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THE CORNER-STONE.

LONDON :

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD-STREET-HILL.

THE
CORNER-STONE ;

OR,

A FAMILIAR ILLUSTRATION OF THE PRINCIPLES

OF

CHRISTIAN TRUTH.

“ Jesus Christ himself being the chief *Corner-Stone*.”

✓
BY JACOB ABBOTT,

PRINCIPAL OF MOUNT VERNON FEMALE SCHOOL.

ABRIDGED BY THE REV. HENRY BLUNT, M. A.
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P R E F A C E.

THE following Work is intended to be, in some sense, the counterpart to the "Young Christian;" *that* having exhibited the first principles of Christian Duty, and *this*, on the other hand, developing the elements of Religious Truth.

The experienced Christian must not look here for additions to his stock of religious knowledge. If I had had any new and peculiar views of any portion of divine truth, I should not have brought them forward in this volume; for it is the elements only of Christianity which I mean here to teach. It is not my aim to advance the science of theology, but to disseminate its *acknowledged* principles; and I have endeavoured to exhibit them simply as they are taught in the New Testament, and as they have been understood by the great body of Christians in every age.

There has been, it must be admitted, and there still continues to be, some controversy on the subjects treated in this volume; and how far what I have said may be acceptable to different classes of Christians, I do not know. I should suppose it would meet with decided opposition from some, were it not that I have often been surprised to see how Christians, who have been considered as entertaining views apparently the most diverse, will come together on a simple exhibition of the gospel, when it is not urged in a tone of challenge and defiance. A heated controversy drives men to such extremes in their expressions, that a calm bystander cannot easily tell what they really do believe. Should any persons, however, find any thing in this volume to disapprove, I trust they will do me the justice to admit, that I have made this exhibition of the gospel with reference to its moral effect on human hearts, and not for the purpose of taking sides in a controversy between different parties of Christians.

The work is not intended to contain a *complete* system of religious truth. Like the "Young Christian," it is designed to be only one excursion into a field which is almost boundless; and in our progress through it, I call the attention of those who accompany me, to such objects, and to such moral scenery, as naturally come in our way. A system of theology is a *map* or a *plan*, in which every feature of the country must be laid down in its proper place and proportion; this work

is, on the other hand, a *series of views*, as the traveller sees them in passing over a certain road. In this case, the road which I have taken leads, indeed, through the heart of the country, but it does not by any means bring to view all which is interesting or important.

The reader will perceive that the history of Jesus Christ is the clew which I have endeavoured to follow ; that is, the work is intended to exhibit religious truth as it is connected with the various events in the life of our Saviour. In first introducing him to the scene, I consider his exalted nature as the GREAT MORAL MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINITY to us. Then follows a view of his PERSONAL CHARACTER, and of his views of RELIGIOUS DUTY. From this last subject we turn aside a little to consider the general CONDUCT OF MANKIND, its CONSEQUENCES, and the principles on which these consequences can be averted by PARDON ; and then we return again to the history of the Saviour,—to the scenes at the LAST SUPPER, and at the CRUCIFIXION. His PARTING COMMAND, and PARTING PROMISE, bring us to the CONCLUSION of the volume.

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THE CORNER-STONE.

CHAP. I.

THE DEITY.

“ The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

“ IF any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine;” so said the Saviour, and the obvious inference from it is, that we are to act up to the light we have, before we seek for more. Reader, are you *doing God’s will*? This book is intended to explain such of the elementary principles of the gospel of Christ, as are necessary to supply the most pressing wants of a human soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness; and this gospel, the Bible assures us, cannot be understood, unless the heart is willing to comply with its claims. If you have not confessed your sins, therefore, and asked forgiveness,—if you do not habitually strive against temptation, seeking help from above,—if you do not aim at doing the will of God in your daily pursuits, I do earnestly advise you to go to God before you proceed farther, and implore his forgiveness for the past, and in the most solemn and emphatic manner, commit yourself to him for the future. Whatever difficulties, in your mind, hang around the subjects connected with religious truth, you certainly know enough to see that this is a duty, and you cannot neglect or postpone obedience without doing violence to conscience, and displeasing God. Do it, then, before you proceed any farther. You will then have God’s guidance and assistance as you go on. You will be preserved from error, and led into the truth. Your heart being opened, the instruction

which this volume may present, will enter into it, and contribute to its improvement and happiness. But it will do no good to heap up the truth before a door which is securely barred against what is already there.

Some centuries ago, a large, a very large company were travelling northwardly in early summer, through a lovely country, whose hills and valleys were clothed with the fig-tree, the olive, and the vine. They journeyed slowly, and without anxiety or care, for their route lay through a quiet land, the abode of peace and plenty. Friends and acquaintances were mingled together in groups, as accident or inclination might dictate, until the sun went down, and the approach of evening warned them to make preparations for rest. While the various families were drawing together for this purpose, the attention and the sympathy of the multitude were excited by the anxious looks and eager inquiries of a female who was passing from group to group, with sorrow and agitation painted on her countenance. It was a mother, who could not find her son. It was her only son, and one to whom, from peculiar circumstances, she was very strongly attached. He had never disobeyed her; he had never given her unnecessary trouble; and the uncommon maturity of his mental and moral powers had probably led her to trust him much more to himself than in any other case would be justifiable. He was twelve years old, and she supposed that he had been safe in the company; but now night had come, and she could not find him. She went anxiously and sorrowfully from family to family, and from friend to friend, inquiring with deep solicitude, 'Have you seen my son?'

He was not to be found. No one had seen him, and the anxious parents left their company, and inquiring carefully by the way, went slowly back to the city whence they had come.

The city was in the midst of a country of mountains and valleys. Dark groves upon the summits crowned the richly cultivated fields which adorned their sides. The road wound along the glens and vales, sharing the passage with the streams which flowed towards a neighbouring sea. The city itself spread its edifices over the broad surface of a hill, one extremity of which was crowned with the spacious walls and colonnades of a temple, rising one above another, the whole pile beaming, probably, in the setting sun, as these anxious parents approached it, in all the dazzling whiteness of marble and splendour of gold. The parents, however, could not have thought much of the scene before them. They had lost their son.

With what anxious and fruitless search they spent the evening and the following morning we do not know. They at last, however, ascended to the temple itself. They passed from court to court, now going up the broad flight of steps which led from one to the other, now walking under a lofty colonnade, and now traversing a paved and ornamented area. At last, in a public part of this edifice, they found a group collected around a boy, and apparently listening to what he was saying; the feeling must have been of mingled interest, curiosity, and surprise. It was their son. His uncommon mental and moral maturity had by some means shown itself to those around him, and they were deeply interested in his questions and replies.

His mother,—for the narrative, true to nature and to fact, makes the mother the foremost parent in every thing connected with the search for their son,—does not reproach him. She could not reproach one who had been such a son. She asked him why he had staid behind, and gently reminded him of the sorrow and suffering he had caused them. He gave them a reply which she could not fully understand; and the feelings with which twelve years of intercourse, such as no mother ever before had with a son, had inspired her for him, forbade her pressing him for an explanation. "*She laid his words up in her heart.*"

With what a strange mixture of affection and wonder, and ardent, but respectful regard, must the mother of Jesus have habitually looked upon her boy! A boy who had never spoken an impatient or disrespectful word; who had never manifested an unkind or a selfish feeling; who had never disobeyed, never failed in his duty; but had, for twelve long years, never given father or mother an unnecessary step, or a moment's uneasiness, or neglected any thing which could give them pleasure. My reader, are you still under your father's roof? If so, try the experiment of doing, in every respect, for a single week, your duty to your father and mother; fill your heart with kindness and love to them, and let your words and your actions be in all respects controlled by these feelings;—be the disinterested and untiring friend and helper of your little brothers and sisters;—in a word, do your whole duty in the family of which you form a part, making filial affection and respect the evident spring, and you will fill a mother's heart with gladness at the change. You can then a little understand the deep tide of enjoyment, which must have filled Mary's heart during the childhood of her spotless son.

What, too, must have been the progress of his mind in knowledge and wisdom:—a mind, never allured away by folly, or impeded by idleness, or deranged by passion! Conceive of a frame too, which no guilty indulgence of appetite or propensity had impaired, and a countenance which was bright with its expression of intelligence and energy, and yet beaming with kindness and love. It was the perfection of human nature, the carrying out to its limit, all which God originally intended in the creation of man. And why was it so? How has it happened, that among the millions upon millions of children who have by disobedience, ingratitude, and sin, planted thorns in their mothers' pillows, and often thrown sadness about the circle in which they moved, this boy had been the only spotless one? How is it, that he alone had walked in purity,—that he alone had never sinned, never sought selfishly his own, never given a parent pain,

never injured a playmate, or returned an impatient word, or struck a blow in anger, or harboured a feeling of revenge? He stands a glorious monument of perfect filial virtue, the more glorious because it is solitary. No other nation, or kindred, or people, or clime, ever furnished such a case, or pretended to furnish one. It is remarkable, that among all the endless fables and pretensions of ancient times, no historian or mythologist, no priest, or prophet, or philosopher, has ever pretended to have found a spotless man. The whole world withdraws its pretensions. Every system of religion, and every school of philosophy, stand back from this field, and leave Jesus Christ alone, the solitary example of perfect moral purity, in the midst of a world lying in sin. The motto of our chapter contains the only explanation. It is, "THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST."

Almost all young persons are lost and confounded in attempting to obtain any clear conceptions of the Deity; or rather I should say, they are embarrassed and perplexed by many false and absurd impressions, which come up with them from childhood, and which cling to them very obstinately in riper years. Let us turn away, then, a short time from the history of the child Jesus, that we may look a little into this subject. It is not an easy one. It will require patient thought and close attention. You ought to pause from time to time, as you read the following paragraphs, to look within and around you, and to send forth your conceptions far away in the regions into which I shall attempt to guide them. And above all, remember that if ever you need divine assistance, it is when you attempt to look into the nature and character of that *Power* which is the origin and the support of all other existence.

In the first place, let us take a survey of the visible universe, that we may see what manifestations of God appear in it. Let us imagine that we can see with the naked eye all that the telescope would shew us; and then in order that we may obtain an uninterrupted view, let us leave this earth, and ascending from its surface, take a station where we can

look, without obstruction, upon all around. As we rise above the summits of the loftiest mountains, the bright and verdant regions of the earth begin to grow dim. City after city, and stream after stream, fade away from view, and at length we see the whole earth itself rolling away on its course, and reflecting from its surface a uniform and silvery light. As the last breath of its atmosphere draws off from us, it leaves us in the midst of universal night, with a sky extending without interruption all around us, and bringing out to our view in every possible direction, innumerable and interminable vistas of stars. They grow fainter and fainter in the distance, till they are lost in measureless regions, too remote to be seen, but which are still as full and as brilliant as those which are near. In one quarter of the heavens we do indeed see the sun shining in all his splendour, but as there is no atmosphere around us to reflect his rays, they produce no general illumination, and the dazzling splendour of his disk beams out from a dark nocturnal sky. The stars beyond him, bright and faint, as they are nearer or more distant, send to us their beams entirely unobstructed by his rays. We have thus the whole visible universe open to our view, so far as telescopic vision will carry us into its remoter regions. Let us look at it in detail.

Do you see yon moon-like looking planet, gliding almost imperceptibly towards us on its way? From that portion of its surface which is turned towards the sun, it reflects to us a silvery light, while the rest of its form is in shadow and unseen. As it approaches us, it enlarges and swells, until it fills the whole quarter of the sky whence it comes. Its illuminated surface is turned more and more from us, as it passes between us and the sun; and as it wheels majestically by us, we see,—dimly indeed, for we look upon its shaded side,—but we see broadly extended regions crowded with life and vegetation. The mighty mass, however, passes on; a bright line of light begins to creep in upon its western limb. The darkened surface gradually fades from our view, and we soon see nothing but the shining crescent which dwindles to a point,

as this mighty world of life, covered with verdure, and thronged with population, wheels away and takes its place among the stars of the evening sky, itself soon the faintest star of all.

In another quarter of the heavens, we see a larger planet, whose surface it would take the swiftest human traveller hundreds of years merely to explore; but it beams mildly upon us from its distant orbit, a little gilded ball.

There are four bright points in the sky near it; two on each side, so minute as to be almost invisible, and yet shining with a clear and steady light, except when in their regular revolution round their parent orb, they disappear behind him, or are lost in his shadow. The whole group, the moons and the mighty mass around which they revolve, sweep on in their annual circuit with nearly the velocity of lightning, but in their almost measureless distance, their motion is to us so nearly imperceptible, that we must watch them days or weeks to be satisfied that they move at all.

Measureless distance, did I say? No. The Creator of this moving world has framed an intellect which has surveyed the bounds of its orbit. Its distance is measured, and its mighty mass is weighed as accurately as any distance, or any weight can be ascertained; and human calculation will tell precisely what situation, at any instant, hundreds of years hence, the planet itself, and every one of its satellites will have assumed. The maker of this machinery set it in motion at least six thousand years ago, and yet so precise, so unaltered and unalterable is the regularity with which he carries it on, that its motions are now the very standard of exactness among men. By these revolutions, an observer in the remotest lands, finds what is the exact time at his distant home, and learns the very distance which separates him from it. It is in fact an illuminated clock which God has placed in the heavens, and whose motions he regulates, so as to make it an unerring guide to man.

Turn now to another quarter, and you see far, far beyond all that we have yet observed, a brilliant star, the brightest

among all the constellations around. It is Sirius,—the fixed, unaltered Sirius. He has been watched for ages, and gazed upon by ten thousand eyes, but no one has discovered in him the slightest motion or change. He keeps his precise place among the feebler companions around him. His lustre never waxes or wanes. No telescope will enlarge or alter him, or bring him nearer, and from two stations a hundred and ninety millions of miles apart, he appears in the same place, and shines with the same brightness, and his unalterable beam comes apparently from the same direction.

But inconceivably remote as this star is from us, we can see far, very far beyond him. The eye penetrates between him and those around, away into boundless regions, where the vista stretches on from star to star, and from cluster to cluster, in endless perspective. The faint nebula is perhaps the most remote of all, whose dim and delicately pencilled light, in the very remotest sky, is, every ray of it, the concentrated effulgence of a blazing sun, so inconceivably distant, however, that their united power can produce only the vision of a little faint cloud, apparently just ready to melt away and disappear.

Such is the scene as it would present itself to an observer, who could escape for an hour from the obstructions to the view at the surface of the earth, and from the dimness and the reflections of our atmosphere. Our globe itself cuts off one half of the visible universe at all times, and the air spreads over us a deep canopy of blue, which during the day, shuts out entirely the other half. But were the field open, we should see in every direction the endless perspective of suns and stars as I have described them. And this too *all around us*,—above and below, to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south. But the beautiful canopy above us does not conceal from us a material heaven beyond.

Banish then,—for this is the object to which I have been in these paragraphs aiming,—all material ideas of a Deity, and do not let your imagination struggle to find its way upwards to some material heaven, with indefinite and idle

conceptions of a monarch seated on a throne. The striking and beautiful metaphors of the Bible never were intended to give us this idea. GOD IS A SPIRIT, it says in its most emphatic tone. Where he acts, there only can we see him. He is the wide-spread omnipresent *power*, which is everywhere employed,—but which we can never see, and never know, except so far as he shall manifest himself by his doings.

This universal essence, then, must display to us its nature, by acting itself out in a thousand places, by such manifestations of itself, as it wishes us to understand. Does God desire to impress us with the idea of his power? He darts the lightning from cloud to cloud, or rolls the thunder, or shakes continents by his unseen hand. Does he wish to beam upon us in love? What can be more expressive than the sweet summer sunset, and the thousand nameless tints and hues which give its expression of peace and happiness to the landscape, and air, and sky of evening? How can he make us acquainted with his benevolence and skill? Why, by acting them out in some mechanism which exhibits them. He may construct an eye, or a hand for man, filling them with ingenious contrivances for our benefit, so numerous, that the very being who uses them may be centuries in exploring their mysterious wonders, and yet not learn them all. How can he give us some conception of his intellectual powers? He can plan the motions of planets, and so exactly balance their opposing forces, that thousands of years shall not accumulate the slightest error, or disturb the unchanging precision of their way. But the great question, after all, is to come. It is the one to which we have meant that all we have been saying should ultimately tend. How can such a being exhibit the moral principle by which his mighty energies are all controlled?

He is an unseen, universal power, utterly invisible to us, and imperceptible, except so far as he shall act out his attributes in what he does. *How shall he act out moral principle?* It is easy, by his material creations, to make any

impression upon us, which material objects can make ; but how shall he exhibit to us the moral beauty of justice, and benevolence, and mercy between man and man? How shall he exhibit to us clearly his desire that sorrow and suffering on earth should be mitigated, and injuries forgiven, and universal peace and good-will reign among the members of this great family. Can he do this by the thunder, the lightning, or the earthquake? Can he do it by the loveliness of the evening landscape, or the magnificence and splendour of countless suns and stars? No. He might *declare* his moral attributes as he might have declared his power ; but if he would bring home to us the one, as vividly and distinctly as the other, he must act out his moral principles by a moral manifestation, in a moral scene ; and the great beauty of Christianity is, that it represents him as doing so. He brings out the purity, and spotlessness, and moral glory of the Divinity, through the workings of a human mind, called into existence for this purpose, and stationed in a most conspicuous attitude among men.

My object in this chapter, thus far, has been to show my readers, in what way, and on what principles they are to study the character of God. The substance of the view, which I have been wishing to impress upon your minds, is, that we are to expect to see him solely through the manifestations he makes of himself in his works. We have seen in what way some of the traits of his character are displayed in the visible creation, and how at last he determined to manifest his moral character, by bringing it into action through the medium of a human soul. The plan was carried into effect, and the mysterious person thus formed appears for the first time to our view, in the extraordinary boy, whom we left sitting in the temple, an object of wonder, which must have been almost boundless, since the power which was manifesting itself in him was unknown. We have now, in the succeeding chapters of this book, to follow the circumstances and events of his remarkable history.

Before we proceed, however, we have a few things of a practical character to say, which are suggested by this subject.

1. A young christian may derive great advantage, and enjoy much pleasure, in studying the character of God on the principles of this chapter.

A young lady of active mind, who was out of health, and forbidden by her physician to read or study, and who complained that she did not know how to employ her thoughts, was advised by a friend to take a walk, and see how many proofs of divine contrivance she could find. Such an experiment I would advise all my readers to try. With a very little ingenuity, they will succeed much better than they would imagine. Should any make the attempt, and reduce to writing the result of the observations made, the report might be perhaps somewhat as follows :

‘ From the yard of my father’s house, I passed through a gate into the garden, intending to cross it and seek for many proofs of design, in the fields and wood beyond. As I passed along the walk, however, I observed several apples lying on the ground, under a tree. I took up one, and found that it was ripe. I asked myself whether there was not design in the smooth tight skin by which the apple was covered, protecting it so fully from the rain; and thought that next spring, when the apples were about half formed, I would carefully pare one while it was on the tree, and then leave it, to see what effect the loss of its skin would have on its future growth.

‘ None but the ripe apples had fallen to the ground. It seems, then, that when the fruit has come to its maturity, it is so contrived as to let go its hold, and fall. There appears to be no natural connexion between the maturity of the fruit and the weakness of the stem precisely at its junction with the tree, particularly as the rest of the stem continues strong and sound as before.

‘ I *mellowed* one of the apples, as the boys term it, by striking it rapidly against a smooth post, but without breaking the skin. Before, though it was not very hard, it was

firm to the touch, but now it was soft and yielding. What change had I made in its interior? A ball of wood could not be thus softened by blows. I cut it open. The juice flowed out profusely. If I had cut it open just as it came from the tree, not a drop would have fallen to the ground. I concluded that the sweet liquid had been carefully put up in little cells, which composed the substance of the fruit, and which had safely retained it until my blows had broken them all away, so as to mingle their contents into one mass. I thought how busily the power of God was employed, every summer's day, in ten thousand orchards, carrying these juices into every tree, apportioning its proper share to every apple, and conveying each particle to its own minute, invisible cell.

‘ Just then I saw before me at a little distance, a cucumber vine, which had spread itself over the ground, and was clinging to every little sprig and pebble which came in its way. “ How can its little tendrils find what they wish to clasp ? ” thought I, as I stooped down to look at them. I observed that the tendrils which did not come into contact with any thing, were nearly or quite straight, though some of them had grown out to a considerable length. Every one, however, which touched any object, had curled towards it, and some had wound themselves round so many times, that they would break rather than relax their hold. How delicate must be the mechanism of fibres, so contrived, that by the mere invitation of a touch, they should curl and grasp the object which is presented !

‘ While looking at this, and observing that the origin of the tendril in the stem of the vine was always at the exact place where a support would be most effectual, I noticed a small bright drop, which assumed, as I slightly changed my position, bright hues of orange, green, blue, and violet. It was a drop of dew, which lay in a little indentation of the leaf. I was admiring the admirable exactness of its form, and the brilliancy of its polished surface, and wondering at the laws of cohesion and of light which could thus retain

every particle in its precise position, and produce images so perfect, and yet so minute, as I saw reflected there, when I accidentally touched the leaf, and the little world of wonders rolled away. The charm was broken at once; it vanished upon the wet ground as if it had not been. The spot upon the leaf, where it had been lying for hours, was dry. Thousands of downy fibres, which God had fashioned there, had held it up, and similar fibres in countless numbers clothed every leaf and every stem and every tendril of the whole. I looked over the garden, and was lost in attempting to conceive of the immense number of those delicately-fashioned fibres, which the all-pervading Deity had been slowly constructing there, during the months that had just gone by. And when I reflected that not only that garden, but the gardens and fields all around me, the verdure of the whole continent, of the whole earth, of unnumbered worlds besides, was all as exquisitely finished as this, the mind shrunk back from the vain effort to follow out the reflection.'

But enough. Such a narrative might be continued indefinitely; and the young Christian who will actually go forth to study God's character in garden and forest and field, will find no end to his discoveries. And the very substances which are most common, and which he has been accustomed to look upon with the slightest interest, he will find teeming with the most abundant proofs of the Creator's benevolence and skill, and of the boundless resources of his power. Take, for instance, water, which, as it lies before us in a bowl, appears as simple, and as little mechanical in its structure, as any thing can possibly be, and yet weeks would not be sufficient to describe its wonders. See it now gliding in a smooth gentle current to the ocean, over golden sands, enchaining us for hours upon its banks, to gaze upon its rippling surface, and into its clear depths,—and now rolling in the billows of the ocean, which toss, with terrific power, the proudest structures that men can frame, as easily as they do the floating sea-weed. Again it assumes an invisible form, and the same particles, under a different law, float imper-

ceptible in the atmosphere, or, by their almost resistless repulsion, work the mightiest engines which man can construct. The Protean substance again appears to us in the form of a light fleecy cloud, sailing in the clear blue sky. And what is a cloud? It presents only a surface of whiteness to the eye: but it is composed of countless drops, turned to their true spherical form with mathematical precision, and gently descending through the air, as fast as their superior weight can find its way. Every fleecy cloud is in fact a shower, with drops smaller indeed than those of rain, and descending more slowly, and consumed by the warm air below them, before they reach the earth. If we could see the gradual formation and dissipation of such a drop, as particle after particle comes to increase it, or flies away, we should see the operation of the Deity; and when we think how many clouds and storms sweep over the sky, every minute globule of which must be formed by the power of God, we shall see how boundlessly multiplied are the operations of his hands.

But the half is not yet told. Come out in the snow-storm, and after surveying the vast extent of country buried in its white wintry covering, look up into the sky, and estimate, if you can, the millions of descending flakes. Every one of these flakes, countless as they are, is formed and fashioned after its proper model. It is crystallized in a precise form, every particle takes its precise place, every point of the beautiful star has its proper acuteness; and although in an hour a southern rain is to melt and destroy them all, still not one is neglected, not one is slighted, but every individual flake, of all the millions, is fashioned with as much exactness and care as if it was expressly intended for the examination of the chymist or philosopher. Now think of the vast fields of snow which whiten the arctic regions,—think of the eternal storms which sweep the polar skies, and which follow the retreating sun every season, far down towards his own peculiar climes, and conceive, if you can, the extent of the work which the all-pervading Deity has continually to do.

But after all, innumerable and wonderful as are these works of the Deity, these modes of acting out his attributes, there are far more interesting manifestations of his character. r'or, exciting and animating as are such glimpses as these or the workings of the Almighty, it is only such attributes as skill, power, taste, invention, which are brought into view by them. They are most striking exhibitions, it is true, but they are exhibitions of cold intellect only, after all. The splendour of the evening sky, the sublimity of a tempest, the exquisite delicacy of structure which we see in microscopic plants and animals, affect us strongly; but it is little more than a philosophical interest in a power and a skill, so infinitely varied in its designs, and so admirable in its execution.

But you can go much farther than this; you can examine, even in nature, the *moral* exhibitions of God's character, and as we pass from these examples of mere mechanism, to those which exhibit to us the moral feelings of the Being who performs these works, our hearts are touched. I will take, to illustrate this, one of the lowest examples of what I mean.

The robin!—just look for a moment at his nest in the midst of this valley of peace. It is fixed securely in a cluster of branches, sheltered just enough by the foliage around, and in it are three or four tender, helpless, unfledged birds lying together. The open air and the broad sky is over their heads; nothing but the hanging leaf protects them from an enemy. They have no power to fly, no power to resist; hunger is coming on, and they cannot provide food; but they lie alone and helpless and weak, the very picture of defencelessness and exposure. But they are safe and happy. God makes them his care. They cannot bear cold; God has guarded them against it, by so poisoning the ponderous earth, and so carefully regulating its motions, that no nipping frost, and no storm of snow can possibly come to desolate their little dwelling. They cannot defend themselves from violence or escape from it. True; and God has so regulated the instincts and propensities of the millions of living things around them, that they shall be exposed to

none. They cannot provide themselves with food, and it will take but very few hours to bring them to excruciating suffering unless they are supplied. But they will be supplied. God has sent out his messengers to provide for them. One flies from tree to tree in a distant part of the forest, and the other perhaps hops upon the shore of the brook or pond. The trees around them are filled with thousands of other birds, alluring them by their songs, and brighter vales and more shady trees invite them to stay. But no. God has bound them to one another, and to their helpless young, by a mechanism as incomprehensible as it is beautiful in its results. It allows them to fly freely and unfettered as they choose, but it retains its indissoluble hold wherever they go. No song of a stranger will make them forget one another; no other nest will lead them to forget their own; no sunny bank or shady grove will have charms enough to detain them; but, faithful to their trust, they toil industriously through the day, and unless death or violence keep them away, they will be ready with their supply, when at night their helpless young open their mouths and cry for food. We cannot comprehend the admirable mechanism by which these results are secured, but we love the character which our Father manifests in securing them.

By such examinations as these, of God's works, we see that he is LOVE; that he is not merely a cold contriver, exhibiting in his works mechanical skill and power alone, but that he has feelings of affection, that he is susceptible of strong personal interest and attachment. It gives us great intellectual gratification to look at the exhibitions of his mere invention and power; but it touches our hearts, and awakens a deep and warm feeling there, when we see this skill and power brought into requisition to secure the protection and happiness of even the lowest creatures he has formed. The inference is irresistible, that he who takes so much pains to bring to every unfledged robin or sparrow its daily supplies of food, cannot be indifferent to our protection and happiness. We must be of more value than many sparrows.

In studying the character, however, of the Great Unseen Power which pervades the universe, you must not look exclusively at those kind and gentle aspects of it, which we have been exhibiting. God is a magistrate as well as a father. It is the part of a magistrate to act on system, and to be firm and decided in sustaining system and law. Plans must be formed with reference to the general good, and these plans must be steadily pursued, even at the occasional expense of great individual suffering. The wider the field, the more extensive the community, and more lasting and momentous the interests involved, the greater is the necessity of this determined firmness on the part of the magistrate upon whom the responsibility devolves. If now you wish to make out for yourself a deity, such as may suit your own weakness or timidity, you will pass over this part of God's character; but if you wish for truth, if you really wish to understand what sort of a power it is that holds the reins or government over us all, you will not allow this aspect of his character to pass unexamined.

You are then, I will suppose, studying God's character in what you see of his works, and as you pass by some usually quiet and happy dwelling, your attention is attracted by piercing cries from within, apparently coming from a child, and indicating acute suffering. You enter to ascertain the cause, and find that a little infant, just learning to delight its parents' heart by its opening faculties of speech and reason, has fallen into the fire, and is dreadfully burned. The poor child cries piteously, and extends its arms to its parents for relief. It has never before known a pain which they could not either relieve or mitigate, and its look of anguish seems to upbraid them for not rescuing it now. Its agonized parents, suffering even more than the child, look this way and that way for help, but in vain. The injury is too deep to be repaired. Hour after hour, nay, day after day, the intense suffering continues, until fever and delirium close the sad scene.

Close it, did I say? No. The child sleeps, but memory

does not sleep in the breast of its half-distracted mother. For weeks and months her eyes will fill with tears, and her heart will almost burst, as she looks upon the deserted little cradle, or the now useless toy. Those heart-rending cries and dying struggles are perpetuated in her mind by faculties which God has planted there; and the recollection will for months and years haunt her by day, and terrify her in her midnight dreams.

All this follows from the accident of a moment, for which no one was to blame. There is but one power in existence which could stop these consequences, after the recurrence of the cause. And will he do it? Will he interpose and stop the torture, and heal the wound, and bring relief and happiness once more to the distracted family? Or will he remain calmly by, leaving the laws of matter and of mind to work out, in such a case, their awful consequences to the full?

The question does not need an answer. He has established laws in regard to the nature and effects of fire upon the human frame, and the connexion of bodily injury with bodily suffering, and the principles which regulate the movements of the human heart, which he sees are best on the whole. These laws he has established. He sees that it is best that they should be liable to no exceptions and no uncertainty in their course, and he accordingly *will carry them through*.

It would not be surprising if some of my readers were to shrink back from this view of the determined decision which God manifests in carrying out to the end all these arrangements which he has once deliberately adopted for the ultimate good of all. We cannot deny, however, that the history of God's dealings with men is full of such examples as we have presented, and that if we really and honestly wish to know what is his character, and what principles do really govern his conduct, such cases deserve a most attentive consideration. He who wishes to frame for himself an imaginary Deity, suited to his own limited views and narrow conceptions, will probably shut his eyes against them. We, however, wish to know the truth, whatever it may be; and

if we attempt to study God's character as it is exhibited in those manifestations of himself which he makes in his daily providence, we shall find everywhere inscribed in blazing characters, UNBOUNDED POWER AND SKILL; UNIVERSAL AND INEXTINGUISHABLE LOVE; AND INFLEXIBLE FIRMNESS IN THE EXECUTION OF LAW.

The second great manifestation of the Deity which is made to us, is in the exertion of a direct power upon the human heart. In all ages of the world there have been remarkable exceptions to the prevailing selfishness and sin which generally reign among mankind. These exceptions occur in the earliest history contained in the Bible; and were it not for the light which Christianity throws upon the subject, they would be almost unaccountable. Cain and Abel, for example, took entirely different courses in reference to their duties towards God. Love, gratitude, and reverence seem to have reigned in the heart of one; while a cold, heartless, and selfish worship was all that the other rendered. Here is an extraordinary difference among beings of the same species, possessing the same native powers and propensities, and placed in substantially the same circumstances.

Noah listened to the warning voice of God, while all the rest of the world gave themselves up to sin. Why should this be so? Worldly pleasure, we might have supposed, would have been as alluring to him as to others, and the disposition to obey and fear their Maker as strong in others as in him. But it was not so. He stood alone; and how shall the moral phenomenon of his solitary virtue amidst universal degeneracy and vice be explained?

So in a multitude of other cases. The narratives with which the Old Testament is filled, seem designed to exhibit to us contrasts. A few individuals, with hearts filled with filial affection towards God, form the bright parts of the picture, and the natural character of selfishness and sin, acting in different circumstances, but in all working out the same bitter fruits, exhibit abundantly the darker shades. Why should this be so? Why should Abraham find in

himself a willingness to obey God, and to deal kindly and justly with man, while ungodliness, injustice, and cruelty, reigned almost all around him. Why was Joseph pure and spotless, conscientious, just, and forgiving? His brothers were men of violence and blood. Why, in *such* a family should there be *such* an exception?

Similar examples have been always occurring, and the Bible exhibits them as the effects of a peculiar operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart: a mysterious operation, powerful in its results, but incomprehensible in its nature. This you will observe is a manifestation of the Divinity entirely different from those to which we have already alluded. In the works of creation and providence, Jehovah himself acts, and from the nature of his actions we learn his character. In his direct power over moral agents, he mysteriously mingles his influences with their moral powers, so as to lead *them* to act, and by the character of the results we likewise in this case learn his character. These are, however, two modes of manifesting the powers and character of the Deity, which are very dissimilar.

There is one other which we have already alluded to,—that more direct and personal exhibition of himself which God has made in Jesus Christ his Son. Here God, for the first time, shows himself to men, openly and without a veil. Here we see the moral attributes of divinity in living and acting reality. In those other manifestations of himself which he has made, “we see through a glass darkly, but here face to face.” When he acts in his providence, or in the mysterious and secret agency of his Spirit in human hearts, we must pause and reflect, in order to come to conclusions; we must trace back causes to effects, and infer the principles which must have guided them. But when the Great Unseen assumes our own human nature, when he becomes flesh, and dwells among us, his attributes and perfections come out into open day.

Such are the three great manifestations of himself to men, which the one Unseen all-pervading essence has made, and

exhibited to us in the Bible, and in our experience and observation. Though there have been interminable disputes in the christian church about the language which has been employed to describe these facts, there has been comparatively little dispute among even nominal Christians about the facts themselves. I have endeavoured, in describing them, to go just as far as the Bible goes, and no farther, and to use as nearly as possible the expressions which are furnished us in that sacred volume.

These views, my readers will perceive, open a very wide field, to be explored in studying the character of God. Many young persons, when they hear of this study, form no idea of any thing more than committing to memory a few passages of scripture, or learning by rote the summary views of some theological writer. But you see that all nature and all revelation, the whole field of observation and of experience, and all the records of history, are full of materials. Go then, and take no man's opinion upon trust, but study the character of God for yourselves by seeing what he does.

There is one thing more to be said, before I close this chapter. Many persons feel a difficulty in determining how to approach the Deity in prayer. 'What conception,' you ask, 'shall we form of the Being whom we address?'

The gospel solves the difficulty. "It is by Jesus Christ that we have access to the Father." This vivid exhibition of his character, this personification of his moral attributes, opens to us the way. Here we see a manifestation of divinity, AN IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD which comes as it were down to us; it meets our feeble faculties with a personification exactly adapted to their wants; so that the soul, when pressed by the trials and difficulties of its condition, when overwhelmed with sorrow, or bowed down by remorse, or earnestly longing for holiness, will pass by all the other outward exhibitions of the Deity, and approach the Invisible Supreme, through that manifestation of himself which he has made in the person of Jesus Christ, his Son, our Saviour.

CHAP. II.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

THE very first words of our Saviour, which have been preserved for us, contain an expression of the great leading principle which regulated his whole life. "*I must be about my Father's business.*" His last words, too, show, that thirty years of fatigue, and danger, and suffering, did not extinguish his zeal in this his work. "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*" He came into the world to do something, not for himself, but for his Father, and he devoted himself to it entirely. He was continually engaged in it himself, while he remained here, going from place to place, encountering hardship, and danger, and suffering, and all without any reference to his own selfish interests, but regarding solely the work he had to do for the salvation of men. And at last, when he left the world, his final charge to his disciples was, that they should be faithful and persevering in carrying forward this work.

In fact, he was so entirely devoted to his Father's business, that half the readers of his life do not imagine that he had any of his own.

And yet there is nothing in which the example of Christ takes less hold of men, than in this leading principle of his conduct,—devotedness to his Father's business. How perfectly evident it is, that a very large proportion of professing Christians are doing their own business in this world, and not their Father's! So universal is this sin, that there are great numbers of nominal Christians who have no idea, no conception whatever, of the ground which Christianity takes in regard to a man's duty. It stands strikingly distinct from every other religion. Mahometanism leaves men to pursue

their own objects,—to live for themselves,—only it prescribes some rules regulating the modes by which these aims shall be pursued. So does paganism,—so did ancient philosophy,—so does modern infidelity. Whatever moral rules all these prescribe, are rules to regulate pursuits, whose nature and objects remain unchanged. But Christianity does no such thing. It comes with far higher claims,—it is no mere regulator of the machinery of human life. It comes to change the plan and object of that machinery altogether.

Look at the history of a man engrossed in the world. He saw, when he was young, that wealth gave consideration and influence to its possessor; and he felt a feverish sort of pleasure when he received the first hundred dollars which he earned. He resolved to become rich, and in his eagerness to go on, he gradually became less and less scrupulous about the means of advancing. He violated no laws, he exposed himself to no public disgrace, but he resorted to those means, so well known to men of the world, by which he could increase his own stores at the expense of the rights or the happiness of others; and by these means he has at length acquired a fortune. He usually attends public worship on the Sabbath; it would be disreputable not to do so. But in the morning and evening, at his own private apartment, he will post his books, or look over his accounts, or plan his voyages:—there is nothing disreputable in this.

He is not a profane man,—not at all, in his own opinion; it is true, that sometimes when excited, he will make use of what he acknowledges to be an improper expression, but men will make allowances for this. He does not do it to such an extent as to injure his character.

He does not worship God in his family. He has no particular objection to religion, but he has no taste for it; and then, besides, he has not time. In order to carry on his plans, it is necessary for him to go early to his counting room, and at night he is fatigued and exhausted, and wishes to rest. As to the answer he shall make, when at last God shall summon him to account for the immortal soul entrusted

to him,—he never thinks of it. Still he is not entirely devoid of all sense of accountability. He would not, for the world, have a note fall due, without looking forward to the time, and being prepared for it. In fact, he plans very wisely. His object is to make a fortune, and he is taking a most judicious and successful course. It is no part of his design to please God, or to do good to man; to save his own soul, or to prepare for a happy meeting with his children in heaven. This is not his business, and of course he does not attend to it.

