harvest, which is the time of making an entire separation of the tares from the wheat. Continue faithful unto death, and ye shall receive a crown of life. God hath promised, "that he will judge the world in righteousness; and he is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance †."

* Math. xxiv. 6.

† 2 Peter, iii. 9.

T H E E N D .

