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James Carnahan
ART. I.—*An Address delivered before the Alumni Association of Nassau Hall, on the day of the Annual Commencement of the College, Sept. 25, 1833, by John Sergeant, LL. D.*

THE day which closes the college life of a young man, is highly interesting, not only to the individual, but also to his friends and to his country.

Having finished his preparatory studies, he is ready to select a profession or occupation for life. Released from the inspection and control of teachers, he is henceforth to follow, in a great measure, his own guidance.

On such occasions, the most heedless can hardly exclude from their minds serious reflections respecting the past, and painful solicitude respecting the future. At this moment, whatever directions, or warnings, or encouragements may be given, by men of distinguished talents and virtues, cannot fail to make a deep and salutary impression on the youth anxious to know which way to direct his steps. On this account we cannot too highly commend the custom which prevails of having addresses delivered on the anniversaries of our literary institutions, by men eminent in civil and professional life. When the subject is well chosen and when the speaker is adequate to the task which he has undertaken, the most happy results may be safely anti-

slain. Christian, you will soon be there. Let your worship here be more like the worship of heaven. Let the inward feeling and the outward act be just as God requires. And while you are yet watching, and waiting, and worshipping, your Saviour will reach down from the heavens, and take you up into his presence, and the light of the throne will shine upon you, and you will know how to touch the golden harp, and all your worship will be pure and transporting, like that of the angels.

Wm. L. Strauge

ART. V.—*Reflections on the Life and Character of Balaam.*

FEW men whose history is recorded in the sacred Scriptures, possessed a more extraordinary character than Balaam. He was, a famous diviner of the city of Pethor on the Euphrates. As the children of Israel were on their march to Canaan, Balak, king of Moab, in conjunction with the princes of Midian, became alarmed lest this vast multitude which were passing through their territories, should fall upon them in a hostile and successful invasion. With a view to impair the strength of the Hebrews and render them a more easy conquest, Balak despatched messengers to Balaam, with an urgent request and with powerful inducements to come and curse this formidable nation. Balaam, whose ruling passion was covetousness, was more than willing to comply with this request: but from some divine impression upon his mind, he was afraid to give them an answer, till he had had an opportunity of consulting the divinity: whether he meant the true God or an evil spirit it is not easy to ascertain. But be that as it may, the true God took the matter into his own hands, and commanded Balaam not to go on this malignant errand; assuring him that the people whom he was desired to curse, were blessed. Mortified and vexed with his ill success, he sent the messengers back to apprise Balak of the result. Balak thinking it possible that there was something lacking either in the character of the messengers or in the reward that was offered, which occasioned the reluctance of the enchanter, immediately sent more honourable messengers, and offered a larger reward. To this message Balaam replied, that for a house full of silver and gold, he could not go beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more. Nevertheless, having his heart set upon obtaining the reward that was offered him, he besought them to remain till he could have an opportunity to consult the deity again, to ascertain whether he had changed his mind. The result was that God in judgment gave him liberty to go; declaring at the same time that in the

course he should pursue in respect to the Israelites, he should be guided entirely by subsequent intimations of the divine will.

The point was now settled in the mind of Balaam that he would go; and early in the morning, he and the messengers set off. But before he had proceeded far, he met with a severe reproof for his wickedness, in a miraculous and most appalling incident. The angel of the Lord, or the angel Jehovah, had placed himself in the way with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam perceived not the unusual appearance; but the beast on which he rode saw it, and was affrighted. After the poor creature had been most wantonly abused by her master, and had actually fallen down with fear, not daring to go forward, she was miraculously endued with power to reprove him for his cruelty and madness: but even this seems not to have terrified him, owing probably to the fact that he had been accustomed to converse with devils in the form of beasts, and perhaps maddened with rage. The eyes of Balaam were then opened to behold the angel, who also rebuked him for his cruelty; and assured him that the turning aside of the beast was what saved his life. Balaam acknowledged his sin, and reluctantly offered to return; but he was permitted to proceed on his journey on the condition that he should be governed in respect to the object of it by divine directions.

