

THE
CLAIMS OF THE GOSPEL
ON
THE YOUNG.



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INTRODUCTION.



THE object of the following pages is to induce the young to devote themselves to the service of their Saviour.

I have not thought it well to attempt to beguile them into a little religious instruction, by employing a pleasing narrative, as the vehicle of truth. While such a beating out of the gold of the gospel into thin leaves is not without its use, and while we are under great obligations to those writers who have skilfully blended entertain-

ment with instruction, our modern religious literature partakes, perhaps, too largely of that character. Patient thought is essential to the formation of sound religious principles. Sooner or later, by some means or other, every one who will become a stable and useful Christian must learn to **THINK**.

If my *reasonings* shall seem to some above the comprehension of the young, I beg that such persons will consider that there is a portion of our educated and reflecting youth, who feel themselves complimented by the respect shown for their powers in such a strain. Some are weary of wandering through forests, and over prairies and fields, and by the side of meandering streams, to

—“ find sermons in stones,”

and to gather up religious truth from natural scenery, from colloquial discourse, and the startling incidents of a well-planned tale.

The mother that conforms her speech to the lisping and imperfect accents of her infant, though she may amuse, does not teach her child so rapidly as she would if she were to keep up an exact pronunciation of her vernacular tongue, as the standard for her imitative pupil. There is something analogous to this in the style of thinking to which different writers invite the young. We may lisp prettily with them, or ask them to speak out boldly with us. We may descend to their modes of thinking, entertain them much, and instruct them a little: or we may go far in advance of them, and act on the principle of the

apocalyptic angel, who, when "a door was opened in heaven," instead of coming down to John, spoke to him with a trumpet-voice, saying, "Come up hither, and I will show thee."

Yet a simple style and a luminous course of argument are of great consequence in books intended for the young. These qualities will, I hope, for the most part, be found to characterize this little volume. I only ask my young friends to read it through entirely, and to join with the author in a devout prayer that the truths which it contains may be, to them, the power of God unto salvation.

J. P.

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THE
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SECTION I.

EXAMPLE OF A YOUTHFUL MONARCH.

ONE of the ancient poets, quoted by lord Bacon, has said: "It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore and see ships tossed upon the sea; a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle, and to see a battle and the adventures thereof below; but no pleasure is comparable to standing on the vantage-ground of truth, and to see the errors and wanderings, and mists and tempests, in the vale below." The comparison is a beautiful one; yet, I confess, it seems to me to be incomplete. It needs a crowning ornament, and there may be descried among these mists and tempests a single object which possesses the

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very highest of all earthly attractions. That object is a youth inspired with high resolve, and practically devoting himself to the service of his God. Such an object is especially commanding, when the person referred to is environed with powerful temptations to an opposite career.

Come with me, then, my young friend, and let us take our stand on this elevated position, in the nineteenth century, and look into the vale of history. Far down, through the dust and smoke of a thousand battles, and at a distance of more than twenty-four centuries, we descry a most remarkable personage. His rich robes, his attendants, his dignified bearing and his crown, betoken the presence of a monarch. It is Josiah, the youthful king of Judah. Yet he possesses a character superior to all the splendours of royalty. He has consecrated his youth, his cultivated powers, and his public influence to God. The lustre of his character is the more conspicuous on account of the foils with which it is begirt in the bad influences that surround him. He was born to a throne. He was educated in a court alike

distinguished for its affluence and its voluptuousness. His father Manasseh was extremely licentious in the earlier part of his reign, and the late repentance of that king had accomplished very little in checking the profligacy which always springs up with such rank luxuriance when vice is patronized by royalty.

The religion of the nation has been changed. The simple and spiritual worship of Jehovah, as an unseen and holy God, has given place to groves, and to images whose forms appeal to the sensual passions, and to those dances and other acts of idolatrous worship, which at the same time debase the mind and generate a mad fondness for pagan rites.

The rank, and fashion, and wealth, and learning of the nation favour the prevailing corruption. The elegancies of taste, the fascinations of beauty, and the bewitching power of music, with its accompanying dissipating amusements, all claim the youthful monarch as their friend. Yet, in the midst of these blandishments, surrounded by all these mighty temptations to an opposite

career, we find that Josiah, while he is yet young, begins "to seek after the God of David his father."

The inspired writer informs us that he thus devoted himself to the service of God at the age of sixteen years. Four years later, when he was but twenty, he appeared as a public reformer, and "began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images." His subsequent life was characterised by the highest philanthropy, the most self-sacrificing public spirit, and the most ardent piety. The testimony to the excellence of his character, which God caused to be recorded by the pen of inspiration, is of the most honourable kind: "Like unto him there was no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him."

Place before your mind such a youthful character. Can you contemplate it without interest? Can you withhold your admiration? You can doubtless turn away from

it. You can decline making it the object of your earnest and protracted attention. You can send your thoughts in a different direction. You can bestow your admiration upon the charms of nature and the beauties of art. You can absorb your powers with pleasure, with elegant learning, with wealth, and a sumptuous enjoyment of the gratifications of sense. You can gaze on the feats of genius, and the achievements of taste. In short, you can contrive so to fill your mind with other objects as to crowd into almost total oblivion the thought that there is such a thing in existence as an estimable moral character. You may form your mind to such habits, that whenever a character like this is represented to you, it shall flit across the field of your mental vision only as a shadow, and not cause one throb of virtuous emulation. But still, if you will contemplate such a character, you will find it exceedingly influential. You will see that it possesses a substantial reality, that it is one of the most attractive objects in creation. It possesses proportion, and grace, and majesty. It has a lustre of its

own, and is rendered doubly resplendent by the light of the Divine countenance which falls upon it, and causes it to reflect the image of God. It stands forth

“ Like a gate of steel
Fronting the sun, which renders back
Its figure and its heat.”

The principles that predominate in a good moral character commend themselves to your approbation. Commercial integrity is a beautiful thing in the eyes of all men. Truthfulness possesses such a charm that the worst of men are ready to avenge the imputation of falsehood. Benevolence commands universal homage; and piety towards parents and towards God is venerated by every thoughtful mind. Yet every virtue possesses an enhanced influence when seen in a living example, and especially when blended in due proportion with all the graces of an estimable character. General precepts form abstract ideas of virtue; but in examples, virtues are made visible in all their circumstances. A right principle awakens admiration, but that principle acted out by a man like ourselves, by a secret and

lively incentive urges us to imitation. When truth is contemplated in its abstract forms, it is like seeds submitted to our inspection; but when presented in the action of a lovely character, it possesses the interest of a present growth. It is seen in connexion with its advantages, like a living tree clothed in beautiful foliage and loaded with fruit.

You cannot contemplate a youthful prince like Josiah, withdrawing himself from the glittering pageantry of his court, and the adulation of the élite of a great nation, and contemplating the claims of Jehovah, without being filled with admiration. You cannot see him approaching, by his reflections, to the solemn conviction that he cannot serve God and mammon, and pondering the dread alternative, without feeling that he is engaged in an investigation that becomes a being whose present actions are linked with future habits and an interminable career. You cannot witness his determined purpose to seek the God of his father David, without feeling the admiration, previously excited, rising still higher. You cannot witness that self-discipline, those prayers and vigils, that

studying of the Divine will, that anxious counselling with the pious, for four successive years, before he was prepared to act with vigorous confidence as a public reformer, without a glow of heartfelt approbation. And certainly you cannot see him going forth to hew down the groves, and demolish the altars of idolatry, now weeping and trembling on the discovery, that, according to the law of God, national judgments were impending, and now inspiring his priests and nobles with zeal in preparing a passover which surpassed every other religious festival, as a public acknowledgment of God—you cannot witness all this, without being ready to exclaim, “Go on, thou right-minded young man. Thou art God’s hero, the champion of virtue. Thy principles and thy deeds are far above the splendid actions of the world’s conquerors. The lustre of thy character surpasses the glory of Solomon. Its radiance beams forth to heaven. Angels see it, and say, Well done! Seraphs respond, Well done! God approves, and says, Well done, good and faithful servant!”

Now, let me ask you, my young friend, do you not see in such a character the most powerful incentives to devote yourself immediately to the service of God? I am aware that there is a difference. You are not expected to fill the same station. Royalty does not belong to your earthly estate. But the same principles become you and the young king of Judah equally well. They possess the same intrinsic beauty in the greatest monarch and the poorest peasant; in "the seraph that adores and burns," and in Lazarus at the rich man's gate. Indeed, these differences of outward condition will comparatively cease after a little time, and all the righteous will encircle the throne together, as participants of a common glory.

If I wished to persuade you to accept of the most princely palace on earth as your own, I could not take a more direct and effective method for securing my object than by presenting it in its beauty and magnificence. If I desired to see you clothed with garments of surpassing richness, nothing is needful to awaken your desire, but a display of their elegance and their suitableness to

your own necessity. If I had devised a plan to associate you with the most agreeable and delightful circles of society, nothing could be more directly to my purpose than to secure your acquaintance with them, and to give you the full assurance of their readiness to receive you. So here, when I wish to secure for you a single blessing, of more value than all the palaces, and robes, and social privileges of earth—a good character, I call upon you to look at it, to behold it in a young man. At sixteen years of age, he sought the God of his father David.

Was he right? Did thoughtful, serious, and conscientious men approve his purpose? Or did the virtuous, the friends of order and of goodness, weep when they saw their monarch seeking the God of his father David, for fear his character would be sullied and the public morals suffer? Did God approve, or did he frown upon him for that anxious, religious solicitude? Did his own conscience commend him? Did a still small voice within speak peace to his mind, and say, Thou art right; still go on; seek the God of thy father David? Or did remorse gnaw his

heart, and upbraid him with wasting his time and talents in an empty undertaking? It is in your power to give but one answer to these inquiries. And will you, my young friend, contemplate a youth pursuing a course that is right, approved of all good men; a course that God and his own conscience commend, and yet will you hesitate to adopt the same principles for yourself? Was it a wise and a lovely thing in that young man to devote himself to the service of his Maker? Was it beautiful in itself? Was the moral position which he took attractive, or was it adapted to disgust and repel men in proportion as they dwelt upon it? Was it, is it now, any thing to him that that high commendation, traced by the pen of inspiration, will glitter upon the sacred page as long as the revelation of God shall continue to exist? Yes, it was wise in young Josiah to seek the God of his father David. The position which he assumed was beautiful. The record of his piety and goodness is of more value than all the fame of conquerors. And yet, though it should attract less the observation of the world, it

would be equally wise in you to devote yourself to the service of your God.

Has this young prince reached a glorious immortality as the result of entering at the age of sixteen years upon the service of God? Think of him as he now is. He has, at this time, existed for two thousand four hundred and ninety-two years. Of the first sixteen years of that time we know nothing. But, at the close of that period he sought after God, and devoted himself to the service of his Maker. Four years were employed in preparation for future usefulness. Nineteen years more in the service of God on earth terminated his career in this world; and he has now been serving his Maker, with all the vigour of his sanctified powers, for the period of more than two thousand four hundred and fifty years; and now, as you read this page and reflect on his career, he exults in the happy consequences of having begun while yet young to seek after the God of David his father.

You do not, you cannot, for one moment doubt that he did right. You cannot but admire his course as a wise one. You can-

not but regard his moral position and character as really beautiful. You cannot doubt that the service of God secures a glorious immortality.

The same alternative is before you, which presented itself to the mind of Josiah. You must either devote yourself to the service of God, or decline to do so, and pursue the course of this world. Which will you do? Will you look upon a course as right, and deliberately decline it? Bring the question up plainly and pointedly to your own mind. Do I approve of such a course in the light of a clear and a palpable example? Do I know, with an intuitive certainty, that this young prince did right in seeking God while in his youth? Did all men approve it? Did God approve it? Did his own conscience approve it? And shall I deliberately take the wrong side of such an alternative? Shall I disregard the approbation of all unprejudiced minds? Shall I estimate lightly the Divine approval? Shall I pursue a course directly against the dictates of my own conscience? Shall I see and admit that a given moral position in a young person is wise and

beautiful, and yet refuse to take that position myself? Shall I, after perceiving that such a course leads to glory, honour, and immortality, deliberately neglect it? I know, my young friend, that you can avoid pressing these questions upon your own mind, and so evade the conclusion. But you cannot reflect, you cannot fully contemplate such an example, and then refuse to follow it, without feeling that you are rejecting the highest claims of right, despising the most manifest wisdom, and spurning immortal blessedness.

But you ask, Is it practicable for me to imitate this beautiful example? I answer, Yes. There can be little doubt that thousands lose the benefit of a high example by indulging the thought that there is something in their own case which renders it impossible for them to pursue the same course. I think I hear you saying—Yes, it is an easy thing to exhort and reprove, and to hold up a beautiful example of youthful devotion to God. But you forget how hotly the fires of youthful passions burn. You omit all consideration of the temptations that beset me.

