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SERMONS

BY THE LATE

JOHN WITHERSPOON, S.S.T.P.

*President of the College of
New Jersey.*

A SUPPLEMENTARY VOLUME

INCLUDING SUCH SERMONS AS ARE NOT ALREADY PUBLISHED IN HIS WORKS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

THE HISTORY OF A CORPORATION OF
SERVANTS, AND OTHER TRACTS.

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SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR.

Extracted from a Sermon preached on the occasion of his death, at Princeton, 6th May 1795, by John Rodgers D. D.

DR JOHN WITHERSPOON was descended from a respectable parentage ; which had long possessed a considerable landed property in the east of Scotland. His father was minister of the parish of Yester, a few miles from Edinburgh, where he was born on the fifth day of February, 1722.* This worthy man was eminent for his piety, his literature, and for a habit of extreme accuracy in all his writings and discourses. This example contributed not a little to form in his son that
a taste

* Dr Wither Spoon was lineally descended from the Rev. Mr John Knox, whose daughter Elizabeth married the famous Mr John Welsh, who strongly resembled his father in law in genius, character, and usefulness in the church : And in his line Dr Wither Spoon descended from this honourable ancestry.

taste and that love of accuracy, united with a noble simplicity, for which he was so distinguished through his whole life. He was sent, very young, to the public school at Haddington: his father spared neither expence nor pains in his education. There he soon acquired reputation for his assiduity in his studies, and for a native soundness of judgment, and clearness and quickness of conception, among his school-fellows; many of whom have since filled the highest stations in the literary and political world.

At the age of fourteen, he was removed to the university of Edinburgh. Here he continued, attending the different professors, with a high degree of credit, in all the branches of learning, until the age of twenty-one, when he was licensed to preach the Gospel. In the theological hall, particularly, he was remarked for a most judicious taste in sacred criticism, and for a precision of idea and perspicuity of expression rarely attained at that early period.

Immediately on his leaving the university, he was invited to be assistant minister with his father, with the right of succession to the charge. But he chose rather to accept an invitation from the parish of Beith, in the west of Scotland. Here he was ordained to the work of the Gospel ministry, and settled with the universal acquiescence, and even with the fervent attachment of the people. His character as a preacher, which rendered him so acceptable and popular, will come more naturally

rally before us in another place. Let it suffice to remark here, that, always interesting and instructive in the pulpit, he was assiduous in the discharge of every parochial duty when out of it. And his preaching generally turned on those great, distinguishing, and practical truths of the gospel, which, in every Christian country, most affect and attach the hearts of the great body of the people.

From Beith he was, after a few years, translated to the large and flourishing town of Paisley, so celebrated for its various and fine manufactures.—Here he resided in the height of reputation and usefulness; and riveted in the affections of his people, and his fellow citizens, when he was called to the presidency of this college.

During his residence at Paisley, he was invited to Dublin, in Ireland, to assume the charge of a numerous and respectable congregation in that city. He was also called to Rotterdam, in the Republic of the United Provinces—and to the town of Dundee, in his own country. But he could not be induced to quit a sphere of such respectability, comfort and usefulness. He declined also, in the first instance, the invitation of the trustees of this college. He thought it almost impossible for him to break connections at home, that had been so long endeared to him—to violate all the attachments and habits of the female part of his family—to leave the scene of his happiness and honour—and, in his middle career, to bury him-

self, as he apprehended, in a new and distant country.

But warmly urged by all those friends whose judgment he most respected, and whose friendship he most esteemed—and hoping that he might repay his sacrifices, by greater usefulness to the cause of the Redeemer, and to the interests of learning, in this new world—and knowing that this institution had been consecrated, from its foundation, to those great objects to which he had devoted his life, he finally consented, on a second application, to wave every other consideration, to cross the ocean, and to take among us that important charge to which he had been called, with the concurrent wishes, and the highest expectations, of all the friends of the college.* Their expectations have not been disappointed. Its reputation and success, under his administration, have been equal to our most sanguine hopes.

Almost the first benefit which it received, besides the eclat, and the accession of students, procured to it by the fame of his literary character, was the augmentation of its funds. The college has never enjoyed any resources from the state. It was founded, and has been supported, wholly by private liberality and zeal. And its finances, from a variety of causes, were in a low and declining

*Dr Witherpoon arrived with his family at Princeton in the month of August, 1768. He was the sixth President of the College since its foundation in the year 1746.

clining condition, at the period when Dr Wither-
 spoon arrived in America. But his reputation
 excited an uncommon liberality in the public ;
 and his personal exertions, extended from Mas-
 sachusetts to Virginia, soon raised its funds to a
 flourishing state. The war of the revolution, in-
 deed, afterwards, prostrated every thing, and al-
 most annihilated its resources ; yet we cannot
 but with gratitude recollect, how much the insti-
 tution owed, at that time, to his enterprize and
 his talents.

But the principal advantages it derived, were
 from his literature ; his superintendancy ; his ex-
 ample as a happy model of good writing ; and
 from the tone and taste which he gave to the li-
 terary pursuits of the college.

In giving the outlines of the character of this
 great man, for I attempt no more, I shall begin
 with observing, that perhaps his principal merit
 appeared in the pulpit. He was, in many res-
 pects, one of the best models on which a young
 preacher could form himself. It was a singular
 felicity to the whole college, but especially to
 those who had the profession of the ministry in-
 view, to have such an example constantly before
 them. Religion, by the manner in which it was
 treated by him, always commanded the respect of
 those who heard him, even when it was not able
 to engage their hearts. An admirable textuary, a
 profound theologian, perspicuous and simple in
 his manner ; an universal scholar, acquainted
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deeply with human nature ; a grave, dignified, and solemn speaker, he brought all the advantages derived from these sources to the illustration and enforcement of divine truth. Though not a fervent and animated orator,* he was always a solemn, affecting, and instructive preacher. It was impossible to hear him without attention, or to attend to him without improvement. He had a happy talent at unfolding the strict and proper meaning of the sacred writer, in any text from which he chose to discourse ; at concentrating and giving perfect unity to every subject which he treated ; and presenting to the hearer the most clear and comprehensive views of it. His sermons

* A peculiar affection of his nerves, which always overcame him when he allowed himself to feel very fervently on any subject, obliged him, from his earliest entrance on public life, to impose a strict restraint and guard upon his sensibility. He was, therefore, under the necessity of substituting gravity and seriousness of manner, in public speaking, in the room of that fire and warmth, of which he was well capable, by nature ; and which he so much admired in others, when managed with prudence.

He never read his sermons, or used so much as short notes, in the pulpit. His practice was, to write his sermons at full length, and commit them to memory ; but not confine himself to the precise words he had penned. He often took great liberties, in the delivery of his discourses, to alter, add to, or abridge what he had written ; but this never infringed upon the strictest accuracy.

mons were distinguished for their judicious and perspicuous divisions—for mingling profound remarks on human life, along with the illustration of divine truth—and for the lucid order that reigned through the whole. In his discourses, he loved to dwell chiefly on the great doctrines of divine grace, and on the distinguishing truths of the gospel. These he brought, as far as possible, to the level of every understanding, and the feeling of every heart. He seldom chose to lead his hearers into speculative discussions, and never to entertain them by a mere display of talents. All ostentation in the pulpit, he viewed with the utmost aversion and contempt. During the whole of his presidency, he was extremely solicitous to train those studious youths, who had the ministry of the gospel in view, in such a manner, as to secure the greatest respectability, as well as usefulness, in that holy profession. It was his constant advice to young preachers, never to enter the pulpit without the most careful preparation. It was his ambition and his hope, to render the sacred ministry the most learned, as well as the most pious and exemplary body of men in the Republic.

As a writer, his style is simple and comprehensive—his remarks judicious, and often refined—his information, on every subject which he treats, accurate and extensive—his matter always weighty and important—closely condensed, and yet well arranged and clear. Simplicity, perspicuity

cuity, precision, comprehension of thought, and knowledge of the world, and of the human heart, reign in every part of his writings. Three volumes of essays, and five volumes of sermons, besides several detached discourses, already published—and treating chiefly on the most important and practical subjects in religion—have deservedly extended his reputation, not only through Britain, Ireland, and America, but through most of the protestant countries of Europe. His remarks on the nature and effects of the stage, enter deeply into the human heart. We find there many refined observations, after the example of the Messieurs de Port-Royal in France, not obvious to ordinary minds, but perfectly founded in the history of man, and the state of society. The pernicious influence of that amusement on the public taste and morals, was, perhaps, never more clearly elucidated. On the following interesting subjects, the ‘ nature and necessity of regeneration—Justification by free grace, through Jesus Christ ; and the importance of truth in religion, or, the connexion that subsists between sound principles and a holy practice,’ there is perhaps, nothing superior in the English language. But Dr Witherpoon’s talents were various. He was not only a serious writer, but he possessed a fund of refined humour, and delicate satire. A happy specimen of this is seen in his Ecclesiastical Characteristics. The edge of his wit, in that performance, was directed against certain corruptions

tions in principle and practice prevalent in the church of Scotland. And no attack that was ever made upon them, gave them so deep a wound or was so severely felt. Dr Warburton, the celebrated Bishop of Gloucester, mentions the Characteristics with particular approbation, and expresses his wish, that the English church, as she needed too, had likewise such a corrector.

This may be the proper place to mention his general character, as a member of the counsels and courts of the church, and the part particularly that he took in the ecclesiastical politics of his native country. The church of Scotland was divided into two parties, with respect to their ideas of ecclesiastical discipline. The one was willing to confirm, and even extend the rights of patronage—the other wished, if possible, to abrogate, or at least limit them, and to extend the rights and influence of the people, in the settlement and removal of ministers. The latter were zealous for the doctrines of grace, and the articles of religion, in all their strictness, as contained in their national confession of faith. The former were willing to allow a greater latitude of opinion; and they preached in a style that seemed to the people less evangelical, and less affecting to the heart and conscience, than that of their opponents. In their concern, likewise, to exempt the clergy of their party from the unreasonable effects of popular caprice, they too frequently protected them against the just complaints of the people. These were styled

stiled moderate men, while their antagonists were distinguished by the name of the orthodox. Dr Witherpoon, in his church politics, early and warmly embraced the side of the orthodox. This he did from conviction, and a sense of duty; and, by degrees, acquired such an influence in their councils, that he was considered at length as their head and leader. Before he had acquired this influence, their councils were managed without union and address, while the measures of the moderate party had, for a long time, been conducted by some of the greatest literary characters in the nation. It had happened among the orthodox, as it often does among scrupulous and conscientious men, who are not versed in the affairs of the world, that each pursued inflexibly his own opinion, as the dictate of an honest conscience. He could not be induced to make any modification of it, in order to accommodate it to the views of others. He thought that all address and policy, was using too much management with conscience. Hence resulted disunion of measures, and consequent defeat—But Dr Witherpoon's enlarged mind did not refuse to combine 'the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove.' He had, probably, the principal merit of creating among them union, and harmony of design; of concentrating their views, and giving system to their operations. One day, after carrying some important questions in the General Assembly, against the celebrated Dr Robertson

sen, who was at that time considered as the leader of the opposite party, the latter said to him, in a pleasant and easy manner, ' I think you have your men better disciplined than formerly.' ' Yes' (replied Dr Wither Spoon) by urging your politics too far, you have compelled us to beat you with your own weapons.'

We have seen him in our own church judicatories, in America, always upright in his views—remarkable for his punctuality in attending upon them—and able to seize, at once, the right point of view on every question—able to disentangle the most embarrassed subjects—clear and conclusive in his reasonings—and from habit in business, as well as from a peculiar soundness of judgment, always conducting every discussion to the most speedy and decisive termination. The church has certainly lost in him, one of her greatest lights; and, if I may use the term in ecclesiastical affairs, one of her greatest politicians.

Before entering on his talents as a president, suffer me, in a sentence or two, to call to your mind his social qualities. When not engaged in the great and serious businesses of life, he was one of the most companionable of men. Furnished with a rich fund of anecdote, both amusing and instructive; his moments of relaxation were as entertaining, as his serious ones were fraught with improvement. One quality remarkable, and highly deserving imitation in him was, ' his attention to young persons.' He never suffered

ed an opportunity to escape him of imparting the most useful advice to them, according to their circumstances, when they happened to be in his company. And this was always done in so agreeable a way, that they could neither be inattentive to it, nor was it possible to forget it.

On his domestic virtues I shall only say, he was an affectionate husband, a tender parent, and a kind master; to which I may add, he was a sincere and a warm friend.—But, I hasten to consider him as a scholar, and a director of the system of education in the college.

An universal scholar himself, he endeavoured to establish the system of education in this institution, upon the most extensive and respectable basis, that its situation and its finances would admit. Formerly, the course of instruction had been too superficial; and its metaphysics and philosophy were too much tinged with the dry and uninteresting forms of the schools. This, however, was by no means to be imputed as a defect, to those great and excellent men, who had presided over the institution before him; but rather to the recent origin of the country—the imperfection of its state of society—and to the state of literature in it. Since his presidency mathematical science has received an extension, that was not known before in the American seminaries. He introduced into philosophy, all the most liberal and modern improvements of Europe. He extended the philosophical course to embrace the

the general principles of policy and public law ; he incorporated with it a sound and rational metaphysics—equally remote from the doctrines of fatality and contingency—from the barrenness and dogmatism of the schools—and from the excessive refinements of those contradictory, but equally impious sects of scepticism, who wholly deny the existence of matter, or maintain that nothing but matter exists in the universe.

He laid the foundation of a course of history in the college—and the principles of taste, and the rules of good writing, were both happily explained by him, and exemplified in his manner. The stile of learning, if you will allow me the phrase, has been changed by him. Literary inquiries and improvements have become more liberal, more extensive, and more profound. An admirable faculty for governing, and of exciting the emulation of the young gentlemen under his care, contributed to give success to all his designs for perfecting the course of instruction. The numbers of men of distinguished talents, in the different liberal professions, in this country, who have received the elements of their education under him, testify his services to the college. Under his auspices have been formed a large proportion of the clergy of our church ; and to his instructions, America owes many of her most distinguished patriots and legislators.

Thus he proceeded, guiding with uncommon reputation and success the course of education in
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this institution, until the war of the American revolution suspended his functions and dispersed the college.

Here he entered upon a new scene, and appeared in a new character ; widely differing from any, in which he had been heretofore presented to the public. Yet, here also, he shone with equal lustre ; and his talents as a legislator and senator shewed the extent and the variety of the powers of his mind. There are few foreigners who can, with such facility as he did, lay aside their prejudices, and enter into the ideas and habits of a new country, and a new state of society. He became almost at once an American, on his landing among us, and in the unjust war which Great Britain waged against us, he immediately adopted the views, and participated in the councils of the Americans. His distinguished abilities soon pointed him out to the citizens of New-Jersey, as one of the most proper delegates to that convention which formed their republican constitution. In this respectable assembly he appeared, to the astonishment of all the professors of the law, as profound a civilian, as he had before been known to be a philosopher and divine.

From the revolutionary committees and conventions of the state, he was sent, early in the year, 1776, as a representative of the people of New-Jersey to the congress of United America ; he was seven years a member of that illustrious body, which, under providence, in the face of innumerable

numerable difficulties and dangers, led us on to the establishment of our independence. Always firm in the most gloomy and formidable aspects of public affairs, he always discovered the greatest reach and presence of mind, in the most embarrassing situations.

It is impossible here to enter into all his political ideas. It is but justice however to observe, that on almost all subjects on which he differed from the majority of his brethren in congress, his principles have been justified by the result. I shall select only one or two examples. He constantly opposed the expensive mode of supplying the army by commission, which was originally adopted; and combated it, until after a long experience of its ill effects, he, in conjunction with a few firm and judicious associates, prevailed to have it done by contract.

He opposed, at every emission after the first or second, and even hazarded his popularity for a time by the strenuousness of his opposition, that paper currency which gave such a wound to public credit, and which would have defeated the revolution, if any thing could.

In the formation of the original confederation, he complained of the jealousy and ambition of the individual states, which were not willing to entrust the general government, with adequate powers for the common interest. He then pronounced inefficacy upon it. But he complained and remonstrated in vain.

Overruled, however, at that time, in these and in other objects of importance, he had the satisfaction of living to see America revert, in almost every instance, to his original ideas—ideas founded on a sound and penetrating judgment, and matured by deep reflection, and an extensive observation of men and things. But I forbear to trace his political career farther; and shall only add here, that while he was thus engaged in serving his country in the character of a civilian, he did not lay aside his ministry. He gladly embraced every opportunity of preaching, and of discharging the other duties of his office, as a gospel minister. This he considered as his highest character, and honour in life.

The college having been collected as soon as possible after its dispersion, instruction was recommenced under the immediate care of the vice-president.* Dr WITHERSPOON'S name, however, continued to add celebrity to the institution, and it has fully recovered its former reputation.

The glorious struggle for our liberties drawing to an honourable period, and the doctor feeling age advancing upon him, was desirous of resigning his place in congress: and would have fain retired, in a measure, from the burdens of the college.

But notwithstanding his wish for repose, he
was

* The reverend Dr Samuel S. Smith, who was unanimously chosen Dr WITHERSPOON'S successor on the 6th day of May, 1795.

was induced, through his attachment to the institution, over which he had so long presided, once more to cross the ocean to promote its benefit. The fruit of that voyage was not indeed answerable to our wishes ; but we are not the less indebted to his enterprize and zeal.

After his return to this country, finding nothing to obstruct his entering on that retirement, which was now become more dear to him ; he withdrew, in a great measure, except on some important occasions, from the exercise of those public functions that were not immediately connected with the duties of his office, as president of the college, or his character as a minister of the gospel.

Accustomed to order and regularity in business from his youth, he persevered in his attention to them through his whole life. And I may add there was nothing in which his punctuality and exactness were more sacredly observed, than in the devotional exercises of the christian life. Besides the daily devotions of the closet, and the family, it was his stated practice to observe the last day of every year, with his family, as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer : and it was also his practice, to set apart days for secret fasting and prayer, as occasion suggested.

Bodily infirmities began at length to come upon him. For more than two years before his death, he was afflicted with the loss of sight ; which contributed to hasten the progress of his other

other disorders. These he bore with a patience, and even a cheerfulness, rarely to be met with, in the most eminent for wisdom and piety. Nor would his active mind, and his desire of usefulness to the end, permit him, even in this situation, to desist from the exercise of his ministry, and his duties to the college, as far as his health and strength would admit. He was frequently led into the pulpit, both at home and abroad, during his blindness; and always acquitted himself with his usual accuracy, and frequently, with more than his usual solemnity and animation. And we all recollect the propriety and dignity with which he presided at the last commencement. He was blest with the use of his reasoning powers to the very last.

At length, however, he sunk under the accumulated pressure of his infirmities; and on the 15th day of November, 1794, in the seventy third year of his age, he retired to his eternal rest, full of honour and full of days—there to receive the plaudit of his Lord, “well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, be thou ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

S E R M O N I.

Ministerial Character and Duty.

2 Cor. iv. 13.

We also believe, and therefore speak.

TO understand what ought to be the character, and what principles should animate the conduct of a minister of the gospel, cannot be without profit, even to a private Christian. It will teach him whom to prefer, when he is called, in providence, to make a choice. It will teach him to hold such in reputation for their office-sake, and to improve the privilege of a regular gospel-ministry, if he himself is favoured with it. And I think it must incline him to make daily supplication to the Lord of the harvest, to send forth faithful labourers into his harvest.

But though there were no such general advantage to be derived from it, my particular charge, and the very aspect of this audience, would easily

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justify

justify me in making this, for once, the immediate subject of discourse.

Now if we would know the character of a faithful minister, we cannot better, or more immediately reach our purpose, than by looking into the character, and observing the conduct, and springs of action, of the Apostles of our Lord, who received their commissions immediately from himself, and were not only the first, but the best and most successful ministers, that ever were employed in the church of Christ.

The Apostle Paul, whose call was so singular, and whose labours were so distinguished, has, in his Epistles to the several churches, planted or watered by him, given us a great light into the chief aims he had in the exercise of the ministry. In this chapter, and the preceding part of this Epistle, he shews the Corinthians, with what visible faithfulness and sincerity he had acted, and what diligence he had used in promoting their eternal happiness.

To save time, I forbear going through the connection of his discourse, and only observe, that in the words of our text, he shows what kept him faithful, and influenced him to so much diligence in the work to which he was called, by alluding to an expression in the 116th Psalm. It is written, 'I have believed, therefore have I spoken. We also believe, and therefore speak.' In this he intimates, that our inward persuasion of the great truths of the ever-

everlasting gospel, could not but have a powerful influence upon him and others, to press the important message, and watch over the souls of those committed to their charge.

In discoursing further at this time, I intend to confine myself to this single truth, which may be easily deduced from the text: that one of the most essentially necessary, and the most extensively useful qualifications of a good minister, is, that he be a good man, that he have a firm belief of that gospel he is called to preach, and a lively sense of religion upon his own heart. After I shall have explained and confirmed this observation, I will conclude with some practical reflections.

Though I have mentioned real religion as one of the most essentially necessary qualifications, I am not ignorant, that taking the words in a strict sense, gifts are more necessary to the being of the ministry, than even grace itself. To make the efficacy of the ordinances to depend upon the inward state of the administrator, is a Popish error, and is expressly guarded against by the Assembly of Divines, in our shorter Catechisms in the following words: ‘The Sacraments,’ and it is equally true of every other ordinance, ‘become effectual to salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his spirit in them that by faith receive them.’

But some degree of capacity is evidently necessary in the most absolute sense. A man who is altogether void of knowledge and utterance, or who is deaf and dumb, may be a faint, but cannot be a minister. This concession, however, takes nothing from the force of the observation, that real religion is of the greatest importance, and most absolutely necessary to the faithful discharge of a minister's sacred trust. That I may set this in as clear and strong a light as I am able, let me intreat your attention to the following observations :

I. Real religion in a minister, will make him knowing, and able for his work. It is necessary for any one who intends himself for the office of the ministry, by diligent study, and the use of those means, with which God in his providence hath furnished him, to improve his understanding, and acquire a stock of knowledge, that he may be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. In this he can have no such incitement as concern for his master's glory. Nay, he that is truly religious, is taught of God, the best of masters, and will have some of his most profitable lessons from his own experience.

Let me the rather intreat your attention to this, that those who are most apt to disparage piety are also apt to speak in terms of high approbation on the subject of literature and science.

—Observe

—Observe, therefore, that true religion serves both to give a man that knowledge which is necessary to a minister, and to direct and to turn into its proper channel the knowledge which he may otherwise acquire. It is an approved maxim in every science, that practical and experimental knowledge far exceeds that which is merely speculative; at least, though the last may make the prettiest show, the first is by much to be preferred for use. Any wise man, if he was to go a dangerous voyage, would readily prefer, as his pilot, one, who had much experience, and had failed often that way himself, to one, who had studied navigation in the most perfect manner ashore. So, my brethren, every man who regards his soul would choose for his spiritual guide, one, who appears to have the wisdom to save his own, and would expect by him to be best directed, how to avoid the rocks and shelves in his passage, through this dangerous and tempestuous ocean of life.

But if this maxim holds true in other science, it holds yet more strongly in religion, which cannot be truly known unless it be felt. There is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty; and therefore he that is a stranger to the one, is ignorant of the other. I am not insensible that a bad man may espouse, and plead for a great part of the system of divine truth; but as he cannot cordially embrace it, so I am inclined to think that he never truly

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understands

understands it. The Apostle Paul declares, that it is only by the Spirit of God which is given to every real christian, and more especially to every faithful minister, that a man is enabled to treat rightly of divine things: ‘ Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God; which things we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.’ As the real Christian from that character is best disposed to seek after, so he is by the same means best fitted to improve and apply his knowledge of spiritual things. This will appear, if we consider what ought to be the great work of a minister. He hath to do chiefly with the hearts and consciences of his people. His business is to convince the ungodly; to awaken the secure; to enlighten the ignorant; to direct and strengthen the weak in the faith, and in general as a wise physician, to administer the medicine proper to the various conditions and disorders of his hearers. Now it must, at first sight, appear, that he who is a stranger to the power of godliness, and knows nothing of the spiritual life himself, must be utterly unfit for discerning how it thrives, or assisting

assisting and promoting it in others. That man must surely be most powerful in searching, and most skilful in guiding the consciences of others, who has been accustomed to examine and direct his own.

I only farther observe upon this particular, that true religion will purify, and direct into its proper channel, the knowledge he may otherwise acquire. It is a great mistake to think, sound learning is an enemy to religion, and to suppose that an ignorant ministry is the best or safest. There is no branch of human knowledge of which a divine may not be the better, or which a good man will not improve to the glory of God and the good of others; though some of them are more important than others; and it is necessary to give to any of them, only such proportion of our time, as is consistent with our great and principal aim. Now true religion is the great preservative against mistake or abuse of any kind on this subject. A bad man is apt to study, merely to gratify his own fancy; and there is a false luxury and delicacy in feeding the mind as well as the body. A bad man is also exceedingly prone to intellectual pride and self-sufficiency; than which, there is not a vice more dangerous in itself, or more contrary to the character of a minister of the New Testament. But he who is sanctified by divine grace, as he has every motive to diligence in acquiring knowledge, so the
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single purpose to which he will wish to apply it, is to serve God in the gospel of his Son.

II. Real religion in a minister will make him happy and chearful, ready and willing to do his duty. There is a great difference between the prompt, and speedy obedience of a servant who loves his master and his work, and the reluctant labour of him who only deceives him, that he may eat of his bread. A truly pious man, undertakes the office of the ministry from love to God, with a view to promote his glory, and what he hath counted his interest in the world, viz. The welfare of the souls of men. An unholy minister undertakes this employment only as a trade to earn by, and has it at least as his highest aim to promote his own worldly advantage. It is easy to see in what a different manner these different persons will act, and in what different light they will view the sacred duties of their function. He who truly believes the gospel and loves its Author, will reckon it his highest honour when he is called to recommend it to the belief of others. He will be apt to teach, and will find a pleasure in carrying his message, besides the reward he expects from him who employs him, and will undergo with chearfulness every fatigue he is subjected to in the execution of his office. On the other hand, he who is actuated by a contrary principle, though he is obliged, that he may raise his wages, in
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some sort to do his duty; yet how heavily must it go on, how tedious and burdensome must it be, both in preparation and performance! He will count his service at the altar, and his work among his people, as a toil and drudgery, and reckon all that redeemed time that he can save for himself, from the duties of his office.

Perhaps it may be thought that there lies a strong objection against this observation from experience; as it appears that such ministers as have least of religion, commonly go most lightly under the charge, and are far from feeling any burden in what is committed to them; whereas the most pious and faithful ministers seem to have a weight upon their spirits, and such a concern for the salvation of their people, as cannot but take much from their cheerfulness in the work to which they are called. In answer to this, observe, that an unfaithful minister is not easy and cheerful because his work is agreeable to him, but because he takes as little of it as may be, and seeks his pleasure more than his duty. Certain it is, that the work of the ministry must be irksome and uneasy to him that believes not, except so far as he makes it subservient to ambition, and displays his own talents when he should be feeding his people's souls. This, I confess, which the Apostle justly calls preaching ourselves, may be abundantly gratifying to the most corrupt heart. On the other hand, that concern for his people which is upon the heart

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of every faithful pastor, is far from being inconsistent with the most solid peace and desirable pleasure arising from the discharge of his duty. It is like the exercise of pity and compassion to the distressed, in him, who is acting for their relief, which, though in some sense painful, is yet accompanied with the approbation of God, and conscience, as flowing from a rightly disposed mind, and therefore to be cherished and cultivated rather than suppressed. There is a time for every good man to mourn, and a time to rejoice, and perhaps the one is even more salutary than the other; for we are told, that God will appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, 'to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.'

III. Real religion in a minister will make him faithful, and impartial in the discharge of his trust. The God in whose presence we stand, and in whose name we speak, is no respecter of persons, and neither should we be, in doing his work. There is commonly a great variety of persons, of different stations, and of different characters, committed to the inspection of a minister; the pleasing or displeasing of whom, has a considerable influence on his worldly ease and interest. This is a great temptation to be unfaithful, and often leads to speak unto them "smooth things, and prophecy deceit" or at least, not to deal with all that freedom and impar-

partiality, that his duty to God requires. In every unregenerate man, worldly interest in one shape or another, either vanity or gain, is the supreme motive of action; and therefore, as most men are impatient of reproof, it cannot be supposed, that an un sanctified minister will venture to provoke their displeasure, or to gall them with unacceptable truths. The favour of the great, or the applause of the multitude, he certainly will seek more than the edification of any. On the other hand, he who truly fears God, and believes what he teaches, will act with faithfulness and boldness. He will remember, that if he seek to please men, he cannot be the servant of Christ. He will therefore no farther obtain, and indeed no farther wish to obtain their favour, than as a diligent discharge of his duty approves him to their consciences in the sight of God, or forces the approbation of the impartial, notwithstanding the resentment of particular offenders. It is only the fear of God can deliver us from the fear of man. I do not pretend that all who fear God are wholly delivered from it; but surely, bad men must be far more under the government of this sinful principle. The one may fail occasionally, the other is corrupted wholly. There are two reasons which incline me particularly to insist on that faithfulness, which can only flow from true piety.

1. That preaching, in order to be useful, must be very particular, and close in the application.

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General truths, and abstract reasoning have little or no influence upon the hearers, as the ignorant cannot, and the wise will not apply them to themselves.

2. The other reason is, that private admonition, and personal reproof, are a great part of a minister's duty, and a duty that cannot be performed by any man who hath not a steady regard to the presence and command of that God, who hath set him to watch for the souls of his people, as one that must give an account.

IV. Real religion in a minister will make him active and laborious in his work. Diligence is absolutely necessary to the right discharge of the pastoral duties, whether public or private. It requires no small attention and labour to seek out fit and acceptable words, as the preacher expresses it, to stir up the attention of the inconsiderate, to awaken secure, and convince obstinate sinners, to unmask the covered hearts of hypocrites, to set right the erring, and encourage the fearful. An unbelieving minister must be careless and slothful. As he is unconcerned about the success of his work, he cannot have any great concern about the manner of performance. But he who believes the unspeakable importance of what he is employed about, both to himself, and his people, cannot fail to be diligent. He knows, that he himself must answer to God for the care he has taken of the souls committed to his charge, and that if he does

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not faithfully warn the wicked to turn from their ways, their blood will be required at his hand.

Oh! my brethren, what a striking consideration is this, to suppose ourselves interrogated by the Supreme Judge, concerning every sinner under our charge! Did you earnestly warn this unhappy soul, by earnest exhortations in public, and by serious affectionate exhortations in private to consider his ways? It is an easy thing, by a partial or cursory performance of our duty, to screen ourselves from the censure of our fellow men; but to stand at the judgment seat of Christ, and answer there for our diligence, is a more awful trial.

Will not also a concern for his peoples interest, animate a pious minister to diligence? If he is truly pious, as he loves God, he loves his brother also. The Apostle Paul says, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." If a man in good earnest, believes, that everlasting misery must be the portion of all who die in an unrenewed state, what pains will he not take, to prevent sinners from going to that place of torment?

One who could see a fellow creature, in the rage of a fever, rushing to the brink of a precipice, and not restrain him, would fall under lasting infamy. Must not the same compassion move the heart of a serious person, who sees his fellow-sinners going blindfold to the pit of perdition?

It is their not believing these things, that makes them so fearless in sinning; if you truly believe them, will you not make an effort to alarm them

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There are no motives like these to diligence,—**he** that believes, will certainly speak.

V. In the last place, real religion will make a minister successful in his work. This it does, both as it fits him for doing his duty to his people, which has been illustrated above, and as it adds to his precepts the force of his example. First, it makes him successful, as it fits him for his duty. It is true indeed, that God only can give the blessing upon a minister's labours, and that he can save by many, or by few, by the weakest, as well as by the ablest instrument; yet we see from experience, that in all ordinary cases, he proportions the success to the propriety, or sufficiency of the means. Neither is there any surer mark, that God intends effectual benefit to any part of the world or the church, than when he raises and commissions men eminently qualified to plead his cause. Therefore, real piety, even in this respect, contributes to a minister's success. If diligence in all other things produces success, it must be so also in the ministry. If he that lays out his ground with the greatest judgment, prepares and dresses it with the greatest care, has the most plentiful crop; if the shepherd that waits most diligently upon his flock, feeds them in the best pasture, and leads them to the safest shelter, has the most increase; then that minister, who does his duty most wisely and powerfully, will also see most of the fruit of his labours.

But real and unaffected yet visible seriousness,
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has also its own proper additional influence on a minister's success. An apparent and visible impression upon the speaker's mind, of what he says, gives it an inexpressible weight with the hearers. There is a piercing heat, a penetrating force, in that which flows from the heart, which distinguishes it not only from the coldness of indifference, but also, from the false fire of enthusiasm or vain glory. Besides all this, the example of a pious minister, is a constant instruction to his people. It ratifies his doctrine while he not only charges them to do what he says, but to be what he is. This will receive much illustration from its contrary.

A minister who has a careless, untender walk, defeats, by his life, the intent of his preaching. Though in reason, it cannot justify any one in disobeying wholesome instructions, that the instructor despises them himself; yet it is one of the most common excuses men make for themselves, and few excuses seem to set their consciences more at ease. Loose and careless persons think themselves quite at liberty to despise the reproofs of their pastor, if, while he teaches others he teaches not himself.

Nay, not only is it thus with the profane, but even those who have the greatest regard for religion, are not so much affected with the same truths, when spoken by one they think indifferent about them, as when spoken by one, who seems to feel what he speaks, and who lives as he teaches.

Experience greatly confirms the whole of this reasoning—for wherever an eminently pious minister has lived, and laboured long, there is commonly to be found the most knowing, serious, sober-minded, and judicious people: nay, the very memory of such a minister is often long continued after he is gone, and his example is proposed by his hearers to their children's children.

From all these considerations, I conclude, that the most important qualification of a good minister, is, to be a believing preacher, and that, if he saves his own soul, he will be the probable mean of saving them that hear him.

I proceed now to make some improvement of the subject.

Reverend Fathers and Brethren;

As we would wish our people to do, let us take heed how we hear, and make a faithful application to ourselves, of what hath been said upon the subject. Let it engage us to a serious examination of ourselves, lest while we preach the gospel to others, we ourselves should be reprobates. This ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious thoughts, for several reasons. We are in danger of thinking ourselves too easily safe, by comparing that outward regularity, to which our office itself, even from secular motives, obliges us, with the licentious extravagance of profane sinners. We are in danger of mistaking our frequent thinking and speaking of the things of
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God, in the way of our calling, for an evidence of true religion, in ourselves. We may also, perhaps, mistake those gifts with which God hath furnished us, for the benefit of his own people, as the fruits of the Spirit, and of gracious dispositions in our hearts. A minister is as much liable to self-deceit as others, and in some respects more so. We have therefore much need, often to make trial of our state, as well as to give all diligence to make our own calling and election sure.

But let us beware of imagining, that this discourse is only applicable to such as have no real faith in Christ. God forbid! that there were any minister among us, a complete unbeliever, counting the gospel a fable. But faith, and every other gracious disposition grafted upon it, are capable of many degrees of improvement and strength; and in proportion to the strength of our faith, and the impression we have of divine things, will be our diligence, and consequently our success, in the work of the ministry. Let us therefore impress our minds, with a more and more lively sense, of the important truths which we teach and hear. Let us not starve ourselves, while we are feeding others: but study to arrive at a greater degree of love to God, and delight in him; a greater conformity to his blessed image, in purity of heart, and integrity of life. Let us in a special manner, study to attain to more and more intimate communion with God in secret which is the sign of our dependance upon him,

and the very exercise of love to him, which is the means of constancy, and the source of joy in religion.

Above all, let us set our affections upon the things that are above, where our Redeemer sits, at his Father's right hand. As our profession is to be pilgrims, and strangers in the earth, to live by faith, and not by sight; let us study, to raise our hopes of, and desire after, the heavenly inheritance. By this, we shall not only believe, but know and feel the value of true religion, which cannot fail to make us diligent in seeking the good of others.

Oh! my brethren, what reason have we to be inwardly ashamed at the weakness of our faith, and the coldness of our love, as they shew themselves, by our indifference in the duties of our office! We are often ready both to complain and wonder, that our hearers are so little affected with the most awful considerations; that they can hear with indifference of everlasting happiness, and sit without fear under the denunciations of eternal wrath; that we cannot persuade them, it is of importance to think what shall become of them for ever. But is it not also to be wondered at, that we ourselves can often speak of these things with so little emotion? Can we ever be sufficiently affected with the danger of our hearers, when we consider, that we must either save them by convincing and converting them now, or deliver our own souls, by witnessing, justifying

tifying, and perhaps pleading for their condemnation at the last day? However plain and simple these truths are, of the final judgment of ministers and people, they are quite unfathomable in their meaning and importance to both. It is strange that we can think of them without the deepest concern, or even speak of them without tears.

Let us pray that the Lord would encrease our faith, that believing we may speak, and that our speech may be with such efficacy, by the blessing of God, as many sinners may be thereby brought to everlasting life; that we may approve ourselves to him that sent us; and that when Christ, the chief Shepherd shall appear, we may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

Man in his Natural State.

REV. iii. 17.

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

IN order to preach the gospel with success, it is necessary that we should begin, by establishing the great and fundamental truths, on which all the rest are built, and to which they constantly refer. Nay, it is necessary that we should often look back to these, and see that we be not off the foundation, or that it be not weakly, or imperfectly laid. Of this sort, I take the guilt, misery, and weakness of our nature to be; and therefore have chosen the words now read, as the subject of discourse.

discourse, in which the Spirit of God reproves the sufficiency, and self-righteousness of the church of Laodicea.

“ Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, &c.” I suppose you will all easily understand, that the words are figurative, and are spoken entirely with a view to the spiritual state of that church. In this light, let us consider what is precisely their meaning.

We may either suppose, that this charge is brought against the church of Laodicea, because there were many there, under the profession of the gospel, who were notwithstanding, still in a natural unrenewed state—strangers to the power of religion; of which, their being thus unhumbled, and insensible of their guilt and misery, was the evidence; and for which, the remedy is prescribed in the following words: “ I counsel thee to buy of me gold, & tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white & raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the & shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.”

Or we may suppose, that this reproof was in a great measure applicable to them all in general, believers and unbelievers; the best of them, being exceedingly prone to trust in themselves, that they were righteous; instead of that humble dependence on the merit and grace of their Redeemer, which ought not only to be the refuge of the sinner,

ner, but the confidence of the faint. And there is no question, that this is a proper caution to professing Christians in every age, to beware of splitting on the rock of self-sufficiency.

But as this disposition reigns in the heart of every one that is yet at a distance from God, is the foundation of their security and impenitence, and is what they must be brought off from before they can be reconciled to God; it is for their benefit that I chiefly design this discourse, though it may also be useful, and shall be in part applied to the children of God. It is an affecting thought when pursued to its consequences; yet, alas! it is unquestionably true, that in every assembly, such as this, of professing Christians, there are not a few, who are in "the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," under the wrath of God, and liable to the condemning sentence of his law; and at the same time, that the far greater part of them are ignorant of it, and know that they are "wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked."

In discoursing farther upon this subject, therefore, I shall,

I. Endeavour to prove and illustrate this truth that all mankind are by nature in a state of sin and misery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God.

II. I shall briefly shew you, that being brought to a lively sense, and genuine conviction of this, is
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the first and a necessary step to the saving knowledge of God in Christ.—And, in the last place, shall make some practical improvement of the subject.

I. In the first place, then, I am to prove and illustrate this truth, that all mankind are, by nature, in a state of sin and misery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God. What is said in this passage of the Laodiceans, is universally true of the posterity of Adam. Unless an inward and essential change has been wrought upon them by the grace of God, they are ‘wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.’ It is also true of them, as well as the of Laodiceans, that they know it not; but vainly presume themselves to be rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing. If these two things are jointly true of many of you my hearers, there is nothing in which you can have so great a concern; therefore, let me earnestly beseech your most serious attention to what shall be said, as the success of this conviction is necessary to your understanding, or profiting by any other part of divine truth, as I shall afterwards shew you.

The proof of the truth here asserted, can be only of two kinds: 1. From Scripture, which is the testimony of God declaring it; 2. From the visible state of the world, and our own experience finding it to be so

1. That all mankind are by nature in a state of sin

sin and misery, appears from the express and repeated testimony of the word of God. And this testimony we have, not only in particular passages carrying the truth, but in the strain and spirit of the whole, and the several dispensations of Divine providence there recorded, which are all of them built upon this supposition, and intended to remedy this universal evil.

See what God declares: Gen. vi. 5. ‘And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually.’ And again, ‘the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.’ We may take the Psalmist David’s testimony of himself, as a sample of the rest of mankind; and indeed he plainly intimates that it is a common calamity: ‘Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Behold! I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.’

We may take also the testimony of the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans, which is the more full to our present purpose, that as he had never been at Rome, he is there laying the foundation of religion in general, and the Christian dispensation in particular, by a clear and explicit proof of the need the world had of a Saviour, from its universal corruption and depravity. See then what he says—‘What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.

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As it is written, 'There is none righteous, no not one.' And again—'Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.—for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.'

You may also see, that the Apostle traces this disorder to its very source.—'Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'

I shall add but one express scripture-testimony more.—'And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.'

But, besides the particular passages of scripture, positively declaring this truth, the whole frame and contexture of the scriptures, and all the dispensations of divine providence recorded in them, are a proof of the same thing. Man is every where considered as in a fallen and sinful state. Every thing that is prescribed to him, and every thing that is done for him, goes upon that supposition. It is not one man, or a few men that are in scripture called to repentance, but all without exception. Now repentance is only the duty of a sinner. An innocent person cannot repent, he has nothing to grieve for in his heart, or to forsake in his life. It is also proper to observe, that one of the scripture-characters of God is, 'merciful and gracious, slow to anger,

' anger, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.' Now, he could not be to us a forgiving God, and there would be no need that he should be revealed under that character, unless we were sinners that stood in need of pardon. Mercy, indeed, is the distinguishing attribute of God, and this can only have respect to offenders. All the other perfections of God might be exercised towards pure and holy creatures, but mercy only towards sinners. He might be a good, holy, just, wise, powerful God to persons in a state of innocence, but he can shew mercy only to the guilty.

Do not the dispensations of God's providence shew the same thing? He sent the flood as a testimony of the wickedness of the world, and for the punishment of a guilty race. Remember also the sacrifices which were appointed and accepted by God from the beginning of the world. Sacrifices are for atonement and expiation. They are plainly a substitution in the room of a forfeited life. It is doing violence to common sense, to make them any thing else. The whole Jewish œconomy, which had in it so many sacrifices, so many offerings, so many washings and purifications, does plainly suppose the person using them to be infected with sin or moral pollution. Had not this been the case, they had been extremely absurd and improper.

But the strongest testimony of all that God hath given to the guilt and corruption of mankind,

kind, is his sending his own Son into the world to redeem them by the sacrifice of himself.—To what purpose redeem them if they were not in bondage? Why so costly an expiation if our lives had not been forfeited to divine justice? But that it was for this purpose that Christ came into the world, is so plain from the whole of the scriptures, that I shall select but one passage out of many to prove it.—‘Whom God hath set
‘ forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his
‘ blood, to declare his righteousness, for the re-
‘ mission of sins that are past, through the for-
‘ bearing of God.’

What is said already, on this head, is a full proof from scripture, that man is now by nature in a state of sin: that he is also, in consequence of that, in a state of misery, and liable to the wrath of God, is proved by many of the same passages, and by many others.—‘For the wrath
‘ of God is revealed from heaven against all un-
‘ godliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold
‘ the truth in unrighteousness.—For the wages of
‘ sin is death, &c.’ But I need not multiply passages to this purpose, for in all God’s dispensations, the deserved punishment of sinners is as evident as their sinfulness itself. It is, indeed, fully proved from the essential perfections of God, particularly his holiness and justice. He is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity. ‘Evil cannot dwell with him, nor fools, that
‘ is, sinners, stand in his sight.’

Is not all this then, my brethren, a sufficient proof from the testimony of God, that man in a natural state is sinful and miserable? Shall we affirm ourselves to be whole if he saith we are unsound? Do we know more than God? Will we not give credit to the fountain of truth? Nor is it any objection to this, that we ourselves know it not, or are but little sensible of it. One considerable part of the disease is blindness of understanding; so that we may and must, till our eyes are opened, be ignorant of our danger. — We may think and say that we are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; while we are ‘wretched, and miserable, and blind and naked.’

2. The same thing appears from the visible state of the world, and our own experience. Unbelievers are apt to hear with indifference and neglect, what they are told from scripture-testimony, unless otherwise confirmed to them: and it is with the unbeliever we have now to do. Besides, the establishment of this truth, upon other evidence than that of scripture, ought to have a powerful influence in inducing men to believe the other truths in scripture, that are connected with and founded upon it. I think it therefore highly proper to lay before you what evidence we have of our lost state, from the observation of the world, though the scriptures had been silent. I would likewise recommend to all, what shall be said on this subject, to preserve your
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your faith unshaken, and keep you from blasphemous, unbelieving thoughts, if at any time you should be tempted to them: since, even unenlightened reason confirms the foundation of divine truth, and nature and providence conspire in preaching the doctrine of divine grace.

Now, doth not our experience, as well as the observation of others, shew us, that we are born in sin, and conceived in iniquity? May we not say from our own knowledge, that the imaginations of the heart of man are only evil from his youth, and that continually? Is there not a proneness and tendency to evil, universally to be observed in mankind, and a backwardness and aversion to that which is good? Is not this apparent even in children, upon the first dawn of reason in their minds, and the first sight of choice or inclination in their hearts? Surely it must be owned, that in that early period, they are at least comparatively innocent.—If any among us is without sin, it must be the youngest; ‘yet folly is bound in the heart of a child.’—How hard is it to guard them from evil, and to inspire them with good dispositions, even by the wisest and earliest care in their instruction! And even after the most successful pains, are there not still many remaining blemishes, through the prevalence of corrupt nature, which shew, that the ground-work itself was faulty? But, on the contrary, how easily do men learn that which is evil? Do they need to be taught? Is it not

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enough to give them licence? How just is that description in Jeremiah! 'They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.' I am far from denying, that men are improved and forwarded in sin, by instruction and example, as well as in that which is good: but it is plain, they are far apter scholars in the first than in the last: which plainly shews, they are more powerfully disposed to it by nature. Nay, is it not evident, from the universal experience and testimony of those who act from a principle of religion, that it is extremely difficult, with all the care they can take, to resist the propensity of nature to the contrary; and that in the best, it often gets the superiority, when they are off their guard? Is not this an evidence of the depravity and corruption of human nature, and its tendency to evil? Are those who hate sin often overcome by it, and shall those who love it, presume to say they are free from it?

If any should ask, how I prove that that course of action to which human nature is inclined is evil, without the assistance of scripture? I answer, from reason; and that many ways—from its pernicious effects on societies, and private persons; from the testimony of the world in general, when others than themselves are concerned, and from the testimony of every man's conscience, in his own case. Who is there, that does not often feel in himself a powerful tendency to what he cannot but in his heart condemn?

demon? Is not his conscience, God's vicegerent? and doth not natural religion, as well as the religion of Christ, declare him corrupt? So that I may say with the Apostle Paul, not citing the passage as a proof, but as an illustration and description of the character and state of natural men—' For when the Gentiles which have not
' the law, do by nature the things contained in
' the law: these having not the law, are a law
' unto themselves, which shew the work of the
' law written in their hearts, their conscience al-
' so bearing witness, and their thoughts, the
' mean while, accusing or else excusing one
' another.'

Thus there is as much light remaining with us since the fall, as to shew, that we are 'out of the way, but not to bring us back to it again.

As a serious consideration of the state of the wicked may shew us our natural impurity, so it hath been long ago discovered, and confessed by many of the ancient Heathens, who never heard of the name of Christ, nor knew of the remedy. These, discerning by nature the perfectly pure and holy nature of God, and comparing it with the dispositions prevalent in man, could not reconcile them together: but concluded, that a creature so corrupt could not come in that condition out of the hands of its Creator. This difficulty some of them endeavoured to solve by a state of pre-existence, which bears some resemblance to the true solution given of it in the ho-
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ly scripture, viz. the apostacy of our first parents, which entailed a corrupted nature upon their posterity, in which the light of nature and revealed truth seem almost wholly to coincide.

It is to the same thing that I cannot help attributing the practice that so universally prevailed over the Heathen world, before the coming of Christ, of offering sacrifices, to appease the wrath of the deity supposed to be offended. That the custom of sacrificing prevailed very generally, perhaps universally among the Heathen nations, at the greatest distance from, and having no correspondence with each other, is a certain and unquestionable fact. Neither do I see to what cause we can ascribe it, unless to one of these two; either an ancient tradition from the beginning of the world, and spread with the inhabitants through the several parts of it, as they separated and peopled it, or to the common condition of human nature, which dictated the same thing to persons in such distant places.