To a man of almost any other spirit than that which Balaam possessed, this would have been enough to have changed his purpose, and to have caused him to abandon with terror the errand on which he had set out. But no; he has a sort of courage that carries him forward. Balak met him on the frontiers of his kingdom, and conducted him no doubt with great pomp to his capitol, and there entertained him with a splendid feast. On the next day he brought him to an adjacent hill, which was consecrated to Baal, that there he might have a good view of the people whom he had been sent for to curse. That he might obtain divine permission to comply with Balak's wishes, Balaam requested the erection of seven altars, and the offering of a sacrifice upon each. While this was doing, Balaam retired to take counsel of the divinity; and lo! he was inspired with this unwelcome message;—that it was in vain he had been brought from the East to curse the Israelites whom God had not cursed; and that they should be the numerous and peculiar favorites of heaven. In delivering this message, he expresses the wish that in respect to his death and posterity he might resemble Jacob.

By request of Balak, two other attempts were made in circumstances which were considered more favourable, to obtain the divine permission for the accomplishment of his purpose; but in both cases there was the most mortifying failure. Balaam was

not only forbidden to curse the Israelites, but was commanded to bless them; and to predict in the most unqualified manner, not only their future prosperity and glory as a nation, but the prosperity and glory which would be secured to the world through a Hebrew Messiah. The result of the whole was, that Balak kindled into rage, and directed Balaam forthwith to leave his territories; while the prophet justified the course he had taken by a constant reference to what he had originally told the messengers, that he could not go beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more. Thus was the counsel of the wicked turned against themselves;—turned into foolishness.

But while Balaam was divinely constrained to bless the people of Israel, and to utter predictions which should be for the consolation of the church in all ages, it is certain, that with criminal inconsistency, he suggested a plan to Balak for seducing the Israelites into gross iniquity, and thus causing them to forfeit the favor of God. The plan was adopted, and with success; for it issued in the death of a thousand Hebrews by public execution, and twenty three thousand more by a plague. Shortly after, however, God commissioned Israel to avenge herself of these enticements of the Midianites by making war upon them; and in this war Balaam himself closed his miserable career. He was caught, fatally caught, in the net which had been spread by his own hands.

The history which has been thus briefly sketched from the inspired record, suggests several important practical lessons. We will attend to a few of them.

I. *It presents a striking example of an awakened conscience in connexion with an unsubdued heart.*

The fact that Balaam would not venture even to attempt to comply with the request of Balak, till he had obtained the divine permission for going with the messengers;—the fact that he did not dare do otherwise than obey strictly the intimations of the divine will, and that he actually blessed the people which he was sent for to curse, and which in his own heart, he desired to curse; and still more the fact, that he expressed his desire that he might himself die the death of the righteous, proved beyond all question that he had a conscience which recognised the difference between right and wrong, and which during all this time was awake, and faithfully doing its office. But, on the other hand, his whole career furnished equal evidence that his corrupt inclinations existed in all their strength; and especially that avarice, which seems to have been the ruling passion of his nature, held him in complete dominion. It was this which made him dissatisfied with the answer that God gave to his first application, and em-

boldened him to renew his request. It was this which urged him forward in spite of all the appalling manifestations which he witnessed of the Divine displeasure. It was this that made him so ready at the suggestion of Balak to change the post of his observation, and to obtain, if possible the approbation of God to the malignant work for which he had been called. He loved the wages of unrighteousness. His heart was fully set in him to do evil. His ruling inclinations were utterly at war with the decisions of his conscience. Do you imagine that the case of Balaam in this respect stands alone? Far from it—it is a case of which every unrenewed sinner, if he would take cognizance of all that passes within, would, at some time or other, find himself an example. You are meditating some act of doubtful character;—it may be to practise some deception upon a fellow mortal for the sake of advancing your fame or your fortune; or it may be to rush into the haunts of guilty pleasure and sensual indulgence. And yet in all this you do not feel free and happy. And wherefore is it? Not surely on account of the feebleness of your inclinations to compass the object in view; but because there is a principle within you which you are obliged to respect, whether you will or not, which contravenes your inclinations, and inspires a gloomy foreboding that the indulgence of them will be fraught with evil. In the conflict which is thus occasioned, conscience will sometimes prevail; and sometimes inclination; but at any rate, it greatly embitters the pleasures of sin.