As, however, he advances in life, he begins to think sometimes more seriously. His minister brings to his view an approaching judgment, and explains the strictness of God's laws, so that his conscience begins to trouble him. He perceives that though his mode of life has been perfectly reputable among men, still it must be considered somewhat irregular when compared with God's law. His children begin to be ungovernable and dissipated as they grow up, and one of them comes, under very melancholy circumstances, to an untimely end. He is troubled. In short, he resolves to reform. He banishes all business from the Sabbath, except that, when the sermon does not particularly interest him, he cannot help sometimes thinking a little of his voyages or his sales. He becomes more scrupulous about infringing upon his neighbour's rights, or taking an unfair advantage of their necessities. He establishes morning and evening prayers in his family, and though he does not always think of the Being he is addressing, he always regularly addresses him in words, and there is generally a feeling of reverence and awe, and a sort of vague impression on his mind, that he is really speaking to the Supreme. He becomes a benevolent man too: that is, when an application is made for charity, he gives as much as he thinks will be expected of him.

In a word, there is a great change in his character. It is true, he is still pursuing the same great object, but then Christianity has come in to regulate the mode of his pur-

suing it. And he goes on for the rest of his days, making his fortune on much better principles, and in much better ways than in the early part of his life. Still, making his fortune is his business. The ultimate object for which he lives and acts is to get money into his possession. Every thousand dollars he obtains, he invests in the most safe and profitable mode he can command, and looks upon it as so much done—accomplished. And when at last he comes to die, and on his death-bed looks over his past life, all the satisfaction he can have, will be in reflecting, that though making his fortune has been the object of his life, he has nevertheless made the last half of it in the most unexceptionable manner.

Now is such a man a follower of Jesus Christ? Is making a fortune for himself his Father's business? No; when he appears before God in judgment, he must expect to be addressed thus, 'Did you not know that you were stationed on earth to do good; to turn men to God; to set an example of devoted attachment to his cause; to relieve suffering, and promote human happiness, as the great objects of your life? All this was distinctly explained to you, and that you might perfectly understand it, you had the example of Jesus Christ your Saviour, who spent a life on earth in the most trying circumstances, for the very purpose of showing how much is meant by the command, that men should serve God while they live, and not themselves. You were distinctly and emphatically told, that you were not your own, that you had been bought with a price, and were bound to live and act as a steward, an agent, a servant. But you have not done so. Instead of it, you have taken possession in your own name of the means of influence, and of usefulness, which were put into your hands to be used for God. You have had your trial, and it has resulted in your deliberate and final choice to act for yourself, and not for your Maker.'

Let us look at another case. Samuel is a little boy eight years old. He has really become a Christian, and wishes to do his duty, and his whole duty. Do you wish to know,

Samuel, what it is? If you look into the Bible, to your Saviour, for an example, you will see that the first principle of action which he announced was, that he was doing his Father's business. But you remember that he was sent from heaven to do a great work here, which you cannot do. 'I cannot go,' you say, 'from place to place, preaching the gospel and working miracles, and giving sight to the blind, and healing the sick. I would if I could.'

It is true you cannot do that. That is, you cannot do your Father's business in the same way precisely that Christ did. Or, to explain it more fully, God has a great deal of business to be done in this world, and it is of various kinds, and the particular portion allotted to each person depends upon the circumstances in which each one is placed. You cannot do exactly what Christ did while he was here, but you can do what he would have done had he been in your place. You cannot make a blind man happy by restoring his sight, but you can make your little sister happy, by helping her up kindly when she has fallen down; and that last is your Father's business, as much as the other. His business here is to make every one happy, and to relieve every one's suffering. You cannot persuade great multitudes of men to love and obey God, as Christ endeavoured to do; but you may lead your brothers and sisters to do it, by your silent influence and happy example. So, also, you can bear sufferings patiently, and take injuries meekly, and thus exhibit the character which God wishes to have prevail here. The light you thus let shine may be a feeble light, and it may illuminate only a narrow circle around you; but if it is the light of genuine piety, it will be in fact the glory of God; and if it is your great object to let this light shine, you are about your Father's business as truly as Jesus was, when he preached to the thronging multitude, or brought Lazarus from the tomb. Yes; if a little child is making it his great aim to do good, by making his parents, his brothers and sisters, and his playmates happy, for the sake of co-operating with God, he is following the example of Christ.

But let us return to the example of our Saviour.

Jesus Christ was in some respects the most bold, energetic, decided, and courageous man that ever lived; but in others, he was the most flexible, submissive, and yielding; and in the conceptions which many persons form of his character, there is a degree of indistinctness and confusion, from want of clear ideas of the mode in which these seemingly opposite qualities come together. The explanation is this. The question, which of these two classes of qualities he would exhibit, depended entirely upon the question, whether it was his own personal welfare, or his Father's business which was at stake. If it was the latter, he feared no danger, he shrunk from no opposition, and no obstacle or difficulty would turn him from his course. If it was the former, his own personal welfare, he was exactly the reverse,—mild, gentle, yielding, to such a degree, that, at first view, it would seem impossible that it could be the same man. There never was a mission or an enterprise of any kind, conducted with a more bold, energetic, fearless spirit, than the Saviour's mission; and, on the other hand, there never was a case where personal sacrifices and injuries were borne with so much indifference and unconcern. Observe how he reproved the insincere and dishonest pretenders to religion, which filled Judea in those days. He followed them into crowds, he met them face to face, and, in the most direct and personal manner, spread out their insincerity and hypocrisy before them. Yes, in the midst of Jerusalem, the very heart and centre of their influence, he brought forward his accusations against them, with a power and severity which human eloquence has very seldom equalled. This was in the cause of his Father. But when it came to his own, how changed! Peter's most unmanly and ungrateful denial, was reproved by *a look!* And Judas, coming at midnight with armed men, to seize him by the basest treachery, was called to a sense of his guilt, by the mildest, the very gentlest reproof which language could frame. So when the profanation of his Father's temple was to be stopped, he could use

a scourge, and effect a forcible ejection with almost military authority; and yet when, as was shown afterwards in the judgment-hall, there was nothing to excite him but his own personal injuries, he was meek and gentle as a lamb. He was equally ready to *use* the scourge in the cause of God, and to *submit* to it in his own.

And this principle is the key to his whole conduct. Many anecdotes might be given to illustrate it. One day, for example, when speaking in the midst of Priests and Levites, in the very seat of their power, he told the story of the good Samaritan. Nothing could be more keenly cutting or more bold than this. They hated the Samaritans, because they would not come to Jerusalem to worship, and were proud of their own piety, because their worship was offered *in the right place!* Jesus did not enter into any laboured argument with them, to show that piety was a business of the heart, and not of geographical location; he simply told them the story,—cutting as it did, exactly across their bitterest prejudices; they would not even have any dealings with the Samaritans.

Some time afterwards, he came in contact with the same feeling again, though in a different way. He was travelling with his disciples, and on arriving at Samaria, they would not receive him, because he *was going to Jerusalem*. Here the prejudice between the rival sects only injured *him* personally, and he thought and cared nothing about it. His disciples were angry, but he quieted them at once, and went on. Thus it was always with him. Yielding, submissive, patient in regard to his own personal injuries and sufferings, but firm, inflexible, and courageous in the extreme, in resisting every injury to the cause committed to his care.

There is something very bold and energetic in the measures he adopted in accomplishing his work. The great business which it was necessary for him to accomplish before his crucifixion, was to publish effectually throughout Judea, his coming, and the principles of his gospel,—and to exhibit, as publicly as possible, the miraculous evidences of his mission.

He did it in the most effectual manner, in about three years. In fact, there perhaps never was so great a moral effect produced in three years, on any community so extensive, if we consider at all the disadvantages incident to the customs of those days. There was no press, no modes of extensive written communication, no regularly organized channels of intercourse whatever, between the different portions of the community. He acted under every disadvantage, and availed himself of no miraculous modes of disseminating his principles; but yet, so skilfully did he plan, and with such promptness and energy did he execute, that in a very short period the work was done.

What were these plans? In the first place he went himself, directly and boldly, into every centre of influence and population he could find. When Jerusalem was crowded with the multitudes which came together at the passover, he was always there, in the most public and conspicuous places, exposing, in the most explicit and direct manner, the sins of the times, and exhibiting the principles of true religion, with a distinctness, and vividness, and beauty, which have never been equalled. At other times, he was travelling from place to place, through fertile and populous provinces, visiting the larger villages and towns, and gathering great multitudes around him in the open country. And yet though he was, in his business, thus bold and enterprising, he was in feeling, as we shall see more distinctly in the sequel, of a quiet and retiring spirit. He always withdrew from the crowd directly his work was done. He sought solitude, he shrunk from observation; in fact, almost the only enjoyment which he seemed really to love, was his lonely ramble at midnight, for rest and prayer. We are told he spent whole nights thus engaged. And it is not surprising, that after the heated crowds and exhausting labours of the day, he should love to retire to silence and seclusion, to enjoy the cool and balmy air, the refreshing stillness, and all the beauties and glories of midnight, among the solitudes of the Galilean hills; to find there happy communion with his Father, and to

gather fresh strength for the labours and trials that yet remained.

Another thing, which exhibits the boldness and enterprise that characterised his plans for making an impression on the community, was the peculiarly new and original style of public speaking he adopted. It was sententious, brief, antithetic. Every sentence was loaded with meaning, and so concisely and energetically expressed, that the sentiment could neither be misunderstood nor forgotten. 'If worldly pleasure allures you away from duty,' a more timid and cautious speaker would have said, 'you must relinquish it. Think how much more important your salvation is than any temporal gratification.' If your *right hand* offend you, says Christ, **CUT IT OFF**. If your right eye offend you, **PLUCK IT OUT**. You had better enter into life with one eye, than to be cast into hell-fire with two.

This then is the key to the character of Jesus Christ in respect to spirit and decision. These qualities shine out with unequalled lustre, whenever there was any *duty* to be done; but the most mild and patient and humble submission takes their place, when there is personal injury or suffering to be endured. In the streets of Jerusalem, and on a question which concerns the character of God or the duty of man, we find him with all his faculties aroused, silencing every opponent by his unanswerable arguments, or his appeals of irresistible eloquence and power. But when *these subjects* fail, all the energy of attack or defence on his part gives way with them; and before his personal enemies, planning personal injury to him, he stands silent, patient, and submissive, leaving the whole torrent of injury to take its course, meeting it with no resistance, and returning no reply.

We have thus far considered the great leading principles of our Saviour's public conduct. As we have presented them, they are three.

1. Entire devotedness to his Father's work.
2. Energy, system, and undaunted courage in prosecuting it.

3. The mildest, most unresisting, and forgiving spirit in regard to his own personal wrongs.

We might close our view of his character with these leading principles of it; but there are some other traits of a more private nature, which it is pleasant to notice. We shall mention them as they occur.

1. He evidently observed and enjoyed nature. There are many allusions to his solitary walks in the fields and on the mountains, and by the sea-side; but the greatest evidence of his love for nature is to be seen in the manner in which he speaks of its beauties. Take for instance, the case where he speaks of the decoration of the lilies. What a conception! We are so familiar with it, that it loses its impression upon us; but if we could approach it anew, we should be astonished at its boldness and beauty. He is endeavouring to persuade his disciples not to be anxious about their food or clothing, for if they will do God's will, he will take care of them. "Look at the lilies of the field," says he,—"*they* toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." A cold heartless man, without taste or sensibility, would not have said such a thing as that. He could not; and we may be as sure, that Jesus Christ had stopped to examine and admire the grace and beauty of the plant, and the exquisitely pencilled tints of its petal, as if we had actually seen him bending over it, or pointing it out to the attention of his disciples.

The mass of mankind never notice the beauties and wonders that are always around them. Among hundreds walking in a garden, it is only a very few who would perceive the objects of astonishment and delight which abound there. Here are several shrubs side by side. They grow from the same earth, are warmed by the same sun, and refreshed by the same showers; and yet the very same juices coming up one stem, arrange themselves into a *currant* at the top—coming up another they form themselves into a *pear*, and in the third case, into a *rose*. The rea

lover of nature pauses to reflect, as he sees these various fruits and flowers, how strange it is, that a mechanism so exquisite can be arranged in those stems, so as to bring such astonishing and such different results from one common store-house of materials. The multitude do not think of it at all. They consider it as a matter of course, that figs should grow upon the fig-tree, and grapes upon the vine, and that is all they think about it.

Now Jesus Christ noticed these things. He perceived their beauty, and enjoyed it. His heart was full of images, which such observations must have furnished. He could not otherwise have so beautifully compared the progress of his kingdom to the growth of such a tree. He could not have related the Parable of the Sower, if he had not noticed with interest the minutest circumstances connected with the culture of the ground. His beautiful allusions to the vine and to the fig-tree, the wheat and the tares, the birds of the air, and the flocks of the field, all prove the same thing. It is not merely that he spoke of those things, but that he alluded to them in a way so beautiful, and touching, and original, as to prove, that he had an observing eye and a warm heart for the beauties and glories of creation.

2. Jesus loved his friends. The duty of universal benevolence, which he so strongly enforced, he never meant should supersede the claims of private, personal friendship, or interfere with its enjoyments. He himself, while he was ready to die for thousands, preferred to take his walks, and share his griefs, with Peter, James, and John. There is nothing more touching, in regard to this subject, than his private intimation at the last supper, to his dearest personal friend, of the fact, that it was Judas, who was to betray him. He understood and felt the happiness of communion and confidence between kindred spirits, and by his example has authorized us to link ourselves to one another, by the ties of friendship and affection, as strongly as we please. Christianity, in expanding the affections of the individual, till they reach every brother and sister on the globe, does not weaken

or endanger a single private or domestic tie. While it draws the whole human family together, it links, by a still closer union than before, the husband with the wife, and the parent with the child—sister to sister, and friend to friend. It is indeed 'the bond of perfectness,' or as we should, at this day, express it, **A PERFECT BOND.**

3. The last thing I have to say about the character of Jesus Christ is, he loved his mother. Perhaps I have some young readers, who can remember that at some recent period, when they have been sick or suffering from any cause, they have, by their fretfulness or discontent, brought trouble and care to their parents, and have considered themselves excused for it by the circumstances in which they have been placed. To them I have one thing to say. Your Saviour was nailed to the cross. The whole weight of his body was suspended from his lacerated limbs, and here he had to hang hour after hour, till life actually sunk under the power of suffering. But even here he did not forget his mother. He gave, in the most touching manner possible, his dearest friend a charge to be kind to her, to protect her, to take care of her as long as she should live. He did this, however, almost by a word, for under such circumstances it was torture to speak. "**BEHOLD THY MOTHER.**" That was all; but it was enough. Now let me ask each one of my readers, whether old or young, who has a mother still alive, as you shut this book at the close of this chapter, to go and devise some act of kindness and affection for her, in imitation of the dying example which the Saviour set us. Do something to cheer and comfort her; even if it is no very substantial act of kindness, it will bring gladness to her heart, as a memorial of your remembrance and affection. Mary must have felt this proof of love most deeply. They told the Saviour, long before, that his mother was to be envied. She must have endured a great deal of solicitude and a great deal of suffering, during her life; but it must have gone far towards counterbalancing it all, to be remembered thus, under such circumstances, and by such a son.

CHAP. III.

HUMAN DUTY, OR THE SAVIOUR'S MESSAGE TO MANKIND.

“ And they went out and preached that men should repent.”

IT is a remarkable fact, and one which has often surprised careful readers of the Bible, that scarcely any thing is said by our Saviour himself, in regard to his own sufferings, as the ground of human salvation; while the writings and addresses of the apostles are full of this theme. There is a most extraordinary contrast in this respect, between the gospels and the epistles. In the former, Christ's sufferings and death are scarcely ever spoken of: in the latter, nothing is spoken of so much. This state of the case has, on the one hand, led many persons to underrate the influence and importance of our Saviour's sufferings and death, and they defend their views by referring to the nature of our Saviour's instructions. Some err on the other side by taking the epistles as their only model,—not sufficiently considering the character of Christ's instructions. Others are embarrassed when they think on this subject; they do not know how to reconcile the seeming inconsistency, though they endeavour to diminish it, as far as possible, by exaggerating and emphasizing the little which Jesus Christ did say, in regard to his sufferings and death. We ought always to suspect ourselves when we are attempting to get out of scriptural difficulties in this way;—by loading passages of Scripture with more meaning than they will naturally bear; a process very common among theological writers. The best way is to let the Bible speak for itself. We must not try to improve it, but just let it tell its own story, in its own way. The man who, when he reads some of the strong, decided passages in the epistles, ascribing all hope of human salvation to the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, finds

himself holding back from the writer's view, endeavouring to qualify the language or to explain it away, is not studying the Bible in the right spirit. On the other hand, he who cannot take the directions which Christ or John gave, for beginning a life of piety by simple repentance for the past, without adding something from his own theological stores, or forcing the language to express what never could have been understood by those who originally heard it,—he cannot be studying this book with the right spirit. We must take the Bible as it is; and there certainly is a very striking and extraordinary difference, between the public instructions of our Saviour himself, and those of his apostles, in respect to the prominence given to the efficacy of his sufferings in preparing the way for the salvation of men. Let us look into this.

Whenever, under any government, a wrong is done, there is, as any one will see, a broad distinction between the measures which the government must adopt, in order to render it safe to pardon, and the conditions with which the guilty individual is required to comply, in order to avail himself of the offer. To make this plain, even to my younger readers, I will describe a case, illustrating the principle, though I admit on a very small scale.

In a remote and newly-settled town in New England, on the shore of a beautiful pond, and under a hill covered and surrounded with forests, was a small school house, to which, during the leisure months of the winter, thirty or forty boys and girls gathered, day after day, from the small farm-houses, which were scattered over the valleys around. One evening a sort of exhibition was held there. Before the time had arrived, there had been indications of an approaching snow-storm. These increased during the evening; and when, at the close of it, the assembly began to disperse, they found that the storm had fairly set in.

The master was sitting at his desk, putting away his papers, and preparing to go home. The snow was beating against the windows, and the aspect of the cold and stormy weather without made many of the scholars reluctant to

leave the warm and bright fire which was still burning on the spacious hearth. For many of them, sleighs were to be sent by their friends, others were waiting for company, and every minute or two the door would open and admit a boy shivering with cold, and white with snow.

Presently the master heard some voices at the door, in which he could distinguish tones of complaint and suffering. Several of the boys seemed to be talking together, apparently about some act of injustice which had occurred, and after waiting a few minutes, the master sent for all the boys, who were standing at the door, to come to him.

Half-a-dozen walked eagerly in, and behind them followed one, more reluctantly; his head was bare, and he had evidently been in tears. As they entered the room, the conversation among the other children was hushed, all their preparations were suspended, and every face was turned with an expression of eager interest towards the master, as his group approached him.

‘William,’ said the master to one of the foremost, ‘there seems to have been some trouble, will you tell me what it is?’

‘Yes, sir: Joe Symmes threw *his* cap,’ (pointing to the sorrowful-looking boy in the rear,) ‘off upon the pond, and it has blown away and he cannot find it.’

‘Joseph,’ said the master, ‘is it so?’

Joseph acknowledged the fact. It appeared, on more careful inquiry, that there had been some angry collision between the boys, in which Joseph had been almost entirely to blame; it was a case of that kind of tyranny of the stronger, which is so common among school-boys. In the end, he had seized his schoolmate’s cap, and thrown it off upon the icy surface of the pond, over which it had glided away with the driving wind and snow, and was soon lost from view. Joseph said he knew it was wrong, and he was sorry. He said he ran after it as soon as it was gone, but he lost sight of it, and that now he did not know what he could do to get it again.

The master told the boys they might go to the fire, while he considered, for a few minutes, what he ought to do.

When left alone, the teacher reflected that there were two separate subjects of consideration for him. First, there was an individual who had been guilty of an act of injustice. Next, there was a little community who had been witnesses of that injustice, and were all in suspense, waiting to know what would follow.

'I am sorry to punish Joseph,' thought he, 'for he seems to be sorry for what he has done, and I think it highly probable he will not repeat it; but if I let such a case pass with a mere reproof, I fear it will do injury to the school. The boys will have less abhorrence, in future, for acts of injustice and oppression by the stronger than they have had. Just in proportion as they see sin, without seeing sad results coming from it, they will lose their sensitiveness to its guilt. I must not let this case pass without something to make a moral impression. I wish I could do this without bringing suffering upon Joseph, but I do not see how I can.'

'Ah! I see what I can do;' thought he, 'I will take the suffering myself. Yes; I will forgive Joseph at once, and then I will go out myself and find the cap, or help them to find it; and when the scholars see that the consequences of this offence come upon *my* head, bringing me inconvenience, and even suffering, especially if they see me bear them with a kind and forgiving spirit, perhaps it will do as much good as punishing Joseph would do. Yes; I know that all my pupils, and Joseph among the rest, are strongly attached to me, and I am sure that when they see me going out into the cold storm, over the ice, and through the snow, to repair the injury which he has done, it will make a strong impression. In fact, it will, I am sure, touch them more effectually, and produce a much stronger dislike to such a spirit, than four times as much inconvenience and suffering, inflicted as a punishment upon Joseph himself.'

It is evident, now, that such a plan would be safe and proper only on supposition that Joseph is really sorry for

what he has done. The course proposed would be altogether inadmissible, if the offender, instead of being humble and penitent, should appear angry and stubborn.

On the other hand, if the master's plan was a wise one, although real penitence on the part of Joseph would be absolutely necessary, nothing else would be necessary. *He* need not know any thing about the plan on which the master relies for producing the right moral impression on the little community.

Now the whole object of this illustration, is to bring clearly forward the distinction between what is necessary *as a measure of government*, in order to prepare the way to offer pardon, and what is necessary *as an act of the criminal*, in order to enable him to receive it.

It is very evident, in this case, that these two things are entirely distinct and disconnected, and that it is not at all necessary that Joseph should know the ground on which the teacher concluded it safe for him to be forgiven. The master's suffering the inconvenience and trouble is an essential thing *to be done*, in order to render it safe to forgive; but it is not an essential thing *to be known*, at the time forgiveness is declared. In fact, the most delicate and the most successful mode of managing the affair, would be for him to say nothing about it, but simply to do the thing, and let it produce its effects.

Accordingly the master, in this case, after a few minutes of reflection, called the boys to him again.

'Joseph,' said he, 'you have done wrong in oppressing one younger and weaker than yourself, and I might justly punish you. I have concluded, however, to forgive you,—that is, if you are sorry. Are you sorry?'

'Yes, sir, I am,' replied the boy, distinctly.

'And are you willing to make proper reparation, if I will tell you what to do?'

'Yes, sir.'

'James,' continued the master, 'are you willing he should be forgiven?'

‘Yes, sir, I am willing he should be forgiven; but how shall I get my cap?’

‘I will talk with you about that presently. You see that is another part of the subject; the question now is, what is to be done with Joseph? He has done wrong, and might justly be punished; but he is sorry for it, and, in this case, I conclude not to punish him.’

If the whole subject were to be left here, the reader will perceive how incomplete and unfinished the transaction would be considered in respect to its effects on those who witnessed it. It would, if left here, bring down the standard of justice and kindness among the boys; and if the pupils had been accustomed to an efficient government, they would be surprised at such a result.

But still, though the teacher had something in reserve to prevent such an injury, it was not, as I have said before, at all necessary, nay, it was not expedient, that he should say any thing about it thus far. Joseph’s penitence was essential to render his pardon proper; this it was, indeed, necessary for him to understand. The measure to be adopted was essential to render that pardon safe; this it was essential for no one but the master to understand. It was necessary that the moral effect should be produced on all, but the measure which the master had in view for producing it might safely remain unexplained till the time came for putting it into execution.

After all was thus settled with the boys, the master took down his cloak, and said he would go out and see if he could find the cap. Joseph wanted to go with him, but his teacher replied, that it would do no good for him to go out in the cold too; it might be necessary to go quite across the pond. He, however, asked Joseph to show him exactly where he had thrown the cap, and then, noticing the direction of the wind, the master walked on in pursuit.

A cluster of boys stood at the door, and the girls crowded at the windows, to see their teacher work his way over the slippery surface, stopping to examine every dark object, and

exploring with his feet every little drift of snow. They said nothing about the philosophy of the transaction ; in fact, they did not understand it. The theory of moral government was a science unknown to them ; but every heart was warm with gratitude to their teacher, and alive to a vivid sense of the criminality of such conduct as had resulted thus. And when, after a time, they saw him returning with the cap in his hand, which he had found half buried in the snow, under a bank on the opposite shore, there was not one whose heart was not full of affection and gratitude towards the teacher, and of displeasure at the sin. And the teacher himself, though he said not a word in explanation, felt that by that occurrence, a more effectual blow had been struck at every thing like unkindness and ill-will among his pupils, than would have been secured by any reproofs he could have administered, or by any plan of punishment, however just and severe.

Such a case is analogous, in many respects, to the measures which God has adopted to make the forgiveness of human guilt safe. It is only one point, however, of the analogy, which I wish the reader to observe here, viz. that though the measure in question was a thing essential for the master *to do*, it was not essential for the criminal to *understand*, at the time he was forgiven.

So in regard to the moral effect of God's government, produced by the sufferings of Jesus Christ, in preparing the way for the forgiveness of sin. The measure was necessary to render free forgiveness safe, but a clear understanding of its nature and of its moral effect is not always necessary to enable the individual sinner to avail himself of it.

But to return. The great subject of Christ's instructions seems to have been simply *human duty*. It was his object to explain, not the great arrangements and measures of God's government, but the duties which each individual sinner had personally to perform.

In order to exhibit clearly the ground he took, we must consider a moment the plan which God had in view in creating men. It was his design to form one great, united,

and happy family, with himself at the head of it. He meant to devote himself to the happiness of his creatures, and he wished them to be interested in each other, and joined to him.

Taking this view of the design of God, in regard to the family of man, we shall be surprised to see how admirably adapted to secure it that code of laws is, which he originally gave to men. We have read the Ten Commandments so many times, nay, they have been so long and so indelibly impressed on the memory, that it is difficult for us to approach them in such a way as to get a fresh and vivid conception of their character. To obviate, in some degree, this difficulty, I give the substance of them in other language, so that the reader may see more clearly, by looking at them, as it were, in a new light, with what admirable skill they are adapted to the object. The wisest assembly of statesmen or legislators which ever convened, if called together to form a code for the world, to apply to every nation, and to operate through all time, could not have made a better selection of points to be brought forward, or arranged them with more scientific and logical precision, or expressed them in clearer terms. And yet the infidel affects to believe that they were the production of the half-civilized leader of a wandering horde—contrived just to assist their author in maintaining an influence over his semi-barbarous followers! But let us look at this code.

THE MORAL LAW.

I. DUTY TO GOD.

1. Your Maker must be the highest object of your interest and affection. Allow nothing to come before him; but make it your first and great desire to please him, and to obey his commands.

2. You shall never speak of him lightly or with irreverence, and you shall not regard any visible object as the representa-

tive of him. He is a spirit, invisible from his very nature, and you must worship him in spirit and in truth.

3. Consecrate one day in seven to the worship of God, and to your own religious improvement. Entirely suspend, for this purpose, all worldly employments, and sacredly devote the day to God.

II. DUTY TO PARENTS.

You are placed in this world under the care of parents, whom God makes his vicegerents, to provide for your early wants, and to afford you protection. Now you must obey and honour them. Do what they command you, and comply with their wishes, and always treat them with respect and affection.

III. DUTY TO MANKIND.

Keep constantly in view, in all your intercourse with men, *their* welfare and happiness as well as your own. Conscientiously respect the rights of others, in regard,

1. To the security of life.
2. To the peace and happiness of the family.
3. To property.
4. To reputation.

In keeping these commands, too, you must regulate your heart as well as your conduct. God forbids the unholy desire as much as he does the unholy action.

Such is God's moral law. And we may triumphantly ask, Where is the statesman or philosopher who can mend it? In giving it as above, I have done nothing but alter its language, so as to present it with freshness to the reader, and number its sections, so as to bring to view its admirable arrangement. I have not omitted a provision, or added one not originally there, nor altered the position of a single command. Look at it again; and imagine it perfectly obeyed in this world. What a world it would make of it! This is that great law of God, whose perfection and purity are

praised from one end of the Bible to the other; this is the law men have broken, and will break; and in regard to this law it is, that the whole controversy is pending between God and man. Men pretend to find a great mystery about the nature of sin, and the nature of holiness, to excuse themselves for remaining unchanged, but the whole mystery is here—here is a law which **THEY WILL NOT KEEP**. They never have kept it, and they will not begin. And yet, disregarded, violated, trampled upon as it has been, by common consent, throughout the whole human family, no man has ever dared to lift up his voice against its justice. No; from the day when it was first thundered forth on Sinai, it has been loudly proclaiming its commands, conscience, in every bosom, re-echoing its voice: and the boldest, the wildest, the most daring opposer of God, never had a word to say against the justice of its claims.

Now the great design of our Saviour's instructions was, to induce men to abandon their sins, and begin at once to keep this law. He explained its spirituality, and brought out to view the two great principles on which all its commands were based—supreme affection to God, and disinterested benevolence towards men.

It is most interesting to observe how directly and clearly Jesus Christ always insisted upon *spiritual* obedience to that law; I mean by this, obedience of the heart:—and how constantly he cut off, in the most decided manner, all those hollow acts of mere external conformity which men were continually substituting in its place. And it is, if possible, still more interesting to observe how liberal and expanded were his views in regard to the *outward acts* by which this heart-felt compliance might be indicated. On the one hand, no act whatever, and no course of life, however seemingly religious, would satisfy him, if there was evidence that the secret feelings of the heart were wrong. On the other hand, no action was too trivial to be a mark of piety, if it only proceeded from the right spirit. For example: here are a priest and a Levite, devoting their lives to their Maker's

service. Nobody doubts their eminent holiness. How does the Saviour judge? Why, he leads them along a road where a man lies suffering. He watches to see what they will do: *they pass by on the other side.* Ah! that reveals the secret. A man may devote his life to the external service of God, without really loving him at all; but he cannot really love him, and yet pass by, and neglect a distressed and suffering brother. And so in a thousand other cases. The beauty, the clearness, the delicacy, and yet the searching, scrutinizing power of the tests which Christ applied to the religious professions of those days, are unparalleled. They would make sad work with some of the bold, self-sufficient, hollow-hearted zeal which exists in our times.

But while he could be deceived by no counterfeit, and would take no specious appearances on trust, but cut away, with a most unsparring hand, all false pretences, and all mere external show, his liberality, in regard to modes by which real, genuine piety should exhibit itself, was unbounded. All he wished was to have the heart right. He cared not how its feelings were evinced. He found a man engaged in his ordinary business, and asked him to leave it and follow him; another wished to know what he should do to inherit eternal life, and he directed him to employ all his property as a means of doing good; in another case, he pronounced an individual forgiven, merely on account of personal kindness shown to himself! Sometimes he called on men to repent; sometimes to believe on him; sometimes to obey his precepts. He was satisfied of Mary's piety, by the teachable, docile spirit she manifested,* in listening to his conversation in her house. He pronounced many persons forgiven, on account of the feeling with which they came to be healed; and even when the malefactor on the cross asked

* Does not the Author, in these passages, appear to forget that Christ had other means of judging of the state of the heart, besides these "external indications?" "Jesus, knowing their thoughts," &c. Matt. ix. 4; Luke xi. 17.—EDITOR

to be remembered, the Saviour considered those words alone as the external indications of a renewed heart.

It is very evident that he thought it of comparatively little consequence what men did *first*, in beginning to serve God : the great point was to induce them to serve him at all. We are very slow to follow his example in this respect. We want to have some precise way in which all men shall repent and be saved. We arrange the steps, and must have them taken in their exact, prescribed order ; and if these steps are not followed, we are suspicious and afraid, whatever may be the ultimate fruits. We consider the case anomalous, if we are compelled to admit it to be genuine.

A master of a family, we will suppose, goes away from home, leaving his sons in charge of his affairs, and giving them employment, in which he urges them to be diligent and faithful until his return. After he leaves them, however, they all neglect their duty, and live in idleness, or occupy themselves solely with their amusements. A friend comes in, and remonstrates with them. He gives them a laboured account of the radical defects in their hearts, the philosophical distinction between dutiful and undutiful sons, and the metaphysical steps of a change from one character to the other. His discourse is all perfectly true, and admirably philosophical ; but it is sadly impotent in regard to making any impression on human hearts.

Another man comes to address them in a different mode. He calls upon them at once to return to their duty.

‘ What shall we do first ? ’ ask the boys.

‘ Do first ! do anything first : there is the garden to be weeded, and the library to be arranged, and your rooms to be put in order. No matter what you do first. Begin to obey your father ; that is the point.’

As he says this, he goes around the premises, and as he finds one after another loitering in idleness or mischief, he calls upon them to return to duty. They are awakened : they see more distinctly than they had done their negligence and guilt ; and as they come successively to know

what they shall do, he points out to their attention various tasks, according to the age and situation of each. His object is not merely external, but sincere and heart-felt obedience; but he cares little by what particular act the new course of obedience begins.

It is just so with the preaching of Jesus Christ. He explained the purity, and beauty, and perfection, of God's holy law, and then called upon men everywhere to begin to live in conformity to it. It is no matter what they do first; no matter with what particular aspect the dawning light of Christianity first shines; let it enter where it will, it will rise and spread till it illuminates the whole. Nor can any external action, if it comes from the right spirit, be too unimportant to constitute the first step in a christian course. Jesus Christ acted on this principle most fully.* He even said that if a man would give a cup of *cold water* to a disciple in the name of Christ, *i. e.* from Christian feeling, he should not lose his reward.

Nor is that remark a mere metaphor, striking and beautiful as it is. It is strictly true, that giving a cup of water to a follower of the Saviour, may be the first act of a religious life. A man who has been neglecting or opposing religion all his days, may be asked by a Christian some trifling favour like that, and the opportunity of promoting, even in so slight a degree, the cause he had been opposing, might so bring to his view the happiness of co-operating with God, in contrast with the misery and guilt of opposing him, that his

* The Editor cannot but protest against the view which the Author here, and elsewhere, takes of the preaching of our Lord. He does not conceive that these statements are borne out by the facts of the case, and when he sees so excellent a Bible scholar as Mr. Abbott preferring repentance and obedience to faith, and justifying this by the example of Jesus Christ, he could desire to remind him, or, at least, he would earnestly request his readers to bear in mind, that our Lord's own opinion upon this matter may be seen, John vi. 28, 29, "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."—EDITOR.

heart might melt at once, and he might do that little deed of kindness in the exercise of his very first feeling of submission to his Maker.

The course which our Saviour pursued is the most perfectly philosophical. Holiness is *submission to God's law*; and though, in principle and spirit, it is always the same, it assumes in the heart many different forms; or rather, a holy heart, a heart willing to submit, will exist in many different states, according to the object presented to it. Hold up God's favours to it, and it feels grateful; present its past sins, and it mourns; show God's goodness, and the leading principles of his government and character, and it rejoices. Thus holiness looking at sin, is penitence; at God, is joy; at duty, resolution; at self, humility; at human woes, compassion. In Abraham it shone as obedience, in Job as patience, in John as love; and yet in all it is one. If it exist in one form, it will exist in each of the others, when the circumstances call for them. Job would have been obedient if God had commanded him to leave his country, and Abraham would have been patient under suffering, like Job. We hear nothing of Joseph's penitence, nor of Samuel's faith in Christ, nor of Daniel's brotherly love. But it was the same spirit, nevertheless, which reigned in all these hearts, appearing by different exhibitions, but in all its hundred forms remaining still the same.

This view of the subject is of immense practical importance to all who are endeavouring, at the present day, to promote piety. It shows how very various, and how entirely different, may be the first steps of the return to God. You have under your care, for instance, a little child. He is too young to know much about religious truth; the nature of forgiveness, the necessity of punishment, the love of the Saviour, or a judgment to come. You can tell him of God,*

* Can any child be too young to be told of "the love of the Saviour," who is not too young to be told of "the holy character of God?" The Editor is inclined to believe that the converse is nearer the truth, and

however; his existence, his presence, his holy character; and then you can just ask him, some morning, *to do right that day for the sake of pleasing Him*. Perhaps he will not; he may try to do right, for the purpose of receiving your praises or rewards, without feeling, however, any desire to please God. On the other hand, perhaps he will. If he does, it will indeed be through an influence exerted upon his tender affections, in answer to your prayers; but he may be, and probably, in many instances, children have been, under just such circumstances, turned to God, and led to begin a service which they are still continuing in heaven. Many children have thus been reconciled to God, when they were too young to know any thing about the source of spiritual life within them, or even the existence of that Saviour, through whose death alone they were finally declared justified and forgiven.

But we are wandering from our subject, which is the fact, that Jesus Christ spent all his strength in inducing men to submit in heart to God, and to keep his holy law; and that if he found them in heart willing to do this, he was but little solicitous about the precise act by which the new life should begin. These acts were various then, and they are various now. A young man, for example, having hesitated between the service of his Maker and the service of sin, walks out alone on a summer evening upon the sea-shore, and there, while meditating upon his character and condition, he resolves that he will hesitate no longer, but that he will return to his Maker; and he utters, with honest sincerity, and from his heart, the Lord's Prayer,—language which he has often uttered, though without feeling, before. *His* first christian exercise is prayer. Another is *overwhelmed with conviction of sin*; and suffers hour after hour, or day after day, under its oppressive load. At last his heart suddenly feels and

that many an infant heart may be led to the love of the Saviour, before the mind is sufficiently advanced to be able to comprehend much of the "existence, and presence, and holy character of God."—EDITOR.

appreciates and rejoices in the goodness and holiness against which he has been contending; he bursts forth in God's praise, and all nature seems to shine with his Maker's glory. *His first christian feeling is joy.* Another's heart melts into godly and heart-felt sorrow for its sins; the first renewed emotion in this case is penitence. There is no end to the variety of forms which the movements of spiritual life assume; and Jesus Christ, while he most vigorously insisted that it should be real, genuine, heart-felt obedience to **THE LAW**, attached no importance to the particular act by which it should first be rendered.