You do not take into account the fact that the person whose character you have held up to my admiration, was an exceedingly rare and uncommon man. No, my young friend, I have not forgotten, nor overlooked any of these things. I know what youthful passions are. I know that there is great danger that they will flame and rage till they envelope your soul in eternal fire. I am aware that the temptations that beset you are numerous and mighty. There are men whose favour you desire, who will regard you as the merest driveller if you dare to think independently on religion, and to follow out your convictions. There are fascinating pleasures, and glittering prospects of future wealth and of worldly honour before you. Religion seems to you to threaten a blight upon all these fond hopes. A devout life is made to appear to you like moping melancholy. But, what do you mean by urging such objections? Do you wish to prove that there is *no* hope of your *ever* turning to God? Do you desire to make your own conversion impossible? Do you seek with one class of objections to shut and bolt

the gate of heaven against yourself, and with another to unbar the door of hell? It is true, my young friend, most fearfully true, that these are great difficulties. There is extreme danger that they will prove your ruin. But they will not demonstrate that it is impossible for you to follow the example of young Josiah.

Nor was the character of those who have served God from their youth remarkable before their conversion. Their remarkable character was the *consequence* of their devotedness, and not the *cause* of it. If you select instances, such as those of Joseph, and Samuel, and Josiah, and Daniel, it must doubtless be admitted that they had been instructed in childhood, but, it was their choice of the service of God in youth, that laid the foundation of those spiritual accomplishments, led them to such bright paths of usefulness, and crowned them with eternal honour. But have not you been instructed too? Are you certain that no tears of parental solicitude were shed upon your couch in infancy? Are you sure that no fervent prayers ascended on your behalf, and that

the Christian instruction which you have received, with all the superior advantages of the story of the cross, and of the words of Him who spake as never man spake, and of the spotless example of Him with whom there was no sin nor guile—are you sure that these advantages are not fully equal to the instructions which Jacob gave to his indulged boy, or which Samuel's mother and Eli the priest gave that infant prophet, or with which Josiah was blessed through the instrumentality of some pious person in the royal palace? No, my dear young friend, do not, I conjure you, make any such excuses. Salvation is prepared for you. It is shown to be practicable for you to attain it, when there is before you the example of one under less advantageous circumstances, who has attained it. It ought to be enough to induce you to take the cup of salvation, when a Christian minister draws it from the gospel, full to the brim, presents it, and says, in the name of his Master, Here it is, without money and without price.—“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.”

But I have called a king to be your

cup-bearer. He has first drank of it himself in your presence. You have seen its effect. It has infused into his nature immortal vigour. His face shines like that of an angel, his robes are white and glittering, his earthly crown is neglected, as we throw away the poorest toys of childhood. He wears a crown of unfading lustre. He is a king and a priest unto God. His principles, adopted in youth, ensured all this. He invites you, by his example, to do likewise, and to share in his blessedness.

Let me conjure you, also, in this connexion, my young friend, not to forget that God has promised success to those that seek him in early life.

In that beautiful personification of heavenly wisdom found in the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs, she is made to say: "Those that seek me early shall find me." Indeed, if we had no specific instruction on the subject, we should know that youth is the favourable period for giving a new cast to the character. In all organic existence nature is most pliable in the early stages of growth. The mind is flexible before the

habits have become confirmed by increase of years, and every one is aware of the fact, that the hardening influence of time forbids the hope of change in advanced age, except with great difficulty. Then, again, if men live long without religion, they become inebriated by the draughts of worldliness, and see spiritual objects with dim and confused perceptions. Lord Bacon says, that “A certain rabbin, upon the text, ‘Your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams,’ inferreth that young men are nearer to God than old, because vision is a clearer revelation than a dream; and certainly the more a man drinketh of the world, the more it intoxicateth, and age doth profit rather in the powers of the understanding than in the virtues of the will and affections.” The same profound writer adds, in another place: “The invention of young men is more lively than that of old, and imaginations stream into their minds better, and, as it were, more divinely.”

I assume it, then, as one of the most obvious and indisputable truths, that it is by far easier for you to devote yourself to the

service of God now, than it will be in after years.

There is a single passage in the word of God, however, which bears upon this point with great pertinency and force. I cite it, and beg that you will give to it a serious and thoughtful attention. It belongs to you, my young friend. You would not be better entitled to appropriate it to yourself, if the pen of inspiration had addressed it to you by name. You will find it in the first chapter of the Proverbs of Solomon. It is as follows: "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."

Now observe, that the persons here referred to, and represented as past hope, are abandoned of God for refusing to be instructed at a previous time, that is, at an earlier period in life. If they had listened then, if they had called on God then, all would have been well. But because it was neglected at the appropriate season, they arrive at such a state that inquiry brings no light, and prayer no blessing. The days of darkness come. The mind is perplexed and beclouded. They have no fixed, clear elementary principles to fall back upon.

They sigh and exclaim, "Oh for the simplicity and teachableness of early life, when there was room in the mind's enclosures to implant, one by one, the great verities of religion. But the period is past. A dark, dense forest of sceptical notions and objections, cherished to avoid restraint, fills my mind. O God, what shall I do? Oh that sunny childhood could come back again! Oh that youth, that golden season for commencing

systems of thought and action, might return! O God, spare a miserable old man, whose thoughts are so beclouded that he knows not what to think, and whose evil habits are as bands of brass." A moment's tranquillity ensues. He listens for an answer. He hears none. Only a melancholy reminiscence springs up—it is the warning that fell on his ear and smote his heart when he was young: "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."

I do not say that such is the certain doom of all that neglect the calls of God in youth. The conversion of old king Manasseh is a cheering exception that may save an aged sinner from absolute despair. But such, nevertheless, is the certain tendency of an early trifling with the appeals of the gospel. God has nowhere promised to awaken you in old age to a sense of your lost condition, or to breathe into your soul an enlightening and subduing influence, though you should utter the most heart-rending cries of remorse and despair.

Let me, then, conjure you to make a faithful application of these principles and reasonings. My argument is before you.

I have drawn your attention to the intrinsic beauty and worth of a youthful character, conscientiously devoted to the service of God. I have asked you to contemplate it as an incentive to go and do likewise. I have also presented to you the prospect of success, if you seek God in early life; and one of the most fearful consequences of delay. What is your decision? Now, my dear young friend, I trust you will not decide against your own convictions of what is right, and wise, and good, and fraught with eternal blessings. You will not say, True, the young monarch whose character I have contemplated did right. Every angel in heaven, every man on earth, and every fallen being, must approve his course. God approved it, and Josiah's own conscience approved it. I know it is a right example, but I cannot make up my mind to follow it. It was a wise thing—it was beautiful, in him, to turn away from the splendours of royalty to seek the God of his father David; to prepare himself

for doing good ; and, then, to pursue that noble career of usefulness. I cannot but admire a young man that will take a moral position so godlike. But, I cannot give up my pleasures and my plans, for the sake of occupying the same position. I perceive clearly that the consequences of that manly and noble choice to become a servant of God are most delightful, wonderful, glorious. I cannot think of the twenty-four and a half centuries which he has already spent in a pure and heavenly state, without feeling that it would be worth my while to be a servant of God too ; but, then, I do not wish to make the necessary sacrifices. Oh no, my young friend, you will not thus resolve to act against your convictions. You will not say, True, God has made promises to them that seek him early, but I do not wish to avail myself of them. You will not say, I admit that the warnings addressed to those that refused to listen to God's calls at an early period are awfully solemn, but I must banish them.

No, you will call up these thoughts, and follow them all with conclusions of an oppo-

site character, will you not? Will you not say, Yes, that example is right, and I will also do right: I will take a course which every moral being in the universe must approve: I see the wisdom and beauty of the position which the young prince of Judah assumed: I see that it would become me as well as it became him, and by the grace of God I will take the same position: I perceive that God has encouraged the young to seek him, and given most solemn warnings of the danger of delay: I will seek him now: I will delay no longer: this day, this hour, shall witness my earnest prayer for grace, the consecration of all my powers to the service of my Maker? Dare I make the solemn vow to be the Lord's? Will God be with me? Will he give me strength? Shall I meet the necessary encouragement? Yes, trembling soul, God will give you strength if you will but trust him. The atoning blood of Jesus will cleanse you. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, will be imparted to you. The saints will bless you. Angels will rejoice over you. The hope of eternal life, as a cheering cordial, will be poured into your soul. You will become

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calm and tranquil. You will be satisfied that you have found your proper place in the scale of being. You will wonder at the moral transformation, and ask with the converted Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

SECTION II.

INFLUENCE OF SINFUL ASSOCIATES.

THIS world is a wilderness, and life is a journey. The paths along which men are pursuing their way are various. They conduct the traveller sometimes over prairies enamelled with wild flowers, and sometimes through forests where savage beasts are prowling. At one period the pilgrim rests by quiet fountains; at another he passes along the verge of frightful precipices, crosses swollen torrents, or threads his way through mountain gorges beset with robbers. While there is much, in the career of every one, that is agreeable and safe, there is much, also, that is fraught with danger.

Of these dangers a two-fold division may be made. One class is obvious and appalling; the other is concealed and deceptive. The latter is by far the more fatal. The roaring torrent, whose noise and fury warn

every traveller to be cautious how he adventures himself upon it, is less likely to destroy than the smooth current, which invites the unsuspecting to a pleasant sail, and then draws them imperceptibly, but with mighty power, towards the engulfing cataract. The wolf, that with bloody jaws howls through the live-long night, is less to be dreaded than the poisonous adder that lurks among the roses. Fierce banditti admonish one, that if he will go down from Jerusalem to Jericho, he must travel under the protection of an armed caravan; while a friend unobservedly administers to him a moral poison that destroys both soul and body in hell! Of great dangers, it is obvious that those are most fatal that lie in the deepest concealment; and, consequently, that men are liable to be destroyed by them in proportion to their inexperience. Allow me, then, my young friend, to solicit your attention to a single class of dangers, which I regard as far greater than any other of an external character. I mean the dangers to which you are exposed from the influence of sinful associates. The wise man has uttered a very striking admo-

dition in respect to this peculiar hazard to which the young are exposed: "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." The reiteration of the thought, in this passage, renders the exhortation a very earnest one. The writer does not enjoin it upon the young, to avoid a continued social intercourse with wicked companions merely; he forbids the least approximation to it. "Enter not," says he, "enter not into the path of the wicked." He then repeats the idea with a slight change in the phraseology. In the next verse he presents another view of your duty, and calls upon you not merely to decline to enter upon social intercourse with the wicked, but also to depart from the places and positions where you would be liable to be drawn into such associations. "Avoid it," says he, "pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." He assumes it as an obvious truth, that **SINFUL ASSOCIATES EXERT AN EXTREMELY DANGEROUS INFLUENCE OVER THE YOUNG.**

The truth contained in this statement is one of grave import. It may be unfolded

and presented in a practical light, by an analysis of the influence referred to. Let me premise, however, that a great obstacle to your deriving benefit from such a discussion is found in the native reluctance of men to admit that they are greatly influenced by others. For this there are two reasons. First, social influences operate silently and constantly. If you are interested in a friend, your mind is absorbed chiefly with those attractive qualities that win upon your affections. An unsuspicious temper is essential to the enjoyment of that friendship, and hence you move, as on a gentle current, and are unwilling to think that one whom you so greatly value can do you an injury. Secondly, the pride of independence revolts at the charge of your being seriously influenced by your associates. True, you know, in general, that men influence one another very extensively, but you are not inclined to admit, in any one instance, that a friend is exercising an injurious influence over you. To place this thought in a clear light, let me ask you, do you not meet with instances daily in which individuals are misled by the influence

of their associates? Do you not feel constrained often to account for the improper position and conduct of a dear friend by referring it to the bad counsel, the corrupt example, or the unhappy influence of some kind, exerted over him by an associate? Do you not often know this to be the source of injury, in cases where no impression of the truth would be produced by your declaring it? If you remonstrate with your friend, you scarcely dare to speak of the influence referred to. You say, he will think I am actuated by personal prejudice, or he will ask with surprise, "Do you think, then, that I have no independence of mind?" Indeed, we all know, that, as a general thing, those who regard themselves as especially independent, are extremely susceptible of being influenced by others. One of the most common arts of those who exercise a deep political influence, is that of making men think that they are exercising an unbiassed and independent judgment. Let me beg of you, then, my young friend, to dismiss the vain thought that you are above being influenced by your associates. There is not a man on

earth, whose character is not continually modified by his contact with society. We imbibe and impart moral influence in every circle of social life. This influence, as arising from intimate relations and warm attachments, is a mighty influence. It is more than weakness, it is madness to despise it.

Sinful associates lead the young to an injurious familiarity with corrupt principles.

Vice is contagious. When we are resisting it with vigour, it is true that it cannot injure us. If Paul's spirit is stirred within him when he sees the whole city of Athens given to idolatry, he receives no taint from the polluting images and rites that everywhere appeal to his senses. If Howard visits degraded prisoners to carry them comfort and reformation, his spirit is not soiled by their vices. But the moment you are in a passive attitude, in respect to any vice, it acts unfavourably upon your moral sensibilities. You associate with a young man who is in habits of profaneness. His oaths, and his blasphemous trifling with sacred things, at first shock your feelings. You do not regard yourself as at liberty to

reprove him. You hear it again and again. It seems less offensive. He possesses generous principles, and you apologize for him as an excellent friend, with a single fault. You admire boldness, and there is something daring in hearty expressions of profaneness. True, it is a vice. It cannot be justified. But, you say it is the vice of the earnest and determined mind. Children whose minds are well subordinated to superiors, and timid females, are never profane. It is the vice of the adventurous mariner, and the brave soldier, and the military chieftain. You apologize for it. You see it associated with what is otherwise estimable. You gradually lose your abhorrence of it, and after a time begin to practise it without knowing how or why you commenced it.