There is another case in which the war between conscience and depravity sometimes produces a still greater tumult in the bosom: we refer to the case of the awakened sinner;—the sinner who has become convinced of his guilt under a special divine influence. On the one hand, conscience thunders out against him the sentence of condemnation. She points him to the wrath to come. She well nigh uncovers before him the fiery gulf. She causes images of wo and despair to pass before his eye, and will let him hear of nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth. On the other hand, his corrupt inclinations rise up with a giant's strength. He knows the reasonableness of God's claims, but his heart rebels against them. There is in his bosom a spirit which would, if it were armed with power, usurp Jehovah's throne. The thought of yielding up all pretensions to personal merit, and of being saved through the righteousness of Christ, is so revolting to his pride that he knows not how to submit to it. There are not wanting those who can testify from experience that this conflict is productive of the keenest agony they have ever felt.

And here too lies to a great extent the secret of the torment of hell. The moment the sinner has passed into that region of

outer darkness, every restraint upon his evil inclinations is removed; and the principle of sin is left to operate in all its fierce and appalling malignity. There too, conscience, though for the most part it may have slumbered up to that hour, wakes in stern and awful majesty; and resents the insults which have been shown it in a life of sin; and makes itself felt as a tormentor in every thought and emotion that rise in the soul. Oh, could the inhabitants of the world of wo pluck out this never-dying worm, hell would cease to be hell; acclamations would ring through the prison of despair; and smiles would beam upon countenances from which joy had been supposed to have taken her final flight.

Here then is a great practical lesson for every sinner. It is, that in order to be happy, his conscience and inclinations must be brought into harmony. In other words, the desires and affections of the soul must be subdued to the authority of conscience: in compliance with its dictates, he must yield up the rebellion of his nature, and devote himself, his all, to the service of God. Do you say that we are giving you a false alarm, and that you are not sensible of this internal war of which we are speaking? Then it is because your depravity has, for the present, got the mastery over your conscience, and is keeping it in an unnatural subjection. Rely on it, though your conscience may be asleep, it is not dead; it will ere long wake, and will not only cause you to feel the reality of its existence, but to writhe under the fierceness of its accusations. Your conscience you cannot exterminate, but your depravity, by the aid of God's Spirit, you may. Conscience is one of the original elements of your moral nature, and must remain forever: depravity is a superinduced or accidental quality, and may be eradicated; and this instead of occasioning a defect, will contribute to the perfection of your moral nature. God has told you how to get rid of your depravity, and to pacify your conscience. He has pointed you to the blood of Christ, which has a sovereign efficacy over the one, and to the Spirit of Christ, whose operations effectually destroy the other; and as you desire that the harmony of your nature may be restored; as you desire that you may be delivered from the corrosions of guilt, and from the promptings, and the restlessness, and the turbulence of evil affections;—above all, as you desire that you may be saved from the miseries of hell, and exalted to the glories of heaven, be entreated to avail yourself without delay of the glorious provision which is offered in the gospel. An active conscience and a rebellious heart would make hell any where in the universe. Beware, O beware, that this fearful union does not exist in your own case, no not for an hour!

II. In the history of Balaam we have a striking example of the mischiefs and folly of a spirit of avarice. It is manifest that Balaam was prompted by this in every step that he took in his foolish expedition against Israel: this is the solution given of it by the apostle when he says, that "he loved the wages of unrighteousness." The rewards which were held out to him by Balak, were too tempting to be resisted by a man of such disposition. He eagerly hailed the opportunity, as he regarded it, of making money; and to this ruling passion he made himself a slave. But what was the result? It was confusion, mortification, utter defeat. It proved to be an expedition fraught only with disappointment and disgrace; an expedition which will cause his name to go down to the end of the world, with the curse of God resting upon it.