If the first of these suppositions is embraced, which indeed I suppose to be the truth, it appears, that sacrifices were appointed by God to man in his fallen state, for the pardon of sin, and that they had reference to the great propitiatory sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.

If we prefer the last supposition, it would seem as if the consciousness of guilt had uniformly prompted men in all ages and nations to offer up some atonement for their offences. In both cases,

cases, it equally serves to prove the corruption and sinfulness of human nature.

Now, as what hath been said plainly proves the impurity of man in his natural state, so his misery and liability to punishment may also be proved, both as a natural consequence of his sinfulness, and even more plainly by itself. There is not only a considerable degree of actual misery in the world, but plain presages of more to follow it in the world to come. Need I take up much time in enumerating the several miseries and calamities incident to human life? Are not oppression and injury from one another, poverty, sickness, pain and death, the plain fruits of sin, and visible tokens of God's displeasure? Man, with some marks of superiority and excellence of nature, is even, by means of his superiority, his knowledge, and foresight of his own sufferings, more miserable than any other of the creatures that is equally subject to the stroke of death.

To the whole, I shall only subjoin one consideration more, which is applicable to both parts of the argument—I have often thought, that the 'natural terror and fear with which
' men are possessed, of the presence of God, or
' any remarkable token of his power, is nothing
' else but an indication of guilt, or an apprehen-
' sion of wrath.'

You may see some incidents in scripture, from which it is natural to conclude, that when God
makes

makes any visible manifestation of his glory, or sends any of his angels or ministers from heaven to earth, those who are present are filled with the utmost dread and terror.

Thus, in the relation given of God's appearance upon Mount Sinai, it is said, 'And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.' See another example in Isaiah :—' Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.' And in the New Testament, in the Apostle John,—' And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.'

And is not this always the case, in all ages, that upon any remarkable appearance of an inhabitant of the other world, or even when any such thing is falsely apprehended, the inhabitants of this world are filled with extraordinary terror? What is this do you imagine, but consciousness of guilt, and apprehension of vengeance?

Innocence has no enemy, and it has nothing to fear. We are all in much the same case with Adam, immediately after his first transgression ; when he heard God's voice in the garden, ' he was afraid, and fled, and hid himself.'—We read of no such fear possessing him while he retained his innocence ; but as soon as he had sinned, he began to dread an avenging God.

From

From all this, then, I would conclude, that reason accords with scripture, in saying, that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God:' that man in a natural state is 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

An Inducement to come to Christ.

Rev. iii. 17.

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

HAVING, in a former discourse, proved and illustrated this truth, that all mankind are by nature in a state of sin and misery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God:—I proceed now to the second thing proposed, which was to shew you, that being brought to a lively sense and genuine conviction of this, is the first, and a necessary step to the saving knowledge of God in Christ.

On this I shall not need to spend much time, as it is so exceedingly plain, both in itself, and from what hath been already said.—It is, however,

ever, necessary to set it clearly before you, in order to lay a foundation for the improvement of the subject.

If the doctrine of Christ, and of him crucified, proceeds upon the supposition of our sinful and miserable condition by nature, then surely it can neither be valued, embraced, nor improved; and indeed, I think hardly understood, by those who know not this their natural state. What Christ hath done, and promises to do in our behalf, is designed as a remedy for our distressed condition; and therefore, till the distress is known, the remedy will be set at nought. If a physician should offer his care and skill for the recovery of a man, who esteemed himself in perfect health, would he not deride the proposal, so long as he continued in that opinion? If any man should offer a charitable supply of clothes and food to one, who imagined himself immensely rich, and gloried in his riches, would he not look upon it as the grossest insult?

Just so is the gospel treated by all such as see not their misery. What is the substance of the gospel? 'To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Behold! I preach to you Christ crucified, a Saviour, suited to your necessities, able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God through him. He is well fitted to be a Mediator between you and your offended maker. He hath offered himself up, a sacrifice to the justice of God, for your sins, by

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‘ the merit of which, you may be saved from
 ‘ deservèd and impending ruin. He offers him-
 ‘ self as a guide, to direct your feet in the way
 ‘ of peace—to stand by you in the difficulties
 ‘ and dangers to which you are exposèd, and to
 ‘ give you, by his communicated strength, a
 ‘ complete victory over all your enemies.’

What reply doth the unconvinced sinner
 make to all this? Why he saith, ‘ I know
 ‘ nothing of this misery you suppose; wherefore
 ‘ then a Saviour? I see no sin; what necessity
 ‘ then for an atonement? I fear no wrath;
 ‘ therefore will seek for no intercessor. My
 ‘ eyes are open, therefore I will have no guide.
 ‘ I know of no enemies, and therefore will not
 ‘ enter into contention with a shadow, or flee
 ‘ when no man pursueth.’

These, my brethren, are either directly or
 implicitly the thoughts of men, in a secure and
 unconvinced state; and while they are so, they
 can see no form nor comeliness in the Saviour,
 nor any beauty that they should desire him.

It is otherwise with the broken in spirit. He
 sees his own vileness and unworthiness, and
 therefore cannot lift his eyes to God, but
 through the atoning blood of Christ. He fears
 the avenger of blood, and therefore flies to the
 ‘ city of refuge’—The message of the gospel is to
 him indeed glad tidings of great joy, and he
 counts it a faithful saying, and ‘ worthy of all
 ‘ acceptance.’

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The justice of this representation you may see from what our Saviour himself says, of the end of his coming: ‘ They that be whole need not a
‘ physician, but they that are sick : But go ye
‘ and learn what that meaneth, I will have mer-
‘ cy and not sacrifice ; for I am not come to call
‘ the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’

See also the terms of his invitation. ‘ Come
‘ unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
‘ and I will give you rest.’

Appetite and knowledge of necessity is first required, or supposed to the bestowing of gospel blessings. ‘ Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come
‘ ye to the waters.’

I shall only add, that we find by the instances recorded in scripture, of such as were converted by the preaching of the gospel, that their conversion
‘ took its rise from conviction of sin.—‘ Now
‘ when they heard this, they were pricked in
‘ their hearts, and said unto Péter, and to the
‘ rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what
‘ shall we do ?’ See also the instance of the jailor
—‘ Then he called for a light, and sprang in,
‘ and came trembling, and fell down before
‘ Paul and Silas : and brought them out, and
‘ said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?’

Repentance unto life, and the return of the sinner to God, proceeds from the same cause in every age. Who are the persons who believingly apply to Christ for the pardon of their sins, but those who see they are undone without him ?

Who are the persons in whose eyes he is most precious, and who maintain the most habitual dependence upon him? Are they not those who have been most effectually humbled, and see their own insufficiency for any thing that is good?

From all this I conclude, that none can come to Christ by faith, but those who see themselves to be 'wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked.'

Let us now make some improvement of what hath been said upon this subject for your instruction and direction.

1. I would improve what has been said on this subject, for discovering the danger of many among us who have never yet been brought to a just sense of their character and state. Even the general belief that such often have in the scriptures, may shew them what they have to fear. I might, no doubt, first of all observe, how very guilty and miserable those are, who are most notorious for sins of the grossest and most shameful kind. But my subject leads me more directly to consider who are in general unrenewed, than to mark the several degrees of guilt in particular sinners. From the text, therefore, and the illustration of it, I am authorised to declare to you, and 'I beseech you to hear it with application,' that all such as were never brought to a real discovery and inward sense of their miserable condition by nature, are still in a state of wrath, and strangers to the power of religion, whatever may
be

be their profession, and whatever may be their present peace. Oh! how easy is it to lay asleep a natural conscience, and to keep a deceitful corrupt heart in a state of ease and security? Some formality in outward duty, some moderation in sin, so to speak, the natural decay and weakness of human passions or youthful lusts, in a character formed by human prudence, and regulated by health, credit or gain, is often made to supply the place of a heart renewed by the spirit and grace of God. But consider, I beseech you, that though some may be ten-fold more the children of the devil than others, yet all by nature are the servants of sin; and 'except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'—It is not only such as are prophane or unclean: such as riot in brutish sensuality; such as are the plagues of human society; who live in brawls and contention, but all in whom an essential change has never been wrought, that are thus included under condemnation.

It is usual for men to take encouragement, from seeing others worse than themselves; and to consider all the threatenings in scripture, as levelled against the chief and capital offenders; but my text is chiefly directed to such as say they are 'rich, and increased with goods.' Can you say then, my brethren, that you have been brought under genuine convictions of sin? Have you been obliged to fall down prostrate before God, when sitting upon the throne of his holi-

ness? Have you found the sentence of death in yourselves, and discovered no remedy but in Christ? If this has never been your case, you have reason to fear, that you are yet 'in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.'

But I must tell you also, that this is matter of feeling, more than of profession. It is not enough to speak honourably of Christ or of his works. Many do so, who never felt their necessity, or seriously and in good earnest applied to him. It were a happy thing, if all among our hearers, who call for evangelical preaching, who quarrel with us when they think we do not preach the Saviour's cross, the lost state of man, and the doctrine of free grace, were experimentally acquainted with these truths. Many such have only been accustomed to hear the Redeemer spoken of with reverence. They may be able to imitate the language of some of his servants, though they know very little of that brokenness of spirit which accompanies true repentance.

But lest this should be in any measure mistaken, I must make these two observations:—The first is, that a lively sense, and deep conviction of sin, is, properly speaking, but a negative mark of true religion; giving us to know, that the unhumbled are yet impenitent.—For it is certain, that many have been under very strong convictions, nay, have been driven to the very borders of despair with terror, who yet never were effectually changed, but stifled their convictions and

and returned to their former security of heart, and carelessness of life.

‘ Secondly,’ there may be some, on the other hand, who are truly ‘ born of God,’ in whom, the terrors of conviction have not been very remarkable. This happens most frequently in the case of those, who are called in their infancy, or earlier years, and who have had the advantage of a careful and pious education. It would be destructive of the comforts of God’s children, to lay down ‘ one method’ in which he always proceeds. He is free and sovereign in the manner of his dealing with sinners; and softens some hearts by kindness, as well as others by correction. So that if the end be brought about, we need be less solicitous about the steps of his procedure. Yet I think humility of spirit is inseparable from real religion; and if it be less visible in the anguish of repentance, it will be still manifest in the temper of the penitent.

II. Let me now, for the improvement of this subject, lay down a few of the best and most solid evidences of genuine conviction of sin. And,

1. It is a good sign that conviction is genuine, when there is a clear and deep apprehension of the evil of sin, as well as the danger of it. When the mind dwells, not only on the atrocity of particular crimes, but on the aggravation of all sin, as such: when the sinner is truly offend-
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ded with himself, for departing from his maker's service; breaking his holy laws; forgetting or despising his innumerable mercies; there may be and there is often an apprehension of suffering, when there is little sense of the evil of sin; but the conviction is then genuine, when it makes the sinner not only remember what he has done, 'but confess what he has deserved.'

2. It is a good evidence, when the sense of the evil of sin abides and grows, even though the fear of wrath may in a great measure have abated.

It is observable, that conviction of sin usually takes its rise from some gross or heinous acts, which first alarm the conscience; and in such a situation, the attention of the penitent is fixed on nothing else, but the enormities of his life. If this view continues, and produces its effects, he is soon brought to see and confess the inherent vanity of his heart; the worldliness of his affections; and the unprofitableness of his conversation. It is a very common thing, for persons who seem to have some sense of the commission of crimes, to have little or no sense at all of the neglect of duty, and of living daily to themselves. It was a heavy charge, however, brought by the Prophet against Belshazzar:—'And the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.' Wherever there is true repentance, though there may be the greatest deace of mind, there will be also a deep and
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growing sense of the evil of sin, and the obligation of being habitually devoted to God.

3. It is a good evidence, when there is a continued and growing esteem of the necessity and value of the mediation of Christ.—It was to save sinners that he came. A sense of sin is necessary to our receiving him; and in proportion to its strength, will certainly be our attachment to him. This indeed is the great and vital principle of the spiritual life.—‘ I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God; who loved me, and gave himself to die for me.’

4. The best and surest mark of real conviction of sin, is, if it leaves you possessed in a deep hatred and abhorrence of it, and a daily solicitude to fly from it. Some may counterfeit a sense of the evil of sin, to their own hearts; may have a real fear of its bitter consequences; and even a presumptuous reliance on Christ for pardon; and yet may in some instances adhere to the practice of it.

Floods of tears from such a person avail nothing; but he hath certainly truly sorrowed for sin, who in his practice forsakes it:—that is to say, he is not willingly subject to any known sin, but says with Elihu, ‘ That which I see not teach thou me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.’

III.

III. Let me beseech all serious persons to improve this subject for the trial of their state. Examine, by the principles above laid down, the reality and the progress of religion in your souls. Have you a growing sense of the evil of sin, and of your own unworthiness?—This is at once an evidence, and a mean of growth in grace. He that thinks least of himself, is highest in God's account; and the more a believer increases in holiness and real worth, the more he increases in humility. As it is an evidence, it is also a mean of further improvement; for he that hath the deepest sense of his unworthiness and weakness, will certainly live most by faith, in the merit and grace of his Redeemer.

Therefore, Christians, try yourselves by this important sign: Whether do you, by religious duties, build yourselves up on self-righteousness, or do you only learn by them, how far you fall short of what is incumbent on you? What innumerable evils compass you about; and therefore, how much have you need of mercy instead of reward? Do you look upon the works of righteousness which you have done, as something, by which you merit at the hand of God; or do you look upon them as the evidence of his own work in you, and for you, and give him the glory, to whom it is due?

IV. I shall now conclude the whole, with a

few directions for producing and preserving this profitable sense and conviction of sin. And,

1. Let me beg of every hearer the serious consideration of himself and his ways. Many have no sense of their sinfulness, because they have no knowledge of themselves at all; but go through the world, in uninterrupted thoughtlessness and unconcern. Is there any thing of greater moment than the state of your minds, and your hope towards God? Inattention is perhaps a more universal cause of impiety, than high-handed and obstinate profanity. Would you but seriously consider your ways, and lay to heart the things that belong to your peace, I would count it a hopeful circumstance; and expect you would speedily see your danger, and God in his mercy would lead you to the cure.

2. Give yourselves much to reading and hearing the word of God. The entrance of his word giveth light — It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and correction; but it is particularly necessary for conviction; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. What wonder, if those who never open a Bible, and seldom enter into the house of God, should be ignorant of their guilt and misery! The word of God shews his right in you, pleads his cause, and challenges your apostacy. It is exceedingly rare that those who have fairly turned their backs upon God's instituted worship, are disturbed in their security; but are suffered

suffered to sleep on, till they sleep the sleep of death. But it frequently happens, that those who attend ordinances, even from no higher principle than curiosity, custom or form, find, that the word of God is 'a fire and hammer' that breaketh the rock in pieces; 'that it is quick
' and powerful, sharper than any two-edged
' sword, piercing, even to the dividing asunder of
' soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a
' discerner of the thoughts and intents of the
' heart.'

3. In the last place, let me beseech you often to seat yourselves in the immediate presence of God, or rather, frequently to recollect, that you can no where go from his Spirit, or fly from his presence. There is, if I may speak so, a light and glory in the presence of God, that discerns and discloses the works of darkness. We may often excuse or palliate our conduct to men, and even hide its deformity from our own view, when we could not justify it to ourselves, if we reflected, that 'it is open and manifest in the sight of
' God.'—If, therefore, there is any thing in your practice, which you are inclined to palliate and apt to excuse,—suppose you were standing at the judgment-seat of Christ, where all of us shall shortly be; and think, whether your excuses will then stand the test of his impartial search.

If our hearts condemn us not, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. It is therefore the duty and interest of every sinner,
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An inducement to come to Christ.

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to take shame and confusion of face to himself, and apply to the ' blood of sprinkling ' which speaketh better things than the blood of ' Abel.'

SERMON

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S E R M O N IV.

On the Purity of The Heart.

PROVERBS XXX. 7. 9.

Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die : Remove far from me vanity and lies ; give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me ; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord ? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

MY BRETHREN,

OUR dependent condition as creatures, and much more our dangerous condition as sinners, exposed to daily temptation, renders prayer a duty of the most absolute necessity. You must all be sensible, how frequent and pressing the exhortations to it are in the Holy Scriptures. And, indeed, there cannot be a better evidence of

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of a right temper of mind, than an habitual disposition to the exercise of this duty.

But as prayer is a necessary duty, we ought to give the greater attention to the manner in which it is performed. We ought to ask only for such things as are truly safe and useful. We ought also to offer up our prayers with importunity, or reserve, according to the nature and comparative importance of those blessings we desire to obtain. All our wants are perfectly known to God; he is also the best judge of what is fit for us, and therefore, our petitions should be well weighed, and expressed in such terms, as, at the same time that they intimate our desires, leave much to himself, as to the measure and manner of satisfying them.

We have an excellent example of this pious and prudent conduct, in the prayer of the prophet Agur, just read in your hearing. All his requests are summed up in two general heads. These he seems to insist upon, as absolutely necessary to ask, with that humble, holy confidence, which is founded on the divine promise, that if we ask any thing agreeable to his will, he heareth us. He seems also to ask them, as what would fully satisfy him, and be sufficient for the comfort of the present life, and the happiness of the life to come. 'Two things,' says he, 'have I required of thee, deny me them not before,' or, as it ought rather to be translated, 'until I die.'

These two requests are conceived in the following terms: 'Remove far from me vanity and lies, give me neither poverty nor riches.' The first, viz. 'Remove far from me vanity and lies,' evidently relates to the temper of his mind, and the state of his soul. The second, viz. 'Give me neither poverty nor riches, relates to his outward condition, or circumstances in the present life. There are two things in the general structure of this comprehensive prayer, that merit your particular attention. First, The order of his request; beginning with what is of most importance, the temper of his mind, and his hope towards God; and then adding, as but deserving the second place, what related to his present accommodation.

Secondly, The connection of his requests. The choice he makes as to his temporal condition, is in immediate and direct subserviency to his sanctification. This is plain from the arguments with which he presses, or the reasons which he assigns for his second petition. 'Give me neither poverty nor riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.'

My brethren, I am persuaded that this subject can hardly be, at any time, unseasonable to a Christian assembly, as our misplaced, excessive, and unreasonable desires, are the greatest enemies to our progress in holiness, as well as to
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our comfort and peace. Perhaps, however, there are some circumstances that render it peculiarly proper for this auditory. Young persons are very apt to cherish vast and boundless desires as to outward things; and having not yet experienced the deceitfulness of the world, are apt to entertain excessive and extravagant hopes. The truth is, rich and poor, young and old, may here receive a lesson of the utmost moment.

Let me therefore intreat your attention, while I endeavour to open and improve this passage of the Holy Scriptures; beginning, at this time, with the first request, 'Remove far from me vanity and lies.'

In discoursing on which, I will endeavour,

I. To explain the import of it, or shew at what it chiefly points, and to what it may be supposed to extend.

II. Apply the subject for your instruction and direction.

I. I am to explain the import of the prophet's prayer, or shew at what it chiefly points, and to what it may be supposed to extend, in the petition, 'Remove far from me vanity and lies.' The word vanity, especially when it is joined, as it is frequently in Scripture, with 'lying, or lies,' is of a very large and comprehensive signification. The word in the original, translated 'vanity,'

properly signifies 'lightness' or 'emptiness;' and lies signify 'falseness,' in opposition to 'truth.'

I imagine we shall have a clear conception, both of the meaning and force of this phrase, if we make the following remark: God himself is the great fountain of life and existence: the great I AM, as he emphatically styles himself to Moses; the 'Original' and the 'only reality,' if I may so speak. All other beings have only a dependent and precarious existence; so that the creation itself, though his own work, compared to him, is vanity. 'Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' Therefore, in a particular manner, the word is often used to denote the folly of all idolatrous worship; or the giving the respect and honour to any thing else, which is due to God alone. 'They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God, they have provoked me to anger with their vanities. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain; or can the heavens give showers, art thou not he, O Lord our God?'

Sometimes it is used to denote the 'folly or unprofitableness' of any vice, and particularly of an ill founded conceit of ourselves, as well as of all fraud and dissimulation, in word or action. So that this prayer for our souls, short as it appears to be, when considered in its full extent, will be found to contain a great variety of important matter.—This I shall endeavour to give you

a brief account of, under the following particulars.

1. We are hereby taught to pray, that we may be preserved by divine grace, from all false and erroneous principles in religion ; so as we may neither be deceived by them ourselves, nor any way instrumental in deceiving others. This, by what has been said of the use of the words in Scripture, appears to be implied in the request, and it is of more moment than some are willing to allow. The understanding being the leading faculty, an error there spreads its unhappy influence through the whole temper and life. Whereas, on the contrary, light in the mind produces fidelity and security in the conscience, and tenderness in the conversation. You may observe, that through the whole history of the Old Testament, idolatry, or a departure from the knowledge and worship of the true God, is the leading sin, and the fruitful source of every other vicious practice. We sometimes, indeed, seem to stand astonished at the excessive proneness of the ancient Jews to this sin. But we need only a little reflection to discover, that an evil heart of unbelief continues the same at bottom, and daily produces the like dangerous effects. How prone have men been in all ages to depart from the simplicity of the truth ! In how many different shapes have they perverted it ! One age, or one country, has been polluted by one error ; and another by an opposite ; impelled by the un-
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stable and irregular fancies of men of corrupt minds. In the last age, the great theme of the carnal reasoner was, to attempt to expose the Scripture-Doctrine of God's certain knowledge, and precise ordination of all events; and in this, fate and necessity, have become the strong hold of infidelity, and are embraced, or seem to be embraced, by every enemy of true religion without exception. Error, shifting its ground, indeed, is but natural; for lying vanities are innumerable; but the true God is the same 'yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

At this very time, how abounding and prevalent is infidelity, calling in question the most important and fundamental principles both of natural and revealed religion! And how properly is this described, by the expression in the text, 'vanity and lies;' for it always takes its rise from the pride and vanity of the human heart! Sometimes a pride of understanding, which aspires to pass judgment on things far above its reach, and condemn things long before they are examined and understood: Sometimes also, from a pride of heart, or self-sufficiency, that is unable to endure the humbling and mortifying view given us in Scripture of our character and state. Oh how readily do men turn aside from the truth! With what greediness do they drink in the flattering but destructive poison! Need I point out to you the fatal effects of such principles taking place? It loosens the obligations to obedience, takes off the

the edge of the reproofs of conscience, and thus removing restraints, leaves men, in the emphatical language of the Holy Scriptures, 'to walk in the ways of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes.'

But in this request, 'remove far from me vanity and lies,' I would not have you confine your views to the most gross infidelity and avowed opposition to God. Pray also, that you may be preserved from error, or mistake of any kind; but especially such as have the greatest influence on the substance of religion.

A clear apprehension of the holy nature, and righteous government of God—the infinite evil of sin—the foundation of our peace in the blood of the atonement—and the renewing of our natures by the Holy Ghost, seem to me absolutely necessary to true and undefiled religion. And they are the truths which particularly serve to exalt the Creator, and lay the creature in the dust. When, therefore, we consider how grateful to corrupt nature everything is, that tends to foster pride, to create security, and set the mind at ease in the indulgence of sin; we must be sensible of how great importance it is, to pray for divine direction and divine preservation. Nothing is more dangerous to men than confidence and presumption; nothing more useful, in faith and practice, than humility and self-denial.

2. This prayer implies, a desire that we may be preserved from setting our affections on such objects

objects as are but vain and unsatisfying, and will in the end, disappoint our expectation. I take this to be not only a part, but a very important part of the Prophet's meaning. The world is the great source of temptation; the powerful and unhappy influence of which we may daily see; or rather, all of us daily and sensibly feel. What is it possesses the fancy, misleads the judgment, inflames the affections, consumes the time, and ruins the soul, but these present enjoyments, of which the wisest of men, after a full trial of them, have left us their character, 'vanity of vanities.'

I am sensible that I have now entered upon a subject, which is far from being difficult to enlarge upon, and yet, perhaps, very difficult to treat with propriety, or in such a manner as to have the intended effect. There is nothing more easy than, in a bold declamatory way, to draw pictures of the vanity of human life. It hath been done by thousands, when, after all their broken schemes and disappointed views, they have just suffered shipwreck upon the coast of the enchanted land of hope. But from such men we may expect to hear the language of despair, rather than of experience; and as it is too late for the instruction of the sufferers, so it very rarely has any effect in warning others to avoid the danger. What I would, therefore, willingly attempt is, to consider this matter in a sober scriptural light; if so be, that it may please God to carry conviction

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to our hearts, and make it truly useful, both to speaker and hearers.

Let me, therefore, my brethren, point out to you precisely, wherein the vanity of the world lieth. The world, in itself, is the workmanship of God, and every thing that is done in it, is by the ordination or permission of God. As such it is good, and may be used in subserviency to his honour, and our own peace. But through the corruption of our nature, the creature becomes the rival and competitor of the Creator for our hearts.—When we place our supreme happiness upon it, instead of making it a mean of leading us to God, then its inherent vanity immediately appears.—When men allow themselves in the indulgence of vicious pleasures, how justly may they be called ‘vanity and lies!’ They are smiling and inviting to appearance, but how dreadful and destructive in their effects! ‘Whoredom and wine, and new wine taketh away the heart.’ Those who refuse to be confined by the laws of piety and sobriety, vainly think they are walking at liberty, when they are bringing themselves into subjection to the severest and most inflexible of all masters. Read the just and striking description, by Solomon, of the effects of whoredom; and reflect on the innumerable calamities brought, in every age, on persons and families by unbridled lust. See also the effects of intemperance and excess—‘Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise

‘ wife.’ And again: ‘ The drunkard and glutton shall come to poverty. Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; at last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.’

Think on the unhappy consequences of dishonesty and fraud. ‘ Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.’—You may also see, in innumerable passages of Scripture, that oppression of others, as it is a sin of the deepest dye, so it is often remarkably overtaken, and punished in the course of providence, even in the present life. ‘ Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways; for the froward is abomination to the Lord, but his secret is with the righteous. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesteth the habitation of the just.’

But there is something more in this request, than being preserved from practises directly vicious; for the setting of our hearts upon worldly things, and making them our chief portion and delight, is certainly seeking after ‘ vanity and lies.’ They are far from affording that happiness and peace which we demand of them, and expect from them. ‘ A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.’ Can there be any thing more comfortable to experience, than that strong expression, ‘ Thou pre-
parest

‘parest a table for me in the presence of mine
‘enemies, thou anointest my head with oil, my
‘cup runneth over.’ You may also find in the
word of god, many warnings of the folly of those
who travel in the path of ambition, and put their
trust in man. ‘Surely men of low degree are
‘vanity, and men of high degree are a lie. Put
‘not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man,
‘in whom there is no help. Happy is he that
‘hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose
‘hope is in the Lord his God.’ But the most
comprehensive remark of all, upon this subject,
is, that human life itself is so exceedingly precari-
ous, that it must write ‘vanity and emptiness’ on
every thing, the possession and use of which is
confined to the present state. ‘Behold thou hast
‘made my days as an hand-breadth.’ What a
striking picture does our Lord draw of the vanity
of human happiness, in that parable of the ground
of the rich man, which brought forth plentifully !
‘And he thought within himself, saying, what
‘shall I do, because I have no room where to be-
‘stow my fruits?’ And while this man is sedu-
lously employed in making provision for a long
and happy life, ‘God said unto him, thou fool,
‘this night shall thy soul be required of thee,
‘then whose shall those things be which thou
‘hast provided?’

The whole of the preceding representation
may be summed up in this excellent sentence of
the wise man : ‘The wicked worketh a deceitful

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‘work

‘work; but to him that soweth righteously shall be a sure reward.’

Now, my brethren, need I add, how prone we are to be led astray, in a greater or less degree, by such ‘vanity and lies?’—I do not insist upon the many victims, which, in every age, have been seen to fall by the destructive hand of vice. How many have been ruined by lust, slain by intemperance, or beggared by dishonesty! But I intreat you particularly to observe, that when we set our affections immoderately upon any earthly object or enjoyment, or when they are not truly sanctified; how much they disappoint our expectation in possession, and what scenes of distress we prepare for ourselves by their removal.

3. This request, ‘Remove far from me vanity and lies,’ implies, that God would graciously preserve us from deceiving ourselves, and thinking our character better, and our state safer than it really is. When we take a view of the state of the world, and the conduct of those who have not yet cast off all belief of eternity, and a judgment to come, it is impossible to account for their security, but by a great degree of self-deceit. We may say of them with the prophet Isaiah, ‘He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, ‘Is there not a lie in my right hand?’ And from the representation given by our Saviour, it is plain that many shall continue in their mistake, and only be undeceived at the last day. ‘Not, every

‘ every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord
‘ shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.’ How
awful a reflection this! How dreadful a disap-
pointment to discover our misery only when there
is no more hope of escaping it! Is there not a po-
ssibility of this being the case with many of you,
my brethren; and do you not tremble at the
thought? I would not wish any, in general, to
give way to a spirit of bondage, or slavish fear;
but the best of the children of God have often
discovered this holy jealousy of themselves. ‘ Who
‘ can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me
‘ from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also
‘ from presumptuous sins; let them not have do-
‘ minion over me, then shall I be upright, and I
‘ shall be innocent from the great transgression.’
And again: ‘ Search me, O God, and know my
‘ heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and
‘ see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead
‘ me in the way everlasting.’

This leads me naturally to add upon this subject,
that we ought to pray for preservation from self-
deceit, as to particular branches of our character
and conduct, as well as our general state.—Many,
even upon the whole, good men, are occasionally
and insensibly brought, for a season, under the di-
rection of sinful passions: They may be indul-
ging themselves without suspicion, in what is, not-
withstanding, really provoking to God, injurious
or offensive to others, and, in the issue, hurtful to
their own peace. They may be making an enjoy-

ment, a talent, a relation, an idol, when they think they are keeping within the bounds of duty. They may be indulging a sinful resentment, when they think they are promoting the glory of God. Many an excuse for neglecting commanded duty, from prudence or difficulty, satisfies ourselves, which will not stand in the day of trial. What reason for the Prophet's prayer in the sense just now assigned, 'Remove far from me vanity and lies.'

4. In the next place, this request implies a desire to be preserved from pride and self-conceit, upon any subject. There is not any thing that affords a stronger evidence of our being unacquainted with ourselves and our own state, than that propensity to pride and vanity, which is so common to us all. It is thought by many, that pride was the sin of the angels, that cast them down to hell. It is plain, that pride was the main ingredient in the first sin of man. And perhaps it is a just and proper description of all sin as such, that it is a dethroning of God, and setting up self to be loved, honoured and served in his room. This sin is by no means confined to the worst of men, in whom it hath an absolute dominion; but retains and discovers an unhappy influence in the very best.—Every thing may be the fuel of pride; our persons, our performances, our relations, our possessions; nay, so pliable, and at the same time so preposterous is this disposition, that men are found sometimes proud of their very vices and defects

defects. But how ill do pride and vanity suit such poor mortals as we are, who seem born but to die!—Who, after passing through a longer or shorter series of weakneses, disappointments and troubles, must at last be laid in the silent grave, to moulder in the dust. We are dependent creatures, who have nothing, and can have nothing but what we receive from the unmerited favour of God. We are unwise and ignorant creatures, who know nothing to the bottom, and therefore are liable to continual mistakes in our conduct. Those among us, who have the greatest comprehension of mind, and know most; as it serves to shew the comparative ignorance of the bulk of mankind, so it serves to convince themselves how little they do know, and how little they can know after all, compared with what is to them unsearchable.

But, above all, we are sinful creatures, who have rendered ourselves, by our guilt, the just objects of divine displeasure. Is there any who dares to plead exemption from this character? And do pride and vanity become those to whom they manifestly belong? Can any thing be more foolish than indulging such dispositions? There is a very just expression of one of the apocryphal writers: ‘Pride was not made for man, nor a high look for him that is born of a woman.’ Indeed they are so evidently unsuitable to our state and circumstances, that one would think we should need no higher principle than our own reason and ob-

• servation to keep us free from them. We do however, need the most earnest and assiduous addresses to the throne of grace, to have all pride and vanity removed from us.—How hateful is pride to God! We are told, ‘he resisteth the proud.’ On the contrary, no disposition is more amiable in his sight than humility. ‘He giveth grace to the humble.’ And again: ‘To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. For thus sayeth the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’

It must, therefore, be the duty and interest of every good man, not only to resist pride and vanity, but to make it a part of his daily supplication to God, that he may effectually be delivered from both.

5. In the last place, this request implies a desire to be delivered from fraud and dissimulation of every kind. It is one of the glorious attributes of God, that he is a God of truth, who will not, and who cannot lie. He also requires of all his servants, and is delighted with truth in the inward parts. But there seems to be some difficulty in this part of the subject, more than in the others. Some will say, why pray to be delivered from fraud and dissimulation? This might be an exhortation

fation to the sinner, but cannot be the prayer of the penitent. If they are sincere in their prayer it seems impossible there can be any danger of fraud. Fraud implies deliberation and design, and though it may be concealed from others upon whom it is exercised, it can never be concealed from the person in whom it dwells, and by whom it is contrived. This is the very language of some reasoners, who infer from it, that though there are many other sins to which a man may be liable without knowing it, yet this can never be the case with dissimulation.

But, my brethren, if we consider how apt men are, upon a sudden temptation of fear or shame, or the prospect of some advantage to themselves, to depart from strict veracity, and even to justify to their own minds, some kinds and degrees of deceptions, we shall see the absolute necessity of making this a part of our prayer to God. Nay, perhaps I may go further and say, that we are as ready to deceive ourselves in this point as in any other.

Upon this important subject, there is one consideration to which I earnestly intreat your attention. Thorough sincerity, simplicity and truth, upon every subject, have, in the world, so much the appearance of weakness, and on the contrary, being able to manage and over-reach others, has so much the appearance of superior wisdom, that men are very liable to temptation from this quarter. It is to be lamented that our language itself,
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if I may so speak, has received a criminal taint; for in common discourse, the expression, 'a plain well meaning-man,' is always apprehended to imply, together with sincerity, some degree of weakness; although, indeed, it is a character of all others the most noble. In recommendation of this character, let me observe, that in this, as in all the particulars mentioned above, 'the wicked worketh a deceitful work; but he that walketh uprightly walketh surely.' Supposing a man to have the prudence and discretion not to speak without necessity; I affirm there is no end which a good man ought to aim at, which may not be more certainly, safely, and speedily obtained by the strictest and most inviolable sincerity, than by any acts of dissimulation whatever.

But after all, what signify any ends of present conveniency, which dissimulation may pretend to answer, compared to the favour of God, which is forfeited by it? Hear what the Psalmist says: 'Who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.'—Let us, therefore, add this to the other views of the Prophet's comprehensive prayer, 'Remove far from me vanity and lies.'

For the improvement of this part of the subject observe,

1. You may learn from it how to attain, not only:

only a justness and propriety, but a readiness and fulness in the duty of prayer.

Nothing is a greater hindrance, either to the fervency of our affections, or the force of our expressions in prayer, than when the object of our desires is confused and general. But when we perceive clearly what it is that is needful to us, and how much we do need it, this gives us, indeed, the spirit of supplication. Perhaps it is more necessary to attend to this circumstance, in what we ask for our souls, than for our bodies. When we want any thing that relates to present conveniency, it is clearly understood, because it is sensibly felt.—There is no difficulty in crying for deliverance from poverty, sickness, reproach, or any other earthly suffering; nay, the difficulty here is not in exciting our desires, but in moderating them; not in producing fervour, but in promoting submission. But in what relates to our souls, because many or most temptations are agreeable to the flesh, we foresee danger less perfectly, and even feel it less sensibly; therefore, a close and deliberate attention to our situation and trials, as opened in the preceding discourse, is of the utmost moment, ‘both to carry us to the throne of grace, and to direct our spirit when we are there.’

2. What hath been said will serve to excite us to habitual watchfulness, and to direct our daily conversation. The same things that are the subjects of prayer, are also the objects of diligence

gence.—Prayer and diligence are joined by our Saviour, and ought never to be separated by his people.—Prayer without watchfulness is not sincere, and watchfulness without prayer will not be successful. The same views of sin and duty, of the strength and frequency of temptation, and the weakness of the tempted, lead equally to both. Let me beseech you, then, to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Maintain an habitual diffidence of yourselves: Attend to the various dangers to which you are exposed. Watchfulness of itself will save you from many temptations, and will give you an inward warrant, and humble confidence, to ask of God support under, and deliverance from, such as it is impossible to avoid.

3. In the last place, since every thing comprehended in the petition in the text, is viewed in the light of falsehood and deceit, suffer me, in the most earnest manner, to recommend to my hearers, and particularly to all the young persons under my care, ‘an invariable adherence to truth, and the most undisguised simplicity and sincerity in the whole of their conversation and carriage.’ I do not know where to begin or end in speaking of the excellency and beauty of sincerity, or the baseness of falsehood. Sincerity is amiable, honourable and profitable. It is the most shining part of a commendable character, and the most winning apology for any miscarriage or unadvised action.’ There is scarcely any action
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in itself so bad, as what is implied in the hardened front of him who covers the truth with a lie : besides, it is always a sign of long practice in wickedness. Any man may be seduced or surprised into a fault, but none but the habitual villain can deny it with steady calmness and obstinacy. In this respect, we unhappily find some who are young offenders, but old sinners.

It is not in religion only, but even among worldly men, that lying is counted the utmost pitch of baseness ; and to be called a liar, ' the most unsupportable reproach.' No wonder, indeed, for it is the very essence of cowardice to dare to do a thing which you have not courage to avow. The very worst of sinners are sensible of it themselves, for they deeply resent the imputation of it ; and, if I do not mistake, have never yet arrived at the absurdity of defending it. There is scarcely any other crime, but some are profligate enough to boast of it ; but I do not remember ever to have heard of any who made his boast, that he was a liar. To crown all, lying is the most wretched folly. Justly does Solomon say, ' A lying tongue is but for a moment.' It is easily discovered. Truth is a firm consistent thing, every part of which agrees with, and strongly supports another. But lies are not only repugnant to truth, but repugnant to each other ; and commonly the means, like a treacherous thief, of the detection of the whole. Let me, therefore

therefore, once more recommend to every one of you, the noble character of sincerity.—Endeavour to establish your credit in this respect so entirely, that every word you speak may be beyond the imputation of deceit; so that enemies may themselves be sensible, that though you should abuse them, you will never deceive them.

SERMON

mindfulness the everlasting ruin of those who are entirely under its dominion, but even good men are liable to many temptations from the same quarter. They may hurt their own peace, give offence to others, or lessen their usefulness by a sinful excess in their attachment to the world, or by a criminal negligence in not giving a prudent and proper attention to it. Be not surprised that I have mentioned the last of these as well as the first, for the Prophet prays for deliverance from the temptation arising from both extremes. Idleness and sloth are as contrary to true religion, as either avarice or ambition; and the habit, when once taken, is perhaps more difficult to remove.

In order to treat this subject with the greater distinctness, I shall, first, shew you what we may earn in general from this prayer; secondly, explain the particular object of the Prophet's desire; and, in the last place, make applications of what may be said, by recommending it to your choice.

I. In the first place, then, we may learn in general from this request, that it is lawful to pray for temporal blessings. It is not unworthy of a Christian, whose conversation is in heaven, to ask of God what is necessary to his support and preservation in the present life. If I were to mention all the examples of this in scripture, I should transcribe a great part of the Bible. Though inferior in their nature and value to
spiritual

spiritual blessings, they are necessary in their place; and it is upon this footing they are expressly put by our Saviour. 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.' They are needful to the prolonging of our natural life till we finish our work, and are fitted for our reward. Therefore, though miracles are a kind of suspension of the laws of nature, and the ordinary course of providence; yet we find God sometimes working a miracle to supply the wants of his servants. It had been no more difficult for God to have kept Elijah from hungering, than to have made the eagles fetch him provision; or to have made, as in another case, a barrel of meal, or a cruise of oil, the lasting and sufficient support of a whole family. But he chooses rather to supply the wants of his people, than cause them to cease, that he may keep their dependence constantly in their view, and that a sense of their necessities may oblige them to have continual recourse to him for relief.

Again, we may here learn, that God is the real and proper giver of every temporal, as well as of every spiritual blessing. A sentiment this, of the utmost consequence, to be engraven upon the heart. We have here an instance out of many, in which truths known and confessed by all, have notwithstanding little hold upon the mind. How few are truly sensible of their continual obligations to the God of life? Consider,

I beseech you, that whatever you possess of any kind, it is the gift of God. He holdeth your soul in life, and guards you by his providence in your going out and your coming in. He covereth your table and filleth your cup. Have you riches? It is by the blessing of the God of heaven.—‘The blessing of the Lord,’ saith the Psalmist, ‘it maketh rich. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.’ Have you credit and reputation? It is God that hideth you from the stripes of tongues. ‘Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.’ Have you friends? it is he that giveth you favour in their fight. Have you talents and parts? It is the ‘inspiration of the Almighty’ that giveth thee understanding.

II. Let us now explain the particular tenor of this petition, and point out the object of the Prophet’s desire: ‘Give me neither poverty nor riches.’ It is plain we are not to suppose the Prophet, in any degree, refusing submission to the will of God, by his thus making choice of a particular state of life.—Doubtless he resolved to be at God’s disposal, and believed that he was able to sanctify to him a state of the highest prosperity, or of the deepest adversity. It was no distrust in God, but self-denial and diffidence of his own strength that suggested this prayer. Therefore,

Therefore, in adjusting his desires and expectations, he pitches upon that state that appeared to him liable to the fewest snares. Thus our blessed Saviour, though it is his will that we should fear no enemy when going out in divine strength, yet teaches us to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.'

Poverty and riches are here mentioned as the two extremes; in neither of which we should wish to be placed, but in a safer middle between the two, so as, if it please God, we may neither be urged by pressing necessity, nor overloaded with such abundance, as we may be in danger of abusing.

But perhaps some will say, Where is the middle? How shall we be able to determine what we ought to desire, since there is so immense a distance, and so many intermediate degrees, between the extremity of want and the countless treasures of the wealthy?

But, my brethren, if we do not hearken to the illusive calls of ambition, avarice and lust, it is by no means difficult to apprehend the meaning of the Prophet, and apply it to persons of every rank. Regard, no doubt, is to be had to the various stations in which God hath thought fit to place us. This difference of station requires supplies of the conveniences of life, suited to the part we are bound to act. That manner of life which would be decent and liberal in one station, would be reckoned mean and fordid in another.

Therefore what would be plenty and fulness to persons in inferior stations; would be extreme poverty to persons placed and called to act in higher and more exalted spheres. | But after we have taken in the consideration of every difference that may happen on this score, there is something in the prayer that belongs in common to persons of all stations; namely, that we should be modest in our desires after temporal good things, and take care not to ask only to gratify a sensual inclination, but for what is really necessary or useful to us. The last is reasonable and allowable, the other is unreasonable and justly condemned by the Apostle James. ‘Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.’

But the first part of this request is explained by the last, contained in the words, ‘feed me with food convenient for me.’ That we may be able to enter into the true spirit of this petition, I shall just compare it with some other scriptural forms of prayer on the same subject, and then endeavour to point out what I take to be the chief instruction intended to be conveyed to us by it.

As to the scripture forms of prayer for temporal provision, the precedence is undoubtedly due to that excellent form left us by our Saviour, in which we find this petition, ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’ You may next attend to the prayer put up by Jacob in ancient times: ‘And Jacob

‘ Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God.’ It is more than probable, that the Apostle Paul alludes to Jacob’s expression, in his excellent advice to all Christians. — But Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out: and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; — for the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

It is obvious to remark, that all these prayers and this apostolic counsel run in the same strain. They all begin and are founded upon a regard to God, and a mind rightly disposed towards him; ‘ If the Lord,’ says Jacob, ‘ will be with me. — Remove,’ says Agur in my text, ‘ far from me vanity and lies.’ Our Saviour begins his prayer with petitions for the glory of God, with which the happiness of our souls is inseparably connected; and the Apostle maintains godliness as the great source of contentment with our portion in this life.

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We may further observe, that there is the same method observed in all these prayers. The expressions vary a little, but the request is the same. Jacob wishes for the divine protection, with food to eat, and raiment to put on. Agur for food convenient for him; and in the Lord's prayer, we ask for our daily bread. There is no specifying of any particulars,—no mention made of this or the other quantity of provision. Their desires are summed up in this general request, and the quantity and quality wholly referred to the good pleasure of God. It is certain that God hath sometimes granted to his own people riches in great abundance; and, at the same time, has given his blessing to enjoy them, and honoured the possessors, by enabling them to glorify him in the use and application of them. But the direct desire of riches, I do not think, hath any warrant from precept or example in his word; and when they are bestowed as a blessing, and not as a curse, it is commonly on those who by their superior concern about the better part, shew that they will put them to their proper use, as in the case of Solomon recorded in the first book of Kings.

' In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a
' dream by night; and God said, Ask what I
' shall give thee? And he said, Give thy ser-
' vant an understanding heart. And the speech
' pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this
' thing. And God said, Because thou hast asked
' this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long
' life

‘ life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor
‘ hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast
‘ asked for thyself understanding, to discern
‘ judgment: Behold I have done according to
‘ thy words: Lo! I have given thee a wife and
‘ an understanding heart, so that there was none
‘ like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any
‘ arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee
‘ that which thou hast not asked, both riches
‘ and honour.’

Now this I take to be the main instruction intended to be given us with respect to our prayers for temporal mercies; that we should not pretend to set bounds to God; but leave the measure of them to his determination.

For further explaining this truth, and at the same time, recommending it to your regard, be pleased to attend to the following observations.

1. Consider that God, infinitely wise, as well as gracious, is certainly the best judge of what is most fit and convenient for us. We know so little of ourselves, that we really know not how we should behave, if placed in particular circumstances, until we are tried. The world has actually seen many examples of those who were loud in their accusations of others, behaving worse when placed in the same stations. And, indeed, I should naturally expect, that an impatient, envious, disobedient subject would, if raised to power, be a cruel, insolent, unjust oppressor; that a petulant

lant, peevish, obstinate servant would make a capricious, severe, unreasonable master.

If we were to carve out our own lot, and to have all our own desires gratified, there is great reason to presume we would throw ourselves into the most disagreeable circumstances with regard to our souls, and probably consult but ill for our peace and comfort in this world.

Let me put a few questions to every one that secretly murmurs at his state. Are you sure, that if you were advanced to a place of power and trust, you would be able to carry yourself with prudence, resolution and integrity? Are you sure, that if you were supplied with riches in great abundance, you would not allow yourselves to wallow in pleasure, or to swell in pride? Are you sure, that if you were raised to high rank, surrounded by flatterers, and worshipped by servants, you would, in that standing, behave with humility and condescension; or, that pressed on all hands by business, company, or amusements, 'you would still ' religiously save your time for converse with ' God?'

A life of piety in an exalted station, is a continual conflict with the strongest opposition. What says experience upon this subject? Solomon did not wholly, and to the end, resist the temptation of riches and dominion. In the whole compass of history, sacred and profane, I do not remember any example of a man's behaving better in point of morals, in a prosperous than in

an afflicted state, excepting one that hath this appearance, viz. Cicero, the Roman orator. His conduct in prosperity was full of dignity, and seemed wholly directed to the public good; whereas in adversity, it was to the last degree mean and abject.—But probably the reason of this was, that pride, or rather vanity, was his ruling passion, and the great motive to his illustrious actions; and when he fell into adversity, this disposition had no scope for its exercise.

Christians, the Lord knoweth our frame, and is well acquainted with what we are able to bear, and consequently what state of life will be upon the whole most convenient for us. It is, therefore, our interest, as well as duty, to refer ourselves entirely to him, and leave him to chuse for us. This is not only the doctrine of Scripture, but so agreeable to reason and good sense, that it has been acknowledged by several of the Heathen philosophers, who have expressed themselves in terms perfectly similar to those of the inspired writings. The prayer which Socrates taught his pupil Alcibiades, is very remarkable; that he should beseech the Supreme God to give him what was good for him, though he should not ask it, and to withhold from him whatever would be hurtful, though he should be so foolish as to pray for it.

2. As God is certainly the best judge of what is good for us, so resignation to him is a most acceptable expression, both of our worship and obedience.

bedience. Single duties are particular acts; resignation is the very habit of obedience. The wisdom and goodness of God are acknowledged in the most authentic manner, when his holy and sovereign Providence is humbly submitted to, and cordially approved. Every impatient complaint is an impeachment of Providence; every irregular desire is an act of rebellion against God. Therefore a submissive temper must be highly pleasing to God, and is the way to glorify him in the most unexceptionable manner. The rather indeed, as it is impossible to attain this temper, but by sincerely laying hold of the covenant of peace, which is ordered in all things and sure. This teaches us the grounds of submission. This procures for us the grace of submission. This stains the pride of all human glory. This changes the nature of our possessions to us, and us to them. This spiritualizes a worldly mind, and makes us know, in our own experience, that all the paths of the Lord to his own people are mercy and peace.