So, you hear the language of ridicule and contempt applied to the religion of Christ. You say, This is wrong. I will not join in it. It contains no argument, it cannot therefore shake my faith. But, I am not set for the defence of the gospel. You go on. You join in the merry laugh, not because it was raised at the expense of religion, but because

it was a piece of brilliant wit. Yet, this same ridicule by degrees takes away your respect for the gospel, and ere you are aware of it, you are plunged in the depths of infidelity. So is it also with low vice. Mingle with those who are addicted to vicious indulgences. Hear their impure conversation. Allow your imagination to be polluted by unchaste allusions and images. Become familiar with vice, as something for the thoughts to dwell upon. What is the consequence? You gradually lose your abhorrence of it, and are prepared to be carried away by the first violent assault of temptation. If you consent to contemplate any vice, (as profaneness, scoffing at religion, or sinful pleasures,) it will be found that the thinking of what is vicious will blunt your moral sensibilities, and create a preparation of heart for a sinful career. There is great force, as well as a singular sweetness of rhythmical numbers, in the often quoted passage of Pope:—

“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen:
But seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

Nor is it less manifest that, *Sinful associates address your imitativeness with great power.*

No one, who has not carefully observed the operation of this principle, can possibly believe that the propensities of men to imitate one another are so strong as facts plainly indicate. How easily and imperceptibly do children imbibe the manners of their parents. Pupils acquire the very motions and modes of speech, the tone and air of their preceptors. This assimilation ordinarily takes place without any endeavour on the part of the imitator. On the contrary, you shall find that others observe it sooner than himself, and he can scarcely believe it till his attention has been repeatedly drawn to the incontrovertible evidence of the facts. By the operation of this principle, men learn to love the inebriating cup. Few persons possess a native appetite for the poisonous beverage. Its use is insinuated by pleasant mixtures, and secured only by social influences and the disposition to adopt a prevailing custom—to imitate others. And what else but the desire of imitation could ever lead

to the free use of that most disagreeable narcotic stimulant, tobacco? Almost every slave of this habit can give you the process by which it was formed. He was restless because he saw his companions engaged in a practice in which he could not participate. He inquired for the article, and commenced its use. Nature revolted, and expelled that which all the laws of the physical man had pronounced contraband. He grew again unhappy, because there was one thing in the common enjoyments of his companions, in which he participated not. He renewed his exertions, and by cautious advances gradually overcame the repugnance of nature, and formed the artificial habit.

The most striking class of facts, however, showing the strength of the propensity to imitation, is found in an imitation of others, in things which are regarded by the imitator as in every respect undesirable! Where the propensity to imitation is strong, persons are frequently led to the formation of habits and to the performing of actions which they have every reason for avoiding. Instances are not rare, in which susceptible persons, especially

the young, have acquired, from associating with a friend, tones of voice disagreeable to themselves, and even the inconvenient, inelegant, and every way undesirable habit of stammering has ensued, contrary to the earnest desires of the imitator. It was the habit of his intimate associate. The hesitating and broken utterances fell upon his ear, not to please, not to excite a wish to be afflicted with the same difficulty, but they touched the propensity to imitation, and drew the unwilling victim of their power, as the serpent's charm draws the reluctant bird towards its destroyer.

Indeed, it has been maintained, with a show of reason which it is difficult to resist, that even the example of suicide has exerted an influence to lead others to perpetrate the same unnatural crime. When a signal instance of self-destruction has occurred, and the public mind has been excited by the extraordinary fact, another and another have followed the example, and others have acknowledged that they have felt its influence in suggesting the same expedient for relieving themselves (as they would say) from present trouble.

But, if the propensity to imitation is so powerful, how mighty, how almost resistless must be the influence of your associates in assimilating your character to their own! When they draw your attention to sinful actions, they do not solicit your imitation of something which you are naturally averse from, as you are from the taste of a disagreeable drug, or the unnatural crime of suicide; they solicit you to sinful pleasures, to the gratification of a corrupt bias: the propensity to imitation and corrupt natural desire combine. Your associates address your love of gain, and say: "Let us have one purse." They appeal to your ambition, and lead the way in seeking the honour that cometh from man. They solicit your desire for illicit pleasures, and portray the arts by which they themselves have secured their gratification. How can you expect to escape the contaminating influence, if you associate with the vile? You might almost as well think that you could take live coals into your bosom without being burned.

Sinful associates also deceive and mislead you, by blending attractive qualities with corrupt principles.

No person loves sin in the abstract. When any one transgresses the Divine law, he does so for a reason. The thief does not purloin his neighbour's goods because he desires to break the law. His eye has seen what he esteems valuable. Covetous desire has been awakened, and he breaks the law for the sake of gratifying that desire. Our first mother did not sin from a previous desire to transgress the law of her Maker. She saw, or thought she saw, (for we are informed that she was deceived,) that the fruit was to be desired to make one wise. This desire for wisdom, which was not intrinsically wrong, drew her into an assent to the temptation. So, when persons sin through the influence of corrupt associates, they do not choose sin in the abstract. The sin is incarnated in a sinful companion. It is inseparably blended with attractive social qualities. You do not love a headlong prodigality, but you love the generous hospitality of the spendthrift. You love that quality of the man which leads him to share with you his last crust. But with this generosity vicious qualities are so combined

that no moral chemistry can decompose them. You love the attractive qualities, and your high admiration of these, and your warm love, lead you to receive his character as a whole, and to allow it to act with its strong assimilating power upon your own.

You do not love licentiousness. But you are delighted with those free, and affectionate, and polished manners, which the libertine has cultivated as the means of success in his accursed art, as the destroyer of innocence. You detest his principles. But his principles are more than half concealed, while his attractive qualities are ever visible and prominent. His character, as a whole, is like a beautiful parterre. Here roses display their charms. At a little distance the jessamine breathes its fragrance. In another place, the rich tulips bend before the breeze, while clumps of dark box set off the variegated beauty of the scene. You know it is true that a poisonous serpent is gliding about in that tasteful garden. You have seen occasional glimpses of his iris-coloured neck glancing in the sun, and again you have heard the rustle produced by his

motions through the long grass. You are not attracted thither by the serpent, but by the flowers. Nevertheless, you know that the serpent is there, and you are in the greater danger from that lurking enemy, just in proportion as you are more pleased with the beautiful spot.

You do not love profaneness and scoffing, but you are pleased with the boldness, and the something that seems like the daring of a manly eloquence in the profane scoffer. He possesses, also, it may be, many other qualities of an estimable character. For the sake of these, you cherish his friendship. For the sake of these, you allow this constant trifling with sacred themes. It drops perpetually upon your ears, paralyzing your moral sensibilities, and exerting a far worse influence than a serious and plausible argument against religion could possibly exercise. Thus it is, that the attractive qualities of sinful associates exert a mighty and unseen influence in misleading the young, perverting their principles, and preparing them for utter ruin.

To complete this analysis of the influence

of sinful associates over the young, let it be observed,

That it is a diffusive and perpetual influence.

The principles and conduct of your friends may shock your feelings to such a degree as to cause you to guard yourself strongly against their influence. But they do not ply you in your intercourse with the individual merely. If you are not readily conformed to them, some more facile and yielding mind in the company of your associates imbibes them. They spread through the entire circle, and act upon you in a modified form from every direction. Moral influence is so diffused by the action of social sympathies, that whatever bad quality fails to injure you by direct contagion, will not fail to pollute other influences, and to meet you again as a secret infection. Then, again, bad social influences are constantly reiterated. They are like the perpetual droppings, that wear the stone. They fall upon the ear and the heart in accents of love. They speak from the frowning brow and the approving smile. They flash upon you in the brilliant witticism, and appeal to

your sympathies in bitter complaints against the severity of virtuous censure.

Was it not wise in Solomon to counsel the young as he has done? To admonish you not to go in the way of evil men, and even to avoid those positions by which you would be liable to be drawn into their company? The same wise counsellor has declared in another place, that "the companion of fools shall be destroyed." He certainly cannot have intended to say, that no person ever can be recovered from the ensnaring and dangerous influence of sinful associates. But he could have intended nothing less than to declare that those who continue to associate with sinful companions shall be destroyed; and, also, that those who become thus associated, are in the extremest danger of continuing under that fatal influence.

If you will carefully survey the ground over which we have passed, you will be confirmed in the apprehension naturally excited by such a warning. You cannot but perceive that sinful associates lead to an injurious familiarity with corrupt principles; that they address your imitativeness with

great power; that they deceive you, by blending attractive qualities with corrupt principles; that they diffuse an infectious influence all around you, and act on you like the ceaseless droppings that wear the rock. You are aware also of the fact, that you are naturally inclined to estimate too feebly the influence exercised over you by others. Your danger is great if you associate with sinful companions. "The companion of fools shall be destroyed."

This shows the reason, also, why it is made indispensable to a Christian life that you should distinctly and formally separate yourselves from the world. In the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, we find the following solemn exhortation: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said,

I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Here separation from sinful associates is declared to be indispensable to a consistent Christian life. For the same reason, our Saviour maintains that no man can be a true Christian without manifesting an open preference for him over the world. In the Gospel according to Mark, the eighth chapter and the thirty-eighth verse, our Saviour says: "Who-soever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." In this passage, the world is represented as in a state of alienation from God. If men allow themselves to be borne on by the current, if they do not feel such a clear preference to Christ as to compel them to

come out with a distinct avowal of attachment for their Saviour, he will disown them in the great day of assize. If they stand visibly associated with the wicked, that alone is accounted as proof that they are the enemies of Christ. All the power of the teachings of Jesus, all the terrors of the law, all the attractions of the cross and the influences of Divine grace, are unavailing for the sanctification of men, unless the cord be snapped that binds them to sinful associates.

The same general principle is inculcated in another form in the word of God. The influence of holy associates is represented as being as powerful to save as the influence of sinful associates is to destroy. If you bind yourselves to the pious, in a sincere and heartfelt union, your character is continually assimilated to theirs. A familiar acquaintance with virtuous principles, when you do not occupy towards them a hostile attitude, continually enhances your admiration of them. Your imitateness is powerfully appealed to by a good example. The attractions of good qualities lend an additional

charm to the holy principles with which they are blended. These principles are diffused also through the whole circle of your pious associates, and surround you with a moral influence, analogous to an atmosphere that is at once salubrious and fragrant. Besides all this, you are connected with a chain of sympathies that extends from the church to her incarnate Head, and thence to God. Thus our Saviour says: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." In connexion with this subject, there is another thought which presses itself upon a contemplative mind with great interest and solemnity. The time for selecting associates that shall act on your character is rapidly passing away. Now the righteous and the wicked are mingled together. Each of these classes is struggling to gain a predominating influence over you. Almost every influence of a moral and spiritual kind is blended with living social qualities. On the one side, there is a vast multitude sweeping along the broad road that leads to death. The current of bad social influence is mighty. God raises

his monitory voice : "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil. 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. The companion of fools shall be destroyed." On the other hand, he calls upon you to come out from among the wicked, and be separate. He will not attempt to prepare you for heaven, without first detaching you from sinful associates. Then he proposes no other method of assimilating your character, but by bringing all the social influence of the church and of Christ to act on you. The time is coming when "the wicked shall be severed from among the just;" when no voice of friendship will invite you to become associated with the good; when all shall be assorted into two great companies. Then, they that are holy shall be holy still. They shall dwell where nothing impure can enter, where the "wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Then, too, they that are filthy shall be filthy still. Where they are, nothing pure shall enter, and no calls of a pilgrim church shall fall upon the ear,

saying, as now : " Come and go with us, and we will do thee good ; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

This is the time both of danger and of hope. My young friend, open your eyes upon your real condition. The character of your associates is forming your character. Do not, for one moment, flatter yourself that you can prevent it. Whom you choose for your friends, them you choose to resemble. To them you will be assimilated. Look, then, at the principles of your companions. If you associate with the wicked, your moral sensibilities will be injured, and your spirit soiled by the contact. Your imitativeness will be almost irresistibly incited to do the same things, and adopt the same principles. You will be beguiled by attractions that serve for a disguise for fatal sins. You will be surrounded by an influence that shall be at once as imperceptible and as disastrous as the deadly malaria. I warn you not to pass on thoughtlessly. The influence of sinful associates is worse than you suppose. Your only safety is in flight.

I conjure you, then, as you value your

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soul, to leave the society of those whose influence is corrupting. Bind yourself in bonds of eternal amity with the good. Go to your Saviour. Let your spirit be joined with his, that you may be changed into the same image.

SECTION III.

INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON YOUTHFUL ENJOYMENT.