It is important that a spirit of avarice should not be confounded with that prudent attention to our worldly pursuits which reason and even religion enjoins. The fact that a man is diligent and industrious in his worldly calling, and even that he is intent on accumulating property, by no means renders him liable to the charge of covetousness. It is part of his duty to provide for his own subsistence; and if there be others dependent upon him, to provide for them also; and this in all ordinary cases, involves the necessity of diligence and industry. So too, he may task himself to the utmost in the acquisition of wealth for the sake of appropriating it to useful and charitable objects; to benefit his fellow men, and to extend the kingdom of Christ. It is not the fact then that an individual is intent on increasing his substance that renders him liable to the charge of avarice; but the spirit with which he pursues his worldly vocation. If he labour, or if he desire to become rich, merely for the sake of being rich; of enjoying the reflection that he has his tens of thousands or millions at his command, when neither himself nor his fellow men are the better for it; in short, if he labours for worldly property only in the spirit of a miser, you may rely on it, he is pursuing a course which will bring down upon him the rebukes of Providence; and which he will himself sooner or later be compelled to deprecate.

There is no spirit which more effectually than avarice, benumbs the best feelings of the heart. There is a noble kind of pleasure in doing good; though it be only from the impulse of a naturally generous disposition. But the avaricious man knows nothing even of this kind of pleasure. The region of his affections is cold as winter, and dark as midnight. He has the strange faculty of deriving happiness, and even his chief happiness, from the sight of heaps of money, which are lying utterly useless, when they might be appropriated to supply the wants of the wretched

and suffering around him, and possibly even his own personal necessities. Will you call this happiness? Who that is not cursed with the spirit of a miser would desire it?

Besides, the gratification of an avaricious spirit is usually marked by severe labour and painful self denial. The man who possesses it is not merely industrious, but his faculties are continually upon the stretch, and he toils with unremitting assiduity, and sometimes hazards, and even sacrifices, his health, in the pursuit of gain. He is not merely frugal, but not unfrequently subjects himself to a retrenchment of many worldly comforts, and sometimes even to severe bodily sufferings, that he may have larger heaps of glittering dust to look at. If he would speak out the honest language of his heart, he would say that his life is a hard one; nevertheless he voluntarily renders it so by indulging his excessive love of the world.

And then too, it is the ordinance of God that the covetous man should not always attain his object: he never indeed fully attains it, for at least nothing short of the wealth of the whole world would satisfy him; but he is often signally frowned upon; and his most diligent efforts to become rich do not raise him above a moderate competence; possibly not above abject poverty. Here then there must be unhappiness of course; for the disappointment of one's wishes always occasions unhappiness; and that in proportion to the strength of desire and effort with which the object has been pursued. But there is something worse still; for scarcely any thing is more common than for the avaricious man to see his wealth blown away after it has been actually acquired; blown away by a single blast of misfortune, perhaps by a single miscalculation of his own, after it had been acquired by the laborious, the self-denying, the miserly, efforts of many years. But even if his property all remains with him to the last—suppose that up to the moment that there arises in his case the necessity of a shroud and a coffin, all that he has acquired or inherited, and set his heart upon, remains in his possession—what becomes of it then? We may not be able to tell what *will* become of it; but we may say with confidence what *will not*: it will not accompany his body to the chambers of the sepulchre; it will not attend his spirit in its flight to other worlds. It remains here; but it does not remain long as he left it; for as his heirs have not known the labour of accumulating these possessions, they will most probably make short work of dissipating them. Say, if you will, that this will all be nothing to him *then*; but ought it not to be something to him *now*? Ought it not at least to rebuke his infatuated pursuit of the world?

But the worst thing in respect to an avaricious spirit remains

to be said: it is, that where it is the ruling passion, and is suffered to continue so, it destroys the soul. If you die unrenewed you must indeed perish at any rate; but if your ruling passion be covetousness, it will be to that especially that you will have to refer your destruction. Oh, dwell upon that most impressive question, which fell from the Saviour's own lips—'What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'

The practical use which we wish to make of what has been said under this article, is to lead all who read these pages to a proper estimate of the possessions of the world. It is not a virtue to be regardless of them; it is almost a condition of our existence here, that we make them in some degree an object of pursuit; and in doing so, we certainly increase the means of our own usefulness. But on the other hand there is danger that we shall set our hearts upon these perishable things, and love them merely for their own sake; and that in the pursuit of a bubble which will after all elude our grasp, we shall sacrifice our souls. Beware, ye men of business, that ye do not incur this amazing evil. Beware that ye use the world as not abusing it. Seek it from right motives, and use it for right purposes, and you need not fear that it will harm you; but if you suffer your attachment to it to be supreme, from whatever consideration, you will be treasuring up for yourself bitter disappointment, and everlasting, though unavailing regret.