3. Such a temper of mind will greatly contribute to our own inward peace. It will be an effectual preservative from all unrighteous courses and unlawful or even dishonourable means of increasing our worldly substance, and consequently save us from the troubles or dangers to which men expose themselves by such practices. It will preserve us from perplexing anxiety, and many uneasy fears for futurity. It will bring us the near
and

and sure way to the greatest of all earthly blessings,—a contented mind.

Such will be the sweet and delightful effects of depending upon God, and leaving it to him to furnish our supplies as he sees most convenient for us. Whoever can pray with the Prophet, ‘Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me,’ may be fully assured that his desire shall be gratified, as it is perfectly agreeable to the will of God.

I conclude with reading to you our Saviour’s exhortation on this subject. ‘Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they? But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’

H

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

The Danger of Prosperity.

PROV. xxx. 9.

Left I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? Or, left I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

I PROCEED now to consider the arguments by which the Prophet enforces his wise and well-conceived prayer. These, in connection with the two branches of the prayer, stand thus: ‘ Give me not riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? And give me not poverty, lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.’ If Agur’s prayer is conceived in the most modest and humble terms, the reasons with which he supports it are every way becoming a truly wise and good man. You see in them a prevailing concern for the honour and glory of God, and his own

own preservation in the paths of piety and virtue: You see in them a humble sense of his own weakness, and the danger of temptation; he, therefore, desires to be placed in such a state of life as will expose him to the fewest trials. An excellent disposition this, and highly worthy of our imitation. How happy would it be for us all, if a desire to please God and preserve our integrity, lay always nearest our hearts, and had a constant and commanding influence on every step we took in our journey through life!

Neither riches nor poverty are bad in themselves. Neither of them is any recommendation or hindrance to the favour of God, who is no respecter of persons. There are good and bad in all ranks. Men may be rich, and yet pious; or poor, yet strictly just and honest. It is, I confess, often done, yet it is highly criminal to look upon all that are rich in this world as profane; and it would be equally so to look upon all that are poor as destitute of integrity. Yet it is undeniable, that, from the corruption of the human heart, these two extremes do often become strong temptations to the particular sins mentioned in the text; which we shall now consider separately, in the order in which they lie in the passage before us.

‘ Give me not riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?’

As to the fact, that riches do often lead to profanity and contempt of God, experience, and

the state of the world, prove it in a manner too plain to be denied. We not only see that those, who are born and educated from their infancy in the higher ranks of life, are most prone to neglect the duties of religion; but those who, from a low or mean condition, are remarkably raised in the course of providence, do often change their temper with their state, and show the unhappy influence of riches in leading them to a forgetfulness of God. Are there not some who were regularly in God's house when they but barely subsisted, who have not time for it now, when they are busy and wealthy? Are there not some families, where the worship of God was constant and regular in early life, while they were undistinguished, and now it is no more to be heard in their sumptuous palaces and elegant apartments? Shall I say, that any worm of the earth is become too considerable to fall down before the omnipotent Jehovah?

I may add, as being of great importance in the present subject, that such changes do often take place gradually and insensibly, very much contrary to men's own expectation; so that we really do not know ourselves, nor can we determine before trial, how far we would resist or yield to the force of temptation. The prophet Elisha foretold to Hazeael the cruelties he would be guilty of when raised to an higher station; to which he replied with disdain and abhorrence, 'What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do
 ' this

‘this great thing? And Elifha answered, the
‘Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be King
‘over Syria.’ The conduct of the children of
Israel in their prosperity is but an emblem of the
general conduct of the children of men. ‘But
‘Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked. Thou art wax-
‘ed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered
‘with fatness: Then he forsook God which made
‘him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.’

What hath been said might be sufficient to
shew the propriety of the Prophet’s prayer; for
if such hath been often, or generally, the influ-
ence of worldly greatness upon other men, why
should any be so confident as to presume it
would be otherwise with themselves? But per-
haps it may afford matter of useful instruction to
enquire a little further into the subject, to trace
the causes of this effect, and shew how, and
why riches become an inducement to irreligion
and profaneness, for this will best enable us to
apply the remedy. When I speak of examining
the causes of this effect, I confess that no reason
can be given for it, but what reflects great dis-
honour upon human nature in its present state.
Were we to judge of the matter by the dictates
of sound reason, we should naturally expect to
find it directly contrary. God is the author of
every blessing which men possess, and his gifts
should lead us to gratitude and acknowledgment.
It seems natural then to suppose, that those who
are most highly favoured in the course of pro-
vidence,

vidence, should discover the greatest sense of obligation, and be ready to make every dutiful return. One would think, that though the poor should be impatient, surely the rich will be content and thankful. Is not this reasonable? Had any of you bestowed many favours upon others, would you not expect that their gratitude should bear some proportion to the number and value of benefits received? Had any of them been remarkably distinguished from the rest, would you not expect from them the most inviolable fidelity and attachment? Strange, that our conduct should be so directly opposite in the returns we make for the goodness of our Maker! That those who are distinguished from others by the largest possessions, and the greatest fulness of all temporal mercies, should be the most prone to wickedness of all sorts; but especially, that they should be peculiarly inclined to forgetfulness and contempt of God. Yet so it is in truth. But however dishonourable it is to human nature, let us search into it a little, and perhaps we may discover the cause of impiety in persons in affluent circumstances, and the danger the Prophet would avoid, by attending to the following observations:

1. An easy and affluent fortune affords the means, not only of pampering our bodies, but of gratifying all our lusts and appetites. They are as strong probably in persons of inferior stations; but providence has rendered the gratification
more

more difficult, and in some cases impossible. Many work through necessity, who would be as idle and slothful as any, but for the fear of want. These will be the first and readiest to reproach the rich, and call them idle drones, who revel in that abundance for which they never toiled; and to put to their own credit that which is wholly owing to the restraints under which they are laid. Many are generally sober, because they cannot afford the charges of intemperance, who want nothing but the means, to riot in the most brutal sensuality. But to persons of great wealth, the objects of desire are always placed in full view, and are evidently within their reach; so that the temptation has uncommon force, and few are able entirely to resist it.

2. The indulgence of pleasure insensibly induces a habit, and leads men to place their happiness in such enjoyments. Habit, you know, is very powerful, and while the habit acquires strength, the power of resistance is gradually weakened. These gratifications consume so much time, that there is little left to reflect upon God and our relation to him. I reckon it none of the least temptations to persons of high rank, that not only their self-indulgence, but the attendance and obsequiousness of others so engrosses their attention, and wastes their time, that they have few opportunities of calm and sober reflection; or, at least, can easily escape from it, and take refuge in company and amusement. Add to this, that

that a great variety of sensible objects and enjoyments render the mind, not only less attentive to things of a spiritual nature, but indeed, less able to understand them.

3. Observe further, that when the better part is thus neglected, and no care taken of the cultivation of the mind, every vice will spring and shoot up in the soul, as briars and thorns do upon uncultivated ground. Sin, my brethren, is natural to us; it is the produce of the soil; if it is not destroyed, it will not die; if it is but neglected, it will thrive. Now, whenever persons fall under the power of vice, they begin first to excuse, and then to vindicate it. Those who are under the government of lust, soon find it would be their interest that there was no such thing as religion and virtue. Whatever we wish, we are easily led to believe to be true. Loose and atheistical principles then find a ready admittance, and are swallowed down greedily. This is a short sketch of the steps by which people in affluent and easy circumstances are often led to deny God, and to say, 'Who is the Almighty? that we should serve him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?'—Loose principles are, at first, more frequently the effect, than the cause of loose practices; but when once they have taken deep root, and obtained full dominion in the heart, they have a dreadful and fatal influence on the devoted victim.

But, my brethren, I find a strong inclination, to make another remark, though perhaps it may be thought of too refined and abstract a nature. It is, that the danger of affluence in leading to contempt of God, arises from the nature of all sin as such. The original and first sin of man was plainly affecting independence. They desired and expected to be as gods, knowing good and evil. And still sin properly consists in withdrawing our allegiance from, and throwing off our dependence upon God, and giving, as it were, that esteem, love and service to ourselves, in one shape or another, that is due only to him. Now observe, that affluence nourishes this mistake, and suffering kills it. The more every thing abounds with us, the more our will is submitted to, and our inclination gratified on every subject; the more we look upon ourselves as independent, and forget our obligations to God. Whereas, on the other hand, disappointments and calamities open our blind eyes, and make us remember what we are. Was not the proud monarch of Babylon inspired with this delusive sense of independence, when he expressed himself thus: ' At the end of twelve months he
' walked in the palace of the kingdom of Baby-
' lon. The King spake and said, Is not this
' great Babylon that I have built for the house
' of the kingdom, by the might of my power,
' and for the honour of my Majesty? But mark
the more powerful word of the King of Kings:
' While

‘ While the word was in the King’s mouth,
 ‘ there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O King
 ‘ Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the
 ‘ kingdom is departed from thee!’ That this is
 the proper source of worldly greatness, may be
 seen in the temper such persons usually acquire
 and settle in, which is pride, insolence, and
 contempt of others. Nay, it appears still more
 clearly in some few instances, in which the in-
 toxication comes to its height, and the poor de-
 luded mortal literally aspires to be considered and
 treated as God. It may seem incredible, but we
 have the most authentic evidence that history can
 afford, that some men have demanded and re-
 ceived divine worship. This was the case, not
 only with Alexander the Great, who was really
 an illustrious prince, but with some of the latter
 Roman Emperors, who were the meanest and
 basest of all men. No wonder, then, that pros-
 perity makes men neglect God, when it prompts
 them to sit down upon his throne, and rob him
 of the service of his other subjects.

Before I proceed to the other part of the
 Prophet’s argument, suffer me to make a few re-
 marks for the improvement of what has been al-
 ready said. And,

1. See hence the great malignity and deceit-
 fulness of sin. It hardly appears more strongly
 from any circumstance than that which has been
 the subject of this discourse, viz. that the gifts
 of God, in the course of his providence, are so
 far

far from exciting our gratitude, in proportion to their number and value, that, on the contrary, those who 'receive most' are usually 'most profane.' They make his favours instruments of rebellion against him, and return contempt for his indulgence, and hatred for his love.

Let us not take occasion from this to gratify our own envy, by particular or personal reproach against those who are great, or have become rich amongst themselves; but let us act a far wiser and juster part, and be humbled for the sinfulness of our nature, and warned of the deceitfulness of sin. We may feel the seeds of this disposition in us all. You find the wise man charging a similar ingratitude upon man in general. 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' And do you not observe every day, nay, has it not turned into a proverb, that we think light of our mercies, spiritual and temporal, when they are common and abundant? And what is the true and proper interpretation of this, but that the greater God's goodness is to us, commonly the less is our gratitude to him?

2. Let me beseech you to make a wise improvement of the advantages you enjoy over one another. Let them excite in you a holy emulation to testify your sense of superior blessings, by superior piety and usefulness. Do you excel others in any respect? Are you successful in trade?

trade? Have you risen to reputation? Are you exalted to offices of dignity? Are you endowed with capacity of mind? Can you remember the time when those were your equals who are now your inferiors? Do not look with insolence upon others, making odious, and perhaps unjust comparisons. Do not swell in pride and self-complacency, as if by your own power you had made yourselves to differ, but rather look the other way to God, who is the maker both of rich and poor, and pray that your thankfulness and duty to him may exceed that of the poor man, as much as his liberality to you exceeds what he has thought proper to bestow upon him. This affords me an opportunity of relating a little piece of private history, that happened in Great Britain, and appears to me very worthy of remembrance, and very conducive to the ends of edification.

A gentleman of very considerable fortune, but a stranger to either personal or family religion, one evening took a solitary walk through a part of his own grounds. He happened to come near to a mean hut, where a poor man with a numerous family lived, who earned their bread by daily labour. He heard a voice pretty loud and continued. Not knowing what it was, curiosity prompted him to listen. The man, who was piously disposed, happened to be at prayer with his family. So soon as he could distinguish the words, he heard him giving thanks with great affection to God, for the goodness of his Providence

dence, in giving them food to eat, and raiment to put on, and in supplying them with what was necessary and comfortable in the present life. He was immediately, no doubt, by Divine power, struck with astonishment and confusion, and said to himself, Does this poor man, who has nothing but the meanest fare, and that purchased by severe labour, give thanks to God for his goodness to himself and family, and I, who enjoy ease and honour, and every thing that is grateful and desirable, have hardly ever bent my knee, or made any acknowledgment to my Maker and Preserver! It pleased God, that this providential occurrence proved the mean of bringing him to a real and lasting sense of God and religion.

Let all persons in health, quiet and plentiful circumstances, learn from the preceding discourse, what it is they ought clearly to guard against.—Pride, security, forgetfulness of God, are peculiarly incident to that state. ‘Lo this,’ saith the Lord to Jerusalem, ‘was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.’ A serious reflection on the obligation such lie under to God for what they have received in their continued dependence upon him, and the instability of all earthly things, would save them from the hurtful influence of worldly prosperity. To enforce this, I shall only read the apostolic charge to Timothy. ‘Charge

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‘them

‘ them that are rich in this world, that they be
‘ not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches,
‘ but in the living God, who giveth us all things
‘ richly to enjoy ; that they do good, that they
‘ be rich in good works, ready to distribute, wil-
‘ ling to communicate ; laying up in store for
‘ themselves a good foundation against the time
‘ to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.’

SERMON

S E R M O N VII.
The Danger of Adversity.

PROVERBS xxx. 9.

*Left I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God
in vain.*

I PROCEED now to consider the argument by which the Prophet urges the second branch of his request, which, in connexion, runs thus— ‘ Give me not poverty lest I be poor and steal.’ Having not only explained the general principle that runs through the whole of this subject, but also very particularly pointed out the dangers attending an opulent and wealthy state; I shall endeavour to do the same thing with respect to a state of poverty and straitness. While I attempt this, I am sincerely sorry that there is so much propriety in the subject, and that it is so well suit-

ed to the circumstances of the inhabitants of this place. You see the Prophet considers the great and general temptation to which the poor are exposed to be dishonesty, by using fraudulent means of relieving their wants, or bettering their condition. You see also, he considers this temptation in its progress, not only inclining them to act unjustly, but sometimes proceeding to the terrible degree of concealing or supporting the fraud by falsehood, and perhaps at last by perjury or false swearing; 'least I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.'

Let us first consider a little the matter of fact, as it appears in experience, and then a few of its principal causes.

As to the first of these, shall I be afraid to affirm, that extreme poverty often inclines persons to dishonesty and fraud? Will it be thought harsh and severe to those already sufficiently depressed? As I would not seem to stand in this place and flatter the pride of the greatest, and most eminent of my fellow-sinners, so neither will I dissemble the truth from a false compassion for the poor. This would indeed be doing them the greatest possible injury. It would be treating them, from mistaken tenderness, as the rich are often treated from the fear or partiality of those who are about them; fostering their self-deceit, and not suffering them to hear the most salutary truths, because they are not pleasing to the flesh.

It

It is, undoubtedly matter of experience, that great poverty makes many take unjust and unwarrantable methods of procuring relief. Not only so, but they seem often disposed to justify and defend them, as if they had a title to rectify what they think mistakes of Providence, in the distribution of worldly possessions. This, in the event, receives great encouragement from some who seem to have imbibed a general false principle, and act upon it, both in their own conduct, and in their judgment of others. In the division of controversy, or dividing disputed property, when one party is, or is supposed to be rich, and in easy circumstances, and the other poor, and in a mean condition, they think, that instead of acting according to strict justice, the advantage should always be made to fall on the poorer side. This conduct is considered by some, not only as lawful, but as laudable. It is, however, a false principle, and is condemned in Scripture, which says, 'Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.' It may be thought, perhaps, that the other is the more common and dangerous partiality, and probably it is so; yet this also is blameworthy, and when followed out, as I am afraid it too often is, must involve numbers unawares in the guilt of stealing; for when they have once laid down this rule, that the poor have some claim upon the rich, they are ready to apply it to their own case, and extend it very far. But in all matters of property, or right and wrong,

whether a person is rich or poor, ought to be utterly out of the question; the only thing to be considered is, what is just and lawful. The rich, are, indeed, in point of conscience, bound to assist the poor: but this must be their own act; no person can take the smallest part of their property without their consent, but he is guilty of an act of injustice, and violation of the law of God. No person has a right to make them generous and charitable against their wills, or to exercise their own generosity and charity at their expence. This must be left to the Supreme Judge at the last day, who will say to them, 'I was a stranger
' and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed
' me not, sick and in prison and ye visited me
' not.' But what will give us the most distinct view of the influence of poverty as a temptation, is the too frequent conduct of those who are reduced from what was once their state to poverty or debt, by misfortune or extravagance, or mismanagement of their affairs. The temptation of poverty is not by far so great to those in the meanest ranks of life, whose income, though small, is not very disproportionate to what hath always been their condition, as to those who are reduced from a higher to a lower state. The few who, in such a situation, preserve their integrity inviolated, and their sincerity of speech unsuspected, deserve the highest honour. Nay, I am persuaded that, bad as the world is, every person in reduced circumstances would meet with compassion and assistance,

assistance, if all about him were sensible that he had neither lost his substance by neglect, nor wasted it by riot, nor concealed it by fraud. But though we cannot help ascribing some measure of what is laid to the charge of persons in this unhappy state, to the rage and resentment of those who have suffered by them; yet, alas! there is too great reason to affirm, that they are too often guilty of prevarication and fraud, the sins mentioned in the text.

I will dwell no longer upon the fact, but will consider a little the reasons of it, which will directly serve to promote the design of this discourse, by exciting men to concern and solicitude, as well as pointing out the proper means of avoiding the temptation. The general reason of this, to be sure, is obvious to every body, that persons in poverty, being strongly solicited by the appetites common to all men, and not having of their own wherewith to gratify their desires, are tempted to lay hold of the property of others. They grudge to see that others have the enjoyments from which they are debarred; and since they cannot have them in a lawful, make bold to seize them in an unlawful way. But this I do not insist on, that I may mention one or two particular reasons, which will suggest suitable exhortations to duty.

1. The first I shall mention, is ignorance. This is peculiarly applicable to those in the lowest ranks of life. Through poverty they are not so well

well instructed, as they ought to be, in the principles of religion, and the great rules of duty. An ignorant state is almost always a state of security. Their consciences are less tender, and they are less sensible of the great evil of prevarication and fraud. I am obliged, in fidelity, to say, that in the private inspection of my charge, though I have found some instances both of poverty and sickness borne with the most pious resignation; there are also some whose condition might move the hardest heart, living in the most sordid poverty, grossly ignorant, and, at the same time, so dispirited, so slothful, or so proud, that they will do little to obtain knowledge for themselves, or communicate it to their children. Many will not attend upon the public means of instruction, because they cannot appear in such a decent garb as they could wish; and for the same reason they keep their children from them, till they contract such habits of idleness and vice, that they come out into the world without principle, obstinate and untractable. Is not the duty here very plain? All such should exert themselves to obtain the knowledge of the things which belong to their peace. They should neither be unwilling nor ashamed to make application for supply; and even the coarsest raiment should not hinder them from appearing in the house of God. Thus they will find acceptance with him, if they worship him in the beauty of holiness, preferably to those who are
cloathed

cloathed in purple and fine linen, and whose hearts are after their covetousness.

2. Another great reason why poverty becomes a temptation to fraud is, that they are introduced to it insensibly, and led on by degrees. The sin steals upon them by little and little. People involved in their circumstances, to get rid of importunity and sollicitation, make promises more of what they hope or wish, than of what they are able to do. Necessity serves as an excuse for their failing to their own minds, and thus they are gradually brought into a breach of sincerity, and proceed from lower to higher degrees of falsehood. Little arts of evasion are first made use of, and doubtful practices are entered upon. One sin seems necessary to strengthen or conceal another, till at last the grossest fraud; and sometimes perjury itself, closes the unhappy scene. I have read an excellent observation, that there is hardly such a thing as a single sin; they are always to be found in clusters. I am sure, this holds in a particular manner as to sins of injustice. They are so interwoven and connected together, that you cannot receive any one without being obliged to admit the rest. This is one great branch of the deceitfulness of sin in general; with a view to which the apostle says, 'But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.'

3. I only mention one other reason of poverty being a temptation to fraud, viz. that in time it destroys

destroys the sense of shame. I am not ignorant, that a sense of shame, which is nothing else but a fear of the censure of others, neither is, nor ought to be the main principle of a good man's actions. But as there is no other principle at all in many, so it is a good assistant and corroborative, when justly directed: but now through the corrupt maxims of the world, poverty is so much the object of contempt, and those who are in this state, meet every day with so many marks of neglect from all, that before their condition is known, they will do almost any thing to conceal it, and after it is known, they become in time so destitute of shame that they are under no further restraint.

From this particular branch of the subject, let me put you in mind,

1. What reason many have to be thankful to the God of life, who hath given them their daily provision, if not in all abundance of immense riches, yet in fulness and sufficiency. An humble, thankful disposition is not only your duty, in return for the divine bounty, but is itself the richest and sweetest ingredient in all temporal mercies. It is that, indeed, which makes them mercies. Envious persons do not taste what they have, their evil eye being fixed on what they cannot obtain. Things in this respect are just what they seem to be. Our comforts are as we are enabled to relish them. The same possessions which are despised by the impatient or ambitious

ambitious, are a treasure and abundance to the humble and grateful.

2. If poverty is a temptation, it ought to be an argument to all to avoid it, or seek deliverance from it by lawful means. Apply yourselves with steadiness and perseverance to the duties of your calling, that you may provide things honest in the sight of all men. It is a duty of the law, and of the Gospel; and it hath this promise in general annexed to it, that 'the hand of the diligent maketh rich.' Read, I beseech you, that vast treasure of useful instruction, the book of Proverbs, where you will meet with many excellent counsels and wise observations upon this subject. Of these I shall mention at present but two passages, selected both for the soundness of the instruction, and the beauty of the illustration. 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.' And again: 'I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof was broken down.'

3. Are any of you poor and reduced in your circum-

circumstances, set a double watch upon your conduct, and earnestly pray that God may preserve you from fraud and disingenuity of every kind. Rather suffer yourselves to be stripped of every thing, and apply to the charity of others, which is not sinful, and ought not to be shameful, than take any dishonest methods of bettering your state. O melancholy thought, that many when they become desperate in their circumstances, become also desperate in their courses, and drown the reflection of their consciences in slothfulness and sensuality? Sincerity, integrity, patience and sobriety in a ruined fortune, are doubly eminent, at least, whatever they may be in the sight of the world, they are honourable and precious in the sight of God, and of all good men.

Before concluding, suffer me to make one or two reflections on the subject in general; the several parts of which I have now explained. And,

1. On what hath been said on this subject, I would graft this important lesson, that you should not only study to preserve yourselves from sin, but from all such circumstances of temptation as are dangerous to human constancy. This was the very ground of the prayer of the Prophet in my text, and is the substance of the reasons he assigns for his request. We are taught the same thing in the strongest manner, by the several instances of human frailty, and the folly of presumptuous confidence, recorded in Scripture.

ture. 'Now all these things happened unto
' them for ensamples, and they are written for
' our admonition, upon whom the ends of the
' world are come. Wherefore, let him that
' thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'
We are also taught the same thing by him who
knew what was in man, as he has given us di-
rections in the form of prayer which he taught
his disciples to say, Lord, 'lead us not into
' temptation.'

Are you really unwilling to do evil, you will
be concerned to keep yourselves out of the way
of every solicitation to it. This is constantly the
effect of a judicious and solid piety, and those
who act otherwise shew, that they either have
no real goodness, or that they are very weak
Christians, and little acquainted either with
themselves, or this present evil world.

2. You may learn how necessary it is, that you
should look for the Divine assistance and direc-
tion, to avoid the temptation of every state of
life. We are truly of ourselves unequal to the
trials with which we are surrounded. Not that
there is any thing unjust or oppressive in the
measures of Providence; but because it seems
good to our Maker to oblige us to a constant de-
pendence upon himself and his promised help.
'But God is faithful, who will not suffer you
' to be tempted above that ye are able, but will
' with the temptation also make a way to escape,
' that ye may be able to bear it.'

The least temptation may prove too hard for us, if we neglect to apply for supreme aid; but in divine strength, we may bid defiance to the most formidable opposition. This temper is well exemplified and described by the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. ‘ And he said unto me, my
 ‘ grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is
 ‘ made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, there-
 ‘ fore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that
 ‘ the power of Christ may rest upon me. There-
 ‘ fore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches,
 ‘ in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for
 ‘ Christ’s sake; for when I am weak then am I
 ‘ strong.’

3. From what hath been said, you may see what an inseparable connection there is between true religion, and your employments and state in this present world. They have a mutual, strong, and constant influence upon one another. It is a fatal, though a common error, to separate them; entirely to confine religion to the times and places of immediate worship, and suppose that it hath nothing to do with the maxims of trade and commerce, or other worldly callings. On the contrary, your impressions of things spiritual and eternal, will direct and regulate your views as to the present life; and your success or misfortunes in worldly schemes will have a certain and visible effect upon your Christian conversation, and the state of your souls. Therefore, let them never be separated in your own views, and let them still
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be kept in their proper order and subordination. Though the light and trivial use, not only of the name of God, but of scripture-language, is both sinful and dangerous; and though a forward ostentatious piety may sometimes look suspicious, yet it were to be wished we had more of a grave and habitual acknowledgement of God in all our ways. This was the language of the Patriarchs of old. In one of the former discourses upon this subject, I took notice of Jacob's prayer, when he set out for Padan-aram. See after the increase of his family, how he expresses himself in answer to his brother Isaac. 'And he lift up his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, who are those with thee? And he said, the children which God hath graciously given thy servant.' See also the Apostolical direction for the manner of projecting our future purposes. '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.'

4. In the last place, let me beseech, in the tenderest manner, every one of you, rich and poor, to remember an approaching eternity. It will not be long till the honourable and despised, the wealthy and the needy, the master and the servant, shall lie down in the dust. Lay hold of that covenant of peace, which is ordered in all things and sure. Hear a great and constant truth: 'What is a man profited, though he should gain

‘ the whole world and lose his own soul, or
‘ what shall a man give in exchange for his
‘ soul?’ How many a Lazarus is now in Abra-
ham’s bosom; and how many a rich man, that
once lived delicately on earth, is at this moment
tormented in hell-fire! The Gospel of peace is
now preached in your ears. Believe in the name
of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved.
I cannot promise that you shall be rich, but all
things necessary are assured to you by the divine
promise; food and raiment, support under trials,
strength for duty, and in the world to come,
everlasting rest.

SERMON

S E R M O N VIII.

Trust in God.

ISAIAH. I. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

IT is said of every real believer, that he walks by faith and not by sight. If this is true, it will follow, that his faith must be exposed to a variety of trials, while he continues in a world of sense. These trials arise from the state of his own mind—from his outward condition—from the state of the world with which he stands connected, and from the mutual influence of all these, one upon another. From this situation it is easy to see, that there are few duties, for the exercise of which a good man will have

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greater or more frequent occasion, than that of trust and reliance upon God. Trust is the duty and the refuge of the needy—of the dependent—of the weak—the timorous, and the distressed. How many are included under one or more of these characters; or rather, who is it that can say he is altogether excluded?

Agreeably to this, we need but open the sacred volume, to perceive how frequent the exhortations are to trust in God, and how many views are given us of his power, wisdom, mercy and faithfulness, to encourage us to an unshaken reliance. At the same time, I am sorry to say, that there are few duties which are more imperfectly understood by many professing Christians. Even pious persons often sin both on the right hand and on the left; that is to say, both by diffidence and presumption. I have, therefore, laid hold of this opportunity, and made choice of this passage of Scripture, in order to open and illustrate a little this important duty of a servant of God. How seasonable it is you will easily perceive, for in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper we have set before us Christ Jesus, the unspeakable gift of God—the great pledge of his love, and the great foundation of our reliance upon him, not only for his saving mercy in general, but for every necessary blessing in our way to eternal rest.

This passage of Scripture is also well suited to the subject. It was spoken to the Jews in a lax and

and dissolute age, when many had turned their backs upon the service of God—had deserted his ordinances, and despised his servants, which is always an occasion both of affliction and temptation to his own children. This appears from the first words of the chapter. ‘ For thus saith the Lord, where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement, whom I have put away? And which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you have sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.’ As also from the 3d and 4th verses: ‘ I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.’

In discoursing further on this subject, it is proposed, through the assistance of divine grace,

I. To open a little the character and state of those who are called upon, and exhorted to trust in the name of the Lord.

II. To explain the duty of trust, and point out the foundation of it.

III. To apply the subject for your instruction and comfort.

In the first place, then, I am to open a little the character and state of those who are here called

led upon, and exhorted to trust in the name of the Lord.

Their description is as follows: ' Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.' It will help us to enter into the spirit and meaning of the Prophet's words, if we keep in view the state of the Jewish church, hinted at a little ago; ' who is among you; ' that is, if there is one or more,—if there is a small select number in the midst of general corruption and depravity, who have kept their garments unpoluted, though iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold, ' that feareth the Lord? ' You know it is common in Scripture to describe religion in general by some particular leading branch of it. The fear of God is often made use of for this purpose, as in that passage, there shall be no want to them that fear him. It may, therefore, signify those who have a sincere and unfeigned regard to the commandments of God, and have chosen him as their portion and hope. Those who desire and deserve to be distinguished from the profane despiser,—the secure formalist, or the disguised hypocrite. Those, in a word, who are, and who desire to appear, to use the strong language of Scripture, upon the Lord's side in every struggle, and who resolve,

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with Joshua, that whatever others do, for their part they will serve the Lord.

But I cannot help thinking, we may also, with great safety, explain the words in a closer and stricter sense, and suppose, that by fearing the Lord, is to be understood a due reverence for his infinite majesty, and a humble veneration for his sacred authority. This is a most excellent fence or guard to the conscience in an evil time, and a noble preservative from the spreading infection and insinuating poison of prevailing or fashionable sins. It is also the usual character of a dissolute age to have cast off fear, to treat the most sacred things with scorn, and to look upon that holy solicitude to avoid sin, which appears in the carriage and language of a child of God, as a mark of meanness or weakness of mind. In such an age, one who fears God is well described by the prophet Isaiah; ‘ But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.’

The next part of the character is, ‘ and obeyeth the voice of his servant;’ that is to say, is willing to hearken to the message of God by the mouth of his servants. The words of the text, no doubt, may be considered as primarily referring to the inspired Prophets, who bore an immediate commission, miraculously attested from God. Many, even of these, were set at nought, their message derided, and their persons insulted, when they attempted to stem the tide of prevailing vice,

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or boldly denounced the divine vengeance against high-handed sinners. But the sincerely pious obeyed their voice. I shall make no scruple to apply this to ourselves, and the present age. Our blessed Redeemer hath established in his church a standing ministry, and the regular administration of ordinances. And though we have this treasure in earthen vessels, yet in no other way doth he now communicate his will, and vouch-safe his presence to his people, but by the reading and hearing of his word, and attendance upon his instituted worship. It will, no doubt, therefore be a part of the character of a good man, that he will love the ordinances, and obey the voice of the servants of God; that he will consider him who hath sent them, and receive instruction, not as the word of man, but as it is in deed and in truth the word of God.

On the other hand, when iniquity prevails, when irreligion and profaneness lift up their heads, one of the most usual concomitants and one of the surest proofs of it is, a neglect of ordinances, and contempt of those who are concerned in their administration: How far this is at present the case, I leave to yourselves to judge. While I speak this, my brethren, I do by no means desire to see an ignorant people distracted by the gloomy terrors of superstition, or led blindfold by the enchanted cord of implicit faith. But sure I am, there is an extreme on either hand, and those who truly fear the Lord, will
honour

honour the persons, and obey the voice of such as plead his cause and speak in his name. You may rest assured, that though they neither deserve nor claim any authority on their own account, yet so long as they stand in the divine councils, and speak the divine word, their message will be attended with this awful sanction, 'He that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.'

The last part of the character here drawn, which lays the foundation for the subsequent direction is, 'that walketh in darkness, and hath no light.' Darkness and light, besides their literal, have often a metaphorical sense in Scripture. They are, indeed, used with a good deal of latitude and variety. But I think their metaphorical signification may be reduced to these two general heads. 1. Sometimes light signifies knowledge, and darkness signifies ignorance,—as in Eph. v. 8. 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light.' Acts xxvi. 18. 'To turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Job xxxvii. 19. 'Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.'

2. Sometimes darkness signifies distress or trouble, and the correspondent signification of light is deliverance and joy; as 2. Sam. xxii. 28, 29. 'And the afflicted people thou wilt save; but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring

‘ bring them down ; for thou art my lamp, O
 ‘ Lord ; and the Lord will lighten my darknefs.’
 Job xix. 8. ‘ He hath fenced up my way that I
 ‘ cannot pass ; he hath put darknefs in my paths.’
 Ps. xcvi. 11. ‘ Light is sown for the righteous,
 ‘ and gladness for the upright in heart.’ Esther
 viii. 16. ‘ And the Jews had light and gladness,
 ‘ and joy and honour.’

None of these senses is to be excluded in the passage before us. Believers may walk in darkness, when ignorant or uncertain as to what nearly concerns them, as well as under distress and trouble. They have also a mutual influence upon, produce, and are produced by one another. For illustrating this a little more particularly, observe, that a good man may walk in darkness ; 1. When he is in doubt or uncertainty as to his interest in the divine favour. 2. When he is under the pressure of outward calamity. 3. When the state of the church is such, that he cannot understand or explain, in a satisfying manner, the course of divine providence. These particulars I have it not in view to enlarge much upon, but only to explain them so far as is necessary to lay a foundation for what shall be afterwards offered on the duty to trust in God.

1. Then, a good man may walk in darkness when he is in doubt or uncertainty as to his interest in the Divine favour. I apprehend that some measure of hope in God’s mercy is essential to true piety, and not only the right, but the possession

sion of every child of God. Faith and despair are beyond all question inconsistent. Faith and hope are inseparable. Yet certainly the excellent ones of the earth may be sometimes involved in great perplexity and doubt. This is plain from scripture examples, from daily experience, and from the nature and reason of the thing. How violent a struggle do we often find the Psalmist David in, between hope and fear? 'O my God, my soul is cast down in me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.' How many do we see every day under a spirit of bondage, who, though they still cleave to God as their portion, yet are often full of fears, and seldom dare confidently affirm their interest in, or relation to him! And indeed how can it be otherwise? While we are here, our sanctification is but imperfect; and, alas! with regard to many, it is often hard to determine, whether we should not write upon it, 'Mene tekeli,' as essentially defective.

Sin separates between God and his people, and causes him to hide his face from them. Nay, sometimes, though there be no particular or provoking crime, as the cause of his controversy with them; he may withdraw from them the light of his countenance, to exercise their vigilance, or to try their patience. I know, my brethren, that the distress of serious souls, when mourning after an absent or an angry God, crying to him in secret,

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and following hard after him in his ordinances, is by many treated with the highest degree of contempt. But surely, if peace of mind from a well founded hope of the Divine favour, is the greatest of all present blessings; and if this, from the variableness of our own conduct, is sometimes more, sometimes less strong, and sometimes wholly suspended; when this last is the case, it must occasion inexpressible concern, and there can be no greater evidence of irreligion and impiety than to call it in question.

2. A good man may walk in darkness when under the pressure of outward calamity. This, in a real believer, is never wholly separated from the former. Even in itself, indeed, no affliction for the present is joyous but grievous. The disorders of this feeble frame, poverty, and straitness of provision, unjust slander and reproach, must be deeply and sensibly felt by every good man, even as he is a man. To this may be added, the loss of relations, and concern for the sufferings of others of every kind, which is always most distressing to the best and tenderest spirits. But outward calamities by those that fear God, are felt most sensibly when they are considered as the rod of his anger, and bring sin to remembrance. When he visits his own children with any of his sore judgments: when he follows them with breach upon breach, they are ready to say, 'Surely he is setting me up as a mark for his arrows, he is counting me his enemy.'—They are often

ten at a loss to understand the cause of his controversy with them; and they also find it often extremely difficult to bring their minds to a patient and submissive resignation to his holy will. To those who know their duty, and desire, through Divine grace, to comply with it, it is no small difficulty to be obliged to struggle with a rising and rebellious heart within, as well as suffering from without, and to be alternately calling in question the certainty, either of the love of God to them, or of their love to him.

3. A good man may sometimes walk in darkness from the aspect of Providence, and the state of the Redeemer's kingdom. The works of God are sought out of them who have pleasure in them. But when they are not able to penetrate the depths of the Divine counsels, this becomes often a source both of distress and temptation. When wicked men are suffered to prosper at their will;—when the good are oppressed by the power and tyranny, or persecuted by the malice of their enemies;—when the most generous attempts for the revival of truth and righteousness are rendered abortive;—when the professing servants of God are divided into parties, or marshalled under names, and their zeal made to spend itself in unnecessary, sinful and hurtful contentions;—when offences come, and those of the highest profession or attainments are suffered to fall into gross crimes, by which the mouths of enemies are opened to blasphemy; then may, and must we adopt

the words of the Psalmist,—Ps. lxxiii. 10.—14.
 ‘ Therefore, his people return hither; and wa-
 ‘ ters of a full cup are wrung out unto them :
 ‘ And they say, how doth God know? and is
 ‘ there knowledge in the Most High? Behold,
 ‘ these are the ungodly who prosper in the
 ‘ world; they increase in riches. Verily, I have
 ‘ cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my
 ‘ hands in innocency. For all the day long
 ‘ have I been plagued, and chastened every mor-
 ‘ ning.’

I proceed now to the second and chief thing proposed from this passage, which was to explain the duty of trust in God, and to point out its foundation.

Trust, in the most general view we can take of it, may be thus explained. It is a reliance or confidence in God, that however discouraging appearances may be for the present time, yet, by his power and wisdom, our desires and expectation shall take place, whether as to deliverance from trouble, or the obtaining of future blessings.

When we can attain this happy frame of spirit, it is an inconceivable relief and ease to the mind under suffering, and is excellently expressed by the Psalmist,—Ps. lv. 22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee, he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Let us then endeavour to explain the grounds of this as distinctly as possible. And God grant that it may be done not only in a clear, but in a solid and

and satisfying manner, so as to assist you in the practice of real and vital religion.

I have already said, that our expectation is from the power and wisdom of God. May we then reasonably expect, is it our duty to believe that we shall receive all that we desire, and that is within the reach of Divine power and wisdom? These have no bounds at all. We know that nothing is too hard for the Almighty. He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. This suggests to us, that there is something more necessary, in order to lay a proper foundation for trust, viz. his goodness to make our expectation probable, and his promise to make it certain. Even created beings can often do what they will not. This holds particularly with regard to God, whose power is directed in its exercise by his goodness, and limited by his wisdom. His goodness, in general, encourages us to go to him with a peradventure, or who can tell whether he may not be gracious? But in order to make our trust both distinct and strong, we must go to his promise, 'for he is faithful and keepeth covenant and truth for ever.' Trust then, my brethren, rests ultimately on the promise. It must be precisely commensurate, or of the same extent with the promise. Whoever doubts or calls in question the certainty of what God hath promised, is chargeable with distrust; and whoever expects to receive, in kind or degree, more than he has promised,

promised is so far guilty of presumption. This is the general rule, and I think it carries such evidence with it, that every one must be sensible it is just, who hath heard it with any measure of attention.

But the great difficulty yet remains, which is, to apply this rule to the various cares that occur in the spiritual life, and to tell any particular person what it is his duty firmly to believe, and hope he shall receive from God, and what it would be presumptuous and simple in him to fix his expectation on. This is plainly of the greater importance, that the more particular our trust is, as to the object of desire, it is the more powerful a support to the mind. At the same time it frequently happens, that the more particular our desires are formed, the foundation of our hope appears the more uncertain and questionable. On this account you may observe, that it is of the greatest moment to understand the nature and tenor of the promises; or rather, indeed, to explain the foundation of trust, and to explain the nature and tenor of the promises, is one and the same thing.

For this end, it may be proper to distinguish the promises of God, as to futurity, into two heads, absolute and conditional. By absolute promises, in this place, I understand only those that are so in the most unlimited sense, that is to say, revealed as a part of the fixed plan of Providence, suspended on no terms but what all, of every character, may expect will certainly come
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to pass. Such are the promises after the flood; 'that summer and winter, seed time and harvest, should not fail;—the coming of Christ in the flesh at the fulness of time,' to the ancient Patriarchs, and to us;—'the downfall of Antichrist; —the preservation of a church on earth,' let its enemies be or do what they will;—'the calling of God's ancient people the Jews, and the coming of Christ to judge the world at the last day.' These are all called promises in Scripture, and so far as they can be of any use to the people of God, either for direction in duty, or restraint from sin, or consolation under trial, they are to be depended on, in the most absolute manner, for they rest upon the certainty of the Holy Scriptures, and the truth of the unchangeable God, who 'is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.'

SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

Trust in God.

ISAIAH I. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

HAVING, in the former discourse, opened the character and state of those who are called upon, and exhorted to trust in the name of the Lord; and entered upon the second thing proposed; which was, to explain the duty of trust in God, and to point out its foundation; and having in this view considered the nature of absolute promises;—I proceed,

2. To consider the nature and use of conditional promises. These I am obliged, for greater distinctness,

distinctness, to divide into three different heads.—1. There are promises made to persons of such or such a character, or in such or such a state.—2. There are promises, the performance of which is suspended on our compliance with something previously required, as the condition of obtaining them.—3. There are promises, not only suspended on both the preceding terms, but upon the supposition of some circumstances in themselves uncertain, or to us unknown. Let us consider each of these with care and attention.

1. There are promises made to persons of such or such a character, or in such or such a state, which are therefore to be applied and rested on, according as the evidence of our being of this character, or in this state, is clear or obscure. In this I have particularly in view, the blessings of salvation, the pardon of sin, peace with God, the spirit of sanctification, and a right to everlasting life. These all lie in an unbroken chain, and inseparable connection, and might have been more briefly expressed, by an interest in Christ the Saviour, who is the author, source and sum of these blessings; ‘for all the promises of God in him, are yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us.’ Let no judicious, attentive hearer be surprised or dissatisfied, that I have ranked these among conditional promises; for you may observe that I have expressed myself thus, they are promises made to persons of such or such a character, or in such or such a state.

state. In this, they certainly differ from the promises properly absolute, mentioned above. It is far from my intention to do injury to that fundamental truth, that salvation is by grace. I esteem that doctrine which proceeds upon a self-righteous system, to be contrary to the word of God, and most pernicious to the souls of men. There is nothing at all required in Scripture to be performed by us, as a purchasing or meriting condition. Every gracious act of the divine government, in our favour, is the fruit of the Redeemer's purchase, and every holy disposition wrought in us is the effect of his Almighty grace. But it is certain at the same time, that in order to our accepting those blessings, we must be truly and deeply humbled, and see ourselves to be incapable and helpless. We must be unfeignedly willing to renounce all claim of merit, and accept of salvation as it is offered in the Gospel; that is, in its full extent, and in the free and sovereign manner of its communication. So far, surely, we must say, the promises of the Gospel are conditional, or wholly pervert the word of God. I know of no promises then to the unbelieving and impenitent, unless you call that a promise, that they shall have 'their portion in the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone; and that the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.'

Hear it, my dear brethren; it is the 'needy, thirsty, sensible soul, that is invited to come and find

find rest. ' Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come
' ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money ;
' come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come buy wine and
' milk without money and without price. Come
' unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
' and I will give you rest.' If any shall think fit
further to say, that the very destination of the
vessels of mercy, is of God's sovereign pleasure,
that conviction itself is by a day of his power,
and that faith which interests us in Christ's
righteousness is his gift : I agree to the whole,
but observe, that it is improperly introduced
here. No use can possibly be made of the di-
vine decree in the application of the promises. It
is inverting the order of things. Can any man
say, I trust in the mercy of God, because I have
been ordained to everlasting life ? No man can
derive comfort from this, till by his effectual cal-
ling it is published, and begins to be accomplish-
ed ; and then he may look back with wonder
and gratitude to that everlasting love, by which
he was chosen in Christ before the foundation of
the world. Can you judge of the fruit of a tree
by looking upon the root ? No, but you judge of
the strength and deepness of the root, by the ful-
ness of the fruit, and the vigour and verdure of
the branches. From an improper mixture of
what belongs to the secret will of God, and what
belongs to us, as our duty, much error and con-
fusion arises.

Now, my brethren, as to the application of
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these promises of pardon and peace, the humbled sinner, the man among us, who walketh in darkness and hath no light,—who is burdened with a sense of guilt, and discouraged by the threatenings of the law, the accusations of conscience, and the pure and holy nature of God,—who, perhaps has all this aggravated by distress and trouble, is called to trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God. He is invited to consider and rest on the extent of the call, the immutability of the promise, and the riches of divine grace. If he is so far from pleading any merit in himself, or being dissatisfied with the plan of salvation laid down in the Gospel, that he is making every thing an argument against himself, and 'dare not lay hold of, or appropriate so unspeakable a mercy: this is just the effect of distrust, and he is called, in the strongest manner, in the text, to 'trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.' With how many gracious assurances for this purpose is the Scripture filled! John vi. 37, 'All that the Father hath given me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' Heb. vii. 25. 'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Rev. xxii. 17. 'And the Spirit and the bride say, come, And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him

‘him take of the water of life freely.’ All things, Christ excepted, are to be renounced to the all-sufficiency of a Redeemer, to be the foundation of our hope. The penitent will say with the Apostle, Phil. iii. 8. ‘Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith.’

2. There is a second class of promises, the performance of which is suspended on our previous compliance with something required as the condition of obtaining them. In these we are not only called ‘to accept of the divine mercy, but commanded to obey the Divine will.’ The order in which I have placed these, will, I hope, prevent you from misunderstanding or misapplying what may be said on them. This class includes all the promises in Scripture, regarding the daily progress of a believer in his sanctification and conformity to God, as well as the increase of his comfort and peace. I am sensible, that as the reconciliation of a sinner to God, and his right to what is called in Scripture the promise of eternal life, is of free and unmerited mercy, so, no doubt, all the inferior or subordinate promises flow from the same source, nay,

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in a certain measure, they are entirely upon the same footing with those formerly mentioned; that is to say, final perseverance, real growth in the spiritual life, and necessary comfort, are the sure and purchased portion of every one that is born of God. Rom. viii. 29. 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.' But in the distribution of those gifts, particularly in their measure, there is not only an unknown regard to the good pleasure of God, but a known and established regard to our conduct in duty. Thus the abundant supply of the Spirit is the fruit and return of diligence in prayer. Matt. vii. 7. 'Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.' See also Ezekiel xxxvi. 25. compared with the 37. 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you, &c. Thus saith the Lord, yet for all this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.' Thus also inward consolation, as well as outward security, is expressly promised as the effect and reward of uniformity and diligence in duty. Isa. xxxii. 17. 'And the work of righteousness, shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.' As the counter part and illustration of this, you see, that a departure from the path of duty

duty brings on the threatened, or, perhaps, I ought to call it, the promised rod of correction; Pf. lxxxix. 30.—33. ‘But if his children shall forsake my law, and not walk in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.’ In the same manner, Isa. xl. 30, 31. ‘Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; —they shall walk and not faint.’ Agreeably to all this, you know, our blessed Lord prescribed watchfulness and prayer as the great preservatives against temptation, and whoever expects either spiritual strength or comfort, while he relaxes his diligence in the way of duty, is guilty of that sin, which is called in Scripture, tempting God; and shall assuredly meet with a dreadful disappointment.

My brethren, as much of the daily exercise of real believers regards their progress in sanctification, and their peace and comfort, it is proper that you should carefully attend to the tenor of these promises, and to what ought to be your reliance upon them. I shall sum up, in a few

particulars, what I apprehend to be of most importance.

1. Trust in these promises implies self-denial, and a deep sense of your own weakness. These promises would be unnecessary and superfluous, were we not insufficient of ourselves for any thing that is good. Trust in God stands directly opposed to all self-dependence. Prov. iii. 5. 'Trust in the lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding.' How jealous God is, if I may speak so, of the honour that is due to him in this respect, may be seen from the many foul and shameful crimes into which he permitted some of his best saints to fall, when they were off their guard, by sloth, or still more provoked him by pride and presumption; Noah's drunkenness, Moses's passion, David's adultery and murder, and Peter's denial of his master. 1 Cor. x. 11, 12. 'Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' For this reason the Apostle Paul says, with great propriety, and with great force, which is equally applicable to himself and other believers, a seeming paradox; 1 Cor. xii. 10. 'For when I am weak, then I am strong.'