A PROFESSOR in one of the German Universities gives an interesting history of a very pleasing print, entitled "Toleration." A Roman Priest, a Calvinist Minister, a Lutheran Divine, a Quaker, a Jew, and a Philosopher, were represented as sitting round the same table, over which a winged figure hovered in the attitude of protection. "For this harmless print," said he, "the artist was imprisoned, and having attempted to escape, was sentenced to draw the boats on the banks of the Danube, with robbers and murderers; and there died in less than two months, from exhaustion and exposure."

How different, my young friend, are the circumstances in which you are placed. You are the free-born citizen of a government where true Christian liberty secures to you the perfect right of judging for yourself, in all matters of faith.

You possess the unquestionable and unquestioned right of embracing one form of religion, or another, or none at all. But rights imply corresponding duties. Since, therefore, God, in his holy providence, has secured to you the enjoyment of the right to think for yourself, and to determine for yourself, in respect to all great practical questions concerning your spiritual interests, he has imposed upon you the obligation to judge with impartiality, and to act with wisdom. You have been urged in a preceding section to devote yourself to the service of God, from several considerations drawn from the example of a youthful monarch.

The same duty may be enforced by a regard for your own happiness. Coleridge has said, in his beautiful manner: "Truth, Virtue, and Happiness may be distinguished from each other, but cannot be divided. They subsist by a mutual coherence, which gives a shadow of divinity even to our human nature." Happiness is the great end of existence. Every sentient being bears the marks of having been created for enjoyment.

Indeed, we cannot detect, in the millions of creatures with which we are surrounded, a single contrivance for causing suffering. Misery is incidental only to a violation of the laws by which active beings are to be guided. If, therefore, we urge upon any one, or upon any class of persons, to pursue a given career as a duty, we ought to be able to show that the course recommended is, also, the means of the highest ultimate happiness. I say *ultimate* happiness, because it is manifest that duty sometimes involves a present painful effort. For instance, were I to find you alone in your burning dwelling in a state of profound slumber, it might be painful for you to be disturbed. Should I speak to you in loud tones, and pull you earnestly by the arm, as almost compelling you to prepare for flight, you might think me rude, and deem it a very unwelcome interruption. But, certainly, you could not make your escape, and look back upon the imminent danger to which you had been exposed, without feeling that the painful interruption of your slumbers was a necessary means of securing your happiness. If,

then, a Christian life were, from beginning to end, a most painful one, we could properly urge you to lead such a life, because it saves the soul from eternal death, and secures everlasting happiness.

But God, in his wisdom, has not so widely separated the duties of piety from the whole of its rewards. True, the higher advantages of a religious life are reserved for the world to come ; but devotion to the service of God secures a higher portion of enjoyment in this life, than the same person could have derived from other sources. I think I can demonstrate to you, if you will give me a patient attention, that you will become far more happy in this life by devoting yourself to the service of God, than you can be while living for the world. For this purpose let me ask you to contemplate the influence of a life of piety upon sensual enjoyments.

There is a class of pleasurable sensations that belongs to us, in common with brute animals. These are estimated very highly by one portion of mankind, and earnestly depreciated by another. It is of small consequence, in my judgment, whether we estimate

their precise value or not. All must allow that mere animal propensities afford a degree of enjoyment which no human being can despise, and which demand gratitude to the Author of our existence. Religion, or a devotion of our spiritual faculties to God, does not, in any way, affect the quality of these enjoyments. Hunger and thirst are the same in a righteous man and an unconverted sinner. The natural relish for food and its gratification are identical in both. Religion does not touch directly, in any way, these sensual enjoyments. It only forbids their indulgence in violation of the rights of others, and restrains from excess.

Now, I venture to say, that I can prove to you, that such a regulating and restraining influence rather augments than diminishes the amount of happiness derived from the animal propensities. We will take the gratification of the desire of food, as a representative of the whole. The boy of twelve years, who has purloined an article of fruit from his brother, and is eating it in secret, knows from the slightest reflection, that he is, on the whole, a loser by that very procedure. He

is robbed of more than half the pleasure, by the want of that social delight which imparts so much zest to the gratifications of the appetite. His conscience is unquiet. Fears of retribution obtrude themselves into his mind. He is teaching the injured party to make reprisals, so that in the long run, since the gratifications to which he is entitled are endangered, he loses far more than he gains. What is true in this simple instance is the elucidation of a great *general* truth. In a family, or in a community of larger circumference, other things being equal, there is most enjoyment in respect to the gratifications of appetite where there is the most scrupulous respect for one another's rights, and all that natural politeness that springs from a true benevolence. Nor can it be doubted that moderate indulgence is productive of a greater amount of enjoyment than excess. The epicure may, perhaps, secure for himself an intenser degree of enjoyment, at times, than is commonly derived from a simple diet; but excess dulls his subsequent relish. His health is impaired, and his spirits are depressed. On the contrary, when Chris-

tian precepts and Christian desires exercise their restraining power, the relish retains its sharp edge, the health is full, and a cheerful flow of spirits secures the constant daily enjoyment of the fruits of the Divine bounty. Nor ought it to be forgotten that the same principles that thus regulate and restrain the indulgence of the appetite produce a joyful gratitude to God for his gifts, a pleasure of which the sensualist knows absolutely nothing. The same reasoning may be applied to the influence of religion, in directing and restraining all the lower propensities of our nature. So far as it has any effect, while it restrains unlawful and excessive indulgence, it augments the amount of sensual enjoyment.

A contemplation of the influence of religion upon the pleasures of life will lead us to a similar result.

By the pleasures of life, I mean the enjoyments that are derived from a higher class of sensations than those just dwelt upon; sensations that are blended with the emotions of taste and the social feelings. Such are the sense of hearing and its gratification in music, mingled with the emotions and sentiments to

which it gives rise. Such also is vision, connected with the beauties of nature and art.

I grant you that these pleasures are neither few nor small. On the contrary, in a well-organized human being, who possesses liberal facilities for their enjoyment, they are both numerous and rich. But, I maintain that the consecration of your powers to God, while it represses some, and regulates all, does not, on the whole, diminish the pleasures of life. You love music. By a laudable attention to the art, your taste has, perhaps, become exquisite. To obtain the gratification which you desire, you seek it in associations of a questionable character. You go to the play, because you think you must have a music not to be found elsewhere in the same perfection; a music such as Milton describes—

“In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning;
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony.”

Doubtless, true religion will draw you away from this class of pleasures. But it will neither destroy your taste for song, nor de-

prive you of the means of its gratification. The music of the sanctuary is as rich and sweet in its character as that which flows through the gay saloons of pleasure. It is sometimes far more lofty and sublime. The vast compass of the organ, and the manner in which the voice blends with its humanized tones, and the massive harmonies of a Handel and Haydn, a Mozart and Beethoven, are sufficient to satisfy any cultivated mind that the very highest enjoyment of music may be found in the house of God. If you complain that a high style of music is not generally cultivated in the church, my reply is, though you may in some respects suffer loss, yet the heart-felt enjoyment of true praise to God will more than make amends for all that you will lose in abandoning those places of amusement which exercise an injurious moral influence. Besides, if you possess a high relish for cultivated music, you may make your taste an incitement to exertion for improving and rendering more influential this delightful part of Divine worship.

The same kind of gratification may be found in the domestic circle. Indeed, in no

place does music produce a sweeter concord of social sentiments, than in the devotional singing of a family whose hearts and voices are attuned to the praises of God. With what beauty and truthfulness has Burns drawn the picture in his "Cotter's Saturday Night!"

"They chant their artless notes in simple guise :
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim :
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs'*, worthy of the name ;
Or noble *Elgin* beets the heavenward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays :
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame ;
The tickled ears no heart-felt raptures raise,
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise."

Nor are you limited to sacred music. There are styles of secular music which, like secular architecture, though not suited to create devotional feelings, nevertheless afford the purest gratification of the taste. There are ballads of freedom, and songs of affection, and harmless glees, and, indeed, a rich variety of secular music, that is as free from an irreligious tendency, and as little reproved by the gospel, as the mirthful laugh

and pastime of childhood. In short, the gospel nowhere censures your love of melodious sounds. On the contrary, God gave you those powers to promote your happiness. He has himself prepared music for their gratification. He has provided sweet sounds in the whispering breeze and the murmuring stream, and sublime music in the roar of ocean, and in heaven's organ—the deep thunder. He has given us the songs of birds, and furnished us with a delightful intimation of the harmonies which ought to subsist among various classes of human beings, by imparting to man's voice a deep and commanding tone—to woman's, more sweet and subduing notes—and to their little boy that stands between them, a voice that reminds us of the tears and the tenderness which his birth produced in the domestic circle. The gospel, then, while it has modified this class of pleasures, has not diminished them. If it draws you away from corrupt and wanton mirth, it opens new sources of delight in a pure friendship with the purest circles of society, and awakens in your soul sentiments of joy and hope.

By a similar course of remark, it may be shown, that those pleasures which are derived from the beauties of nature and art are in no degree lessened by devotion to the service of God.

The sublime wonder created by contemplating the Falls of Niagara cannot be increased by an indulgence in sin. The splendours of a glorious sunset, or the beauties of a landscape, are not more effective in producing enjoyment in proportion as men are wicked. The disciple of Christ can enjoy them to as high a degree as another man. Indeed, an additional charm is imparted to nature by the habits of a pious mind in discovering a thousand instances of the goodness of God in his works. True, the gospel restrains the contemplation of impure works of art, and a gazing upon forms of beauty in the wanton dance, but this restraint augments rather than diminishes pleasure. There is a self-respect and a good conscience accompanying a proper indulgence in visual pleasures, which impart great zest to their enjoyment.

I will not deny, that, if you devote your-

self thoroughly to the service of God, you will temporarily suffer loss, in respect to some of the pleasures of life. Grave duties will often demand the sacrifice of pleasures that are, in themselves, lawful and innocent. The gospel will restrain you from an indulgence in those that injure others or corrupt yourself. But, still, your hearing and seeing are not impaired. Nor are the objects that gratify these fine senses forbidden you. The sweet sounds of nature, the melodies and harmonies of cultivated music, spectacles of grandeur, and visions of rich and graceful beauty are yours, as really as they would be if you were the servant of sin.

Equally beneficial is the influence of a life of piety on the enjoyments of the intellect and imagination.

Should the question be raised, whether Christianity be favourable to the highest attainments in science and literature, such minds as those of Bacon, and Locke, and Milton, and Samuel Johnson, with a host of others like them, would make a satisfactory reply. And, certainly, in countries where the cause of learning has been left almost

wholly to the free patronage of its friends, it is manifest that it has received more than its full share of support from evangelical Christians. If Galileo was imprisoned by the Pope, it must be remembered, that the Pope was not Christianity, but Antichrist; a usurping tyrant, that sealed the book of God and took away the key of knowledge, because he was the enemy of the gospel.

In literature, it is true that Christianity imposes restraints upon the pleasures of the imagination. The spirit of the gospel forbids you to pore over those pages of fiction where vice is decked with charms, and virtue is brought into contempt. It forbids your dwelling on the imagery of a licentious poet. But there is an abundance of the most wholesome food for the imagination in our literature. No young person, who will reflect upon the subject, can doubt that he will be the gainer by turning away from those novels that are corrupting, to the perusal of the British essayists and the better class of fictitious writings; or that he will enjoy a more intense delight in a familiar acquaintance with our purest and loftiest poetry,

than he could possibly derive from gloating over the licentious images that defile so many of the pages of a Moore and a Byron.

Then, again, you ought not to forget that a devotion of your powers to the service of God will open new and rich sources of enjoyment to your imagination and your intellect. A religious life brings with it the cultivation of new tastes, and the formation of new habits of thought. The character of God, the nature of the Divine government, and the incarnation of the Messiah, together with the fall and recovery of man, are themes which must stimulate the intellectual powers of those that dwell upon them. Then, the conflict that is going on among the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the final destination of the righteous and the wicked, and the shouts and harpings of ransomed millions, furnish the richest enjoyments to a sanctified imagination.

Thus far we have confined ourselves to the influence of religion upon our secular enjoyments. It restrains and directs them, without diminishing their amount.

Let me, now, invite your attention to new sources of enjoyment in the influence of true piety. It mollifies harsh tempers. It produces forgiveness, meekness, and humility. It assigns to each passion its proper position, marshals them in beautiful order, and places them all under the control of benevolence. No one who reflects, can doubt that human happiness is greatly promoted by securing a predominant influence to the gentler sentiments of our nature. If it be said, that there are multitudes of instances of professed Christians, in whom no such influence prevails, my reply is, there are multitudes who have the form of godliness without its power. Yet, the fact that true religion does produce the effect referred to, and that such is its tendency, is exceedingly obvious. The precepts of the gospel enjoin such a regulation of the passions. Those who really receive these precepts as their guide, cannot fail to be influenced by them. The relation which the Christian, as a pardoned sinner, admits himself to sustain to God—a relation according to which he owes ten thousand talents and has nothing to pay, and where everything is freely for-

given—cannot but tend to make him gentle and forgiving. Then the example of his heavenly Master possesses a still more powerful influence in the same direction. But, if there were any doubt respecting the power of these precepts and this example, it would be removed for ever by adverting to the conversion of a bloody persecutor, like Saul of Tarsus, into a meek disciple of Jesus, and to instances every day occurring and sufficiently manifest to those who delight in observing the good fruits of Christianity.