III. In the history of Balaam *we have an instance of God's restraining influence on the mind of a bad man.*

When he was first applied to to curse the people of Israel, he hesitated, and from some divine impression no doubt, refused to go, until he should have taken counsel of the divinity. And after his meeting with Balak, though he manifestly desired to comply with his wishes, yet during the whole time there was a divine influence acting upon him, which not only prevented him from cursing, but caused him to bless the Hebrew nation. He repeatedly declared, both to the messengers and to Balak, that he could not go beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more.

Admit, if you will, that the influence which was exerted upon Balaam was to some extent miraculous, yet in its general aspect, it is a fair specimen of what God is constantly doing in the world. Sinners, we know, act as if they regarded themselves independent even of the Highest; they project and mature, and carry forward their guilty plans, with as much confidence as if there were no eye that could see farther than their own, and no power that could confound their evil designs; but the real fact is that their principal witness and their tremendous judge is always present; and he has his own plan in suffering them, not in compelling them, to work iniquity; and

though they do not realize it, he restrains them at his pleasure, and causes even the wrath of man to praise him. Yes, that sinner who glories most in his fancied independence, is doing nothing but what God permits him to do; nothing even but what God will take care shall redound to his own glory.

One means by which God restrains bad men in their wickedness, is the operation of conscience. Balaam's conscience, as we have seen, was awake; and this it was that dictated a refusal to comply with Balak's wishes, and even to yield to his own. Other sinners have been checked in their career of guilt by the operation of this principle as well as Balaam. Have you never yourself half projected a guilty purpose, which something within forbade you to mature, much more to execute? Admit that a regard to your own character in the view of the world may have had some influence in keeping you back, yet are you not conscious that the most efficient agency has been that of this internal monitor which has spoken with stern authority, and bid you look forward to the results of your conduct, as they will be developed at the judgment? We venture to say, if you knew the secret history of every wicked man, you would know that his conscience often operates as a curb upon his inclinations; and that one grand reason why the world is not literally engulfed in crime, is, that this ever present judge of actions *will* speak, and for the most part, *will* be heard, even amidst the clamours of passion and the boisterous revellings of vice.

There is another way in which God exercises a restraining influence upon the wicked: it is through the arrangements of his providence. You are not conscious perhaps that there is any other agency in the disposal of your lot than your own: you do not even dream that there is any higher power at work in ordering the circumstances of your condition. But the fact really is, that God's providence is concerned with every thing that happens to you, and every thing that relates to you; and all the minute circumstances which mark your lot, are as truly a matter of his cognizance and direction, as is the great system of worlds that fill immensity. And he orders the condition of every sinner with reference to the amount of wickedness which he shall commit; that is, he so orders it that he shall be restrained in his guilty career beyond a certain limit. This he may do by keeping him out of the way of temptation;—temptation especially to those sins to which his inclinations most powerfully prompt. He may also bring him under the influence of circumstances which shall serve to inspire self-respect; and thus keep him from the extreme debasement of his faculties. Many a man no doubt has a respectable standing in society, and would revolt at the idea of gross

crime, who has nevertheless that in him, which if it were called forth by temptation, might make him a terror or a scourge to all around.

You see then that God keeps the rein in his own hand. Why he permits sin at all is indeed a question which we cannot answer; but that it is not forced upon the universe without his permission, and that he has said concerning it in his decrees, and does say in his providence, that "hitherto it shall come and no further," is alike a dictate of reason and revelation. Here then, sinners, is a consideration which ought greatly to abate your triumph: for even *you* are in the hand of God, to be dealt with according to his pleasure. You cannot go beyond the limit which he has marked out; and though you are perfectly voluntary in your wickedness, and of course answerable for it, yet you will know at the last, that God's eye and God's hand had been always upon you. Here too is a consideration in view of which the church, and every true member of the church, has a right to rejoice. You may not understand wherefore sin is permitted at all, wherefore the wicked seem to prosper, wherefore there are sometimes no bands in their death, but you do know that all this shall never harm your interests; because your interests are bound to the throne of Him who has declared in respect to his people, that all things, even the most adverse, shall work together for their good.