1. As we are to put no trust in ourselves, so we are to exercise the most unshaken confidence of our being able to discharge any duty, or undergo

dergo any trial by the help of the Almighty.— Oh! how ready are we to sin on both hands! How often do we presume upon our own strength, and forget the necessity of applying for divine aid!—And on the other hand, how prone are we to timidity or despondence in difficult cases! When corruptions have long kept their ground, we are ready to dread their influence, and to make but little out of the promises in Scripture, that we shall be made ‘more than conquerors’ through him that loved us.’ We have learned, by sad experience, that in us dwelleth no good thing, and yet it is long before we will attend to the lesson that follows hard upon it, ‘my grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be made perfect in weakness.’

3. As these promises are expressly made to the diligent, you must still remember that your own attention and application to duty is essentially necessary, and that the assistance promised from on high, is always represented in Scripture as an argument and encouragement to diligence, and not a warrant or excuse for sloth. Philip. ii. 12. ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’ It is also well worthy of notice, that the same Prophet Ezekiel, who says, chap. xxxvi. 6. ‘A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you,’ changes the form of his expression; and in another place, chap.

xviii. 31, 32. speaks in the following terms:
 ‘ Cast away from you all your transgressions
 ‘ whereby ye have transgressed; and make you
 ‘ a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye
 ‘ die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure
 ‘ in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord
 ‘ God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.’
 In consequence of this,

4. In the last place, trust in God will make us ready to acknowledge, that when we fail in duty, when we forget or break our resolutions, the fault is certainly in ourselves. It is impossible to excuse or justify ourselves in any degree, without laying the blame, in the same proportion, upon God, and calling in question his faithfulness and truth. But whatever our treacherous hearts may sinfully suggest, we are not straitened in God, but straitened in our own bowels. We find him pleading his own cause, in this respect, in many passages of Scripture, Isa. lix. 1. ‘ Behold, the
 ‘ Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot
 ‘ save; neither his ear heavy, that he cannot
 ‘ hear; but your sins have separated between
 ‘ you and your God, and your iniquities have
 ‘ hid his face from you, that he will not hear’.
 Upon the whole, trust in these promises is no other than an humble and diligent application to duty, under a deep sense of weakness, and dependence on promised strength, accompanied with a firm persuasion, that ‘ in the name of the
 ‘ Lord we shall tread down our enemies,’ and
 go

go on from strength to strength, 'till we appear
'before God in Zion.'

3. Another class of promises are those that are suspended, not only on the same conditions with the two former, but upon some other circumstances in themselves uncertain, or to us unseen. These are temporal mercies, or rather temporal prosperity, deliverance from present distress, and abundance or affluence of outward enjoyments. Perhaps we may also add spiritual consolation, and sensible joy in God. I find no temporal promise precisely fixed to the servant of God but this: 'Bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure;' and it is certainly his duty, in the most straitening circumstances, to maintain a confident dependence on the power and wisdom of Providence for necessary supply. I do not condemn those who, when reduced to extremity, have actually pleaded this divine promise, and against hope, have believed in hope; and I am persuaded instances have not been wanting of relief, furnished in a manner next to miraculous. But as to every other degree of temporal prosperity, God hath reserved it in his own hand to give or withhold it at his pleasure; that is, as he sees it will be most for his glory, and the benefit of his people. It is lawful then, my brethren, for you to endeavour to procure, by honest industry, the increase of your substance, to look well to the state of your flocks, and your herds, and to ask by prayer the blessing

ing of God upon your labours. It is lawful, and it is your duty by regularity and care, to preserve life and health, as well as to ask of the Father of your spirits, recovery from sickness, or deliverance from any other kind of distress. But you are not warranted to believe that these petitions shall be granted in hand, or in your own time and measure, even though you ask them in sincerity with the prayer of faith. There may be reasons for withholding them, and yet you may be accepted in your prayers. An infinitely wise God knows best what is for your good, and he only hath a right to determine in what part of his own service; where and how long he shall employ you. Trust in God, therefore, in this respect, implies a careful attention to the tenor of the promises with regard to temporal mercies, and not to look for, or even, if possible, desire what he hath not promised to bestow.

If I am not mistaken, we shall find it of moment, upon this subject, to observe, both what he hath not and what he hath certainly promised. He has no where promised that his own people shall be the richest or the greatest on earth; but he hath certainly promised to bless their provision, and assured them, that a little that a just man hath shall be better than the riches of many wicked. He has not promised that they shall be free from suffering; but he hath certainly promised to support them by his own presence under their distress. Isa. xliii. 2. 'When
' thou

• thou passest through the waters, I will be with
• thee; and through the rivers, they shall not
• overflow thee; when thou walkest through the
• fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the
• flame kindle upon thee.' The truth is, he hath
promised that 'all things shall work together for
'their good'. In one word, they have indeed
all mercies promised, only they themselves are
not in a condition; at present, to judge what they
may use with safety, and what not. As the heir
of an opulent estate, though he is proprietor of
all, yet is laid under restraint while in infancy
and nonage, because he would soon ruin himself
if it were committed to his own management; so
the believer, though an heir of God, and joint
heir with Christ, yet till he is meet for the in-
heritance, he must be at his Maker's and Re-
deemer's disposal. Take in, therefore, only this
limitation, and then see his extensive charter.
1 Cor. iii. 21.—'For all things are yours; whe-
• ther Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world,
• or life, or death, or things present, or things to
• come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and
• Christ is God's.' What then is the duty of a
child to God? It is to breathe after more and
more submission to the divine will, and to annex
this reservation to every petition of a temporal na-
ture, 'nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.'
And, oh! my brethren, how happy the person
who hath seen the weakness of human judgment;
who waits the intimation of God's will, before he
will

will suffer his desires to fasten with eagerness on any earthly comfort, and who endeavours to keep himself free from perplexity, by an humble and submissive reliance on the all-sufficiency of God!

I observed, in entering on this part of the subject, that spiritual consolation, or sensible joy in God, is to be considered as a promise of the same class, which must, therefore, be asked with submission, and is dispensed according to the good pleasure of a gracious but sovereign-God. I am sensible, as has been formerly observed with another view, that some degree of comfort necessarily follows from a believer's relation to God; but many pious persons seem to desire and to expect sensible comfort in a higher measure than God sees it meet to give them, or than is proper for them in the present state. It is with spiritual prosperity as with temporal, every one cannot bear it. Therefore, it is our duty still to be sensible that we have much more comfort and peace than we deserve, and as we desire and strive for greater degrees of it, to accompany these desires with much humility and resignation to the will of God.

I proceed now to the last thing proposed, which was to make a practical application of this subject for your instruction and direction.

1. From what has been said, you may see what judgment you ought to form of inward suggestions, and strong or particular impressions upon your minds. There are some extremely prone to interpret

interpret a text of ſcripture, ſuddenly ſuggeſted to their minds, or any ſtrong impreſſion made on them, as an immediate meſſage from God, to be directly applied to themſelves: Others, in oppoſition to this, as enthuſiaſtical and viſionary, ſeem to give up every expectation of being able to ſay, with the Pſalmiſt, ‘ I bleſs the Lord who hath given me counſel, my reins alſo inſtruct me in the night ſeaſon.’ I beg, therefore, that you may obſerve, that the ſuggeſtion of a paſſage of ſcripture, of itſelf gives no title to the immediate application of it, becauſe the great deceiver may undoubtedly ſuggeſt ſcripture, as we find he could reaſon from it in our Saviour’s temptation. We are, in every ſuch caſe, to conſider the tenor of it, if it be a promiſe of encouragement, that is, how and in what manner it may be ſafely applied. If any thing happens to be ſuggeſted that expreſſly ſuits our preſent condition, either by ſetting home the obligation of duty, with particular evidence upon the conſcience, or pointing out the grounds of comfort, it ought to be thankfully acknowledged as from the ſpirit of God. For example, if a perſon, under the power of a ſpirit of bondage, and fear of Divine wrath, hath ſuggeſted to him any of the extenſive gracious aſſurances of mercy to the chief of ſinners, it is his duty to lay hold of it. It is directly ſuited to his condition, and would be the very thing that a wiſe and judicious paſtor would recommend to him for his relief. He may therefore
without

without hesitation, bless God for it, if it is brought with power and efficacy upon his heart. In the same manner, if a person under trouble hath suggested to him any of the promises of support under it, surely he ought, in the discharge of his duty, firmly to rely on the accomplishment of that part of the word of God. But in the reflex examination of a person's character or state to apply the sudden suggestion of a promise or privilege, perhaps of a conditional nature, is certainly both sinful and dangerous. Sinful, because without warrant; and dangerous, because leading to delusion.

2. From what hath been said, you may see what it is that we ought to seek for with the greatest earnestness, and may hope to obtain with the greatest confidence. Recollect, I beseech you, the order in which I have mentioned the promises of God as the objects of trust and reliance. First of all the promises of salvation, deliverance from the guilt of sin, and a right to everlasting life; next, whatever is necessary to the preservation and improvement of the spiritual life; and then, in the third place, proper accommodation, and suitable provision in our passage through the present world. They are here ranked according to their value in themselves, and the value which we should put upon them. Let us, therefore, take care that we never violate this order, which is necessary, not only because of their comparative value, but because of their mutual

tual influence one upon another. It is in vain for us to expect to attain to the habit or practice of holiness, till we are united to God by faith in Jesus Christ. All the promises of the gospel are ratified in him. All the divine fulness is treasured up in him. Every divine gift is dispensed by him. Therefore, he says, John xv. 4. Abide in ' me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear ' fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no ' more can ye, except ye abide in me.' And the Apostle Paul, Gal. ii. 20. ' I am crucified with ' Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but ' Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now ' live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son ' of God, who loved me, and gave himself for ' me.'

In the same manner nothing can be more preposterous, than to fix our affections upon temporal mercies, or our attention upon the promises that relate to them, so as to lose view of our interest in God's favour, and the progress of our sanctification. All the temporal promises in scripture are made to the children of God as such, and for carrying on the purposes of his grace in them. Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. There is no promise in the whole volume of inspiration to the wicked and impenitent. ' There is no peace, saith my God, ' to the wicked.' He will either rebuke them in his wrath and chasten them in his hot displeasure, or give them up to a cursed, hardening, stupify-

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ing prosperity, than which, no state on earth is more to be dreaded.—Christian! never suffer an anxiety about your outward state to supplant or go before, or even to be separated from a concern, that you may not be found wanting when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary.

3. Let me beseech you to adore the wisdom, justice and mercy of God, in the order he hath established, according to the different nature of the promises. That which is of most, nay, properly speaking, of unspeakable value, and radically contains all the rest, is placed first in order, and offered in the most free and gracious manner, without money and without price. Salvation is preached to the chief of sinners, and a Saviour held forth as able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. Many uses might be made of this, but the single use I intend to make of it at present, as connected with the duty of trust, is to silence the complaints of envy and impatience. How prone are many to look with an evil eye upon the more extensive possessions, and greater apparent outward comfort which others enjoy! Does it not astonish you to think how much unbelief and ingratitude there is in those repining thoughts? Meanness of rank, and poverty of state, are no hindrance at all to an interest in Christ, and a right to everlasting life. Nay, the Gospel is preached to the poor.—Many a Lazarus has been carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom, while the rich and luxurious have lifted up

up their eyes in torments. Will you, can you, dare you then complain? Will you envy the man of the world, his stately palace, his elegant furniture, and his sumptuous fare? What is the amplest portion in the present life compared with the sure mercies of David? What child of God would exchange with any wicked man a prison for a palace; or a scaffold for a throne?

I beseech you to add to all this, that even with regard to present peace or comfort, there is no comparison between a good man and a bad. 'A man's life doth not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' This is a truth not only often repeated in the sacred oracles, but written in the clearest and most legible characters in the history of Providence.—Nay, even independently of virtue or religion itself, every human calamity, whether arising from sickness, reproach, contention, fear, or ungratified desire, rages with greater violence in the higher, than in the lower stations of life. A vain and conceited monarch once sent to ask at an heathen oracle, who was the happiest man on earth? and met with a deserved disappointment in the reply: If we should put a question much more profitable as well as much more easily resolved, in what rank of life the most exquisite human misery has been found? I have no doubt but it ought to be answered, upon a throne.—Experience will always ratify the wise man's observation: 'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred

' therewith.' A sanctified lot is an inestimable treasure. The blessing of God on a cruise of oil, and a pot of meal, is better than inexhaustible mines of gold and silver. What cause of contentment and patience to the child of God!

In the last place, you may learn, from what has been said on the subject, what is the plainest, the shortest, and, indeed, the only sure way to deliverance from distress or calamity of whatever kind. It is to fly to the mercy of God through the blood of Christ, to renew the exercises of faith in him, and in proportion as it pleases God, to fill you with all joy and peace in believing; you will perceive every other covenant blessing flow clear and unmixed from this inexhausted source. It will lead to repentance, humiliation and submission. The sanctified use of the affliction will be obtained, and this brings deliverance of itself; for no rod will be continued longer than it hath answered its end. At any rate, when suffering is necessary, grace, to suffer with patience, shall not be withheld. Would you have any more, and is not this remedy always at hand? Can the poorest man say, it is not within the reach of his purse? It is at once effectual and universal. It was once said in contempt of a worthy and pious minister, that he made so much of the blood of Christ, that he would even apply it to a broken bone. But bating what may be thought indecent in the expression, chosen on purpose to bring a good man into ridicule, the thing itself, I make bold to affirm

firm, is a great and precious truth. Faith in the blood of Christ makes a man superior to all sufferings. It softens their aspect—it abates their severity—nay, it changes their nature. When a man is under distress or calamity of any kind, and considers it only in itself, and independently of his relation to God, it retains its old nature, and tastes with all the bitterness of the original curse; but when it is considered as limited in its nature—its measure, and its continuance by a kind Saviour, the believer submits to it with patience, as a part of his Creator's will; bears it with patience in his Redeemer's strength, and sometimes is enabled to embrace it with pleasure, as serving to carry him to his Father's presence. Is this going too far? No, my dear brethren; there are great realities to which the word of God, and the experience of his saints, bear united evidence. Many here present, I doubt not, have been witnesses of this truth in the carriage of their relations now with God; and not a few, I trust, will repeat the testimony to succeeding ages. I conclude all with that animated passage of the Apostle Paul,—‘ 2 Cor. iv. 16. 17. ‘ For which cause we faint not; but though ‘ our outward man perish, yet the inward man is ‘ renewed day by day. For our light affliction, ‘ which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far ‘ more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’

SERMON X.

The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men.*

PSAL. lxxvi. 10.

Surely the wrath of Man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

THERE is not a greater evidence either of the reality or the power of religion, than a firm belief of God's universal presence, and a constant attention to the influence and operation of his providence. It is by this means that the Christian may be said, in the emphatical Scripture language, 'to walk with God, and to endure as seeing him who is invisible.'

The doctrine of divine providence is very full and complete in the sacred oracles. It extends not only to things which we may think of great moment, and therefore worthy of notice; but to things

* Preached at Princeton on the general Fast, 17th May 1776.

things the most indifferent and inconsiderable
‘ Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ? ’ says
our Lord, ‘ and one of them falleth not to the
ground without your heavenly Father ; nay,
‘ the very hairs of your head are all numbered.’
It extends not only to things beneficial and sa-
lutary, or to the direction and assistance of those
who are the servants of the living God ; but to
things seemingly most hurtful and destructive,
and to persons the most refractory and disobedi-
ent. He over-rules ~~all his creatures~~, and all their
actions. Thus we are told, that ‘ fire, hail,
snow, vapour, and stormy wind, fulfil his word,’
in the course of nature ; and even so the most
impetuous and disorderly passions of men, that
are under no restraint from themselves, are yet
perfectly subject to the dominion of Jehovah.
They carry his commission, they obey his orders,
they are limited and restrained by his authority,
and they conspire with every thing else in pro-
moting his glory. There is the greater need
to take notice of this, that men are not ge-
nerally sufficiently aware of the distinction be-
tween the law of God and his purpose ; they are
apt to suppose, that as the temper of the sinner is
contrary to the one, so the outrages of the sinner
are able to defeat the other ; than which nothing
can be more false. The truth is plainly asserted
and nobly expressed by the Psalmist in the text,
‘ Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee ; the
‘ remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.’

This

This psalm was evidently composed as a song of praise for some signal victory obtained, which was at the same time a remarkable deliverance from threatening danger. The author was one or other of the later prophets, and the occasion, probably, the unsuccessful assault of Jerusalem, by the army of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, in the days of Hezekiah. Great was the insolence and boasting of his generals and servants against the city of the living God, as may be seen in the thirty-sixth chapter of Isaiah. Yet it pleased God to destroy their enemies, and, by his own immediate interposition, to grant them deliverance. Therefore the Psalmist says, in the fifth and sixth verses of this Psalm, 'The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep. None of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob! both the chariots and the horse are cast into a deep sleep.' After a few more remarks to the same purpose, he draws the inference, or makes the reflection in the text, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain?' which may be paraphrased thus; the fury and injustice of oppressors shall bring in a tribute of praise to thee; the influence of thy righteous providence shall be clearly discerned; the countenance and support thou wilt give to thine own people shall be gloriously illustrated: thou shalt set the bounds which the boldest cannot pass.

I am

I am sensible, my brethren, that the time and occasion of this psalm, may seem to be in one respect ill suited to the interesting circumstances of this country at present. It was composed after the victory was obtained; whereas we are now but putting on the harness, and entering upon an important contest, the length of which it is impossible to foresee, and the issue of which it will perhaps be thought presumption to foretel. But as the truth, with respect to God's moral government, is the same and unchangeable; as the issue, in the case of Senacherib's invasion, did but lead the prophet to acknowledge it; our duty and interest conspire in calling upon us to improve it. And I have chosen to insist upon it on this day of solemn humiliation, as it will probably help us to a clear and explicit view of what should be the chief subject of our prayers and endeavours, as well as the great object of our hope and trust, in our present situation.

The truth, then, asserted in this text, which I propose to illustrate and improve, is,—‘ That all the disorderly passions of men whether exposing the innocent to private injury, or whether they are the arrows of divine judgment in public calamity, shall in the end, be to the praise of God;’ Or, to apply it more particularly to the present state of the American Colonies, and the plague of war,—‘ The ambition of mistaken princes, the cunning and cruelty of oppressive and corrupt ministers, and even
‘ the

‘ the inhumanity of brutal soldiers, however
 ‘ dreadful, shall finally promote the glory of
 ‘ God ; and in the mean-time, while the storm
 ‘ continues, his mercy and kindness shall appear
 ‘ in prescribing bounds to their rage and fury.’

In discoursing of this subject, it is my intention, through the assistance of divine grace,

I. To point out to you in some particulars, how the wrath of man praises God.

II. To apply these principles to our present situation, by inferences of truth for your instruction and comfort, and by suitable exhortations to duty in the important crisis.

I. In the first place, I am to point out to you, in some particulars, how the wrath of man praises God. I say, in some instances, because it is far from being in my power, either to mention or explain the whole. There is an unsearchable depth in the divine counsels, which it is impossible for us to penetrate. It is the duty of every good man to place the most unlimited confidence in divine wisdom, and to believe that those measures of providence that are most unintelligible to him, are yet planned with the same skill, and directed to the same great purposes as others, the reason and tendency of which he can explain in the clearest manner. But where revelation and experience enables us to discover the

the wisdom, equity, or mercy of divine providence, nothing can be more delightful or profitable to a serious mind, and therefore I beg your attention to the following remarks.

In the first place, the wrath of man praises God, as it is an example and illustration of divine truth, and clearly points out the corruption of our nature, which is the foundation-stone of the doctrine of redemption. Nothing can be more absolutely necessary to true religion, than a clear and full conviction of the sinfulness of our nature and state. Without this there can be neither repentance in the sinner, nor humility in the believer. Without this all that is said in Scripture of the wisdom and mercy of God, in providing a Saviour, is without force and without meaning. Justly does our Saviour say, 'the whole have no need of a physician, but those that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.' Those who are not sensible that they are sinners, will treat every exhortation to repentance, and every offer of mercy, with disdain or defiance.

But where can we have a more affecting view of the corruption of our nature, than in the wrath of man, when exerting itself in oppression, cruelty, and blood? It must be owned, indeed, that this truth is abundantly manifest in times of the greatest tranquillity. Others may, if they please, treat the corruption of our nature as a chimera; for my part, I see it every where, and

I feel it every day. All the disorders in human society, and the greatest part even of the unhappiness we are exposed to, arises from the envy, malice, covetousness, and other lusts of man. If we and all about us were just what we ought to be in all respects, we should not need to go any further for heaven, for it would be upon earth. But war and violence present a spectacle still more awful. How affecting is it to think, that the lust of domination should be so violent and universal! That men should so rarely be satisfied with their own possessions and acquisitions, or even with the benefit that would arise from mutual service, but should look upon the happiness and tranquillity of others, as an obstruction to their own. That, as if the great law of nature were not enough, 'dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return,' they should be so furiously set for the destruction of each other. It is shocking to think, since the first murder of Abel by his brother Cain, what havock has been made of man by man in every age. What is it that fills the pages of history, but the wars and contentions of princes and empires? What vast numbers has lawless ambition brought into the field, and delivered as a prey to the destructive sword!

If we dwell a little upon the circumstances, they become deeply affecting. The mother bears a child with pain, rears him by the laborious attendance of many years; yet in the prime

prime of life, in the vigour of health, and bloom of beauty, in a moment he is cut down by the dreadful instruments of death. 'Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood;' but the horror of the scene is not confined to the field of slaughter. Few go there unrelated, or fall unlamented; in every hostile encounter; what must be the impression upon the relations of the deceased? The bodies of the dead can only be seen, or the cries of the dying heard for a single day; but many days shall not put an end to the mourning of a parent for a beloved son, the joy and support of his age, or of the widow and helpless offspring for a father, taken away in the fulness of health and vigour.

But if this may be justly said of all wars between man and man; what shall we be able to say that is suitable to the abhorred scene of civil war between citizen and citizen? How deeply affecting is it, that those who are the same in complexion, the same in blood, in language, and in religion, should, notwithstanding, butcher one another with unrelenting rage, and glory in the deed? That men should lay waste the fields of their fellow subjects, with whose provision they themselves had been often fed, and consume with devouring fire those houses, in which they had often found a hospitable shelter?

These things are apt to overcome a weak mind with fear, or overwhelm it with sorrow, and in

the greatest number are apt to excite the highest indignation, and kindle up a spirit of revenge. If this last has no other tendency than to direct and invigorate the measures of self-defence, I do not take upon me to blame it; on the contrary, I call it necessary and laudable.

But what I mean at this time to prove by the preceding reflections, and wish to impress on your minds, is the depravity of our nature. 'From whence come wars and fightings among you,' says the Apostle James, 'come they not hence, even from your lusts, that war in your members?' Men of lax and corrupt principles, take great delight in speaking to the praise of human nature, and extolling its dignity, without distinguishing what it was, at its first creation, from what it is in its present fallen state. These fine speculations are very grateful to a worldly mind. They are also much more pernicious to uncautious and unthinking youth, than even the temptations to a dissolute and sensual life, against which they are fortified by the dictates of natural conscience, and a sense of public shame. But I appeal from these visionary reasonings to the history of all ages, and the inflexible testimony of daily experience. These will tell us what men have been in their practice, and from thence you may judge what they are by nature, while unrenewed. If I am not mistaken, a cool and candid attention, either to the past history, or present state of the world, but
above

above all, to the ravages of lawless power, ought to humble us in the dust. It should at once lead us to acknowledge the just view given us in scripture, of our lost state; to desire the happy influence of renewing grace each for ourselves; and to long for the dominion of righteousness and peace, when 'men shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.' †.

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† I cannot help embracing this opportunity of making a remark or two upon a virulent reflexion thrown out against this doctrine, in a well known pamphlet, *Common Sense*. The author of that work expresses himself thus; 'If the first king of any country was by election, that likewise establishes a precedent for the next; for to say, that the right of all future generations is taken away, by the act of the first electors, in their choice not only of a king, but of a family of kings for ever, hath no parallel in or out of scripture, but the doctrine of original sin, which supposes the free will of all men lost in Adam; and from such comparison, it will admit of no other: hereditary succession can derive no glory. For as in Adam all sinned, and as in the first electors all men obeyed; as in the one all mankind were subjected to Satan, and in the other to Sovereignty; as our innocence was lost in the first, and our authority in the last; and as both disable us from re-assuming some former state and privilege, it unanswerably follows, that original sin and hereditary

2. The wrath of man praiseth God as it is the instrument in his hand for bringing sinners to repentance, and for the correction and improvement of his own children. Whatever be the nature of the affliction with which he visits either persons, families, or nations; whatever be the disposition or intention of those whose malice he employs as a scourge, the design on his part is, to rebuke men for iniquity, to bring them to repentance, and to promote their holiness and peace.

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'ditary succession are parallels. Dishonourable rank! Inglorious connection! Yet the most subtle sophist cannot produce a juster simile*.' Without the shadow of reasoning, he is pleased to represent the doctrine of original sin as an object of contempt or abhorrence. I beg leave to demur a little to the candor, the prudence, and the justice of this proceeding.

1. Was it modest or candid for a person without name or character, to talk in this supercilious manner of a doctrine that has been espoused and defended by many of the greatest and best men that the world ever saw, and which makes an essential part of the established Creeds and Confessions of all the Protestant churches without exception? I thought the grand modern plea had been, freedom of sentiment, and charitable thoughts of one another. Are so many of us, then, beyond the reach of this gentleman's charity? I do assure him that such presumption and self-confidence are no recommendation to me either of his character or sentiments.

2. Was it prudent, when he was pleading a public cause, to speak in such opprobrious terms of a doctrine

* *Common Sense*, page 11. *Bradford's edition*.

The salutary nature, and sanctifying influence of affliction in general, is often taken notice of in scripture, both as making part of the purpose of God, and the experience of his saints. 'Now, no affliction,' says the apostle, 'for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peacable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' But what we are particularly led to observe by the subject of this discourse is, that the

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doctrine, which he knew, or ought to have known, was believed and professed by, I suppose, a great majority of very different denominations? Is this gentleman ignorant of human nature, as well as an enemy to the Christian faith? Are men so little tenacious of their religious sentiments, whether true or false? The prophet thought otherwise, who said, 'Hath a nation changed their gods which yet are no gods?' Was it the way to obtain the favour of the public, to despise what they hold sacred? Or shall we suppose this author so astonishingly ignorant, as to think that all men now, whose favour is worth asking, have given up the doctrine of the New-Testament? If he does, he is greatly mistaken.

3. In fine, I ask, where was the justice of this proceeding? Is there so little to be said for the doctrine of original sin, that it is not to be refuted, but despised? Is the state of the world such, as to render this doctrine not only false, but incredible? Has the fruit been of such a quality as to exclude all doubts of the goodness of the tree?—On the contrary, I cannot help being of opinion, that such

has.

wrath of man, or the violence of the oppressor, praiseth God in this respect, that it has a peculiar tendency to alarm the secure conscience, to convince and humble the obstinate sinner. This is plain from the nature of the thing, and from the testimony of experience. Public calamity, particularly the destroying sword, is so awful that it cannot but have a powerful influence in leading men, to consider the presence and the power of God. It threatens them not only in themselves, but touches them in all that is dear to them, whether relations or possessions. The prophet Isaiah says, 'Yea, in the way of thy judgments, ' O Lord, have we waited for thee,—for when ' thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants ' of the world will learn righteousness.' He considers it as the most powerful mean of alarming the secure, and subduing the obstinate. ' Lord, ' when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, ' but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy ' at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies ' shall devour them.' It is also sometimes represented as a symptom of a hopeless and irrecoverable state, when public judgments have no effect. Thus says the prophet Jeremiah, ' O Lord, are not

has been the visible state of the world in every age as cannot be accounted for on any other principles, than what we learn from the word of God, that ' the imagination of the heart of man is only evil ' from his youth and that continually,' Gen. vi. 5. —viii. 21.

‘ not thine eyes upon the truth ? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved ; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction : They have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return.’

We can easily see in the history of the children of Israel, how severe strokes brought them to submission and penitence. ‘ When he slew them, then they sought him ; and they returned and enquired early after God ; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.’ Both nations in general, and private persons are apt to grow remiss and lax in a time of prosperity and seeming security ; but when their earthly comforts are endangered or withdrawn, it lays them under a kind of necessity to seek for something better in their place. Men must have comfort from one quarter or another. When earthly things are in a pleasing and promising condition, too many are apt to find their rest, and be satisfied with them as their only portion. But when the vanity and passing nature of all created comfort is discovered, they are compelled to look for something more durable as well as valuable. What therefore can be more to the praise of God, than that when a whole people have forgotten their resting place, when they have abused their privileges, and despised their mercies, they should, by distress and suffering, be made to hearken to the rod and return to their duty ?

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There is an inexpressible depth and variety in the judgments of God, as in all his other works; but we may lay down this as a certain principle, that if there were no sin, there could be no suffering. Therefore they are certainly for the correction of sin, or for the trial, illustration, and perfecting of the grace and virtue of his own people. We are not to suppose, that those who suffer most or who suffer soonest, are therefore more criminal than others. Our Saviour himself thought it necessary to give a caution against this rash conclusion, as we are informed by the evangelist Luke; 'There were present at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' I suppose we may say, with sufficient warrant, that it often happens, that those for whom God hath designs of the greatest mercy, are first brought to the trial, that they may enjoy, in due time, the salutary effect of the unpalatable medicine.

I must also take leave to observe, and I hope no pious humble sufferer will be unwilling to make the application, that there is often a discernible mixture of sovereignty and righteousness in providential dispensations. It is the prerogative of God to do what he will with his own; but he often

often displays his justice itself, by throwing into the furnace those, who, though they may not be visibly worse than others, may yet have more to answer for, as having been favoured with more distinguished privileges, both civil and sacred. It is impossible for us to make a just and full comparison of the character either of persons or nations, and it would be extremely foolish for any to attempt it, either for increasing their own security, or impeaching the justice of the Supreme Ruler. Let us therefore neither forget the truth, nor go beyond it. 'His mercy fills the earth.' He is also 'known by the judgment which he executeth.' The wrath of man in its most tempestuous rage, fulfils his will, and finally promotes the good of his chosen.

3. The wrath of man praiseth God, as he sets bounds to it, or restrains it by his providence, and sometimes makes it evidently a mean of promoting and illustrating his glory.

There is no part of divine providence in which a greater beauty and majesty appears, than when the Almighty Ruler turns the counsels of wicked men into confusion, and makes them militate against themselves. If the Psalmist may be thought to have had a view in this text to the truths illustrated in the two former observations, there is no doubt at all that he had a particular view to this, as he says in the latter part of the verse, 'the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.' The scripture abounds with instances, in which
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the designs of oppressors were either wholly disappointed, or in execution fell far short of the malice of their intention; and in some they turned out to the honour and happiness of the persons or the people, whom they were intended to destroy. We have an instance of the first of these in the history to which my text relates*. We have also an instance in Esther, in which the most mischievous designs of Haman, the Son of Hamedatha the Agagite, against Mordecai the Jew, and the nation from which he sprung, turned out at last to his own destruction, the honour of Mordecai, and the salvation and peace of his people.

From the New Testament I will make choice of that memorable event on which the salvation of believers in every age rests as its foundation, the death and sufferings of the Son of God. This the great adversary, and all his agents and instruments, prosecuted with unrelenting rage. When they had blackened him with slander, when they had scourged him with shame, when they had condemned him in judgment, and nailed him to the cross, how could they help esteeming their victory complete? But, oh the unsearchable wisdom of God! they were but perfecting the great design laid for the salvation of sinners. Our blessed Redeemer, by his death, finished his
work,

* The matter is fully stated and reasoned upon by the prophet Isaiah, chap. x. from the 5th to the 19th verse.

work, overcame principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross. With how much justice do the apostles and their company offer this doxology to God? 'They lift up their voice with one accord and said, Lord, thou art God which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.'

In all after ages in conformity to this, the deepest laid contrivances of the prince of darkness, have turned out to the confusion of their author; and I know not but, considering his malice and pride, this perpetual disappointment, and the superiority of divine wisdom, may be one great source of his suffering and torment. The cross hath still been the banner of truth, under which it hath been carried through the world. Persecution has been but as the furnace to the gold, to purge it of its dross, to manifest its purity, and increase its lustre. It was taken notice of very early, that the blood of the martyrs was the seed
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of Christianity ; the more abundantly it was shed the more plentifully did the harvest grow.

So certain has this appeared, that the most violent infidels, both of early and of later ages, have endeavoured to account for it, and have observed, that there is a spirit of obstinacy in man, which inclines him to resist violence, and that severity doth but increase opposition, be the cause what it will. They suppose that persecution is equally proper to propagate truth and error. This, though in part true, will by no means generally hold. Such an apprehension, however, gave occasion to a glorious triumph of divine providence, of an opposite kind, which I must shortly relate to you. One of the Roman emperors, Julian, surnamed the apostate, perceiving how impossible it was to suppress the gospel by violence, endeavoured to extinguish it by neglect and scorn. He left the Christians unmolested for some time, but gave all manner of encouragement to those of opposite principles, and particularly to the Jews, out of hatred to the Christians ; and that he might bring public disgrace upon the Galileans, as he affected to stifle them, he encouraged the Jews to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, and visibly refute the prophecy of Christ, that it should lye under perpetual desolation. But this profane attempt was so signally frustrated, that it served as much as any one circumstance to spread the glory of our Redeemer, and establish the faith of his saints. It is affirmed by some ancient
authors

authors, particularly by Ammianus Marcellinus, a heathen historian, that fire came out of the earth and consumed the workmen when laying the foundation. But in whatever way it was prevented, it is beyond all controversy, from the concurring testimony of Heathens and Christians, that little or no progress was ever made in it, and that in a short time, it was entirely defeated.

It is proper here to observe, that at the time of the Reformation, when religion began to revive, nothing contributed more to facilitate its reception, and increase its progress, than the violence of its persecutors. Their cruelty, and the patience of the sufferers, naturally disposed men to examine and weigh the cause to which they adhered with so much constancy and resolution. At the same time also, when they were persecuted in one city they fled to another, and carried the discoveries of Popish fraud to every part of the world. It was by some of those who were persecuted in Germany, that the light of the reformation was brought so early into Britain.

The power of divine providence appears with the most distinguished lustre, when small and inconsiderable circumstances, and sometimes, the weather and seasons have defeated the most formidable armaments, and frustrated the best concerted expeditions. Near two hundred years ago, the monarchy of Spain was in the height of its power and glory, and determined to crush the

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interest of the reformation. They sent out a powerful armament against Britain, giving it ostentatiously, and in my opinion profanely, the name of the Invincible Armada. But it pleased God so entirely to discomfit it by tempests, that a small part of it returned home, though no British force had been opposed to it at all.

We have a remarkable instance of the influence of small circumstances in providence in the English history. The two most remarkable persons in the civil wars, had earnestly desired to withdraw themselves from the contentions of the times, Mr Hampden and Oliver Cromwell. They had actually taken their passage in a ship for New-England, when by an arbitrary order of council they were compelled to remain at home. The consequence of this was, that one of them was the soul of the republican opposition to monarchical usurpation during the civil wars; and the other, in the course of that contest, was the greatest instrument in bringing the tyrant to the block.

The only other historical remark I am to make is, that the violent persecution which many eminent Christians met with in England from their brethren, who called themselves Protestants, drove them in great numbers to a distant part of the world, where the light of the gospel and true religion were unknown. Some of the American settlements, particularly those in New-England, were chiefly made by them; and as they

they carried the knowledge of Christ to the dark places of the earth, so they continue themselves in as great a degree of purity of faith, and strictness of practice, or rather a greater, than is to be found in any protestant church now in the world. Does not the wrath of man in this instance praise God? Was not the accuser of the brethren, who stirred up their enemies, thus taken in his own craftiness, and his kingdom shaken by the very means which he employed to establish it †.

II. I proceed now to the second general head, which was to apply the principles illustrated above to our present situation, by inferences of truth for your instruction and comfort, and by suitable exhortations to duty in this important crisis. And,

In the first place, I would take the opportunity on this occasion, and from this subject, to press every hearer to a sincere concern for his own soul's salvation. There are times when the mind may be expected to be more awake to di-

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† Lest this should be thought a temporising compliment to the people of New-England, who have been the first sufferers in the present contest, and have set so noble an example of invincible fortitude in withstanding the violence of oppression, I think it proper to observe, that the whole paragraph is copied from a sermon on Psalm lxxiv. 22. prepared and preached in Scotland, in the month of August, 1758.

vine truth, and the conscience more open to the arrows of conviction than at others. A season of public judgment is of this kind, as appears from what has been already said. That curiosity and attention at least are raised, in some degree, is plain from the unusual throng of this assembly. Can you have a clearer view of the sinfulness of your nature, than when the rod of the oppressor is lifted up, and when you see men putting on the habit of the warrior, and collecting on every hand the weapons of hostility and instruments of death? I do not blame your ardour in preparing for the resolute defence of your temporal rights. But consider, I beseech you, the truly infinite importance of the salvation of your souls. Is it of much moment whether you and your children shall be rich or poor, at liberty or in bonds? Is it of much moment whether this beautiful country shall increase in fruitfulness from year to year, being cultivated by active industry, and possessed by independent freemen, or the scanty produce of the neglected fields shall be eaten up by hungry publicans, while the timid owner trembles at the tax-gatherer's approach? And is it of less moment my brethren, whether you shall be the heirs of glory, or the heirs of hell? Is your state on earth for a few fleeting years of so much moment? And is it of less moment, what shall be your state through endless ages? Have you assembled together willingly to hear what shall be said on public affairs, and to join in imploring the

the blessing of God on the councils and arms of the United Colonies? And can you be unconcerned, what shall become of you for ever, when all the monuments of human greatness shall be laid in ashes? For, 'the earth itself and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up.'

Wherefore, my beloved hearers, as the ministry of reconciliation is committed to me, I beseech you in the most earnest manner, to attend to 'the things that belong to your peace, before they are hid from your eyes.' How soon, and in what manner a seal shall be set upon the character and state of every person here present, it is impossible to know; for he who only can know does not think proper to reveal it. But you may rest assured, that there is no time more suitable, and that there is none so safe as that which is present, since it is wholly uncertain whether any other shall be yours. Those who shall first fall in battle, have not many more warnings to receive. There are some few daring and hardened sinners who despise eternity itself, and set their maker at defiance; but the far greater number, by staving off their convictions to a more convenient season, have been taken unprepared, and thus eternally lost. I would therefore earnestly press the apostle's exhortation, 'We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain: for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation

‘ have I succoured thee: Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.’

Suffer me to beseech you, or rather to give you warning not to rest satisfied with a form of godliness, denying the power thereof. There can be no true religion, till there be a discovery of your lost state by nature and practice, and an unfeigned acceptance of Christ Jesus, as he is offered in the gospel. Unhappy they who either despise his mercy, or are ashamed of his cross! Believe it, ‘ there is no salvation in any other. ‘ There is no other name under heaven given ‘ among men by which we must be saved.’ Unless you are united to him by a lively faith, not the resentment of a haughty monarch, but the sword of divine justice hangs over you, and the fulness of divine vengeance shall speedily overtake you. I do not speak this only to the heaven-daring profligate, or grovelling sensualist, but to every insensible secure sinner; to all those however decent and orderly in their civil department, who live to themselves, and have their part and portion in this life; in fine, to all who are yet in a state of nature, for ‘ except a man be ‘ born again, he cannot see the kingdom of ‘ God.’ The fear of man may make you hide your profanity; prudence and experience may make you abhor intemperance and riot; as you advance in life, one vice may supplant another and hold its place; but nothing less than the
sovereign

sovereign grace of God can produce a saving change of heart and temper, or fit you for his immediate presence.

2. From what has been said upon this subject, you may see what ground there is to give praise to God for his favours already bestowed on us, respecting the public cause. It would be a criminal inattention not to observe the singular interposition of providence hitherto, in behalf of the American colonies. It is, however, impossible for me, in a single discourse, as well as improper at this time, to go through every step of our past transactions; I must therefore content myself with a few remarks. How many discoveries have been made of the designs of enemies in Britain and among ourselves, in a manner as unexpected to us as to them, and in such season as to prevent their effect? What surprising success has attended our encounters, in almost every instance? Has not the boasted discipline of regular and veteran soldiers been turned into confusion and dismay before the new and maiden courage of free men, in defence of their property and right? In what great mercy has blood been spared on the side of this injured country? Some important victories in the south have been gained with so little loss, that enemies will probably think it has been dissembled; as many, even of ourselves thought, till time rendered it undeniable. But these were comparatively of small moment. The signal advantage we have gained by the evacuation

evacuation of Boston, the shameful flight of the army and navy of Britain, was brought about without the loss of a man. To all this we may add, that the counsels of our enemies have been vitibly confounded, so that I believe I may say with truth, that there is hardly any step which they have taken, but it has operated strongly against themselves, and been more in our favour than if they had followed a contrary course.

While we give praise to God the supreme disposer of all events, for his interposition in our behalf, let us guard against the dangerous error of trusting in, or boasting of an arm of flesh. I could earnestly wish, that while our arms are crowned with success, we might content ourselves with a modest ascription of it to the power of the highest. It has given me a great uneasiness to read some ostentatious, vaunting expressions in our news papers, though happily, I think, much restrained of late. Let us not return to them again. If I am not mistaken, not only the holy scriptures in general, and the truths of the glorious gospel in particular, but the whole course of providence seems intended to abase the pride of man, and lay the vain-glorious in the dust. How many instances does history furnish us with of those who, after exulting over, and despising their enemies, were signally and shamefully defeated*? The truth is, I believe, the
remark

* There is no story better known in British history

remark may be applied universally, and we may say, that through the whole frame of nature, and the whole system of human life, that which promises most, performs the least. The flowers of finest colour seldom have the sweetest fragrance. The trees of quickest growth or fairest form, are seldom of the greatest value or duration. Deep waters move with least noise. Men who think most are seldom talkative. And I think it holds as much in war as in any thing, that every boaster is a coward.

Pardon me, my brethren, for insisting so much upon this which may seem but an immaterial circumstance. It is in my opinion of very great moment. I look upon ostentation and confidence to be a sort of outrage upon providence, and when it becomes general, and infuses itself into the spirit of a people, it is a forerunner of destruction. How does Goliath the champion, armed in a most formidable manner, express his disdain of David the stripling with his sling and his stone? 'And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdain'd him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest unto me with staves? And the Philistine curst David

' by

story, than that the officers of the French army, the night preceeding the battle of Agincourt, played at dice for English prisoners before they took them, and the next day were taken by them.

' by his gods ; and the Philistine said to David,
 ' Come to me and I will give thy flesh unto the
 ' fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.'
 But how just and modest the reply ! ' Then said
 ' David to the Philistine, thou comest to me with
 ' a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield ;
 ' but I come unto thee in the name of the Lord
 ' of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom
 ' thou hast defied.' I was well pleased with a
 remark of this kind, thirty years ago, in a pamph-
 let, in which it was observed, that there was a
 great deal of profane ostentation in the names
 given to ships of war, as the Victory, the Valiant,
 the Thunderer, the Dreadnought, the Terrible,
 the Fire-brand, the Furnace, the Lightning, the
 Infernal, and many more of the same kind. This
 the author considered as a symptom of the nation-
 al character and manners, very unfavourable, and
 not likely to obtain the blessing of the God of
 Heaven †.

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† I am sensible that one or two of these were
 ships taken from the French, which brought their
 names with them. But the greatest number had
 their names imposed in England ; and I cannot
 help observing, that the victory often celebrated
 as the finest ship ever built in Britain, was lost in
 the night without a storm, by some unknown ac-
 cident, and about twelve hundred persons, many
 of them of the first families in the nation, were
 buried with it in the deep. I do not mean to infer
 any thing from this, but, that we ought to live
 under

3. From what has been said you may learn, what encouragement you have to put your trust in God, and hope for his assistance in the present important conflict. He is the Lord of hosts, great in might, and strong in battle. Whoever hath his countenance and approbation, shall have the best at last. I do not mean to speak prophetically, but agreeable to the analogy of faith, and the principles of God's moral government. Some have observed, that true religion, and, in her train, dominion, riches, literature, and arts, have taken their course in a slow and gradual manner, from east to west since the earth was settled after the flood, and from thence forbode the future glory of America. I leave this as a matter rather of conjecture than certainty; but observe, that if your cause is just,—if your principles are pure,—and if your conduct is prudent, you need not fear the multitude of opposing hosts.

If your cause is just—you may look with confidence to the Lord, and intreat him to plead it as his own. You are all my witnesses, that this is the first time of my introducing any political subject into the pulpit. At this season, however,
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under the practical persuasion of what no man will doctrinally deny, that there is no warring with the elements, or with him who directs their force; that he is able to write disappointment on the wisest human schemes, and by the word of his power to frustrate the efforts of the greatest monarch upon earth.

it is not only lawful but necessary; and I willingly embrace the opportunity of declaring my opinion without any hesitation, that the cause in which America is now in arms, is the cause of justice, of liberty, and of human nature. So far as we have hitherto proceeded, I am satisfied that the confederacy of the colonies, has not been the effect of pride, resentment, or sedition, but of a deep and general conviction, that our civil and religious liberties, and consequently in a great measure the temporal and eternal happiness of us and our posterity depended on the issue. The knowledge of God and his truths has from the beginning of the world been chiefly, if not entirely confined to these parts of the earth, where some degree of liberty and political justice were to be seen, and great were the difficulties with which they had to struggle from the imperfection of human society, and the unjust decisions of usurped authority. There is not a single instance in history in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire. If therefore we yield up our temporal property, we at the same time deliver the conscience into bondage.

You shall not, my brethren, hear from me in the pulpit, what you have never heard from me in conversation; I mean, railing at the king personally, or even his ministers and the parliament, and people of Britain as so many barbarous savages. Many of their actions have probably
been

been worse than their intentions. That they should desire unlimited dominion, if they can obtain or preserve it, is neither new nor wonderful. I do not refuse submission to their unjust claims, because they are corrupt or profligate, although probably many of them are so; but because they are men, and therefore liable to all the selfish bias inseparable from human nature. I call this claim unjust of making laws to bind us in all cases whatsoever, because they are separated from us, independent of us, and have an interest in opposing us. Would any man who could prevent it, give up his estate, person, and family, to the disposal of his neighbour, although he had liberty to chuse the wisest and the best master? Surely not. This is the true and proper hinge of the controversy between Great-Britain and America. It is however to be added, that such is their distance from us, that a wise and prudent administration of our affairs is as impossible as the claim of authority is unjust. Such is and must be their ignorance of the state of things here, so much time must elapse before an error can be seen and remedied, and so much injustice and partiality must be expected from the arts and misrepresentation of interested persons, that for these colonies to depend wholly upon the legislature of Great-Britain, would be like many other oppressive connexions, injury to the master, and ruin to the slave.

The management of the war itself on their
Q part,

part, would furnish new proof of this, if any were needful. Is it not manifest with what absurdity and impropriety they have conducted their own designs? We had nothing so much to fear as dissension; and they have, by wanton and unnecessary cruelty, forced us into union. At the same time to let us see what we have to expect, and what would be the fatal consequence of unlimited submission, they have uniformly called those acts Lenity, which filled this whole continent with resentment and horror. The ineffable disdain expressed by our fellow subject, in saying, "That he would not hearken to America, till she was at his feet," has armed more men, and inspired more deadly rage, than could have been done by laying waste a whole province with fire and sword. Again, we wanted not numbers, but time; and they sent over handful after handful till we were ready to oppose a multitude greater than they have to send. In fine, if there was one place stronger than the rest, and more able and willing to resist, there they made the attack, and left the others till they were duly informed, completely insured, and fully furnished with every instrument of war.

I mention these things, my brethren, not only as grounds of confidence in God, who can easily overthrow the wisdom of the wise, but as decisive proofs of the impossibility of these great and growing states, being safe and happy when every part of their internal polity is dependent on Great Britain.

Britain. If, on account of their distance, and ignorance of our situation, they could not conduct their own quarrel with propriety for one year, how can they give direction and vigour to every department of our civil constitutions from age to age? There are fixed bounds to every human thing. When the branches of a tree grow very large and weighty they fall off from the trunk. The sharpest sword will not pierce when it cannot reach. And there is a certain distance from the seat of government, where an attempt to rule will either produce tyranny and helpless subjection, or provoke resistance and effect a separation.