Then, there is a present enjoyment, and that of high character too, in the conscious effort to do right. True, there must be pains taking and vigilant endeavour; but, the evils that are necessarily connected with neglect of duty are still more painful. The apostle Peter has suggested a beautiful representation of the influence of these opposite courses in his exhortation to Christians to “gird up the loins of their minds, to be sober, and hope to the end.” The figure has allusion to men dressed in long oriental robes, and travelling together through various scenes, sometimes among briars and thorns,

and sometimes through dust or mire. If you neglect circumspection and a careful restraint of your passions, it will be as if the dress of your soul were left to fall, and to be soiled and rent by the exposure; if, on the contrary, you restrain your passions, if you gird them up, you will enjoy the protection thus secured, as well as become prepared to let your long white robes flow down, without danger of defilement, in the New Jerusalem, because there no unclean thing can enter.

Closely connected with these considerations is another, to which I cannot but attach great consequence. I mean the peculiar consolations which religion brings in seasons of distress. This is vastly more important than young persons are apt to suppose. In your anticipations, the path of future life is strewn with flowers and illumined with sunshine. I am glad that it is so, and have no desire to spread the sombre shadow of later years prematurely over your mind. But it will do you no harm to reflect upon the fact that afflictions may one day come, and to provide for their alleviation.

I do not deny, indeed, that there are ills in life, for which the world itself furnishes a remedy. You may lose your earthly estate. At first, it may cause great perplexity and even pangs of distress. You look around for relief. You bethink yourself of what may be done by frugality, by industry, and enterprise. Your mind is stimulated to meet the exigency, and you find more happiness in recovering your loss than you would have derived from the uninterrupted enjoyment of your possessions. You may also suffer a temporary impairment of health, and find reliefs without resorting to the consolations of religion. Agreeable remedies, relaxation from labour, change of air, and the delights of social intercourse, may cause a quick rallying of the powers of nature, and the period of convalescence may be among the happiest seasons of your life. But, there are other afflictions for which the world affords no remedy. You may lose, late in life, a beautiful property, for which you have toiled all your days. No frugality, no industry, no enterprise can recover it. You go down from the sunny heights of opulence into the

deepest poverty. The hope of recovery from your misfortune does not brighten one hour of your future being. The most that you can aspire after is, that you may be saved from the cold charities of an unfeeling world. Your position in society is changed. Your prosperous friends form new associations, and the sympathies that were felt for you when your misfortunes were fresh have gradually died away. For such distress the world affords no adequate consolation. Many a man, in circumstances like these, because he had no consolations but such as earth can give, has been led to terminate his mortal career by his own hand. But if you have devoted yourself to the service of God, you may find a positive joy in your affliction. You may glory in tribulation. Conscious that the world has had too much influence over you, that its glare has dazzled and misled you, the change of your circumstances may be the means of imparting to your mind a more sober and satisfactory estimate of yourself and of your true position. You may be led to adopt, as your own, the language which a great poet put into the lips of

one fallen from the heights of wealth and honour:—

“Never so truly happy—
I know myself now ; and I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience.”

If, however, you continue to enjoy the most ample provision for your earthly wants, you may be, you must be bereaved of dear friends. A venerated father, a fond mother, an almost adored companion, may be snatched away by the hand of death. Nothing of a worldly nature can bring adequate relief under such affliction. Sensual enjoyments lose their power. Pleasures cease to charm. Science and literature fail to delight the mind, and philosophy is dumb. Then Religion comes. She points you to the skies. She leads you to the tomb of Jesus. She bids you to behold his reanimated form, and to follow him with your eyes till a cloud receives him. She speaks of a reunion with the departed. She charges you to remember that your heavenly Father does all things well, and that whomsoever he loveth he

chasteneth. She fills your soul with the comfort of hope.

You may be subjected to a severer trial. You may be smitten by a fatal disease. "The voices of merriment and the footsteps of the busy and the idle" are heard on every side. But your voice has a tone that tells of joys departed and of the hollow tomb, and your steps are treading near to the grave. To say that religion can give you adequate consolation in such a crisis, that it can cause you to experience a joy, in such a decline, purer and deeper than the gay derive from their pleasures, and that it can make you triumph in death, is saying much. And yet, it is true, religion meets you with such reliefs in those trying exigencies when all other supports utterly fail. In other conditions the Christian enjoys as much, to say the least, as the worldly man. His sensual enjoyments are as great. His pleasures, though modified in their character, are not diminished in amount. The happiness derived from the intellect and the imagination are, at least, equal to those of the world. In short, an unconverted sinner possesses

no advantage over one who has sincerely devoted himself to the service of his Maker, while all the positive benefits of religion are a clear surplus in favour of the service of God. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

The application of this strain of reasoning is exceedingly obvious. It is adapted to correct a wide-spread and fatal error.

Let me describe to you this error, my young friend, as it exists in your own mind. If you were to express it as it rises up in your heart, you would use language somewhat like the following: "Religion, I admit, is a good thing. It is beautiful in youth, a support in the trials of life, an ornament to age, and an angel of peace at the death-bed. I hope I am not insensible to its value. But I am young. The world presents itself to me with peculiar charms. I do not intend indulging in its excesses, but I cannot sacrifice so much, and submit to such strict rules of life, as a profession of evangelical religion imposes. If I devote myself to the service of God, I wish to be

thorough and consistent. There are certain enjoyments that must be relinquished. My gay companions must be forsaken for a new class of associates. The theatre must be given up. I must abandon dancing; for, though some professed Christians dance, I do not think I could. I should wish to place my character for consistency above suspicion. Then, there are meetings for prayer to be attended. They are dull. The sacramental communion too—there is such an awful solemnity attending it, that I am afraid it would fill my mind with gloom. But, what is most trying of all, I must come under the constant supervision of conscience, guided and stimulated by the word of God. I could never comply with all the strictness of its demands. It would make me miserable to become a thorough and consistent Christian.”

. Are not these the very sentiments of your heart? Do they not contain the principal reasons why you do not devote yourself to the service of God? Yet a careful analysis of this state of mind would satisfy you that you are labouring under a most

preposterous mistake. You have assumed that if you should change your principles, your enjoyments would naturally flow from the same sources as at present. So the wealthy and penurious man fancies that nothing could make him more wretched than to impart his money to the poor and the miserable. He fancies that he should die, if he were to lead the life of a Howard. But would he? If, from a sense of duty, he should consecrate his immense income to the relief of suffering humanity, would this render him wretched? On the contrary, benevolence would become a predominant principle; and inasmuch as God has connected higher happiness with virtuous feelings than with their opposites, he would derive more enjoyment from a cultivated and gratified benevolence, than he ever drew from his burning avarice. So that young lad, whose indulgent and thoughtless parents allow him to spend his evenings in the places of dissipation, and to riot in low pleasures, fancies that he is far happier than his virtuous school-fellow, who, restrained by parental wisdom and authority, devotes

his evenings to music and drawing, and innocent home amusements, or who accompanies his mother to the religious lecture. Yet, I ask you to reflect. Is it so? Is he most happy who is least restrained? Is a precocious libertine in the possession of higher enjoyments than a pure-minded youth? On the contrary, are not better feelings cultivated in that quiet and well-ordered home, and do not pure and tranquil sentiments minister quite as much to human happiness as those that are corrupt? If that unrestrained youth should change his habits, his enjoyments would also be changed. So would it be, if you should devote yourself to the service of God. The meeting for prayer would no longer be dull and uninteresting, when you should there offer a heart-felt worship in fervent supplication and joyful praise. The sacramental communion, instead of being a scene of sepulchral gloom, would become a feast where sweet affections and heavenly hopes should predominate. In the change of principles involved in devoting yourself to the service of God, your habits are changed, your

sentiments are changed, and with these a change is produced in the very nature of your enjoyments.

Now, my dear young friend, let me entreat you to disabuse your mind of this most fatal practical error. I do not doubt that your understanding is convinced. You can appreciate the argument to which you have given your attention. A devotion of your powers to the service of God will not diminish your sensual enjoyment, nor lessen the pleasures of life, nor rob you of the happiness to be derived from the exercise of the intellect and imagination. Then, religion creates new enjoyments. It gives a predominancy to the gentler sentiments, and a happy consciousness of aiming to do right. It brings consolation not only in affliction, but brings it, also, when all other consolation fails. It is your highest interest to devote yourself to the service of God. You are capable of seeing this. You do see it. When a faithful minister of Christ reasons with you "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," you cannot avoid the discovery. When the walls of the

sanctuary shut out the gay visions of earth from your mind, and the influence of public worship steals over your heart, you see it. When you witness the sweet and solemn joy of Christians at their Master's table, you see it. When the Holy Spirit by his quiet illumination has hushed the noise of sinful passions, you have heard his still small voice, saying, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" and then you have said in your heart, I believe one is happier, even here, for being a true Christian.

The greater part of your convictions, however, you may say are of an opposite character. More generally you regard religion as a sombre theme, leading to a life of gloom. Yet, you ought to reflect, that you thus regard it just in proportion as you are resolved to indulge in sin, and that the worse men are, the more do they think so. The gospel is not a sombre theme. It brought a choir of angels, with shoutings and songs, down to earth, when our blessed Redeemer was born. It has kindled

joys in human hearts such as no other influence on earth can produce; and it will people the new Jerusalem with ransomed millions, robed in white and crowned with gold. If there is any thing gloomy in its appearance to you, it is because the pure light is obscured by the dusky medium through which it passes when entering your sinful and darkened mind.

Besides, you ought not to forget, that when the conviction that religion will promote your highest happiness even in this life, enters your mind, it enters it always at the very times when that mind is in the best state for perceiving truth. It is a conviction that comes not when mad passion reigns. It finds not its way into the soul when it is excited by ambitious projects, nor when reason is endeavouring to do battle against the restraints of Christianity. It comes when a conscious teachableness pervades the soul. It is felt to be the dictate of serene wisdom. It comes in the hour of calm reflection, when life is thought of as a whole, and when the busy thoughts travel on into eternity. It comes when purposes

of usefulness are formed. It steals into the mind in those reflecting hours when one is convalescent from a dangerous illness. It is a conviction that is known by the company it keeps to be the child of truth. And what shall I say to persuade you further? I can say nothing. You must persuade yourself. Come, my young friend, you understand the subject. You know that the claims of duty and of interest coincide. You have been taught the gospel. Your heavenly Father is ready to forgive your sins, and to adopt you into his family. He calls upon you to consecrate yourself to his service. You must not resist him. He is your God. You are in his hands. He can impart to you blessings, here and hereafter, that shall surpass all your conceptions of possible enjoyment. He can cast you off for ever!

SECTION IV.

DANGERS OF INNOCENT ENJOYMENTS.

God is good. He is very good to you, my young friend. I wish it were in my power to give you some just appreciation of the extent of his benignity—of its all-pervading influence. Your heavenly Father desires your happiness. When he contrived your powers of vision, and created the sun, and spread around you scenes of variegated beauty, it was his intention that you should derive enjoyment from these his benevolent arrangements. When he conferred upon you elastic spirits, and provided for their gratification, he had respect to your personal comfort. When he endowed you with a warm and susceptible nature, and placed you in social relations where eye should meet eye, and smile answer smile, and heart respond to heart, he intended all the enjoyment that such objects and relations could secure, and

more than you are likely to derive from them.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the wise man calls upon you to participate freely in the blessings that are suited to the spring-time of life. "Rejoice," says he, "O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes." Then follows a grave admonition. You are called on to be assured that God will demand a strict account for the manner in which you behave yourself in these circumstances. "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Some commentators have maintained that the first part of this passage is ironical, and that the design of the inspired writer was the same as if he had said, "Go on, young man, in your reckless career; indulge in all manner of wild excess: but do not forget that you will be called to a solemn and awful reckoning for all your misconduct." This is the commonly received sense of the passage, and may be its true meaning. The interpretation of Grotius is, however, in my

judgment, greatly to be preferred. It is substantially this. The young are sincerely urged to enjoy the worldly happiness for which their natures are suited, but are admonished to temper their indulgence by salutary anticipations of a coming judgment. The connexion, I think, demands this interpretation. In the two verses immediately preceding the text, it is said, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. 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." Here, the obvious intention is to exhort men to temper lawful enjoyments with the thought that all the days of life will not be so sunny as the present, and that seasons of affliction, "days of darkness," must be expected to ensue. It is wise to prepare for them, for they will be many. Then follows the passage referred to, repeating the same general thought in the style of an animated apostrophe. It is here addressed to the young man particularly, and the final judgment is put in the

same place here which the phrase "days of darkness" occupies in the preceding verse. "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 thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." The meaning may be conveyed by a paraphrase, thus: "Enjoy those blessings which are adapted to your elastic spirits, your youthful hilarity; but observe, there are dangers connected with these vivacious pleasures. Temper them, therefore, with salutary anticipations of that coming judgment, which will bring you to an account for every action, every word, and every secret thing."