IV. We may learn from the history of Balaam that *dangers lurk in the path of the wicked*. The angel of the Lord had stationed himself in Balaam's path with a drawn sword; and the life of the prophet must have been the sacrifice, if the beast on which he rode had not turned aside. From some cause, either natural or preternatural, the appalling spectacle at first entirely escaped his observation.

So too there are dangers in the path of every sinner. In the way of open vice there are dangers which respect the present life, as well as the future. The dishonest man, the gamester, the intemperate man, the sensualist, the thief, the liar, the robber, the murderer, the openly wicked of any character, are constantly in the midst of dangers: this is true even of those who are but just beginning, or who are only just contemplating a career of vice. You are in danger of losing your character, of losing your health, of losing your property, of losing your friends, of losing your life. But what is wise than all, whether you are openly vicious or not, if you are only unrenewed, you are in imminent danger of losing your soul; in danger of having your portion at last in everlasting burnings.

But is it true that you are sensible of these dangers? Are you

practically sensible that destruction is in your path, and that if you keep on, you will inevitably run yourself against the sword of Jehovah's vengeance? Is it not, on the contrary, the melancholy fact, that like Balaam you see not your danger; and that you even resist every effort that is made to bring you to see it? When the ministers of Christ proclaim it to you, and urge you to flee from it, what else do you do than treat the warning as if it were an idle tale? When your Christian friends perform in private the same office of kindness, can you say that they are more successful in rousing you! And when God speaks, nay thunders, in his providence, are you not as deaf as adders? We tell you now on God's authority that there is destruction in that path in which you are walking; yes, in that path of gaiety and amusement, that path of supreme devotion to worldly gain, that path of forgetfulness of God, there is stationed an angel of death, who, if you are not speedily arrested, will surprise you by executing his office, and consigning you to the miseries of the lost. God reproveth you for your wickedness, not indeed by supernatural means, but in the common course of his providence, and through the operations of your own conscience; and if you neglect to heed these reproofs and rush on to destruction, say whether your blood will not be upon your own head?

V. In the history of Balaam, *we behold a wicked man rendering his homage to the truth and excellence of religion.* This Balaam did in taking counsel of God on the point whether he should go at Balak's request; and in his persevering adherence to the divine command to bless and not to curse the Israelites; and more than all, in the earnest wish he expressed that in respect to his death and his posterity, his lot might be like that of the people of God. He was a bad man, but nevertheless he revered the good; and though he was not willing to live the life of the righteous, he was more than willing to die the death of the righteous.

In this respect also, there was nothing in the disposition which Balaam manifested, to distinguish him from other bad men. It is true of the wicked generally, it is true of them all without exception, that in some way or other, they testify to the excellence and value of religion. Even those who trifle with the gospel, and profess to regard it with contempt, do really, though most unintentionally, proclaim their secret conviction of its truth and divinity: in other words, they prove that in their professed opposition to religion, they act the part of hypocrites.

Wicked men render their homage to the excellence of religion, when they assume the appearance of it without the reality. For why is it that they are willing in this way to submit to the

drudgery of systematic deception;—of trying to support a character which they know does not belong to them? Manifestly, the only reason is that they expect hereby to commend themselves to the favour of the world; and they know that from the very constitution of human nature, virtue must always be respected, vice always detested. Every hypocrite, then, every false professor of religion, every man who tries to pass himself off in the world for something better than he really is, renders his decisive testimony to the excellence of religion. The genuine quality he has not, but he regards it as so important, that he is willing to assume the appearance of it, and support that appearance at the expense of a studied duplicity. Religion is often attempted to be traduced on the ground that there are many hypocrites in the church; but if those who prefer the charge would allow themselves to reflect, they would perceive that this very fact takes for granted the excellence and value of religion; for who would have any motive to counterfeit that which was after all good for nothing? Again; the openly vicious testify in various ways their respect for good men while they are living, and their respect for their memories after they are dead. We know, indeed, if they wish to find some one to aid them in the accomplishment of their evil designs, or to participate with them in their guilty pleasures, they will not go to the good man: they will go on such occasions to one like themselves; to one whom they know to have proved himself capable of conniving at their wickedness, if not of becoming an accomplice in it. But let them have any important trust to be executed which shall involve in a great degree their own interests, or the interests of their children, and you will find them looking out for the man of unyielding integrity and virtue; and they will be just as unwilling as you would be to trust one of their own associates. And when the good man dies, think you they will love to traduce his memory? Far from it. Even though, while he was living, they might have been disturbed by the purity of his example, and possibly by the faithfulness of his admonitions, and might have sometimes made him the undeserved object of their reproach, yet when they come to follow him to the grave, they will be heard to speak of him as a good man; and his good deeds will sometimes be the theme of their eulogy after his body has mouldered in the grave. We ask those who are observers of human conduct, is it not so?