CHAP. IV.

HUMAN NATURE, OR THE SAVIOUR'S RECEPTION AMONG MANKIND.

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”

IN the last chapter we considered our Saviour simply as a teacher; hereafter we shall have occasion to look at him more particularly as a sufferer. In the meantime, we must devote a few pages to considering the reception which the principles of duty he inculcated meet with among men.

This brings us at once to the study of human nature; and the way to study human nature is, to look at it as it exhibits itself in the actual conduct of mankind. If we examine it thus, we shall find it presenting itself in a great many alluring aspects. Look, for instance, at any of those quiet villages, which may be found by thousands in every christian land. When day dawns, the grey light looks into the windows of a hundred dwellings, where honest industry has been enjoying repose. The population is grouped into

families, according to the arrangement which God has made ; and while the eastern sky reddens and glows by the reflection of the approaching sun, there is, in every dwelling, a mother, actively engaged in providing for the morning wants of the household which God has committed to her care. There is a tie around her heart, binding her to her husband, her children, her home, and to all the domestic duties which devolve upon her. These duties she goes on to discharge, though they are ever renewed, and ever the same. She does it day after day—three hundred and sixty-five times this year, and as many more the next, and the next, perhaps for half a century. What patience! what persevering industry! and all, not for herself, but for others.

At the proper time, all the families of the village assemble, each in its own quiet home, to receive their food. The breakfast hour for one is the breakfast hour for all. Each conforms to the customs of the others, with as much regularity as if these customs were enforced by penal laws. Every one is at liberty ; and yet, in all the important arrangements of life, they all agree. And how is this agreement produced? By the regard which every one has for the opinions and feelings of the rest ; a feeling which we cannot but look upon with pleasure ; and it reigns in all human communities, and has almost boundless power in regulating established customs, and preserving the order of society.

We next see our villagers going forth to their respective labours. You will observe them issuing from their various dwellings, and repairing to their work, with as much regularity as if on a preconcerted signal. The mechanics go to their shops, the tradesman to his store, and the farmers to their fields ; and though there may be here and there an exception, they continue their toil as industriously as if their motions were watched, and all their actions controlled by masters, who had the right and the power to exact from them a stated daily task. And this course of daily active industry is persevered in through life, and all the means of comfort and enjoyment which it procures, are frugally

husbanded. Sickness, death, calamity, may produce an occasional interruption, and even paralyze, for a time, all interest in worldly pursuits and duties; but the elastic spirit rises again, when the severity of pressure is removed, and again finds occupation and enjoyment in its daily routine of toil.

The moral beauty of it all consists in the fact, that each man labours thus industriously, day after day, and year after year, not merely for himself, but for others also. Each has, upon an average, four or five who are dependant upon him, and it is for them mainly, and not for himself, that he confines himself so constantly to his daily toil.

There may be exceptions. Here and there one is idle and dissolute, leaving the inmates of his wretched home to mourn the guilt of the husband and father, and to feel its bitter consequences. But it is only here and there one; and in almost every such case, the ills which the sufferers would otherwise have to bear are very much alleviated by the assistance of neighbours, who cannot well enjoy their own comforts at their own homes, until they have relieved the pressure of want that is so near them. The great majority, however, are faithful to their trust; held to duty, not by compulsion, nor by fear of penalty, but by a tie which God has fastened round the heart, and whose control men love to obey. This is human nature.

The reader may, perhaps, say that there is no virtue in all this seeming benevolence, because such is the nature of the tie by which the father and the mother are bound to their household; and that the faithful discharge of their own domestic duties is the way to secure the highest and purest happiness to themselves. It is so, undoubtedly; and it is the very moral beauty which we have been endeavouring to point out, that, in a case of such universal application, the human heart is such, that it can find, and does find, its own purest and highest enjoyment in unceasing efforts to promote the enjoyment of others.

Thus the day passes on in our peaceful, quiet village: the evening brings recreations of various kinds; some, indeed,

seek guilty pleasures, but far the greater number find happiness at home. Night brings universal repose, the members of each family sleeping quietly under their own roof, 'with none to molest or make them afraid.' Or if there is a solitary one, who prowls about at midnight, to steal, or burn, or kill, he is but one among a thousand,—a rare and abhorred exception to the general rule.

Perhaps, however, under one roof there is sickness. A pale and feeble child, who has been a source of unceasing anxiety and trouble to his parents, from his very birth, lies in his little couch, restless and feverish, under an attack of some new disease.

'Mother, your sleep has been disturbed enough by its restlessness and its cries. Carry it away to some remote apartment, and leave it there, to moan alone under its sufferings, so that you may sleep, for once, undisturbed. If it should die before the morning, you will only be relieved of a continual and heavy burden.'

'Father, leave the little sufferer to its fate. You will then sleep quietly through the night, and the necessity for toil will be diminished on the morrow. Why should you take such pains, and bear such watching and such fatigue for this child? Even if he lives, he will never repay you; but as soon as he becomes a man, he will go out from your roof, away into the world, and you will see him no more. Therefore abandon the little sufferer at once; send him away to a distant room, and leave him.'

The proposal makes the father and mother cling still more closely to their suffering child; and when at midnight every house in the village seems desolate and still, you will see, from the two windows of their chamber, the glow of lamp and fire within, contrasted with the cold white light, with which the moon silvers the windows of other dwellings. In that chamber the sleepless mother watches, with love which no sacrifices can exhaust, and no protracted efforts tire. It expands to meet every emergency, and rises higher and higher, in exact proportion to the wants and sufferings of its

feeble object. The light will continue at those windows till the morning dawn extinguishes it ; and as long as the loved object needs this watchfulness and care, those windows will show the same signal of sickness and suffering as regularly and as constantly as night returns.

There is a great moral beauty in this, and in all those principles of human nature, by which heart is bound to heart, and communities are linked together in bonds of peace and harmony, and of mutual co-operation and goodwill. Some persons may, indeed, say that there is nothing of a *moral* character in it. We will not contend for a word. There is beauty in it of some sort, it is certain ; for the man who can look upon these and similar aspects of human character without some gratification, is not human. It is beauty of some sort, and it is not physical nor intellectual : if any man chooses to apply some other term than *moral* to characterize it, we will not contend. At any rate, it is human nature.

But nearly all that there is which appears alluring in the above views, or any other views which can be taken of human nature, when left to itself, is to be resolved into two principles. And these principles are such, that if virtue can be based upon them at all, it is certainly virtue of the lowest character. The principles are these—natural affection and policy ; the two foundations on which rest nine-tenths of all which is called virtue in this world. There is, indeed, among men, a vast amount of industry and frugality ; of faithful domestic attachment, and persevering performance of the ordinary duties of life ; there is honesty, and conscientiousness, and dislike of suffering, which leads to many efforts to remove or alleviate it. But, after all, for we must, to be honest, come to the unpleasant conclusion, nearly the whole has its only basis in feelings of natural affection, or on views of enlightened policy. The results are beautiful ; they are essential to the well-being, and almost to the existence of society, but when we come honestly to analyze their causes, we shall see that instinctive affection and views

of policy produce nearly the whole. God has taken care so to form the human heart, and so to constitute communities, that these influences of natural affection, and these considerations of policy, shall be enough, in ordinary instances, to protect the outward frame-work of society. This outward frame-work, therefore, is sustained very well. The rest,—all that is within the region of the *heart*, the private feelings and private conduct between man and man,—he has appointed laws to regulate. And what is the consequence? Why, what he impels man to do by fixed and certain constitutional tendencies, and what he makes it plainly his interest to do, *that* is done. But all the rest fails. His laws are broken, his authority contemned, and, though the exterior fabric of society is protected, as we have seen, and presents so beautiful and imposing an aspect, the heart sickens as we look at what is within.

Take our village for instance. If we look at its exterior arrangements, how fair it seems! But the reader would shut this book in displeasure at its harshness, if I were to describe, with anything like fairness, the feelings and emotions which really reign in the hearts of its inhabitants. The children all know that God their Maker has said to them, ‘You shall not disobey your father and mother.’ They care no more for it than for the idle wind. The mother, who watches over her sick child, has, perhaps, a heart rising against God, repining and unsubmitive. It seems to be an honest village, for the inhabitants do not rob or murder each other in the night. Honest! why there is not a man who will trust his neighbour to make a bargain between himself and him, without watching his own interest with the utmost eagerness. They seem to be benevolent; that is, they cannot bear to witness any great physical suffering, and they take measures to alleviate or remove it. Benevolent! the amount of real heart-felt benevolence among them is shown by this fact, that if any man comes forward with a plan for doing good, and asks the co-operation of his neighbours, nine out of ten of them will believe that *his interest* is, in some

way or other, directly connected with it; and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they will be right! Such a view of human character, on paper, is objected to, and opposed by many; but still they know that it is in fact true. They act on the presumption of its truth in all their dealings with men; and their knowledge of mankind is abundantly sufficient to convince them, that if the hearts of the inhabitants of any village could be really unmasked, they would present such disclosures of envy, malice, strifes, selfishness, ill-will, pride, and revenge, as would justify the strongest language which could possibly be used to describe them.

It is astonishing what beautiful, what admirable results may be secured in human society, by the operation of these natural impulses and views of policy, while each individual of the community may be the abandoned slave of sin. The following is a striking illustration of it. A man may drop a letter containing a hundred pound note into any post-office in the country. He slips it through a little aperture, and does not know who is on the other side. The man who takes it up is a stranger. He passes it into the hands of another stranger, and thus it goes from hand to hand, from driver to driver, and clerk to clerk, for a thousand miles, and, at last, his correspondent safely receives the money from some one, he knows not whom. And what has been its protection? A sheet of paper, fastened with a little coloured paste: or in its condition of greatest security, a leathern bag, closed by a lock, which any stone by the side of the road would shatter to pieces. The treasure is thus carried over solitary roads, through forests, and among the mountains; and is passed from one hand to another in a state of what would seem to be most complete exposure. What honest men these agents, thus trusted, must be! is the first reflection. Honest! why the writer of the letter would not really trust a tenth part of the sum to the honesty of a single one of them. They may be honest, or they may not; but the careless observer, who should attribute the safe result to the honesty of the men, would be most grossly deceived. It is an adroit arrange-

ment,—most admirably and skilfully planned by human wisdom, and acting by means of principles which God has implanted,—that secures the result. The merchant trusts the money to agents whom he does not know, not because he thinks they are *honest*, but because he knows they are *wise*; he relies on human nature, but it is the shrewd policy of human nature—not its sense of justice.

Forgetting this distinction has been the means of a great proportion of the disputes which have raged in the world about human character. In philosophizing upon the subject, a writer of a poetic turn is deluded by the beauty, the moral beauty, we may, perhaps, safely say of results, which really depend on very different principles in human hearts from what they seem to indicate. They who have the most romantic ideas of human nature in theory, do not fail of being sufficiently guarded and suspicious in their dealings with mankind; or if they do, they are sure soon to become soured by disappointed hopes, and while they panegyryze the race in the mass, they bitterly accuse and reproach it in detail. Besides, there is one proof, and that on a most extensive scale, of the real nature of worldly virtue; it is this,—a fact which no man competent to judge will deny,—that all the arrangements of business in every community, and in every scheme of government which was ever formed by human skill, go on the plan of making it for the *interest* of men to do right, and not on the plan of confidence in the integrity and moral principle of their hearts. A government and a system of institutions based on the idea, that men were, in a majority of cases, disposed to do their duty of their own accord, could not stand a day.

But all this is not the worst. It is not the falseness and hollowness of worldly virtues, nor the vices of heart and life which prevail every where among men, which are the great subjects of the charge which God makes against us. It is another thing altogether,—viz. that men WILL NOT SUBMIT TO THE REIGN OF GOD OVER THEM. This is their settled, determined, universal decision. It is called in the Bible by

various names, — ungodliness, rebellion, unbelief, enmity against God, and many others. Jehovah has proclaimed a law; men disobey it altogether. They do, indeed, some things which are commanded in that law, but then it is only because it happens to suit their convenience. He tells us we are not our own, but his; we pay no regard to it, but go on serving ourselves. He tells us that all will soon be over with us in this world, and that, in a very short time, we must stand in judgment before him. Who believes it? He charges the man of wealth to act as his Maker's steward in managing his property, and sacredly to appropriate it to his cause; the wealthy man regards it just as much as he would a similar claim from the beggar in the street. He calls upon men of rank and influence to glorify him by exhibiting pure and holy lives, in the conspicuous stations in which he has placed them; look at the princes and nobles, the legislators and statesmen of this world, and see how they obey. By his word and by his Spirit he tells us of our undying souls, of the value of holiness and spiritual peace, of the deep guilt of sin, of mercy through a Saviour, and of eternal life with him in heaven; men turn away from such subjects in utter contempt. These topics, whenever introduced among the vulgar classes of society, will ordinarily be received with open derision and scorn; and the refined circles of society, with as decided, though with a little more polite hostility, will not allow their introduction. There is as real, and certain, and determined a combination among men, to exclude God and his law from any actual control over human hearts, as if the standard of open rebellion was raised, and there were gathered around it all the demonstrations of physical resistance.

It is sometimes said that the reason why subjects connected with God and religion are so excluded from conversation in polite circles of society, is the fact, that when such subjects are introduced, they are so often a cloak of hypocrisy and deceit. I know it is so; and this fact constitutes the most complete and overwhelming evidence of the extent to

which this world is alienated from God. Even what little professed regard there is for him here, is, two-thirds of it, hypocrisy! This is, in fact, what the objection amounts to; and what a story does it tell in regard to the place which God holds in human hearts. No: as men have generally made up their minds to have nothing to do with God, they are determined to hear nothing about him, unless it be in such general terms, and in such formal ways, as shall not be in danger of making an impression. We may almost wonder how eternal justice can spare this earth from day to day, when we reflect upon what is unquestionably the awful fact, that throughout all those countries where the true God is known, in four cases out of five in which his name is mentioned at all, it is used in oaths and blasphemies.

The preceding chapter of this work opened, perhaps the reader thought, a very broad door of salvation, and would lead one to ask, who can help being saved? It was, indeed, a wide door; one which all might enter; the condition simple, and universally proclaimed—‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.’ ‘In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.’ But the difficulty is, that widely extended as the gates of salvation are, and simple as is the entrance, men WILL NOT COME IN. They do not wish to be saved, and they will not seek salvation. They do not love holiness; they do not like the idea of serving God: penitence, humility, broken-hearted submission to God’s will, and spiritual peace and happiness, they do not like. They want to be making money, or gaining admiration, or enjoying sensual pleasure; and persuasion is not merely insufficient to change them—it does not even tend to change. You cannot change the *desires and affections of the heart* by persuasion. No; plain and simple, and open to every man, as is the way of life, men choose another way: and if the few imperfect exceptions which exist, were not accounted for in the Bible,

we should be utterly unable to account for them at all; so fixed, and settled, and universal a characteristic it is of human nature, to wish to have, in this life, as little as possible to do with God and eternity. Even the little love to God and submission to him which exists, is so adulterated, that it scarcely deserves the name. The enemies of religion know this very well. They charge us with selfishness and ambition and party spirit, as the real springs of a large portion of our pretended efforts in behalf of religion; and they are right. We deny it in our eager controversies with our foes, but every true Christian acknowledges and bewails it in his closet before God.

We see thus that the great, the destroying guilt of human souls, is not open vice and crime, but determined and persevering alienation from God.

Whenever we carry the law of God to human souls, and bring home to the conscience and the heart, the summons to surrender to it, it meets, from all the varieties of human character, with substantially the same reception. Take it to savages on their remote island. Explain the law to them, shew them its moral perfection: offer them forgiveness for the past, if they will now subdue their passions, and cease their murderous quarrels, and give themselves up to the service of the pure and holy Spirit, and become, like him, pure, and holy, and merciful, and kind. Will they obey?

Come then to a christian land, and collect an assembly of children. Describe to them the cold, cheerless misery of sin; call their attention to the secret corrodings of remorse, which they all suffer every day. Remind them of their ingratitude and disobedience to their parents, and their neglect of God; tell them how rapidly time is flying, and how soon they must appear before their Maker. Describe the moral beauty of a holy character,—pure, docile, faithful, grateful to father and mother, and filled with affection for God,—the soul resigned and submissive to his will, and happy in a sense of his forgiveness and protection. Then ask them to come and give themselves to their Saviour, and

to begin lives of purity and duty and holiness. What will they do? They will sit still while you speak, if they have been trained to sit still on such occasions, and, perhaps, a few may listen with real attention; but after you have finished all you have to say, they will go away with hearts as cold towards God as if they had been indurating under the influence of sin for a hundred years.

Make the experiment then upon a maturer mind. Here is a wealthy merchant, engaged in business, which abundant prosperity from God has brought before him. In order that there may be nothing exceptionable in the form and manner in which his duty as a child of God is brought before him, we will suppose that he is sick, and has sent for his pastor to come and visit him. Let this pastor explain what is meant by the requisition of the Bible, that a man of wealth should feel that his wealth is not his own, but that he holds it as a steward or agent; and that he is bound to be faithful to the trust committed to him. He knows very well what are the duties of trustee. He understands the distinction between agent and principal; so that no long explanation is necessary. Let the pastor simply call his attention to the point, and bring home to his mind the nearness of eternity, the inconceivable importance of the salvation of his soul, and that of his workmen, his clerks, his salesmen, his navigators; and plead with him to come out honestly and openly and with all his heart, on the side of God and holiness; to let his light shine; and to devote every thing he has to the work of helping forward God's cause in the world. Suppose this experiment were to be tried, who that knows mankind will doubt about the result? One half the Christian pastors in the world would be so convinced of its hopelessness, that they would not make the attempt. They would not ask, plainly and directly, a worldly man, under such circumstances, to give himself up to God. And if they should bring the question forward, plainly and faithfully, and in all its honest truth, instead of winning new converts to God, they would, in nine cases out of ten, in any commercial city in Christendom,

excite high displeasure, and very likely never be able to gain admission to the bed-side again. Worldly men are very willing to sustain the external institutions of religion, and to assemble on the Sabbath from time to time, to hear praises of the moral virtues, or discussions of the abstract excellencies of religion. But you cannot take such a text as this, "YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN, YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE, THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODIES AND IN YOUR SPIRITS, WHICH ARE GOD'S:" and fairly bring it before men's consciences and hearts, so that they shall really understand its meaning, without awakening strong opposition or dislike. It is opposition and dislike to something; *they* say it is not enmity against God: but that certainly looks very much like enmity against God and his government, which is excited by the presentation of the very fundamental principle of all his laws.

But do not let us despair. There may be some one, yet, who will admit God, though all these have rejected him. Here is an amiable and gentle girl; obedient to her parents, faithful in many of her duties, affectionate, kind. Let us bring to her the invitation to come into the kingdom of heaven. Exemplary as she is in external conduct, she knows very well that her heart would not bear exposure; envy, self-will, jealousy, pride, often reign there. She knows it—she feels it; and her conscience being still tender, these sins often destroy her peace: tell her that divine grace will help her to subdue these, her enemies. She sometimes looks forward to future life, and sighs to think how soon it will pass away: tell her that piety will dispel the darkness that hangs over the grave, and open immortality to her view. She thinks of future trials, and difficulties, and dangers, with dread: tell her that the Saviour is ready to guide her, and be her friend—to protect and bless her at all times—to give her employment, and to be her reward. Spread the whole subject out before her, and urge her to come and give herself up to God, and save her soul. She listens to you with respectful, and, perhaps, even with pleased attention; but do

not be deceived by it! She is, at heart, tired and sick of the gloomy subject. She might like, perhaps, protection and happiness; but her heart revolts against God and holiness, and you might as well talk to the deaf adder as to her.

Or, if her heart is not entirely braced up and hardened in its determination to have nothing to do with God and religion—if she is really willing to listen and to read—she is still just as obstinately determined *not to obey*. She is called, perhaps, a religious inquirer. She reads the Bible, and offers a daily prayer, and takes an interest in religious instruction; but her secret motive is, *to keep religion within her reach*, because she dares not let it go altogether. She is still determined not to give up herself to it. She can love her parents, her brothers and sisters, but her heart is cold towards God; and though you do all you can to persuade her to come out openly, and honestly, and cordially on his side, she is fixed, immovably fixed, in refusing to do it. Her religious friends think she is very near the kingdom of heaven: and, in one sense, she is near. She stands at the very gate of the celestial city. All obstacles are removed: she can look in, and see the happy mansions and the golden streets. The simple difficulty is, that *she will not enter*. If you urge her, she tries to perplex you with metaphysical speculations, or listens in respectful silence, and goes away, and continues in sin exactly as before.

And thus it is all over the world. There are many beautiful moral exhibitions to be seen here—many admirable results—many alluring aspects of human nature. But, after all, any honest observer must see, that between mankind, and God their Maker, there is a deep, and settled, and universal disagreement; they would be willing that God should rule over them, if he would leave them pretty much to themselves. But this *he* will not do. His very first, and most emphatic command is, "THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF;" and this *they* will not do. It is their fixed, their settled, their unchanging determination, that they will not do it.

Perhaps I ought not to call it a determination; for it is rather a feeling than a determination—a disrelish for holiness, and the spiritual enjoyment of loving and serving God. The heart, sensitive as it is in regard to its own rights and interests, is cold and torpid in regard to its Maker's claims. Motive will not act upon it. Persuasion has no effect, for there is no feeling for persuasion to take hold of. Argument does no good; for, though you may convince the understanding without much difficulty, the heart remains insensible and cold—*dead*, as the Bible terribly expresses it—dead in trespasses and sins. This coldness and insensibility of the heart towards God, lead to all sorts of sinfulness in conduct. It takes off restraint, gives up the soul to unholy feelings, increases the power of temptation, and thus leaves the soul the habitual slave of sin. These overt acts are the effects, not the cause; and he who hopes to be morally renewed, must not look directly and mainly to his moral conduct, and endeavour to rectify that; but he must look deeper; he must examine his heart, and expect no real success which does not proceed from the warmth of spiritual life springing up there.

I presume that a large portion of the readers of this chapter, will be persons who feel, in some degree, the value and the necessity of piety; and they are, perhaps, actually reading this book with a vague sort of wish to meet with something in it which will help them to find salvation. The book can do this only by showing you the real difficulty; which is, that you do not sincerely wish for salvation. Cease to do evil; ask forgiveness, in the name of Christ, for the evil you have done; and henceforth openly serve God. These are, certainly, directions which it is easy for you to understand, and easy to practise. The difficulty is, a heart which will not comply. There is a moral obligation to comply, which the understanding admits, but which the heart does not feel; and a moral beauty in complying, which it does not perceive.

This is spiritual blindness. And yet, simple as it seems, a

large portion, even of those who call themselves religious inquirers, have very little conception of what spiritual blindness is. It is insensibility to spiritual things; a dulness of moral perception, insomuch that sin, though it is intellectually perceived, makes no impression; and holiness, though the word is understood, awakens no feeling of its excellence and beauty in the heart. I can best illustrate it by a simple case, such as parents often have occasion to observe.

A noisy boy, three or four years old, was once running about the house, disturbing very much, by his rattling playthings and his loud outcries, a sick mother, in a chamber above-stairs. I called him to me, and something like the following dialogue ensued:—

‘Where is your mother?’

‘She is sick up stairs.’

‘Is she? I am sorry she is sick.’

A pause.

‘Were you ever sick?’

‘Yes. I was sick once,’ said he, and he began to rattle his little feet upon the chair, and to move about in a restless manner, as if he wished to get down.

‘Oh, you must sit still a moment,’ said I; ‘I want to talk with you a little more. When were you sick?’

‘Oh, I dont know.’

‘What did your mother do for you, when you was sick?’

‘Oh, she rocked me in the cradle.’

‘Did she?—did she rock you? I am glad she was so kind. I suppose you liked to be rocked. Did she give you any thing to drink?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Did she make a noise to trouble you?’

‘No, sir, she did not make any noise.’

‘Well, she was very kind to you. I think you ought to be kind to her, now she is sick. You cannot rock her in the cradle, because she is too old to be rocked; but you can be gentle and still, and that she will like very much.’

‘Oh, but,’ said the boy in a tone of confidence, as if what

he was saying was perfectly conclusive and satisfactory, 'I want to ride my horse a little more.'

So saying, he struggled to get free, that he might resume his noisy sport. Probably nearly all the parents who read this dialogue, will remember, as they read it, many similar attempts which they have made, to lead a little child *to perceive the moral beauty of gratitude*, and to yield their hearts to its influence. But the child will not see or feel. It understands the terms—it remembers its own sickness and its mother's kindness—it knows that its mother is now sick, and that its noisy plays produce inconvenience and suffering; but every attempt to lead it to look at all these things in connexion, and to perceive and feel its own *ingratitude* are vain. It has no perception of it—no sensibility to it. 'I want to ride my horse a little more,' is the idea that fills its whole soul; and duty, gratitude, obligation, are unfelt and unseen.

It is thus with you, my irreligious reader. Your heart has no spiritual perception of the guilt of ingratitude towards God, and the moral beauty and excellence of obedience to his law. You can look at the law, at God's character, at your own sins, at all the declarations of the Bible; but you do not feel their moral weight. The carnal, that is, the worldly mind, does not know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The difficulty seems hopeless, too; that is, so far as human means will go towards removing it. Every thing fails. In the hands of the Spirit of God, as we shall hereafter show, every thing does, indeed, at times, succeed; but in its ordinary operation, every means and every influence which can be brought to bear upon the human heart, fails of awakening it. It is a common opinion among men, who are aware that all this is true in regard to their own hearts, that the coldness and insensibility which they feel, will be dispelled by some future providence of God. They think that affliction will soften them, or sickness break the ties of earth, or approaching death arouse them to vigorous effort to flee from the wrath

to come. But, alas! there is little hope here. Affliction does good to the friends of God, but it embitters and hardens his enemies. Sickness stupifies, and pain distracts; and approaching death, though it may alarm and terrify the soul which is unprepared for it, seldom melts the heart to penitence and love.

My reader, if your heart is cold and hard towards God, abandon all hope that the alarm and anxiety of a death-bed will change it. Seek moral renewal and forgiveness now.



CHAPTER V.

PUNISHMENT, OR THE CONSEQUENCES OF HUMAN GUILT.

“He will miserably destroy those wicked men.”

THERE are, perhaps, one thousand millions of men upon the earth at this time; of which, probably, nine hundred and ninety-nine millions entertain the feeling towards God, which are described in the last chapter, and act accordingly. The question at once arises, What will God do with them?

The reader will perhaps recollect, that in the first chapter of this work, when considering the character of the Deity, we found that one of its most prominent traits, is determined decision in the execution of law. This is a trait which shows itself as conspicuously in all nature around us, as it does in the declarations of the Bible; but one which, unfortunately, is not very popular in this world. Efficiency in government is popular or unpopular, according to the character of the individual who judges of it. An efficient administration secures protection and happiness to the good; but to the bad, it brings suffering, and perhaps destruction. It is natural, therefore, that the latter should be very slow

to praise the justice which they fear; and in this world there is so large a portion upon whom God's efficiency, as a moral governor, will bear very heavily, that the whole subject is exceedingly unpopular among mankind.

It is curious to observe how men's estimates of the same conduct vary according to the way in which they are themselves to be affected by it; for nothing is more admired and applauded among men, than efficiency in the execution of law, in all cases where they are themselves safe from its penalties. There have been great disputes in respect to the bounds which ought to be assigned to political governments, or, in other words, the degree of power which the magistrate ought to possess; but within these bounds, in the exercise of this power, every body admires and praises firmness, energy, and inflexible decision. Nobody objects except the criminal, who has to suffer for the safety of the rest. He always protests against it.

About fifty years ago, an English clergyman, of elevated rank and connexions, and of high literary reputation, committed forgery. The law of England says that the forger must die. Now England is a highly commercial country; and all the transactions of business there, connected with the employment, and the sustenance, and the property of millions and millions, entirely depend upon confidence in the truth of a written signature. Destroy the general confidence, in the identity of a man's hand-writing in signing his name, and all the business of the island would be embarrassed, or stopped, and universal confusion, distress, and ruin, would follow in a day. The man, therefore, who counterfeits a signature, in such a country, points his dagger at the very vitals of society.

The law of England does right, therefore, in affixing a very severe penalty to the crime of forgery; not for the purpose of revenging itself on the hapless criminal, but for the sake of protecting that vast amount of property, and those millions of lives which are dependent upon the general confidence in the writing of a name. It is a sad thing for a

clergyman, of refined and cultivated mind, to pass through the scenes which such a law prepared for him. Consternation when detected; long hours of torturing suspense before his trial; indescribable suffering, when, on being brought to the bar, he saw the proof brought out, step by step, clearly against him, and witnessed the unavailing efforts of his counsel to make good his defence; and the sinking of spirit, like death itself, while the judge pronounced the sentence which sealed his awful fate. Then he is remanded to prison, to spend some days or weeks in uninterrupted and indescribable agony, until his faculties become bewildered and overpowered by the influence of horror and despair, and he walks out at last, pale, trembling, and haggard in look, to finish his earthly sufferings by the convulsive struggles of death. Sad consequences these, we admit, although they come only upon one, and all for just affixing another man's name to a piece of paper, without any intention of defrauding any body; for it is highly probable that in this case, as in many similar ones, the criminal meant, in mercantile language, to have 'taken up' the paper before it fell due. In fact, he must have designed this, for that was the only way to escape certain detection. Awful results, we admit, for a sin so quickly and so thoughtlessly committed; but not so sad as it would be to let the example go on, until the frequency of forgery should destroy all mutual confidence between man and man, and business be stopped, and millions of families be reduced to beggary. Better is it that here and there a violator of the law should suffer its penalties, than that the foundations of society should be sapped, and the whole structure tumble into ruin. The question, therefore, for the government of that island, was simply this,—will you be firm, notwithstanding individual suffering, in executing the law, or will you yield and take the consequences? If you yield, you open the flood-gates of crime and suffering upon the country; and there will be no place to stop, if you once give way to crime, till the land becomes one wide-spread scene of desolation,

famine raging in every hamlet, banditti lurking in the valleys, or riding in troops upon the highways, and wretched mothers, with their starving babes, roaming through the streets of desolated London, in a fruitless search for food. That was the question, and the energetic government of the country understood it so. The unhappy criminal gave every indication of penitence. He was generally believed to be truly penitent then, and is universally believed to have been so now. All England, too, with one voice, sent in earnest petitions for his pardon; but it was in vain. The British ministry understood their duty better; and though it was perhaps as painful a duty as a government ever had to discharge, they were firm, unyielding to the last. They gave him neither pardon nor reprieve; and though they would probably have submitted to almost any personal suffering to save him, they were compelled to leave him to drink to the full, the bitter consequences of his sin.

There were thousands and thousands of petitioners in his favour, overcome by compassion for the man. The tide of popular feeling was altogether against the government then; for men generally are weak-minded, inefficient, yielding, when the performance of duty is painful. But since the time has gone by, and the momentary weakness of the occasion has passed away, there has been as strong a tide of public approbation in their favour. In fact, this conspicuous and terrible case of sin and suffering, has made a permanent impression, not only upon England, but upon the whole civilized world. Every man feels it. He may not trace back the feelings to its origin; but it is undoubtedly, in a very great degree owing to this, and precisely similar transactions, that that distinct, and almost indelible impression has been made upon the community, and is handed down from generation to generation, which connects in every mind, such strong and mysterious associations of sacredness, with the signature of the written name. From that day to this, every writer who has commented upon the transaction, while he has many expressions of sympathy for the suffering, has a far

more emphatic tribute of praise for the inflexible firmness and decision which refused to relieve it.

Undoubtedly all my readers see this in the same light. We are, in a great measure, incapacitated from regarding some transactions analogous to this, in a correct manner, on account of their coming too near to ourselves;—but this one can be understood; its moral bearings and relations are seen as they are, without distortion; and the simple fact, which enables us to take the view of this subject which truth and justice present, is this,—we have not committed forgery ourselves. Suppose there had been in the prison, where this unhappy criminal was confined, a room full of other forgers, and their opinion had been asked about the justice or necessity of condemning him. Could they be made to understand it? No; they would be vociferous in their outcries at the unjust severity of inflicting such protracted and terrible suffering for so little a sin. We, however, can understand it, for we are impartial observers. We have not committed the crime, and we, consequently, have nothing to fear from sustaining the law. We rather see the value of an efficient administration of justice, in the protection it affords to our rights, and the addition it makes to our happiness. I have accordingly taken this case to present to my readers, to illustrate four or five points which we can see more plainly, than when we look at them directly in the government of God. As I enumerate the points which such a case illustrates, let the reader listen to the voice of reason and conscience within, and he will find that it testifies in their favour.

1. The time spent in committing the sin has nothing to do with the just duration of the punishment of it. It took Dr. Dodd fifteen seconds to write Lord Chesterfield's name: he suffered indescribable agony for many months, and was then blotted from existence for it. He would have lived perhaps forty years. So that here, for a sin of fifteen seconds, justice took forty years in penalty. She took more; for he would have been glad to have exchanged death for forty years of exile and suffering. In fact, he petitioned for such a commutation.

Some one may say that I fix too small a time for the commission of the sin ; that he spent many hours, and perhaps days, in devising his plans, and practising his counterfeit signature, and getting his bond drawn, and that his guilt was extended over all these. His *guilt* was, to be sure, but he was not punished for guilt : he was punished for *crime*. If the last fatal act had not been performed, he would not have committed any offence against human law. God might have punished him, but man could not ; so that, strictly and fairly, the fifteen seconds spent in delineating the letters of his pupil's name, was the whole. For a sin of fifteen seconds, then, there followed a penalty worse than suffering for forty years ; and mankind have, by common consent, from that to this, pronounced the punishment just.

2. Desert of punishment does not depend upon intention to do injury. The forger, in this case, had not the least intention of doing injury. He could not have had such an intention, for Lord Chesterfield could not have been called upon to pay the bond without causing instant detection. This fact, however, was no reason why he should go free. The question was not what injury he intended to commit, but what injury really would follow, if his crime should go unpunished.

3. Desert of punishment does not depend upon the immediate consequences of the sin. The evil of sin consists not in the direct injury of the single transgression, but in the ruinous effects to the community, when it is allowed to go unpunished. The only direct injury which could have resulted from this crime was the loss of 4000*l.* by one individual. Fifty times that sum might probably have been raised to save his life, but it would have been unavailing. He was executed, not for putting to hazard the 4000*l.*, but for endangering the vital interests of an immense community. The 4000*l.* has nothing to do with the case : it would have been the same, if it had been 40*l.* The sin was the *forgery*, not the endangering of 4000*l.*

Men are always estimating their guilt by the time

employed in committing the sin, or by the direct consequences resulting from it; and fancy they deserve but light punishments, because they think that their transgressions have occupied but little time, and can of themselves do no great or immediate injury.

4. Desert of punishment does not depend upon the degree of distinctness with which the consequences are foreseen. The criminal here had no idea that he was involving himself in such dreadful difficulty; but this inconsideration was no admissible plea.

Hearts in this world, which give themselves up to sin, are unconcerned about its guilt, and have no idea of the awful consequences which are to ensue; but this will not, cannot, alter those consequences.

5. The object of punishment is not revenge against the individual. Nobody felt any sentiment of revenge against the individual here. There was one common and universal effort to save him, and that by the very community which alone could suffer injury from his crime. The government would most gladly have pardoned him, if they could have done it safely. No one wanted him to suffer. The only reason for it was, that the suffering of the criminal in such a case can alone arrest the consequences of the sin. In many and many an instance, has the chief magistrate of a state had the strength of his moral principle tried to the utmost, by the importunities of a whole community, and, more than all the rest, of the wretched wife and children of the criminal. A weak man, in such a case, will yield: his desire to save individual suffering, will induce him to take a step which will hazard all that society holds most dear. Instead of any feelings of resentment against the individual to urge him on, there is a deep emotion of compassion for him, to keep him back; so that if he is firm and does his duty, it must be because moral principle carries him forward, against the strong tide of feeling with which his heart pleads for the life of a fellow-creature.

— So with God. If any of us should be so happy as, after

finishing our pilgrimage in this vale of tears, to be admitted to the happy home in the skies, God will assuredly protect us for ever from the sins and the sinners which have brought so much misery here. He will be firm and unyielding in the execution of his law; but it is not the less true that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

6. The object of punishment, on the other hand, is, a moral impression upon the community, designed to arrest the ruinous consequences of the sin. We have seen under the last head, that it is not resentment against the individual. The forger knew it was not, in his case, resentment that stood in the way of his pardon; and in his petitions, he made no effort to remove any feeling against him personally, but to show how the necessary moral impression might be made without his death. The following paragraph, from a petition he offered to the king, shows this:—

‘ I confess the crime, and own the enormity of its consequences, and the danger of its example. Nor have I the confidence to petition for impunity; but humbly hope, that public security may be established, without the spectacle of a clergyman dragged through the streets to a death of infamy, amidst the derision of the profligate and profane: and that justice may be satisfied with irrevocable exile, perpetual disgrace, and hopeless penury.’

It is evident from this what object the petitioner supposed it to be which required his death. And in his effort to avoid death his plan was to show, that the proper moral impression might be made on the community without it, so as, in his own words, ‘ *to establish the public security*’—‘ *to satisfy justice* ;’ expressions which are almost precisely those used by religious writers in describing God’s design in punishing sin, and which are spurned by the disbelievers in a judgment to come, as expressions having no meaning, or else signifying something unjust or absurd. ‘ *To satisfy justice* ;’—a metaphorical expression certainly, but one which any man can understand if he will. The great English philologist, for it

was Dr. Johnson who penned this petition for the unhappy criminal, will hardly be charged with using, under such circumstances, unmeaning, or unintelligible language. If the man had been pardoned, a violence would have been done to the sense of justice which reigns in every man's bosom, which would have worked incalculable injury. It would have undermined the authority of law, and brought down the standard of moral obligation, and every man would have felt, as soon as the excitement of the occasion was past, that the firm foundations of commercial confidence throughout the empire, had been rendered insecure.