There is nothing cynical, nothing austere in the religion of Christ. It proposes to awaken in your bosom a lively sympathy with heavenly things; but it does not, for this purpose, exclude you from the sympathies of earth. It aims to create in you a thirst for the pure waters of eternal life; but it does not, for this purpose, dash every other cup with bitterness. It would prepare you for

the hour of death; but it does not, for the sake of accomplishing this end, spread over your whole life the gloom of the grave. Afflictions, it is true, are dispensed by an all-wise Providence, for the enforcing of lessons which we refuse to learn under a gentler tuition. But Christianity itself comes, like its Divine Founder, only healing human maladies, and bringing gifts for men. It comes to teach us to look upon the beauties of earth, and to praise God for their bestowment; to bid us to rejoice in the spontaneous outflow of social life, and yet to protect us from hurtful lusts. It comes to teach us to unite the purity and the serene devotion of the hermit, with the best enjoyment of worldly good. Yet, there are peculiar dangers connected with lawful enjoyments. These dangers demand, from every young person especially, a thoughtful attention. I beg, then, that you will observe,

That THE NATURAL GAIETY OF A YOUTHFUL MIND TENDS TO MAKE YOU FORGET GRAVE INTERESTS AND DUTIES.

You have a quick susceptibility. Sensible objects strike your mind with great force.

Your emotions of taste are easily awakened ; and your affections flow forth, in a full tide, to almost every plausible solicitation. Thus your mind becomes filled, to overflowing, with the objects of sense, the gratifications of taste, and earthly affections. You are so occupied with these enjoyments, that you seem to have no time for analyzing the principles by which you are governed. You forget that there is a spiritual world and an eternal state. Your relations to your fellow-men as immortal beings, your influence upon your own destiny in the habits to which you are forming your undying spirit, your relations to God, and to Christ as your Saviour, have but a feeble place in your thoughts. The innocence of your worldly enjoyments contributes still further to this fatal oblivion of eternal things. You ask, "Did not God create me with faculties adapted to deriving happiness from this world, so adorned with beauty and so replete with the gifts of his bounty ? Did he not give me a social nature and surround me with congenial spirits, thus literally inviting me to this sympathy with my companions ? I am only enjoying the very

things which were intended for my happiness. Nor have I run into any mad excess. I have not indulged in surfeiting and drunkenness. I have not perverted greatly any of the gifts of the Divine goodness." What you say, my young friend, may be true. These enjoyments may be in their own nature harmless. They may come to you as God's best earthly gifts. If they were personified, we should see them as smiling friends coming to you in the white robes of innocence, and knocking at the door of your heart. You open and receive them. Every chamber of your inner being is crowded with them. There is no room left for the entertainment of your Saviour. You are so occupied with them, you are passing from one to the other so rapidly, your conversation is so animated and gleeful, that the whisperings of the Holy Spirit can be heard with difficulty; and when you seem least chargeable with any actual misdoing, your heavenly Benefactor is forgotten. God is not in all your thoughts! This oblivion of grave interests leaves the soul fearfully exposed to temptation. There is a beautiful allusion to this

peculiar danger of the young in the conduct of Job, as described in the first chapter of the book bearing his name. We are told that "his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day: and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and drink with them." These festive proceedings, we are informed, awakened great solicitude in the bosom of this wise and holy patriarch. But wherefore is he so anxious? Does he regard feasting as a crime? Does he think their festive mirth will, of itself, provoke the Divine displeasure? that their kindly greetings and the excitement of kindred affection will call down the judgments of Heaven? Nothing of the kind. He is fearful lest, from their minds being filled with worldly enjoyment, they will forget to reverence their Maker, and so fall a prey to temptations from which they are not protected by a sense of the Divine presence. "It was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my

sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." The thoughtful recognition of God, my young friend, as your Creator and Judge, is one of the most effective shields against the power of temptation. Let worldly good, then, fill your heart—I care not how innocent it may be in itself—and you are exposed to dangers of the most fearful character.

Another source of danger to which you are exposed, as connected with worldly good, is observable in THE TENDENCY OF SUCH ENJOYMENTS TO LEAD YOU TO PROCRASTINATE ALL SERIOUS ATTENTION TO YOUR SPIRITUAL INTERESTS.

When worldly delights have not succeeded in perfectly filling your mind so as to expel the thoughts of God and eternity, they have often led you to delay, for the present, a proper attention to the claims of religion. You have felt that you must have these enjoyments now, or forego them for ever. You have said, "I can never be young but once. I see that pleasure is fleeting.

'Tis but a snow-drop on the river,
A moment white, then gone for ever.'

I must catch it as it flies." With this reasoning you have delayed giving a serious attention to subjects which you intend by no means ultimately to neglect. The objects of sense press themselves constantly upon your attention. They must be accepted immediately, or they pass on, and others receive them. Spiritual interests, on the contrary, continually wait upon you. They are as rich and as free to-day as at any former period of your existence. The Saviour stands waiting, and knocking at your door. You trust that it will be so for a long time to come. Yet, there are two sources of danger from which the enjoyment of worldly good withholds your thoughts. You may suddenly die. Death comes unexpectedly to almost every human being. Yet, when you are enjoying the world, every thing in your circumstances seems unlike dying. You know, indeed, that there are thousands of small and unlooked-for incidents that remove men from the world daily, and that the very law of our exit is, that it takes place unexpectedly. "The Son of man cometh as a thief in the night." And yet,

you feel no forewarnings of mortality ; and the very comforts which God is lavishing upon you contribute to an enjoyment which leads you to say, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." Then, there is a tendency in this delay to engender a powerful habit. This habit grows imperceptibly. You are no more conscious of it than the little child is of the growth of its frame. This habit exerts its influence also imperceptibly. Like the unseen power of gravitation, it exercises a constant and mighty sway. The tendency of a full enjoyment of worldly good is to awaken the very spirit ascribed to the rich man in the parable, when he said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

This spirit, once excited, too, tends to its own perpetuation, till the sudden developments of the Divine Providence shall say, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee ; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?"

Another source of danger to which you are exposed, as connected with worldly

good, is found in the fact, that **THE EXERCISES WHICH ARISE IN THE PROCESS OF CONVERSION ARE UNCONGENIAL WITH WORLDLY ENJOYMENT.**

For the sake of clearness, we may speak of three different states of mind, as holding very different relations to worldly happiness. First, the state of mind which characterises one who lives confessedly for this world. It cannot be denied that such a man may greatly enjoy life. He may, without exercising any thing of the spirit of piety, enjoy the gifts of Providence with a high relish. He may derive much happiness from honourable pursuits and agreeable associates, and from a successful acquisition of wealth and learning and influence. He may please himself with lively visions of the future, and from a preponderance of hope in his composition, may tinge every prospect with brightness and with beauty.

If you contemplate the same mind at a subsequent period, under the influence of true piety, you will see his enjoyment of the world modified by the change in his spiritual state. The gifts of God possess the

same relish as before, with the additional zest imparted to them by sentiments of gratitude. His honourable pursuits are more favourable to a high self-respect, because prosecuted from higher and better motives. His associates are more agreeable, because the fragrance of piety is added to their character. His enjoyment of prospective good is enriched, because the beams of hope have glanced from the sublimest earthly heights, and shot far over the vale of life, and gilded the mountain-tops of the good land that lies on the other side of Jordan. Now, between these two states of mind there is another,—a middle, a transition state. When this mind, which was so happy while comparatively satisfied with the world, and so much *more* happy when recovered to the enjoyment of the Divine favour—when this mind was first aroused to a serious contemplation of eternal things, it became the subject of emotions and exercises altogether uncongenial with the enjoyment of worldly good.

Sin against God appears in a new light. A sense of ingratitude, in having so long slighted a gracious Saviour, overwhelms the

soul. Shame and remorse fill the heart. On making serious endeavours to know the truth, a mortifying sense of ignorance is awakened. It is seen that an unteachable temper has shut the light of heaven from the soul. An effort to do right reveals the power of sinful habits, and not unfrequently the most depressing apprehensions take possession of the whole man.

It is not strange if appetite fail and sleep be chased away, and sackcloth seem to be spread over all the bright scenes of earth, and an impenetrable veil be interposed between the agonized spirit and the heavenly Jerusalem. Or, if no such pungent distress be endured, there may be, what shall be esteemed still worse, a conscious want of moral sensibility, in which the mind perceives that there is reason for shame and remorse and apprehension, without the susceptibility of being thus affected. It is true, that while you are in a careless, unconverted state, you have no very clear ideas of the spiritual condition to which you will be subjected if you yield yourself to the influence of religious truth. But you know something

of it. You have had foretokens of it in an occasional and temporary awakening of your mind to the subject.

Now, a full and free enjoyment of worldly good is extremely uncongenial with the exercises which you are sure must rise in the process of conversion. If you were in a state of great unhappiness; if your property were taken from you; if your dearest friends were snatched away by death; if your health were gone irreparably, you could more easily commence the struggle to enter in at the strait gate. But the world is so sweet, that you can scarcely endure to turn your mind to a theme that may even temporarily interrupt your enjoyment. Oh! there is danger that the very kindness of your heavenly Father will be made the occasion of your neglecting the calls of his gospel.

There is still another danger to which you are exposed from the enjoyment of worldly good. It is found in **THE DISPOSITION TO BE SATISFIED WITH THE WORLD AS YOUR PORTION.**

It is true, men are not apt to be satisfied with their present possessions of worldly

good. But, they are satisfied with what they possess in connexion with what they expect to acquire. In other words, they expect to be satisfied when they shall have achieved a certain end, definitely marked out in their own minds. The merchant expects to be satisfied when his gains have risen to a sum clearly estimated by himself as enough. The aspirant for political distinction regards a certain elevation in office as all that he can desire. The possession of a present good as affording real enjoyment, and the eager reaching forth for a larger amount of the same thing, serve to concentrate the desires in one direction, to divert them from every thing like spiritual and heavenly blessings. Hence, you seldom see a man, while in the eager pursuit of fortune, or fame, or office, bending his attention to eternal interests.

If God, in his holy providence, destroy the last hope of worldly fortune, or preclude the possibility of distinction; if he reduce them to the necessities of the prodigal, they more readily turn their regards towards their Maker, and exclaim, "I will arise and go

to my father." But, there is extreme danger, while you enjoy the gifts of the Divine bounty, while your elastic powers are quickened by the prospect of an increase of worldly blessings—there is extreme danger that you will arrive at that precise state of mind to which an inspired writer refers, when he speaks of "men of the world which have their portion in this life;" and that this will continue till a voice reach you like that which fell upon the ear of the rich man: "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things."

Keeping in view these dangers, as arising from a lawful enjoyment of worldly good, let me beg of you to reflect on the necessity of guarding against them by anticipations of a judgment to come.

The general ground on which I urge this obligation is the following: — No OTHER MEANS ARE EQUALLY EFFECTIVE. You will perceive the truth of this statement by lending your attention to several particulars. Anticipations of a coming judgment serve to clothe the present life with a great and solemn interest. Were you certain that you

should stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account of all the deeds done in the body, at the end of a single month from this time, such an anticipation would exert a decided influence upon you. You could not forget your Maker. You would not procrastinate your eternal interests. At least, you could not do it with facility. Your mind would be thrown into such a state of deep thoughtfulness as would not be uncongenial with the process of conversion. Conviction of sin, apprehension and repentance, would appear to you as sentiments suited to your condition. But, a similar influence may be exerted by your own reflections. When you allow your mind to dwell upon the subject, you cannot but perceive that the motives which may be elicited from the fact that God will bring you into judgment, are really as great and effective as they would be if the time of that great assize were known to be near at hand. The fact, that you must give account to God for your doings and principles, is equally solemn and important if that adjudication take place in six months

from this time, as it would be if it should occur at the end of thirty days. Indeed, there are two considerations that impart to a distant assize an enhanced influence for good.

First, your account has a longer period in which to accumulate. You cannot be insensible to the fact that the amount of your sins is augmented with your years. If you had been called to the bar of your Maker a year ago, you would not have appeared before him with so great an amount of guilt resting upon you as would characterise your state if you were now to appear in his presence with the additional sins of the last year charged against you. Grant, then, that you may have many years yet to live upon the earth. This lengthened period of trial adds solemnity to the final judgment. That judgment is as certain as it would be if it were nearer. Its distance will swell the amount of your sins. If your mind is not stunned by the apprehension of a quick-coming doom, in these anticipations, yet it is loaded with weightier considerations drawn from the accumulation of guilt, and the certainty and the exact justice of the ultimate trial.