It is moreover to be observed that the wicked render their homage to religion, even in their attempts to vilify and abuse good men. For what is it that they reproach them for? Never for that which is good; but always for something which is sup-

posed to involve error or crime. You often hear a professor of religion reproached as a hypocrite, but never as a truly religious and devoted man. You will often hear professors called bigots, and knaves, and drunkards, and these things will be dwelt upon in the way of bitter reproach; but never will you hear them reproached for charity, and honesty, or any other Christian virtue. What more decisive proof than this could be desired that bad men reverence religion? If it were not so, they would attack Christians, because they *are* Christians; and would not find it necessary to call things by wrong names; to change virtues into vices.

But there is yet another way in which the wicked do homage to religion; it is in forming resolutions to become religious before they die; as well as in the agonizing, though there is too much reason to believe, fruitless, efforts, to become so in the hour of death. There are some on every side who are neglecting religion, and some, we doubt not, who would shrink from being suspected of ever turning their thoughts towards it as a serious concern. But we should hazard little in saying that there is not one in whose breast there does not live a resolution that he will become religious before he dies. And here is the evidence that he has, after all, a secret conviction that religion is the one thing needful, and that it is essential to the salvation of his soul. We will not predict, in respect to individuals, the fate of this resolution; whether it will go into effect, or whether it will prove only a staff for them to lean upon as they go down to hell. But we may speak of what *has* occurred; of what is occurring constantly in the world; of dying scenes in which there is bitter lamentation, and hard struggling, and piercing agony, because the soul feels that it is just going, and fears that it is going without religion. We knew a man who in health seemed utterly regardless of his salvation, and was nothing better than a scoffer. We met him in a solitary walk, and pressed him with the importance of religion, and tried to avail ourselves of every circumstance to bring him to reflection, but he resisted it all; and seemed by his whole manner to say that he had no fear for the future. Shortly after we heard that sickness had shut him up in his chamber; and that his friends were apprehensive that he was nigh unto death. We went to his dwelling, and into his chamber, anxious to know whether religion was the same unimportant thing in his estimation which it had been a little while before. On approaching his bedside, we saw that he must die, and felt that we were even then in the presence of the King of Terrors. He remembered the walk; he remembered the warning; he remembered his own indifference; and the recollection was a thorn in

his soul. "Religion"—said he,—“I feel that it is every thing. Oh I would give the world for it, if it were at my command! But here I am in the valley of death, a stranger to its consolations. I am dying without hope—I am dying to be miserable forever, because I neglected religion; because I heeded not the warning voice. I always intended to be religious, even when I made light of its obligations; but I have delayed too long: here I am in the act of dying, and what can I do?” He *was* in the act of dying; for when he had spoken these words, his spirit had fled. We looked upon him, and the eye had ceased to move, the bosom had ceased to heave, the pulse had ceased to beat—every thing told that he was a corpse. In his last hour and his last moments, he was stung by remorse, he was overwhelmed with terror, he was well nigh frantic with agony; but in every word, in every groan, in every look, he testified to the excellence of religion. He preached upon his death bed more impressively than ministers can ever do, the solemn truth that the world is nothing, that religion is every thing.

Wherefore then will any of our readers neglect religion? If even the wicked render an involuntary testimony to its excellence, if it is absolutely necessary to gild with comfort and hope your last hour, if in neglecting it, you throw your immortal soul away forever, we ask whether such neglect is not something worse than madness? Is there any apology for delaying that for an hour in which your interests for eternity are all bound up? Reason answers, there is none. Conscience answers, there is none. God grant that this may be your own practical decision; and may your future conduct evince that this has been the era of your becoming wise for eternity!