The object, then, in endeavouring to procure pardon, was to devise some way to prevent these evils, without the death of the criminal,—some way to satisfy justice,—and sustain law,—and make the moral impression, which the government well knew would be made by the destruction of the man. No such way could be found, and the poor criminal had to submit to his fate.

What this poor sufferer's learned and eloquent advocate failed to find for him, Jesus Christ our Saviour succeeded in finding for us;—a way by which to satisfy justice, and sustain law, and make a moral impression, which should arrest the sad consequences of guilt, and render it safe that we should be forgiven. We shall consider this, however, more fully in the sequel.

But to return. That 'God is love,' is one part of the inspired delineation of his character. That 'God is a consuming fire,' is equally distinct, and it comes from equally high authority. There is, however, a common understanding among men, that they will read and appreciate the former, while the latter is almost wholly passed by. In fact, there is among many persons, and even among Christians, a feeling that God must be considered and represented as a father only, not as a magistrate; children must be taught to love him, not to fear him; and those terrible denunciations which frown in every page of the Bible are kept out of view. It is even thought by many that there is a kind of harshness and

inhumanity in representing God as he is, a God of *terrible* majesty, and in holding up distinctly and clearly to view the awful retributions he threatens, with a design to deter men *by fear*, from breaking his laws. But Jesus Christ thought not so. 'FEAR HIM,' says he, 'WHO CAN DESTROY BOTH SOUL AND BODY IN HELL. Yea, I say unto you, fear him.' He never shrunk from bringing fully to view the undying worm,—the ceaseless torment,—the inextinguishable fire. We are too benevolent, say some, to believe such things, or to teach such things. Benevolent! yes; they are more benevolent than the Saviour. He had love enough for men to tell them plainly the truth; but these, it seems, have more. I do not speak here merely of those who openly deny the declarations of the Bible on this subject, but of a very large portion of the christian church, who never tremble themselves, or teach their children to tremble at the wrath to come. Many a christian reader of the Bible passes over its pages, thinking that such truths are all for others, when, in fact, they are peculiarly needed by himself. He is a professor of religion, thinks his peace is made with God, and that, consequently, the terrors of a coming judgment are nothing to him. In the meantime, he leads a worldly life,—he does, day after day, what he knows to be wrong,—frustrating the grace of God by making his vain hope of forgiveness the very opiate which lulls him into sin. As to threatened punishment, it passes by him like the idle wind. God is a father, he says; his government is paternal; and the language which proclaims his threatened judgments is eastern metaphor; or, if it has any serious meaning, it is intended for others, not for him. This feeling extends to all. It is one of the forms which human unbelief, so obstinate and so universal, assumes. If we were to look throughout the Bible for the subject which is presented with the greatest prominence and emphasis there, and one which is pressed most directly with reference to a strong and continual influence upon human minds, it is the unshrinking and terrible decision, with which, under the government of God, sin will be punished; and yet how very

few there are, even in the most enlightened christian community, and in the very bosom of the church, who stand in any daily fear of the judgment to come! So settled and universal is this feeling, that some readers will perhaps be surprised at the idea, that fear of God's judgments should have a place in the bosom of the church. 'There is no fear in love,' they will say; "perfect love casteth out fear." So it does, but it must be *perfect* love; and when a church has attained to this,—when sin is banished from every soul,—and the world is finally abandoned,—and God reigns in supreme, and unquestioned, and uninterrupted sway,—and every heart is a temple of perfect purity and holiness,—then may its members cease to think of the danger of God's displeasure.' Then, but not till then.

The great foundation of the almost universal unbelief which prevails, in respect to the consequences of sin, rests in the heart. Man is unwilling to believe what condemns and threatens himself. But while the origin is in the heart, the intellect assists in maintaining the delusion, and this chiefly through the mistake of considering moral obligation as of the nature of debt and credit, instead of considering God's government, as it really is, a system of probation. The meaning of probation is understood well enough in reference to this world. Young men are led to see that there are certain crises in their lives, when immense and irretrievable consequences depend upon the action of an hour. This is well known;—the principle is interwoven into all the providential arrangements of life. Men do not complain of it; they see practically its fitness. But when they come to look at the attitude in which they stand towards God, the idea of probation gives way to that of debt and credit, and they go to estimating their sins, and to calculating the time they have spent in committing them, and they bring in their offsets of good deeds, and then consider what amount of suffering is necessary to close the account.

In order to show how momentous are the consequences which often depend upon a very brief period of trial, let us take a very

common case. A boy of twelve years old, brought up by christian parents in some quiet village, is sent at last to the metropolis, into a commercial establishment, where he is to commence the duties of active life. As his mother gives him her last charge, and with forced smiles, but with a bursting heart, bids him good-bye, he thinks he cannot yield to any temptations which may beset him. For many days, and perhaps weeks, he is steady. He is alone, though in a crowded city; his heart, solitary and sad, roams back to his native hills, and recalls a thousand incidents of childhood; conscience, foreseeing the struggles that are to come, is busy in his heart, retouching every faint and fading moral impression, which years gone by had made there. He looks upon the diseased and abandoned profligates around him with horror, and shrinks instinctively back from the very idea of vice. Every night he reads a passage in the beautiful Bible, which was packed by stealth in his trunk, with his father's and mother's names upon the blank page; and he prays God for strength and help, to enable him to be faithful in duty, and grateful to them.

In the course of a few weeks the world is somewhat changed to him. He does not love his parents and his early home the less, perhaps, but he thinks of new scenes and new employments a little more. He forms acquaintances, and hears sentiments and language which he must, in heart, condemn, though he does it more and more faintly, at each successive repetition. He engages with his new comrades in plans of enjoyment which he feels are questionable. Either they are positively wrong, or else his previous notions have been too strict; he cannot exactly decide which, and he accordingly tries them more and more, occasionally reasoning with himself in regard to their character, but coming to no absolute decision. He does not think of home so much as he did;—somehow or other there are melancholy thoughts connected with it, and he finds it less easy and pleasant to write to his parents. He used to have a letter, well filled, always ready for any private opportunity which accident

might furnish ; but now he writes seldom, though he apologizes very freely for his seeming neglect, and expects every week to have more time.

At last, some Saturday afternoon, the proposal comes up among his companions, to go off on the morrow on a party of pleasure. It is not made directly to him, but it is in his hearing, and he knows that he is included in the plan, and must decide in favour or against it. A party of pleasure, of innocent recreation, they call it. He knows it is a party of dissipation and vice, and formed, too, for that sacred day, which God commands him to keep holy. He says nothing ; and from his silent and almost indifferent look, while they loudly and eagerly discuss the plan, you would suppose that he was an unconcerned spectator. But no ; look at him more attentively. Is not his cheek a little pale ? Is there not a slight quiver upon his lip ? and a slight tremor in his limbs, as he leans upon a chair, as if his strength failed him a little ? These external indications are very slight, but they are the indications of a sinking of the spirit within, as he feels that the moral forces are taking sides, and marshalling themselves in array for the struggle which must come on. Conscience does not speak ; but he knows, he feels, how she will speak, before this question is decided. Inclinations, which are beginning to grow powerful by indulgence, do not yet draw, but he knows how they will draw ; and the blood falls back upon his heart, and strength fails from his limbs, as he foresees the contest. It seems as if the combatants were drawing up their forces in gloomy silence, waiting, by common consent, till the time shall arrive, and the signal be given, for their deadly struggle.

The armistice continues, with slight interruptions, until he leaves his companions, and, having closed the business of the day, walks towards his home. But there are within him the elements of war, and as soon as he retires to his solitary room, and the stimulus and excitement of external objects are removed, the contest is begun. I need not describe it ; I can have no reader who does not understand the bitterness

of the struggle which ensues, when duty, and conscience, and the command of God, endeavour to maintain their stand against the onset of sore temptation. Human beings have occasion to know what this is, full well.

Besides, it is not to the circumstances of the contest in such a case that I wish to turn the attention of the reader, but to this fact: that, very probably, on the event of this single struggle the whole character and happiness of the young man, for life, depend. He may not see it so at the time; but it is so. If duty gains the victory here, her next conquest will be achieved more easily. There is a double advantage gained, for the strength of moral principle is increased, and the pressure of subsequent attacks is diminished. The opposing forces which such a young man must encounter, in taking the right stand, are far more powerful than those which tend to drive him from it, when once it is taken. On the other hand, if he yields here, he yields, probably, for ever. Conscience stands rebuked and silenced; guilty passions become tumultuous for future gratification; impure and unholy thoughts pollute his mind; and though remorse may, probably, for a long time to come, at intervals more and more distant, and in tones more and more faint, utter reproaches and warnings, he will, in all probability, go rapidly down the broad road of vice and sin. All this is not fancy, but fact. It is the real history of hundreds of young men, who go down every year to ruin, in precisely this way. They have their time of trial; the time when they are put to the test; a crisis which, in many cases, is over in a few hours, but whose awful consequences extend through a life of misery, and are not stopped even by the grave.

Perhaps it may be supposed that all the miseries of a life of vice ought not to be charged upon the hour when the first step was taken, but should be considered as the consequences of the repeated acts of transgression which the individual goes on to commit. We have no objection to this at all, but it does not relieve the hour of the first transgression from any portion of its responsibility; for this very disposition to go on

in sin, is the direct result of the first transgression; and it is the very worst result of it. If the first sin left the heart in a right state, the conscience tender, and guilty passions subdued; and if nothing was to follow from it but simple suffering, even if it were suffering for years, it would be comparatively nothing. The greatest, the most terrible of all the evils which result from the first indulgence of sin, is, that it leads almost inevitably to a second and a third. The tyrant takes advantage of his momentary power to rivet his fetters, and to secure his victim in hopeless slavery. So that if a young man spends one night in sin, the great evil is not that he must *suffer* the next day, but that *he will go on sinning* the next day. He brings heart, and conscience, and ungodly passions into such a relative condition, that he will go on. There is not half as much to stop him, as there was to prevent his setting out; so that the first transgression has for its consequences not only its own peculiar miseries, but all the succeeding steps in the declivity of sin, together with the attendant suffering, which, to the end of time, follow in their train.

All this is true, though not universally, in respect to the various vices and crimes of human life. I say not universally,—for in these, taken individually, the wanderer may sometimes, of his own accord, stop and return. But it is true universally, and without exception, of the broad way of sin and rebellion against God, from which the wanderer, if he once enters it, will never, of his own accord, turn back. Take the first step here, and all is lost. The inclination to return never comes. The whole Bible teaches us, that sin once admitted, whether it be by a spotless spirit before the throne of God, or by a tender infant here, establishes its fixed and perpetual reign. Cannot the sinner return? the reader, perhaps, may ask. Cannot the falling spirit or sinning man, give up his warfare, and come back to God? Cannot Dives, who neglected and disobeyed God when on earth, seek his forgiveness and his favour now? We have nothing to do with these questions; the inquiry for us to make is, not

whether they *can*, but whether they *will* return. The Bible tells us they will not; but with mankind around us, and our own hearts open to our view, we scarcely need its testimony. Sin once admitted, the soul is ruined. It lies dead in trespasses and sins; going farther and farther away from God, and sinking continually in guilt and misery. It may, indeed, while in this state, be clothed in the appearances of external virtue, but it will still remain hopelessly estranged from God, so deeply corrupted, and so wholly lost, that it can be restored to purity and holiness again, only by being created anew. Sin thus does more than entail misery—it perpetuates *itself*. The worst of all its consequences is, its own inevitable and eternal continuance.

The question is very often asked, whether the punishment of sin in another world, will be suffering directly inflicted, or only the evils which naturally and inevitably flow from sin. The distinction between these two species of retribution is very clear in respect to human punishments, but it is lost at once, in a great measure, when we come to the government of God. It is impossible to draw the line between them; because, whatever consequences follow, they are so uniformly and indissolubly connected with sin, that they form a part of its nature. In fact, it is not enough to say that sin brings suffering,—it *is* suffering. Misery is, as it were, an essential property of it; but whether rendered so by the decision of Jehovah, or by an original and absolute necessity in the very nature of things, it is, perhaps, impossible for human powers to determine. One thing is certain, however, that Jehovah does not shrink from the direct employment of suffering, whenever it is necessary to accomplish his purposes. It is an unpopular subject, and one which, probably, a vast majority of readers would prefer to have passed by; but no one can form any correct idea of his Maker's character, or know at all what he is to expect at his hands, without being fully aware of it.

Take, for instance, the human frame. It is made for health and happiness, and when we look upon a countenance

blooming with beauty, and observe its expression of quiet enjoyment, we feel that the being who formed it is a God of love. But we must not forget, that within that very blooming cheek, there is contrived an apparatus capable of producing something very different from enjoyment. A fibrous network spreads over it, coming out in one trunk from the brain, extending every where its slender ramifications, and sending a little thread to every point upon the surface. What is this mechanism for? Its uses are many; but among its other properties, there is in it a slumbering power which may indeed never be called into action, but which always exists, and is always ready, whenever God shall call it forth, to be the instrument of irremediable and unutterable suffering. We admit that in almost every case it remains harmless and inoperative: still it is there, always there, and always ready; and it is called into action whenever God thinks best. And it is not merely in the cheek, but throughout every part of the frame, that the apparatus* of suffering lies concealed; and it is an apparatus which is seldom out of order. Sickness deranges and weakens the other powers, but it seldom interferes with this; it remains always at its post, in the eye, the ear, the brain, the hand,—in every organ and every limb, and always ready to do God's bidding.

Nor is it a useless and idle preparation of instruments, never to be employed. It is called into action often, and with terrific power. God accomplishes a great many of its most important purposes by it. These purposes it is not our business now to examine, though there can be scarcely a more interesting field of inquiry for us, than the uses of suffering, and the extent to which God employs it in the accomplishment of his plans. These purposes are all

* It appears a far more philosophical, and, indeed, religious view, of the susceptibility of pain, to consider it not as "an apparatus of suffering," but as a most merciful and benevolent provision for the safety of the body. See this subject treated with great ingenuity and beauty in Sir Charles Bell's *Bridgewater Treatise* on "The Hand," chap. vii.
—EDITOR.

benevolent, most highly so; still, *suffering*, freely employed, is the means through which they are produced. All nature corroborates what the Bible asserts, that our Maker is not only a father to be loved, but a magistrate to be feared.

CHAPTER VI.

PARDON, OR CONSEQUENCES PREVENTED.

“God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.”

NOTWITHSTANDING all that was said in the last chapter, in respect to the necessity of the most vigorous and energetic measures in arresting the consequences of sin, there is such a thing as pardon: forgiveness, perfectly free, and yet perfectly safe. There are various ways by which the objects of punishment can be secured, without punishment itself; though these various modes are, perhaps, only different applications the same, or similar principles. The object of law and penalty is, to hold up to the community, distinctly, the nature and the effects of sin; to make a strong moral impression against it; and thus to erect a barrier which shall prevent its extension. A wise parent or teacher, who feels the necessity of being firm and decisive in government, will find a great many cases occur, in which punishment, that is really deserved, is unnecessary; that is, when the objects enumerated above can be attained without it. Now, every wise parent and teacher desires to save suffering wherever it can be saved; and, though there is great danger of doing this, when it cannot be done safely, *still* there are many cases where it certainly is safe.

The reader is requested to call to mind here, the story of

the lost cap, given at the commencement of the third chapter of this work. It was there introduced for another purpose, but it illustrates very well the point we have here in view. The course which the teacher pursued in that case was undoubtedly far better than any plan of punishment would have been. Every body will admit this. There cannot be a question in the mind of any one who understands human nature, that the course there described was most admirably adapted to secure the object. In order to perceive this, however, it must be distinctly understood what the real object of punishment is, viz. a good effect upon the community, not the gratification of personal resentment against the offender. If the teacher, in that case, had been a passionate man, and if his feelings of resentment had been aroused at the misconduct of his pupil, he never would have devised such a plan to save him. It is difficult to tell which appears most conspicuous in such a case as that—the wish to promote the highest welfare of the little community over which he presided, or delicate and compassionate interest in the feelings of the offender. Any person who is capable of perceiving moral beauty at all, will see, that in the plan he adopted, both these feelings, viz. firm and steady regard for the safety of the community, and benevolent interest in the transgressor, were singularly and beautifully blended. The plan he adopted was, in substance, this: he substituted his own inconvenience and suffering for the punishment of his pupil, so as to rely upon the former for the production of that moral effect which would naturally have resulted from the latter. We observe three things in the character of this transaction, which are of importance to be mentioned here. First, the plan originated in love for the offender, and a wish to save him from suffering. Secondly, it was exactly adapted to touch his feelings, and produce a real change in his heart, which punishment probably would not have effected. Thirdly, it secured the great object—the right moral impression upon the little community which witnessed it, far more perfectly, and more pleasantly, than any other mode

could have done. The whole plan is an instance of what may be called *moral substitution*,—putting the voluntary suffering of the innocent in the place of the punishment of the guilty. This principle, substantially, though seldom or never brought to view by writers on rewards and punishments, is very often applied. They who resort to it, perceive, in the individual cases, by a kind of instinctive feeling, its powerful and healthful effect, though they may not perhaps philosophize on its nature. The story of the lost cap is a specimen of many cases, where this or a similar principle is acted upon by intelligent parents or teachers. Each particular case, however, is different from the others, and presents the principle in a different aspect. I will therefore add one or two others, describing them as they actually occurred. But before proceeding, I ought distinctly to say, that no human transactions can be *entirely* analogous to the great plan of redeeming man from sin and misery by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. They may partly illustrate it, however,—some conforming to it in one respect, and some in another. The reader will therefore understand that I offer these cases, as analogous to the arrangement made for saving men through the atoning sufferings of Jesus Christ, only in the general principle, viz. that of *moral substitution*,—accomplishing, by means of the suffering of the innocent, what is ordinarily secured by the punishment of the guilty. I will first mention a very trivial case. I give this rather than others more important and extraordinary, because it is more likely to recall to the minds of parents similar instances which may have occurred in their own experience.

In a certain school, it was the custom for the pupils to play during the recesses, in the school-room, with soft balls, stuffed lightly with cotton, and which could consequently be thrown without danger. The use of hard balls, which were sometimes brought to school, was strictly forbidden. One morning, as the teacher entered the room, and was just taking his seat at his desk, a girl approached him, with a very sad and

sorrowful look, and followed by several of her companions. She had in her hands some fragments of stucco.

‘Sir,’ said she sorrowfully, holding up the broken pieces, ‘see what I have done!’

‘What is it?’ said the teacher.

She pointed up to the ceiling, where was an ornamented centre-piece, wrought in stucco, and said she had broken it off from that with her hard ball.

It was very evident, from the countenance of the offender, and from the general expression of concern which was visible in the many faces which were turned toward the group at the teacher’s desk, that she herself, and all the rest of the pupils, felt deeply the fact, that the consequences of this breach of law must come upon the teacher, as the one entrusted with the apartment, and responsible for it. They were attached to their teacher, and would rather have suffered themselves than have brought inconvenience and trouble to him; and he perceived by a glance of the eye, that by this means a moral impression was made, far more effectual and valuable than any punishment would have produced. In a word, he saw that through his suffering, the offender might safely go free. If no injury had been done, he would have noticed, very seriously, any violation of the law, but since the injury came upon him, and since the little community was in such a state that it would feel this deeply, the very best, the very wisest thing he could do, was to pass over the offence entirely. A rough, passionate, and unthinking man, might, perhaps, in such a case have rebuked with greater sternness, and punished with greater severity, just in proportion to the inconvenience and trouble the sin brought upon him; but he who knows human nature, and studies the adaptation of moral means for the accomplishment of moral ends, will see in a moment, that in such a case the mildest punishment, even the gentlest reproof, would weaken the impression; and that the way to make the most of such an occurrence, would be to dismiss the sorrowful pupil with kind words in respect to the injury,

and without a syllable about her sin. This, too, is *moral substitution*; receiving, through the sufferings of the innocent, the advantages usually sought from the punishment of the guilty.

It is difficult to lay down general rules in regard to the application of this principle in the moral education of the young, because so much depends upon the state of feeling of the parties concerned at the time. For example, in the case last described, had the offender been impenitent and unconcerned, and had a feeling of cold indifference prevailed in the school-room in regard to the injury which had been done, the course taken would have been most evidently unwise and unsafe. It is a question of moral impression on hearts,—an impression in favour of law, and against the breach of it,—and it is only where this impression can be produced better without the punishment than with it, that there can be any safe remission. It is, however, unquestionably true, and all parents and teachers ought to keep it in mind, that where any serious consequences result from an offence, those consequences in a wise and judicious government will lighten, not increase, the severity of reproof and punishment. They go far towards producing the very impression which reproof and punishment are intended for, and consequently they diminish the necessity of it. Those parents and teachers who take little notice of offences when they are harmless, and punish them with severity when followed by accidental injury, ought to perceive that they are not administering moral government, but only gratifying their own feelings of resentment and revenge.

In the case we have just described, the injurious consequences were not voluntarily assumed by the innocent individual, in order to allow the guilty one to be forgiven. They came upon him without any consent of his. The following case is different in this respect. The persons who suffered the injury here, voluntarily assumed it. The case, like the former, is described exactly as it occurred.

At one of the New England colleges, not many years ago, a company of joiners were employed in erecting a building. A

temporary shed had been put up in the college yard, where the work went on, and where, at night, the tools were left, protected only by the honesty of the neighbourhood. From some cause or other, a feud arose between some of the workmen and the students, and the next day when the former came to their work, they found their tools in a sad condition. Planes were gapped and notched, saws dulled, chisel-handles split, and augers had been bored into the ground. The indignation which this wanton injury excited threatened very serious consequences. Some measure of retaliation was expected from the mechanics, which, of course, would be repaid again by the students, and thus it was feared that a deadly and permanent hostility would be produced. It was of course impossible to ascertain the authors of the mischief; and if they had been ascertained, punishment would probably have only made them more secret in their future plans. A species of moral substitution removed the difficulty entirely. The plan was this:—

After evening prayers, when the students were all assembled, one of the officers stated to them the case,—described the injury,—presented an estimate of its amount, and proposed to them that they should raise, by voluntary contribution, a sum sufficient to remunerate the injured workmen. ‘There is no claim upon you for this,’ said he, ‘not the slightest: the mischief was indeed undoubtedly done by some of you, but it was certainly by a very small number, and the rest are not in any degree responsible. Still, by leaving their tools so completely exposed, the workmen expressed their entire confidence in you. This confidence has now been shaken; but if you take the course I propose, and voluntarily bear the injury yourselves, you will say openly and publicly that you disavow all participation in the offence, and all approval of it; and you will probably prevent its repetition. Still, however, there is no obligation whatever resting upon you, to do any thing of the kind. I make only a suggestion, which you will consider and decide upon as you please.’

The students were then left to themselves, and after a few minutes' debate, occasioned by a slight opposition from a few individuals, the vote was carried, almost unanimously, to assume the injury themselves. The money was contributed and paid. The innocent suffered, and the guilty went free, and the moral effect of the transaction was most happy. The whole quarrel was stopped at once. The tools were repaired, and left afterwards in perfect safety, though as unprotected as before.

It ought to be stated, however, that the sum necessary was a very trifling one, and its amount had nothing to do with the moral effect of the transaction. Any officer would have paid double the sum in a moment to have ended the difficulty. The effect was not produced by the reparation, but by the guilty individuals seeing that their innocent companions would assume the consequences of their guilt, whatever they might be. It was not a measure of ways and means, but of moral impression.

This case seems different from the preceding in two important particulars. The first is, that the loss was borne neither by the offenders nor by the magistracy, but by a third party, not directly concerned in the transaction. The second is, that there was no evidence of the offenders being penitent. In fact, the plan had no reference to the offenders at all; its whole aim was moral impression upon the community. They escaped, in this instance, not through any plan formed for saving them, but through the imperfection of the government, which had no means of detecting them. They were not *forgiven*; they simply *escaped*. In such cases, the plan has generally two objects: to save the offender, if he is penitent, and to produce the right moral effect upon the community. Here, however, the former was no part of the design; it was the latter exclusively. Had they been discovered, and found to be still unchanged in heart, justice would not have been satisfied, to use Dr. Johnson's language, without their punishment. Still the other great design—a strong moral impression upon the community to arrest the progress of sin, and to create an universal feeling

against it—was most admirably secured, through the voluntary consent of the innocent, to suffer the consequences which ought justly to be borne by the guilty.

All these are cases in which a person is relieved from sufferings which he deserves, by the substitution of others; but it is equally in accordance with universally admitted principles of human nature, that a person should *receive favours* which he does not deserve, on account of others. We are represented as not only forgiven through Jesus Christ, but as receiving every blessing and favour for his sake. This seems to be a moral substitution of a little different character, but it is exemplified with even greater frequency in human life than the other. There calls at your door, late at night, a wandering stranger, and asks admittance; he seems destitute and wretched, and as it is not convenient, and perhaps not even safe, to admit him into your family; you, very properly, direct him to a public house at a little distance, and supply him with the means of procuring a reception there. Just as he is leaving you, you think you recognize something familiar in his features, and on inquiring his name, you find he is the son of one of your dearest and earliest friends. How quickly do you change your plan, and bid him welcome, and endeavour to repay, by your hospitality to him, the favours you received in days long past from his father. But why? It is no return to the father; he is long since in his grave. Why? do I ask:—there is an universal and almost instinctive feeling in the human heart, leading us, under certain circumstances, to make such moral substitutions—to show favour to one on account of obligation to another. The apostle Paul understood this principle, when he sent back Onesimus to his master, and endeavoured to secure for him a kind reception, by saying, “If thou count me a partner, receive him as myself.”

In former chapters we have taken a view of two great objects for which the Son of God appeared here: to set us an example, and to teach us, by precept, our duty. We have considered the nature of the example, and also the

system of duty which he held up to men. We now come, however, to look at the chief design of his incarnation, namely, to make, by perfect obedience during his life, and the sufferings he endured at the close of it, such an exhibition of the nature and the effects of sin, and such an expiation for human transgressions, as should render it safe to forgive all who are penitent. In other words, he came, not only to teach us our duty, and to set an example of its performance, but to suffer for us, and to make, by that suffering, a moral impression on the great community of intelligent beings, which should serve instead of our punishment, and render it safe that we should be forgiven.

It has made such an impression. It is now eighteen centuries since that death occurred, and among all the varieties of opinion which have been adopted in regard to it, by Atheist, Deist, and Christian, in one point all must agree, that the death of Jesus Christ has made a stronger impression upon the human race than any other transaction since the creation of the world. In the remote and subjugated province where it occurred, it was witnessed, indeed, only by a few thousands, and they looked upon it with little more interest than would have been excited by the execution of any other object of popular fury; they perhaps supposed, too, that in a few months it would be forgotten. But no! In a very few weeks it was the means of arresting the attention, and subduing the hearts, and altering the characters and lives of thousands. The tidings of the transaction, and the explanation of it, spread like a flame. The walls of the city could not confine it; the boundaries of the province could not confine it. The influence of wealth, and the coercion of military power, were equally insufficient to stop its progress, or to prevent its effects. It shook the Roman empire to its foundations; and now, eighteen centuries from the time of its occurrence, it holds ascendancy over more hearts than it ever did before, and it is an ascendancy which is widening, deepening, and strengthening, and promises to spread to every nation, and to every family on the globe.

This impression, too, is of the right kind. A knowledge of the death of Christ, with the explanation of it given in the Scriptures, touches men's hearts; it shows the nature and the tendencies of sin, it produces fear of God's displeasure, and resolution to return to duty; and thus produces effects by which justice is satisfied, and the authority of law sustained, far better, in fact, than it would be by the severest punishment of the guilty sinner.

We have now accomplished the plan which we had marked out for this chapter, which was the exhibition of some of the principles upon which the pardon of sin can safely be bestowed. These principles are in substance as follows:—The design of God in connecting such severe and lasting sufferings with sin, is not resentment against the sinner, but a calm and benevolent interest in the general good. He wishes no one to suffer, and has accordingly provided a way by which he can accomplish more perfectly what would have been accomplished by the inflexible execution of the law. By this means, the way is open for our forgiveness, if we are penitent for our sins. The circumstances of this sacrifice will be considered more fully in a subsequent chapter; the design of this has been only to explain some of the acknowledged principles on which the necessity of it is grounded. This object is now accomplished; but before closing the chapter, we may devote a few pages to turning this subject to a practical account.

There are a great many persons to whose wounded spirits the truths advanced here would be balm if they would apply them. Many a thoughtful reader of such a work as this is often in a state of mental anxiety and suffering, which the subject of this chapter is exactly calculated to relieve. You feel that you are a great sinner; and though this feeling produces no powerful and overwhelming conviction, it still destroys your peace, and fills you with uneasiness, which, though it may be sometimes interrupted, returns again with increased power at every hour of reflection, and especially in solitude. You wish you were a Christian, you say: I

will suppose that you really do. Many persons who say that, merely mean that they wish for the benefits of piety, not for piety itself. They would like the rewards of the Saviour, but they do not like his service. I will suppose, however, that you really wish to be his. It is possible that you do ; and yet you may not have found peace. You think there is some love for the Saviour in your heart, some interest in his cause, some desire to serve him, and yet do not feel relieved from the burden of sins, and are not cheered with the spiritual peace and joy which beam in the hearts of others. Now the cause of your restless unhappiness is a burdened conscience ;—*a burdened conscience!* There is a sort of instinctive feeling, or, if not instinctive, it is interwoven with all the inmost sentiments of the soul, that guilt deserves punishment. You feel that you are guilty. You know that God is an efficient governor,—a God of terrible majesty,—for whatever men may say, there is something in the heart which testifies that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God, and that the soul which gives itself up to sin must expect to feel the weight of divine displeasure. You know this, and you feel it ; and though you ask forgiveness, you do not realize that it can safely be bestowed. Now the remedy is simple and effectual. It is for you **TO COME IN FAITH TO THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST.**

Let me explain precisely what I mean by this. Your conscience is uneasy, being burdened by the load of your past sins. Perhaps you do not distinctly fear punishment ; but it is the sense of responsibility for sin, and an undefined dread of something that is yet to come, which really destroys your rest. Now why have you any thing to fear ? Why should God ever call you to account for those sins ? It must be either from personal resentment against you, or else because the welfare of his government requires the execution of his law upon you. There cannot be any thing like the former, you know ; it must therefore be the latter. Now the balm for your wounded spirit is this, that the moral impression, in respect to the nature and tendencies of sin, which is

the only possible reason God can have for leaving you to suffer its penalties, is accomplished far better by the life and death of his Son : and if you are ready to abandon sin for the future, there is no reason whatever remaining why you should be punished for the past. God never could have wished to punish you for the sake of doing *evil* ; and all the *good* which he could have accomplished by it is already effected in another and a better way. Now believe this cordially ; give it full control in your heart. Come to God, and ask for forgiveness on this ground—trust to it fully. If you do, you will feel that the account for the past is closed and settled for ever. You are free from all responsibility in regard to it. Ransomed by your Redeemer, the chains of doubt and fear and sin fall off, and you stand free, and safe, and happy, a new creature in Jesus Christ, redeemed by his precious blood, and henceforth safe under his mighty protection.

This change, bringing to a close the old responsibilities for sin, and commencing as it were a new life in the Saviour, that is, by an intimate union of spirit with him, is very clearly described in many passages of Scripture like the following ; which, however, you have perhaps often read without understanding it. “ I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” To receive these benefits you must have faith. Faith means confidence ; not merely cold intellectual conviction, but confidence :—a feeling of the heart. To show this distinction clearly, imagine a man unaccustomed to such an elevation, to be taken to the summit of some lofty spire, and asked to step out from an opening there, upon a narrow board, suspended by ropes over the dizzy height,—how will he shrink back instinctively from it ! Explain to him the strength of the ropes, show him their size, and convince him, by the most irresistible evidence, that they have abundant strength to support many times his weight :—can you make him willing to trust himself to them ?

No. But the builder, whose confidence in the suspended scaffolding has been established by experience, stands upon it without fear, and looks down to the stony pavement, a hundred feet below, with an unmoved and steady eye. Now you must have such faith in Christ's sufferings and death, as not merely to admit their efficacy, but to trust yourself to it.

A father was once amusing a number of children with an electric machine, and after one or two had touched the knob and received the shock, they drew back from the apparatus, and looked upon it with evident dread. The father presently held out to them the jar uncharged, and consequently harmless, and said distinctly, but without emphasis, 'If you touch it now, you will feel nothing. Who will try?'

The children drew back, with their hands behind them.

'You do not believe me,' said he,

'Yes, sir,' said they with one voice; and several hands were held out to prove their faith; but they were quickly withdrawn before reaching the dangerous knob. One alone, a timid little girl, had *that kind* of confidence in her father which led her really to trust to him. The rest believed his word, but had not heartfelt faith in it. Even the little believer's faith was not unwavering. You could see on her face, when the little knuckle approached the harmless brass ball, a slight expression of anxiety, showing that she had some doubts and fears after all; and there was an evident feeling of relief when she touched the knob, and found from actual trial that her father's word was true, and that there was really nothing there.

This last is christian faith exactly. It not only believes what the Saviour says, but it acts in reliance upon it. It *trusts* to Christ, and throws itself upon him, and tries to hush its remaining fears, and to feel fully the confidence which it knows is deserved. Still there will too often be a slight mis-giving,—a hesitating fear, alternating and mingling with its confidence and love,—and expressing itself in the prayer, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." There ought not

to be, however, the slightest misgiving. It is sinful and unreasonable, even in the least possible degree.

Come at once, then, to the cross of Christ, with faith in it, —real heartfelt confidence in its efficacy in taking away all the necessity for punishment, if you are only ready now to abandon sin. If you do this, you may be sure that peace and happiness will come.

This will give you peace, but nothing else will. So deeply in the human heart has God laid the feeling, that sin must bring suffering in its train, that you cannot get rid of the burden of responsibility for the past but in this way. You may forget it for a time, you may drown it by the excitements of business or of pleasure, but the poison will remain, rankling more and more; and the more clearly you see your sins, and the more deep your repentance, the more distinctly will you feel that repentance alone can never authorize their remission. We cannot be justified by any deeds of the law; that is, we cannot be pardoned, or considered just, by any thing we can do in obedience to the law. We must be justified by faith: if we are to enjoy real peace with God, it must be through Jesus Christ our Lord, who gave himself for us, that we might be reconciled to God through the propitiation he has made for our sins.

When a person first commences his course as a moral agent, he then, indeed, has before him obedience or disobedience; and if he obeys, he is then *justified by the law*. The phrase is almost a technical one, but the meaning is obvious. He keeps the law, and on account of this obedience he stands innocent and safe. He is safe from all charges and all the consequences of guilt. He enjoys peace of mind, and a quiet conscience, which result from his own moral excellence, and his strict obedience to the law. He is justified by works, and can have no place for repentance, and no need of a Saviour.

If, however, he has once committed sin, his character and standing are for ever changed. He is, and must be, henceforward on a different footing. Common sense tells us this:

—for suppose, among the spotless angels around God's throne, there was one who, millions of years ago, on one single occasion, fell into a passion, or yielded his heart to the dominion of any other sin :—suppose that he was brought immediately to repentance, and returned to duty, and never afterwards transgressed, and that God forgave him his sin ; how evident it is, that the moral attitude in which he stands, must thenceforth be different from that of all the others. How differently would he be looked upon ! How differently must he for ever feel ! The recollection would follow him, and something like a sense of responsibility would follow him,—a burden which no lapse of time, and no subsequent obedience could remove.

It would be so, too, under any other government. Even where the sin is entirely forgiven, it places the sinner on permanently different ground. Among a family of affectionate children, suppose that one should, on a single occasion, rebel against his father, and introduce for one day, derangement and suffering into the usually happy circle ; the father takes such measures as to bring him back immediately to repentance and submission, and he is freely and fully forgiven ; and yet how plain it is, that the next morning, when the family are about to separate from the breakfast table, to engage in the various duties of the day, this returning and forgiven sinner stands in a moral attitude entirely different from the rest. He feels differently ; his brothers feel towards him differently ; his father looks upon him with new and altered thoughts. The evil consequences of his sin are perhaps all over ; for his father may have remedied them all. The guilt of it is all gone : for if he is really penitent, he is renewed and strengthened in his feeling of affectionate submission to his father. But something remains. It is not resentment against him ; his father and his brothers love him even more than before. It is not suspicion ; they feel increased confidence in him, knowing that the bitter lesson that he has learned will save him from wandering again. It is not alienation of any kind ; their

hearts are bound more closely to him than ever, and you will see that there is a tone of greater kindness, and a look of greater affection, from father and mother, to this their returning son, than if he had not sinned and been forgiven. What is it, then, that remains? It is hard to describe it; but the heart testifies that there is something which places him in a new position, and gives to the affection, of which he is an object, a peculiar character. He is *justified*; that is, there no longer rests upon him the responsibilities of guilt; but he is not justified by his obedience,—by the deeds of the law. He has violated law, and wandered from duty, and yet he is justified and loved again.

Sin therefore, even if it is sincerely repented of and entirely forgiven, places the soul which has committed it in a new and peculiar attitude. If peace returns, it is not the peace of conscious rectitude; it is the peace of forgiveness,—of reconciliation; as perfect as the other, but of a different kind. This distinction is clear. Every one who looks into his own heart will see it. The two kinds of justification and of peace are brought to view continually in the New Testament, where almost every form of contrast and antithesis is employed to set one over against the other, in order to give point and prominence to the distinction. It is of immense importance, that the young Christian should consider this, so that he may clearly understand which kind of peace and happiness he is to seek.