Secondly, the apparent distance of the judgment leaves your mind in a calmer and more balanced state. Oppressive apprehension is not favourable to a true repentance. Calm thought, a deliberate survey of the Divine forbearance, and of the gentle and kind methods of his grace, are most effective in softening and subduing the heart. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." A slow, wasting consumption may force upon your attention a judgment to come, and this *may* lead you to escape all the dangers attending the lawful enjoyment of worldly good. But what a consumption *may* do, your own reflections will better accomplish, if they be properly directed. If you will fill your mind with anticipations of a coming judgment, and thus temper your enjoyment of worldly good, you will secure the very best influence of the revealed character of God upon your heart. You will behold, at once, the goodness and severity of the Lord. The manifestations of his kindness will be present in the gifts of his bounty and the proffers of his grace. His judgments will appear as a great deep—distant,

but awful. The gentler influences will be more prominent, as actually present. The severer influences will effectually teach a thoughtful mind not to despise the forbearance of God. The Divine attributes will appear in the same proportions as they did to Moses, when "the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."

Then, again, if you anticipate, with reflection, a coming judgment, you cannot but perceive that your whole career is exerting an influence of the most serious nature upon your mental and spiritual habits. What you are doing to-day may not be, in itself, criminal, yet it may involve a neglect of your Maker, which the light of eternity may show to be a preparation for being justly separated from communion with him for ever. Thus your life may be invested, by your own reflections, with such a great and solemn interest, that you cannot avoid exercising a

serious circumspection, and endeavouring to act with a wise reference to the whole eternity of your existence.

Anticipations of a judgment to come tend, also, to keep before your mind the fact that God is a present witness of all your doings. The influence in repressing crime would be very great, if the criminal believed that a faithful and discriminating witness were beholding his misdeeds, and that he would bear testimony against him in a future trial. If you will reflect much on a future judgment, a sense of the Divine presence and inspection will exert a powerful influence over you. If you engage in earnest labour for the accumulation of wealth, this discriminating witness is with you in your daily toil. He sees what you do, not only, but also the motives by which you are actuated. He knows whether you seek property that you may be useful, that you may give alms, or whether you aim only at self-aggrandizement. If you are enjoying the affection of kindred and all social blessings, he perceives whether you are thankful to the Giver, and whether you are endeavouring

to exercise a salutary spiritual influence over your associates and your friends. In short, wherever you are, and however employed, this Being of infinite wisdom and goodness is ever accompanying you. If you are in your work-shop, your counting-room, your office, or in your field, he is there. If you are committing a crime, he sees it. If you are enjoying his favours with ingratitude, he perceives it. If you are happy in the participation of his gifts, and unmindful of the poor, he knows it. If you are seizing on worldly enjoyments with avidity, and making this a reason for procrastinating an attention to your spiritual interests, he understands it. If you are making the world your portion; if you are reaching forth to it, with apparent innocence, because seeking objects in themselves lawful, he sees in your interior state all the madness and the guilt of idolatry. Your doings may be beautiful as whited and tasteful monuments; and still, your inward principles may be unsightly as the interior rottenness of a charnel-house. Yet all is seen, all shall be exposed in the day of judgment. Employ,

then, the forecast of which you are capable. While enjoying the good gifts of God, be not unmindful of the coming retribution: "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Anticipations of a judgment to come will also impress you with a sense of the uncertainty of life. You know, indeed, that you must die; but, while you are enjoying the world without any serious reflections on a future judgment, you are not influenced by a consideration of the uncertainty of this life. If, however, you reflect much on the force of the expression, "After death the judgment," you will be impressed with the brevity and uncertainty of your earthly existence. Thus you will reflect every day, that that may be your last day in this world. You will lie down at night with the conscious and grave admission that ere another morning shall dawn, you may stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Your ordinary vocations will be prosecuted with dependence on God. You will not belong to that company to whom the apostle James addresses himself when he says, "Go to now,

ye that say, To-day, or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." Suppose, then, that you are pursuing an upright and honourable course of life. You are enjoying the gifts of God. You are making a lawful use of his blessings. "The light is sweet." "To behold the sun is pleasant." The elastic spirits of youth find their appropriate gratification in the good things of this life. Suppose that God does not forbid your enjoyment of these things, but on the contrary tells you to seize upon them as intended for you. May there not plainly be danger connected with gratifications in themselves innocent? May not festive indulgence lead to intemperance? May not the purest earthly delights lead to a forgetfulness of God? May not an eager reception of other things leave the Son of God unwelcomed, as he was at Bethlehem,

when the stable was made his abode, and a manger his bed? May not the Holy Spirit's voice be drowned by a gleeful mirth, which would not be otherwise than innocent if it were not indulged to the production of such a result? May not these enjoyments, my young friend, deceive you, just because they are not intrinsically vicious?

Let me say to you, then, the gospel is not unfriendly to your enjoyment of the blessings of this life. God has not created visions of beauty, and then forbidden you to look upon them. He has not loaded the earth with goodly fruits, and forbidden you to eat them with a keen relish. He has not endowed you with a social nature, and then prohibited its happy exercise. But, he has told you that there is danger—danger of falling into a brutal and corrupting sensuality—danger that a lawful enjoyment of his gifts may lead you to forget your Maker—that, unless you will employ your powers of forecast, and anticipate a coming judgment, soon God will not be in all your thoughts. He has warned you that you are in great peril from the tendency to procrastinate.

minate a proper attention to your eternal interests. While enjoying the world, you will think conviction of sin, and repentance, things most uncongenial to your state. Think, then, my young friend, of the coming judgment. It may be far off—it is not the less *real*. It may be near too. Unseen hands may be tolling your knell to-day. This may be your last year. God grants you blessings, it is true, which are adapted to fill your heart with gladness; but they create no reason for trifling. On the contrary, worldly prosperity tries the character much more deeply than adversity.

Enjoy the world. Take its gifts and be thankful; but think of the judgment, when all these opportunities for making your peace with God will be gone for ever. Think of the account to be rendered of the manner in which you are now treating your Saviour. Think of the inspecting eye of the all-seeing God fixed upon you. Think of the impossibility of escaping exact justice, if you go unprepared to the judgment-seat. Think of the fearful uncertainty with regard to the

time of trial, Guard yourself against danger while enjoying life. "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

SECTION V.

CHRIST'S CLAIM ON THE YOUNG.

WHEN a great prince invites one of his subjects to dine with him in his royal palace, the guest cannot but regard such a distinction as demanding a peculiar return of grateful affection. The honour is felt to be far greater, however, if the sovereign propose to accept the hospitality of the subject in his own humble mansion. It is higher still, if the monarch go forth with an uncereemonious freedom, and knock at the cottage door of a poor subject, and ask entertainment, as if he were a near relative or an intimate friend. It is in this last-mentioned attitude that our Saviour has presented himself to you. He has come uninvited. The King of kings stands before the door of sinful man. He knocks, and asks admission. He proposes to become a guest, and to reciprocate with his host all

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their common enjoyments. He is coldly repelled. "He came to his own, and his own received him not." Yet he continues his kind solicitations. He still stands at the door and knocks. He waits long for admission. Christ, as a friend, is seeking to establish a friendly intercourse between himself and those to whom his gospel is addressed.

The claim of our Saviour, as founded on such a call, is, I think, peculiarly adapted to the young. You are especially susceptible of the solicitations of friendship. Your affections are warm. Your heart has not been chilled by disappointment. Distrust has not been awakened by the treachery of the world.

Allow me then, my young friend, to call your attention to some of the grounds of the claims of Christ on your affections. **OUR SAVIOUR MADE A PECULIAR MANIFESTATION OF INTEREST IN YOUR WELFARE BY COMING INTO THIS WORLD.** I am aware that it is very trite to say, that Christ existed in a state of glory and blessedness before he visited our earth, and that he became incarnate that he might bring to us all the bless-

ings of Christianity. But, I beg that you will allow your mind to dwell, for a moment, on the wonderful facts here referred to. Your Redeemer was supremely happy in his heavenly kingdom. He possessed unbounded wealth. The worlds had been made by him, and were his rightful possession. All the principalities and powers in the heavenly places were obedient to his will. He did not originate his work of mediation to prop up a crumbling dynasty. He could have supported his throne and given an ever-growing power to his empire, without the least movement for human redemption. He did not undertake his earthly mission to compensate us for something that was of the nature of a misfortune, or to make amends for a loss in which we were more worthy of pity than deserving of blame. On the contrary, we had forfeited every thing. His character would have been stainless, if he had never undertaken our cause. He saw us sinking in eternal death. It was the purest and most disinterested benevolence that impelled him to interpose in our behalf.

His generosity was without a parallel. Yet

I know of no method by which you can approximate to a correct conception of it, but by attempting a comparison with something which is yet immeasurably inferior to it. Suppose yourself, then, to be one of a company of shipwrecked mariners. In a terrific storm your frail bark has been stranded upon a rock-bound coast. Fragments of the broken vessel crash fearfully around you. The yawning gulf now threatens to swallow you up, and now the resistless breakers seem ready to dash you against the jagged rocks. While in this perilous condition, and when all other means of rescue are unavailing, a friend appears for you. He is able to give you all needed assistance. He has come from the highest position conceivable on earth. He has been raised, by his wisdom and goodness and power, to a throne from which he exercises a happy dominion over the whole world. He has looked on you, as an individual, with sympathy. He has not despatched vessels and men to aid you, and waited in his comfortable chamber to witness the result; but, he has gone out personally and buffeted the storm, and adventured himself amid the

crushing fragments, and suffered more than you yourself have suffered, to rescue you from that condition of peril. Will you not allow that such an interposition claims the requital of grateful love? Would you not think yourself base in the extreme if you withheld your affections from such a benefactor? Yet your Saviour's interposition possesses a far stronger claim. Every point of the comparison fails to come up to the reality. It is only a faint shadow of the truth. The wreck in which you are involved is that of your own ruined nature. The death into which you are sinking is eternal. Your impending doom is not your misfortune, but a most just retribution. The Monarch who interposes is not the head of earthly kingdoms merely. He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." He is "over all, God blessed for ever." His personal condescension is greater than any mortal man is capable of exercising. He comes to help you when you are dying in sin, and when he is the very Being against whom the sin has been committed.

If, then, you can perceive clear ground for an appeal to your affections, in the case of

such an interposition of a human benefactor, there is plainly discoverable a ground for a far stronger appeal in the interposition of your Saviour. He came from heaven to this sad and sinful world. He has laid hold upon you by the gentle and loving influences of his gospel, to draw you away from the shipwreck of faith and the surges of death eternal. He solicits your affections by a manifestation of the purest and most disinterested friendship.

THE POSITION WHICH CHRIST HAS ASSUMED TOWARDS YOU AS INVOLVED IN GUILT, EVINCES, ALSO, A PECULIAR CLAIM ON YOUR AFFECTIONS.

It is difficult to discriminate between real and seeming friends in the time of prosperity. But, when the clouds of adversity gather thick around us, we soon discover the difference. Those that manifest attachment then, are endeared to us by two considerations. First, the genuineness of their friendship is demonstrated; and, secondly, its offices are peculiarly grateful in the time of trouble. What a beautiful exemplification of this disinterested friendship is furnished in the story of Ruth! Her mother-in-law had migrated

to the land of Moab as an affluent stranger. She had a husband and two sons. The respectability of the family and the promise of the young men secured for them an advantageous matrimonial connexion. They married two sisters. The father and both the sons died. Naomi was left in the desolateness of a double widowhood. The companion of her youth and the supports of her age were both gone. The sadness of her condition determined her to return to her own people. How painful were the reflections that crowded upon her mind! The precious dust of her husband and her sons was to be left in a strange land. She was about to look upon the green sod that covered their graves for the last time. She had come full, she was about to return empty. The Lord had dealt bitterly with her. How gloomy and solitary must her long journey have appeared to her in prospect. She is ready for her departure. It only remains for her to bid farewell to her daughters-in-law, the widowed wives of her two sons. One of them, Orpah, kissed her mother-in-law, and shed some tears of tenderness and turned away. But Ruth could

not thus easily separate herself from her friend. She "clave unto her." When Naomi deemed it too great a sacrifice, and hesitated to accept it, gently bidding her to go back with her sister, where her necessities were provided for, she could not be persuaded. Her soul was bound to her friend by ties which adversity only strengthened. She exclaimed: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." This was genuine friendship. It was more ardent in proportion as the object of it had less to promise as a requital for sacrifices made.

But, there are yet profounder depths into which friendship descends to exhibit its sincerity and exercise its power. It takes part with the guilty. The desolate dungeon is cheered by its tones and brightened by its smiles. The mother kneels beside the couch of her culprit son, and breathes a warmer

affection and sends forth a more ardent and a holier prayer because he is guilty. A wife sits beside her husband, and holds his hand, and directs his eyes to the God of mercy, when the executioner's axe is uplifted to take the forfeit of his crimes to a human government. This is a friendship that commands a requital of grateful love. And yet, my young friend, Christ has shown a friendship for you superior to these, or any other instances of earthly affection. He has found you condemned by the Divine law. Justice demands that you should be barred out of heaven; that you should be sent into an eternal exile from all that is holy and all that is happy. While thus guilty, while thus exposed and doomed, your Saviour has befriended you. More than this. He has become your friend *because* you are guilty. He "has come to seek and to save that which was lost." You know he was reproached for eating with publicans and sinners, for befriending the vilest of human beings. He gazes on you with a more tender pity because you are unworthy. When the Divine law, and a crowd of

upbraiding thoughts assault you, he looks upon them as he did upon the enemies of the guilty woman brought before him for judgment, and every accent of censure is hushed. He asks, "Where are thine accusers?" and then exclaims, "Neither do I condemn thee." Does not such affection demand a return of grateful love? He has manifested an interest in your welfare in coming into the world. He has exhibited a condescension of the most wonderful character. Instead of being repulsed by your sins, he has made your very guilt the ground for a deeper interest in your behalf. Because you are ill-deserving, he shows you peculiar tenderness. When the shield of the law is withdrawn, and the darts of justice fly thick and swift, he becomes himself your shield and buckler. When a voice is heard, saying, "Cut it down," his suppliant cry of "Spare it this year also" delays the stroke. When interior passions drown the voice of conscience by boisterous mirth or angry uproar, his friendly tone allays their violence, and you hear his still small voice: "Behold, I stand at the

door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

Surely love like this demands a requital. Christ has peculiar claims as a friend on the affections of the young.