I have said, if your principles are pure—The meaning of this is, if your present opposition to the claims of the British ministry does not arise from a seditious and turbulent spirit, or a wanton contempt of legal authority; from a blind and factious attachment to particular persons or parties; or from a selfish rapacious disposition, and a desire to turn public confusion to private profit—but from a concern for the interest of your country, and the safety of yourselves and your posterity. On this subject I cannot help observing, that though it would be a miracle if there were not many selfish persons among us, and discoveries now and then made of mean and interested transactions, yet they have been comparatively inconsiderable both in number and effect. In general, there has been so great a degree of pub-

lic spirit, that we have much more reason to be thankful for its vigour and prevalence, than to wonder at the few appearances of dishonesty or disaffection. It would be very uncandid to ascribe the universal ardour that has prevailed among all ranks of men, and the spirited exertions in the most distant colonies to any thing else than public spirit. Nor was there ever perhaps in history so general a commotion from which religious differences have been so entirely excluded. Nothing of this kind has as yet been heard, except of late in the absurd, but malicious and detestable attempts of our few remaining enemies to introduce them. At the same time I must also, for the honour of this country observe, that though government in the ancient forms has been so long unhinged, and in some colonies not sufficient care taken to substitute another in its place; yet has there been, by common consent, a much greater degree of order and public peace, than men of reflexion and experience foretold or expected. From all these circumstances I conclude favourably of the principles of the friends of liberty, and do earnestly exhort you to adopt and act upon those which have been described, and resist the influence of every other.

Once more; if to the justice of your cause, and the purity of your principles you add prudence in your conduct, there will be the greatest reason to hope, by the blessing of God, for prosperity and success. By prudence in conducting this important

tant struggle, I have chiefly in view union, firmness, and patience. Every body must perceive the absolute necessity of union. It is indeed in every body's mouth, and therefore, instead of attempting to convince you of its importance, I will only caution you against the usual causes of division. If persons of every rank, instead of implicitly complying with the orders of those whom they themselves have chosen to direct, will needs judge every measure over again, when it comes to be put in execution: if different classes of men intermix their little private views, or clashing interest with public affairs, and marshal into parties, the merchant against the landholder, and the landholder against the merchant: if local provincial pride and jealousy arise, and you allow yourselves to speak with contempt of the courage, character, manners, or even language of particular places, you are doing a greater injury to the common cause, than you are aware of. If such practices are admitted among us, I shall look upon it as one of the most dangerous symptoms, and if they become general, a preface of approaching ruin.

By firmness and patience, I mean a resolute adherence to your duty, and laying your account with many difficulties as well as occasional disappointments. In a former part of this discourse, I have cautioned you against ostentation and vain glory. Be pleased further to observe, that extremes often beget one another; the same persons

sons who exult extravagantly on success, are generally most liable to despondent timidity on every little inconsiderable defeat. Men of this character are the bane and corruption of every society or party to which they belong; but they are especially the ruin of an army, if suffered to continue in it. Remember the vicissitude of human things, and the usual course of providence. How often has a just cause been reduced to the lowest ebb, and yet when firmly adhered to, has become finally triumphant? I speak this now while the affairs of the colonies are in so prosperous a state, lest this prosperity itself should render you less able to bear unexpected misfortunes.—The sum of the whole is, that the blessing of God is only to be looked for by those who are not wanting in the discharge of their own duty. I would neither have you to trust in an arm of flesh, nor sit with folded hands to expect that miracles should be wrought in your defence.—This is a sin which is in scripture stiled tempting God. In opposition to it, I would exhort you as Joab did the host of Israel, who though he does not appear to have had a spotless character throughout, certainly in this instance spoke like a prudent general and a pious man. ‘Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God; and let the Lord do that which is good in his sight.’

I shall now conclude this discourse by some exhortations to duty, founded upon the truths, which

which have been illustrated above, and suited to the interesting state of this country at the present time; and,

1. Suffer me to recommend to you an attention to the public interest of religion; or, in other words, zeal for the glory of God and the good of others. I have already endeavoured to exhort sinners to repentance; what I have here in view is to point out to you the concern which every good man ought to take in the national character and manners, and the means which he ought to use for promoting public virtue, and bearing down impiety and vice. This is a matter of the utmost moment, and which ought to be well understood, both in its nature and principles. Nothing is more certain than that a general profligacy and corruption of manners makes a people ripe for destruction. A good form of government may hold the rotten materials together for some time, but beyond a certain pitch even the best constitution will be ineffectual, and slavery must ensue. On the other hand, when the manners of a nation are pure, when true religion and internal principles maintain their vigour, the attempts of the most powerful enemies to oppress them are commonly baffled and disappointed. This will be found equally certain, whether we consider the great principles of God's moral government, or the operation and influence of natural causes.

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What follows from this? That he is the best friend to American liberty, who is the most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, and who sets himself with the greatest firmness to bear down profanity and immorality of every kind. Whoever is an avowed enemy to God, I scruple not to call him an enemy to his country. Do not suppose, my brethren, that I mean to recommend a furious and angry zeal for the circumstantial of religion, or the contentions of one sect with another about their peculiar distinctions. I do not wish you to oppose any body's religion, but every body's wickedness. Perhaps there are few surer marks of the reality of religion, than when a man feels himself more joined in spirit to a truly holy person of a different denomination, than to an irregular liver of his own. It is therefore your duty, in this important and critical season, to exert yourselves, every one in his proper sphere, to stem the tide of prevailing vice, to promote the knowledge of God, the reverence of his name and worship, and obedience to his laws.

Perhaps you will ask, what it is that you are called to do for this purpose farther than your own personal duty? I answer, this itself, when taken in its proper extent, is not a little. The nature and obligation of visible religion is, I am afraid little understood, and less attended to.

Many from a real or pretended fear of the imputation of hypocrisy, banish from their conversation

fation and carriage, every appearance of respect and submission to the living God. What a weakness and meanness of spirit does it discover for a man to be ashamed, in the presence of his fellow sinners, to profess that reverence to almighty God which he inwardly feels! The truth is, he makes himself truly liable to the accusation which he means to avoid. It is as genuine and perhaps a more culpable hypocrisy to appear to have less religion than you really have, than to appear to have more. This false shame is a more extensive evil than is commonly apprehended. We contribute constantly, though insensibly, to form each others characters and manners; and therefore, the usefulness of a strictly holy and conscientious deportment is not confined to the possessor, but spreads its happy influence to all that are within its reach. I need scarcely add, that in proportion as men are distinguished by understanding, literature, age, rank, office, wealth, or any other circumstance, their example will be useful on the one hand, or pernicious on the other.

But I cannot content myself with barely recommending a silent example. There is a dignity in virtue which is entitled to authority, and ought to claim it. In many cases it is the duty of a good man, by open reproof and opposition, to wage war with profaneness. There is a scripture precept delivered in very singular terms, to which I beg your attention; 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, but shalt in any ways re-
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'buke him, and not suffer sin upon him.' How prone are many to represent reproof as flowing from ill nature and furliness of temper? The Spirit of God, on the contrary, considers it as the effect of inward hatred, or want of genuine love, to forbear reproof when it is necessary, or may be useful. I am sensible there may, in some cases, be a restraint from prudence, agreeably to that caution of Solomon, 'Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.' Of this every man must judge as well as he can for himself; but certainly, either by open reproof, or expressive silence, or speedy departure from such society, we ought to guard against being partakers of other mens sins.

To this let me add, that if all men are bound in some degree, certain classes of men are under peculiar obligations to the discharge of this duty. Magistrates, ministers, parents, heads of families, and those whom age has rendered venerable, are called to use their authority and influence for the glory of God and the good of others. Bad men themselves discover an inward conviction of this, for they are often liberal in their reproaches of persons of grave characters or religious profession, if they bear with patience the profanity of others. Instead of enlarging on the duty of men in authority in general, I must particularly recommend this matter to those who have the command of soldiers enlisted for the defence of their country.

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The cause is sacred, and the champions for it ought to be holy. Nothing is more grieving to the heart of a good man, than to hear from those who are going to the field, the horrid sound of cursing and blasphemy; it cools the ardour of his prayers, as well as abates his confidence and hope in God. Many more circumstances affect me in such a case, than I can enlarge upon, or indeed easily enumerate at present; the glory of God, the interest of the deluded sinner, going like a devoted victim, and imprecating vengeance on his own head, as well as the cause itself committed to his care. We have sometimes taken the liberty to forebode the downfall of the British empire, from the corruption and degeneracy of the people. Unhappily the British soldiers have been distinguished among all the nations of Europe, for the most shocking profanity. Shall we then pretend to emulate them in this infernal distinction, or rob them of the horrid privilege? God forbid. Let the officers of the army in every degree remember, that as military subjection, while it lasts, is the most complete of any, it is in their power greatly to restrain, if not wholly to banish, this flagrant enormity.

2. I exhort all who are not called to go into the field, to apply themselves with the utmost diligence to works of industry. It is in your power, by this means, not only to supply the necessities, but to add to the strength of your country. Habits of industry prevailing in a society, not only
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increase its wealth, as their immediate effect, but they prevent the introduction of many vices, and are intimately connected with sobriety and good morals. Idleness is the mother or nurse of almost every vice; and want, which is its inseparable companion, urges men on to the most abandoned and destructive courses. Industry, therefore, is a moral duty of the greatest moment, absolutely necessary to national prosperity, and the sure way of obtaining the blessing of God. I would also observe, that in this, as in every other part of God's government, obedience to his will is as much a natural mean, as a meritorious cause of the advantage we wish to reap from it. Industry brings up a firm and hardy race. He who is inured to the labour of the field, is prepared for the fatigues of a campaign. The active farmer, who rises with the dawn, and follows his team or plow, must in the end be an overmatch for those effeminate and delicate soldiers, who are nursed in the lap of self-indulgence, and whose greatest exertion is in the important preparation for, and tedious attendance on, a masquerade, or midnight ball.

3. In the last place, suffer me to recommend to you frugality in your families, and every other article of expence. This the state of things among us renders absolutely necessary, and it stands in the most immediate connection both with virtuous industry, and active public spirit. Temperance in meals, moderation and decency in

in drefs, furniture, and equipage, have, I think, generally been characteristics of a distinguished patriot. And when the same spirit pervades a people in general, they are fit for every duty, and able to encounter the most formidable enemy. The general subject of the preceding discourse has been the wrath of man praising God. If the unjust oppression of your enemies, which withholds from you many of the usual articles of luxury and magnificence, shall contribute to make you clothe yourselves and your children with the works of your own hands, and cover your tables with the salutary productions of your own soil, it will be a new illustration of the same truth, and a real happiness to yourselves and your country.

I could wish to have every good thing done from the purest principles and the noblest views. Consider, therefore, that the Christian character, particularly the self-denial of the gospel, should extend to your whole deportment. In the early times of Christianity, when adult converts were admitted to baptism, they were asked among other questions, Do you renounce the world, its shews, its pomp, and its vanities? I do. The form of this is still preserved in the administration of baptism, where we renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. This certainly implies not only abstaining from acts of gross intemperance and excess, but a humility of carriage, a restraint

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and moderation in all your desires. The same thing, as it is suitable to your Christian profession, is also necessary to make you truly independent in yourselves, and to feed the source of liberality and charity to others or to the public. The riotous and wasteful liver, whose craving appetites make him constantly needy, is and must be subject to many masters, according to the saying of Solomon, 'The borrower is servant to the lender.' But the frugal and moderate person, who guides his affairs with discretion, is able to assist in public counsels by a free and unbiassed judgment, to supply the wants of his poor brethren, and sometimes, by his estate and substance, to give important aid to a sinking country.

Upon the whole, I beseech you to make a wise improvement of the present threatening aspect of public affairs, and to remember that your duty to God, to your country, to your families and to yourselves, is the same. True religion is nothing else but an inward temper and outward conduct, suited to your state and circumstances in providence at any time. And as peace with God, and conformity to him, adds to the sweetness of created comforts, while we possess them, so in times of difficulty and trial, it is in the man of piety and inward principle, that we may expect to find the uncorrupted patriot, the useful citizen, and the invincible foldier. God grant that in America, true religion and civil liberty
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may be inseparable, and that the unjust attempts to destroy the one, may in the issue tend to the support and establishment of both.

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AN ADDRESS

A N
A D D R E S S
T O T H E

Natives of Scotland, residing in America

Countrymen and Friends,

AS soon as I had consented to the publication of the foregoing sermon, I felt an irresistible desire to accompany it with a few words addressed to you in particular. I am certain I feel the attachment of country as far as it is a virtuous or laudable principle, perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say, as far as it is a natural and pardonable prejudice. He who is so pleased may attribute it to this last when I say, that I have never seen cause to be ashamed of the place of my birth;

birth; that since the revival of arts and letters in Europe, in the close of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century, the natives of Scotland have not been inferior to those of any other country, for genius, erudition, military prowess, or any of those accomplishments which improve or embellish human nature. When to this it is added, that since my coming to America at an advanced period of life, the friendship of my countrymen has been as much above my expectation as desert; I hope every reader will consider what is now to be offered, as the effect not only of unfeigned good-will, but of the most ardent affection.

It has given me no little uneasiness to hear the word Scotch used as a term of reproach in the American controversy, which could only be upon the supposition that strangers of that country are more universally opposed to the liberties of America than those who were born in South-Britain, or in Ireland. I am sensible that this has been done in some news-papers, and contemptible anonymous publications, in a manner that was neither warranted by truth, nor dictated by prudence. There are many natives of Scotland in this country, whose opposition to the unjust claims of Great-Britain has been as early and uniform, founded upon as rational and liberal principles, and therefore likely to be as lasting, as that of any set of men whatever. As to Great-Britain itself, time has now fully discovered that the real friends of

America in any part of that kingdom were very few; and those whose friendship was disinterested, and in no degree owing to their own political factions, still fewer. The wise and valuable part of the nation were, and as yet are, in a great measure ignorant of the state of things in this country; neither is it easy for the bulk of a people to shake off their prejudices, and open their eyes upon the great principles of universal liberty. It is therefore at least very disputable, whether there is any just ground for the distinction between Scots and English on this subject at all.

This dispute, however, I do not mean to enter upon, because it is of too little moment to find a place here, but supposing that, in some provinces especially, the natives of Scotland have been too much inclined to support the usurpations of the parent state, I will first endeavour to account for it, by assigning some of its probable causes; and then offer a few considerations which should induce them to wipe off the aspersion entirely, by a contrary conduct.

As to the first of these, I will mention what I suppose to have been the first and radical cause, and which gave birth to every other, of the disaffection of some of the natives of Scotland to the just privileges of America. What I have in view was, the friends of liberty, in many places of America, taking the part of, and seeming to consider themselves as in a great measure engaged in the same cause with that very distinguished person,

John

John Wilkes, Esq: of London. This was done, not only in many writings and news-paper dissertations, but one or two colonies, in some of their most respectable meetings, manifested their attachment to him, and seemed to consider him as their patron and friend. N^o 45, which was the most offensive number of a worthless paper, was repeated and echoed, by the most silly and ridiculous allusions to it, through every part of the country, and by many who could not tell what was signified by the term.

It will not be necessary to say much on the prudence of such conduct, because I suppose those who expected Wilkes's mob would pull down the parliament-house, or that there would be insurrections all over the kingdom in behalf of America, are by this time fully satisfied of their mistake. It appears now in the clearest manner, that, till very lately those who seemed to take the part of America in the British parliament, never did it on American principles. They either did not understand, or were not willing to admit, the extent of our claim. Even the great Lord Chatham's bill for reconciliation would not have been accepted here, and did not materially differ from what the ministry would have consented to. The truth is, the far greatest part of the countenance given in Britain to the complaints of this country, was by those who had no other intention in it than to use them as an engine of opposition to the ministry for the time being. It is true, some of them

them have now learned to reason very justly, and upon the most liberal principles; but their number is not great, and it was not the case with any one speaker or writer, whose works I have had the opportunity of perusing, till the very last stage of the quarrel.

What effect this Wilkism (if I may speak so) of many Americans may be supposed to have had upon the minds of gentlemen from Scotland, it is not difficult to explain. That gentleman, and his associates, thought proper to found the whole of their opposition to the then ministry, upon a contempt and hatred of the Scots nation; and by the most illiberal methods, and the most scandalous falsehoods, to stir up a national jealousy between the northern and southern parts of the island. There was not a vile term or hateful idea, which ancient vulgar animosity had ever used, though long union had made them scarcely intelligible, which he did not rake up and attempt to bring into credit, by writing and conversation. The consequence of this is well known. Wilkes and some others were burnt in effigy in Scotland; and it produced so general an attachment to the king and ministry, as has not yet spent its force. In these circumstances, is it to be wondered at that many who left Scotland, within the last fifteen years, when they heard Wilkes, and those who adhered to him, extolled and celebrated by the sons of liberty, should be apt to consider it as an evidence of the same spirit, and that:

that they were engaged in support of the same cause. Perhaps we may go a little higher with this remark, in tracing political appearances to their source. It is generally said, that the King himself has discovered a violent, rancorous, personal hatred against the Americans. If this be true, and I know nothing to the contrary, it may be easily accounted for upon the very same principles.

I am far from supposing that this was a good reason for any man's being cool to the American cause, which was as different from that of Wilkes, as light is from darkness. It was indeed doing great dishonour to the noble struggle, to suppose it to have any connection with who should be in or out of court favour at London; and therefore it was always my opinion, that those who railed against the King and ministry only, did not carry the argument home, nor fully understand the nature of their own plea. In order to justify the American opposition, it is not necessary to shew that the persons in power have invaded liberty in Britain; it is sufficient to say, that they, with the concurrence of the whole nation, have refused to suffer it to continue in the colonies.

This leads me to the second part of my design, which was to lay before you the reasons which, I think, should induce every lover of justice and of mankind, not only to be a well-wisher, but a firm and stedfast friend to America, in this important contest,

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It has been often said, that the present is likely to be an important æra to America. I think we may say much more; it is likely to be an important æra in the history of mankind. In the ancient migrations, a new country was generally settled by a small, unconnected, and often an ignorant band. The people and the soil were alike uncultivated, and therefore they proceeded to improvement by very slow degrees; nay, many of them fell back and degenerated into a state vastly more savage than the people from whence they came. In America we see a rich and valuable soil, and an extensive country, taken possession of by the power, the learning, and the wealth of Europe. For this reason it is now exhibiting to the world a scene which was never seen before. It has had a progress in improvement and population, so rapid as no political calculators have been able to ascertain. I look upon every thing that has been said upon this subject to be mere conjecture, except in such places as there has been an actual numeration. When men say that America doubles its number in fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years, they speak by guess, and they say nothing. In some places that may be under or over the truth; but there are vast tracks of land that fill every year with inhabitants, and yet the old settled places still continue to increase.

It is proper to observe, that the British settlements have been improved in a proportion far beyond

yond the settlements of other European nations. To what can this be ascribed? Not to the climate; for they are of all climates. Not to the people; for they are a mixture of all nations. It must therefore be resolved singly into the degree of British liberty which they brought from home, and which pervaded more or less their several constitutions. It has been repeated to us, I know not how often, by the mercenary short-sighted writers in favour of submission to, or re-union with Great-Britain, that we have thriven very much in past times by our dependence on the mother-country, and therefore we should be loth to part. These writers forget that the very complaint is, that she will not suffer us to enjoy our ancient rights. Can any past experience shew that we shall thrive under new impositions? I should be glad any such reasoners would attempt to prove that we have thriven by our dependence, and not by the degree of independence which we have hitherto enjoyed. If we have thriven by our dependence, I conceive it is a necessary consequence that those provinces must have thriven most which have been most dependent. But the contrary is self-evident. Those which have hitherto enjoyed the freest form of government, though greatly inferior in soil and climate, have yet outstripped the others in number of people and value of land, merely because the last were more under the influence of appointments and authority from home.

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When this is the undeniable state of things, can any person of a liberal mind wish that these great and growing countries should be brought back to a state of subjection to a distant power? And can any man deny, that if they had yielded to the claims of the British parliament, they would have been no better than a parcel of tributary states, ruled by lordly tyrants, and exhausted by unfeeling pensioners, under the commission of one too distant to hear the cry of oppression, and surrounded by those who had an interest in deceiving him. It ought, therefore, in my opinion, to meet with the cordial approbation of every impartial person, as I am confident it will of posterity, that they have united for common defence, and resolved that they will be both free and independent, because they cannot be the one without the other.

As this measure, long foreseen, has now taken place, I shall beg leave to say a few things upon it; in which I mean to show, 1. That it was necessary. 2. That it will be honourable and profitable. And, 3. That, in all probability, it will be no injury, but a real advantage, to the Island of Great-Britain.

1. It had become absolutely necessary. All reconciliation, but upon the footing of absolute unconditional submission, had been positively refused by Great-Britain. Unless, therefore, the colonies had resolved to continue in a loose and broken state, with the name of a government
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which they had taken arms to oppose, the step which they have now taken could not have been avoided. Besides, things had proceeded so far, and such measures had been taken on both sides, that it had become impossible to lay down a scheme by which they should be sure of our dependence, and we, at the same time, secured in our liberties. While things continued in their ancient state, there was perhaps a power on the part of each, of which they were hardly conscious, or were afraid and unwilling to exert. But after the encroachments had been made and resisted, to expect any thing else than a continual attempt to extend authority on the one hand, and to guard against it on the other, is to discover very little knowledge of human nature. In such a situation, though every claim of America should be yielded, she would soon be either in a state of continual confusion, or absolute submission. The king of England, living in his English dominions, would not, and indeed durst not, assent to any act of an American legislature, that was, or was supposed to be hurtful to his English subjects. This is not founded on conjecture, but experience. There is not (at least Dean Swift affirms it) any dependence of Ireland upon England, except an act of the Irish parliament, that the king of England shall be the king of Ireland. This last has a separate independent legislature, and in every thing else, but the above circumstance, seems to be perfectly free; yet if any man should

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assert,

assert, that the one kingdom is not truly subject to the other, he would, in my opinion, know very little of the state and history of either.

2. A state of independency will be both honourable and profitable to this country. I pass over many advantages in the way of commerce, as well as in other respects, that must necessarily accrue from it, that I may dwell a little on the great and leading benefit, which is the foundation of all the rest. We shall have the opportunity of forming plans of government upon the most rational, just, and equal principles. I confess I have always looked upon this with a kind of enthusiastic satisfaction. The case never happened before since the world began. All the governments we have read of in former ages were settled by caprice or accident, by the influence of prevailing parties or particular persons, or prescribed by a conqueror. Important improvements indeed have been forced upon some constitutions by the spirit of daring men, supported by successful insurrections. But to see government, in large and populous countries, settled from its foundation, by deliberate counsel, and directed immediately to the public good of the present and future generations, while the people are waiting for the decision with full confidence in the wisdom and impartiality of those to whom they have committed the important trust, is certainly altogether new. We learn indeed from history that small tribes and feeble, new settlements, did

did sometimes employ one man of eminent wisdom, to prepare a system of laws for them. Even this was a wise measure, and attended with happy effects. But, how vast the difference, when we have the experience of all past ages, the history of human society, and the well-known causes of prosperity and misery in other governments, to assist us in the choice?

The prospect of this happy circumstance, and the possibility of losing it, and suffering the season to pass over, has filled me with anxiety for some time. So far as we have hitherto proceeded, there has been great unanimity and public spirit. The inhabitants of every province, and persons of all denominations, have vied with each other in zeal for the common interest. But, was it not to be feared that some men would acquire over-bearing influence? That human weakness and human passions would discover themselves, and prevent the finishing of what had been so happily begun? In the time of the civil wars in England, had they settled a regular form of government as soon as the parliament had obtained an evident superiority, their liberties would never have been shaken, and the Revolution would have been unnecessary. But by delaying the thing so long, they were broken into parties and bewildered in their views, and at last tamely submitted, without resistance, to that very tyranny against which they had fought with so much glory and success. For this reason I think that

every candid and liberal mind ought to rejoice in the measures lately taken through the states of America, and particularly the late declaration of independence, as it will not only give union and force to the measures of defence, while they are necessary, but lay a foundation for the birth of millions, and the future improvement of a great part of the globe.—I have only further to observe,

3. That I am confident the independence of America will, in the end, be to the real advantage of the Island of Great-Britain. Were this even otherwise, it would be a weak argument against the claim of justice. Why should the security or prosperity of this vast country be sacrificed to the supposed interest of an inconsiderable spot? But I cannot believe that the misery and subjection of any country on earth, is necessary to the happiness of another. Blind partiality and self-interest may represent it in this light; but the opinion is delusive, the supposition is false. The success and increase of one nation is, or may be, a benefit to every other. It is seldom, indeed, that a people in general can receive and adopt these generous sentiments; they are nevertheless perfectly just. It is industry only, and not possessions, that makes the strength and wealth of a nation; and this is not hindered, but encouraged, provoked, and rewarded by the industry of others*.

But

* See David Hume's Essay on the jealousy of trade.

But to leave the general principle, or rather to apply it to the case of Great-Britain and America: what profit has the former hitherto received from the latter? And what can it reasonably expect for the future? Only its trade, and such part of that trade as tends to encourage the industry and increase the number of the inhabitants of that Island. It will be said, they intend to raise a large, clear, net revenue upon us, by taxation. It has been shewn by many, that all the taxes which they could raise, would only serve to feed the insatiable desire of wealth in placemen and pensioners, to increase the influence of the crown, and the corruption of the people. It was by the acquisition of numerous provinces that Rome hastened to its ruin. But even supposing it otherwise, and that without any bad consequence among themselves, they were to acquire a great addition to their yearly revenue, for every shilling they gained by taxes, they would lose ten in the way of trade. For a trifling addition to the sums of public money to be applied or wasted by ministers of state, they would lose ten times the quantity distributed among useful manufacturers, the strength and glory of a state. I think this has been sometimes compared to the difference between draughts of spirituous liquors to intoxicate the head or weaken the stomach, and cool refreshing food to give soundness, health, and vigour to every member of the body.

The trade, then, of America, as soon as peace

is settled, will be as open to them as ever. But it will be said, they have now an exclusive trade, they will then but share it with other nations. I answer, an exclusive trade is not easily preserved, and when it is preserved, the restriction is commonly more hurtful than useful. Trade is of a nice and delicate nature; it is founded upon interest: it will force its way, wherever interest leads, and can hardly by any art be made to go in another direction. The Spaniards have an exclusive trade, as far as they please to confine it, to their own plantations. Do they reap much benefit from it? I believe not. Has it made their own people more industrious at home? Just the contrary. Does it, in the natural course of things, make a people less careful to work as well and as cheap as others, to procure voluntary purchasers, when they know they can send their goods to those who are obliged to take them? Does it not both tempt and enable great merchants in the capital, to import from other nations what they can export to such a forced market, to advantage? By this means a considerable profit may come into the coffers of a few particulars, while no essential service is done to the people, and the ultimate profit is carried to that country where the goods are produced or fabricated. It has been repeatedly said, by political writers in England, that the balance of trade is against that country to every nation, excepting Portugal, and their own plantations. I will not
answer

answer for the truth or universality of this assertion; but if it is true in any measure, I will venture to affirm, upon the principles of general reason, that the cause which produces it is no other than the exclusive trade they have hitherto enjoyed to the American settlements.

But the circumstance which I apprehend will contribute most to the interest of Great-Britain in American independence is, its influence in peopling and enriching this great continent. It will certainly tend to make the American States numerous, powerful, and opulent, to a degree not easily conceived. The great and penetrating Montesquieu, in his Spirit of Laws, has shewn in the clearest manner, that nothing contributes so much to the prosperity of a people, as the state of society among them, and the form of their government. A free government overcomes every obstacle, makes a desert a fruitful field, and fills a bleak and barren country with all the conveniencies of life. If so, what must be the operation of this powerful cause upon countries enjoying, in the highest degree, every advantage that can be derived from situation, climate, and soil? If the trade of America has hitherto been of so great benefit to England, how much more valuable may it be when these countries shall be still more highly improved, if she shall continue to enjoy it? This argument is liable to no objection but what may arise from the loss of an exclusive trade, which I have already considered. It may be

be added, however, that there is not now, nor ever has been, any aversion in the American to the people of Great-Britain; so that they may be sure of our trade, if they treat us as well as others; and if otherwise, they do not deserve it.

I might illustrate the argument, by stating the probable consequences of a contrary supposition. If Great-Britain should prevail, or overcome the American states, and establish viceroys, with absolute authority, in every province, all men of spirit and lovers of freedom would certainly withdraw themselves to a corner, if such could be found, out of the reach of tyranny and oppression. The numbers of the people at any rate would sensibly decrease, their wealth would be speedily exhausted, and there would remain only a nominal authority over a desolate country, in return for a vast expence laid out in the conquest, and in place of a great and profitable trade, by which both nations were made happy. One of the arguments, if they may be called so, made use of against this country, and on which an obligation to obedience has been founded, is taken from the expence they have been at in blood and treasure for our protection in former wars. This argument has been often answered in the fullest manner; but if they shall continue to urge it, how fearful to think of the obligations we shall be under, after this war is finished! Then shall we owe them all the sums which they shall have laid out in subduing us, and all that we have spent in

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attempting to prevent it; all the blood which they shall have shed in attacking us, and all that we shall have spilt in our own defence. There is unquestionably a loss to Great Britain, by the one side of the account as well as the other; and it tends to show, in the clearest manner, the unspeakable folly, as well as great injustice, of the promoters of this war.

Thus I have stated to you, though very briefly, the principles on which I think the American cause ought to be pleaded, and on which it ought to be espoused and supported, by every lover of justice and of mankind. But though the general plea in justice were less clear than it is, there is a light in which the conduct of the opposers of it has always appeared to me unreasonable and ungenerous to the highest degree. That resistance to Great-Britain has been determined on, in the most resolute manner, through all the colonies, by a vast majority, is not only certain, but undeniable. In the beginning of the controversy, some writers, with an impudence hardly to be paralleled, called the fact in question, attempted to deceive the people in this country, and effectually deceived the people of England, by making them believe, that it was only a few factious and violent men that had engaged in the contest. It is not very long since a writer had the courage to assert, that, "nine tenths of the people of Pennsylvania were against independence." The falsehood of such misrepresentations is now manifest, and

and indeed was probably known from the beginning, by those who desired to have them believed. Taking this for granted, then, for an inconsiderable minority, whether natives or strangers, to set themselves in opposition to the public councils, is contrary to reason and justice, and even to the very first principles of the social life.

If there is any principle that was never controverted upon the social union, it is, that, as a body, every society must be determined by the plurality. There was a time when it was not only just and consistent but necessary, that every one should speak his mind freely and fully of the necessity or expediency of resisting the authority of Great Britain: but that time is over long ago. The measures being resolved upon, and the conflict begun, one who is barely neuter can scarce be forgiven; a secret plodding enemy must be considered as a traitor. Every person who continued among us after the decisive resolutions formed by all the colonies, ought to be considered as pledging his faith and honour to assist in the common cause. Let me try to illustrate it by a similar case. Suppose that a ship at sea springs a leak, which exposes the whole company to the most imminent danger of perishing. Suppose a counsel is called of all the persons on board to determine what port they shall endeavour to gain. Then it is not only the right, but the duty of every one to speak his own judgment, and to press it upon others by every argument in his power.

power. Suppose a great majority determines to push for a certain place, and to go to the pump by turns every quarter of an hour; but that two, or three, or one, if you please, is of opinion that they should have gone another course, because of the wind, current, or any other circumstance, and that it would be best to change hands at the pump only every half hour. All this is well. But if after the determination, this same gentleman, because his advice was not followed, should refuse to pump at all, should silyly alter the ship's course, or deaden her way by every means in his power, or even should only, by continual complaints and despondent fears, discourage others on whose activity the common safety depended; I desire to know what treatment he would receive or deserve? Without doubt he would be thrown over board in less time than I have taken to state the case. I am not able to perceive the least difference between this supposition and what takes place in America at the present time.

If this argument is just with respect to every inhabitant of the country, it ought to have some additional weight with those who are not natives, and whose residence is not certain, or has not been long. There is a great degree of indecency in such taking any part against what the majority of the inhabitants think to be their interest and that of their country. Were they even wrong, their mistake should be lamented, not resisted; on the contrary, it would be the part both of generosity

nerosity and justice to support them effectually in a contest which wisdom would have declined. We see indeed every day melancholy instances of a base and selfish temper operating different ways. Many when they do not obtain that rank and honour which their pride and partiality think their due, or if their advice is not followed, immediately renounce the service of their country, and it may go to destruction for them. In opposition to this, let me recommend the example of the illustrious Fabius of Rome. He had given strict orders to all his officers not to engage the enemy, but to keep at a distance. Unhappily his lieutenant-general, by his own rashness, got entangled with a part of the army under his command, and was engaged. Fabius, preferring his country's good to fame, rivalry, and safety, came immediately to his support with all expedition, and thereby gained a glorious and complete victory.

I hope you will take in good part the above reflections, which, I think, contain nothing that is virulent or indecent against any man or body of men. They are the effects of judgment and conviction. The Author, as is probably known to many of you, has been personally abused in newspapers at home for the part he was supposed to have taken in the American cause, which was in some degree indeed the motive to this address. He hopes that an honest and faithful support of liberty and equal government in this part of the world,

world, will be no just reproach to his character, either as a scholar, a minister, or a christian, and that it is perfectly consistent with an undiminished regard for the country which gave him birth.

The above is submitted to your candid perusal, by

Gentlemen,

Your sincere friend, and

Obedient humble servant,

The AUTHOR.

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SERMON

S E R M O N XL

On the Sin of Scoffing at Things Sacred.

PSALM i. 1.

Blessed is the Man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

THERE is an old and beaten observation, that human nature, in all ages, is the same. To this I add, or rather offer, by way of illustration of it, that sin, which bears so much sway in human characters and actions, has been the same, in its operation and influence, in all ages, since the fall of Adam. For this reason the characters drawn in the holy scriptures, and particularly the observations on human life, contained in the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, and book of Ecclesiastes, are as perfectly adapted to
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the present age, as if they were but of yesterday's date.

As the ten commandments, which are the sum of the moral law, consist mostly of prohibitions, the Psalmist, in this passage, draws the character of the good man in a negative form, by its opposition to the bad. At the same time, the danger to which the unwary are exposed, the enticing and deceitful nature of sin, and its monstrous enormity, when arrived at its full height, are couched in the most admirable manner; 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly;—nor standeth in the way of sinners;—nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful'.

It is not agreed among interpreters, who was the author of this Psalm; and, indeed, it is a matter more of curiosity than moment very critically to enquire. Some think it was the Psalmist David, because of the high esteem expressed in it for the law of God, a thing which so remarkably distinguishes his other writings. Others refer it to a later period; and suppose that Ezra, or some other after the captivity, who collected the sacred hymns of different authors into one volume, prefixed this as a sort of argument or preface to the whole. It is indeed, a summary of all that follow. It plainly contains a character both of good men and bad; the usual course of divine providence towards each of these classes, as well as the final issue of their conduct in the

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everlasting happiness of the one, and the everlasting misery of the other.

Even the most cursory reader must observe, that there is a gradation in the expressions of the text, which rise one above another in their strength and energy: nay, it is the opinion of many, that they are chosen with peculiar art, and contain a double, if not a threefold gradation.

1. In the character, beginning with the ungodly, who are without proper impressions of religion, and habitually governed by other principles than the fear of God. Next, sinners, or those who are more openly flagitious, and visibly guilty of gross crimes. And finally, the scornful, who set reproof at defiance, and treat every thing serious and sacred with contempt and disdain.

2. In the communication of others with them, walking; which seems to imply occasional, unforeseen, and transient intercourse;—standing, which seems to indicate a greater degree of approbation and voluntary compliance with their example;—and sitting, which signifies, being fixed and settled in an evil course, and refusing to depart from it.—To this some add the other expressions; the counsel, the way, and the feat; on which I forbear to insist, but proceed to observe,

That we have, in this passage, a most useful and instructive lesson of great moment in every place and age; and peculiarly suited, on several accounts, to the present circumstances of this congregation. It is, therefore, my resolution to
discourse

discourse a little, through the assistance of divine grace, on the three distinct branches into which it may be naturally divided.

I. The infectious nature of sin, or the danger of 'walking in the counsel of the ungodly.'

II. The deceitful and hardening nature of sin, which insensibly leads from 'walking in the counsel of the ungodly, to standing in the way of sinners.'

III. The finishing stage of wickedness, the most criminal and most pernicious character, viz. of the scornful, who are bold enough to treat things serious and sacred with derision.

Having done this, I shall make some application of the subject, for your instruction and direction.

In the first place, let us consider the infectious nature of sin, or the danger of walking in the counsel of the ungodly. That the society of bad men is highly dangerous to all, but especially to young persons is indeed a truth which no sober man will deny, and which hath been often set in the strongest light by religious and moral writers: it may therefore seem unnecessary to insist upon it. But, my brethren, I am persuaded, that it fares often with known and common truths, as with common mercies, they are despised for their cheapness. Though their certainty be readily al-

lowed, their use and application is, notwithstanding, or, perhaps, for that very reason, in a great measure neglected. How seldom is it that men make the distinction with care, and act upon it with prudence and resolution; either in their own conduct, or in the disposal of their children. Bear with me, therefore, while I endeavour to impress your minds with a sense of your obligation to depart from the society of evil doers, and to preserve, with the utmost solicitude, all young persons under your care, from the mortal contagion.

For the importance and necessity of this, you have the concurrent testimony of wise and good men, in every age and nation: experience hath taught it to the most barbarous, as well as the most improved and polished people. There is no nation of which history hath preserved us any account, but, in their proverbial sayings, which are the product of time, we find a warning against the infection of corrupt society: What dying parent, in his last or parting adieu to his children, ever omitted to caution them against the society of bad men? nay, doth not daily experience prove this, beyond dispute; to every one who hath the least degree either of memory or reflection? Is there among you any person, who has arrived at the unhappy distinction of being known for a profligate? Whenever this happens, those about him are able to mark the progress of his corruption, and can even point out the

the persons, or societies, where he was first taught the rudiments of vice, and initiated in the principles of licentiousness and riot. I am none of those who either deny or conceal the original, inherent, universal corruption of human nature; and yet I scruple not to affirm, that example, instruction, and assistance, are necessary to our improvement even in vice. Without this, no single person is capable of arriving at that degree of depravity which we have sometimes occasion to observe.

Whoever would examine into the reasons, and impress his mind with a sense of the danger of corrupt society, especially to youth, may just reflect upon the following particulars.

1. We are all by nature prone to sin. It is the growth of the soil, as weeds of the cursed ground. If weeds can hardly be restrained by the utmost diligence and care of the husbandman, what an enormous product might he expect, if he would directly apply himself to their encouragement and cultivation! Just so, if by the utmost care and attention parents can hardly restrain the irregularities of their children, and form them to true piety and goodness; what wickedness may they not arrive at, if they are delivered over to schools of profanity, and suffered to form their sentiments and manners, from those who have long 'walked in the ways of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes, without fearing God, or regarding man.'

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2. Young persons are ignorant and unsuspecting; strangers to the world, they are alike ignorant of the characters of men, and the effects of vicious courses. What a prey must such be to the artful and insinuating language of those, who, enslaved by habit, and wearing the chains of vice, find their chief remaining pleasure in seducing others into the same miserable state! Justly is the great enemy of mankind called the deceiver, because he betrayed our first parents into rebellion by a lie: and in the same way he and all his servants continue to paint and varnish over sin with false colours, that it may be embraced without reluctance, by those who know not that afterwards 'it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.' Need I tell you in what a decent garb sin is often clothed; and what honourable names it often assumes in the world, to gain the easier admission? Sensuality and intemperance is social affection, and good fellowship: filthy obscene conversation is but harmless mirth and freedom: anger and resentment is but honour, resolution, and dignity of mind. In short, the whole tenor and strain of fashionable conversation is often little else than a strong illusion put upon the mind, to pervert the dictates of reason, and evade the reproofs of conscience. How dangerous such intercourse to young unwary minds, who are often deeply penetrated with the poison, before they so much as suspect the design of its being

being administred ! It requires no common degree of fortitude and resolution, as well as no small measure of spiritual wisdom, to resist the importunity of sinners, and unravel the subtilty with which they ly in wait to deceive.

3. Vice is usually baited with pleasure, of which young persons are peculiarly sensible: their affections of every kind are in the most lively and vigorous state. One of the first and most important lessons, which parents and guardians must teach them, is moderation and restraint; whereas the immediate effect of associating with the profane, is not only to strengthen their passions by indulgence, but to instruct them how to plead in their defence; and above all, to inspire them with an abhorrence of confinement and rule. From these unhappy attachments, these most pernicious friendships it is, that instruction however excellent, is unwillingly listened to; and the most wise and gentle government is esteemed harsh and severe. It has been sometimes observed, that persons strictly and piously educated, when they have come into the world, have run headlong into the most vitious and abandoned course of life. This has been commonly ascribed to the rigour of their former confinement, and an advice grafted upon it, that parents should be less severe to their children, lest they should more than compensate this early restraint, by the liberties which they afterwards assume. But though I willingly admit, that every parent should
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temper his authority with gentleness and love; yet I am far from thinking the effect, just now mentioned, is ascribed to its proper cause: it is not owing so much to the rigour of parental authority, as to young persons getting into the society of men without principle, and there secretly imbibing those vicious desires, which afterwards they rejoice in an opportunity of gratifying to the full. However strict and severe any person's education may be, if he comes to maturity of age, before he contracts an intimacy with those who justify the commission of sin, conscience will have acquired so great authority, that all solicitation to gross wickedness will be received with abhorrence. This opinion is supported by a fact, which I imagine I have observed, that the children of pious parents, who are betrayed into vicious courses, are almost always such as have been most early removed from their immediate inspection.

4. The danger of corrupt society to young persons appears, from their being exposed to ridicule and scorn, which is of all other trials hardest for them to bear. I shall have occasion, on the third general head, to speak more fully on this subject; but in the mean time, it is certain, that a sense of shame is strong in young persons in general, and that ridicule is the usual weapon, by which adepts in vice assault the cause of truth and piety; by which indeed they commonly endeavour to destroy all regard to decency and order. It is lamentable.

lamentable to think, how often persons of excellent capacity, and admirable dispositions, have been led astray by the abuse of this most amiable quality, a sense of shame.

From all these considerations, we need not be surpris'd at the frequent and strong cautions given in the word of God, upon this subject:

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

— Who so keepeth the law, is a wise son :

‘ but he that is a companion of riotous men,
‘ shameth his father.’ But there is nothing more

moving than that earnest and pathetic exhortation ; ‘ 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 wise man’s insisting upon this important counsel, and the iteration of the expressions, serves to convey, in the strongest manner, a sense of the certain ruin of those who neglect to observe it.

II. Let us now proceed to consider the hardening nature of sin, which leads from ‘ walking in the counsel of the ungodly, to standing in the way of sinners.’ Upon this, as on the former particular, I may observe, it is a known and beaten subject, on which it is easy to say things strong, but difficult to say any thing new. There are several just remarks upon it, or striking similitudes, which have been handed down from the earliest ages ; and were probably the first fruits of

of human experience. The little that I am at present to repeat or add, shall be divided into two parts: 1. The gradual and insensible progress of sin, which leads the sinner on from one step to another, till he is irrecoverably lost. 2. The strength and power of inveterate habits.

1. The insensible progress of sin. It is wonderful by what artful methods, what plausible pretences, and what slow degrees, sin makes its first approaches. Let some of those persons who are now lost to all sense of duty, or of shame, reflect, if possible, with what horror they would once have thought of the practices, which at present they are not able to forsake. Every sin, how small soever, opens a passage for the admission of multitudes of others; breaks the restraint of conscience; habituates and emboldens the sinner. The ancients were wont to say, that the way of sin is down-hill: every step a man takes on this declivity, accelerates his motion, so that it becomes more and more difficult, and at last impossible, to stop his course. This is what the apostle Paul had in his view, when he gave this excellent precept to the Christian Hebrews; 'But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' We may say of sin, in general, what Solomon says of strife; 'The beginning of it is like the letting out of water.' If you watch against the beginning of sin, you may hope to prevail; but if you once grant indulgence

dulgence, it will establish and increase its own power. To attempt then to stop its progress, is like endeavouring to gather together a flood of water, after you have, with your own hands, opened the sluices which have caused it to overflow.

2. To the insensible progress of sin, add the strength and power of inveterate habit. This is represented to us in the strongest terms in scripture, where the changing of an inveterate habit is compared to a natural impossibility: 'Can the
'Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his
'spots? then may ye also do good, that are ac-
'customed to do evil.'

As we may receive many useful moral lessons from the visible creation and the course of nature; so this in particular, of the force of habit, is, if I may speak so, written in the most legible characters, and repeated in every page of both. A stone, which has long continued in one place, makes itself a bed, and is with great difficulty removed: a plant or tree that has long been confined to one position, or made to grow in a particular shape, will seldom ever receive any other. This is also the case with our own bodily frame. Particular postures or motions to which we have been early habituated, can scarcely be altered by the utmost attention, and the strongest inclination of the will: the obstinacy is still greater in all habits where desire and affection have place. It is easy to see every day the violent attachment men have to employments and pleasures, however

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trifling in themselves; to which they have been long accustomed. But it is greatest of all in sinful habits, because in them the force of custom is added to the original strength of natural corruption.

Both the above particulars may be illustrated, by observing how much habit and example together operate to the improvement and perfection of guilt, in large and populous cities. There we may often find so astonishing a degree of wickedness of every sort, as it is mortifying to think that human nature should be capable of; there we may find persons who will perpetrate calmly and sedately, what would surprize a less knowing sinner so much as to hear of. And what pity is it, that there should be found some, who, during their occasional residence in places of great resort, lay down their innocence, instead of their rusticity; and bring home no other accomplishment but an insolence and boldness of countenance in the commission of sin! That instructed in the principles, as well as habituated to the practice of impiety, they are not content with doing evil, but discover an incredible industry and assiduity in deceiving and seducing others! And shall I not add, what pity is it, that some, instead of improving and adorning their minds by application to study, or storing them with useful knowledge, do more than lose their time, by drinking in the poison of infidel writings? Instead of fitting themselves to discharge the duties of public

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or private life, with propriety and dignity, they only acquire the unhappy talent of setting their minds at ease in the commission of sin, and make large additions to their own natural depravity of heart.

III. Let us consider the finishing stage of wickedness, the most criminal and the most pernicious character, viz. that of the scornful, who are bold enough to treat things serious and sacred with derision.

This part of the subject, my brethren, merits your particular attention, and naturally divides itself into these two branches: 1st, The sin and danger of it to the persons who are guilty of it. 2^{dly}, The unhappy influence it hath in polluting others.

I. The sin and danger of it to the guilty persons. Whoever will consider the state of mind from which such derision must flow, will immediately perceive, that it implies the highest degree of profaneness, and impiety. It is such an audacious attack upon the majesty of the living God, as must strike every thinking person with astonishment and horror. One of the first principles of all religion is reverence for the Deity, and for every thing that hath a visible relation to him: This we find written upon the conscience; in general, even of the most blinded heathens. The common and trivial use of the name of God is prohibited under the severest sanctions in the

oracles of truth. We find also some instances there, of mere irreverence being punished in a very terrible manner. The angelic hosts, though perfectly pure and holy, are yet represented as deeply penetrated with a sense of the extreme disproportion between uncreated excellence, and created weakness, and filled with the highest veneration of him who only is Holy: 'In the year that King Uzzia died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings, with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.' It may seem unnecessary or improper to add, and yet it gives me pleasure that I can do it with truth, the same thing has evidently distinguished some of the best and greatest men on earth. We are well informed, that some of the greatest enquirers into nature, as they grew in years, and increased in the knowledge of the works of God, did also visibly grow in an awe and reverence of their Almighty Maker. Of one in particular, it is said, that he never mentioned the name of God without a sensible pause in his discourse. After this, what can we think of any poor creature, whose breath is in his nostrils, being guilty of contempt and scorn of the name, attributes, works, or worship of God!

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There is a remarkable difference between sins of this kind, and many other sins which are, notwithstanding, very heinous and aggravated in the sight of God. Into many other sins, of a very gross nature, a man may be hurried by the violence of passion, or betrayed by the suddenness of temptation; but, if I mistake not, scorn of things sacred must always be a deliberate crime: the sin cannot be committed without a good deal of composure and presence of mind: reason is not over-born, as in other cases, by appetite; but reason itself (if the perverted gift of God in such persons may be called so) is principal in the guilt. A scorner is never tempted, properly speaking, but by these acts and exercises of religion, which should excite the veneration of all, and do excite the veneration of many, not excepting some of the most profligate.

Contempt of things sacred is an entire victory over conscience. In many cases men sin with some reluctance: it is not so much their choice, as they are over-born by the strength of corruption, and vitiate the peace of their minds, to gratify the demands of lust; hence remorse often succeeds the indulgence; and though real reformation does not take place, yet it lays the sinner under frequent and considerable restraints. But in treating things sacred with scorn, the mind is wholly at ease; and finds its pleasure in the very impiety itself. The truth is, so entire is the victory over conscience, that nothing but settled atheism and infidelity can be guilty of it, accord-

ing to that just expression of the psalmist, 'Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, thou wilt not require it.'