Forgiveness; the proud, unsubdued, and restless spirit of the world knows not what it means; but he who has experienced the enjoyment which springs from it, feels that it is the richest and deepest fountain of human happiness. The heart renewed,—sin throwing down its weapons and escaping from the temple which it has made wretched so long,—God reconciled—the soul overflowing with the emotions of gratitude and love, to which the contrast of past indifference and enmity gives a character of warmth and vividness, which they can never know who have never sinned:—the past, gloomy and dark as it is, all forgiven,—the future, bright

and alluring with promised enjoyments, which are prized the more as the free unmerited gifts of infinite love :—these are some of the feelings which mingle in the heart which is reconciled to God. Others lie too deep for description ; they must be experienced to be known ; but they who know them will testify, that in the sense of penitence and pardon, where it has full possession of the soul, there are fountains of as pure and deep enjoyment as the heart can contain. The soul rests in it, bathes itself in it, as it were, with contented and peaceful delight. Other enjoyments are restless and unsatisfying. This fills the soul, and leaves it nothing to wish for but to be undisturbed. It is hardly proper for us to inquire why sin was permitted to enter the government of God ; but this we can see, that it has opened a fountain of enjoyment entirely unknown before. It has brought happiness which, without it, could not have been felt upon the earth, and it has even introduced a new song into heaven.

But this is a digression from our path. We were endeavouring to show that sin necessarily places the soul which has fallen a prey to it, in a new position. Even where it is forgiven, the moral attitude in which the sinner stands is permanently changed. This is, however, not the consideration with which we are here chiefly concerned. We wish rather to show the change it produces in the relation which the soul sustains to its Maker before it is forgiven. Let us return then to our supposition, and imagine that the father, in the case of his disobedient son, had not taken such measures as to render it safe for the boy to be forgiven. There will then remain upon the guilty mind a burden which cannot be taken off, though other objects and interests may come in, and in time hide it from his view. It is thus perhaps gradually forgotten, but it is not removed. It remains like a fragment of a weapon in a wound, perhaps seldom noticed or felt ; but it is there, and when memory brings it back to view, it sends a pang of remorse to the inmost soul. Many persons carry such sins upon their consciences all through life. Some transgression was committed in early youth,

which has been a thousand times forgotten, and a thousand times called back by memory to view, and every time it comes the heart sinks, and the spirit writhes under the rankling of the wound.

Such is sin. It is a barbed and poisoned arrow, which if once allowed to enter, will penetrate deeper and deeper, and will remain, unless removed by a moral treatment adapted to the moral constitution of man; and the wound cannot be healed till the sin is taken away. You may cover it up; you may forget it; you may, like a man with a wounded side, take care to keep the tender part from the slightest touch which may disturb its quiet;—but the wound is still there, and it cannot be healed till the sting which was left in it is taken away.

Now this, my reader, is your case. Sin has reigned in your heart, and consequently the peace and satisfaction of perfect obedience are gone for ever: and such is the moral constitution of the soul, that there is no peace left for you but that of forgiveness and reconciliation. This cannot come through mere repentance, or confession, or reform. It cannot come by these means, in any case of sin or crime whatever. A thief who should be pardoned by his sovereign, and become truly penitent, and firmly re-established in the principles of integrity, would not, and could not through these alone, be restored to happiness, even as a citizen. The memory of the past would be bitterness and gall, and though he might gradually forget his wound, he could never by such remedies be made whole; if he had nothing else to save him, he would carry the galling and heavy burden to his grave. And you, if you are to find real peace, real deliverance from the burden of sin, must find it in a clear view of a Saviour crucified for you, and in coming to him with faith—i. e. cordial, unhesitating confidence, that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him. You must feel that by his life, and sufferings, and death, he has accomplished all which could have been effected by the punishment due to your sins; and that

henceforth you may go free, safe and happy in him, the past remitted for ever, and the path of holiness and peace now opened broadly before you, and inviting you on.

We must make a clear distinction, however, between peace and pardon. Cases are constantly occurring, where a person who, from peculiar circumstances, has obscure or clouded views of the nature of forgiveness, and the necessity of a Saviour, is still really penitent for sin. If penitent, he will be forgiven; in fact, he is forgiven, though he may be, as it very often is, weeks and months, and even years, before he sees so clearly the nature of redemption through the Son of God, so as to have peace and happiness restored to his heart. The great point is to induce sinners to return to God, and to give their hearts to him. If they do this truly, they will be humble, and watchful, and prayerful, and God will guide them to *all* truth; but there are many instances where peace to the troubled spirit is long delayed. The little child may begin to love its Maker before it knows any thing about the way of safe forgiveness: so may a half-instructed pagan: so did, in fact, the Saviour's disciples. They thought their Master was to have redeemed his country by political power, until they actually saw him crucified; and even in christian countries, a soul may be often so shut away from the light and influences of the gospel, in their purity and power, as to feel after a Saviour a long time in vain. Moral renewal is the essential thing for *pardon*. A knowledge of the salvation by Jesus Christ, and clear ideas of the great sacrifice for sin, give *peace*. St. Paul, the ablest, the most powerful and thorough-going preacher of the cross that ever lived, understood this, when, standing before the august assembly at Athens, he preached simple repentance, and a judgment to come. Nay, we have higher authority still, for Jehovah himself sent priests and prophets, for four thousand years, simply to call upon his people to repent of sin and do their duty. They made but a very few obscure allusions to a Saviour—so obscure that they were not understood till that Saviour came.

John Bunyan has beautifully exhibited this view, by making Christian carry his burden long after he has entered the narrow way. His face was turned towards Zion : and though he fell into many sins, and encountered many difficulties, his heart was changed. He felt the burden of sin, and sought relief from a friend whom he found on the way. But the friend replies, ' Be content to bear it, till thou comest to the place of deliverance, for there it will fall from thy back of itself.'

Now, this burden was not the burden of existing sin, but of responsibility for past sin. If it had been the former, the guide would have given him very sad advice. No, it was not the present pollution of sin, but its past responsibilities which became so heavy a burden : and though his heart was renewed, and he was in the right way, it was some time before he came so near to the cross of Christ, as to understand and feel its power in relieving his conscience of its load. He went on afterwards with light and happy steps.

The great question, then, with every religious inquirer, is, whether you have found *penitence*, not whether you have found *peace*. Do you relinquish sin? Are you weary of it, and do you loathe and abhor it, on its own account, as an evil and bitter thing, from which you can sincerely pray to be freed? There is a burden resting upon you, which still destroys your rest; and while your heart has really returned to God, and you can find no happiness but in him, you wonder that you continue wounded and miserable, instead of finding the relief at once, which you hoped penitence would bring. You conclude, therefore, that you are not penitent, though you are almost conscious that you are so; and you sink, overwhelmed with the difficulties of understanding the movements and the condition of your own heart. You feel a burden, and think it must be the burden of guilt.

If your heart is really in the condition I have described, it is the burden of responsibility for past sins, which hangs over you and bows you down, though your heart is really

renewed, and consequently you are freed, in some degree, from its present power. The remedy is the cross of Christ. Come to it, and see what he has done and suffered for you. Look at the moral effect of this great sacrifice, and feel that it takes off all the necessity of punishment, and all the burden of your guilt. Come and trust to this. Seek union with Christ, so as to be one with him; and open your heart to the full admission of his assurance, that you may, through this union, have all past responsibilities ended for ever, and that all the blessings which his unfailing obedience and spotless perfection have deserved, may flow in upon you. But oh! remember, if you do thus come and give yourself to your Saviour, being freed from the bitter fruits of sin, through his sufferings, and expecting to enter your home in heaven, under his protection, and in his name,—remember, that giving yourself up to him must not be an empty form. Christ gave himself for us, not that we might go on in sin, after receiving its forgiveness, but to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people. If you hope for pardon in this way, you must give up the world and sin entirely, and for ever. Henceforth, its allurements and temptations must be nothing to you. You must say, in language, which, like a great many other passages, on every page of the New Testament, is dark to those who have not experienced its meaning, “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.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAST SUPPER.

'I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer.'

THE plan which has been followed in the progress of this work, may not have been very obvious to the reader. It was our design to present the great elementary truths of the religion of the gospel, as they naturally connect themselves with the circumstances of our Saviour's history. We accordingly commenced with his childhood, and were led at once into a train of reflection on the nature and the character of that eternal and invisible essence, whose attributes were personified in him. His conduct and character as a man, came next before us; then the views of religious duty which he came to urge upon men. The rejection of his message by mankind, the consequences of it, and the way by which these consequences may, in any case, be prevented, naturally followed, leading us a little away from the immediate history of our Saviour. We now return to it,—ready, however, to be led away again, whenever necessary to accomplish the great design of this volume.

We have already shown that the great object which the Saviour had in view, in the influence he endeavoured to exert over men, was to induce them to repent of sin, and to return to duty; and not to make them theoretically acquainted with theological truth. He pressed moral obligation, and endeavoured to arouse and to enlighten conscience. He did indeed assure them of forgiveness, if they would abandon sin; but he left them, in a great measure, to be taught by future revelation, which was to be made by his Spirit to the apostles, in what way the promised forgiveness was to be obtained. It was not until after his resurrection that he discoursed freely and plainly, even with

his disciples, on this subject. Then, indeed, he explained the subject to them fully. He showed them that "he ought,"—that is, that it was necessary for him—"to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory: and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself."

This full disclosure of the nature and objects of his mission was not made until after his death. He approached, however, to such a disclosure in his last sad interview with his disciples, on the night in which he was betrayed. It is to the circumstances and character of this interview, that we have to call the attention of our readers in this chapter.

Jerusalem was crowded with strangers, so much so that though the enmity against the Saviour had been gathering strength, until it was now ready to burst all barriers, the leaders did not dare to proceed openly against him, for fear of a riot among the multitude, which they should not be able to control. "They feared the people," it is said,—for the people loved to listen to him, and therefore would probably defend him. They greatly misunderstood the human heart. He deserved to be beloved, and they thought that he would be; but the very populace whom they so much feared, instead of feeling any disposition to protect their innocent victim, joined the cry against him. Far from giving them any embarrassment or restraint, their clamour was the very means of urging the Roman governor to do what his own sense of justice most plainly condemned.

At any rate, the enemies of the Saviour thought it wise to proceed with caution, and they were, at this time laying plots for his life. We shall consider the nature of the plan they formed in the next chapter. It is sufficient here to say, that Jesus knew the whole, and felt that his last hour was nearly come. He had been accustomed for some time to speak in public during the day, and at night to go out to rest in the neighbouring villages, or to seek retirement and prayer upon the Mount of Olives. His last night had now come.

His last public address to men had been delivered. The sun had set for the last time to him, and nothing now remained but to give his beloved disciples his farewell charge, and then once more to take his midnight walk, and offer his midnight prayer.

It was evening,—the evening of a great festive celebration, which for fourteen hundred years had been uninterruptedly observed. Established to commemorate one deliverance, and to typify another very singularly analogous to it, it was intended to continue till the Lamb of God should at length be slain. A new and nobler ordinance was then to take its place—an ordinance of deeper meaning and higher value, and of interest, not to one small province only, but destined to extend its influence to every nation on the globe. This night, therefore, strictly speaking, was to be celebrated *the last passover*. The thousands who crowded the city did not know it; but Jesus did: and as he made preparations for celebrating it with friends, noiselessly and quietly, in their upper chamber, he must have been impressed with the moral greatness of the occasion. A friendless man, persecuted and defenceless, and doomed to be executed the next day as a malefactor,—coming with his twelve friends, as powerless and unprotected as himself, into their secluded room, there to bring to a close the long series of splendid celebrations, which for fourteen centuries had been sustained by God's command. Yes! the meeting on that night was the connecting link between the old dispensation and the new. The Saviour well knew this. Friendless and persecuted as he was, the whole city thronged with his enemies; the plot for his destruction matured, and spies out for him,—the very price for his life actually paid, and danger pressing around him so closely that he was obliged to make his arrangements very privately, in order to be sure of an uninterrupted hour;—he yet must have known that he was bringing the long series of Jewish rites and ceremonies to its termination, and introducing a new dispensation, whose ordinances of nobler meaning, beginning there, were to spread

to every nation, and to last through all time. It is strange that the place chosen for this, too, should have been the very heart and centre of hostility to his cause.

At the appointed hour they came together, and, as they assembled around the table, their Master felt that he met them for the last time. They felt it too. He told them plainly that his hour was come, and they felt depressed and dejected, looking forward, as they did, with anxiety and terror to the scenes which were to ensue. *They* knew what they were very imperfectly; but Jesus himself saw the whole. They were in the dark, or, at least, saw but dimly; but it was all broad light to him. As he looked around, he could call to mind what each one would do. There was Judas, with the price of his blood already paid; there was Peter, who was to abandon and deny him; and not one of all these, his firmest friends, but would forsake him in the hour of danger, and fly. But he did not think of these things. It was the last time he was to be with them before his death; and while he was fully aware that their fortitude could not stand the dreadful trial to which it was soon to be exposed, he did not dwell upon such thoughts. He looked upon them with interest and sympathy, not with anger; and tried to comfort, not reprove them. He once became agitated in speaking of his betrayal, but composure soon returned, and he did not allude to his abandonment by the rest, except in reply to their own boastings of unshrinking fidelity.

But we must come to the discourse. The peculiar circumstances under which this meeting was held, distinguished it from every other occasion on which the Saviour gave religious instruction. He had, on every occasion, in the house and by the way, in the thronged city, and before the multitudes assembled in the fields and on the sea-shore, urged men to repent, and forsake their sins; now he was to exhibit some great *truths*, more clearly than he had ever done before, to this select company, whose hearts had long been preparing to receive them.

It was a familiar conference, rather than a formal discourse. The disciples freely asked questions: and sometimes the conversation ceased to be general, and the individuals of the company talked with one another, in separate groups, as they happened to be seated together. The great truths of religion were, however, the subjects of discussion; and nothing could afford higher proof of the genuineness and truth of the description of this interview, than the cautious, hesitating manner in which the leading disciples are represented as asking their questions; it was in precisely the way in which new and extraordinary developements of truth are always received by pupils from a teacher to whom they look up with veneration and respect. But let us look at these truths in detail.

1. He explained to them that he was the great manifestation of the Divinity to men; and that, consequently, it was only through him that the human mind could find its access to the Divinity. But let us quote his words.

“ I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

“ If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

“ Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

“ Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father!

“ Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

“ Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.”*

* John xiv. 6—11.

The human mind still repeats Philip's very natural request,—“Shew us the Father.” It reaches forward for some vision of the DIVINITY—the great unseen and inconceivable essence which pervades all space, and exists through all time; and it often decks out for itself a gorgeous image, with crown, and sceptre, and throne, which reason tells them cannot exist, and which, if it did exist, would be a splendid idol, not God. How many Christians bow to such an image which their imagination has made! an idol more vain, in fact, than those of stocks and stones; for they, at least, have substance, while this is but a phantom of the mind. No; Jesus Christ is the personification of the Divinity for us; the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person; and it is by him alone that we are to find our way to the great Power which reigns over us all. Believe this, said the Saviour, on my assurance, or else believe it on account of the powers you see that I possess, and the works I do.

2. He taught them that divine influence upon the hearts of men was necessary to their repentance and salvation. “Ye have not chosen me,” said he; “I have chosen you.” What a declaration! How solitary it makes the Saviour in the world he had come to redeem! More than thirty years he had spent here, doing good continually, and proclaiming offers of reconciliation and pardon; and now, on the last night of his life, surrounded by inveterate foes, already actually *sold* to them, and with but a few hours of liberty remaining, he gathers privately his twelve friends, that he may have one last sad interview with them; and here he had to reflect that even these, his *twelve* friends, among ten thousand enemies, *had not chosen him*; he had chosen them. He stood alone, after all; the only example of independent, original holiness. The universal reign of ungodliness and sin had been broken only where *he had chosen* individuals to be saved, and trained them, by his own power, to moral fruitfulness and beauty.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” How

much it means! How many lessons we may, by a most direct and rigid inference, draw from it! How lofty the moral courage which led him to say it! Another man, in such a case, would have strengthened the attachment of the few who remained true to him at such an hour, by praising their generous fidelity in adhering to their chosen friend. But Jesus, as if loving the solitary grandeur of the position in which he stood, with all the world against him except these twelve, gently withdraws himself even from these,—“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,—one of you will betray me,”—‘another will repeatedly deny that he is my friend, and in the course of this night, when the hour of real danger shall come, every one of you will be scattered, and will leave me alone.’ Solitary sufferer! how wide a distance separated thy lofty powers, and original and stable virtue, from the weak and frail and *cultivated* attachment of thy trembling friends!

The Saviour brought to view, in many other forms, the dependence of his disciples for all the moral excellence they could ever possess upon their union with him.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bear more fruit.”

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

“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.”

It was as if he had said, You have no spiritual life originating in yourselves, and existing independently: you depend on me. It is by divine power exercised upon you, by means of your union with me, that your hearts are to be purified more and more, so that the fruits of piety may be increased in you. Without this union you will be nothing.

He spoke to them of the Comforter also, alluding again and again to this promised influence from above; saying first

that he would send him from the Father, and again, that the Father would send him in his, the Saviour's, name. This Comforter, the Holy Spirit, was to enlighten their minds, and comfort their hearts, and, above all, was to bring effectually to the hearts and consciences of men those great truths which the Saviour had preached to the ear in vain. The three great subjects which the Spirit was to press upon the attention of mankind were pointed out. Human guilt, human duty, and a judgment to come. "He shall reprove the world of sin and of righteousness;" of *righteousness and of sin*, some theologians would say, reversing the order, thinking that in a logical arrangement, right should come before wrong. But no; the Saviour's view is far more true to nature and to fact. The Holy Spirit, when it comes to men, finds them debased and depraved; and righteousness, if it finds a place in human hearts at all, must be preceded by conviction of *sin*. To produce this conviction, and then to awaken penitence and love, and to keep alive a sense of obligation and accountability, is the work which this heavenly visitor comes to do.

The necessity of an interposition from heaven to turn men away from their sins, and to bring them to repentance, had been often alluded to by our Saviour before. But the truth stands out, with uncommon clearness and prominence, in these his last instructions. His pupils did not at once fully understand it. Nay, who, we may ask, understands it now?

"He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and manifest myself to him."

"How," asked one of the disciples, "how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto *us*, and not unto the *world*?"

"If a man love me," was the reply, "he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him*, and make our abode with him."

It is no wonder that, with their imperfect ideas of the true character of their Master, and of the relation he sustained to the Divinity, they asked the question how he could manifest himself to them and not to the world; and how strange must

his reply have sounded, if they supposed it came from a man like themselves! God and I will come and dwell with the good! What language, if a mere mortal man had uttered it!

It is most interesting to observe how, in this whole conversation, the thoughts of the Saviour seemed constantly to dwell on this great truth,—the moral dependence of the human heart on God.

A sense of dependence, and confidence in promised protection, are delightful emotions to hearts constituted as ours are. This is true in regard to physical dangers. When the dark heavy clouds gather in the western sky, at the close of a sultry summer's day, and flashes of lightning are seen, and heavy rolling thunder seems to convulse the sky, the christian father betakes himself to his sheltered home, and gathers his family around him, and loves to come and lay the whole precious trust into his Maker's hands. If his heart is right it will be a happy hour to him. He has done all he can do, and there is already over him whatever protection human art can raise against the rain and hail, and the tempestuous wind and fatal lightning, and all the dangers of the midnight storm; but his happiness consists in forgetting all such protection, and coming to place himself, and all that is dear to him, under the mighty hand of God; confiding in him, and in him alone. He knows he can trust to nothing else. There is a roof over him, but one blast of the tempest might scatter it to fragments. His walls a single bolt from heaven might rend asunder, and his whole dwelling in a moment burst into flame. He knows all this; and it is his happiness to feel that, though he has done all he can do, he must trust in God, and in God alone.

It is exactly so with his spiritual protection. He will do all he can do, but he never will consider his prayers, and resolutions, and watchfulness, as his real defence against temptation and sin. No; he takes delight in feeling that, in respect to *moral* protection, his trust is wholly in God; and this feeling, that he is spiritually in his Maker's hands, is not only his greatest safety,—it is his highest happiness.

The soul, too, comes to this feeling in all the trying scenes and solemn occasions of life with peculiar pleasure. It flies to it as to a refuge, and enjoys its refreshing influence when nothing else would sustain or console. Our Saviour seems scarcely ever to have thought of it so much, and to have pressed it so strongly and so repeatedly upon his disciples, as in this last sad scene.

But let us proceed to consider some of the other topics he brought before them on this occasion. As we go on, the reader will be struck at the selection he made. The great fundamental truths of religion seemed to rise before him, and occupy his view. It was, in fact, a discourse on the theology of the gospel, bringing out its great features, and holding them up prominently to view. It has not the formal arrangement of a scholastic discourse, for it was a free conversation; but the truths are all there, and the nature of the views he thus presented to the disciples, so lofty and so profound, contributes, quite as much, perhaps, as the affecting circumstances of the occasion, to give to the whole scene that air of majestic and affecting solemnity, which is not equalled by any other passage, even in the Bible. But let us proceed to consider the remaining topics.

3. He taught them that the true evidences of piety are its *fruits*; a truth of which it seems harder to convince mankind than of almost any other. Nobody denies it in words, but very few really believe it in fact. We are always substituting something else in the place of these fruits. It seems as if the Saviour felt that now, as he was about to leave his disciples to carry on his work alone, they would be peculiarly exposed to danger from this source, and he accordingly pressed upon them again and again attention to it. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "If a man love me, he will keep my words." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples." Such

expressions were continually occurring in his discourse ; and if we consider what was unquestionably the fact, that the record of John contains only a brief summary of the remarks which the Saviour made, we shall be convinced that he urged this subject very emphatically and fully upon the attention of his disciples.

The Church is, however, very slow to learn the lesson. We err in two ways, sometimes by placing something else entirely, in the stead of fruits, as evidences of piety, and sometimes, on the other hand, by mistaking the nature of the fruits which are to be regarded as evidence. We do this continually ; and, probably, when the day of real trial shall come, the whole Church will be overwhelmed with astonishment to find at last what an immense amount of mere hollow and hypocritical pretension will be found under her banner. In fact, the evidence which is, perhaps, mainly relied upon here, in determining the attitude in which a man stands in respect to christian character, is almost altogether different from that pointed out by the Saviour. Bold assurance of profession, and religious party spirit, rank very high among the commonly received evidences of piety. If a man talks confidently of his change, and expresses deep interest in the duties of his new service, and if the language of the Christian comes fluently from the tongue, we are slow to suspect insincerity. In many such cases the very profusion of professions might lead us to withhold our confidence. Empty profession is generally loquacious, while sincere and devoted attachment is strong and deep in the heart ; but its words are few. " Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," the reader will say. True ; it speaks out of the abundance, and yet it says but little. There is abundance of feeling, but not of words.

Party spirit in religion is another spurious proof of piety. The victim of it seems to be entirely devoted to the cause of Christ ; he has, indeed, a strong interest in that cause, and makes continual effort, and submits to great sacrifices, to promote it. But the real fruits of piety do not reign in his

heart; and he was not spiritually blind he would see that his zeal is party spirit, almost entirely; *i. e.* an interest in an organization of which he has become a constituent part. Whenever men act together, the mind, by one of its mysterious powers, sees a new being in the union, and soon forms almost a personal attachment to it. It enlists men's pride and ambition, and arouses all their energies; and devotion to this imaginary existence becomes often one of the strongest passions of the human mind. It is one of the sins to which the human heart is most prone, and in which it is most impregnable. A man usually thinks it a virtue. He sees he is not working for himself; and persuades himself that it is the *principles* of his party which are the object of his attachment. But this is not the case; for when these principles spread partially into other parties he is always displeased. He is never satisfied at seeing his opponents coming to the *truth*,—they must come over to *his side*.

This is party spirit; and the humble and devoted Christian, who really loves his Master, finds it constantly insinuating itself into his heart, and acting as the motive of a very large proportion of his labours in the service of his Master. The tests by which this spirit can be detected we have not time now to describe; but it burns every where in the christian church; it influences parish against parish, and society against society; and makes each denomination jealous and suspicious of the rest. It frowns upon the truth and the christian prosperity, which is not found within its own pale. It is the spirit of intolerance and exclusion. "We found one," it says, "casting out devils in thy name, and we forbid him, because he *followeth not us*." Banish this spirit for ever. If men will *cast out devils*, no matter whom they follow; they must do it, if they do it at all, in Jesus's name, and no matter for the rest. We must not frown upon real piety or truth because they do not appear in our own uniform, but then, on the other hand, we must never confound truth with error, nor admit the pretensions of any specious counterfeit,

which may assume the name and form of piety, while it is without its power.

But what are the real fruits of piety? the reader may ask. The apostle has given the catalogue. They are characteristics of the heart, not of the external conduct. They are these:—

LOVE. The heart that is renewed experiences an entire change in respect to its great ruling principles of action. Instead of being swayed by the impulses of selfishness and passion, its affections go forth and rest upon God as their supreme object, and link themselves also by indissoluble bonds with every other being who is joined in heart to him. These new emotions have henceforth the control.

JOY. The prevalence of universal love will go very far towards producing universal enjoyment. Love is happiness, and it brings happiness in every form; and true piety will find sources of pleasure which sin never knows. Where there is moroseness or melancholy, there must be something wrong. It may be moral or physical disease, but it must be one or the other.

PEACE. Peace within itself, and peace in respect to others. Selfishness is keenly alive to its own rights, and keenly sensitive to injuries; and where each seeks mainly his own, there must be collision. Piety quiets animosities and strifes, by destroying the value of the objects of contention. It points men to new sources of happiness; and they are such as can be enjoyed most perfectly when others share them. The heart that is renewed is at peace, too, within itself: its irritating passions and corroding cares are all allayed; and the soul is like a summer sea, serene and placid,—the storms of passion hushed, and the golden beams of the Sun of Righteousness reposing tranquilly upon it.

LONG-SUFFERING. The true Christian feels that he is himself forgiven; and he consequently bears long, and is kind. He looks upon sin with compassion for the offender, and

remembers the burning from which he was saved. The heartless pretender can, in public, assume this language; but when off his guard at home, or in his counting-house or field, his hasty words and impatient looks betray the spirit which reigns in his heart.

GENTLENESS. The Christian feels that his great business in life is to lead *hearts* to the Saviour: and hearts, if led at all, must be led gently. The hollow-hearted pretender will try to drive. Harsh, repulsive, and tyrannical, he shows that he has not experienced the grace of God, which always softens asperities, and smooths the roughness with which selfishness is so often clothed.

GOODNESS. The renewed heart feels a benevolent interest in the welfare of every sentient being. It desires universal happiness, and springs with an ever ready elasticity to produce it wherever Providence shall present the opportunity. The great public effort, the generous donation, the open deed of charity, may be the result of pride or ostentation, or party spirit; but real christian benignity shows itself in all the thousand nameless occasions, where a word, or a look, or a trifling action, may give pleasure. It shows itself in great efforts, too; but the highest proof of its existence and its power, is continued, and universal, and spontaneous action.

FAITH. True piety believes what God says, and trusts to it. It sees heavenly realities, and feels their influence continually. It trusts in God's care, realizing that every mercy is his gift, and bowing submissively to affliction and trial. Hypocrisy is sound in its theoretical views, but it repines at losses,—or stands restless and uneasy over the cradle of a sick child,—or proves, by the manner in which it pursues this world, that it has no faith in God's promises about the happiness of another.

MEEKNESS. The sincere Christian is humble in respect to himself, and indulgent and mild towards others. Having some conceptions of the deceitful wickedness of his own heart, he looks upon the worst of men as brother sinners. The hypocrite cannot see his own pollution and guilt, and is

consequently haughty, censorious, and uncharitable in respect to the failings of his fellow men.

TEMPERANCE. The worldly enjoyments of the sincere disciple are in all respects regulated by christian principles. The regulator existing in the heart acts always, and with steady consistency. Hypocrisy restrains those indulgences which men would see and condemn, but she rewards herself for her venal virtue by the freedom of her secret sins.

Such are the fruits of piety, as enumerated by an inspired apostle. Such fruits as these were what our Saviour had in view. He charged his disciples again and again to look for these, as the only evidence that human professions of love to him were really sincere.

We have thus considered the three great truths which stand out most prominently in the instructions of this occasion.

At the close of the interview the Saviour established the great christian ordinance, which has been celebrated, without interruption, in every age, from that day to this. The circumstances under which the ordinance was established, teach us a lesson, as we have already briefly said in a preceding chapter, in regard to the manner in which our Saviour regarded forms and ceremonies, which his followers have in all ages been very prone to forget. It is not that they overrate the importance of external religious observances, but that they forget what it is upon which their value and importance entirely depend; viz. their spiritual meaning, and the feelings of heart with which they are performed.

It was one great object of the Saviour's preaching, to call the attention of men from outward actions to inward character, and the manner in which he instituted this last solemn ceremony is precisely in keeping with the whole tenor of his public instructions. There is no formal ceremonious preparation for it; no studied arrangements and cautious prescription of mode and form; but when the time arrives for his last farewell, he merely sets apart, in the most simple manner, his last solemn act of intercourse with his disciples,

as a perpetual memorial of his death; and he does it, too, in such a way as most effectually to fix their minds upon its moral meaning—its spiritual effect.

He did not devise any new ceremony for the purpose, but only paused upon a portion of the solemn transaction in which he was last engaged, and consecrated that. He did it, too, in language so brief and general, as to show that moral impression, not ceremonial exactness, was what he had in view in looking forward to future celebrations of the ordinance, by his followers, in ages to come. "Take these," says he, as he offers them the bread which had been placed upon the table for another purpose, and poured out another cup of their simple wine; "take these, as emblems of my sufferings and death, incurred for the remission of your sins, and henceforth do this in remembrance of me. As often as you do it, you do show forth the Lord's death until he come."

The Saviour acted evidently upon the same principles in regard to the other great ceremony of the christian religion. He wanted some mode by which an open profession of attachment to him might be made; and he just adopts one already in use for a similar purpose. He did not *contrive* baptism as a mode of publicly professing piety, he merely *adopted* it, formed already, as it was, to his hands. The people were accustomed to it. Their associations were already formed in connexion with it, and of course it was the most convenient mode. He would probably have taken any other form had any other been more convenient and common. The one chosen is, indeed, highly appropriate; denoting so clearly the inward purification which the open profession of faith in Christ, and attachment to his cause, should always bring with it; but it is the sincerity with which it is performed, not the appropriateness of its character, which gives it all its value.

And yet there is something in the simple act which Jesus Christ consecrated as a memorial of him, that renders it admirably adapted to its purpose. Other persons have generally endeavoured to perpetuate their memory by leaving some magnificent monument behind them. One of the most

striking exhibitions that human beings make of the mysterious principles of their nature, is by their desperate struggles to keep a place for their names upon the earth, after they have themselves gone beneath the ground. One founds a city; another, at a vast expence, erects a mausoleum; and a third stamps his effigy upon a medal or a coin. But Jesus Christ understood human nature better. He used no marble, or brass, or iron; he laid no deep foundations, and reared no lofty columns. When he bade the world farewell, he simply asked his friends occasionally *to do one little act* in remembrance of him.

He was wiser than the builders of the pyramids. A hundred thousand men, if ancient story be true, were employed by one monarch for twenty years in rearing the pile which was to perpetuate his memory. The Saviour did the work, and did it better, by a few parting words.

Yes; Jesus Christ left us as a memorial, not a magnificent thing to be looked at, but a very simple thing to be done and the influence, in keeping the remembrance of the Saviour before the minds of men, which this simple ceremony has exerted for eighteen centuries, and which it still exerts, shows the wisdom of the plan. Its very simplicity, too, is the means of rendering it, to a considerable extent, a test of the sincerity of professed attachment to the Saviour; for the ceremony cannot long continue in its simplicity, unless such attachment sustains it. When love is gone, it becomes unmeaning, and, from its very nature, there is nothing but meaning to give it interest among men. When the heart ceases to be in it, then there is but one alternative,—it must lose its whole value, and ultimately be abandoned, or else pomp and parade must come in, to supply the interest which grateful recollection ought to give. It has accordingly, in some cases, been converted into pomp and parade, and in others gradually lost its interest, and disappeared. But with these dangers on every side, the institution has still lived and flourished, and is spreading to every nation on the globe.

Understand then, Christian, what is the true nature and design of a religious ceremony, whether it was instituted by

Christ, or has gradually grown up as a religious custom in the denomination with which you are connected. Consider well that its whole value, its whole power consists in its *spiritual effect* on the heart and conscience. See that you secure this, and never surrender your heart to the deadening influence of scrupulous attachment to mere form.

Consider what the ceremony means. It is intended to bring to our minds the death of Christ,—to remind us of his blood flowing, and his body lacerated *for us*, “for the remission of sins,” as is expressly stated. In order to eat the bread then, and drink the cup, worthily, this must be in mind; and it is the moral and spiritual effect of this truth upon the heart which is to be chiefly sought for, when we come together around the table of the Lord.

Now, in order clearly to understand the mode in which this ordinance ought to be celebrated, so as to secure its spiritual blessings, let the reader call to mind what was said at the close of the last chapter, respecting the means by which the soul is to come to Christ in faith, so as to secure forgiveness for the past, and spiritual strength for the future, through a *union with him*. The great design of the Lord's supper is simply to *renew this union*. When we first repent of sin, and return to duty, we come to the Saviour, and seek such a connexion with him, that our sins may be pardoned through his sufferings and death, and that we may have strength furnished us from him, to go on our way safely in future. If this change was entire and complete,—if it overturned for ever the dominion of sin, and established the perpetual and perfect reign of holiness, we should perhaps never have occasion to repeat the transaction, and our celebration of the supper would be simply an act of grateful remembrance,—a memorial merely of the Saviour's love. But it is not so. Sin continues its hold. It is always ready to rise to re-assert successfully its power; and the communion season returns to us from time to time, to give us an opportunity of breaking free again and again, and seeking, by the

moral power* of the sufferings and death we celebrate, new relief for the conscience, new pardon for sin, new spiritual life, new peace, and higher happiness. Whenever, therefore, it returns, it should bring us to a most thorough and effectual investigation of our standing and progress as disciples of the Saviour. It is the time of periodical settlement between our souls and God, when the account should be most carefully examined, and all sins brought out fully to view; every secret hold which the world has upon us should be discovered and broken, and thus the soul should be brought into a state to give itself away anew, and without reserve, to its Master's work. The world and its cares are to be left behind, all past sins fully examined and fully acknowledged, and the responsibility for them is to be brought and laid upon Him who is mighty to save. Peace would then return. The collected anxieties and the troubles of conscience would all disappear. Habits of sin beginning to be formed would be broken up, and the soul, refreshed and restored and reunited to its Saviour, would have made, at each successive return of the solemn ceremony, a decided advance in holiness and happiness. But how different is it in fact! We come to the scene of our Master's sufferings and death, and bring the world all with us. One comes with his quarrels, another with his business; this brother leads some darling sin in by the hand, and that one is cold and hard in heart, looking on with stupid indifference at the solemn symbols. Of one thing, however, we may be sure. The design of this ordinance is very clear, and God has indicated very plainly what are the feelings with which he wishes us to observe it; and

* It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the author's view of the intentions and effects of the Lord's Supper do not exactly coincide with those of our own church, which, when it speaks of "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine," certainly intends something more than "the moral power of the sufferings and death we celebrate."—EDITOR.

he has left, in the most decisive language, his warning of the danger of our thus coming and profaning what he has made sacred. The institution was designed to have a deep meaning, and to produce a powerful effect. By coming without examination, and without a desire for the spiritual blessings it is designed to procure, we are doing all we can to degrade what God has elevated,—to destroy its character and power, and its spiritual influence, and to bring it into contempt.

I need not repeat the language in which God has threatened those who eat and drink unworthily. It would be plain, if such language had not been used, that God must consider the intrusion of worldliness and sin into the places which he had endeavoured to make sacred, as an offence of the highest character. The prosperity of his kingdom in this world depends more upon the purity of his church, and the elevation of its standard of piety, than upon any thing else ; and throughout the whole of the New Testament, no design is more apparent, or more earnestly pursued, than that of separating his friends, by a clear line of demarcation, from his enemies, and keeping his church pure. The worldly Christians, or rather the worldly professors of religion, crowd around this line, and obliterate all its distinctness. They allure many a sincere follower to it, who would otherwise keep away, and thus they are thwarting, most directly and most effectually, the progress of the Saviour's kingdom. If all the cold, and worldly, and indifferent professors of religion could be exchanged, each for ten boisterous and inveterate enemies, piety might proclaim a jubilee at the brightening prospects of her cause.

But what shall we do, perhaps some one may ask, if we find, when the time of the communion season arrives, that our hearts are not in the right state,—shall we stay away?—I have nothing to say about staying away. What you had better do, if you are a professing Christian, and will not give up the world and sin, when the time arrives for renewing your solemn consecration of yourself to your Maker's service, I do not know. It is a sad alternative, if you are fixed upon

it, either to disobey Christ's command altogether, or to comply hypocritically. I am sure I cannot tell you which to choose. One thing, however, is certain, that if you had any adequate ideas of your obligations and your accountability,—if you felt at all what it is to go into the very presence of the Saviour, and among his best friends,—yourself a secret enemy; if, in a word, you could see the solemn ceremony as he sees it, you would be afraid to go and be the Judas there.

“And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives.” The Saviour and his disciples stood around their table and sang an hymn. It was the Redeemer's last public act, his final farewell. He had presided over many an assembly, guiding their devotions, or explaining to them the principles of religion. Sometimes the thronging multitudes had gathered around him on the sea-shore; sometimes they had crowded into a private dwelling; and sometimes he sat in the synagogue, and explained the law. But the last moment had come; he was presiding in the last assembly, which, by his mortal powers, he should ever address; and when the hour for separation came, the last tones in which his voice uttered itself were heard in song.

What could have been their hymn? Its sentiments and feelings, they, who can appreciate the occasion, may perhaps conceive;—but what were its words? Beloved disciple, why didst thou not record them? They should have been sung in every nation, and language, and clime. We would have fixed them in our hearts, and taught them to our children, and when we came together to commemorate our Redeemer's sufferings, we would never have separated without singing *his parting hymn*.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CRUCIFIERS.