THE EXTRAORDINARY SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST ON YOUR BEHALF FURNISH A GROUND OF DISTINCT APPEAL TO YOUR AFFECTIONS.

A beautiful exemplification of the Divine wisdom is found in those arrangements by which a single law of nature, or a single event in history, achieves several distinct and important ends. By the single law of gravity the planets are held in their orbits, the mountains are retained upon their bases, the rivers flow, the ships float upon the ocean, and the vapours ascend to water the thirsty ground. Each of these objects is attained by this one law, and that too with as much perfection as if it were the only object to be secured. So the sufferings of Christ in his atoning sacrifice accomplish several distinct ends. They are a martyr's testimony to the truth. They are an example of suffering affliction with patience. They are a satis-

faction to Divine justice for a lost world. They are vicarious sufferings offered in the stead of each individual believer. If you contemplate these sufferings in any one of the various points of light here referred to, you shall find them as perfectly adapted to that end as if that were the only end to be achieved by them. Our Saviour's crucifixion was as perfect a testimony of a martyr to the truth, as it would have been if no other object had been secured by it. As an example of meekness and patience, his sufferings are as influential as they could have been if they had not made atonement for the sins of the world. We may contemplate any one of these ends, apart, as being the true and real design of the sufferings of our Saviour. Let me, then, ask you to dwell, for a few moments, on the sufferings of Christ in your stead.

The influence of the sufferings and death of Christ on the minds of thousands is lost, from the general manner in which they are viewed. You are apt to contemplate them as if they had no special reference to yourself. You say, "True, the sufferings of our

Saviour were indispensable to the Christian system. They brought Christianity to bear upon the race. So far, however, as they affect individuals, they have respect to the disciples of Christ. They were not intended for me. If I regarded myself as a true Christian, the case would be changed. But I am not a disciple of Christ. I have not acknowledged him as my master, and do not consider his sufferings as having reference to me”

Stop, my young friend. For whom did Christ die? For sinners. Are you not a sinner? Nor, did he suffer for sinners as a mass merely. “He tasted death for every man.” He died for you as *really* as if you had been the *only* sinner in the world. He died in your stead. I know not how to introduce the thought which I entertain, as a reality, into your mind, but by resorting again to an imperfect comparison. That you may not be misguided by the representation, let me charge you to remember that the resemblance to which your attention is solicited has respect to one particular only; namely, the suffering of one person in the

place of another. I have represented it to myself in the following manner. I have fancied, as a sick man often does in his dreams, that I had committed a crime for which I was to be publicly executed. This is the basis of my comparison. The fatal day at length arrives. Arrayed in the habiliments of death, and seated in the criminal's cart, I am borne slowly on to the place of execution. Armed soldiers are seen before and behind, and on either side. A crowd of spectators, with solemn and pitiful looks, are moving with us. While thus marching to my doom, a benevolent-looking man mounts the vehicle and places himself by my side. I look earnestly upon him, as thinking that it is a faithful minister of religion, who desires by pungent reproof and solemn exhortation to prepare me for a penitent death. His looks, however, do not suggest the idea of blame. They only express compassion. His tones and his language indicate nothing but a tender interest in my welfare. From his manifest intelligence I perceive that he cannot be ignorant of my guilt; but he seems to be affected only with my misery, and to be

earnestly bent on securing my relief from the doom that impends. I begin to feel a strange interest in this unknown friend. I wonder what can be his object. Does he intend to take my part, as by seizing upon some informality in the proceedings had concerning me? No. Does he purpose to maintain that my condemnation and execution are undeserved? No. Does he purpose to call up a band of undiscovered followers from the crowd, that shall have more power than the armed soldiery, and then to rescue me? Nothing of the kind. Yet he seems intent on my deliverance, and confident that he shall secure it. We arrive. He sits beside me on the platform. When the moment comes for the execution, he suddenly rises up, throws over me a royal robe with which he was invested, and appears himself in the garments of a criminal, steps forward, takes my place, and is executed in my stead, before I have time to recover myself from the astonishment into which I am thrown by these extraordinary actions. I see him struggle in his dying agonies. His pale corpse is taken down, claimed by his friends and laid

in the silent grave. After three days he awakes from the sleep of death, and comes to me and says with a friendly smile: "Go and sin no more. Recognise me as your friend; bind yourself to me by the ties of an unalterable attachment, by a simple confidence in me as your friend. Do this, trust in me as your adviser and counsellor; and I will secure for you such moral habits as shall make you as secure against committing a crime as I am myself."

Now, let me ask you to observe again, that while such a comparison as this is imperfect because impossibilities are supposed, and because there are some points in which the resemblance does not hold between this supposed interposition of a human benefactor and the interposition of Christ, yet I think in this one respect the resemblance is perfect. One innocent person suffers in the stead of one guilty person. I know that Christ does not suffer precisely the same thing that you would suffer in enduring the penalty of the Divine law. You were exposed to eternal death, involving also the peculiar agonies of remorse, which the innocent Saviour could

not feel. Yet he has suffered more than the shame and agony of such an execution as I have described. He bore the cruel betrayal by a professed friend, the denial of another, and the more bitter affliction that was experienced when all his disciples forsook him and fled. He endured the mock trial, the cruel taunts, the buffeting and spitting. His hands and feet were nailed to the cross. He was lifted up to die in company with base criminals, and was less pitied and more insulted than they. He hung upon that cross for hours, and expired in inexpressible agony! This suffering was endured for you. The fact that other ends were attained detracts nothing from this. His sufferings were a martyr's testimony, but they were none the less vicarious sufferings for sinners. They were an example of enduring affliction with patience, but none the less an expiation for sin. They had respect to the race. They were a propitiation not for our sins only, "but also for the sins of the whole world." Yet, they had the same respect to you which they would have had, if you had been the only person to be benefited by them. Should

a friend make you a present of a hundred pounds, your obligations to gratitude would not be diminished if he gave an equal present to a large circle of your relatives. Indeed, your obligation is enhanced by the multiplication of the gifts. Your happiness is promoted not only by the portion which you as an individual have received; but it is also still further advanced by the extension of the same gifts to others. God has lighted up the sun in yonder heaven for you. It has gilded every mountain-top, brightened every lake and stream, clothed with variegated beauty every valley, and dyed the cloud-curtains of earth with rich colours, and blessed with its beams all human beings and all animated things, and yet that sun was made for you. God's benevolence to you is not less, and does not demand less gratitude, because others are objects of an equal kindness. I call upon you, then, to place distinctly before your mental vision the victim of Calvary, and to remember that every pang of those unexampled sufferings was borne for you. The strong lamentation and tears in the garden, the groans of

agony, and the bitter death-cry, are appeals to your heart. They are expressions of friendship for you, and they demand a requital of grateful affection.

THE MANNER IN WHICH OUR SAVIOUR SOLICITS YOUR CONFIDENCE FURNISHES STILL ANOTHER GROUND OF APPEAL TO YOUR AFFECTIONS.

I speak not, here, of his condescension in coming into our world, of his sympathy with you as a sinner, nor of the manifestations of his love in his sufferings. These topics have been dwelt upon in their order. I refer rather to the gentleness of his calls, and the predominant motives by which he solicits your affections. He invites, rather than threatens. He gives greater prominence to entreaty than to rebuke. He uses kind appellations. "I call you not servants; but I have called you friends." Though we are sinful, he is not ashamed to speak of us as his brethren. He seeks to win by tenderness. He regards those whom his love has conquered as his affianced spouse, "the bride, the Lamb's wife." He captivates the hearts of publicans and sinners by eating with

them. He disarms and subdues a blood-thirsty persecutor, by asking him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

He exhibits as much of bland and benignant gentleness as can possibly consist with his unbounded authority and greatness. True, he has spoken plainly of the consequences of declining his proffered grace. He has told of some being bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness. He has told us of the severing of the wicked from among the just, and spoken in unequivocal terms of the destruction of both soul and body in hell. But still proffered blessings and the attractions of Divine goodness are chiefly relied on to lead you to repentance. Adoption into the family of your heavenly Father, the peace which the world cannot give, the resurrection and the life, the treasures laid up in heaven, the entering into his joy, and the sitting down with him upon his throne, are themes which are ever upon his lips. What can be more influential than the manner in which our blessed Saviour proposes to bestow his gifts? He does not sit in his palace like the rich man in the parable, and send out the

fragments of his munificent provisions, as to a Lazarus lying at his gate. He proposes rather to bring you in, as the father of the prodigal did his recovered son. The garments of shame are removed. The best robe—the robe of holiness—is put on. You share with him in his own blessedness. Let me beg of you, then, to contemplate fully these several grounds of appeal to your affections. I have often asked myself how it is that the young are so slightly influenced by our Saviour's solicitations of their affections. It is thought by many to be a sufficient answer to say, "They are depraved." "They fancy that religion will throw over them unwelcome restraints." This answer may be true. But, it is too general. I ask, Why do not the Saviour's condescension in coming into the world, the interest which he has taken in them as sinners, the sufferings which he endured in their stead, and the kind manner and the sweetness of the predominant motives by which he urges his claims—why do not all these benign influences, so well adapted to the warm and generous dispo-

sitions of the young, win them to their Saviour? I will tell you why. It is because they do not dwell upon them. They do not surrender their mind to the legitimate influence of these truths. The thought may be illustrated by a reference to the parable of the good Samaritan. When that poor wounded man lay there by the road-side, weltering in his blood, "By chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side." Why did not these men aid that unfortunate stranger? You say, Because they were hard-hearted, sinful men. True; but, hard as were their hearts, how did they prevent such an appeal to their compassion from acting on their obdurate nature? I answer, They did it by a shrewd piece of management. "They passed by on the other side." They perceived as with the quickness of instinct, that if they stopped, and went to the man, if they listened to his groans and his pleading for a

little water, if they gave heed to his tale, and heard his fond expressions respecting his wife and children, if they gave their minds up to the influence of these appeals, they would feel constrained to stop and render him assistance. Hence they passed by on the other side. It is thus, my young friend, that you avoid being affected, subdued, even by the appeals which your Saviour makes to your affections. Contemplate the glory of his pre-existent state, and then think of the Babe of Bethlehem, and remember that this wonderful stoop of condescension was for you. Dwell upon it, till your mind is filled with it as a reality, and it will touch your heart. Think of his interposition in your behalf while you were in your guilt, and it will move you. It is a sincere and influential friendship that will abide with you in adversity, that will sympathize with you in unjust reproaches. What ought to be the influence of that friendship which would not hesitate to espouse your interests when you were justly condemned! You cannot think of Christ as taking part with you

because you are guilty, without being strongly influenced by it. And can you dwell upon his last sufferings, and not feel that the solicitation of your love in that scene is omnipotent? Remember that he died in your stead. He did so, as really as if you were the only sinner for whom he made atonement. Dwell upon it, till the full reality takes possession of your mind. If you will do so, you cannot avoid the effect. You will be ready to say, in the language of one of our sacred lyrics,

“I saw one hanging on a tree,
In agony and blood,
Who fixed his languid eyes on me
As near the cross I stood.

“Sure, never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look :
It seemed to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

“My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
And plunged me in despair ;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And helped to nail him there.

“A second look he gave, which said,
I freely all forgive ;
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die that thou mayst live.”

I call upon you then, my young friend, to look to Christ, and to yield yourself to the solicitations which he has made to your affections. Think of his condescension in coming to you from the heavenly world—in standing at your door, and knocking for admission. Think of him as interposing for you because you were guilty. Contemplate his dying agonies when he suffered in your stead. Think of the gentleness of his calls, and how he beckons you to come to him, that you may enter into his joy. There is great force in that symbolic representation of the influence of thinking of Christ, and believing on him, brought to view by our Saviour's comparison of himself to the brazen serpent uplifted in the camp of Israel. Those that look to him, live. Turn your eyes away from the absorbing cares and pleasures of the world. Gaze upon the Son of God. As you think of him, you shall be changed by the Spirit of God into his image. While you are looking unto Jesus, he is made the author and perfecter of your confidence in him. Pass not by on the other side. Slight

not your Saviour. Listen. Do you not hear his call? "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me."

THE END.

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