It is also an entire victory over shame: this is commonly the last restraint that sinners overthrow. Many are confined and kept in awe by fear of man, long after they have cast off the fear of God. From the shamefulness of sin, religion preserves some degree of credit, even where a great plurality is in the opposite interest. For this reason the prophet Jeremiah mentions it as a great aggravation of the sins of his countrymen, that they were lost to all sense of shame: Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall; at the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down saith the Lord? But it is not evident, that scorers are destitute of shame? They have indeed, not only extinguished it in themselves, but the manifest design of their conversation is to destroy it in the minds of others.

I need add nothing further to shew the guilt and danger of persons of this character, but putting you in mind of the rank which it holds in several catalogues of crying sins in the holy scriptures, and the awful judgments of God which are denounced against it. The prophet Ezekiel, in enumerating the sins of Jerusalem, among many enormities, hath this; 'Thou hast despised mine
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‘ holy things, and profaned my Sabbaths.’ And the prophet Isaiah, ‘ Now, therefore, hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.—For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibson, that he may do his work, his strange work ; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be not mockers, lest your hands be made strong ; for, I have heard from the Lord God of hosts, a consumption even determined upon the whole earth.’ See also the state of things in Jerusalem, immediately before the Babylonish captivity : ‘ But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.’

2. How unhappy is the influence of this character upon others ! As it is highly criminal, it is pernicious in the same proportion. Considered only as an example, it must have dangerous effects : many sins shun the light ; and are, by those that commit them, concealed with the utmost care. When that is the case, whatever they may be to the guilty person, they are far from being so dangerous to the public, as those crimes that are not only often visible, but done on purpose to be seen. Now, scoffers at things sacred must always be an example, as the crime cannot be committed alone ; and, indeed, they often aspire at a kind of character for despising religion, and
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would be greatly mortified, were their accomplishments of this kind hidden from the world.

Neither is it merely a common example: scoffers are not only barely sinners; they are advocates for sin: it is their constant study to break the restraints of conscience, and weaken every moral obligation in others, as well as in themselves. This too they endeavour to effect in the most agreeable manner: contempt of religion makes a part of their social mirth; and these two things are soon looked upon by the unwary youth as so inseparable, that the one is quite tasteless and insipid, unless it is seasoned by the other.

It deserves particular consideration on this subject, that scoffing at things sacred is apt to give natural modesty, and the sense of shame in young persons, a wrong and contrary turn. Modesty is the strongest natural fence to virtue. We find notwithstanding, very frequently, that persons of great natural modesty have not courage sufficient to profess or practice what conscience dictates to be their duty. How unhappy is it when so excellent a preservative from vice is thus quite perverted, and has an opposite effect! All history is full of the powerful effects of a sense of shame, both in doing good and evil. It breaks the strongest of all natural attachments: it is not to be overcome by the severest laws, though fortified with the most terrible sanctions. Now, as it needs no proof, that scoffing at sacred things tends

tends to pervert the sense of shame, it must have the greatest and most immediate effect in bringing on a general dissolution of manners.

The malignant influence of profane scorn is not confined to young persons, there being very few of any character who are not hurt by it in a most sensible manner. Would you be convinced of this? How rarely do we find any possessed of a determined courage and resolution in opposing fashionable crimes! How unwilling are the best to suffer shame for adhering to their duty! What a variety of efforts will be made to escape it! Contempt is disagreeable at any rate; and it is intolerable to pride, some remains of which, capable of being irritated, are to be found in the very best men on earth. For this reason, the most established Christians do carefully shun all unnecessary society with wicked men, knowing how difficult it is to avoid sin in one shape or other. If such is the case with the best, how dangerous must the society of scorners be to all who are able to bear them; but especially to those who have pleasure in them.

It will not be improper here to observe, that one great reason why scorn and ridicule is so hurtful to religion, is, that it attacks things sacred through the medium of human weakness. True piety and virtue is in itself so venerable an object, that it is not possible to render it ridiculous, but by misrepresentation: however, as it is always, in this world, attended with human infirmity

firmity, this affords a handle to profane persons to load it with reproach. Their success, in this unhappy design, is no greater than may naturally be expected: few are able to distinguish between a person and his cause, nor, indeed, is it possible to attack the one, without wounding the other. It evidently appears, that it is impossible to treat religious persons in general, or the expressions, forms, and rites commonly appropriated to religious worship, with scorn; and not, at the same time, bring religion itself into contempt.

I do not mean by this to plead for approbation, or even indulgence, to any indecency, by which folly or vanity may abuse or disgrace the worship of God: far from it. I think every thing of that kind ought to be reprov'd with severity, and oppos'd with resolution: but I contend, that it is infinitely more proper to treat it with abhorrence and detestation, than with scorn. Whoever will give himself this liberty, may easily find an opportunity, from the weakness inseparable from humanity, to throw off that reverence for God and his service, which it ought to be his chief sollicitude to preserve and improve. There are many whose visible weakness is to be lamented; and, perhaps, there is no human character at all so perfectly decent in every respect but, by imitation, and a little aggravation, it may be rendered ridiculous.

Let it also be considered, that it requires far less comprehension of mind to expose the folly and

and weakness of others, or even to invent plausible falsehoods, and misrepresent them, than to reason with justness and propriety on the most common subjects. A very small degree of ability is sufficient to accomplish a scoffer, who is not restrained by any sense of duty. Nor is this to be wondered at; for there is always a sufficient number, to whose understandings the most vile and miserable performance is perfectly adapted.

In support of all this, I could adduce many examples, abundantly known and familiar; but, for certain reasons, I shall only mention a very celebrated instance from antiquity. Socrates was certainly the wisest and the best man of all the heathens, whose characters have been transmitted to us. His behaviour was such, as not only deserved, but seemed fit to command the esteem and veneration of all who knew him; yet was this worthy man successfully turned into ridicule, by a person, whose writings, which have come down to us, are to the last degree mean and contemptible. Nor was the effect merely transient; for, in the opinion of many, this contempt paved the way for the hatred which his enemies soon raised against him, and which brought him to his death.

I proceed now, in the last place, to make some improvement of what has been said: and with this view suffer me to apply the truths above illustrated by giving you some advice and direction
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under the three following characters, one or more of which will include every person who now hears me.

1. To those who are young; in that lovely, precious, dangerous season of life, of all others the fittest for learning what is good, and unhappily prone to learn or imitate what is evil. My dear children, this is not the first of many times I have addressed instruction particularly to you, and I pray that God may open your hearts to receive it. Let me beseech you, first of all, to learn this important lesson, to distrust yourselves, be sensible of your inexperience, and be persuaded of your danger, from the admonitions of others. The greatest evidence you can give of real knowledge, is to be sensible of your ignorance; and of true wisdom, to be willing to learn; the solicitude and concern of your parents or other relations, to preserve you from the destructive paths of vice, is from their certain knowledge of what you are now unwilling to believe. Above all things, shun as the pestilence, the society of profane scorners. Lost to all sense of piety, feared in their consciences, and enslaved to their lusts, they will do all in their power to destroy a rising sense of religion in your minds: 'While they promise you liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption. Think upon eternity approaching: no man can foresee or foretell to you now, whether your time on earth shall be long or short; whether you shall have much prof-
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perity, or many trials in the present world; but as the blessing of God is the best ingredient in all temporal mercies, so being at peace with him is the best support under suffering; and the only preparation for death.

But as all the delusive arguments in favour of sin are drawn from this present life, suffer me to plead the cause of piety and truth in this respect. Be assured, that true religion is the way to health, peace, opulence and public esteem: Hear the wisest of mere men: "Length of days is in wisdom's right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour: Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Do not look only on those libertines who are in the beginning or middle of their course; whose spirits are lively, and their vigour yet unimpaired: look on the few older practitioners. These were the good-fellows and social spirits of a former period: their companions were cut off in the middle of their days, and they remain as beacons for your instruction and warning. Do you see them fallen in their deportment, mean in their attire; and despised by the world itself; their fates bloated with intemperance, and their miserable offspring pale with hunger, or crippled by neglect? these are the terrible fruits of midnight rioting. They were once as merry in their cups, as ready with their jests, and as great despisers of Sabbaths, and sermons, of whining and praying, as any of their more
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sprightly

sprightly successors, who are in the high road to the same despicable end.

My dear friends, when you perceive any one stirring up your aversion to parental authority, and teaching you to despise the troublesome admonitions of ministers and mothers, know that he is enticing you to the ruin of soul, body, and estate. Hear again the wise man, or rather the Spirit of God speaking by him : ‘ Hear then, my son, and
 ‘ be wise, and guide thine heart in the way: be
 ‘ not amongst wine-bibbers, amongst riotous eat-
 ‘ ers of flesh; for the drunkard and the glutton
 ‘ shall come to poverty, and drowfiness shall
 ‘ clothe a man with rags; hearken unto thy father
 ‘ that begat thee, and despise not thy mother
 ‘ when she is old. The eye that mocketh at his
 ‘ father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the
 ‘ ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the
 ‘ young eagles shall eat it.’

Do you indeed think, that any of your loose companions, with all their professions of friendship and attachment, have the same concern for your true interest that a parent has; or the same judgment to discern it? You may esteem it as a favour when you are assisted in the indulgence of your pleasures, and your irregular courses are concealed from the knowledge of your relations; but it is in truth the greatest injury that can possibly be done you: it is often distressing to those of riper years and more experience, to observe how difficult it is to persuade young persons of
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easy tempers and warm affections, of the danger of associating with profligates. We reckon it hard that you will not believe that they are worthless, upon our testimony; but must learn it from your own fatal experience. Believe it, there is no true friendship but what is founded on the principles of piety and virtue: and if you confide in those of a different character, you will sooner or later be rewarded with treachery and falsehood: and indeed the sooner, the better; for their friendship is infinitely more hurtful than any effects of their displeasure. Again therefore, let me beseech the younger part of my audience, who have not yet themselves thrown off all regard to decency, to give up all friendship with, and avoid the society of, those who have. It is usually a hard sacrifice, I confess; but necessary to your preservation from the most destructive courses. What signifies the scorn or resentment of a few hardened wretches, compared to the peace of your own minds, the heart-felt pleasure you will give to every real friend, your comfort and happiness in this life, and the well-grounded hope of a blessed immortality?

2. Let me shortly address myself to parents, or others who are entrusted with the education of youth. And, oh that I could make you sensible of the importance and difficulty of your charge! There are many directions, which might be given you with respect to education in general; but I choose to confine my thoughts at present to what

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is suggested by the occasion and subject of this discourse. Let it, therefore be your care, to preserve your children, as much as possible, from the company and conversation of profane persons, especially those who are tainted with infidelity; and who, as its natural consequence, treat the exercises of piety with contempt and scorn. To suffer this, when you can hinder it, is treating their souls in the same manner, as you would do their bodies, if you placed doses of sweetened poison in every corner of the house. You will daily perceive how children are formed by imitation, in their temper and manners: they must bear a resemblance to those from whom they receive their first impressions: but if this is the case in general, how much more must they embrace the principles, and imitate the practice of their companions in pleasure?

This caution is so necessary, that where counsel and intreaty are not sufficient to procure compliance, authority ought to be interposed. Mere authority indeed will be very ineffectual; and therefore I must particularly recommend to you an early attention to your childrens opinion and judgment: they soon form a judgment, and will give early marks of approbation and aversion of persons and characters. Do your utmost to make them esteem religion, as the greatest happiness to every person, and the most amiable part of every character. Make them sensible, from your conduct, that it is not only your sincere choice, but
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greatest delight. It is very fatal to them, when they are led to look upon it as a burden or constraint. Habituate them early to consider all other qualities as good for nothing, when piety is wanting; and a person of a truly Christian conversation as worthy of the highest esteem, whatever be his station or circumstances in other respects. Remember it makes a part of the character of a good man, as drawn by the psalmist David; 'in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.' I am persuaded, that many, who truly fear God themselves, are inadvertently guilty of a great mistake in this particular: they discover unhappily too much of their admiration or envy of the natural advantages of others, independent of their moral character. Dress, furniture, and wealth, are looked upon as distinguishing advantages; and children are often suffered to indulge themselves in mockery and derision; even where deformity, poverty, awkwardness, and things perfectly innocent in themselves, are the only objects of their scorn. Intellectual abilities also, comprehension of mind, and sprightliness of fancy are commonly much the objects of esteem; and young persons are insensibly led to admire these natural qualities, without at all considering to what purposes they are applied. This must necessarily have a fatal effect; and therefore parents should endeavour, as much as possible, to preserve upon their own minds, and inspire their

children with, an esteem of true piety, and a horror and aversion at a vicious character, whatever advantage may happen to accompany it.

If due care is taken betimes in this respect, I am persuaded it will, in a great measure, prevent the danger arising from the example or solicitation of the patrons of impiety. Their chief success depends on their real character's lying concealed, till it is safe and proper to avow it. They instil the principles of irreligion, as a wise man would do the most sacred truths, by little and little, as their disciples are able to bear them, and always do it under the disguise of pleasure. There is nothing more different than the conversation and carriage of a libertine, in the presence of those of whom he stands in awe, and among his select companions; and even these last are but gradually initiated into the concluding and horrid mysteries of profanity and blasphemy. Young minds therefore should be early formed to such a taste, as to look for piety and virtue, before they will give their approbation or affection to any human accomplishments. Were this the case, they would not be so often betrayed by specious appearances, and drawn in, by degrees, first, to suffer; then, to imitate; and, at last, to delight in the most vicious practices.

While I am giving you these directions, I cannot help observing, that you may see the great necessity of wisdom and prudence in the religious education of children. Apply yourselves to it
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with diligence. It is an extensive and difficult, but, at the same time, a noble, useful, delightful study. 'And if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.'

I shall now close this discourse with a few words to professing Christians in general.

My Brethren, when vice rears up its head, and appears with insolence and boldness, as it will certainly affect every good man with concern, so it is of great importance what treatment it meets with from the public. If it passes without notice, we may conclude, that corruption hath deeply infected the whole mass. If men are afraid or ashamed to express their indignation at it, we may conclude the conspiracy is formidable; and that the interest of truth and piety is greatly on the decline. There are many, who, in cases of gross scandal, rather choose to keep themselves at ease, by forbearance and indulgence to the guilty, than run the hazard of provoking their resentment, by an honest declaration of their real sentiments. Nor is it seldom to be observed, that the very persons who do least in their own sphere, for stemming the tide of profanity, are the first and loudest in complaining of the negligence of magistrates or pastors, in inflicting public punishments or censures.

Whilst, therefore, I am endeavouring, in some measure, to discharge my own duty, I must also put you in mind of yours. It is evidently the duty

ty of all who profess to fear God, to abstain from the society of those who are grossly profane, without discovering any sense of penitence or sorrow. The truth is, I ought rather to make this a mark of true religion, and affirm, that all good men will do so; than inform them that they should. There must be a likeness of disposition among familiar friends. Had you that abhorrence of impiety that you ought to have, you would count the society of impious persons a stain and reproach to your own characters. Of this I am able to give a very strong, and, at the same time, a plain and familiar proof. Were any person known to be guilty of theft and dishonesty, or any fault that is odious and disgraceful in the world, every one would reckon his intimate companions almost, if not to the same degree, as abandoned as himself. The same thing will certainly hold as to profanity or licentiousness; though indeed it carries in it a melancholy proof, that sins against piety or purity are far from being held in the same abhorrence as what endangers our substance or temporal interest. I must, however, here beg of you, to attend to a singular and very strong passage of the epistle to the Romans. The apostle Paul closes his description of the profane world in the following terms:

‘ who knowing the judgment of God, (that they
 ‘ which commit such things are worthy of death)
 ‘ not only do the same, but have pleasure in them
 ‘ that do them.’ I have looked into the original,
 - and find the words justly translated; and you:
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see, from the construction of the sentence, the apostle represents having pleasure in sensual and wicked men, as implying a depravity of character superior even to that of sensuality itself.

But as associating with the profane is a mark of profanity, so every degree of countenance given to them, by persons of entire character, is a sensible injury to the public. It serves to put honour upon vice, and in part to deliver it from that just reproach which ought to be the punishment of the guilty, and a warning to others not to tread in their steps. I have, on several occasions, observed, that the present period or state of things, in this place and congregation, demands the greatest concern for the public interest of religion. Growing in numbers, and growing, I hope, in wealth, as the effect of your own and your fathers industry, you are in danger of the introduction of a worldly spirit by the rising generation. This every good man ought, with the utmost prudence and resolution, to oppose; particularly by doing all in his power to preserve the honour and respect due to true religion, and treating with contempt every open enemy to that important interest. I sincerely wish you improved, and possessed of every accomplishment that is truly valuable; but beware of that false politeness, which consists in little else than an opposition to religion and sobriety. And, indeed I am afraid we shall not soon attain to any other; at least, not by the help of those, who as they set religion at defiance,

defiance, so are equally strangers to that elegance and sense of decency which distinguishes persons of higher rank.

The worst enemies of sinners are those who treat them with indulgence, so long as they continue to justify or to palliate their offences. Nothing serves to harden them more, than when no notice is taken of their crimes; and they find themselves just as generally, and as well received, as if they had done no evil. On the other hand, when they perceive the deep concern of others on their account, it is an excellent mean of bringing them to serious reflection, and inducing them to tremble at themselves. Wherefore, my beloved hearers, let me beseech you to preserve your horror of sin, notwithstanding the boldness of sinners. Do every thing in your own power to reclaim the offenders. Be earnest in your supplications to almighty God, that he would snatch them as brands from the burning, and raise them up as trophies of his victorious grace. But while they continue in their enmity to God, forget not, on your own account, the apostolic counsel; 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.'

SERMON

SERMON XII.

ON

Christian Magnanimity*.

2 Thess. ii. 12. *That you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you into his kingdom and glory.*

THE present state was intended to be, and I think must, by every person of reflection, be admitted to be a continual trial of the faith and constancy of a Christian. It is therefore a duty we

* It seems proper to acquaint the public with the reason and intention of this publication. It had been the custom, in the college of New-Jersey, from its first establishment, that the president should preach a sermon on the Lord's day preceding commencement, for the benefit of young persons in general;

we owe to others in general, but in a special manner, the elder to the younger, to give them faithful warning of the temptations and dangers, to which they must, of necessity, be exposed, if they mean to walk in the paths of piety and virtue. It hath often occurred to me, in meditating on this subject, that as false money is most dangerous, when it is likest to the true, so those principles, and that character, which approach the nearest to true religion, if notwithstanding they

meral; and in the end, address a particular exhortation to the seniors of that year, who were to receive the first degree in the arts, and leave college. This custom was very much approved by the author of the following sermon and address, on his taking charge of the college, and therefore regularly continued. For several years, the address was founded upon, and had a particular relation to whatever had been the subject of the preceding discourse. But in the year 1775, when the war with Britain was actually begun, and every thing seemed to breathe the spirit of defence, he chose *Christian Magnanimity*, as the subject of the discourse; and not knowing what might be the event of the important contest, he thought it advisable to make a collection, or summary, of all the advices that had been given to the young gentlemen for their conduct in life, in different years, under distinct heads. This produced the one now published, which, with some variations and additions, has been delivered to the class annually, sometimes the Sabbath preceding commencement, and sometimes on commencement-day, when the exercises left room for it. The author having now introduced every
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they are essentially different from it, will be most ready to impose on an uncautious and unsuspecting mind. Therefore, if there is such a thing as a worldly virtue, a system of principles and duty, dictated by the spirit of the world, and the standard of approbation or blame with the men of the world, and if this is at bottom, essentially different from and sometimes directly opposed to the spirit of the gospel, it must be of all others, the most dangerous temptation, to persons of a liberal education and an ingenuous turn of mind.

This, if I am not mistaken, is really the case. There are some branches of true religion which

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thing that he thought of sufficient importance to find a place in it, and the length of the piece having become such as not easily to admit of its being all pronounced in one day, especially the day of commencement, he has been induced to publish it together with the sermon which accompanied it, when first prepared and reduced to a regular system. He the more willingly agreed to this, that several instances have happened, of gentlemen, educated at this college, signifying, that they thought they had received advantage, in many situations, by recollecting the advices given them at their graduation for their conduct in life. He therefore now puts the whole into their hands, and into those of all who are willing to accept of it, as the fruit of long experience and considerable attention to the course of human affairs, earnestly wishing that they may be useful and eminent as citizens, scholars, patriots; and at the same time beseeching them, that in any or all of these characters, they may neither forget nor be ashamed to be Christians.

are universally approved, and which impiety itself cannot speak against; such as truth and integrity in speech, honesty in dealing, humanity and compassion to persons in distress. But there are other particulars, in which the worldly virtue and the Christian virtue seem to be different things. Of these I shall select one, as an example, viz. Spirit, dignity, or greatness of mind. This seems to be entirely of the worldly cast: it holds a very high place in the esteem of all worldly men; the boldest pretensions are often made to it, by those who treat religion with neglect, and religious persons with disdain or defiance. It is also a virtue of a very dazzling appearance; ready to captivate the mind, and particularly, to make a deep impression on young persons, when they first enter into life. At the same time, the gospel seems to stand directly opposed to it. The humility of the creature, the abasement and contrition of the sinner, the dependence and self-denial of the believer, and above all, the shame and reproach of the cross itself, seem to conspire in obliging us to renounce it.

What shall we say then, my brethren? Shall we say that magnanimity is no virtue at all, and that no such excellence belongs to human nature? Or shall we admit that there is beauty and excellence in it—confessing at the same time, that it does not belong to religion, and only say, that though we want this, we have many other and better qualities in its place? To this I can never agree; for

for every real excellence is consistent with every other; nay, every real excellence is adorned and illustrated by every other. Vices may be inconsistent with each other, but virtues never can. And, therefore, as magnanimity is an amiable and noble quality, one of the greatest ornaments of our nature, so I affirm that it belongs only to true and undefiled religion, and that every appearance of the one, without the other, is not only defective, but false.

The holy scriptures, it is true, do chiefly insist upon what is proper to humble our pride, and to bring us to a just apprehension of our character and state. This was wise and just, because of that corruption and misery into which we are fallen; the contrary would have been unjust. It is evidently more necessary, in the present state of human nature, to restrain pride, than to kindle ambition. But as the scripture points out our original dignity, and the true glory of our nature, so every true penitent is there taught to aspire after the noblest character, and to entertain the most exalted hopes. In the passage which I have chosen as the subject of my discourse, you see the Apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to walk suitably to the dignity of their character, and the importance of their privileges, which is a short but just description of true and genuine greatness of mind.

My single purpose, from these words, at this time, is to explain and recommend magnanimity

as a Christian virtue; and I wish to do it in such a manner, as neither to weaken its lustre, nor admit any degree of that corrupt mixture, by which it is often counterfeited and greatly debased. Some infidels have in terms affirmed, that Christianity has banished magnanimity, and by its precepts of meekness, humility, and passive submission to injury, has destroyed that nobleness of sentiment, which rendered the ancients so illustrious, and gives so much majesty and dignity to the histories of Greece and Rome. In opposition to this, I hope to be able to shew that real greatness is inseparable from sincere piety, and that any defect in the one, must necessarily be a discernable blemish in the other. With this view, I will, first, give you the principles of magnanimity in general, as a natural quality; secondly, I will shew what is necessary to give it real value, as a moral virtue; and, thirdly, shew that it shines with the most perfect brightness as a Christian grace; after, will improve the subject, by a practical application of what may be said for your instruction and direction.

First, then, let me state the principles of magnanimity, in general, as a natural quality. I think it must be admitted, that as there is a real difference between bodies as to size and bulk, as well as other sensible qualities, so there is a real character of greatness, or meanness, applicable to the mind, distinct from its other qualities or powers. It is, however, I apprehend, a simple impression,

impression, which cannot be explained or further analyzed, but may easily be felt, and is best illustrated by its effects. These may be summed up in the following particulars: to magnanimity it belongeth to attempt; 1. Great and difficult things; 2. To aspire after great and valuable possessions; 3. To encounter dangers with resolution; 4. To struggle against difficulties with perseverance; and, 5. To bear sufferings with fortitude and patience.

It belongs to magnanimity to attempt great and difficult things. Those who, from a love of sloth and ease, neglect the exercise or improvement of their powers; and those who apply them with ever so great assiduity and attention, to things mean or of small consequence, are plainly destitute of this quality. We perceive a meanness and want of spirit in this respect, when particular persons fall below their rank in life, or when, as is too frequently the case in any rank, they fall below human nature itself. When a prince, or other person of the first order and importance in human life, busies himself in nothing but the most trifling amusements, or arts of little value, we call it mean; and when any man, endowed with rational powers, loses them through neglect, or destroys them by the most grovelling sensuality, we say he is acting below himself. The contrary of this, therefore, or the vigorous exertion of all our powers, and particularly, the applica-

tion of them to things of moment and difficulty, is real magnanimity.

2. It belongs to magnanimity to aspire after great and valuable possessions. It is more difficult properly to illustrate this as a branch of magnanimity, because of its frequent perversion, which will be afterwards explained. It seems, however, to be necessarily included in the general character. A great mind has great capacities of enjoyment as well as action. And as there is a difference between the blessings in our view, both in point of dignity and extent, such a man will not be easily satisfied, or put up with what is either mean or scanty, while he can acquire and possess a better and more extensive portion. The large and increasing desires of the human mind, have often been made an argument for the dignity of our nature, and our having been made for something that is great and excellent.

3. It belongs to magnanimity to encounter dangers with resolution. This is inseparable from, and constitutes a leading part of the character. Even the most excellent and valuable services to mankind, if they are attended with no difficulty at all, or meet with no opposition, though they retain the character of utility, yet, for want of this circumstance, they lose that of greatness. Courage is always considered as a great quality; it has had the admiration, or rather adoration, of mankind in every age. Many, when they speak of magnanimity, mean nothing else but courage, and when

when they speak of meanness, have little other idea but that of timidity. Neither is there, I think, any human weakness, that is more the object of contempt and disdain, than cowardice, which, when applied to life in general, is commonly called pusillanimity.

4. It belongs to greatness, to struggle against difficulties with steadiness and perseverance. Perseverance is nothing else but continued and inflexible courage. We see some persons, who shew the greatest activity and boldness for a season, but time and opposition weaken their force, and seem, if I may speak so, to exhaust their courage, as if they wasted the power by the exertion. Perseverance, therefore, is necessary to greatness. Few things are more contrary to this character, than fickleness and unsteadiness. We commonly join together, the characters of weak and changeable.

5. In the last place, it belongs to greatness to bear sufferings with fortitude and patience. This is a kindred quality to the former, and is necessary to complete the character of magnanimity. Such is the state of human things, that suffering is in one way or another, wholly unavoidable. It often happens, that difficulties cannot be removed, or enemies cannot be conquered; and then it is the last effort of greatness of mind, to bear the weight of the one or the cruelty of the other, with firmness and patience. This virtue has always been of the greatest reputation. It is a well known saying, of a heathen philosopher, that a
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great man, suffering with invincible patience, under a weight of misfortunes, is a sight, which even the gods must behold with admiration.

Having thus pointed out the principles, or rather enumerated the chief effects of magnanimity, as a natural quality; let us now, in the second place, consider what is necessary to give it real value, as a moral virtue. This is of the utmost importance, and must appear so, to all who will consider the subject with attention. That I may set the matter in as clear a light as possible, observe, that to render magnanimity a valuable quality, it must further have the following characters.

1. The object of our desires must be just as well as great. Some of the noblest powers of the human mind, have often been exerted in invading the rights, instead of promoting the interest and happiness of mankind. As the history of the world, is little else than the history of human guilt; so, many of the most illustrious names, transmitted down to us, have been those of the most active and successful destroyers of their fellow creatures. There may be, and there have been in such persons, many or most of the ingredients of natural greatness of mind, but these have only served to make the characters, in the eye of reason, more hideous and detestable.

2. Our desires ought to be governed by wisdom and prudence, as well as justice. If any person either forms difficult projects, or aspires after

after great possessions, and in prosecution of his purposes, exerts ever so much courage, fortitude and patience: yet, if these designs are less useful, or these possessions less valuable, than others to which he might have applied the same talents, it cannot deserve the name of true magnanimity. If any person, for example, forms a resolution of exerting his skill, in such feats or performances as have nothing or very little valuable in them, but that they are difficult and uncommon, I think no man will pretend that he has any title to the character of greatness of mind, otherwise a rope-dancer might be a hero: Or, if any person should spend a whole life, in the most unwearied application to the single purpose of accumulating wealth, however vast his desire, or however astonishing his success, his merit would be very small. Nay, we must be sensible that he has lost many opportunities of doing signal service to mankind, and of acquiring more valuable and durable enjoyments, while in pursuit of this, which, after all, will disappoint his hopes.

3. The principle of action must be honourable, as well as the achievements illustrious. If a person does things ever so extraordinary in their nature, overcomes the greatest difficulties, or braves the most formidable dangers, merely to make his name famous, we must at once perceive how much it detracts even from his name itself. This is not the language of religion only, it is the language of reason, and the dictate of the human heart.

heart. An insatiable thirst of praise, is so far from being amiable, that it is hateful or contemptible. I am sensible that a thirst of fame, is not only apparent in, but seems to have been confessed by many of the most distinguished heroes of antiquity; but as it certainly does abate, in a good degree, the lustre of their great actions, so the indulgence that is given them, upon this head, is wholly owing to the disadvantages they lay under, in a state of Heathenism, and their ignorance of a better and nobler principle. ‘Nothing,’ says an eminent author, ‘can be great, the contempt of which is great;’ and, therefore, if a contempt of riches, a neglect of fame, and a readiness to sacrifice both to duty and usefulness, is one of the most glorious characters we can conceive, it is plain, that not the deeds, but the principle is the evidence, and not the head nor the hands of man, but the heart is the seat of genuine greatness.

4. In the last place, in order to real greatness, every attempt must be possible and rational, perhaps probable. Nothing is more common than to find persons, under the pretence of great and illustrious designs, prosecuting what is not of any value when obtained, and at the same time scarcely possible, and no way probable to be obtained at all. This is declining altogether from the line of greatness, and going into the path of extravagance. Again, should any man undertake what he was altogether unable to perform, however excellent

cellent the design were in itself, we would not dignify it even with the name of ambition; he would acquire and deserve the character, not of greatness, but of folly or madness.

On the whole, it is plain that these moral principles, must enter into the composition of true greatness, and that, when they are wanting, the natural characters mentioned before, degenerate into vice, and assume the names of pride, ambition, temerity, ferocity and obstinacy.

This leads me, in the third place, to shew, not only that there is nothing in real religion, contrary to magnanimity, but that there, and there only, it appears in its beauty and perfection. Let me briefly run over, and apply to religion, the above-mentioned ingredients of magnanimity.

1. It is to attempt great and difficult things. Religion calls us to the greatest and most noble attempts, whether in a private or public view. In a private view, it calls us to resist and subdue every corrupt and sinful passion, however strongly the indulgence is solicited by the tempting object, or recommended by the artful seducer. The importance and difficulty of this struggle, appears not only from the holy scriptures, but from the experience and testimony of mankind in every age. What cautions are given by Solomon upon this subject? 'He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.' The wisest Heathens have inculcated the necessity of self-government

government, and the danger of surrounding temptation, by many instructive images. But why should I extend this part of the subject? How few are successful in this attempt? This alone is a sufficient proof, that it is great and difficult, and every person exercised to godliness, will be abundantly sensible of it, from the state of his own heart.

In a public view, every good man is called to live and act for the glory of God, and the good of others. Here he has as extensive a scene of activity, as he can possibly desire. He is not indeed permitted to glory or to build an altar to his own vanity, but he is both permitted and obliged to exert his talents, to improve his time, to employ his substance, and to hazard his life in his Maker's service, or his country's cause. Nor am I able to conceive any character more truly great than that of one, whatever be his station or profession, who is devoted to the public good under the immediate order of Providence. He does not seek the bubble reputation in the deadly breach, but he complains of no difficulty, and refuses no service, if he thinks he carries the commission of the King of kings.

2. The truly pious man aspires after the greatest and most valuable possessions. He despises, indeed, the uncertain and the unsatisfying enjoyments of time. His desires after present enjoyments, are subjected to the will of God. He has given them up without reserve, yet his heavenly

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Father knoweth that he hath need of these things, and therefore he both asks and hopes to receive what is suitable and necessary, and believes that a little that a just man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked. But the glorious object of the christian's ambition, is the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The honourable relation he stands in to God as his adopted child in Christ Jesus, inclines and authorises him to hope for this purchased possession, and enables him to look down with becoming indifference, on all the glory of this transitory world. Let the rich man glory in his riches, and the wise man glory in his wisdom; he only glories in this, that he knoweth the Lord, and shall be with him for ever.

3. True piety encounters the greatest dangers with resolution. The fear of God is the only effectual mean to deliver us from the fear of man. Experience has abundantly shewn, that the servants of Christ have adhered to his cause, and made profession of his name, in opposition to all the terrors which infernal policy could present to them, and all the sufferings, with which the most savage inhumanity could afflict them. But as this belongs to the case of persecution for conscience sake, which, by the peculiar kindness of Providence, is exceedingly rare among us, it is proper to observe, that every christian has frequent opportunities of manifesting a holy resolution in encountering the reproach and derision

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of worldly men, for adhering to his duty. And when we consider how hard it is to bear reproach and scorn, called, in scripture, 'the trial of cruel mockings', there will appear to be no small measure of dignity and heroism in him, who can calmly submit to, it from every quarter, rather than depart from his duty. There are not a few who are apt to boast of their spirit and resolution, who are yet unable to bear reproach, and meanly make the sentiments of others, and the caprice of faction, the rule of duty, in place of the clear dictates of conscience and the word of God. How contemptible is this, compared to the conduct of that man, who seeks no fame, but by honest means, and fears no reproach for honest actions, but contents himself with a silent and believing regard to him who seeth in secret, and who shall at last bring every work into judgment.

4. True piety perseveres with constancy in opposition to continued trial. This is indeed what distinguishes the Christian warfare from that of every other. It continues through life, and the last enemy to be overcome is death. In all the conflicts between men on earth, the issue may be speedily expected, and the reward immediately bestowed; but in religion, it is only he who shall endure to the end that shall be saved. This adds greatly to the difficulty, and seems to shew, not only the excellence and beauty, but the real dignity

dignity and magnanimity of the christian character.

5. In the last place, true piety endures suffering with patience and fortitude. If we reflect upon the number of suffering martyrs, whose testimonies are upon record, we shall see with what calmness and composure, with what undaunted firmness, and sometimes with what exultation and triumph they have gone to a scaffold, or been tied to a stake. Can any person, think you, who hath gone to the field of battle, in quest of glory, or who hath braved the danger of the seas, in quest of wealth or power, be once compared with those who have cheerfully given up their precious life, or submitted their bodies to the torture, to keep their consciences undefiled? But my brethren, christian patience is much more frequently tried in another manner. The believer has made an unreserved surrender of himself and his all, to the disposal of providence: His faithfulness to this promise, is brought almost every day to the trial. For the christian then to suffer reproach, without rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, to be submissive under the loss of substance, and say with Job, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'—To yield up relations, and to say with David, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' To look forward to approaching

death, and say with the Apostle Paul, ' I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.' This is magnanimity indeed; this is the most solid glory to which any child of Adam can possibly attain. I proceed, in the last place, to make some practical improvement of what hath been said.

1. You may learn, from what has been said that whenever honour differs from conscience, it is a treacherous guide; wherever spirit and dignity of mind, as a worldly virtue, differs from true religion, and even from the simplicity of the gospel, it is false and spurious. The gospel, it is true, will not suffer men to seek revenge, or to delight in it. It will humble them in the fight of God, and make them self-denied in the presence of men, yet it will constrain them not to refuse any duty to the one, or any useful service to the other. It will not suffer them to be ambitious of higher places of honour and trust, but it will make them active and zealous in the duties of that place, in which they already are. It will not suffer them to resent injuries and gratify revenge, but it will make them withstand a king upon his throne, if he presume to interfere in the matters of their God. What is there here that is not noble?

After all, the testimony in favour of true piety, is universal, if carefully attended to. Every one must acknowledge, that ostentation, and love of praise and whatever is contrary to the self-denial of the

the gospel, tarnishes the beauty of the greatest actions. Courage and modesty, merit and humility, majesty and condescension, appear with tenfold glory, when they are united; it is impossible to separate them; to divide, is to destroy them. They are like light and shade in a picture, which are necessary to each other, and which, by their union, constitute the beauty and augment the lustre of the piece. So true is this, that the highest polish that any person can receive in commerce with the world, is to have an apparent disposition to prefer the interest of others to his own, to guard against every degree of offence, and to be always ready to oblige. I have often been pleased with that observation of a foreigner of high rank†, that worldly politeness is only an imperfect imitation of Christian charity, it is nothing else but a studied appearance of that deference to the judgment and attention to the interest of others, which a true Christian hath as the rule of his duty, and the disposition of his heart.

2. Suffer me to observe, that as Christian magnanimity is more excellent than that of the world, it is also more practicable, and, in fact, more universal. Worldly magnanimity is what always requires such talents, as do not fall to the lot of many, and such opportunities for its exercise, as seldom occur. The road to heroism is not open to every man. But that magnanimity, which is the fruit of true religion, being in-

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† The Prince of Conti.

deed the product of divine grace, is a virtue of the heart, and may be attained by persons of mean talents and narrow possessions, and in the very lowest stations of human life. In fact, there have been, and are daily examples of it in every rank. We see the heroic fortitude of the martyrs, as manifest in those of early years, and the weakest sex, as in any other; and whoever will visit the solitary walks of life, may find, in the lowest stations, humility, thankfulness, patience under affliction, and submission to providence, such as would do honour to the most approved virtue, and the most enlightened mind. To despise riches, and restrain the motions of envy and impatience, in a needy state, is perhaps as truly noble as to improve them wisely in a higher. Thus, the honour which is chiefly desirable, is equally open to the rich and to the poor, to the learned and to the unlearned, to the wise and to the unwise, as it cometh from God, who is no respecter of persons. One of the best and happiest effects of serious reflection is, to bring us, in a great measure, all upon a level, as indeed, in one most important respect—the magistrate with his robes, the scholar with his learning, and the day-labourer, that stands unnoticed, are all upon the same footing—for we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ.

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A D D R E S S
T O T H E

Students of the Senior Class.

On the Lord's Day preceding Commence-
ment.

September 23. 1775.

Gentlemen,

As you have now finished the usual course of study in this place, and are to enter upon public life in a variety of ways, as each shall be determined by inclination or other circumstances, I willingly embrace the opportunity of addressing an exhortation to you, at this important and interesting period of your lives. I do

do not mean to say much, if any thing, that you have never heard before ; but to lay hold of your present situation, with some hope, that what may be said now, will remain upon your memory, and have an influence upon your future conduct. That I may speak with the greater clearness and precision, I will divide what I have to say, into three branches. 1. Your duty to God, and the interest of your souls. 2. The prosecution of your studies, or the improvement of your talents, as members of society. 3. Prudence in your commerce with the world in general, your outward provision and other circumstances in life.

As to the first of these, it is to all men of the greatest moment. Some of you, I know, and more, I hope, are intended for the service of Christ in the ministry. To this we have the universal suffrage, that true religion is absolutely necessary, with which I heartily agree. But I wish those who are destined for other employments, may not sometimes make a comparison here unjust in itself, and dangerous, perhaps even ruinous to their own souls. Because true religion is necessary to a minister, and they are conscious to themselves, or at least suspect that they are without religion ; instead of laying to heart the things that belong to their peace, they only determine that they will follow some other calling. But alas, though the difference to the public is very great, the difference to the persons themselves, seems

seems to me but very small. A clergyman without religion, to be sure is a dreadful character, and, when visible, a detestable one; but truly one would think, at the close of life, it will be but little comfort to a man, that he must go to the place of torment, not as a minister, but as a lawyer, physician, soldier, or merchant. Therefore suffer me to say to you, and to all who now hear me, that the care of your souls is the 'one thing needful.' All mankind, of every rank, denomination and profession, are sinners by nature. The ministers of the New Testament have received a commission to preach the gospel to every creature: 'He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.'

While I say this, I beg of you to consider that the advantages which you have enjoyed, will be an aggravation of your guilt, if they are unimproved. There is an equity as well as wisdom often to be observed in the providence of God. Unless reasons of sovereignty, that is, reasons unknown to us, prevent it, judgment will be inflicted, when a person or people is ripe for the stroke. Therefore, as some plants and seeds, both from their own nature and from the soil and situation in which they are placed, ripen sooner than others, so some persons; by the early pains taken upon them, and the privileges they have enjoyed, fill up the measure of their iniquities sooner than others, and are more speedily overtaken with deserved vengeance.

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There are many common sayings that are the effects of error and prejudice; for example, that which you will be told by many, that the children of good men are as bad as any. If this is intended to insinuate that a regular and pious education affords no ground to hope for good behaviour in after life, it is at once contrary to reason and experience. But if we should say that when young persons piously educated, burst restraining bonds asunder, and are seduced into vicious courses, they commonly run faster and farther than others, it is a certain fact, which may be easily accounted for, and affords an important instruction to all.

After intreating you to lay religion to heart, I must beseech you to guard against being too easily satisfied in a matter of infinite moment. Do not think it enough to be prudent, cautious, or decent in your conduct, or to attain a character formed upon worldly principles, and governed by worldly motives. I am not against (as you all know) introducing every argument against sin, and shewing you that loose practices are ruinous to name, body, and estate. Neither is it wrong that you should fortify every pious resolution by the addition of these motives. But alas! the evil lies deeper. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' True religion must arise from a clear and deep conviction of your lost state by nature and practice,
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and an unfeigned reliance on the pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace of God.

Suffer me, upon this subject, earnestly to recommend to all that fear God, to apply themselves from their earliest youth, to the exercises of piety, a life of prayer and communion with God. This is the source from which a real Christian must derive the secret comfort of his heart, and which alone will give beauty, consistency, and uniformity to an exemplary life. The reason why I have mentioned it on this occasion is, that youth, when the spirits are lively and the affections vigorous and strong, is the season when this habit must be formed. There are advantages and disadvantages attending every stage of life. An aged Christian will naturally grow in prudence, vigilance, usefulness, attention to the course of providence, and subjection to the divine will; but will seldom attain to greater fervour of affection and life in divine worship, than he had been accustomed to from his early years. On the contrary, he will generally see it necessary instead of trusting to occasional impulses to guard and strengthen the habit by order and form.

Be companions of them that fear God. Esteem them always most highly, and shun, as a contagious pestilence, the society not only of loose persons, but of those especially whom you perceive to be infected with the principles of infidelity, or enemies to the power of religion. Many
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of these are much more dangerous to pious persons than open profligates. As for these last, decency is against them, the world itself condemns them, reason despises them, and prudence shuns them. He must have a very mean taste indeed who is capable of finding pleasure in disorder and riot. If I had no higher pleasure on earth than in eating and drinking, I would not chuse to eat and drink with the drunken. Order, neatness, elegance, and even moderation itself are necessary to exalt and refine the pleasures of a sensual life. Therefore I will not allow myself to suppose, that I shall afterwards hear of any of you roaring and swearing in taverns, or wasting your bodies and estates, by lewdness and debauchery, or that you take pleasure in those who do so. But be especially careful to avoid those who are enemies to vital piety, who do not pretend to speak directly against religion, but give every vile name they can think of, to all who seem to be in earnest on that subject, and vilify the exercises of religion under the names of whining, cant, grimace, and hypocrisy. These are often unhappily successful in making some uncautious persons ashamed of their Redeemer's name, his truths, his laws, his people, and his cross.

I need hardly observe, that this is not to be understood as recommending pharisaical pride and superciliousness, far less a rash and presumptuous judging of the state of others. It is not
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only lawful, but our duty, to have a free communication with our fellow citizens, for the purposes of social life: It is not only lawful but our duty to be courteous and to give every proper evidence of respect and attention to others, according to their rank and place in society. What I mean to caution you against is, an unnecessary, voluntary intercourse, such as has inclination for its motive and pleasure for its object. With respect to this, we need not hesitate to say with the inspired prophet, 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.'

2. I come now to speak a little upon the prosecution of your studies and the improvement of your talents. Your education in a seminary of learning, is only intended to give you the elements and first principles of science, which should whet your appetite for more, and which will enable you to proceed with an assured hope of success. It hath been generally a favourite point with me, to recommend the union of piety and literature, and to guard young persons against the opposite extremes. We see sometimes the pride of un sanctified knowledge do great injury to religion; and on the other hand, we find some persons of real piety despising human learning, and disgracing the most glorious truths by a meanness and indecency hardly sufferable in their manner of handling them. On this account, industry and application to study is of the

utmost importance to those who are intended for the office of the ministry.

But I have it further in view, to recommend to you all, without exception, a life of diligence and application. Avoid sloth as a dangerous enemy; fear it, hate it, and despise it. It is a common saying, that men do not know their own weakness; but it is as true, and a truth more important, that they do not know their own strength. I desire that you will receive the following information from me, which I dare say, every person of judgment and experience will confirm, that multitudes of moderate capacity have been useful in their generation, respected by the public, and successful in life; while those of superior talents from nature, by mere slothfulness and idle habits, or self-indulgence, have lived useless and died contemptible. There is also a disposition in young people, which you know I have often set myself to oppose, to think that loose irregular sallies, and sometimes even vicious liberties are a sign of spirit and capacity. The very contrary is the truth. It requires no genius at all to do mischief. Persons of the greatest ability have generally been lovers of order. Neither is there any instance to be found of a man's arriving at great reputation or usefulness, to his capacity what it might, without industry and application.

Suffer me here, in a particular manner, to recommend to you a firmness of mind and steady per-

perseverance, as of the utmost moment to your progress and success. Whatever a man's talents from nature may be, if he apply himself to what is not altogether unsuitable to them, and hold on with steadiness and uniformity, he will be useful and happy; but if he be loose and volatile, impatient of the slowness of things in their usual course, and shifting from project to project, he will probably, neither be the one nor the other.

I am somewhat at a loss what to say as to character and reputation, yet it is so important a point, that it must not be omitted. True religion should furnish you with a higher and nobler principle to govern your conduct than the desire of applause from men. Yet, in subordination to what ought to be the great purpose of life, the approbation of the supreme Judge, there is a just and laudable ambition to do what is praise-worthy among men. This ought not to be extinguished in the minds of youth; being a powerful spur and incitement to virtuous or illustrious actions. A truly good man will seek no praise but by honest means, and will be superior even to disgrace itself, if brought upon him by adherence to his duty. Yet he will also be tender and careful not to give just cause to any to impeach his conduct. If I might be permitted to direct your views upon this subject, I would say, consider that your character is already beginning to form. Every step you take further in life, will both ascertain and spread it. You ought also to

be informed, that notwithstanding all the hackneyed complaints of the partiality and censoriousness of the world, a man's real character, in point of ability, is never mistaken, and but seldom in point of morals. That there are many malicious and censorious persons I agree, but lies are not half so durable as truth. There is an impartiality in a diffusive public, which will shew itself where means of information are afforded to it. Therefore reverence the judgment of mankind without idolizing it. Be as cautious as possible to do nothing that deserves censure, and as little concerned as possible what reproaches may fall upon you undeserved. It is not a contradiction, but perfectly consistent to say, a man should be tender and even jealous of his character, and yet not greedy of praise. There is an amiableness and dignity in the first, but a meanness and littleness in the last.

Another advice, near a kin to the last, is; do as much as you can to deserve praise, and yet avoid as much as possible the hearing of it. This is but another view of the same subject; and that it may be the more useful, and my intention in it the more manifest, I will extend it both to praise and dispraise. When you come into public life, and become the objects of general attention, not only guard against fishing for applause, and being inquisitive after what people think or say of you, but avoid knowing it as much as you decently can. My reason for this is, that whether
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you will or not you will bear as much of the slander of your enemies, as you will bear with patience, and as much of the flattery of your friends, or interested persons, as you will bear with humility. Therefore prepare yourself for both, but seek for neither. Several eminent authors, as you doubtless know, have given it as an advice to young clergymen, and other public speakers, to get a friend who is a good judge, and intreat him to make remarks upon their composition, carriage, delivery, &c. with fidelity. I have nothing to say against the goodness of the advice in itself, but at the same time, I have no great conviction of the necessity or even the utility of it. It is very seldom that advice is asked in this manner, but with a view to obtain a compliment, and still seldomer that it is given with sufficient freedom and impartiality. If any man has humility and self-denial enough to wish to know his own faults, there will be little difficulty in discovering them. Or if we could suppose there were difficulty to himself, his enemies, or rivals, or talkative people, though they be neither the one nor the other, will supply the defect. Perhaps you will think, that in the strictures of malice and envy, there is generally an acrimony that has no great tendency to reform; like a rusty knife, which makes a very painful wound, though not very deep. I agree to this fully, and yet affirm, that there is so much the more virtue, so much the more wisdom, and

perhaps I may add, so much the more pleasure in making this use of them.