“ The Lord looketh on the heart.”

WE left the Saviour, at the close of the last chapter, going out, late at night, with his disciples, from the place where they had held their last assembly. They passed out of the gate, and went down the hill, across the rivulet which flowed through the valley, and ascended the Mount of Olives on the other side. One however was absent.

Judas Iscariot, it will be recollected, had left the assembly some time before. He had his arrangements to mature for delivering the Saviour to the soldiers appointed to make him prisoner. It seems that the leading priests had been desirous of taking him, for the purpose of bringing him to trial; but they did not dare to do it openly, for fear of an uproar among the people. Their only other plan, therefore, was to find out his private retreats, and send an armed band for him at some time when he was alone with his friends. This plan it was difficult to execute, for Jesus generally withdrew himself very privately when his work was done, and they did not know how to find him. Judas relieved them of the difficulty.

But who was Judas? let us look a little at his history and character.

There seems to be no evidence against the supposition, that he was just such a man as any other of those worldly professors of religion which are to be found by thousands in the christian church at the present day. It is plain that he was not that abandoned and hardened reprobate which he is very generally supposed to have been; if so, he would not have hanged himself, when he found what were the consequences of his crime. It does not seem to be at all improbable, that, when he joined the Saviour's cause, he thought he was sincere. A man would not be likely to connect

himself with such a cause for the express purpose of making money. This, if possible, is certainly very improbable. It seems far more reasonable to suppose that he became a professed disciple, as thousands do at the present day, with his heart unchanged, though not aware of his own true character.

They who have a strong love for the world, have often no uncommon share of worldly wisdom ; or, at least, those who love money, know well how to take care of it ; and Judas, like many others since his day, was appointed to a trust which proved a very dangerous one to him. In fact, the very love for such a trust, which fitted him to discharge the duties of it successfully, made those duties very dangerous to him. It is altogether probable that love of money acquired its ascendancy over him very gradually. It almost always does. Very few persons have the hardihood to unite themselves with the christian church deliberately, with the design of making their connexion with it a mere source of profit ; but very many who join it professedly with other designs, do, in fact, gradually turn their connexion with it to this purpose. They are deceived at first about the sincerity of their motives ; they feel some sort of interest in religion, which interest they mistake for genuine piety ; but, as it is without foundation, it soon disappears, the world gradually regains its hold, and, as it comes back and fixes its reign, it leads the man to avail himself of every advantage which he can derive from his new position, to increase his own earthly stores. At first he does this without particular injury to the cause he has espoused, but soon the claims of interest and of his Master's service come into slight collision. The latter yields, though he is so blinded he is not aware of it. The cases become more frequent and more decided ; but the progress of blindness goes on as fast as the progress of sin, so that he continues undisturbed, though he is as really betraying the cause of his Master as if he was actually guiding an armed band to his private retreat.

There is no end to the cases which might be stated in exemplification of this. We will suppose one. It is that of

a worldly pastor, who consents to receive in charge a branch of his Master's church, when his motive is his pay. He neglects his appropriate work, and devotes his time and attention, and gives all his heart, to the work of increasing his stores. He does it privately and silently, but the world around him soon understand it. They are quick to perceive hypocrisy, and to detect the true character of worldliness, however dexterously it may clothe itself in the garb of piety. The money-getting disciple thinks, perhaps, that all is going on well. He performs his duties with punctilious formality, but his heart is not in the work, and the souls within his influence are only chilled by the coldness of the form. In a word, the cause committed to him is betrayed; is betrayed, too, for money; and if it is true that, in the sight of God, the heart, and not the particular acts by which the heart may manifest itself, is the criterion of character, he must expect to stand with Judas when the time of reckoning shall come.

How many times has a man of business, professing to love the Saviour, betrayed his cause by violating his principles, and brought open disgrace upon it in the eyes of the world. He deals in commodities which are destructive to the souls and bodies of men, or he acts on principles which are entirely inconsistent with christian character. Unjust, oppressive, and miserly, he disgraces the name which he has hypocritically assumed. But he accomplishes his object;—he acquires the money for which he is willing to sell his Master's cause. Even Judas was paid. He secures also his other object, of being called a Christian. He, however, betrays the cause. For the mass of mankind bring down their conceptions of religion to the rank of the lowest pretender to it whom they can find; so that he who serves the world and sin, while he pretends to be a Christian, does not generally disgrace himself, he degrades Christianity. Still he accomplishes his objects. He is called a Christian, and makes his money; but he must rank among the traitors at last.

Judas had no idea, probably, that any very serious consequences would have resulted from what he was about to do.

He might have known, indeed, had he thought about it; but he, probably, thought of little but his thirty pieces of silver. If he did reflect at all, it was, probably, only to quiet himself with the excuses which, in similar circumstances, men always make; such as, that it was his duty to increase his property by all honest means,—that there could be no great harm in merely introducing the soldiers to the Saviour,—that if he did not give them the information they desired, somebody else certainly would. All the ordinary excuses would have applied perfectly here.

However this might be, the wretched man went at midnight to the place of rendezvous; and while he and the soldiers who were to accompany him were receiving their directions and forming their plans in the city, the Saviour was bending under the burden of those intolerable but mysterious sufferings, which have thrown an eternal gloom over the garden of Gethsemane. Upon what a scene the moon, which was always full at the time of the Jewish pass-over, must have looked down at this sad hour!

It is midnight,—the moon is high, and the streets of Jerusalem are deserted and still,—except when the footsteps of some solitary passenger re-echo a moment upon the ear, and then die away. Beyond the walls, even deeper silence and solitude reign; every bird is at its rest, and in the still night air we can hear the brook murmuring through the valley. In the garden on the other side too, the consecrated place of prayer, every zephyr is hushed, every leaf is in repose, and the moon is silvering with its cold light the outlines of the foliage, and brightening on the distant hills.

It was midnight—the hour of stillness and rest—but yet the whole scene was not one of repose. The scattered disciples of Jesus waited for their Master, who was bending down in his lonely retreat, under the weight of suffering which we can neither appreciate nor comprehend. And in some lurking-place in the silent city, the rough soldiers were lighting their lanterns, and girding on their weapons, and forming their plans. Presently they issue forth and pass on

from street to street, now in light and now in shadow, stealing along probably in careful silence, lest they might arouse some of the people and provoke the interference which their masters dreaded. At this moment what a spectacle must the whole scene have presented to any one who could have looked down upon the whole. The dark betrayer, walking in advance of his band with cautious steps, half fearing, and half rejoicing in his anticipated success;—the careless soldiers, following to execute a work which they probably did not distinguish from any other similar deed which they often performed;—the disciples, scattered through the valley and in the garden, some probably anxious and unhappy, and others overcome with bodily and mental exertion, sunk in sleep;—Jesus himself, struggling in solitude under the pressure of sufferings which overwhelmed him with indescribable agitation, and almost unnerved his soul. There must have been something uncommon in an anguish which could carry the Saviour's fortitude to its utmost limit. On the cross he was calm.

But we must go on with the story. One of the most striking proofs of the genuineness and truth of the narratives of this transaction which are recorded in the New Testament, is the apparent discrepancy between the two accounts of the scene which occurred when Judas and his band arrived at the place to which Jesus had retired. That this discrepancy may be the better understood, we place the two accounts in opposite columns.

MATT. XXVI. 47—50.

And while he yet spake, lo Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomso-

JOHN XVIII. 3—8.

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the Chief Priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns, and torches and weapons.

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon

ever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast.

And forthwith he came to Jesus and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him.

And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus and took him.

him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.

Fabricators of a story would never have left such a discrepancy as this; and yet it is precisely such an one as two original witnesses would have been almost certain to have fallen into in narrating the circumstance of such a case. Scenes of calm and quiet action, where but few individuals are concerned, and incidents succeed each other with quiet regularity, may be described perhaps in nearly the same language by different and independent observers; but in a scene of tumult and confusion, where many are acting and talking together, each in a great degree regardless of the rest, faithful witnesses who describe what they actually see, will tell very different stories. A large number of the discrepancies of the Bible are of this character, and they are the most striking proofs of the fearless honesty of the witnesses who recorded the facts.

Judas came with a preconcerted part to perform. He had arranged every thing beforehand, and probably he had, as it were, every look and action committed to memory. He had braced himself up to his work, and had fixed its details with so much minuteness, that he could perform his part almost mechanically as soon as the proper moment should arrive. This is human nature as it shows itself on all such occasions. It learns its task when it has one of an agitating nature to perform, or is to act in any extraordinary emer-

gency, and then it comes up to the moment of action with a sort of mental momentum which carries it through, right or wrong, and leaves it very little power to modify its course, or to adapt it to any new or unexpected circumstances. Judas came with his plan thus formed,—Jesus had also his own course marked out,—and the almost mechanical determination of the one came into collision with the fearless and lofty energy of the other. The soldiers fell back. Perhaps they did not know till they saw him, who it was they were sent to bring; and in the confusion of the encounter, each witness has recorded what struck most forcibly his own observation.

There was a slight resistance,—but Jesus stopped it and surrendered himself a prisoner. The soldiers regained their courage, after the momentary alarm excited by the Saviour's sudden appearance, and began to secure their victim. There was enough in their rough ferocity to terrify the disciples, and they fled. The soldiers made, perhaps, some effort to secure them too. They certainly endeavoured a short time after to seize a young man on their way, who came out in his night-dress to ascertain the cause of the commotion which he heard. At any rate the disciples fled—and the soldiers had nothing to do but to secure their prisoner.

They bound him,—and binding, under such circumstances, is a very different thing from what most of our readers would suppose. The cords are not drawn lightly around the wrists of a military prisoner. They secured him and returned towards the city. The priests were too deeply interested in the triumphs they were about to enjoy, to wait quietly for the regular time of trial. Some of them even came out with the soldiers toward the place where Jesus was taken, and others assembled in the palace of the high-priest, and Jesus was taken directly into the midst of them. Here they spent some time in collecting their testimony and framing their charges, and urging on each other to a higher pitch of excitement, and to more determined and inveterate hostility.

There might possibly be a case in which men might be

deceived in regard to the character of a good man, and might press him very severely with the effects of their displeasure, from honest, though mistaken convictions of his guilt. That this, however, was not the case here, is very certain from the nature of the charges brought against the Saviour at the different tribunals where he was successively brought to trial. These charges were *varied to suit circumstances*, and therefore could not have been honest. In this case, he was before the Jewish priests, and the accusation brought against him was irreverence in speaking of what their religion taught them to hold sacred,—they called it blasphemy. This charge they attempted to prove from some expressions perfectly innocent in the sense in which he had used them, and almost perfectly so, even with the meaning which they pretended to attach to them. They found it difficult to establish their charges by any witnesses they could procure, but they were soon satisfied in another way. When he began to talk about himself, he uttered what they called blasphemy, enough to convince them fully; and the high-priest rent his clothes with affected horror. They spent some time in gratifying their resentment and hatred, by insulting and tormenting their victim in every possible way. They said he had pretended to be a prophet, and they accordingly blindfolded him, and then beat him, asking him to prophesy who it was that struck the blow. Jesus suffered it all in silence.

The conclusion of their deliberation, if such treatment of a helpless prisoner could be called deliberation, was that he ought to die. But in the way of his death there was a very formidable difficulty, which must be particularly described.

Judea was at this time a Roman province. It had been conquered by the armies of the empire some years before, and was accordingly now under Roman government. Now the policy which the Romans seem to have pursued, in maintaining their power over the countries which they subdued, was to leave the inhabitants as much as possible to their own customs and laws, interfering only in those great and important subjects which could not safely be left to a

vanquished people. The command of all the forts and of all the soldiers they of course assumed themselves. They took the direction of all the important public measures, and they reserved, too, a control over the higher criminal cases which might occur in the administration of justice. Inferior punishment the Jews might inflict themselves, but they were not permitted to take *life* in retribution for crime without the permission of their conquerors. Of course, then, there was no way by which they could procure the execution of Jesus, but by carrying him to the Roman government, and obtaining the sentence of death there.

But how could they do this? Their charge against him was blasphemy, and what would a Roman officer care about blasphemy? The governor was comparatively a stranger there, having been in possession of the government only six or eight years. He was a Roman, not a Jew; he took consequently little interest in Jewish feelings, and felt no reverence for 'what the Jews held sacred. How to get a sentence of death confirmed by such a man, against a criminal charged with such a crime as blasphemy, was the question.

It could not be done. They knew it could not be done; for a Roman officer, as the event in this case showed, could understand the claims of justice when his own interest or ambition did not interfere with them. If they go to Pilate, therefore, with their persecuted prisoner, they must have some more plausible pretext than the story of the blasphemy.

By this time, their number had probably much increased; and when the hour arrived, at which they could obtain admission at the Roman hall, they bound their prisoner again, and led him forth into the street. Attended and followed by a throng of his enemies, the Saviour walked quietly on, until he arrived in front of the palace occupied by the Roman. They sent Jesus in, remaining outside in the street themselves, *lest they should be defiled!* What perfectly good friends are superstition and sin, and with how little interference will they share the dominion of the heart! Here is a savage crowd, tyrannizing over a defenceless and

helpless man, in the extreme of injustice and cruelty; their blood is boiling with angry passions, and no obstacles or difficulties are sufficient to restrain them in their eagerness to secure the destruction of their victim; and yet, thus excited, thus inflamed, and thus destitute of all moral principle, they stop at once when they come to the doors of a Roman building, and will not enter it, for fear that *they shall be defiled!*

The Roman was a pagan, and his apartments were forbidden ground to them. The strictness of their law had prohibited even so slight a connexion as this with idolatry; especially when they were about to celebrate any of the more solemn ordinances of the law. The passover was at hand, and they must eat it. They could insult and torture an innocent victim, but they must not omit to eat the paschal lamb! They could stand burning with malice and rage in a Jewish street; but to cross the threshold of a pagan dwelling would never do. Every man there probably prided himself on his scruples—his inflexible precision in obeying the law; but thought nothing of the loathsome and terrible corruption which had full possession of his heart. Whited sepulchres, the Saviour had called them; what an exact comparison!

They were particularly scrupulous at this time, on account of the approaching passover, as the narrative informs us; but the same narrative states that the passover had been celebrated the evening before; for it was to keep this feast that Jesus and his disciples had met on the preceding evening. The apparent discrepancy is another of those marks of genuineness, which no skill can ever counterfeit. The occurrences of real life constitute a most complicated web, where a thousand actors, and a thousand events mingle and intertwine in the most intricate confusion. All is, however, in fact, consistent, though no one eye can take in the whole. Through this congeries, truth takes its bold and unhesitating way, confident that it cannot find at any one point, any thing which is really inconsistent with what it is to meet with at

another; and, therefore, it speaks freely of what it sees, and boldly exhibits every object which may lie in its track. It runs, of course, into apparent difficulties. It leaves interruptions and chasms, which additional light must correct and explain, and it is only when that additional light is fully furnished that we see, in all its perfection, the consistency and harmony of the whole. Fabrication cannot take such a course. She must *make* things consistent and plain, as she goes on; or if she leaves an apparent difficulty, there must be an explanation at hand.

The researches of scholars have reconciled this apparent disagreement; in fact, there are several considerations, each of which is sufficient to account for the language used. Perhaps the most important is, that there was a dispute at that time in regard to the day on which the passover should be kept;—some, relying simply on the declarations of Scripture, celebrated it on one evening, and the priests and pharisees, following certain traditions, preferred the next. It is not necessary however, for our purpose, to dwell on this subject here.

The character exhibited by these priests is the second great variety which this whole transaction brings to view. Enmity to the Saviour appears in them in very different forms from that which it assumed in Judas. His ruling passion was love of money,—theirs was love of place and power. They were *priests*; all their estimation in society, and all the virtue, on which they so confidently prided themselves, depended on the ceremonies of the Jewish law. Undermine these, and call public attention from ceremonial exactness to internal purity, and such an influence and such characters as theirs would be ruined. Jesus Christ had been doing this most effectually, and all their spiritual pride, ambition, and every worldly feeling was roused.

There is a great difference also between the actual appearances which were exhibited in the two cases. Judas was calm, the priests were furious. Judas endangered his master's

life by cool, calculating treachery; the priests were loud, and boisterous, and urgent, in effecting his destruction. The former was the accessory, assisting others in what he never would have undertaken himself. The latter were the principals, originating every plan, and pressing it forward with the most open and determined energy.

The reason for this difference is, that the principles which Jesus Christ was publishing, came at once to inevitable and direct collision with the ambitious views and feelings of the priests, while they were not thus aggressive in respect to the avarice of Judas. The Saviour's *principles* did indeed as plainly forbid the avarice, but his *acts* did not come so directly in the way of its gratification. Judas was left to pursue uninterrupted his own plans, but the hollow hypocrisy of the Jews was not thus left. Every public address made by the Saviour was most directly undermining it. Judas, therefore, remained quiet and undisturbed, while the priests were goaded on to fury. The ruling passion was gently *drawn out* of its retreat, in the former case, allured by the opportunity of gratifying itself by the ruin of its victim; in the latter, it was boldly assaulted in its den, and the contest was, of course, a desperate struggle for existence.

But now comes a new character still upon this ever-varying stage. At the door of the hall where this trial is going on, stands a man who is watching with eager interest every thing which takes place. He seems to be a stranger;—he tries to affect unconcern, but he plainly is not one of the common bystanders there. Presently some one comes down to the door and procures admission for him, and he takes his place by the fire with the others who are waiting to see the end. He is accused several times, by persons who notice his appearance, of being one of the friends of the prisoner, but he is afraid to admit it. An hour ago he drew his sword in his Master's defence; now he dares not admit that he knows him. Perhaps he was afraid that Malchus would remember, against him, his wounded ear. He had, in fact,

more reason to fear than any other disciple; and as human nature is, it is not surprising that he should be overcome by the greatness of the danger.

If this scene were fiction, one of its highest beauties would be the contrasts of character between Peter and John. A superficial observer drawing from imagination, would have made Peter in all respects bold and undaunted; and in exhibiting John as mild and gentle, would have made him timid and yielding. But history in this case, as she is recording facts, is true to nature; and while she gives to Peter physical boldness and constitutional ardour, she gives the calm, steady, lofty moral courage to the gentle John. At midnight, among lanterns and torches, and weapons, and an armed band, Peter rushes on with his sword; but when the hour of physical excitement has passed, he turns pale at the question of a maid-servant, and denies his Lord. John has no resistance to offer to a soldier, but amidst all his Master's dangers he keeps close to his side, his known and acknowledged friend; attending him faithfully on his trial, and doing all he can by his presence and sympathy to soothe his last moments upon the cross.

Reader, if you had been in Peter's case, should you have denied your Master as he did? Were this question to be proposed to any assembly of Christians, and if an answer was to be immediately given according to the spontaneous feelings of the heart, it would be perhaps one universal negative. You think that you yourself would certainly never have committed so great a sin; and still it is not at all improbable that you are cherishing a secret hope that your sins are forgiven, and are yet concealing it from others. You hope you are the Saviour's friend, but you are afraid or ashamed to have it known. You wish to make secret peace; and are unwilling to repair openly the injury which you have openly done.

Still you will say, perhaps, that though this may be wrong, there is a great difference between such a concealment, and repeatedly and plainly denying the Saviour in express assertions.

True. And so there is a great difference between the degree of danger which leads you to deny your Master, and that which overwhelmed Peter. You are afraid of a taunt, or of some harmless sarcasm; scourging and crucifixion threatened him. You are afraid of the looks and words of a few of your own companions; he quailed before weapons of torture and death in the hands of a ferocious soldiery: if you consider, therefore, the difference between the modes by which your practical denial of Christ and his are exhibited, you must also consider the difference in the strength of the temptation by which you are respectively overcome. The sin is the same in its nature in both cases, and though yours is less conspicuous, it may be even more aggravated than his.

The sin of Peter is, in all its essential characteristics, very often committed by those who profess to abhor it. Brought, as we are, in such a world as this, into perpetual connexion with the influences of sin, we are very often thrown into circumstances where we think it most prudent, for a time, to conceal the flag under which we profess to sail. There is no great danger which we dread; but when we come into scenes where Jesus Christ is not honoured, and where his principles are in disrepute, we quietly conceal our attachment to him; and while we, perhaps, say nothing that is false, we allow ourselves to pass for worldly men, by speaking in their tone, and displaying, so far as we can, their spirit. We are ashamed, or afraid, to avow our principles, and, consequently, we stand in reality where Peter did. There is, in fact, no essential difference between his case and ours. The circumstances are altered, but the spirit is the same.

But we must go on with our story. The Jews, too punctilious to go themselves into the judgment-hall, waited in the street, and sent their prisoner in. The conversation which ensued is one of the most striking examples which the Bible contains; every incident being so true to nature, and every word so exactly in keeping with the character and

circumstances of the individual who utters it. It was substantially as follows. While reviewing it, however, we must keep in mind the strongly marked characteristics of the three great parties in the transaction. Jesus, the victim, patient, quiet, and submissive, ready to bear and to suffer every thing; silent under mere taunts, but ready to explain when any one shall honestly ask for explanation. The crowd in the street, eager for his destruction, but without power to effect it, unless they can obtain permission from the governor, before whose palace they have assembled; and the governor himself caring nothing about the Jews or their pretended criminal, but unwilling either to put an innocent man to death, or to displease the people under his command, and standing especially in awe of anything which might hazard his political character in the estimation of the emperor at Rome. Agitated and distracted by the contradictory impulses of these feelings, he vacillates and wavers, and tries every way to escape the responsibility of a decision.

‘What accusation do you bring against this man?’ was the first and most natural question. Pilate came out to ask it of those who had assembled at the door.

They answered that he was a malefactor. Perhaps they had not decided upon the precise charge which they should bring against him.

‘Very well,’ was the reply, ‘take him, and judge him according to your law.’

‘He deserves *death*, and that it is not lawful for us to inflict,’ they replied. ‘We have, therefore, brought him to you.’

A conversation now ensued, in which they brought out their charge, adapted to the feelings of the new judge. The old accusation was *blasphemy*. Now it is *treason*. Treason against the Roman government. This, too, when every Jew, from Galilee to Gaza, abhorred the Roman yoke, and would have almost deified any one who would have raised successfully the standard of rebellion. Every Roman tax-gatherer was hated, and every mark of their political subjec-

tion was odious in the extreme: and they had themselves actually tried in vain to lead Jesus to say something against the Roman government, supposing that he would not dare to brave public opinion so far as to speak in its favour. In the face of all this, they come, heartless pretenders to an allegiance which they did not feel, to denounce him to their common enemy, for what they would, every man of them, have been glad to have done. It was the basest of all charges ever brought against the victim of any oppression. They accuse him, before their common enemy, of being their own friend; for treason against Cæsar would have been political attachment to them; so that if he had uttered sentiments hostile to the powerful foe which had brought one common oppression over the land of their fathers, it would have been base treachery for *them* to have disclosed it.

But he had not. They took some of his metaphorical expressions, and perverted them to a meaning which they were never intended to convey; and endeavoured from these to maintain their charge of treason against Cæsar.

The charge was well calculated to produce some effect. It evidently arrested the attention of the Roman, and he went into the hall, where Jesus stood waiting, to ask for his defence.

The manner in which he accosted him seems to imply that Pilate thought it probable that his prisoner was some insane, or, at least, eccentric man, against whom his countrymen had been, for some reason, exasperated; for he does not put the charge of treason to him as an accusation against which he wished to hear his defence. "Art thou the king of the Jews?" said he; as if his object was to put him off his guard, by saying nothing which implied reproach, but only endeavouring to draw him into conversation.

'Do you ask the question of your own accord?' was the Saviour's reply, (We give the conversation in substance only,) 'or is that the charge which they bring against me.'

'Am I a Jew?' was the rejoinder. 'What interest should I take in the affairs of your people? Your own

countrymen have brought you here to me as a criminal : what is it that you have done ?

‘ They accuse me, then, of trying to be a king. I have spoken sometimes of a *kingdom*, but it is not of this world. It is perfectly plain that I have aimed at no political power ; if I had, I should never have yielded up myself to my enemies without a struggle. My friends would have fought for me if this had been the nature of my aim. No : the kingdom I have spoken of is not of this world.’

‘ Are you a king, then, in any sense ?’

‘ Yes, I am. I came into the world to found a new moral kingdom here, by bearing witness to the truth.’

‘ What is your truth ?’ asked the Roman ; but, apparently, not waiting for a reply, he went out to the door again, and told the multitude there that he found no fault in the man. He probably supposed that he was some ignorant and deluded, but harmless, enthusiast, whose case deserved no serious notice. ‘

The priests, however, renewed their charges. They assured the governor that their prisoner was really a dangerous man, that he had been exciting sedition, and teaching the people treason against the Roman government, all over the land, from Galilee to Jerusalem.

The word Galilee suggested to the perplexed Roman a new way of extricating himself from the difficulty, for it was fast becoming quite a serious difficulty to him. His sense of justice would not allow him to condemn the man, but he could not resist the clamour which demanded his death. The word Galilee reminded him that he might throw off the responsibility of the decision upon Herod, who had jurisdiction over that province, and who was, at this time, accidentally at Jerusalem. He sent him, therefore, to Herod, his accusers following in the train.

Herod was glad to see them come, when he heard who it was they were bringing. He did not wish, like Pilate, honestly to examine the case, but hoped for amusement from his prisoner. Jesus perceived it at once ; and though he

frankly explained to Pilate his character and plans, to Herod's questions of curiosity and insult he deigned no reply. The priests and scribes accused him vehemently, but he was silent. They clothed him in a gorgeous robe, in ridicule of his supposed pretensions, and then sent him back to Pilate.

Under these circumstances the procurator was much perplexed to know what to do. Duty was on the one side, and strong inducement to do wrong on the other, and he wavered and hesitated, and resisted, and inclined, now to this side, and now to that, just as the human mind does in circumstances substantially the same. Millions of men, who struggle ineffectually with temptation to do acknowledged wrong, may see their own story told, and almost their own hearts reflected in this scene.

His first plan was to compromise the difficulty.

'You have brought me this man,' said he, 'as one that is exciting the people against my government. I have examined him here before you, and cannot find any evidence of his guilt. I have sent him to Herod, too, and he finds no more evidence than I. Now I am willing to inflict some moderate punishment upon him, but he has done nothing worthy of death.'

This, of course, did not satisfy them. They were determined, if the most urgent demands on their part could prevent it, that he should not escape so.

Pilate then thought of another plan. It had been customary for him, at their great festival, to release some public criminal as a favour to them. In a conquered country, the interests of the government are generally regarded as so distinct from those of the people, that even the punishment of criminals, especially those guilty of political crimes, is regarded as, in some sense, an injury to the community. A foreign power comes and establishes itself over them, and it is not surprising that even wholesome control should be unpopular, and that the pardon of a state criminal should be regarded as a boon from the authorities,—a suitable contri-

bution from the government, to the means of rejoicing at a great public festival,

The Roman proposed, then, since they insisted that Jesus should be condemned to die, to consider him as thus condemned, and then to pardon him, as it was usual to pardon one on the occasion which had now arrived. He might have known that this would not succeed. The crowd were all ready with their reply. 'Release Barabbas!' 'Pardon Barabbas!' 'Barabbas!' came up from a hundred voices.

'What shall I do then with this Jesus?'

'Crucify him!' 'Crucify him!'

'Why, what evil hath he done? *He is not guilty.*'

'Crucify him!' 'Crucify him!' was the universal reply.

The perplexed and distressed procurator seems scarcely to have known what to do. The crowd must, by this time, have become very great, and was, probably, every moment increasing. Passions were rising,—violent gesticulations, and ferocious looks, spoke the intense excitement which prevailed,—and he must have seen that there was the most imminent danger of a riot, perhaps an insurrection, which would involve him in lasting difficulty, or might even ruin for ever his political hopes. He could allay the whole by giving up the defenceless and innocent object of their fury. But when he looked upon him, patient, mild, submissive, waiting in silence to learn what was to be his fate, he could not do it. He was a Roman, and he knew his duty.

It was very plain, however, from the course he had taken thus far, what would be the ultimate decision. He began to yield at first; and when a man proposes terms with sin of any kind it is not difficult to foresee which will conquer. Pilate concluded to go one step further; to scourge the prisoner, in hopes, perhaps, that when they came to witness his sufferings under the lash, their hearts would relent, or, at least, that their anger would be satisfied. He gave him up to the soldiers therefore, and ordered him to be scourged.

Scourging! How few of those who have read this story have any idea what a military scourging is. I might give a

description from the narratives of witnesses. But it must not be done; I could not introduce to my readers, by distinct description, a hardy soldier, writhing and shrieking under such an infliction, without passing those limits in the detail of physical suffering, beyond which such a work as this ought not to go. How Jesus bore it we are not told. Pilate hoped it would satisfy his murderers. It would have satisfied any common murderers.

The scourging finished, the bleeding sufferer was retained some time by the soldiers for their amusement. A larger number, perhaps nearly the whole garrison of Fort Antonio, were called to enjoy the sport. They crowned him with thorns, and gave him a reed for a sceptre, and then with the gorgeous robe which Herod had found for him, they held him up as an object of universal derision.

Pilate at length came forth again to make a last effort to save the prisoner.

‘Here,’ said he, ‘I have brought him forth again, to tell you once more, that *he is not guilty*.

‘Behold the man,’ said he, as he pointed to the prisoner, covered with marks of the sufferings and indignities he had borne. The reed was in his hands, the purple robe around him, and the thorns were in his bleeding temples. No wonder Pilate thought his enemies would have been moved.

“Crucify him;” “Crucify him;” was the universal reply.

‘You must take him then and crucify him yourselves, for I cannot find any fault in him. He has not been guilty of treason.’

But why go on to detail the faltering, failing efforts, which the Roman officer made to serve his prisoner. He had begun to yield, and though he continued to dispute the ground, at every step he gave way more and more, until, finding that riot and tumult were inevitable, and when it was pretty distinctly intimated that he might be denounced at Rome, as a traitor himself if he allowed this supposed traitor to go free, he finally yielded. Before giving, however, the orders for his crucifixion, he came out before the multitude, and in the

most solemn manner assured them, that the man was innocent, and that if they crucified him, they must answer for his blood.

“ His blood be on us, and on our children ! ” was the awful reply.

Very few men ever think of comparing themselves with Pontius Pilate, or with the soldiers who executed his orders; when perhaps there are not anywhere in the Bible, delineations of character which might be more universally appropriated than these. Neither of them had any special hatred for the Saviour. Pilate would have done his duty if he could have done it by any common sacrifice; but like multitudes, probably, who will read this examination of his character, he was not willing to make the sacrifice which was necessary, in taking the right side. The reader fluctuates, perhaps, just as he did, between conscience and temptation, yielding more and more to sin, and finding the struggle more hopeless the longer it is continued. A religious book, an afflictive or a warning providence, or an hour of solitude, quickens conscience, and renews the combat; but the world comes in with its clamours, and, after a feeble resistance, he gives way again—Pilate exactly—in every thing but the mere form in which the question of duty comes before him.

And the Roman soldiers too; they would have said, if they had been charged with doing wrong, that they were soldiers, and must do as they were ordered. They executed Christ as they would have executed any other man at their centurion's command. Such work was their business, and the part they performed in the sad tragedy was, as the phrase is at the present day, *in the way of business*; they felt, probably, no responsibility. The excuse was, to say the least, as good then as it is now, and it will be allowed as much weight at the judgment-day, in the case of the ignorant and degraded soldier, as in that of the enlightened and cultivated member of a christian community. In other words, it is no

excuse for either. The bookseller who has circulated a pernicious book, the lawyer who has fomented the quarrels which he ought to have healed, the merchant who has distributed over the community the temptations to vice or the means of gratifying unholy passions, and the soldiers who insulted and tortured their victim in obedience to their commanders, will all find at last, that the customs or regulations of business among men will never justify doing what conscience declares to be wrong.

Such is the marked and striking variety of character which is exhibited in this extraordinary scene. We have the soldiers and the bystanders, like the mass of mankind, unconcerned and reckless, caring little about right and wrong, and controlled in their conduct by the accidental influence of circumstances,—neither fearing God, nor regarding duty; and we have Pilate, doubting and hesitating in the struggle against sin,—conscience awake, and yet temptation powerful, and the contest ending, as such contests usually do, in the victory of sin. They are fair examples of the two great forms of open wickedness—hardened reprobates sinning without compunction, and the wavering and miserable soul doing wrong in spite of it. It is hard to tell which God regards as most guilty. We have hypocrisy, also, in its two leading forms; Judas, a hypocrite for money, and the priests, hypocrites for place and power. To complete the collection, we have piety in its two leading forms; the wandering, sinning, and broken-hearted Peter; and Mary and John, firm in their duty, and unwavering in their affection, to the last; sharing the opprobrium and the danger of their Master, and keeping closely at his side; giving him all that human sympathy can give, and receiving his dying charge.

It is a very common impression that the populace, generally, were against the Saviour, at this time; but the narrative does not seem to countenance this idea. The priests were against him, and they seem to have been the chief, if not

the only agents. They contrived their plans secretly, in order to get him apprehended, and to procure sentence against him, by the Roman governor, before there should be any opportunity for a rescue by the people; after this, they knew he would be secure; and now when he was led away, under Roman authority, to execution, they seem not to have feared any interruption. A great company of friends did, however, follow him, lamenting his cruel fate. He once turned to address them on his way, asking them to weep not for him, but for themselves and their children.

They came to the place of execution, and painful as it is, we must dwell a few moments upon the scene that was presented there. He was to be crucified; and crucifixion is perhaps the most ingenious and the most perfect invention for mingling torture and death which was ever contrived. It is the very masterpiece of cruelty. Life is to be destroyed; but in this way of destroying it, it is arranged with savage ingenuity that no vital part shall be touched: the torturer goes to the very extremities,—to the hands and to the feet, and fixes his rough and rusty iron among the nerves and tendons there; and the poor sufferer hangs in a position which admits of no change and no rest, until burning and torturing inflammation can work its way slowly to the seat of life, and extinguish it by the simple power of suffering.

They laid the Saviour down upon the cross, and extended his arms; a soldier on each side holds the hand down in its assigned position, and then presses the point of the iron spike upon the proper place in the palm. He raises his hammer,—the patient sufferer waiting calmly for the blow.

But we must stop;—we leave the rest, and the reader must conceive, if he can, of the first sharp piercing agony, and the excruciating pains then shooting through the frame;—the rising inflammation, and the intolerable thirst, which goads a wounded man almost to desperation, and brings up from a field of battle, a few hours after the contest, one universal cry for water, from the thousands who lie wounded and dying. As the Saviour hangs, too, by such a suspension,

hour after hour, we must remember that *he had been scourged*. Perhaps this was in mercy, however. He died sooner than the malefactors.

But it is too awful a scene to dwell upon. We may read the narrative in the Gospels without much feeling, because we have long been familiar with the words, and they cease to affect us. But if the imagination really enters into the scene, she recoils, awed and terrified with the contemplation of such sufferings. Very few men would have nerve enough to witness what the Redeemer was willing to endure.

Life was slow in relinquishing its hold, attacked thus, as it was, in the remote extremities. It sunk at last, however, under the power of protracted pain. The sufferer ceased to speak; his head dropped upon his breast; and as they looked up to his face from below, the rigid fixedness of feature, and the half closed and glassy eye, told them that all was over.

In crucifixion, ingenious and savage cruelty maintains her ground to the very last; for when the executioner gets tired of waiting for the miserable sufferer to die, and time compels him to do something to accelerate the work, he has not the mercy to destroy the sad remnant of vitality at a blow. He keeps, still, as far as possible away from the seat of life, and by new violence inflicted on the limbs, endeavours simply to send a new pang, as a reinforcement to the assailant, in the protracted contest between life and suffering. It is the very object and aim of crucifixion to kill by pain, and with savage consistency they will employ no other agent to speed the work. Accordingly, when, at sunset, the soldiers came to the place of execution to see how the fatal process was going on, they broke the malefactors' legs to quicken their dying struggles.

"*He is dead already*," said they, when they came to the Saviour's cross, and looked at the body hanging passive and lifeless upon it; and one of them thrust his long iron-pointed spear up into his side, to prove that there was no sense or feeling there.

The ferocious executioners then went away, and left the disciples to take the body gently down, and bear it away to the tomb. As they carried it to what they supposed would be its long home, the limbs hung relaxed and passive; the tongue, to whose words of kindness and instruction they had so often listened, was silent; the eye fixed,—the cheek pale,—the hand cold. The soldiers had done their work effectually; and though the disciples could not have noticed these proofs that their Master had really gone, without tears, they must still have rejoiced that the poor sufferer's agonies were over.

As to themselves, all their hopes were blasted and all their plans destroyed. They had firmly believed that their Master was to have been the Saviour of his nation; instead of that he had been himself destroyed. The day before, every thing had looked bright and promising in their prospects; but this sudden storm had come on, and in twenty-four hours it had swept every thing away. They placed the body in the tomb; and disappointed, broken-hearted, and overwhelmed with sorrow, they went to their homes. They knew nothing about the design and nature of these sufferings,—and we know, after all, but little; but who can be so insensible as not to see that this transaction, exhibiting on so conspicuous a stage all the forms and degrees both of holiness and sin, and especially when seen in the light in which the sacred writers subsequently exhibited it, goes very far towards making the same moral impression, as would be made by the just punishment of sin? Who can read the story without loving purity and holiness, and abhorring and dreading guilt?

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARTING COMMAND, OR THE MEANS OF SPREADING THE
GOSPEL.

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

WERE we to follow inclination, we should not pass over those most interesting events which occurred during the interval between the Saviour's death and ascension. But it is not the design of this work, as the reader will have already perceived, to give a connected and continuous history of Jesus Christ, but to bring forward the leading principles of religious truth, as they are naturally connected with the various points of this history. Fidelity to our plan therefore seems to require, that after having considered the sufferings which our Saviour endured for us, we should pass on to the consideration of the great work which he wishes us now to do for him. He assigned this work to his disciples by his last words.

The objects and the pursuits of human life are entirely changed, by the view which the gospel takes of the human condition and character. Without the light which Christianity sheds upon it, it is a dull and wearisome path, a routine of tiresome duties, or heartless pleasures. Every one will admit that it has been so with him, in respect to the past, though his future way seems gilded with new promises of enjoyment. These, however, will certainly fade away when he approaches them, as all the rest have done.

The mass of mankind never see this. They know, it is true, that they have never been contented and happy, and are not now; but just before them in the voyage of life, they see a bright spot upon the waters, which they expect soon to

reach, and where their bark will float, they think, in a golden sea of light and glory. That spot has been just so far before them, and has just looked as bright and alluring for years; and as they have approached it, the splendid reflection has fled, and the waters have returned to darkness and gloom, before the keel of their bark could plough them. Still they have not discovered this illusion, but they give themselves up to its influence with their whole souls, and press forward as eagerly to the spot of imagined happiness, as if it had just this moment burst upon their view.

The more thinking and serious however see this, and feel it deeply. It seems to them discouraging to toil on in duties which return every day the same, and the performance of which leaves behind no permanent effects; or to seek for pleasures which the experience of years has proved can seldom be attained, and which, when they are attained, do not satisfy. These feelings have oppressed many a sensitive and reflecting spirit, as it has looked forward to the years of life that remain, and thought how soon they would be gone, and has asked, with a desponding sigh, "What have I to live for?"

The true followers of Jesus Christ are raised at once above the vacuity and inanity which characterise a life spent without God. Their Master did not leave the world without giving them something to do; something at once pleasant, and useful, and ennobling.

The work which Christ has given us to do, is the promotion of his kingdom here; and it is the work of all. If there is any thing clearly asserted in the New Testament, it is that the followers of the Saviour are not their own, but his; that they are bought with a price, and are bound to be devoted to their Maker's service. The great work too, which, in his service, they are called upon to perform, is establishing and spreading the reign of holiness in this world; and it is of such fundamental importance that every Christian should understand clearly his duty in this respect, that a chapter ought to be devoted to it; and as it is a subject which relates

exclusively to personal duty, I shall adopt the form of direct address to my reader.

When you give yourself up to the service of Jesus Christ, then, consider how much is meant by it. It involves, among other things which have already been considered, devoting yourself to his work. To bring men to repentance and holiness was the work of his life; if you follow him, then, it must be yours. This point, however, was considered more fully in a preceding chapter. Our object is now, not to enforce the duty, but to show rather by what means it is to be performed. These we shall consider in order.

I.—A HOLY LIFE.

The most direct and powerful means of promoting the Saviour's kingdom, is the vigorous cultivation of your own growth in grace. There is a great tendency among Christians to look too much away from themselves, and think that they are to do good to their fellow-men, by bustling efforts, bearing directly upon them, without the light of a high and consistent, and unsullied example of holiness: "Ye are the salt of the earth," said our Saviour; and the very expressive metaphor seems to imply that Christianity is to influence mankind, not so much by its outward and open triumphs in the world, as by the silent and unseen, and yet most powerful operation of its principles in the hearts and lives of its professors. The thousands of individual Christians are surrounded, each in his own little sphere, with some upon whom they exert a constant influence. The aggregate of this influence is immense. Each individual, however, is responsible only for his own comparatively minute and separate share; but success in securing it, in every part, and consequently in the whole, depends on personal christian character.

To show this, let us consider the amount of influence of two distinct kinds, which may be exerted by a particular church. It consists, we will suppose, of a hundred members; and in the daily business and pursuits of life, they are

connected, probably, more or less directly, with two thousand persons; that is, there are two thousand persons, at least, who are acquainted with some one or more of them. One kind of influence then, exerted by these Christians, is, that of their private character and conduct, and the spirit manifested in their dealings as they affect these two thousand. Again, they are interested, we will suppose, in the spread of religion, and they contribute a considerable sum of money, to circulate Bibles or tracts, or to support missionaries in foreign lands. Now the point we are urging is, that the former, viz. the private influence, exerted over those with whom they come into immediate connexion, is far more important than the other. It is this kind of influence which is more frequently spoken of in the New Testament than the other; and if the church felt the importance, and universally acted accordingly, the gospel would make far more rapid progress in the world than it now does. The reader will see in the sequel, that I do not mean to undervalue the second mode of promoting Christ's kingdom. It should have its proper place; but the first and great duty of every Christian, is to see that his own heart is right, and that the light of the glory of God shines in all his private conduct.

And yet this is very often forgotten. The heart, deceitful and hard towards God, loves to forget it. We seek moral renewal for ourselves, and we feel, at first, a strong interest in our Maker's service; but the world comes in again, and gets the victory; and since we do not like to renew the painful struggle necessary to overthrow it once more, we leave ourselves, and endeavour to quiet conscience by activity in our efforts to save others from their sins. Our pride is gratified by the thought, that we stand on safer and better ground than those for whom we labour, and many other worldly feelings may be gratified, in devising and executing our plans. In the meantime, our own hearts remain cold and dead; our petitions become feeble, our prayers formal; desires for real spiritual blessings for our own souls are gone, and we work industriously, with the pretence of endeavour-

ing to procure for others what we do not really desire for ourselves.

This must not be so, if we wish to do any good to the cause of Christ. We must look within, and seek first to eradicate our own sins, and have our own hearts right. We should pray for spiritual blessings for ourselves, and see that we do it sincerely. Many and many a night when the Christian kneels for his evening prayers, he cannot honestly ask God to come and be with him. The world has full possession; and if he prays in words, that God would come and break its chains, it is with a secret wish that he may not be heard. If we examine ourselves with careful scrutiny, we shall often find that this is really the case. The Christian, therefore, who wishes to be at his post, and to act efficiently for his Master, should pray for himself, and see that he can pray honestly.

Again, he should *watch himself*. We are all far more willing to watch one another than to watch ourselves. It is easier, and more pleasant, to see the faults of others than our own. We like to think of the obstinacy, and ingratitude, and folly, of those that are entirely without God in the world, far better than to see the same qualities in ourselves, who profess to have tasted of the happiness of piety, and then have almost thrown the cup aside. Now there is, unquestionably, such a fault as turning our thoughts too exclusively to ourselves. Many persons err in this way, and to them advice contrary to this should be given. But such cases are rare. The mass of Christians, especially in this busy age, are far more inclined to be watchful over all their neighbours than over themselves, and especially to see the hardness of heart, and the base ingratitude, exhibited by sinners, while they entirely overlook their own.

Once more, we should *labour for our own* spiritual good. In religious action, the natural law, in respect to selfishness, seems to be reversed. We are far more ready to toil for others than for ourselves; we had rather that they would repent, than that we should grow in grace; we prefer buying

and distributing a dozen tracts for the unregenerate, to reading attentively and prayerfully a treatise designed to promote our own progress in holiness.

This is not surprising, though it is very wrong. Unhappily for us, moral renovation leaves sin in our hearts, wounded, indeed, but very imperfectly subdued; and this is one of the forms which, for ever deceitful, it continually assumes; but it must not be so. The best way to *spread* religion, is to *exemplify* it. A pure church is the most powerful army; the christian armour consists of the christian graces, and it is with these that victories really valuable are alone to be won.

But it is not my intention here to point out the means of growing in grace, but only to bring to view the importance of a high standard of personal holiness among believers, as a means of spreading the religion of the Saviour. There is a great tendency to look with too exclusive an interest at the public movements of the church in its efforts to extend its boundaries, while the far more powerful influences which might be exerted by piety and holiness within, are comparatively neglected. The interest felt, however, in the public movements of the church is not yet half what it ought to be. I do not wish to depress the one, but to raise the other. In fact, they generally go hand in hand. Right efforts, made in the right spirit, are among the very best means of promoting piety and spiritual progress in the individual who makes them; there is a sort of reflex action, that brings to his own heart the blessings which he seeks to bring down upon others. But to accomplish this object they must be *right efforts*, made in the right spirit: and here is the danger.

In fact, there is no question that a man may be led to the most vigorous efforts to promote the cause of religion from motives which are altogether distinct from those which the Saviour requires. Self-interest, party spirit, love of honour, spiritual pride, and a thousand other motives, animate a vast proportion of the zeal which is professedly expended in the cause of Christ.

A minister will be active and ardent in his efforts to awaken religious interest among his people; or an author may write a book ostensibly to give religious instruction. Now they both may be led forward in their works by a desire to do good; but it must not be forgotten that the very same success which accomplishes good for the cause brings honour to the labourer; and many an enterprising and zealous workman will find, if he looks honestly at his heart, that the worldly feeling has had far more than its fair share in the work.

It is the same with all the open and active means of endeavouring to promote the Saviour's cause. There is so much mingling of motives in them that it is difficult to tell, in many cases, whether the natural or the renewed feelings are most cultivated by such efforts. If these things are done in the right spirit, they cultivate that spirit; and, on the other hand, the feelings which prompt them are strengthened, if they are wrong. Bad passions, as well as good, thrive under the influence of indulgence, and, consequently, the very same act, such as contributing money for any religious or charitable purpose, may be the means of awakening and cherishing in the heart of the Christian who makes it, love to God, and a warm desire for the salvation of men. It may wean him from the world, and link him to his Saviour by a bond closer than before. On the other hand, it may give the reins to selfishness and passion, and banish spiritual peace and joy, and bring back the soul very far in its sad return to the dominion of sin.

It is, therefore, unsafe to depend, as too many do, on mere christian action for their growth in grace. It is sometimes unquestionably wise to turn the thoughts of some dejected desponding Christian away from himself, in the hope that he may find cheerfulness and enjoyment in doing work for his Master. It is, in many cases, the very best advice which can be given. Still those instances, though many in the aggregate, are individually rare. In all ordinary cases, the great danger is the other way,—of going out of ourselves, and

seeking to win God's favour by the bustle of what we call christian action, while the passions of the heart remain unsubdued, and its recesses of hidden guilt unexplored. It is a great deal easier, with hearts such as ours, to give money, or to erect a church, or to exhort in a religious assembly, or to write good advice for others, than to come and humble our own selves, and crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.

The advantage of making more direct and special efforts to induce Christians to cultivate the right spirit of piety, than to induce them to go forward in christian action, is manifest, from the consideration that warm piety in the heart will almost spontaneously go forth into christian action, whether you urge it on or not: but the most uninterrupted and energetic christian action will not necessarily produce the right state of heart. It may only foster and strengthen the bad principles of action from which it springs. Besides, the light of a pure and honest christian character must of itself do good among men. It exerts an influence which they cannot but feel, and it is an influence far more powerful than any other. Suppose we could station in any community in our country a little band of *perfect Christians*, and leave them there, merely as specimens of the practical effects of Christianity. Connect them by the ordinary pursuits of business, with the mass of society, but cut them off, if you please, from all opportunity to make direct efforts to inculcate the principles of religion upon others. What an effect their simple presence would produce! Pure, holy, harmless, and undefiled, weaned entirely from this world, and living entirely for another! Hearts warm with love to God, and ardent affection for one another, and untiring benevolence towards all around them; selfishness, gone—pride, censoriousness, resentment, all gone—and instead of the base passions of human nature, the whole soul filled with the noble, and generous, and exalted sentiments which Christianity tends to inspire. What an influence would be exerted by such a church, even if they were deprived of all those means of influence on which we ordinarily depend! and how

different would it be in its nature from that which is now too often exerted in the towns and villages of our land by those who have in charge the cause of the Saviour there! The minister cold and heartless,—close and selfish in his dealings during the week; and then preaching on the Sabbath, in the performance of a dull routine of duty, or to gratify the vanity of rhetorical or theological display; the father worldly and selfish, devoted with his whole soul to the work of making a fortune, and now and then adding his name to a subscription to keep up his credit as a benevolent man, or perhaps to get rid of unpleasant importunity; and a mother, scolding and fretting among her children and domestics all the morning, and then decking her face in assumed and heartless smiles, or in an expression of affected solemnity, to go to a religious or charitable meeting in the afternoon. My description may seem unnecessarily severe; I hope it is so: at all events one thing is certain, that Christians cannot hope that God will bless them, and prosper his cause in their hands, unless their *hearts* are right, and their efforts in his service are made from honest desires to promote their Saviour's cause. And this will not be the case unless the spirit of religion, which is the spirit of peace, love, and joy, reign habitually and incessantly at home as well as abroad, in retirement as well as in public: and if it really exists, it will show itself as certainly in the tone and manner with which we speak to our children, or bear the little trials of every-day life, as in the most public acts performed in the face of the world.

If, then, you wish, Christian, to do any thing effectual for the Saviour, look within: labour first and most constantly with your own heart, so that the light of pure religion may beam in beauty and gentleness there. The world around will see and feel its moral power. Many will be led by it to the fountain which has purified you; they will follow your example, they will imbibe your spirit; and thus, while coming nearer and nearer to the Saviour yourself, you will, in the most effectual manner, extend his kingdom.

II.—PERSONAL INFLUENCE.

Aim at acquiring as strong a personal influence as possible over others. We put this next to the work of securing your own progress in holiness, because we really believe it stands next. The man whose own heart is right towards God, and who has a strong influence over others, must inevitably do a great deal towards promoting the Saviour's cause. He may in many cases mistake—he may work to disadvantage—but he has the essentials, and to a great extent he may succeed. But let us explain what we mean by personal influence.

Here are two Christians, equally devoted to their Master's cause. One, however, feels that next to his responsibility for his own personal character, his highest trust is his direct influence over others. This influence he will steadily endeavour both to preserve and to increase. In all his intercourse with others, he endeavours to acquire their good will. To find his way to their hearts, his benevolence is active, practical, operating at all times, and diffusing enjoyment all around him. He has regard for the rights and for the feelings of others as well as for his own. He sympathizes with the difficulties and trials of those who are connected with him; and thus, independently of the light which his character sheds around him, is the object of strong personal regard.

The other is a very different man. He cultivates the spirit of piety, and bewails his sins before God. He is ready to make even great sacrifices to do good whenever the opportunity is presented: but in all the thousand little connexions which bind him to society he seems morose and stern. The ordinary kindnesses and courtesies of life he never exhibits. He reserves his charity for masses of men, and his benevolence for great occasions. In all the ordinary dealings in which he becomes connected, from day to day, with his fellows, he is harsh and unconciliating; firm in the defence of all his rights, and inflexible in resisting every injury. He means to do what is right; but on the line which his eye

marks out as the line of rectitude he stands firm and perpendicular. He ought to stand thus on the line of rectitude in respect to moral principle, but not on that of justice, in regard to his own interests. He never sympathizes with those who are dependent upon him. They find that he does not think of their temptations, or feel for the trials they have to bear. If they are sick, he relieves their wants, perhaps, with cold propriety, but gives no evidence of compassion, or of real good-will.

Now, with the same degree of piety (if it is possible for the piety to be the same in two such cases), and with the same degree of wealth, and with the same influence of standing, how different will be the amount of service which these two individuals can render to their Master! The one is connected by the closest ties to many human hearts; and his sentiments, his feelings, his spirit, are insensibly and continually adopted by all around him. His light shines and allures. The other not only can do no good, but he is constantly but insensibly doing harm. The people around consider his character as illustrating the natural tendencies of religion. Many cases have occurred where a Christian of wealth and public influence has had such a character that a whole community has been seared in conscience, and alienated from the truth, by the associations which such a spectacle constantly before their eyes has led them to form. They would have disliked the purity and spirituality of religion without this, but they are led by it to dislike it still more. They are driven farther and farther away from God, by means of the influence of one of his professed friends.

Such characters, too, when once formed, seem to be incurable: for as every mad projector defends himself against the most convincing proofs of the wildness and impracticability of his schemes, by recollecting the opposition and incredulity which Columbus had to contend with, so do these Christians consider every difficulty they meet, and every feeling of opposition which they awaken in others, as proofs of their fidelity in the cause of their Master. "He that lives

godly, will suffer persecution," says the apostle; but they read it the other way. All that suffer persecution must certainly be godly. Not very sound logic, the impartial reader will say; but any logic is sound enough to convince, when it is offered by interest or pride.

It is the duty, then, of every individual who wishes to obey the Saviour's dying command, and in obedience to it, to assist his Master in spreading the reign of piety among men, to take care of his personal influence.

A very large proportion of the readers of this work will, however, in all probability, attempt to place themselves out of the reach of all these remarks, by saying to themselves, 'This is all very true, but it does not apply to me. I have no influence, and from the very circumstances in which Providence has placed me, I cannot have any.'

While such readers have been perusing the preceding paragraphs, their thoughts have been fixed upon some influential individuals whom they could call to mind, and they have considered these remarks as applicable only to them, or to persons placed, like them, in stations of trust and responsibility in the service of God. Perhaps some one who reads this may *wish* he could apply the remarks to himself. Sometimes, perhaps, in your hour of devotion, when your heart is warmed by reflecting what the Saviour has done for you, you sigh to reflect how little you can do in return. You wish you had some public or general influence which you might devote to the cause of the Saviour. But you are alone; your sphere of duty is limited to the little spot in which you move from day to day, with very little influence over other minds, so that even when you wish to do good, it seems scarcely in your power.

This feeling is one which very extensively prevails; but it is founded upon an entire mistake in regard to the nature of the influence which may be made most valuable for the purpose of promoting the Saviour's cause. You think you have no influence. You have a very powerful influence. It is

not extensive, but it is powerful, and this distinction you overlook. Let us consider it a little.

The chief magistrate of a populous city has an extensive influence. It reaches a great many minds. His plans and his measures promote or injure the interests of thousands. They are discussed, and approved or condemned in many a little group, and thus, out of all the multitudes around him, there are very few who do not know his name, at least, if they do not hear of his doings. The influence of what passes in that one man's mind, extends in this way to tens of thousands. But, after all, his official influence is not very powerful in any *individual* case. In the aggregate, it is very powerful; but it is an aggregate made up of many small units. Select from among the multitudes with whom he is daily thrown into connexion, the one to whom he is bound most closely,—over whom he has the greatest ascendancy; and how great an ascendancy is it? Why, it is a tie of business. It is the influence of a slight interest in common, and the chain will remain just so long as the business and the common interest retain their hold. The power of heart over heart, in such a case, is very small. The man, from the eminence on which he is placed, holds a slight control, a feeble influence, over many thousands. We gaze at the greatness of it in amount, and forget how feeble it is in detail. The very child, returning from school with the companion of his studies and his plays, holds an ascendancy and a control over the heart, to a degree which the statesman or the magistrate never obtains. Now it is influence over the heart, which is to be made effectual in making friends for the Saviour.

Suppose that two obscure and solitary individuals live together in a retired dwelling among the mountains. Their pursuits, their interests, their joys and sorrows are common. If one is cheerful and happy, the light of her smile is reflected upon the countenance of the other. If one is gloomy or impatient or sad, the sympathy which years have

cherished, transfers the emotion to the bosom of the other. However dissimilar in disposition and character they may have been in youth, every difference is gradually diminished or destroyed. They come to be interested in the same pursuits, to fear the same evils, and to have every wish and every emotion common. This process of assimilation goes on till the last,—and when one of them at length lies down in the grave, the other is left to mourn the loss, with a feeling of irretrievable bereavement, to which human life can hardly afford a parallel.

This, now, is a powerful influence;—but it is not an extensive one. The influence of each could extend only to the other. The world around was nothing to them. And what is peculiar in this case is, that the greatness of the ascendancy would depend, most of all, upon the very fact that the rest of mankind were removed beyond their reach. The fact that they were nothing to all the world, was the very reason why they were so much to one another:—and it is so with us all. The more a man's influence is extended and diffused, the more is it ordinarily weakened in its bearing upon individuals. The public officer, who reaches a hundred thousand minds, reaches them all feebly; and if you wish to find an example of the highest power exerted by one heart over another, you must seek it in the case of some one secluded from the world, and engaged in a round of duties, which bring him into contact with but few.

We may go farther than this, and say, that there is scarcely an example of influence to be found, so powerful as that exerted by a little child just old enough to talk, over his little brother or sister a year or two younger than itself. He is in all things its leader, and guide, and oracle: with perhaps more power over its heart, than the world exhibits in any other case. The little learner follows and imitates his superior, in almost every thing. He goes wherever his companion leads,—and mimics all his actions,—and repeats, in his imperfect and broken articulation, all his words; and he is thus led forward to almost all his knowledge, and

guided, in almost the whole formation of his character, by a child, only a little older than himself, and who is almost wholly unconscious of the influence he is thus exerting over an immortal mind.

Such is the distinction between the extent, and the individual power of influence, and it does not require much reasoning to show which is most efficient as a means of promoting the salvation of souls. Piety is a feeling of the heart, and he who would promote it, must gain access to the heart. Consequently, the more direct the access, in the individual case, the greater is the prospect of success. A christian labourer who is employed day after day by an irreligious man, has a far greater influence over him in a religious point of view, than the chief magistrate of the country can have. The labourer *must* have a great influence in the formation of the religious character of his employer. If he is gentle and benevolent, and of unbending integrity and faithfulness, and if it appears that these traits of character spring from his christian principle, the example thus set will speak with an eloquence which words can seldom equal.

Perhaps this chapter may be read by some one who has been accustomed to consider himself too young to do any good. You look around you, and see others enjoying opportunities of making direct efforts in the Saviour's cause, and you think that if you could enjoy such a privilege, you would highly prize it. 'Had I but a class in a sabbath school,' you say, 'how happy should I be, in endeavouring to lead my pupils to the Saviour!'

You have not, indeed, a class in the sabbath school, but you have a little sister who is infinitely more under your influence, than any class of sabbath-school children could be. You would see them only on the sabbath, and then but for an hour,—that, too, in a crowded room, and among multitudes of strangers. Your brother or your sister, however, is with you every day. They come to you for assistance in a thousand difficulties, and for guidance in all their perplexities

and cares. You can see them at all times; you can watch for opportunities to interest and attract them; you can help them to forsake their sins, and to watch against temptation, by being at all times at hand; and, above all, you can set them a constant example of the power of piety in making your own conduct what it ought to be, and your own heart peaceful and happy. Now the influence which you thus may possess, is altogether greater than you could have as a sabbath-school teacher. It is not so *extensive*, but it is more powerful in the individual case, and this is what is to be considered in judging of the opportunity you have to do good. Improve, first, the little field which Providence has put so entirely into your hand, before you look forward to wider spheres.

There is not now a Christian on the globe who has not a very powerful influence of the kind which I have described, over one, two, or more minds around him. Providence has placed us all, in connexion with our fellow-beings, in such a way that we must exert a great influence upon the formation of their characters. The power which we thus hold is far greater than we suppose, and until all within the circle of our acquaintance, however narrow that circle may be, are devoted and happy Christians, we must never say and never feel that God has placed us in circumstances in which we have nothing to do for him.

It is on these principles, and for such purposes, that every individual Christian should labour to deepen and extend the influence in his hands; and it is by means of this, mainly, that he is to aim at building up the Saviour's kingdom. If every one would be faithful, in the sphere in which Providence has placed him, the most astonishing effects would be immediately witnessed. Suppose every Christian were to come up at once to his duty as a follower of Christ, renounce the world entirely, search his heart, and cultivate, by every means in his power, his own spiritual progress,—and then devote himself to the work of doing good in the narrow

sphere of his own personal influence: there would be no splendid conquests achieved by any one; but by the united efforts of all, the work would go on with universal and almost inconceivable power. No one who knows the effect of holiness, when it appears in living and acting reality, in arresting attention and alarming the conscience, and in winning those who witness it to penitence and faith, can doubt that each individual who should thus live, might hope to be the means of bringing one, two, three, or four, every year, to the service of his Master: and to double, or treble, or quadruple the church in a year, would be progress which would soon change the face of things in such a world as this.

This is the way, undoubtedly, that the principles of the gospel are ultimately to spread in the world: through the influence of the lives and efforts of private Christians. I speak of course, now, of those countries where Christianity has nominal possession. Private Christians look far too much away from themselves, to ministers, and missionaries, and Bibles, and tracts, and imagine, that their business is merely to sustain the efforts made through these means. The far more valuable and powerful influences which might be brought to bear upon a world lying in sin, from the light of religion in the hearts and lives of the great mass of believers, is lost sight of and forgotten. But it is the *church* which is the pillar and ground of the truth. It is the great mass of disciples, which are the light of the world. Or rather it is they who *ought* to be: for a cold and worldly church, instead of being the pillar of the truth, is a millstone about its neck. Instead of casting around them the beams of heavenly light, its members shed abroad a darkness and a gloom which there is nothing to dispel.

Be careful, then, not only to watch your own progress in piety, but to seek influence over your fellow-men,—the influence of heart over heart; and as far as you secure it, consecrate it all, honestly and sincerely, to the cause of Christ

III.—THE STUDY OF HUMAN NATURE.

Carefully study the powers and tendencies of the human soul, especially in its religious aspects, and be prepared to act intelligently in all that you do, in attempting to influence the heart. Most sad mistakes are made in this respect, by many religious men, who make efforts blindly, and without consideration, as if they imagined that religious truth was to accomplish its object by some merely mechanical power which it possesses, and as if it were of no consequence how it is applied.

In order to avoid this evil, it is necessary to consider, before we attempt to act upon any heart, what is the real effect which we wish to produce upon it, and then to adapt our means to the production of the effect. Many persons err most grossly in this respect. A teacher, for example, offers a prize to be awarded to the pupil who will commit to memory the greatest number of verses in the Bible. Emulation and jealous rivalry immediately take possession of the class, and reign supreme. But the verses are committed. The boys are indefatigable in their efforts, and if committing verses in the Bible was the ultimate object in view, and was to be accomplished at any sacrifice, the plan might be considered triumphantly successful. But committing passages of Scripture is not the end; it is only the means to an end. That end is the moral renewal of the heart, and it is defeated entirely by the mode taken to secure it.

Again, a religious man goes to converse with an unbeliever. I do not mean one who openly rejects Christianity as a whole, but who denies its fundamental truths, and lives in sin, sheltered by his unbelief. Now the proper object of a conversation with him is not to convince his intellect, but to awaken his conscience. The difficulty is not with the understanding, but with the heart; and instead of wasting time in a fruitless attempt, by argument, to force upon his mind evidence which he is fully determined not to see, the true

policy is to bring up, gently but clearly, questions of duty, based on what he admits to be true.

The apostle Paul understood this principle, and practised it most perfectly. He adapted his discourses most adroitly to the condition and wants of his auditory. When he reasoned before Felix, it was upon righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; topics which his distinguished hearer could appreciate and understand. He based his addresses to the Jews on the sentiments of their own Scriptures. At Athens he endeavoured to awaken the conscience by appealing to the few simple truths which his hearers there could not deny; and in his epistles to the christian church, he went at once into all the sublime and mysterious truths which are revealed by the full light of the christian dispensation. He studied human nature, and adapted what he had to say to the moral condition and wants of those whom he addressed; always making it his great object to awaken the slumbering conscience by the highest truths which his audience were prepared to understand.

In their efforts to promote the cause of religion, Christians often act as if they imagined that the great object was to bring truth before the mind, whereas the real difficulty is to gain influence for what is already there. The work which we have to do is to touch the heart, not to pour cold light upon the mind. Now to awaken warm feeling in the heart, is unquestionably the province of the Spirit of God. We cannot effect it alone, but we may adapt our efforts to this design; and, at all events, we may so manage them, as not to thwart or oppose it. The reverse is often the fact. Many and many a time is religious truth presented to the mind in such a way, and accompanied by such attending circumstances, as to destroy its effect. The various ways by which this is done cannot in such a chapter as this be pointed out. What we wish is, to put the Christian on his guard, that he may watch his plans and methods, and see that he does not defeat his own designs.

The proper guides, in such a study of the human heart,

are the Bible and observation, not theoretical books. Perhaps a very large proportion of those who make human character a study at all, go first to theoretical writers for general views, and then just look into the conduct of men for the mere purpose of finding illustrations or proofs of them. They never go into the field as independent observers, ready to notice whatever they may see, and to leave it to tell its own plain story. Certain facts, which accord with their adopted theories, stand out in bold and prominent relief, while others are overlooked or forgotten: or, if they are too conspicuous to be completely disregarded, they are warped and twisted to suit the false conceptions of the mind. Such a course, besides fixing error, is an insurmountable barrier to progress. We notice and speculate upon human conduct just so far as the ground is covered by our theological or metaphysical opinions, and beyond that we do not go.

Books, and the opinions of great men on human nature, may perhaps be guides, but they never should be trammels and barriers. The field of observation is open before all; and Christianity, while it gives us the noblest work to do, gives us also the loftiest science to study. It puts, too, all the means and opportunities for observation fully before us, and says in spirit, 'You have a world of mind around you, open to your influence and accessible to your observation. Make it your great study to understand it, and your great work to bring it home to God.'

IV.—USE OF PROPERTY.

The christian religion takes higher ground in respect to human duty than any pretended message from heaven ever dared to assume; and it makes claims, which, for boldness and authority, stand entirely without a parallel. Its theory is substantially this. That it is the great design of Jehovah to establish an universal kingdom of benevolence, and consequent happiness:—that this kingdom has been, in this world, overturned and destroyed; and that all who wish its restoration are to come and *give themselves wholly* to the

work of promoting it. He does not require men to devote a *part* of their time, and a *part* of their property to his purposes, leaving them to employ the rest for themselves. He claims the whole,—or rather he invites men to come and consecrate the whole to the work of co-operation with him.

The question is very often asked, ‘What proportion of a man’s income ought to be devoted to charitable purposes?’ But the question itself seems to rest on an entire misconception of the nature of the claim which God makes upon men. It may have either of two meanings. In the first place, the inquirer may mean to ask, what proportion of his means of doing good in this world ought to be devoted to his Master’s service, and what to his own:—or, on the other hand, it may mean this:—when all that a man has is consecrated to God, what proportion of his means of influence should he employ himself, and what portion should he commit to others to employ: for it will be seen by a very slight examination, that when money is given for a charitable purpose, it is generally a method of sustaining others in the work of doing good. Now, in the first of these two significations, the question is evidently based on erroneous views. God will admit of no such division of the heart, nor of the powers of his creatures. In the second, the question must be unanswerable; that is, it can receive no general answer, for the courses to be taken in respect to it are as various as the conditions and circumstances of men.

But let us analyze a little more accurately the real nature of doing good by means of money. It is called giving, but, strictly speaking, it is not giving. It is simply a combination of men in one place, to produce a certain moral effect in another; and money is made use of as the mere instrument by which the object is accomplished. This we shall easily see by looking at a particular case.

To make the reasoning the more simple, we will suppose a case which would never precisely occur, but we can easily apply the principles which it illustrates to ordinary instances. We will suppose that, on some rude and inhospitable coast,

remote from the fertile and wealthy regions of the civilized world, there is a community of hardy settlers, who are devoted and consistent Christians. They enjoy religious privileges themselves, and at length they form the wish to do something for the ignorant and vicious inhabitants of a small island, a few miles from their coast. They are themselves dependent upon their daily exertions for their daily bread, and, consequently, though they can all, besides discharging the duties they owe to their families, and to the poor around them, find an hour or two in each day, which they can devote to God's service in some foreign field, no one of them can gain time enough to go away from home to visit the destitute islanders. Now there are evidently two ways by which they can surmount the difficulty. Any one of them can lay by the proceeds of his labour during those hours which are not required in the discharge of his duties at home, until he has accumulated stores sufficient to supply his family and himself during a visit to the island. The other plan is, for all to combine, and send one of their number, by uniting their labours during those extra hours, and thus finding support for the one who was absent. Let us suppose the latter plan to be adopted; and to make the case more distinct, we will imagine that one particular hour is assigned, at which all who remain at home shall be at work for the family of the one who was selected to go. When the hour arrives, the missionary is perhaps at the island, explaining to the inhabitants the nature of religion, and the claims of duty; and his friends and neighbours at home are each in his own little garden, labouring to provide food and clothing for their absent brother, and for his lonely family. They are all at work together, and in one common cause. They are not, indeed, all in immediate connexion with the souls whose benefit is the object of the enterprise, but they who are at home, labouring to sustain the absent one, are as really and effectually operating upon the distant island as he who has gone. They are all engaged in one common enterprise for the promotion of God's cause, each

doing his assigned part. Neither is giving to the other,— unless, indeed, he who goes can claim some gratitude from the rest, for having assumed the severer and more trying portion.

Now money is only a representative of the proceeds of labour, and if, instead of sending out to their missionary the provision and clothing which he would need when engaged in his enterprise, his christian friends at home should convert those provisions and clothing into the form of money and send them to him in that form, it would not alter the case. They would still all be labourers in one common cause, having different parts assigned to each, but all labouring together to spread the gospel, according to the command of their Master. Nor would the case be altered, if instead of working for this purpose at some specified time, each one was to labour when he pleased, in carrying forward this cause ; nor is it essential that such labours should be kept distinct from the ordinary labours of the day. All these incidental circumstances may be almost endlessly varied, without at all altering the real nature of the transaction, considered as a combination among many Christians to effect a moral impression on human souls, each taking his own appropriate part, but all engaged together, and all responsible directly to God.

How wonderful are the results secured by the contrivances and arts of life ! A solitary widow, in her home among the distant forests, knits an hour or two at her lonely fireside, in order to contribute her little share to the spread of the gospel ; her work tells on the minds of savages ten thousand miles from her humble dwelling. A farmer's children cultivate a little piece of ground in their father's garden, and change its products in the autumn for a dollar. It passes from their hands, and they see it no more ; but in a few months the magic metal comes out in the shape of a thousand pages of the word of God, and lives for half a century, to tell its message to the benighted people of some foreign land. A timid, and retiring, and fearful daughter of Zion, wishes to do something for her Master ; and she industriously

plies her needle during the long winter evenings of a single season, and a few months afterwards, in consequence of it, a miserable and suffering child, whom she never saw, in a country which she has scarcely heard of, is told that he can be clothed, and fed, and taught, through the instrumentality of a love which has reached half round the globe to bring him relief from his misery.

It is important to be noticed here, too, that, in one respect, the more remote from ourselves is the place where we can make any moral impression, the more valuable it will be; for piety, when pure, tends, from its very nature, to spread and propagate itself; and, therefore, from every point among the population of this world, at which we can once give it a footing, we may hope it will extend in a wider and wider circle. It is a light which will be the more universally diffused, the more its radiant points are multiplied; and yet no error can possibly be more fatal than for a Christian to suppose that he could atone for the want of heartfelt and efficient piety in his own quiet sphere by magnificent plans of remote and doubtful good. The first duty of every follower of the Saviour is, unquestionably, as we have already shown, at home—in his own inmost soul; his next, in his own narrow circle of personal influence. These posts must be guarded well by every Christian, or else piety will soon lose the little hold she has in the world. But the maintaining a high standard of christian feeling and action, in the small circle in which the individual immediately moves, not only *may* not be inconsistent with extensive and wide-spreading benevolence, but it *cannot*. Looking at a distance, and planning with reference to remote and unseen results, will not only not interfere with the progress of piety in the heart, but, if such efforts are made with honest sincerity, they will be the most effectual means of promoting it. But then they must be made in the right spirit. The attempt to carry influence, in the ways we have described, to other countries, must spring from honest desires to co-operate with God. It is this co-operation, and the moral effect at which it ought to aim, that

must be the great stimulus to action; and the pleasure of being a fellow-worker with God must be the reward, or else such labours will only improve and strengthen the spiritual pride, or the love of ostentation and display, from which they spring.

V.—RELIGIOUS DISCUSSION.

We place this title among the subjects brought before the reader in this chapter, rather with the design of excluding than of including it. It is a very doubtful means of doing good. Skill in disputation is a weapon very commonly employed—far too commonly; and our design now is, to show its nature, and what may fairly be expected from it; and, especially, to define those limits and restrictions to which such efforts to act upon the mind ought to be subjected. Let the reader understand, however, while reading the remarks on this subject, that, like the rest of this work, they are addressed to common Christians, sustaining the ordinary relations and connexions of society. Learned men have sometimes devoted their lives to the work of placing on record the evidences which their researches have furnished, of the truth and divine authority of the Scriptures, or of the nature of the truths they reveal; and the works thus produced have been among the strongest bulwarks of christian faith. Our plan does not lead us to say any thing of efforts like these: it confines us to the attempts continually made to remove religious error, by argument and discussion, in the common intercourse of life; attempts which, under certain circumstances, are wise and successful; under others, they are far worse than useless.

Religious discussion has its sole foundation in real or supposed religious error; and the nature of religious error is very little understood. Let us look at some of its sources.

1. One great source of erroneous impressions, on all subjects, is the power of influences exerted in early life, and which are sometimes so strong as utterly to bid defiance to

all argument. Every one has observed the permanency of these early impressions of early life in such cases as the following :—A child was once terrified, when very young, by suddenly seeing a snake, as it was playing in the grass ; and up to the age of twenty he retained an unconquerable aversion to the animal, so that his companions used to torment him by forcing upon his observation *pictures* of snakes, which would overwhelm him in an agony of terror and suffering. Another was carried to see a man who was shockingly mangled by an accidental explosion in blasting rocks, and fifteen years did not obliterate the impression. During all the years of childhood and youth, the effects of gunpowder, in every form, were a continual terror to him. Now, will you endeavour to overcome such feelings by argument? Will you go and try to *prove* to these terrified young men that a picture cannot bite, or that the flash of a little squib cannot endanger them?

But the reader will say that these are mere *antipathies* ; they are not of the nature of erroneous convictions entertained by the understanding. So is a very large proportion of the dislike to religion, and the disbelief of its truths, mere antipathy, and not deliberate conviction. The cases just adduced to illustrate it, are certainly strong ones ; but every man who will pause a moment to reflect, must see that a child, brought up under the influence of such associations as are, in many families, connected with the religious opinions of those who disagree with them, must inevitably, if human nature is consistent with itself, form such an antipathy. It may have men, or it may have opinions, for its objects ; but, in either case, argument, as a corrective, would be utterly thrown away. It would not only be entirely insufficient to produce a change, but it would scarcely have any tendency to do it.