I conclude this part of my subject, with advising you to maintain a friendship with one another, and to carry the intimacies of early life, through the whole of it. To this I add, that you ought to desire and cultivate the correspondence of men of piety and learning. Man made for society, derives his chief advantages of every kind, from the united efforts of many conspiring to the same end. As to piety, nothing is more essential to it, than social communication. It properly consists in the supreme love of God, and fervent charity to all men. The Christian also hath need of the assistance of others in his passage through this world, where he has so much opposition to encounter. Those who deserve this character, are said to be pilgrims and strangers on the earth. Therefore they ought to keep together, lest they lose their way. They comfort each other in distress, they assist each other in doubts and difficulty, they embolden each other by their example, and they assist each other by their prayers.

This is no less the case in respect to literature. It has been observed, that great and eminent men have generally, in every nation, appeared in clusters. The reason of this probably is, that their society and mutual intercourse greatly adds to their improvement, and gives force and vigour to the talents which they may severally possess. Nothing

Nothing is so powerful an incitement to diligence or so kindles the best sort of ambition, as the friendship, advice, and assistance of men of learning and worth. The approbation of one such, is of more value to a noble mind, than peals of applause from an indiscriminating multitude. Besides, the assistance which men of letters give to each other, is really necessary in the execution of particular works of great compass and utility. If it is, by the labours of preceding ages, that it is now possible in one life to attain to such a degree of knowledge as we have sometimes seen, so it is by the concurrence of many friends lending their assistance, that one man has been sometimes able to present to the public, a system of science, which without that aid, he alone would have in vain attempted to bring to perfection. There is no circumstance which throws this new country so far back in point of science, as the want of public libraries, where thorough researches might be made, and the small number of learned men to assist in making researches practicable, easy or complete.

3. The last head on which I promised to give you my advice, was prudence in your communication with the world in general, your outward provision and other circumstances that conduce to the happiness and comfort of life. On this subject, I begin with what I have often recommended to you, frugality in the management of your affairs, order and exactness in your dress, furniture

furniture, books, and keeping of accounts. Nothing could be further from my mind than to recommend the temper or conduct of avaricious men, whose fordid souls have no higher ambition, and indeed, hardly any other desire, than that of getting pelf. This is not only unbecoming a gentleman and scholar, but, in my opinion, wholly inconsistent with the character. I never knew an instance of a person in whom this disposition took place in early life, that could apply to study, or that became eminent in any thing that was good. The opposite vice is the common fault of youth, and it is against this I would caution you. The frugality I would recommend, is that of an independant mind, that fears and scorns subjection to others, and remembers the just saying of Solomon, that 'the borrower is servant to the lender.' That frugality which arises from order and œconomy, is not only consistent with, but it is the parent of liberality of sentiment and generosity of conduct. It is indeed the source of beneficence, for no man can bestow out of an empty purse. On the other hand, covetousness and profusion, are by no means repugnant to each other, and indeed they are more frequently joined than many apprehend. The stricture of Sallust on the character of Catiline, 'eni appetens, sui profusus,' has been often cited; and may generally be applied to loose and profligate livers. I hope therefore you will learn betimes to distinguish between the virtue and the
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vice, and to adhere to the one as much as you despise the other.

I will make an observation here, which may be applied not only to the distinction of character in this instance, but in almost every other that has been or shall be mentioned. It will be much your interest, if you learn betimes to make not a hasty but a deliberate and candid judgment, when you infer character from appearances. The habits of life which men contract, give a bias to their opinions and even a tincture to their conversation and phraseology. Persons inclined to levity and dissipation, will often ascribe to covetousness, what arises from very different causes. I have known, even in youth, a person declining to engage in a party of pleasure, accused by his companions as mean and sneaking, and afraid of his purse, when, in reality, it was not that he loved money more, but pleasure less. It may sometimes happen, that a person of principle, will see it proper to decline meetings of festivity, though not directly sinful, as an unnecessary waste of time, or from some other circumstance to him dangerous and ensnaring. I have also seen persons more advanced in years, who from a habit, perhaps a necessary habit, of strict temperance, and retired manner of life, were very sparing of personal expence, and even not much disposed to social intercourse, and therefore called close or covetous; and yet when applied to, for pious or charitable purposes, would be much more liberal than

than others of an opposite turn of mind. Observations perfectly similar might be made upon the opposite character of liberality. It is not every kind of openness of heart that indicates profusion. We are told by Solomon, that 'the liberal soul shall be made fat,' and by the prophet Isaiah, that 'the liberal desireth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall be established.' From these contrasted remarks, I infer, that as it is seldom necessary to judge preemptorily of others, so forbearance and the most charitable allowance is both our duty and interest.

In the next place, I recommend to you, humility of heart and meekness of carriage. I consider in this place, the grace of humility as a virtue especially serviceable to your earthly comfort. I consider and mean to treat it as a maxim of worldly prudence. The scripture seems to point it out as peculiarly necessary for this purpose, and to annex the promise of earthly happiness to the practice of it. 'Blessed are the meek,' says our Saviour, 'for they shall inherit the earth.' I would understand him as saying, every good man shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, but those who excel in meekness, shall of all others have comfort on earth. In many different views, we may see the propriety of this connection. Nothing is more offensive to others, than a proud assuming manner. It not only magnifies every fault, but vitiates even good conduct. It is not only odious to virtuous persons, but it is equally, if not more

more so, to those who are without principle. Some vices recommend a man to the vicious in the same line, as one drunkard is pleased with the sight of another; but nothing is so hateful to a proud man, as another of the same character, nor is offence sooner given or taken than between those, who, in this respect, perfectly resemble one another. This vice is not only odious to persons of understanding and reflection, but to the most ignorant, being as easily perceived as it is universally hated.

The moral virtue of meekness, and condescension, is the best ground-work even of worldly politeness, and prepares a man to receive that polish, which makes his behaviour generally agreeable, and fits him for intercourse with persons in the higher ranks of life. The same virtue, by the composure and self-command that accompanies it, enables a man to manage his affairs to advantage, in whatever calling he may be engaged, or in whatever station he may be placed. A good shopkeeper is commonly remarkable for this quality. People love to go where they meet with good words and gentle treatment; whereas the peevish and petulant may be said to have a repelling quality about them that will not suffer any body to approach them.

To complete the whole, meekness of spirit is as useful to a man's self as meekness of carriage is acceptable to others. The meek suffer much less from the unavoidable evils of life, than those
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of a contrary disposition. Many cross accidents of the less important kind, are in a manner annihilated when they are born with calmness. The injury they do us, is not owing half so much to their weight or severity, as to the irritability of our own minds. It is evident that the same disposition must greatly alleviate calamities of a heavier kind; and from analogy you may perceive, that as it mitigates the sorrows, it multiplies and adds to the sweetness of the comforts of life. A moderate portion gives greater satisfaction to the humble and thankful, than the most ample possessions to the proud and impatient.

Nearly allied to the above virtue, is the government of your passions, and therefore of this I shall say but little. Every one must be sensible how important it is, both for the success of your worldly callings and your usefulness in public life, to have your passions in due subjection. Men of furious and ungoverned tempers, prone to excess in attachment and resentment, either as to persons or things, are seldom successful in their pursuits, or respected and useful in their stations. Persons of ungoverned passions are almost always fickle and changeable in their measures, which is of all things the most fatal to important undertakings. These generally require time and patience to bring them to perfection. As to public and political life in particular, the necessity of self-government is so great and so universally acknowledged

known, that it is usual to impute it in eminent men, not to principle, but to address and policy. It is commonly said, that politicians have no passions. Without enquiring into this, I shall only say, that whatever truth may be in it, it is still in favour of my argument. The hypocrisy does honour to the virtue. If the appearance be so necessary or so useful, what must be the value of the reality?

I will here take an opportunity of confuting, or at least correcting a common saying or proverbial sentiment, many of which indeed that obtain belief in a blinded world, are nothing but false colouring and deception. It is usual to say, in defence of sudden and violent passion, that it is better to speak freely and openly, than to harbour and cover secret heart malice. Perhaps I might admit that this would be true, if the inward rage were to be as violent, and continue as long and return as often as indulged passion. Every person must agree, that wherever there is a deep and lasting hatred, that never forgets nor forgives, but waits for the opportunity of vengeance, it deserves to be considered as a temper truly infernal. But in most instances of offence between man and man, to restrain the tongue is the way to govern the heart. If you do not make mention of an injury, you will truly and speedily forgive it, and perhaps literally forget it. Rage is in this respect like a fire; if a vent is given to it, it will increase and spread while there is

fuel to consume, but if you can confine and stifle it, you will completely extinguish it.

To the government of the passions succeeds the government of the tongue. This indeed will in a great measure, be the effect of the former, and therefore is recommended by all the same arguments; yet it deserves very particular attention separately as a maxim of prudence. There are great indiscretions in speech, that do not arise from passion, but from inattention and want of judgment as to the propriety of time and place, and indeed many other sources. I would therefore earnestly recommend to you, to habituate yourselves to restraint in this respect; especially in the early part of life. ‘Be swift to hear,’ says Solomon, ‘and slow to speak.’ Forwardness in speech is always thought an assuming thing in youth, and in promiscuous companies, is often considered as an insult as well as an indiscretion. It is very common for the world in general, and still more so for men of judgment and penetration, to form an opinion of a character on the whole, from some one circumstance; and I think there are few things more unfavourable in this way, than a talkative disposition. If the first time I am in company, especially with a young man, he talks incessantly, and takes the whole conversation to himself, I shall hardly be brought to have a good opinion of him, whether what he says be good or evil, sense or nonsense. There are some persons, who, one might say, give away
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so much wisdom in their speech, that they leave none behind to govern their actions.

But the chief danger of an ungoverned tongue, is, that it kindles the fire of contention among others, and makes enemies to a man's self. Solomon says, 'Where no tale-bearer is, the strife ceaseth.' A little experience will shew you, how unsafe it is to use much freedom in speech with absent persons. In that case you put yourself wholly in the power of those that hear you, and are in danger, not only from their treachery or malice, but from their mistakes, ignorance and imprudence. Perhaps it would be too rigid to say, that you ought never to speak to a man's prejudice in his absence, what you would be unwilling to say in his presence. Some exceptions to this rule, might easily be conceived. But both prudence and candour require that you should be very reserved in this respect, and either adhere strictly to the rule, or be sure that good reasons will justify a departure from it.

This will be a very proper place to give you some directions, as to the most proper conduct when you suffer from the tongues of others. Many and grievous are the complaints of what men suffer from the envenomed shafts of envy and malice. And there certainly is a strong disposition in some to invent, and in many to believe slanderous falsehoods. The prevalence of party, either in religion or politics, never fails to produce a plentiful crop of this poisonous weed.

One of the most important rules upon this subject is, that when an accusation is in any degree well-founded, or suspicious appearances have given any occasion for it, the first duty is to reform what is really wrong, and keep at a distance from the disputed limit.

This will bring good out of evil, and turn an injury into a benefit. But in cases, as it may often happen, when the slander is perfectly groundless, I hold it to be in general the best way wholly to despise it. Time and the power of truth, will of themselves do justice in almost every case of this kind; but if you shew an impatience under it, a disposition to resent it, or a solicitude to refute it, the far greatest part of mankind will believe it not the less but the more. If slander were a plant or an animal, I would say it was of a very strange nature, for that it would very easily die, but could not easily be killed. It discovers a greatness of mind and a conscious dignity to despise slanders, which of itself commands respect; whereas to be either offended or distressed by them, shews a weakness not amiable, whether the accusation be true or false.

This rule I do not say is wholly without exception; there may be cases where vindications may be necessary and effectual, but they are not many; and I think I have seen in the course of my life, reason to make the following distinction: If the accusation or slander be special, and relate
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to a particular fact, fixed by time, place and other circumstances, and if it be either wholly false or essentially mistaken in its nature and tendency, the matter may be explained and justice may be done. But if it be a general character, that happens to be imputed to a man, he ought to attempt no refutation of it but by conduct; the more he complains of it, the more he speaks of it, the more he denies it, it will be the more believed. For example, if it be affirmed that a man spoke profanely in a certain company at a certain place and time, when he was not present at all, it may be easily and completely refuted; but if he is accused of being proud, contentious, covetous, or deceitful, although these accusations are pretended to be supported by a train of facts, it is better to let them wholly alone, and suffer his conduct to speak for itself. There are instances in history of accusations brought with much plausibility and urged with great vehemence, which yet have been either from the beginning disbelieved or by time confuted; which occasioned the Latin proverb, *‘Magna est veritas et prævalebit.’*

All the above-mentioned particulars may be said to be the happy effects of wisdom and benevolence united, or rather perhaps, in the light in which they have been stated to you, they are chiefly the proper fruits of that wisdom which is “profitable to direct.” But I must add another advice, which is the immediate effect of benevo-

lence and good-will, that is, be ready to assist others and do good as you have opportunity. As every thing is liable to be abused, sometimes the maxims of prudence take a wrong direction, and close the heart against impressions of sympathy and tenderness towards others in distress. Sometimes indeed, the coolness and composure of spirit, and that self-command which is the effect of reflection and experience, is mistaken for a callous and unfeeling heart, though it is a very different thing. To give way to the agitation of passion, even under the finest feelings, is the way to prevent instead of promoting usefulness. A parent, overwhelmed with surprise and anxiety, at a calamitous accident that has befallen a child, shall be incapable either of reflection or activity, and shall sometimes even need the assistance which he ought to give. But independently of this, there are certainly some persons who contract a habit of indifference as to the wants or desires of others, and are not willing to put themselves to any inconvenience, unless their own particular concerns may be promoted at the same time.

In opposition to this, I mean to recommend to you a disposition to oblige, not merely by civil expressions and an affable deportment, but by taking a real interest in the affairs of others. Be not unwilling to lend your advice, your assistance, your interest to those that need them. Those who cannot spare pecuniary assistance, may do
many

many acts of valuable friendship. Let every neighbour perceive that you are not ready to quarrel needlessly, nor insist pertinaciously on trifles; and if you live to obtain credit and influence, let them be employed to assist the deserving of every class. If you undertake to do the business of others, attend to it with the same fidelity, and if possible, with greater punctuality than you would to your own. Some are ready to excuse or justify a contrary conduct, by complaining of the ingratitude or injustice of mankind. But in my opinion, these complaints are contrary to truth and experience. There may be many particular persons both ungrateful and unjust; but in the world in general, there will be found a clearness of discernment, and an exactness of retribution. Our Saviour tells us with respect to one fault, that of rash judging, what is equally true as to injuries of every kind, 'with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again: good measure pressed down and shaken together and running over, shall men give in to your bosom.' This, in my opinion, may and ought to be understood both ways: as the churlish Nabal generally meets with his match, so persons of a humane and friendly disposition, shall reap the fruits of it to them or theirs. The truth is, the disposition itself is not in its perfection, but when there is no regard to an immediate return. If you give, looking for a speedy recompence, it is not giving, but selling. You may,

may, however, safely trust to the promise of God: 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.' I have known many instances of kindnesses that were both remembered and requited, after they had been long forgotten by him who bestowed them. Nay sometimes they may be repaid in another generation. It is no inconsiderable legacy for a man to leave to his children, that he had always been a friend to others, and never refused his assistance to those who stood in need of it.

It will not be an improper place, here to introduce a few words upon a subject, which has been often handled by writers of the first class: I mean private friendship. Some writers against religion, have actually made it an objection against Christianity, that it does not recommend private friendship or the love of our country. If this were true, it would be no fault, because the universal benevolence recommended by the gospel, includes all private affections, when they are consistent with it, and is far superior to them when they are contrary to it. But in fact, the instances of private friendship mentioned and alluded to in scripture, are a sufficient recommendation of it, and even our blessed Saviour himself is said to have distinguished the youngest of his disciples with particular affection. I will therefore observe with most authors, that there is no true friendship, but what is founded upon virtuous principles, and directed to virtuous purposes. To
love

love a person who is not worthy of love, is not a virtue but an error. Neither is there any dependence to be placed, in trying cases, upon persons unprincipled at bottom. There never was a true friend who was not an honest man. But besides this important truth, it is further to be observed, that there is a species of friendship which is neither founded on virtue nor vice, but mere weakness of mind. Some persons having no resources in themselves, are obliged to have recourse to some other, upon whom they may lean, and without whom they seem as if they could neither think, act, nor even exist. This sort of friendship is to be seen particularly in princes and persons of high rank, and is generally called favouritism; but the same thing may be observed in all ranks, though, in the lower, it is not so conspicuous. We may say of it, that it is like some of those plants that are false and spurious in their kind, which have some of the appearances, but want the most valuable and essential qualities of those that are genuine. Such friendships are commonly contracted by caprice or accident, and uncertain in their duration, being liable to be dissolved by the same means. Valuable friendship is the result of judgment as well as affection; it is one of the greatest comforts of life as well as one of the greatest ornaments to human nature, and its genuineness may be discerned by the following mark—that though it is particular, it is not exclusive. When there is a great, but virtuous

tuous attachment to a person, who deserves it, it will make a man not less but more friendly to all others, as opportunity or circumstances shall call him to serve them.

You will perhaps be surpris'd that as I have so often expressed a desire of your being accomplished in every respect, that I have heretofore said nothing or but little on that politeness and grace in behaviour, which is so much talk'd of, and which, in some late writings, has been so highly extoll'd. What has been already explain'd to you, I hope will lay the foundation for the most solid, valuable and durable politeness. Think of others as reason and religion require you, and treat them as it is your duty to do, and you will not be far from a well-polish'd behaviour. As to any thing further, that is external in mode and propriety of carriage, it can never be learned but by intercourse with the best company. As to the writings above referred to, the chief of which are Rochefoucault's Maxims, and Chesterfield's Letters, I think of them as of many other free writings, that when view'd properly, they may be as usful, as by being view'd otherwise, they are generally pernicious. They contain a digested system of hypocrisy, and betray such pride and self-sufficiency, and such hatred or contempt of mankind, as may well be an antidote against the poison which they mean to convey. Nay, one would think the publication of such sentiments is ridiculous, because it is tel-
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ling you that they desire to be polite, and at the same time that this politeness consists in taking you by the weak side, and displaying their own address by over-reaching yours.

I must also observe, that such writers give, in general, a very unjust as well as dishonourable view of nature and mankind! I remember indeed Dean Swift says,

“As Rochefoucault his maxims drew

“From nature, I believe them true.”

What must I say to this? shall I say that he did not draw his maxims from nature? I will not, because I think he did. Am I obliged then to admit them to be true? By no means. It is nature, but it is just such a view of nature, as a man without principle must take. It is in himself, that all the error and exaggeration is to be found.

Those who discover an universal jealousy, and indiscriminate contempt for mankind in general, give very little reason to think well of themselves. Probably men are neither so good as they pretend, nor so bad as they are often thought to be. At any rate, candour in sentiment as well as conduct, as it is an important duty of religion, so it is a wise maxim for the conduct of life; and I believe these two things are very seldom if ever found either separate from or opposed to each other.

The last advice that I shall offer you, is to preserve a sacred and inviolable regard to sincerity and

and truth. Those who have received their education here, or at least who have completed it, must know how much pains have been taken to establish the universal and unalterable obligation of truth. This is not however mentioned now to introduce the general subject, or to shew the guilt, folly and danger of deliberate interested falsehood, but to warn you against the smaller breaches of truth now so very common, such as want of punctuality in appointments; breach of promise in small matters; officious falsehoods, that is, deceiving children, sick persons or others for their good; jocular deceptions, which are not intended to continue long, or to be materially hurtful to others. Not one of these is without sin before God, and they are much more hurtful than is commonly supposed. So very sacred a thing indeed is truth, that the very shadow of departure from it is to be avoided. Suppose a man only to express his present purpose as to futurity, for example, to say he will go to such a place to-morrow, though there is no proper obligation given, nor any right to require performance, yet if he does so often, he will acquire the character of levity and unsteadiness, which will operate much to his disadvantage. Let me therefore recommend to you a strict, universal and scrupulous regard to truth.—It will give dignity to your character—it will put order into your affairs—it will excite the most unbounded confidence, so that whether your view be your own interest, or the

the service of others, it promises you the most assured success. I am also persuaded, that there is no virtue that has a more powerful influence upon every other, and certainly, there is none by which you can draw nearer to God himself, whose distinguishing character is, that he will not, and he cannot lie.

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~~THE HISTORY OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE GOLD MOUNTAINS IN THE INTERIOR PARTS OF SOUTH AMERICA~~

AND THE EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS WHICH OCCURRED IN THE COURSE OF THE DISCOVERY.

BY **THE AUTHOR** OF THE HISTORY OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE GOLD MOUNTAINS IN THE INTERIOR PARTS OF SOUTH AMERICA.

CORPORATION

OF

SERVANTS*

Discovered a few Years ago in the Interior Parts of SOUTH AMERICA.

Containing some very Surprising Events and Extraordinary Characters.

INTRODUCTION.

THE skill of an author, like that of a merchant, lies chiefly in judging with readiness and certainty, what kind of commodities, and in what manner, to offer to the public.

* The Reader will find himself obliged to the Author of the following History, for the pains he hath taken to render it as entertaining, and sentimental as possible. With this view he hath entirely

what quantity, any particular age or place is able and willing to receive. This I have, of late, made very much my study, with regard to our own age and country, and the result of my enquiry is as follows. There are two sorts of subjects for which there is a general demand in Great Britain at this time, *viz.* 1. Biography, if any thing may be so called that gives an account of the lives of persons that never existed, but in the imagination of the authors. This is, indeed, a most fruitful subject, and under the various titles of Histories, Lives, Adventures, Memoirs, &c. teaches people how to live after any imaginable plan. 2. The other is the formation of schemes and projects, to be carried on by subscription, for the good of mankind, which never were so favourably received as at present, the abortion or mismanagement of nine in ten of them not having in the least abated the ardor of the publick. If any be of opinion, that new discoveries in the science of morals, ~~for the support of infidelity,~~ are as favourably received as any of these, such must be told, that they are but superficial ob-

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servers,

tirely avoided the use of foreign names, often hard to pronounce, and when pronounced wholly without meaning. Instead of this, when he had occasion to mention particular ranks of men, offices, or customs; he chose to express them by what did most exactly correspond with them in our own country. By this means the narrative, disencumbered of definitions or circumlocutions, is rendered quite easy and intelligible.

servers, or under the prejudice of religious enthusiasm. The discoveries here pointed at, have been of late years so various, so contradictory and so short-lived, that they really raise very little curiosity. As an instance of this, the reader is desired to recollect if he can, the most extraordinary thing of the kind that ever was attempted. A great living author, David Hume Esq. not long ago, made health, cleanliness, and broad shoulders capital virtues, and a running sore an unpardonable crime; yet was it but little taken notice of when first published, and is now almost wholly forgotten.

Therefore, an author is undoubtedly happy who hath hit upon, or happens to be furnished with a subject suited to the taste of the age. This I humbly presume to be my own case. I have had the good fortune, lately to obtain distinct information of a most extraordinary history, which also may perhaps lay a foundation for some new scheme, or, at least, for mending and cobbling those which are now cracked and old. The only misfortune that it labours under is, that it is true; for I remember the lofty and sonorous Earl of Shaftesbury, whose memory I greatly revere, tells us there is much more truth in fiction than in fact. The meaning of this is, that authors of taste and genius like himself, employing their fancy in delineating feigned characters, give ordinarily a juster view of nature than tedious relations of what really happened.

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This loss, however, I trust, will be abundantly made up by the extraordinary and wonderful nature of the passages I am to relate, which, it is to be hoped, will have the effect of fiction in enlivening the imagination of the writer, and, indeed, very possibly, may be mistaken for fiction by many readers. The truth is, I hope there is a singular felicity in my subject in every respect. If the excellency of history, according to Lord Shaftesbury, lies in its being like fiction, and the excellency of fiction in its being like real facts, according to all other men, the subject in hand must needs excel, as it partakes of both these characters. It will be like truth, because it is true; and it will be like fiction, because the same train of events, perhaps, never happened in any other place or nation.

To introduce myself to my subject, and inform the reader how I came by the knowledge of it, he may be pleased to recollect, that in the year 1741, when Commodore (afterwards Lord) Anson made a voyage round the world, one of the ships of his squadron, call'd the Wager, was cast away upon a desert island in the South Seas. The greatest part of the crew who were saved lengthened the long-boat, and made a long and dangerous voyage through the streights of Magellan, to Brazil. As they were often obliged to swim ashore for provisions and water, it happened that, at one time, there were to the number of fourteen of them ashore upon a part of the coast very

far South, near the mouth of the streights. Having stayed all night, unfortunately next morning the wind blew so hard in shore, that only six of the fourteen were able to get aboard, and the vessel was obliged to go away and leave the other eight.

It is needless here to insist upon the various accidents they met with in this perilous situation: the difficulty of obtaining food, without which they must very soon have died: the mean and scanty provision with which nature will be sustained, when there is no more or better to be had: the inventive faculty of man for supplying his wants when reduced to absolute extremity, and a hundred other things which have been represented in all possible lights by other writers of adventures. Let it suffice, therefore, to say that, in process of time, four of them were killed by the inhabitants of the country, and the remaining four taken prisoners. After changing their masters several times, they came at last into the hands of one who carried them a great way off to the capital of an empire, and the court of a powerful prince. There they lived many years, learned the language, and had occasion to see the manners of the country. Two of them, at last, acquired such a degree of favour, that, in compliance with their earnest request, they were sent to the Portugueze settlements, and came from thence to Great Britain.

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One of these persons, who was a man of tolerable education, at well as good sense and comprehension, coming to live in my neighbourhood, communicated to me what follows of this history. In general he told me the conduct and characters of men, bating some little differences of fashion and modes of address, which are ever changing in every country, were much like what they are among ourselves. Court favour was precarious and changeable. Interest and ambition prevailed more in obtaining places of power and profit, than modest and peaceable merit. Cold and sober men gathered wealth, and crept up, by slow but sure steps, to station and dignity; while the lively sprightly fellows threw away all that they had, and soon became contemptible to others and useless to themselves. The knowledge of the world was of very little benefit; for tho' every class of men could clearly discern the errors that adhered to those of a different rank, they could scarcely observe, and never would imitate their commendable qualities. For example, says he, a profuse, diseased, needy Lord would speak with infinite contempt of the meanness of soul, and hardness of heart frequently to be found in traders and men of business; but never once thought of following their example in sobriety, application, and regularity in the distribution of their time, to which they manifestly owed all their success. So that, upon the whole, he concluded that human nature in all ages and in

in all places was the same. A sage remark the reader will say, but I can easily remember to have heard it before.

There was, however, one class of men in that nation, whose constitution as a body, and many of whose characters and practices were of the most extraordinary kind, viz. the SERVANTS. Their state and conduct, at the time which fell under his own observation, were so singular that they excited his curiosity; and induced him to enquire with great care into their condition, as far back as history could trace them. This is what I am now to communicate to the publick, being willing that my book should be buried in oblivion, or burned with disgrace, if a story can be produced equal or even similar to it in any other age or country.

CHAP.

CHAPTER I.

Of the original State of the Servants, and their Erection into a Corporation.

IN very early times, of which there are still some accounts handed down by tradition, the Servants were in a state not much different from what they are at present among us. It does not appear that ever they were slaves, or were treated with excessive rigour or severity. They were trained up in some acquaintance with, and applied themselves to such work as they seemed to be fitted for by the turn of their minds, and the strength or agility of their bodies. They were chosen or hired by every family as they pleased, made a voluntary agreement, and were employed in doing what was necessary of every kind. They were paid as they and the family could agree, eating of their own labours, and were cherished and caressed in proportion as they deserved it. In cases of remarkable neglect disobedience or misbehaviour they were turned away. This, indeed, happened but seldom, for they were in general honest, sober and industrious. They had the interest of their masters at heart, nay, so remarkable were some of them in these times for fidelity, that (it is reported) they seemed to have

as much or more pleasure in doing their work, as in receiving their wages.

But it happened, some ages ago, that one of their princes was saved from a formidable conspiracy against his life and crown, just upon the point of execution, by the fidelity and courage of a servant. The prince was a man of warm heart, and an uncommonly generous disposition. Not content with bountifully rewarding his benefactor by kindness to himself and family, he conceived a design of perpetuating the memory of the fact, and shewing his gratitude by doing something in favour of the whole order or body of men. For this purpose, being possessed of absolute power, after consulting upon it for some time, he established the following regulations, not doubting that they would be highly beneficial to his subjects in general, as well as the servants in particular.

1. It was ordered that the wages of servants should be considerably augmented, and fixed to a certain rate in all the king's dominions. This was evidently dictated by compassion. He observed that it was very hard and unequal, that those who were constantly employed in labour, who promoted the interest of their masters so much, should notwithstanding live so poorly; that they should have nothing but the coarsest diet, and no more money than was barely necessary to purchase the meanest cloathing. He used when the matter was under deliberation, to rea-
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son thus; ' For my part I think a king ought
' to have the heart of a man; I consider the ser-
' vants as my fellow creatures, and am desirous
' that they should taste some of those pleasures
' and delicacies of life, which they contribute so
' largely to procure for the accommodation of
' others'.

He also observed that interest as well as com-
passion dictated the same thing; that keeping
them poor would entirely dispirit them, and
make them do their duty in the most careless and
slothful manner, by which their masters must re-
ceive manifest prejudice. On the other hand, a
good and secure provision would give them great
vigour and alacrity. He ventured to foretel,
that a third part increase of their salary would in-
crease their work in a far greater proportion, so
that the publick would be gainers by this seeming
burden; besides that such a fixed provision would
free them from all temptation to pilfering and
stealing, and so be an improvement upon their
honesty as well as activity.

Another advantage he proposed to reap by this
measure was, increasing the number of servants.
It was well enough remembered that, at no very
distant period, the kingdom had suffered not a
little from the scarcity of servants; so that the
land lay uncultivated, and many branches of busi-
ness neglected. Now it was impossible to avoid
seeing that this measure must increase the num-
ber of servants, by inducing them to come into
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the kingdom from the most distant places, as well as encouraging them to marry and propagate, and bless their country with a multitude of useful hands.

Nay, he even called in the aid of luxury to enforce his argument, alledging, that keeping the servants poor, must make them sordid and nasty, so that it would be odious to people of taste and elegance to have them about their persons, or even to see them in their houses. "But by carrying the proposed design into execution, he said, he hoped to see the servants in general genteel, well dressed, well behaved, and conversible men. That this must be an advantage in particular to families in the country, who were considerably distant from one another, and, in certain seasons of the year, could have very little intercourse: nay even; that in cities and places of greater resort, it would be better, in many respects, to have opportunities of conversation within doors, than to be always obliged to seek society abroad.

In short, he supposed that the regulation now established would put an entire period to all the murmurings and complaints of servants, and their desire of shifting from one family to another, which was a source of daily inconveniences. They must be touched, says he, with a sense of gratitude for so unexpected and so happy a change in their situation, and will therefore be thoroughly content and 'never ask for more.'

2. Having the public good all along at heart,

as much as the advantage of the Servants, he ordered schools and places of exercise to be built, and masters appointed to train up Servants and fit them for their several trusts. There were different tracks of education chalked out for all different sorts of employments. It was particularly expected of the directors, of these academies, that they would select the Servants fit for every branch, and both educate and dispose of them according as their genius should intimate they were most capable. As for example, for cooks, waiting men, and other domestick servants, and grooms, gardeners, and labouring men of all sorts without doors.

The advantage of this regulation, in both its parts, seemed very evident. Education, it was said, is all in all. Education makes the man, and makes the Servant. It will therefore prepare them for their work. They will enter upon it expert and proven, very much to the publick emolument; instead of being awkward and unhandy for some time, till experience has given them facility, or, perhaps, retaining some measure of rusticity and inactivity through their whole lives.

It seemed also a matter of great moment, that no man should be suffered to profess what he could not do, but that he should be confined to that only which he could best do. Neither was it proper that this should be left to the caprice of families, or the ambition and presumption of the

Servants themselves. And it was never once imagined the masters of academies would be defective in judgment and impartiality, on their part.

3. The third and last regulation he established, was ordering the servants to be erected by charter into a large corporation, containing many smaller bodies and societies within it. To this corporation he gave authority over the several members of which it was composed, and established a complete subordination. This was thought a piece of admirable wisdom and policy. They were to be strictly watchful over one another, and it was supposed they would get all the advantage in this shape, which men united in society have over those in a state of nature. The several classes and divisions of the corporation were to try the sufficiency of all Servants before they were admitted, and had power to turn them off when they misbehaved or neglected their work. That this might proceed with the greater regularity, they were every one secured by law in their employments. They were not left in a vague dependent state: a servant once hired by any family could not be turned away but by an order of his fellow-servants, to whom all complaints of his conduct were to be made, and by whom they were to be judged.

The whole was founded upon the most excellent reasons. Who so proper to judge of the capacity

capacity and diligence of Servants as those who are Servants themselves? Who can be supposed so attentive to their conduct, or so jealous of their behaviour, since the character of particulars must evidently reflect either disgrace or credit on the whole collective body?

D d 2

CHAP.

C H A P. H.

Of the Effects produced by these Regulations.

AT first, and indeed for a considerable time after these regulations were established, experience seemed to confirm the wisdom as well as generosity of the prince, and to discover their happy consequences every day. Servants were trained up and instructed in every branch of business, and were very expert in their work. They understood the cause, the reason and the end of every thing, and could talk upon it in a most intelligent and consistent manner. They did every thing with much exactness, and had plainly a far greater air of neatness and elegance than formerly. The fields were dressed and trimmed to great perfection; the utensils of the houses were all brightned and put in order; the outsides of the houses and avenues to them were all adorned in a very pretty and fanciful manner. They were not content with what was barely profitable to their masters, but paid also a due regard to show and appearance. Persons who travelled were exceedingly delighted, and the proprietors were not a little proud of the change; for every house was like a little palace, and every country-seat like a little paradise. Thus far the Servants seemed to be much upon their honour, and, from

a sense of gratitude to the emperor, endeavoured to behave themselves with great care and diligence ; so that every body, as well as themselves sincerely rejoiced in the change of their state.

But alas ! how short-sighted are human creatures ! this universal satisfaction did not last long. It was quickly seen, notwithstanding so good a beginning, that the regulations laid down would but ill answer the end proposed. The change to the worse took its rise from the enlargement of their wages, which yet seemed, at first, to be the chief and most reasonable article of the regulations : for, after they had obtained good wages, and the best of food and accommodation, some of them began to grow fat, and consequently lazy. When they were suddenly called, sometimes by dozing and sleeping they did not hear at all : and when they did hear were very slow in their motions, and always ready furnished with an excuse for their neglect ; or, perhaps, raised some very strong objections to what they were desired to do. When they were sent of an errand, they took a long time before they returned ; and yet would positively stand to it, that it was impossible to return sooner. If this was not satisfying, they would, in a great rage, before they delivered their message, return and measure the ground they had traversed in order to determine the dispute.

Having now more to eat or drink than formerly, they behaved to take more time to it ;

and so the hours of their work were very much diminished. This seemed to them not only reasonable but necessary; and great disputes arose upon it with the families in which they served. The families in general gave them to understand that they expected greater diligence and activity, as they were now better paid than before, whereas the Servants counted that highly ridiculous; for with them it was a fixed point, that the more liberally they were paid, they ought to do the less for it. It is needless to enlarge upon this part of the subject; let it suffice to say, that, in general, having now got so good provision made for them, they began not to serve but to live. The delicacies of the world began to captivate their hearts, and instead of satisfying themselves with necessaries, and being useful in their generation, they be thought themselves of enjoying what had thus so luckily fallen to their share.

Changes in all respects came on insensibly. It was before observed that one advantage proposed by the regulations was the increase of the number of servants. This effect indeed did follow with a witness. Whereas before the country was not overstocked with Servants, and families were at great pains in looking out for proper ones, now they increased to an almost incredible number. Not only was there a great confluence of strangers, from distant places, but many of the inhabitants, not inconsiderable in point of station, found it

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it their interest to become Servants. Now you would every where see them going about and soliciting employment, and very wonderful were the arts they sometimes used to obtain it. Of these I shall say nothing in this preliminary part of the history, because I shall probably have afterwards a better opportunity to introduce them.

As the state of things, and the way of thinking began to alter, the language and manner of speaking altered also at the same time. In former times they used to speak of getting a master, or being hired, or getting an employment; now they spake of getting into bread, of getting a salary, a settlement, or a living. I know nothing that resembles this difference so much as the difference between our way of speaking in Scotland, and what is usual in our neighbour country of England about servants. Here we speak of a servant's getting into service; in England they call it getting a place, and a footman turned away, they term, with the highest propriety, a footman out of place.

Things having once come into this situation, it happened with these Servants as it happens with all men when once they begin to gratify their desires: they became inordinate, excessive and insatiable. Instead of being content with what they had obtained, they began to fall upon all imaginable methods of increasing their revenues. They contrived an infinite number of perquisites besides their ordinary wages. When a family had

had, of their own free motion, bestowed any mark of favour upon a good servant, the thing was immediately spread abroad, and all other families were harrassed with complaints, and teased to death by their servants till the same was bestowed upon them. They would often, in a clandestine manner, lay hold of some of the goods of the family and appropriate them to their own use; and, when it came at last to be discovered, they would take the advantage of their own covetousness, and prove clearly, that, by immemorial custom, it belonged to them as their due. Where families were ignorant, they would affirm with the greatest boldness, that such and such were the privileges of servants in all other places, and by that means procure their consent. When they were not only ignorant but timid and cowardly, they would go a short way to work, and threaten to burn their houses to the ground if they did not comply with every demand.

But, what they excelled most in were the arts of flattery and deceit in rich families. Such as got near great men would stand as it were in perpetual admiration of the beauty of their persons, the gracefulness of their manners, and the excellence of their understandings. The servants of some persons of great rank had a custom of making up a long list, every day, of the virtues which such persons had that day put in practice, and reading it over to them next morning before they got out of bed, which was observed to render

der them quite facile and tractable for a long time after.

They persuaded the credulous, that the publick good was inseparably connected with their thriving and opulence. 'Industry,' said they, 'is the source of wealth to a nation. Servants, every body must acknowledge, are the means of industry: thence it follows undeniably, that the more servants the better.' By the help of this argument they obtained, that many new establishments were made for Servants. And such was the fascination that prevailed, that frequently there were settlements made for the provision of menial servants in a wilderness, where there was hardly a single creature to serve; and of husbandmen upon a sea shore, where there was not an inch of ground to cultivate. They also got about sick and dying persons, and by their officious services, by tending them with apparent care, and by frequently and readily giving them cordials, they prevailed, that many left great legacies to them in their wills.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

Continues the same subject. And particularly gives an account of a very remarkable step taken by the Servants.

WHEN their possessions, privileges, and immunities were thus enlarged, they began to claim greater respect than formerly, and to assume additional titles and designations. Some of them would be no longer servants properly speaking, but overseers. They affirmed that it was essential to the nature of servants that some of them should be overseers, and that there could be neither order nor oeconomy in a family without some such. To this they added suboverseers, and several other officers for their assistance. They then proceeded to archoverseers who had all the other overseers, as well as servants, under their jurisdiction. At a great meeting of the whole corporation, this was determined and decreed to be, and to have been, a part of the original institution of servitude, without which it could not possibly subsist.

These encroachments were very patiently submitted to, and, one would think, had been carried as far as the nature of the thing would admit. Yet there remained one step more which exceeded every thing that had been formerly seen, and happened as follows. An overseer of the capital city gathered a great many of his cotemporaries about

about him, and after begging their most serious attention to a proposal he had to lay before them, made a speech to the following purpose. ' Honoured and very dear Brethren, you know that the life of society is order, and the soul of order is subordination. The greatest service, therefore, that we can do to our corporation, is to keep up the subordination of offices among us with as much strictness, and to make it as compleat and extensive as possible. There are no structures which stand so securely, as those that are built in the form of a cone or a pyramid, because they have a broad base, and gradually lessen towards the top. Neither of these, however, is complete, but maimed or imperfect, unless it be carried on till it terminate in a point. Therefore, the subordination of our society can never be entire and perfect, till it end in a single person, who may unite the whole, and enjoy absolute uncontrollable dominion. And; as the person who is on the top of a pyramid must necessarily see farther than those who stand upon any of the lower steps of it, so the person who is at the head of the whole society of servants must, in virtue of his office, surpass them all in wisdom and sagacity. Nay, as this order is of the institution of nature, and as a last resort or supreme judge is necessary to determine controversies in any society, so I do think it may be proved that nature, to be uniform and consistent in her operations
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‘ must immediately inspire the person so exalted
 ‘ with infallible knowledge and a sort of infinite
 ‘ mind. Now I hope it is very plain, that I my-
 ‘ self am the person to whom, and to my succes-
 ‘ sors in office, this power and authority do of
 ‘ right belong.’

One of the assembly then rises up and says; ‘ I
 ‘ greatly suspect this will be attended with no
 ‘ good effects upon the interest of the Servants in
 ‘ general, not to mention the interest of the
 ‘ families, which, from a sense of duty to the
 ‘ corporation, I intirely give up. At any rate, it
 ‘ ought not to be gone into precipitately; for it
 ‘ is a prodigious innovation.’ ‘ Quite otherwise,’
 ‘ says the former speaker; ‘ for tho’ I have conde-
 ‘ scended to reason with you, and show you that
 ‘ in the nature of things there must be one who,
 ‘ like the top-stone of a pyramid, is incumbent
 ‘ on the whole body; as also, that this can be
 ‘ no other than myself, who dwell in the centre
 ‘ of this vast empire; yet I can give undeniable
 ‘ evidence that it hath been always so in fact,
 ‘ since there was an empire here, and since there
 ‘ were Servants.’ The objector then shook his
 head, as who should say, that is far from being a
 clear point, and seemed to wonder from whence
 this evidence was to proceed. The other imme-
 diately goes on, ‘ It is as clear as the sun; for, tho’
 ‘ all the records that contained this regulation
 ‘ are lost, yet I very well remember, that my
 ‘ nurse told me before I was two years of age,
 that

that her grandmother's sisters-cousin-german assured her it was fact.

However unwilling, one would think, men should be to give up their natural rights, and submit to usurped authority, yet so it was that they soon agreed to this scheme; and, indeed, it appeared to have been not ill projected for their own ends. It is not to be conceived at how speedy a pace they advanced, in acquiring and extending their dominion. They quite inverted the use of language; for when they spoke of the family they always meant the Servants: or, if they said any thing that would tend to the good of the family, it was to be understood, that it would promote the increase of the wages, privileges and immunities of the Servants. In many places the Servants grew upon the families, and turned them out altogether. In some of the most delicious spots of the country; you would have seen fine seats and inclosures wholly possessed by Servants, who absolutely refused to do any work, but gave themselves up to lazy contemplation. If any body had presumed to ask them the meaning of this, they said they were employed in studying the theory of service, and wishing that all Servants might be good, and all families well supplied.

It has been observed above, that they began their scheme by flattering the rich and great men, and endeavouring to insinuate themselves into their favour. But as soon as their power was suf-

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Sciently established, they changed their note, and treated the most considerable men of the country with great haughtiness and contempt. They affirmed it to be absolutely necessary for the publick good, that they should have much honour and respect paid them. That, as they were undeniably the most useful rank of men, by consequence they were the most honourable. Instead of being humble and submissive, they insisted, that all the people, from the highest to the lowest, should pay a profound respect to the overseers, archoverseers, and other dignitaries, whose names I have forgot, because they had neither sense nor meaning. Nay, the emperor of the Servants arrived in time at such power, that he made the richest men in the country, even the governors of provinces to tremble. He ordered them sometimes to wipe his shoes; and, when they misbehaved or shewed the least backwardness, commanded them to be whipt.

When my informer mentioned this circumstance, I could not help discovering much amazement at the pusillanimity of these people, and even modestly hinted some suspicion as to the truth of the fact. He insisted, however, in the most positive manner, on the truth of his account; and added, that he had many things still more wonderful to communicate; as an instance of which he affirmed, that it was not only usual for the emperor to order great men to be whipt, but even to command them to whip themselves. All this

this they were obliged to submit to, for he had the lower servants, and the whole kingdom absolutely under his influence. If any person or family had disputed his will in the least article, they would either, without more ado, burn the house and them in it, or they would wholly give over work, and neither provide them with food nor fuel, so that they behoved immediately to starve.

What contributed not a little to establish this usurpation, was a very singular scheme which they fell upon while they were flattering great men, and persuading them to make new establishments for Servants. This was, that families should not be permitted to choose Servants for themselves, but that a Lord, or any other great man, should have the power of nominating the Servants within a certain district. They never failed to invent plausible reasons for all their schemes. In support of this it was alledged, that families were often whimsical in their choice. That some would prefer a servant because he was tall, and others because he was short: some because his hair was red, others because it was black. That they did not know when they were well served, and when they were not. That they were apt to be imposed on by such as had smooth tongues and could flatter them. That, if families and servants were in a good understanding, they would raise sedition and subvert the constitution.

On the other hand it was thought exceeding clear, that great men would understand the interest of the country, and the capacity of Servants, much better than the vulgar. As also, that they were above all suspicion of partiality, and would be sure always to send fit and accomplished Servants to every house. But against the contrary of all this was soon found by experience. They learned speedily to sell every place to the highest bidder, unless when they had a favourite or dependent to gratify, which indeed, at bottom, was the same thing. However, they were soon made dupes to the Servants, for when the profit of this sale was found out, the overseers and archoverseers gradually usurped the nomination to themselves, and at last, it came to be made an addition to the great and overgrown power of the Emperor.

It may easily be supposed, things were now in a sad situation, and they continued so, as tradition and written records assure us, for many ages. The lands lay uncultivated; the people were reduced to the greatest misery imaginable; they were forrily clothed and worse fed. No body prospered but the Servants, or rather, only the upper ranks of them, the noble and honourable Servants, the overseers and archoverseers. To these indeed may be added the idle and speculative sort, who were settled in hives, in the most pleasant and fruitful vallies, in every province

province. As for the poorer or lowest class of servants, who actually did any work for the families, they were as much oppressed, by this time, as their masters. Their wages were mostly taken up by lazy overseers, or exhausted by heavy taxes which they were obliged to pay to the emperor, and his court.

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CHAP.

C H A P. IV.

A terrible blow given to the Domination of the Servants; and particularly to the Power of the Emperor.

IT appears to be a fact, tho' not very well accounted for by philosophers, that, when men have been long accustomed to slavery, they hug their chains, and become so blinded, as to pride themselves in their misery itself. A poor peasant, in a neighbouring country, whose face is pale with hunger, and his family scarce covered with rags, through the oppression of his prince, yet will be very ready to venture his life in vindication of the tyrant's honour, and count himself extremely happy to lay it down in defence of his person. So it happened with the people under consideration. They were so deluded by these Servants, that, as their condition, so their reason itself was turned upside down. They gloried in the usurpation of the servants over them, worshipped them often as they passed, and stoutly defended all their rights and privileges.

If by chance it happened, (as there were always some in every age) that one thought fit to complain of the sloth, debauchery, avarice and tyranny of the Servants, his brethren immediately raised a hideous accusation against him, and the stupid

stupid people generally joined in the cry. They immediately assisted his fellow-servants to seize him, to imprison him, and, according to the degree of his offence, to punish him. They first, indeed, took the most charitable pains to convince him of his error. If, upon this, he was willing to recant, and solemnly to declare that the conduct of the Servants was admirable, and the character of them all unblameable, he was dismissed only with a good beating. But, if he was obstinate, and insisted on telling the truth, he was carried to a dreadful subterraneous place, and, there, put to the most horrid and shocking tortures, which at length ended in death.

However, at last, this mystery of iniquity got a terrible blow. One of the lower Servants, of an honest heart, and a determined resolute temper, being filled with indignation at the oppression which the rest were guilty of, set himself to open the eyes of the publick, and expose their wickedness. He made a full discovery of all the frauds he had any how been acquainted with, and spared not the corruption of the Emperor's court. Laying down only this plain principle, that Servants were obliged to promote, at all times, the real interest of their masters, he set the abominable conduct of the covetous blood-suckers in the most odious light. Whenever he went to a fair, or other place of public concourse, he would get upon an eminence, and in a long discourse, endeavour to rouse the people from their lethargy,

lethargy, and inflame them with resentment against their oppressors.

This furnished his brethren with an opportunity of representing him as a disturber of the peace, and loading him with innumerable calumnies. Many tumults were raised against him, and he was often in imminent danger of his life. When he had narrowly escaped being stoned in publick, they would often hire desperadoes to assassinate him in private; and, sometimes, attempted to bribe his intimate friends to take him off by poison. However, by a mixture of bravery and caution in himself, together with the assistance of some faithful friends, who saw how much he was promoting their interest, or rather, by a most singular providence, he was always brought off safe. At last, a few of the other servants joined him, and they together opened the eyes of several provinces of the Empire. These came to a formal resolution of casting off the yoke of the Emperor, and settling the Servants upon a quite new, or rather bringing them back to the old, reasonable and natural foundation.

This was not brought about without a most violent and pertinacious opposition. The Emperor immediately founded the alarm, and set the Servants in motion throughout all his dominions. He could not be supposed, indeed, to look upon such a scheme with indifference; for it plainly tended to strip him of a great part of his revenue and power: nor was it easy to see where it would

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stop. He therefore cried out against it with all his might. He sent out a proclamation, in which he affirmed, that it struck against the very being of Servants; and that the design was no less than to exterminate them from the face of the earth. He represented it as the most unnatural thing that ever was heard of. That there had been sometimes conspiracies of servants against their masters, but a joint conspiracy of masters against their own servants, and of servants against their fellow-servants, was absolutely without precedent. He concluded with a solemn exhortation, devoting all who should continue in this rebellion to complete and irremediable ruin.

The consequence of this was a civil war in the kingdom. Many battles were fought, in which there was a dreadful slaughter on both sides, and multitudes taken prisoners, who were none of them used very well. The Emperor indeed, and his court, had a manifest advantage, by long practice, in devising the most exquisite methods of revenge and cruelty. But, to shorten my narrative, after many violent and bloody disputes, as well as useless conferences, at last some provinces agreed to keep the old way, and some established the new. Particularly, in one northern province there was, at the time of the change, a most excellent method and order established with regard to the Servants. They not only renounced the authority of the Emperor; but all overseers, archoverseers, auditors, controllers, accountants, keepers

keepers of records and other unnecessary officers were banished at once: and none suffered to continue but useful working Servants. The speculative drones were expelled, and their lands given to persons of rank and worth in the province. That regulation was abolished, as extremely pernicious, which permitted lords or great men to name servants to others, so that every family chose such as best pleased themselves, and such as were well qualified for the business for which they were hired. The exorbitant increase of their wages was reduced, as well as all extravagant perquisites, and only a moderate provision continued and settled.

CHAP.

CHAPTER V

Some account of the Reformed Establishment, in a Northern Province; and the happy effects that followed upon it for a time. It begins however again to degenerate.

THE people of this province were now so fully convinced of the terrible consequences of the late usurpation, that they resolved to use all possible precautions, to prevent the return of corruption for the future. In this the servants themselves seemed to concur very heartily, and were, apparently, animated with a warm zeal against the worthless part of their own order. Many excellent rules were laid down in the meetings of the corporation. They were ordered under the severest penalties to apply themselves diligently to their business; to live sober, grave and mortified lives; to forbear all ranting, junketing and gaming. They were forbid all travelling abroad, or wandering from their families, but upon urgent occasions, and with leave asked and given. If any were convicted of dishonesty, laziness, or disobedience, they were not only dismissed, but stript of their cloathes, branded in their foreheads, and declared utterly incapable of ever being again employed.

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The greatest strictness imaginable was used in trying them, as to their sufficiency in every branch of business for which they were hired; and very diligent enquiry made into their character for honesty and sincerity. When they were introduced to any family, they were taken solemnly bound by a tremendous oath, to have the good of the family always at heart, and that they should never do any thing, directly or indirectly, that might tend to its prejudice. But above all, there was a strict law made, and declared to be unalterable, that no Servant should be forced upon any family against their will. In order to secure, in the most effectual manner, the execution of these laws, it was resolved, that, in the government of the corporation, there should be joined with the Servants certain persons of the most prudent sort from the families. These were called helpers, they had no salaries, but being naturally a sort of representatives of the people, it was expected they would universally support their interest.

For a long time this province was exceedingly happy in their reformed constitution. The most perfect harmony subsisted between masters and servants. The work of the servants seemed to be a pleasure to them, and, on the other hand, the members of every family seemed to vie with one another who should treat their servants with the greatest tenderness and humanity. Once or twice there was an attempt made to introduce overseers and archoverseers among them, from a neighbouring

neighbouring province which had retained these officers, tho' they would not suffer them to be subject to the Emperor. However, the people showing a proper spirit, they were still thrown out. All this time matters went on exceeding well, the fields were assiduously cultivated, and brought every year immense crops; and plenty as well as harmony was every where to be seen.

But alas, after a long season of peace and quiet, things began to alter for the worse. Ambition, avarice and luxury, would not be kept out by the banishment of the old titles. They found a way of introducing themselves, under cover of the form that then prevailed, without any apparent change. The most important step towards bringing this about, was re-establishing the law which impowered great men to nominate Servants to inferior families. This was submitted to the more easily, because they only nominated them to the salary, provided that the corporation should think proper to introduce them to the family. For this purpose, the most sacred laws required an invitation from the family itself. But the young Servants soon began to find, that it was far easier for many of them to play the parasite or sycophant about great men's houses, than to acquire a good reputation for diligence in their work. That was the road; therefore, in which the greatest part of them travelled to preferment.

Many and fierce were the struggles, for several years, in the meetings of the corporation about introducing Servants to families. As all the laws required an invitation from the family, when any person was nominated, a neighbouring court would send a deputation to the family, to ask them whether they would take such a one for their Servant or not. Sometimes they wheedled and flattered, and sometimes threatened them, if they would not comply. If any consented, their names were set down three or four times, to swell the number; if any were angry and spoke impertinently, they were supposed to be out of their senses, and incapable of judging. After these arts were used they would sit down gravely to determine the matter, and FIND, that there was in this instance a most agreeable and harmonious invitation.

It is impossible to help smiling, when one reflects upon the various methods used in conducting this business. Sometimes they could not get a single person in a house to accept of the Servant who had been nominated. When this happened, they used to send for all the relations of the family, even the most distant cousins, and ask their consent, which was easily obtained, because it was nothing to them whether the family were well served or ill. When they had obtained it, if a complaint was made, they endeavoured to prove by very ingenious reasonings that these distant relations had as good a title to invite a
Servant

Servant as any person whatever. Matters however drove on very heavily for a while; but in order to facilitate them, many gentlemen of estates, who knew not much either about service or Servants, procured themselves to be chosen to the office of helpers. Not that they helped to do any thing; but getting in to be members of the courts of the corporation, they contributed to provide Servants in places. By this means many were provided with a piece of bread, who had been poor sneaking fellows, and had followed them in their youth, in hunting, fishing, and other diversions.

Such was the situation of affairs when my informer went into the country, and, as the case was very singular, the reader may easily guess how much it engaged his attention. He resided chiefly in this Northern province, and, therefore, his remarks were mostly confined to what happened among them. It would be endless to mention all that he told me, but the principal observations shall be communicated to the world in the following chapters.

C H A P. VI.

Of the great impropriety often seen in the appointment of Servants; and the sentiments of the inhabitants on that subject.

THERE is commonly, in every society, some radical principle which governs and modifies the rest, and gives a tincture to all the measures that are carried on, whatever be their particular subject, or seeming intention. In the case before us, the fundamental error appears to have been the power of nomination which was given to great men. The consequence of this was, an excessive impropriety in the appointment of Servants to different families. If a poor ordinary family wanted a household Servant, sometimes a Lord would send them a foreign cook out of his own kitchen. This fellow would speak such minced broken language, that they could not understand him; and the meat he dressed for them they could not endure to look upon. When they desired him to provide plain solid food, such as they had been in use to eat, and in sufficient quantity to fill their bellies, he would serve them up a course of flimsy dishes, finely garnished, but entirely disguised, so that the poor people could not imagine what they contained. If at any time they made complaint of this, he triumphed over
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their clownish ignorance and unrefined taste, and would offer to prove, to the satisfaction of all men of sense, that he perfectly understood his art.

In innumerable such instances they went intirely in the face of common sense, in the choice and appointment of Servants. Sometimes, if a family wanted a plowman or a gardiner, they would send them a huntsman, or a running footman. If a considerable merchant wanted a book-keeper, they would send him a stupid ignorant fellow who could neither write nor read. For this preposterous conduct there was no remedy. The great men counted the right of nomination as a precious jewel, which no consideration could induce them to part with. And as the power of determination, in all disputed cases, lay in courts composed of Servants, they strenuously supported the most unreasonable appointments. This was naturally to be expected, because a contrary conduct would have been a silent impeachment of many of themselves, as unfit for their present stations.

Besides, it happened in this case, as I observed had happened in a former age, many loved to have it so. The people of better rank, and those who would be thought to be of better rank by an unaccountable fascination, not only approved but admired these measures. To allow families, they said, to choose Servants for themselves, would be a source of endless confusion; but that the present was plainly a simple, rational, uniform and

method of proceeding. It was a common and fashionable topick of conversation to despise the folly and impudence of the common people, who had always a strong inclination to choose their own Servants, and looked with a very evil eye upon those who were thus billeted upon them against their wills. If any person, in a company, had but signified that he thought this conduct inconsistent with equity or good policy, he was not thought fit to be reasoned with, but a great and loud laugh was immediately raised against him, so that he was not only put to silence, but to confusion. Nay, there were not wanting many who affirmed, that no body could be sincerely of that opinion, but that it was only pretended from base and sinister views.

I must observe here, that when my informer was on this part of the subject, which indeed he often resumed, as what had made a great impression upon his own mind, I could not help again discovering marks of astonishment. I told him, I very well knew the absurdities of which the human mind is capable, yet this seemed to be the most incredible of any thing that I had ever read or heard of; that it should be laughed down as a ridiculous notion, that families ought to be at liberty to choose their own Servants. On this he was not a little offended, and speaking with some acrimony, says, 'It was to gratify your curiosity, sir, that, in this and former conversations, I have given an account of my
' obser-

• observations in foreign countries. If you de-
• sire to hear no more, I shall be wholly silent ;
• but give me leave to say, that the treatment
• which we travellers meet with when we return
• home, is at once unreasonable and ungrateful.
• If we tell you things that are common, you
• look upon them as insipid and trifling ; and,
• if we tell you things that are quite new and
• surprizing, you let us know, with great good
• manners, that you do not believe us.’

Then after a little pause, ‘ Pray sir,’ says he,
• how many nations are there in Europe, Asia
• or Africa, who think themselves at liberty to
• choose their own prince, or to bring him to an
• account for oppression or bad government ?’
Truly, said I, I believe not above five or six.
• Well then,’ says he, ‘ If, perhaps, fifty to one
• of mankind have thought it a sin or folly for
• them to choose their own masters, is it modest
• in you to suspect my veracity, when I tell you
• of one nation, where it became fashionable to
• think that they ought not to chuse their own
• Servants.’

• But, to come a little closer to the point,’ says
he, ‘ are you not a member of the select society in
• E——h ?’ I am, and glory in it as a most
honourable distinction. ‘ Have you not taken
• agriculture under your patronage ?’ Undoubted-
ly ; and by what means can we better promote
the interest of the public ? ‘ By none, I admit.
• But suffer me to proceed with my interroga-
• tories.

' tories. Have you bought any land with the
 ' profits of your improvements?' Not yet. They
 are but in their infancy, and have cost me a
 great deal of expence. ' Are the crops of im-
 ' provers generally better than those of other
 ' people?' I cannot say they are. ' You ought,'
 says he, ' to have confessed that they are com-
 ' monly worse; for, according to my observation,
 ' the mark of an improver is not to have a good
 ' crop, but to be able to give a rational and phi-
 ' losophical account how he came to have a bad
 ' one. But have you not also encouraged a man
 ' to write books and read lectures upon agricul-
 ' ture, who made himself a beggar by putting it
 ' in practice?' Perhaps it may be so, but he un-
 derstood the theory. ' How came you to be-
 ' lieve that he understood the theory? Alas!
 ' alas! fir, absurdities coming into fashion is not
 ' so rare a thing at home, as to entitle you to
 ' doubt the truth of my narrative, when I told
 ' you of the mistakes and delusion of a certain
 ' people abroad.'

I confess I was never more nettled at any
 thing, than at this unexpected attack upon the
 laudable attempts among us, of late, to improve
 our native country. To compare them with the
 monstrous conduct of the unpolished American
 people described in this book, was unsufferable.
 I could not, therefore, let the matter drop, but
 told him, All that you have said, fir, might
 easily be answered; however, not to spend time
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upon it at present, what do you think of, or what have you to say against the excellent and rational tracts which have been published by private gentlemen of fortune among us, upon agriculture? Do they not contain the clearest arithmetical calculations, of the profit to arise from the method laid down? 'I say,' answered he, 'they are all what the lawyers call *felo, de se,* and totally inadmissible.' Your reason pray. 'My reason! why, truly, I have more reasons than one. In the first place, they always put me in mind of a quack doctor with his catholicon. They have but one remedy for all diseases. A gentleman happens to be struck with some new theoretical principle, and immediately falls to work, ruts down every thing else, and applies this wonderful discovery to all purposes, all soils, and all seasons. You know what enthusiasts the horse hoers and pulverisers are. Many of them are clearly of opinion, that dung is prejudicial to ground, as serving only to engender weeds. I was once quite of this opinion myself, and found no other difficulty in it, than how gentlemen and farmers would get quit of their dung, which, not being returned to the ground in the way of manure, must soon grow up to an enormous, and at the same time, most noxious and offensive heap. When under these apprehensions, I remember to have projected a scheme to be carried on by subscription, which would have proved an effectual re-

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‘ medy. The method was, to have plans taken
‘ of every county, in which the level should be
‘ marked, then canals to be carried through all
‘ the low grounds, and smaller ducts drawn from
‘ every gentleman and farmer’s house, terminat-
‘ ing in these canals, which, by the help of a
‘ collection of rain water at every house, would,
‘ at certain seasons of the year, carry away the
‘ whole dung, and at last empty it into the sea.
‘ The expence of this scheme would, indeed,
‘ have been very considerable; but the great ad-
‘ vantages to be reaped from it, I apprehended,
‘ would soon convince every body of its utility.
‘ Now, however ridiculous such a scheme may
‘ be, I am fully convinced it would have been
‘ put in practice in a certain county, if it had not
‘ been for the incorrigible obstinacy of the com-
‘ mon people. I am also of opinion, that it
‘ would have succeeded, and that dung would
‘ have been wholly banished in a short time.
‘ This would have happened, not only by the
‘ help of the canals, but the crops would have
‘ been so thin and spiritual, that the cattle who
‘ fed upon them would have passed very little of
‘ a gross or excremental nature.

‘ I shall not trouble you, continued he, at this
‘ time, with any more of my reasons but one. It
‘ seems highly incredible that, if the new schemes
‘ of agriculture were so profitable as their authors
‘ give out, they would be so generous as to dis-
‘ cover them gratis to the publick, and even
‘ press.

‘ pres the said publick to accept of them. It is
‘ more probable they would keep them as a se-
‘ cret in their own families, till their excellence
‘ were discovered by their visible effects. I
‘ know a manufacturing town, where, if any man
‘ falls upon a method of working, or a fabrick
‘ of goods, that is likely to bring a good profit,
‘ he is so far from pressing it upon his neigh-
‘ bours, that he uses every possible precaution to
‘ keep it to himself. On the other hand, his
‘ neighbours are as inquisitive as he is secret ; and
‘ commonly both discover and imitate it in a
‘ very little time. There is a disposition in man-
‘ kind to resist what is forced upon them, and to
‘ leave no method unessayed to come at what is
‘ industriously placed out of their reach.

‘ I would, therefore, humbly recommend it
‘ to all improvers, to give over talking upon the
‘ subject, and to fall heartily about putting their
‘ rules in practice ; and, I can promise them,
‘ that, if they be successful, it will not be long
‘ before they will be quite common. Or, let
‘ every person who discovers a nostrum in agri-
‘ culture, apply to the government for a patent
‘ that no body may be suffered to use it except
‘ himself, and those who shall pay him sufficient-
‘ ly for the ingenuity of his invention. I can as-
‘ sure you, sir, that if I had said to the people
‘ whom I left a few years ago, that I knew a
‘ nation, where it was common for benevolent
‘ persons to point out to them plain, easy, cheap
‘ and

‘ and certain methods of growing rich, but they
‘ would not be persuaded to use them, I would
‘ have had the same compliment paid me, which
‘ you were pleased to pay me some time ago, that
‘ I was taking the privilege of a traveller.’

I shall not trouble the reader with saying how far I was convinced by this reasoning, only it made me resolve to be entirely silent, as to any further particulars I should learn concerning the corporation of Servants, how strange and unaccountable soever they might be. Having, therefore, brought this unavoidable digression to a close, we proceed with the history.

CHAP.

C H A P . VII.

Great partiality in the trial of Servants, and uncertainty in the characters given of them.

IF the reader recollects what was said in the preceding chapter, it is probable he will be surpris'd, that the corporation, with the powers given them, did not, for their own credit, look better into the qualifications of Servants. Since it was in their power to license them or not, it may be supposed they would take effectual care, that no insufficient person should be admitted. But it is to be observed, that so soon as the method of fixing Servants, upon the nomination of Lords or great men, came to be again in use, the trial of their sufficiency turned to a mere farce. There might be some degree of integrity found in one court; but, in such a case, the candidate had nothing to do but apply to another, where he would find, perhaps, a set of rascally fellows who were ashamed of nothing. To what a degree of boldness they ventured to proceed, may be seen from the following account of what literally happened.

A certain court was going upon the examination of a young man, who desired to have a certificate that he was fully accomplished as a Servant, and particularly well skilled in the cultivation

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tion of land. A grave and antient member asked him, Pray, sir, what is the best way of plowing hard stiff land? *Ans.* By running a wheel-barrow over it. The examiner was highly offended with the absurdity of the answer, and shewed plainly in his countenance a mixture of surprize and indignation. But another member of court, being of a meek and gentle temper, and a great enemy to severity, thought proper to interpose. He says to his brother, my dear sir, the young man is modest and bashful, which in itself is a most amiable disposition, tho' it hinders him from answering so distinctly, as were to be wished. Then, turning to the candidate, he says, I dare say, sir, you know well enough that a wheel-barrow cannot plow land; because it will not enter into the soil, nor open it sufficiently. Must not hard stiff land be broken and pulverised, in order to make it fruitful? *Ans.* Yes, sir.

Then the first resumed his examination. Now, pray sir, Can you tell me how deep land ought to be plowed when it is well done? He, tho' quite ignorant of the subject, being naturally a man of spirit and acuteness, imagined, from what he had heard, that the deeper the better, and immediately answered, six yards. On this his examiner fell into a violent passion, and said, How have you the impudence, sir, to ask us to instruct you as a plowman, when you know nothing of the matter? Was there ever such a thing heard or seen, since the beginning of the world, as plowing

plowing land six yards deep? Or what conception could you have, in your own mind, of the possibility of the thing? You ought to have a sentence passed against you, wholly incapacitating you for any place in this country.

The noble and generous spirit of the candidate was roused by this severe treatment, so, he replied; Pray sir, do you imagine that, in this improved age, the servants of the established corporation are brought up to a thorough knowledge of the several branches of business, for which the salaries are appointed? For my own particular, you ought not to be surprized that I could not tell you how land should be plowed, for I never saw a plough in my life. How, when, where and by whom were you educated then? says the other in amaze. *Ans.* I served an apprenticeship in a toy shop. Very well, says the examiner, blessed, precious, happy, improved times! I have no more to add, I give up the examination to any body that pleases.

When this discontented zealot had dropt the discourse, some other moderate men asked him a few polite and fashionable questions, such as, what is the genteelest lining for a red coat? In what manner should you present a glass of wine to a lord, and how to a farmer? Whether is hunting or fishing the pleasantest diversion? Whether should the Servants or the children of a family have the best lodging, diet. &c.? After a few minutes had been spent in this manner, it

was carried by a great majority that he had answered extremely well, and was, in every respect, a most accomplished Servant.

It was usual for the Servants to carry certificates with them, from the inferior courts of the corporation, wherever they went; but if any man had trusted to these certificates, he would have found himself miserably mistaken. They had taken up a principle, that a man might attest any thing to be true, which he did not know to be false. On this principle, for a proper consideration, a vagrant fellow, of whom they knew little or nothing, would easily obtain a certificate, declaring him to be a compleat Servant for every branch of business, and in particular, an admirable cook, gardiner, or whatever else he himself desired to be specified. If, upon trial, he was found totally deficient in any of the branches mentioned, and complaint was made to the court who certified for him, they thought they were fully excused if they could say that, upon their honour, they knew nothing about him, and were wholly ignorant whether he was a good Servant or a bad. On all such occasions they used to launch out in praise of charity, and alledge, that every man had a right to another's good word, as far as it would go, unless he had forfeited it by some particular and known misdemeanor.

C H A P. VIII.

Servants of different characters. A sketch of the good and bad. The inveterate hatred of the bad against the good.

HOWEVER general the corruption was, the reader is not to imagine that all Servants were of the same character, or behaved in the same manner. There were still some, here and there, who acted in a manner suitable to their station, who minded their business, who loved their masters, and were beloved by them. These made as great a struggle as they could to keep matters right in the meetings of the corporation, tho', commonly, with very indifferent success. The opposite principles and conduct of the two sorts may be learned from the following particulars.

They differed, *toto celo*, in their very profession and manner of speaking. The modern fashionable party affirmed, that courage and self-sufficiency ought to be the leading character of a Servant. That he ought always to be speaking in praise of his own deeds. That he ought never to allow of any error or mistake in his behaviour: but, on the contrary, to insist that he deserved the highest approbation. Who is obliged, said they, to speak well of a man who

speaks ill of himself? Can there be any thing more pusillanimous, than for a servant to be always confessing that he can do very little to any purpose.

On the other hand, the honestest sort of Servants declared, that they thought pride and confidence were in themselves hateful, and quite intolerable in Servants. That they should not make high pretensions, lest they should be brought but to the greater shame; that they should acknowledge the great imperfection of every thing they did, and expect to be rewarded, not for the worth or value of their service, but from the goodness and indulgence of their masters.

It was curious to observe the different effects of these principles. Those who spoke in the highest terms of their own qualifications were always the most negligent and the most unfaithful. They grudged every thing they did, and laid hold of innumerable pretences for shortening their hours of labour, and procuring days of relaxation. If, at any time, one of them had done a piece of work in a tolerable manner he could hardly be brought to do any more for two days; but was wholly taken up in admiring his own ingenuity, and commending it to all who would take the pains to listen to him. On the contrary, the humble and self-denied were always busy, applied themselves to their duty with the utmost care and assiduity, and thought they could never do enough. They never once called in question
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the hours of labour, but considered the necessity of the family, or the importance of the work they were engaged in. When any body happened to commend one of them for his diligence, he intreated them to forbear such discourse, for he was very sensible he had not done the thousandth part of what he ought to have done.

Men came to be so sensible of the different effects of these principles, that almost every family earnestly wished to have Servants of the self-denying character, and perfectly hated the other. If they entered into conversation with an unknown Servant, they were particularly attentive to the strain of his discourse, and, though he were upon his guard, would with great sagacity penetrate his sentiments. But, alas! this served very little purpose; for, if he had interest to procure a writ of nomination, they were obliged to receive him, and then being fixed in the saddle, he made a full discovery both of his principles and practice.

Nothing was more remarkable than the rancorous hatred which the self-sufficient bore to the humble Servants; especially such as showed the most remarkable diligence in their work. They spread slanders against them without number. They used to go about with indefatigable diligence, among the great men, and nominators to the established salaries, to exasperate their minds against them, and prevent their settlement or promotion. They represented them as a set of poor, silly, sneaking, spiritless fellows, who, for
no

no other end than to throw an odium on the more free and generous livers, would work longer than usual. For the same reason, it was pretended, that, when the rest were at their pastime running, jumping, or cudgel playing, then to be sure, these hypocrites would be driving a stake; or pruning a tree about a farm, or picking weeds from a garden or field of corn. They represented them, also, (which was indeed partly true,) as acquiring a stiff rustick air, by often stooping, and habitual application to their work.

Neither were they wanting in executing their revenge against their enemies themselves, whenever an opportunity offered. If two or three of the looser sort met, by chance, one of the industrious in a solitary place, or going of an errand; they cunningly solicited him to join with them in some diversion, for example, blind man's-buff, or any other. If he complied, they all conspired against him, and drubbed him heartily; and, after they had done so, one was immediately dispatched to inform against him and let the family he belonged to know how he had been spending his time, so that he was no better than his neighbours. Whenever they discovered a Servant in a field after the usual time of labour, they would get behind the hedges and pelt him unmercifully with stones, so that he returned home, not only fatigued with his work, but severely smarting with the wounds he had received.

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Such was not only the conduct of individuals, but the very same spirit prevailed in the meetings of the corporation, from the lowest to the highest. None met with so severe treatment from them as honest industrious servants, who were beloved in the families where they were placed; neither was there any crime so heinous as being more diligent than the generality of other Servants. If any family accused a servant of pilfering, negligence, drunkenness, or wantonness among the maids, these were all human infirmities, no way atrocious in their nature. They were also hard to be ascertained; so that it was almost impossible to bring a proof of the facts to the satisfaction of the court. But, if one happened to be accused of doing any uncommon service to the family at their desire, or working when others were allowed to play, this was high treason against the constitution; and he was condemned without mercy, and sometimes without hearing.

But, of all the crimes of this sort, the most unpardonable was whatever tended to impeach the wisdom, or weaken the authority of the annual meetings of the corporation. When an inferior court was ordered to introduce a servant into a family who had refused to receive him, sometimes a member or two would humbly represent, that the terms of the oath appeared to them absurd and profane, in that instance, and beg to be excused. Whenever this happened, they

they were dragged as delinquents to the bar, rated and abused, stript and branded, declared infamous, and incapable even of repentance: It was many times affirmed in the general meeting, that no man could be guilty of a crime which so much as approached in guilt to that of disparaging the authority of the corporation of Servants.

I must take this opportunity of acquainting the reader with a story that happened a few years before my informer left the country. One of the Servants, who was a great opposer of the prevailing measures, finding his brethren to be deaf to serious reasoning, fell upon a singular device. Being possess'd of a vein of humour, and knowing a little of the art of painting, he drew a picture of the droll or ludicrous kind, in which, by ænigmatical characters, he represented the various impositions of the Servants in general. He also took off the likenesses of the principal and most active leaders of the corporation, and put them in the most comical postures imaginable. Here was to be seen a fellow capering and dancing in a garden all full of weeds, and his instruments lying beside him, quite grown over with rust—Another carrying a basket over his arm, with the sign of a pine apple in his hand, and a passenger, on examining the contents, finds nothing but stinking fish, and stops his nose—A great bloated fellow, swelled like a tun, challenging the whole country to run a race with him—Another hurrying away a girl into a corner, and covering her with his

his frock.—These, and many others, he drew in such a manner, as clearly to expose their knavery and ostentation.

This picture was stuck up, in the night-time, near a publick road leading to a great town. As the persons were all very well known, it is not to be imagined what entertainment it afforded to the people. No body could look upon it without laughing: and, when ever any of the Servants, honoured with a place in it, were seen upon the streets, the boys gathered about them in crowds, and, to their unspeakable mortification, mimicked the postures in which they had been represented. Copies in miniature were taken of this performance, and kept in many families: so that, whenever the Servants were in ill humour they would pull out the draught, and hold it in their eye.

The fury and resentment of the Servants, on the publication of this piece, is not to be conceived. The author had done it with so much caution and secrecy, that they could not get him legally convicted. However, they either discovered, or at least thought they had discovered, who he was, and employed themselves night and day, in devising methods of revenge. Above all, that unlucky fellow, who had been represented following the girl, was so transported with rage, that he scarce ever returned to his right senses. He had been something of a draughtsman himself, so he set about making a picture in ridicule of the industrious

trious servants; but, either the thing itself was so difficult, or he proceeded with so much rage and trepidation, that it was a perfect caricatura, and his friends prevailed with him to suppress it.

The poor author, in the mean time, was obliged to be constantly upon his guard, as there was always a set of desperadoes lying in wait for him, armed with clubs, and fully determined to beat his brains out, if they could catch him in a proper place. In the mean time, they all agreed in telling lies upon him without ceasing. They affirmed, that no body but a complete rascal could be capable of such a performance; that to betray Servants to their masters was, at any rate, a malicious trick; but, that for a Servant to laugh at his fellow Servants, and set other people a laughing at them too, was the clearest demonstration of a depraved heart. It was ten years after the fact was committed, that my informer left the country; and he declared that their resentment had not abated in the least degree: a circumstance which I observed, had made a deep impression upon his mind; so that he would often say, From the fury of an enraged Servant, good Lord deliver me. He also told me, that he was convinced by this example, that wit and humour was a talent unspeakably prejudicial to the possessor; and therefore, if ever he had a child, and observed in him the least turn that way, he would apply himself with the utmost assiduity to eradicate it as a vice.

C H A P. IX.

The carelessness of Servants in their work. A curious debate in a certain family, which issued in nothing.

IT will be easily perceived, from what has been said above, that the greatest part of the Servants were excessively negligent. They seemed to have two great objects constantly in view, and to carry them on hand in hand; the increase of their wages, and the diminution of their labour. The truth is, however strange it may seem, these always bore an exact proportion to one another. Whenever a Servant got more wages settled upon him, he looked upon it as a consequence, that he should be more slothful than before. In the mean time, it was remarkable what ingenious and plausible reasonings they always fell upon to justify their conduct. On this subject particularly they would say, 'What is well done is soon done. A small piece of work, executed as it ought to be, is better than marring a great deal, which is worse than idleness.'

Instead of any other general remarks, I shall entertain the reader with a curious example of their ingenuity, in devising excuses for their own neglect. This happened in the family of a great man, about three years after the publication of

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the enigmatical picture, and plainly showed that tho' the reproof had enraged them, it had contributed nothing to reform them. One morning, almost the whole Servants of this family were gathered together in a large hall, to consider what work it would be proper for them to fall about that day. A Servant who, indeed, was not very well looked upon, as inclining a little to the sober industrious kind, complained, that there had been for a long time an intolerable negligence in keeping the fences, and excluding straying or strange cattle from their master's grounds. He therefore proposed, that they should immediately go in a body, drive out all the strange cattle, without exception, that were in the inclosures, and mend up the fences, which were now in so sorry a condition. He told them, that there were many strange cattle pasturing where they ought not to be; particularly, that he himself, not an hour before, had seen a large bull, with a thick neck, and dull heavy eyes, but broad shoulders, firm joints, and a lank belly, which made him fit for jumping. On this a dispute arose, of which the reader may take the following just and faithful account.

One observed, that he could not agree to the motion, which proceeded from a person no way remarkable for a good temper. 'If our brother would look a little more at home, says he; perhaps he would find less reason for these snarling complaints for the negligence of others. The proposal

proposal is unkind and unbenevolent. There should be great forbearance used in every family toward their neighbours. No doubt there have been, and there will be, trespasses upon both sides; and therefore, I am humbly of opinion, that no notice should be taken of it at all.

A second then rises up, and speaks to the following effect. If I thought that any good would follow upon what is now proposed, I should readily agree to it. I am perhaps as much attached to my master's interest as the person who made this motion, notwithstanding all his fine professions; but I am persuaded it would be altogether in vain. There is a strange disposition, in beasts of all kinds, to break into those places from which there is any attempt to keep them out; it would therefore only increase the evil it pretends to remedy. All persecution, we know, helps the cause of the persecuted; so that supposing one has made an encroachment at this time, if he were driven out, we may depend upon it, he would immediately return with twenty more at his heels.

A third made a very sage and learned observation. Take notice, says he, what you are about to do. There is more difficulty in it than you apprehend. Is there not a very great similitude in colour, shape and size, between our master's cattle and his neighbour's? It would oblige us to

a very strict and particular examination before
 we could determine the point. This would
 create such difference of opinion, such zeal and
 keenness in every one to support his own sen-
 timents, that we might spend the whole time
 of our service before we could come to any con-
 clusion. I acknowledge it is a fixed principle,
 that every beast should be kept only on his
 own master's grounds; but, I hope you will be
 sensible, it is only a speculative point which
 a beast belongs to one master, and which to a-
 nother. On this subject, wise and good Ser-
 vants have differed in all ages, and will differ
 to the end of the world.

A fourth delivered the following opinion. I
 cannot help being against the motion, for a
 reason that no body has yet taken notice of. I
 can assure you, from my certain knowledge, it
 would give great pleasure to the strange cattle
 themselves, and, in particular to the bull who
 seems to have given occasion to the present de-
 bate. He has a vast satisfaction in being gazed
 upon and wondered at, which would be the
 certain consequence of this attempt. Besides,
 he is infected with an inveterate itch, which
 gives him an infinite pleasure in being driven
 through the gaps of hedges, and being scrubbed
 and clawed by the thorns in the passages.

A fifth said, I am surprized to see so much
 time spent upon this ridiculous proposal. The
 author of it seems to have forgot a fundamental
 law.

‘ law of the Corporation, that no Servant should
‘ meddle with the affairs of another family, or
‘ pretend to take the inspection or government
‘ of any beasts but such as belong to his own
‘ master. Now, says he, this is manifestly the
‘ case in the present instance; nay, it is even
‘ implied in the proposal itself, which is, there-
‘ fore, quite irregular and incompetent. If that
‘ bull does not belong to us, let his own master
‘ send for him when he pleases; we have noth-
‘ ing to do with him. Let us mind our own
‘ affairs.’

Then rose a servant of ancient standing, several
of his teeth having been lost by old age, who
bore a particular mark of his master’s favour. He
was remarkable for making long speeches, of
which it was difficult to comprehend the mean-
ing. After speaking about half an hour, quite
unintelligibly, he concluded thus. ‘ Brethren,
‘ I do not deny, that such a proposal as this
‘ might have done very well in former times,
‘ when the fences were almost entire, and the
‘ offending strangers very few: but, at present,
‘ it is quite romantick and impossible. Will any
‘ man seriously pretend, at this time of day, when
‘ the hedges are almost wholly broken down, and
‘ so many encroachments on every hand, to af-
‘ firm, that none ought to continue in the in-
‘ closures but such as truly belong to our master.
‘ I am afraid his fields would make a very de-

‘ solate appearance, for there would be few left
‘ behind.’

Last of all, one tells them in a few words, that the debate was altogether idle; that there was a mistake at the very bottom of the affair: for, by the best information he could procure, the beast in question was not a bull, but an ox.

To sum up the matter, one or other of these various and contradictory reasons prevailed upon a great majority to come to this resolution, that it was not prudent nor expedient, at this time, to agree to the proposal; and, therefore, the intruders in general should be winked at, and that beast in particular, whether he were bull or ox, should continue where he was.

CHAP.

C H A P. X.

Of the ambition and covetousness of the Servants, and the various methods they fell upon to gratify their desires.

I HAVE observed before, that the constitution in this province was framed with great care, and seemed particularly calculated to prevent ambition and love of pre-eminence. For this reason, they established a parity among the Servants, and took every measure they could think of, to prevent the introduction of overseers and archoverseers. By this time, however, the Servants had not only degenerated in point of fidelity and diligence, but had made great encroachments upon the constitution itself. They had a prodigious hankering after the high-sounding titles, and immense revenues, which were given to Servants in the neighbouring province. It grieved them to hear, and sometimes, when sent upon business to that country, to see, that some of the overseers lived in splendid palaces, and were carried about in chariots, while they themselves were still obliged to wear the dress of Servants, and generally to walk a-foot.

Gladly would they have introduced these offices in their own province; but the great men, who had hitherto assisted them, dreaded the expence, and

and would not agree to it. They were, therefore, obliged to proceed cautiously and gradually. In some few instances, they made it appear, that one Servant might be introduced in two different families, and enjoy both the salaries. As to the work, they might be sometimes in the one, and sometimes in the other; or, if one of them was a family of small consequence, they might do well enough without any Servant at all. They begged, in the most abject manner, of the governor of the province, that a small number of salaries might be appointed, without any office annexed to them, by way of gratuities, for the encouragement of good Servants. This was done; and there followed a terrible competition for obtaining them, which produced a most malignant hatred between those who were successful and those who were not.

The reader may perhaps imagine, that the hope of meriting these salaries would excite them to vie with one another, in doing the business of the families where they served. It was quite the contrary. They tried every method of advancement but that only; or, if any did try it in that way, they were sure to be disappointed. Some of them used the old way of flattery, which had always a very great effect. Some became political tools, spies, and informers to the prevailing party at court. Some were not ashamed to become pimps and pandars to great men, and even sometimes to attend them in their nocturnal expeditions.

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Some endeavoured to make themselves remarkable for feats and achievements quite out of the way of their own business. One of them for example, would make a windmill, of curious structure, and put it upon the top of the house where he lived. The consequence of this was, that passengers going that way, after standing still and admiring it a little, would ask any person they saw next, who had done it. The answer immediately followed, 'The servant who lives here, is a most ingenious fellow, as ever was fetch.' Thus was his fame spread abroad, and sometimes came to the ears of the people above.

I cannot help particularly mentioning one who was the most successful of all that had gone before him, who was alive when my informer left the country, and probably may be alive at this very time. The method he fell upon, was telling wonderful stories of the heroic actions of that people's predecessors, a subject of which they were enthusiastically fond. He had acquired a very great knack of story-telling, and could describe things so to the life, both by word and gesture, that every body was delighted to hear him. He immediately gave over all work in the family to which he belonged; and when they civilly put him in mind of his neglect, he told them they might go about their business, for they were a pack of seditious scoundrels, altogether below his notice. He was a fellow of uncommon ability; and no less remarkable for enterprise and resolution.

resolution. He carried on his schemes; procur-
ed for himself one salary after another; and did
not fail to laugh at the simplicity of those who
bestowed them, saying among his intimate com-
panions, 'He blessed God that mankind were so
'easily' deceived, by the formal countenance of a
'Servant.'

The supernumerary salaries, however, were so
few, that they were soon exhausted, and did lit-
tle else, indeed, than excite a hungering and
thirsting after more. To remedy this, they fell
upon a method of gratifying the vanity of those
whose pockets they could not fill. A title was
invented, which, (like the honorary rewards of the
ancients in this part of the world) they said,
would serve to distinguish illustrious merit, and
raise a happy emulation. The title was, Master
of Service; and the directors of the schools or
places of exercise were appointed to bestow it,
according to the skill and proficiency, of the
candidates. Immediately applications came in
from all quarters, and it was dealt about very li-
berally, and, if possible, even more absurdly than
the salaries had been before. There was hard-
ly an instance of its being bestowed for real
knowledge or useful industry: but for some
whimsical qualification of a different kind. If a
man had invented a new dance or song, or collec-
ted a whole barrel of salted butterflies in one sum-
mer, or made a gold chain for binding a flea to
a post, he was instantly created a Master of Service.

CHAP.

*Of the sentiments of the people concerning the Servants
and their manner of treating them.*

THE reader may probably be wondering in himself, how the people behaved in these circumstances, and what became of their affairs. He may be ready to think, that their patience must be by this time nearly exhausted, and some terrible revolution at hand. The truth is, the patience of many of them had been at an end for many years; but, being divided among themselves, their influence was not sufficient to produce a general change. It is impossible to mention all the effects which the conduct of the Servants had upon the people; but it will be worthwhile to take particular notice of two classes of men, and their behaviour upon the subject.

One set of people rose among them, whose sentiments and conduct were as singular and extraordinary, as any thing recorded in this book. They were men who made high pretensions to reason and penetration, and gave themselves much to abstract reflections upon the nature of things. They were of opinion, that all the wisdom of the nation centered in themselves; and that all the rest were downright fools or madmen. However, entering upon their speculations with such
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an overweening conceit of themselves, their boasted reason first led them into many mistakes, and at last fairly turned their heads.

It was their custom to search into history, and particularly into the history of the Servants. There they found, that, in every age, there had been a great deal of knavery among the Servants. All the instances of this sort they used to collect, publish, and compare with the conduct of the Servants in their own times; which they exposed with the greatest severity. At last, by long dwelling upon this subject, they came to be of opinion, that there ought to be no such thing in nature as a Servant; that they never had done any thing but harm; and that the world would be much better without them. Sometimes sober-minded people attempted to set them to rights, and alledged, that, tho' the dishonest had always been too numerous as well as noisy, yet still there were some of great worth and usefulness; nay, that society, in the nature of things, could not subsist without persons in lower stations, to serve and accommodate those in higher. This was so far from having an effect upon them, that they became always more positive upon contradiction, and scarce ever failed to advance opinions still more wild and romantic than before. Instead of yielding that Servants were necessary in society, they affirmed, that it was not only desirable, but extremely possible, to have a whole nation

nation of lords, without one person among them of inferior degree.

They affirmed, that excepting Servants, all other men were by nature wise, honest, and active; fully sufficient for their own happiness; and that they would have been quite virtuous and happy, without any exception, if they had not been blindfolded and deceived by the Servants. To this race, whom they used often in a fit of raving, to curse in a most dreadful manner, they imputed all the envy, malice, oppression, covetousness, fraud, rapine, and bloodshed that ever had happened since the beginning of the world. In support of their scheme, they made learned disquisitions on nature, and the first cause of all things. They shewed that nature was, and must be wise and good in all her productions; and, therefore, that man must needs be free from every thing that is evil, and his original constitution perfectly just and sound. All the disorders that were to be seen in society were easily accounted for, from the hellish machinations of the Servants. In the mean time, it was obvious, that the Servants were the product of nature too; and according to the same reasoning, must have been of as gentle and tractable dispositions, and in all respects as faultless as their masters. This manifest difficulty in their own scheme, however unaccountable it may appear, they never once reflected upon, nor by consequence attempted to resolve.

Sometimes they were pressed with the necessity of Servants to cultivate the ground, which, if neglected, it was plain, would grow over with briars and thorns, and every noxious weed. Here they immediately recurred to their old argument, the excellency of nature's productions; and, upon the strength of it, presumed absolutely to deny the fact. They said, were the earth only left to itself, it would produce nothing but what was useful and salutary, and that in great abundance, for the support of its inhabitants; that all the pretended cultivation of it by the Servants was but spoiling it; and that they themselves had sowed the seeds of every hurtful or unnecessary plant. It was to no purpose to mention to them, either the vast tracts of uncultivated ground, or the desolate condition of a neglected field; all this, they pretended, arose from a certain sympathy in the several parts of the earth one with another, and from poisonous vapours easily carried by the wind, from the places where Servants had been at work. In short, they sometimes projected a scheme for a new settlement where no Servants should be admitted; and where they hoped, in a little time, every man would be as wise as a philosopher, as rich as a merchant, and as magnificent as a king.

After all, the perfection of their absurdity appeared in the following circumstance. Though it was plain, to any person of reflexion, that their delirium took its rise from the tricks and misbehaviour

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Behaviour of bad Servants, yet they had the most rooted and inveterate antipathy at those that were good. The reason, probably was, that the diligence and usefulness of this last sort stood directly in the way of their scheme, and prevented the rest of the nation from being of their opinion. All seemingly good Servants they affirmed to be at bottom arrant knaves; and in one respect, unspeakably worse than any of the rest, because they appeared to be better. The idle, slothful, worthless Servants, were frequently their companions; and it was one of their highest entertainments to lead such fellows into frolicks, mischief, or debauchery, and then point them out to their fellow citizens, and use words to this purpose; ‘ You poor hood-winked fools, do you see these rascals? why will you any longer harbour them in your houses? they are all of one complexion, and will infallibly bring you to misery and speedy destruction.’

C H A P. XII.

Continuation of the same subject. The sentiments and conduct of others, in consequence of the behaviour of the Servants.

WE are not to suppose that the whole nation lost their senses. No: by far the greater number acted as prudently and rationally as men could do in their circumstances. According to plain common sense, in proportion as corruption and degeneracy increased among the Servants, they set the higher value on such as were honest and faithful. They used every mean in their power to procure such for their own families, agreeably to the laws of the corporation. When this could not be brought about, or when a good-for-nothing-fellow was buckled to the salary, they put themselves to the additional expence of hiring one according to their own mind; paid the former his wages duly, and only desired the favour of him to give them no trouble, but spend his time according to his own fancy.

It was pleasant enough to observe the different conduct of the established Servants, according to their different tempers, when they fell under this predicament. Some of them were greatly enraged to see the service of another preferred to theirs, used many artful methods to prevent it
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where they could, and took every opportunity of venting their malice, or glutting their revenge when they could not. Where they could get any body to believe them, they asserted that all skill and power of doing good was confined to the corporation; that it was inherent in them, and descended in their blood from one generation to another, like courage in the race of game cocks. The others, they pretended, were a spurious brood, and that it was impossible to train them so as to make them fit for service.

If this did not gain credit, all possible pains were taken to disparage the conduct of the additional Servants. Their work was examined with the greatest strictness, every flaw in it pointed out, and many faults imputed to it merely through envy. If any piece of work appeared to be substantial, they pretended it wanted neatness, and was altogether inelegant. This charge, however, made little impression upon the people. They had been so long plagued with Servants who minded nothing but ornament, both in their persons and their work, that they were rather pleased than disgusted with one of a more homely carriage.

When nothing else would do, the grossest lies and calumnies were spread, both of the new Servants and those who employed them. It was pretended, that they sowed the seeds of sedition and disaffection, in the families where they got admittance. Sometimes this accusation, tho' utterly groundless, obtained such credit with the
governors

governors, that, if they had a complaint to make, or a cause to try, they could scarcely expect justice. It was also alledged, that they terrified the children out of their wits, by telling frightful stories in the winter evenings. You might meet with many of the established Servants who asserted, and even seemed to believe, that all who employed any other than themselves, were idiots or crack-brained, and destitute of common sense.

On the other hand, not a few of the established Servants were altogether indifferent how many others were hired, and how little work was left to themselves. They knew that their wages were well secured to them, which was the main chance; and they found rather more time and liberty to follow the bent of their inclinations. Perhaps they would have been better satisfied if the people had been content with what kind and quality of work they thought proper to do. But, as this was not to be expected, the hiring of others rendered all matters perfectly easy, and their lives were one continued scene of indolence or pleasure.

In the mean time, it was highly diverting to hear how they expressed themselves upon this subject, and with how much art and cunning they made a virtue of necessity. They used to extol their own candour and benevolence. ‘Gentle-
‘men,’ one of them would say, ‘you see with
‘what discretion I use you. I am always glad
‘to see liberty prevail, and every man suffered to
do

‘ do what seems proper to himself. I am well
‘ pleased, that you should hire as many Servants
‘ as you incline. I ask no more, than that I
‘ may have a clean neat bed-chamber, in a con-
‘ venient part of the house, my wages well and
‘ regularly paid, and a small bit of ground in
‘ the garden to bring up a few delicious herbs
‘ and fruits for my own use. If these things are
‘ properly attended to, you shall find me a good
‘ man to live with; I shall never interfere with
‘ your work in the least, or give you any manner
‘ of trouble, even by making remarks upon it.’

In such a case, it would happen now and then, that one of the family, touched a little with the absurdity of this phlegmatick speech, would answer, ‘ That very well he might make himself
‘ easy, since, all the while, he was well fed and
‘ clothed at their expence.’ This he would receive with silent contempt, and display the greatest satisfaction in his own composure of spirit, and meekness of temper.

As for the remaining part of the nation, they reflected very little upon their condition, but took such Servants as were sent to them, and rubbed on as well as they could. Such quiet and passive people were highly extolled by the Servants, who took all opportunities of declaring, that they were the only solid and rational persons in the whole kingdom. These praises delighted them greatly; so that they lived as poor and as merry as beggars, who have nothing to hope, and nothing to fear.

CON-

C O N C L U S I O N .

THUS I have given the reader an account of this extraordinary class of men; and I am certain, he must confess, there is something in their characters and conduct, proper to excite a mixture of laughter and indignation. It is also probable, that he feels a considerable degree of sympathy with the deluded and oppressed people, and is anxious to know, whether there appeared any prospect of deliverance. This was a question I often asked at my informer, who assured me that, from what he had heard and seen, there was not the most distant prospect of reformation by the Servants themselves. The honest sort were always borne down, traduced and slandered; and those of an opposite character had so long kept the management of the corporation in their hands, that they reckoned themselves secure in their authority, and openly set at defiance both the people in general, and their fellow Servants.

There remained just a glimpse of hope from one quarter, viz. the gentlemen who had been chosen to the office of helpers. They had at first contributed as much as any to the introduction of wrong measures; but, not being under the temptation of interest, they began to open their eyes at last. For some years they had been a considerable restraint upon the violence of the Servants,
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and had prevented them in several instances from degrading, stripping, and branding those who had incurred their displeasure, by doing business at unseasonable hours. They had also contributed to the disgrace and dismissal of some drunken fots, and lascivious wretches, whom several of the leading Servants had a strong inclination to spare. From these circumstances, some flattered themselves that a change might be brought about; and that though the Servants would never think of any reformation themselves, it would soon be 'forced upon them by a foreign hand.'

After all, it was but very uncertain whether any material change would soon take place; and therefore, while we can only send that unhappy people our good wishes, we have reason to rejoice in our own good fortune, that we are perfectly free from impositions of the same or any similar kind.

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