A sufficient allowance is not made for this by the opposite parties in a religious controversy. If one generation takes sides violently, on any question, they inevitably *entail* the quarrel. Their children have scarcely the opportunity to judge for themselves. The laws of the human mind almost

compel them to feel as their fathers felt; for it becomes, in such cases, a matter of feeling rather than opinion. No one, therefore, ought ever to cherish a harsh or an unkind thought towards any one, on account of his religious errors, if his father led the way.

This influence of early associations has more power than all other causes put together, in the formation of religious opinions. The children of Mahometans become Mahometans themselves, without arguments in favour of the prophet; and, in the christian world, religious opinions are hereditary, and pass down, with exceptions comparatively few and rare, from father to son; so that Popery and Protestantism, Episcopacy and Dissent, and Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist opinions, occupy, in the main, the same ground, from generation to generation. It is true, indeed, that argument has something to do with this; for, though every faith has its defenders, to which all have access, still each child hears chiefly the voice of the one which its father chooses for it. But, notwithstanding this, every intelligent observer of the human mind, and especially of the habits and susceptibilities of childhood, will at once admit that other influences than those of argument are the efficient ones, in the production of these almost universal effects.

The first* source of religious error then, is, these associations of early childhood, which reasoning never formed, and which she is utterly incompetent to overthrow.

2. Another very common source of error on all subjects, and especially in religion, is the bias of mind produced by the influence of the *feelings*. The danger of such a bias is universally understood in common life, and is guarded against, in many cases, with great care. Whenever a contention arises between two individuals, the friends and

* The Author does not, of course, mean to exclude the original corruption and evil bias of our fallen nature from the first place among the sources of religious error.—EDITOR.

connexions of the respective combatants, with the same facts before their eyes, and guided professedly by the same principles of right and wrong, form directly opposite opinions, and each party adheres to the views which mere feeling has produced, with inflexible pertinacity. So, when any new speculation or plan of improvement is agitated in any community, each man will take sides on the question, just as his interests would be affected by the results. In the former of these cases, it is personal attachment, in the latter, pecuniary interest, which constitutes the bias; but any other emotion may produce the same effect.

This tendency of the human mind is universally known; every man, in consequence of it, almost instinctively distrusts the opinions of others, where their feelings or their interests are involved in the question; and a wise man, under such circumstances, will distrust his own.

Perhaps there is no class of subjects on which men are more in danger from this source, than those connected with religion. The various interpretations which are given to the declarations of the Bible, alter very considerably their force, in respect to the degree of restraint they impose upon human desires, and to the amount of sacrifice which they require in the service of God. A great reason, therefore, in many cases, why men cannot see the evidence of a particular truth, is the practical consequence which flows from it. We see this very clearly in those cases where certain abstract views of duty relate more or less directly to the common pursuits of life, so as to interfere with the business of one man, while they leave that of another untouched. The former will make great opposition to that, which, in the view of the other, is most obviously and unquestionably true. Now, in some such cases, where great and obvious principles of common morality are concerned, the proper course, undoubtedly, is to throw such a blaze of light upon the subject, as to force the guilty perseverer in sin to see his duty. In regard, however, to what are more strictly called religious truths, mere argument in such cases is of little avail.

A man, for instance, has made up his mind to live in sin, and perhaps in vice. He does what he knows to be wrong from day to day, though conscience, not wholly silenced, murmurs feebly in those hours of solitude which he cannot wholly avoid,—warning him of the danger of a judgment to come. He at length is almost accidentally told, that there is no future retribution. His mind springs spontaneously into the belief of it. He needs no argument. He may, indeed, listen to a few reasons, for the purpose of laying them up as weapons of defence, but his own belief is, after all, founded on his feeling. Now argument and discussion with such a man will ordinarily do no good. While he appears to listen to you he is only planning his own reply. Reasoning has not placed him in his entrenchment, and reasoning cannot drive him from it. Must he then, the reader may ask, be left hopelessly? No. The truth has an ally and an advocate in his own breast, which, though he may have silenced it, he cannot destroy; and our hope of success is in making its warning voice heard again. Bring *duty* before him; lead him to see that he disobeys God, and that his expected impunity can be no excuse for sin. If he can but see that he is a sinner, he will go to the Bible, and *that* will set him right about the future consequences of sin.

The cases we have considered thus far, are those in which the mind is led to reject what is true, because the truth is, in itself, unpleasant, on account of the practical duties which rest upon it; but the mind is very often blinded in a little different way. Men are often kept in error, not because they have any special objection to the truth itself, or to the practical consequences, in general, which result from it, but because they are unwilling to acknowledge that they have been in the wrong. A man who has always been on one side, and is so universally regarded, cannot admit that he has been mistaken, without feeling mortification himself, and exciting the ill-will of others. Light however comes in, which he secretly perceives is sufficient to show him that he has been wrong; but he turns his

eye away from it, because he instinctively feels what must inevitably follow from its admission.

These and similar causes act so universally, that the power of reasoning and argument, in changing the religious opinions of men, is exceedingly circumscribed. If men were willing to perceive the truth, we should have nothing to do but to prove to them what it is; but proof is so abundant every where, that it will of course come to the soul as fast as it is ready and willing to receive it. The first thing then, generally, is to get men into the path of duty. They all have truth enough to enlighten the beginning of it,—and more light will certainly shine upon it as they go on.

There is, however, a vast amount of useless discussion arising from religious differences, which the foregoing heads of remark will not explain. They who are in some degree willing to abandon sin, and do their duty, still see many subjects in very different lights, and become involved in endless disputes respecting them. Some of the more common sources of such profitless controversies come next in our enumeration.

3. Disputes founded on difference in the understanding of language. Take, for example, human character. There is no field more open to human observation than this, and, perhaps, there are few subjects in regard to *the facts* of which men are more universally agreed; and yet there is scarcely any one which has given rise to more endless discussions.

In their practical dealings with mankind, it is plain that intelligent men of all parties take substantially the same views of human conduct and character. They who, in the argument, have the lowest views of the natural character, are not more suspicious or severe in practice than others; and those who speak most highly of the native purity, and the spontaneous virtues of the human heart, are not thrown off their guard by their theories. As to the facts, there is, and there can be, scarcely any disagreement. We all know how men think and feel about God, and on what principles

they act in relation to one another. No company of bank directors, or board of managers, or cabinet council, probably ever differed very seriously in respect to the success of proposed measures, on account of the difference of their views in respect to the character and the tendencies of human nature. They may belong to very different denominations, and may have expressed their views in theory, in conflicting language, but when they leave theory, they have no difficulty about the facts.

I speak of course here of questions about human character as it is, not about the feelings with which God regards it; this is evidently a different point, and one in which disagreement would not necessarily affect the practice in the common business of life. But any real difference in respect to the actual extent of the depravity of the heart would affect this practice. Now, notwithstanding all the disputes with which mankind have been agitated on this subject, there is harmony when they come to act. The disputes are at once forgotten; men of the most opposite theoretical views work side by side, differing in nothing except that they who have had the most extensive experience, are most completely on their guard.

Now, how happens it that, under such circumstances, there should be such a perpetual dispute when there can be, after all, but little real disagreement? Of course I refer here, as has been remarked before, to a disagreement about the actual principles by which human nature is controlled, and not to the view which God takes of these principles. How can there be such a disagreement? The explanation is, that the terms employed in the discussion convey to different individuals very different ideas. One party understands the language used by the other, in describing human character, as implying moral perversion so complete, that the heart would take delight in promoting suffering, and love moral evil in all cases, on its own account, rather than moral good. They would expect to see it hating one being because he is merciful, and another because he is faithful and true. They

would expect that men with such characters as they suppose the language in question to imply, would abhor justice, and mercy, and benevolence, not in those particular cases merely where the operation of these principles came into collision with their own interest, but in the abstract and universally. They would expect to see them applauding cruelty, and admiring black ingratitude, and carrying their principles out into practice, by devising misery for all around them, merely for the pleasure of witnessing it, and bestowing a double share of their malignity upon those who had been most friendly to them.

Such a character as this is what one class of persons understand by the language used, and in the dispute they merely maintain that this is not the actual character of mankind. Nobody believes it is; but the dispute goes on, one party contending for one view, and the other opposing not the opinion of their antagonist, but a totally different one, and which seems equally preposterous to both. If they should come to an explanation, the chief question would be, by what terms they should describe what every body sees, and what their practice proves that they see substantially alike.

When we come even to such terms, as *can*, *will*, *freedom*, *punishment*, *unity*, *person*, *sin*, *affections*, and a hundred others, which are the perpetual topics of religious controversy, though they are plain and explicit enough in common use, they have various shades of signification as terms in a metaphysical argument. These shades cannot be defined: they elude all attempts to fix them, and yet they very seriously affect the views a man will form of the propositions into which they enter; and many and many a time controversialists have found, after a long discussion, that they had misunderstood each other from the beginning.

Take, for instance, the first word of the foregoing list. It seems a very simple word, and one that is very generally understood. So it is, as far as is necessary for popular use. But any person may convince himself that when used for

other purposes, it is not understood alike, by trying this experiment. On some occasion, when ten or twenty, or more individuals, not accustomed to metaphysical speculations, are together, propose this question: '*Can* any one of the company go and lie down in a burning fire? *Considering all the circumstances of the case*, the nature of fire, his dislike of pain, his sound mind,—considering all these circumstances, *can* he do it?' After pausing a moment for reflection, so that each individual can form an independent judgment, call for a simple answer,—ay, or no. The company will probably be about equally divided. The larger it is, the more nearly equal generally will be the division. If, now, the individuals are allowed to discuss the question, each person presenting the view which guided his own vote, and then the question is put again, the diversity of opinion will still remain, and in ordinary cases they would never come to an agreement. And yet there is no difference of opinion about the facts. Every one knows perfectly well what is the actual fact, as to the power of an individual in respect to such a case. The whole apparent diversity is produced by different ideas as to the precise metaphysical signification of the little word *can*. Practised minds would have no difficulty in such a case; they would immediately define the word, and give two answers according to the two significations, and they would be unanimous.

Now no sort of disputes are more common than endless discussions which are precisely of such a character as this would be. The danger is understood by scholars who are at all conversant with the nature of such inquiries, and they make very special efforts, though they are often ineffectual, to guard against it. But the mass of mankind are very imperfectly aware of this source of difficulty, and they involve themselves in endless disputes, the parties calling things by different names, and each combatant standing astonished at the stupidity and obstinacy of the other, in refusing to see what is so perfectly plain.

4. Another source of endless and fruitless discussions, is the disputing about questions which can be of no practical consequence, however they may be decided; such as the origin of sin, the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, the salvation of infants, the precise metaphysical relationship of the Son to the Father. We have said they are of no practical consequence; of course an ingenious reasoner can contrive to connect practical consequences with any subject whatever, and in his zeal he will exaggerate the importance of the connexion. In fact, every subject in the moral world is more or less connected with every other one: nothing stands out entirely detached and isolated, and consequently a question which its arguers will admit to be merely a theoretical one, will never be found.

It would of course be absurd to condemn all discussion of such points as the above, and others similar to them. The calm philosophical consideration of such questions is perfectly proper. It is the bringing them into the field of religious truth, and making them the means of religious divisions,—each party jealous and suspicious of those who think differently from himself,—and leaving the weightier matters of judgment, mercy and faith, to wrangle about differences which can do at most but little harm; this is the spirit which it is our object to condemn.

5. The last source of religious error and useless religious disputes which we shall mention, is the pride and self-conceit which keeps men from realizing that there is or can be any subject which is actually beyond the reach of their powers. Men will indeed admit this in the abstract, but then they evince the insincerity of such an acknowledgment, by having a distinct and well-defined theory on every subject which can be brought before them.

From these views of the origin and nature of religious error, and the effect of argument and discussion as a means of removing it, it seems to be pretty clear that those endless

disputes and controversies which are perpetually springing up in the common walks of life, by which the peace and harmony of families and villages are so often destroyed, are labour spent in vain. The Christian endeavours to reason his brother Christian or his worldly neighbour out of his errors, and begins, perhaps, with honest motives, and certainly with sanguine hopes of success. But he finds that however decidedly he may imagine the *truth* to be on one side, there may be *talking* on both; and he soon becomes irritated by formidable opposition, when he expected an immediate surrender. He soon becomes excited; and, forgetting the spiritual value of the truth, he contends for victory in the contest, and if he had any right feeling at the beginning, it is all gone before the conversation is closed.

The best way for private Christians to prove the truth, is to let it exercise its whole power upon their own hearts, and then to exhibit its fruits. Try to promote the happiness, and to improve the hearts and lives of those around you, and you will evince the efficacy, and the value, and the truth of the opinions you hold, better than in any other way.

In fact, the little progress which religion is making in the world is made in this way. Disputes on all subjects which are involved in real difficulty, generally result in a division of the auditors into parties, proportioned, pretty nearly, to the abilities of the combatants; and in religion there is a bias, which is altogether on the wrong side; discussion, therefore, here will be peculiarly uncertain in its results. It is the visible moral effect of the truth which really sustains its influence in this world. It is *moral power*, so evident and so irresistible, which enables pure Christianity to stand her ground; and every thing which diminishes this, or limits the sphere of its influence, or draws off the attention of men from it,—every thing of this kind, retards most directly and most powerfully the progress of the Saviour's cause. Let every class of Christians then, who think they love the truth, instead of wasting their time in disputing with their neighbours, cherish the pure spirit of piety in

their hearts, and cultivate in themselves and in all around them, its genuine and happy fruits. The Christian's rule of influence is not to endeavour to establish the truth in the human *intellect* by the power of subtle disputation; but "by *manifestation* of the truth, to commend themselves to every man's *conscience* in the sight of God." In other words, we must bring piety forward; its nature and tendencies must be made to appear in this world, and to stand out in bold and striking relief among the prevailing miseries and sins. But this must be done, too, with the constant conviction that THE CONSCIENCE is the great avenue by which it is to find access to the human heart, if it is admitted at all.

CHAPTER X.

THE PARTING PROMISE, OR THE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

AT the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, any one who should have looked abroad at the condition and character of mankind, would have pronounced the attempt which the twelve disciples were about to make, the most wild and impracticable scheme which the human heart could devise. Jesus knew, when he commanded his followers to engage in such an enterprise, that they would need help. He coupled therefore a promise with his command,—the one as remarkable as the other.

The Saviour's presence with his followers assists them in their work, undoubtedly, in several ways. It cheers and sustains them. It gives them guidance and direction in difficulty and doubt; and the feeling that they are always with

their leader, enjoying his presence and sympathy, gives devoted and honest Christians a support in difficulty and trial and affliction, which nothing else could afford.

But Jesus had often said before, that men, when turned from sin, were so turned by influences from above, which influences he was to send down from the Father. We cannot therefore doubt that in this his parting promise, he referred, in part at least, to the co-operation which he should himself render them, in all their efforts to save souls. The disciples understood this, and the first triumphs of Christianity were, in a simple but beautiful manner, ascribed to him: "And *the Lord* added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Their Master, too, gave the disciples an early and most signal proof that he remembered his promise, and was able to fulfil it, by changing Saul, their bitterest and most powerful foe, to their most devoted and most efficient friend. The apostle always attributed his conversion to the direct interposition of the Saviour; and with such proofs as the early Christians thus had, that a divine and unwonted influence was exerted upon human hearts, in connexion with their efforts, they could not but take courage, and press on in a cause which, without such aid, must have been very soon abandoned.

We have the same evidence now, as I intend to show in this chapter by a narrative of facts, such as are, in substance, very common in modern times, and which prove that the enterprise of bringing the world back to God is not a hopeless one.

We come, then, to the facts in the case, which are, that men will not turn away from sin, and begin, with broken-hearted patience, to serve God, without his aid. There is no way of inducing them to do it. You can bring clearly before them the obligations which they are under to God, but if they still prefer the world and sin, what more can you do? You can exhibit the moral beauty of gratitude, but if you exhibit it to a heart naturally ungrateful, if such an one should be found, what good would it do? You cannot *prove*

that if a man has received kindness from another, he ought to show kindness in return. If the person you address does not perceive it at once, there is nothing to be said about it; argument would be utterly unavailing. In the same manner, if he sees it, but does not feel it, you cannot alter his heart by reasoning.

There is a mistaken view of man's moral dependence, which, in some cases, produces one very sad effect. Persons sometimes think that the power to renew them is so completely in their Maker's hands, that they must wait for him to exercise it. They seem to have the impression that God will *repent* for them, and they are looking to him to do it. Now this is very evidently absurd. The Holy Spirit will never repent *for* you; no, *never*. From the very nature of things he never can. You must repent yourself, though, if you do it, it will be in the exercise of spiritual power supplied from on high.

The absurdity of such passive waiting to *be acted upon* may be well illustrated by some of the miracles of the Saviour. A man, for example, comes to Jesus Christ with a withered hand. It hangs lifeless by his side. It is insensible and motionless, a symbol of the moral condition of the human soul when dead in sin. He asks help from the Saviour; and what is the reply? "Stretch forth thine hand."

'How can I stretch it forth? Its utter lifelessness,' might the poor patient say to the Saviour, 'is the very reason why I bring it to thee. I cannot stretch it forth unless its life and power are previously restored.'

"Stretch forth thine hand," is, however, the command; and though we might gather innumerable *theoretical* difficulties about such a command, there are none in practice. The patient obeys. The very instant of exertion on his part, is the very instant of returning life and power. His hand obeys his volition. It obeys it, however, by a power which a supernatural interposition supplied. He could not have raised his arm without external aid; and, on the other hand, he could not have external aid without making the effort.

Now every person, who, after understanding God's commands, defers obedience until the power of the Holy Spirit is exerted upon him to lead him to do it, seems to be almost precisely in the condition of the man with the withered hand, if, after the Saviour had directed him to stretch it forth, he had stood waiting, before he made the effort, to have life restored to it. He must feel, he thinks, the blood beginning to circulate, and sensation returning, before he has any thing to do! His arm would, in such a case, remain withered for ever. So the soul which has sunk into the lethargy of waiting for God's Spirit, may wait for ever in vain. Man must repent himself. He must love God himself; he must abandon sin himself. God will not do the work for us; he will only infuse the spiritual vitality by which it is to be done.

It is melancholy to observe, that when the word of God, or the obvious principles of duty, mark out a straight course, man *will* find devious and wandering paths, turning off to the right and to the left—any way just to avoid the narrow path of duty. One class of persons, interested, or professing to be interested, in the question of their salvation, fold their arms in quiet inaction, waiting, as they say, for influences from above to lead them to their duty. Another, aroused perhaps from this condition, goes zealously to work to purchase their salvation, to fabricate repentance and faith by their own power alone. Self-confident, self-sufficient, and filled with spiritual pride, they think to turn their own hearts to God without receiving any new life from him. Brought back from their wanderings upon one side of the truth, away they go immediately upon the other, in an error as dangerous, nay, as fatal as before. For, after all, it makes little difference whether a man gives up the kingdom of heaven altogether, or attempts to enter it without being born again. In either case, he continues dead in trespasses and sins. The difference is, that, in the one, he lies in acknowledged lifelessness; in the other, his cadaverous form is clothed in the garments, and placed in the attitude of life; but stiffened

limbs, and a countenance of death-like expression, betray its case. No, *we must be born again!*

The modes and forms which moral renewal by the Holy Spirit assumes in the soul are innumerable; and the truths which seem to be employed as the means of affecting the heart, are almost equally varied. All that we know is, that, while the mass of mankind go on obstinately in sin, individuals of every possible character, and in every variety of circumstances, do repent and return to duty. Sometimes it is the little child, knowing scarcely any thing but that it has a Maker. Again, it is some hardened and violent opposer of God and religion, who throws down his weapons, and comes humbled and broken-hearted to the foot of the cross. Sometimes one well instructed in religious truth, and faithfully warned of guilt and of danger, will, after years of indifference and thoughtlessness, suddenly relent and come to the Saviour; and, at others, whole communities will be aroused; and though they could before be affected by no exhortations, and no remonstrances, they will now suddenly awake, and flock in crowds to the service of God. The Holy Spirit can operate any where, and with any means. Sometimes he whispers gently to a single one, in solitude; sometimes he spreads solemnity over the crowded meeting. To-day he gives meaning and power to the Scriptures, as the reader, at his lonely fireside, seeks their guidance; to-morrow, he indites a prayer, or gives to reflections which have been utterly unable to affect the heart, power to overwhelm it with emotion; brings up sins which have been looked upon with cold unconcern in their true character, and draws them out before the soul in gloomy array. He awakens conscience, and quickens the memory; he disrobes the world of her alluring garb, and gives a spiritual meaning to the events of Providence. Life, seen by the light which he brings into the soul, wears its own serious and sober hue; eternity rises, its distant realities draw near, doubts and uncertainties vanish, and the soul to which this heavenly messenger is sent walks forth redeemed from sin, purified from pollution, set free

from its chains, its powers expanded and its aims and views enlarged, prepared henceforth to be a holy and happy child of God, instead of the degraded and polluted child of sin.

Now it is aid like this that Christians are to look for when they endeavour to promote the cause of religion in the world, and it seems to be rendered just in proportion to the humility, and sincerity, and devotedness, of the efforts which are made. Bad feelings, and sinister aims, are so often mingled with christian zeal, and so often assume its form, that, in ordinary cases, we have a sad mixture of the fruits of genuine piety with those of hypocrisy and sin. There is, however, such a thing as moral renewal, by means of unwonted influences upon human hearts, which the ordinary operations of the mind cannot explain. The following narrative is an account of a not very uncommon case. It is a specimen of hundreds which have occurred within a few years in our land, and which have been fully equal to this in its results. An actual case like this, narrated particularly, may give the reader a more vivid conception of what co-operation from above Christians may expect, than general remarks upon the promises which the Scriptures contain. Such cases certainly afford a striking commentary upon the Saviour's words, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

THE COLLEGE REVIVAL.

As probably but few of my readers have had opportunity to form any acquaintance with the interior of a New England College, or with the nature of college life, I must commence my narrative with a description of the place in which the scene is laid.

The appearance which a New England College exhibits to a traveller, is that of a group of large brick buildings, generally a hundred feet long, and four stories high, standing usually upon an eminence, or upon a level plain, on the borders of some quiet country village. The buildings are connected with one another, and approached, from various

directions, by gravelled walks, and perhaps ornamented with shrubbery; and one among them, distinguished usually by a form somewhat different from the rest, and surmounted by a sort of cupola, indicates that the whole constitute some public establishment.

A fresh admission of students takes place in the autumn of each year, consisting ordinarily of young men, from twenty years of age down to thirteen. These students are united into one class, and commence one course of study, which extends through a period of four years. During these four years, there will, of course, be three more admissions, making four classes, and *only* four, in the institution at the same time.

The large buildings I have alluded to, are divided into rooms as nearly alike as possible;—eight usually upon a floor, and, consequently, thirty-two in all. Each one of these rooms is assigned to two of the members of the class admitted, and it is to be for one year their home. The first day of the collegiate year, those portions of the building assigned to the Freshmen, as the last admitted are called, exhibit a scene of very peculiar and striking character. The bustle of preparation,—moving in, and putting up furniture,—the interest excited by the novelty of the mode of life they are now to lead, and the lingering recollections of home, left perhaps for ever,—resolutions of diligence and fidelity in the course of study before them,—and the various other feelings excited by the new and strange faces and objects around, all conspire to give to the Freshman's first day at college a marked and striking character, and to fill it with new and strong emotions which he never can forget.

In every class there is a large number of youthful members, whose parents' situation in life is such, that they have been the objects of constant attention from infancy, and have accordingly been early fitted for college, and sent to the institution before their minds are sufficiently matured, and their moral principles firmly enough established, to resist the new and strong temptations to which they are henceforth*

to be exposed. Others are older and more mature. Many of these have prepared themselves for college by their own exertions, and have entered under the influence of strong desires to avail themselves of its privileges. In these two classes may be found almost every variety of human character. Every virtue and every vice here exhibit themselves. There is infidelity, cold, calculating, malicious infidelity, establishing her wretched reign in the bosoms of young men just opening into manhood. There is vice, secret and open, of every species, and in every degree. There is intemperance and profaneness, and hatred of religion, and an open and reckless opposition to the cause of God and holiness, scarcely ever surpassed by the animosity of any veteran foe.

The lines between the enemies and the friends of God are thus drawn in college more distinctly than in almost any other community:—and the young and inexperienced in every new class, are marked out by the idle, dissipated, and abandoned for their prey. The victim first listens to language and sentiments which undermine his regard for the principles of duty, and weaken those cords which christian parents had bound around his heart when he left his early home, and he soon falls more and more under the influence of these ungodly companions. Half allured by their persuasions, and half compelled by their rude intrusions into his room, he spends the hours which college laws allot to study, in idle reading, or in games of chance or skill. He first listens to ridicule of religious persons, and then joins in it, and next begins to ridicule and despise religion itself. The officers of college do all in their power to arrest his progress. They see the first indications of his beginning to go astray, in the neglect of his studies, and in the irregularity of his attendance upon college duties; and again and again appoint one of their number to warn him, and expostulate with him, and kindly to put him on his guard. How many such efforts have I made! As I write these paragraphs, I can recall these interviews to mind with almost the distinctness of actual vision. A short time after sending the messenger for

the one who was to receive the friendly admonition, I would hear his timid rap at the door. He would enter with a look of mingled guilt, fear, and shame, or sometimes with a step and countenance of assumed assurance. How many times, in such circumstances, have I tried in vain to gain access to the heart! I have endeavoured to draw him into conversation about his father and mother, and the scenes of home and childhood, that I might insensibly awaken recollections of the past, and bring back long-lost feelings, and re-unite broken ties. I have tried to lead him to anticipate the future, and see the dangers of idleness, dissipation, and vice. I have endeavoured to draw forth and encourage the feeble resolution, and by sympathy and kindness, and promises of aid, to bring back the wanderer to duty and to happiness. He would listen in cold and respectful silence, and go away unchanged; perhaps to make a few feeble resolutions soon to be forgotten; but more probably to turn into ridicule the moral lecture, as he would call it, which he had received; and to go on, with a little more caution and secrecy perhaps, but with increased hardihood and rapidity, in his career of sin.

In many cases, college censures and punishments frequently follow, until expulsion closes the story. In other cases, the individuals conceal their guilt, while they become more and more deeply involved in it, and more and more hardened. They associate with one another, and at length, in some cases, form a little community in which ungodliness, infidelity, and open sin, have a confirmed and unquestioned sway.

I must say a word or two now in regard to the ordinary routine of daily life at college, in order that the description which is to follow may be better understood. Very early in the morning, the observer may see lights at a few of the windows of the buildings inhabited by the students. They mark the rooms occupied by the more industrious or more resolute, who rise and devote an hour or two to their books by lamp-light on the winter mornings. About day-break

the bell awakens the multitude of sleepers in all the rooms, and in a short time they are to be seen issuing from the various doors, with sleepy looks, and with books under their arms, and some adjusting their hurried dress. Those who first come down go slowly, others with quicker and quicker step, as the tolling of the bell proceeds; and the last few stragglers run with all speed, to secure their places before the bell ceases to toll. When the last stroke is sounded, it usually finds one or two too late, who stop short suddenly, and return slowly to their rooms.

The President or one of the Professors reads a portion of Scripture, by the mingled light of the pulpit lamps, and the beams which come in from the reddening eastern sky. He then offers the morning prayer. The hundreds of young men before him exhibit the appearance of respectful attention, except that four or five, appointed for the purpose, in different parts of the chapel, are looking carefully around to observe and note upon their bills the absentees. A few also, not fearing God or regarding their duty, conceal under their cloaks, or behind a pillar or a partition between the pews, the book which contains their morning lesson:—and attempt to make up, as well as the faint but increasing light will enable them, for the time wasted in idleness or dissipation on the evening before. When prayers are over, the several classes repair immediately to the rooms assigned respectively to them, and recite the first lesson of the day.

During the short period which elapses between the recitation and the breakfast bell, college is a busy scene. Fires are kindling in every room. Groups are standing in every corner, or hovering around the newly-made fires:—parties are running up and down the stairs two steps at a time, with the ardour and activity of youth:—and, now and then, a fresh crowd is seen issuing from the door of some one of the buildings, where a class has finished its recitation, and comes forth to disperse to their rooms, followed by their instructor, who walks away to his house in the village. The breakfast bell brings out the whole throng again, and gathers them

around the long tables in the common hall, or else scatters them among the private families in the neighbourhood.

An hour after breakfast, the bell rings to mark the commencement of study hours; when the students are required by college laws to repair to their respective rooms, which answer the three-fold purpose of parlour, bed-room, and study, to prepare for their recitation at eleven o'clock. They, however, who choose to evade this law, can do it without much danger of detection. The great majority comply, but some go into their neighbours' rooms to receive assistance in their studies, some lay aside the dull text-book and read a tale, or play a game; and others, farther gone in the road of idleness and dissipation, steal secretly away from college, and ramble in the woods, or skate upon the ice, or find some rendezvous of dissipation in the village, evading their tasks like truant boys. They, of course, are marked as absent; but pretended sickness will answer for an excuse, they think, once or twice, and they go on, blind to the certainty of the disgrace and ruin which must soon come.

The afternoon is spent like the forenoon, and the last recitation of the winter's day, is just before the sun goes down. An hour is allotted to it, and then follow evening prayers, at the close of which the students issue from the chapel, and walk in long procession to supper.

It is in the evening, however, that the most striking peculiarities of college life exhibit themselves. Sometimes literary societies assemble, organized and managed by the students, where they hold debates, or entertain each other with declamations, essays, and dialogues. Sometimes a religious meeting is held, attended by a portion of the professors of religion, and conducted by an officer: at other times, the students remain in their rooms, some quietly seated by their fire, one on each side, reading, writing, or preparing the lessons for the following morning: others assemble for mirth and dissipation, or prowl around the entries and halls to perpetrate petty mischief, breaking the windows of some hapless Freshman, or burning nauseous drugs at the keyhole of his

door; or rolling logs down stairs, and running instantly into a neighbouring room so as to escape detection,—or watching at an upper window to pour water unobserved upon some fellow-student passing in or out below; or plugging up the keyhole of the chapel door, to prevent access to it for morning prayers; or gaining access to the bell by false keys, and cutting the rope, or filling it with water to freeze during the night: or some other of the thousand modes of doing mischief to which the idle and flexible Sophomore is instigated by some calculating and malicious mischief-maker in a higher class. After becoming tired of this, they gather together in the room of some dissolute companion, and there prepare themselves a supper, with food they have plundered from a neighbouring poultry yard, and utensils obtained in some similar mode. Ardent spirit sometimes makes them noisy—and a college officer, at half-past nine, breaks in upon them, and exposure and punishment are the consequences; disgrace, suspension, and expulsion for themselves, and bleeding hearts for parents and sisters at home. At other times, with controlled and restrained indulgence, they sit till midnight, sowing the bitter seeds of vice; undermining health, destroying all moral sensibility, and making almost sure the ruin of their souls.

In the meantime, the officers of the institution, with a fidelity and an anxious interest, which is seldom equalled by any solicitude except that which is felt by parents for their children, struggle to resist the tide. They watch, they observe, they have constant records kept, and in fact they go as far as it is possible to go, in obtaining information about the character and history of each individual, without adopting a system of espionage, which the nature of the institution, and the age of a majority of the pupils, render neither practicable nor proper. They warn every individual who seems to be in danger, with greater and greater distinctness, according to the progress he seems to be making, and as soon as evidence will justify it, they remove every one whose stay seems dangerous to the rest; but still the evil will

increase, in spite of all the ordinary human means which can be brought against it.

Such is college, and such substantially was the condition of Amherst college, in April, 1827, at the time of my narrative. Faithful religious instruction was given on the Sabbath, at the chapel, where the students were required to attend, and we were accustomed to hold, also, a meeting for familiar religious instruction one evening during the week. At this meeting, however, scarcely any were present; a small portion of the actual members of the church were accustomed to attend, but never any one else. If a single individual, not professedly a Christian, had come in for a single evening, it would have been noticed as a rare occurrence, and talked of by the officers as something unexpected and extraordinary. Our hearts ached, and our spirits sunk within us, to witness the coldness and hardness of heart towards God and duty, which reigned among so large a number of our pupils. Every private effort which we could make with individuals entirely failed, and we could see, too, that those who professed to love the Saviour were rapidly losing their interest in his cause, and becoming engrossed in literary ambition and college rivalry, dishonouring God's cause, and gradually removing every obstacle to the universal prevalence of vice and sin.

There was then in college, a young man, who had been among the foremost in his opposition to religion. His talents and his address gave him a great deal of personal influence, which was of such a character as to be a constant source of solicitude to the government. He was repeatedly involved in difficulties with the officers on account of his transgressions of the college laws, and so well known were his feelings on the subject, that when at a government meeting, during the progress of the revival, we were told with astonishment by the president, that this young man was suffering great distress on account of his sins, it was supposed by one of the officers that it must be all a pretence, feigned to deceive the president and make sport for his companions.

The president did not reply to the suggestion, but went to visit him; and when I saw him, he said—"There's no *pretence* there: if the Spirit of God is not at work upon his heart, I know nothing about the agency of the Spirit."

That young man is now the pastor of a church, active and useful, and when commencing this narrative, I wrote to him to send me such reminiscences of this scene as might remain upon his mind. He writes me thus:

' Very dear Sir,

' My obligations to you as a friend and instructor make me anxious to fulfil my promise of drawing up a sketch of the revival at Amherst College, during the last two or three weeks of April, 1827. I have been delayed partly by sickness, and the unusual pressure of duties here, partly by the difficulty of settling in my mind a clear idea of what you wish, and partly by the impossibility of reviving the memory of facts and impressions in the exact order of their occurrence. If this communication should reach you too late to answer your purpose, it will at least prove my wish to yield you such assistance as I may.

' For a considerable time previous, the subject of religion in college had fallen into great neglect;—even the outward forms were very faintly observed. During nearly two years in which I had been connected with the college, I had never heard the subject mentioned among the students, except as matter of reproach and ridicule. At least this is true, so far as my intercourse with the students was concerned. Those who professed piety, either through timidity or unconcern, seemed to let the subject rest, and were chiefly devoted to indolence, or literary ambition. But while religion was shamed and fugitive, irreligion was bold and free. A majority of the students were avowedly destitute of piety; and of these, a large portion were open or secret infidels, and many went to every length they could reach of levity, profaneness, and dissipation. So many animosities and irregu-

larities prevailed, as to endanger the general reputation of the seminary.

‘Some of the students who were differently situated from myself, may perhaps have noticed preparatory movements on the common mass of mind, indicating an undercurrent of feeling, gradually gaining strength, and preparing the community for the results which were to follow. But I saw none—and none such could have been generally apparent. Upon myself the change opened with as much suddenness as power.’

I here interrupt, for a moment, the narrative of my friend, to mention all the indications which I myself, or my brother officers, perceived. The president, with faithfulness and plainness, urged upon the professors of religion their duties and their neglect, and held up to them the evidences that they were, as a body, wandering from duty, and becoming unfaithful to their trust. But he had done this often before. In fact, he was in the habit of doing it. The difference seemed to be that, though heretofore they would listen with stupid coldness, and go away unchanged, now they suddenly seemed inspired with a disposition to hear, and with a heart to feel. They began to come in greater numbers to the meetings appointed for them, and to listen with silent solemnity to warnings and exhortations which had been always unheeded before. All the efforts which were made were aimed at leading Christ's followers to penitence, and at bringing them back to duty. And though it had been impossible before, it was perfectly easy now; and while this very work was going on, actually before the time had come for thinking of the others, they began spontaneously, or, at least, to all appearance, without human exertion, to tremble for themselves. The officers and the religious students were astonished, day after day, to find numbers whom no faithfulness of exhortation had hitherto been able to affect at all, now coming, of their own accord, and asking for help and direction; trembling with anxiety and remorse on account of their

past sins, and with fear of God's displeasure. But to return to my correspondent.

'The first circumstance which attracted my attention was a sermon from the President, on the Sabbath. I do not know what the text and subject were, for, according to a wicked habit, I had been asleep till near its close. I seemed to be awakened by a *silence* which pervaded the room; a deep solemn attention which seems to spread over an assembly when all are completely engrossed in some absorbing theme. I looked around, astonished, and the feeling of profound attention seemed to settle on myself. I looked towards the President, and saw him calm and collected, but evidently most deeply interested in what he was saying; his whole soul engaged, and his countenance beaming with an expression of eager earnestness, which lighted up all his features, and gave to his language unusual energy and power.

'What could this mean? I had never seen a speaker and his audience so engaged. He was making a most earnest appeal to prevent those who were destitute of religion *themselves*, from doing any thing to obstruct the progress of the revival which he hoped was approaching, or of doing any thing to prevent the salvation of others, even if they did not desire salvation for themselves. He besought them, by all the interests of immortality, and for the sake of themselves and of their companions, to desist from hostilities against the work of God.

'The discourse closed, and we dispersed. But many of us carried away the arrow in our hearts. The gayest and the hardiest trembled at the manifest approach of a sublime and unwonted influence. Among some, who might have been expected to raise the front of opposition, I resolved not to do it, but to let it take its course, keeping away from its influence without doing any thing to oppose it; but neutrality was impossible.'

I must interrupt the narrative of the letter again, to

explain a circumstance which I perceive is alluded to in the next paragraph. About a year before this time there had been similar indications of a returning sense of duty to God among the students. The officers were much encouraged, but our hopes were all dispelled by the success of a manœuvre, which is so characteristic of college life and manners that I will describe it. The plan adopted by the enemies of religion was to come up boldly and face the awakening interest, and, as it were, brave it down. The first indication of this design which I perceived was this: I had been invited by the serious portion of the students to address them one Saturday evening, in a recitation room. I took my seat in the great armed chair, which had been placed for me in a corner, with a Bible and hymn-book on the oval leaf attached to it, whose form and fashion any collegian will recollect, when the door opened, and in walked, one after another, six or eight of the most bold, hardened, notorious enemies of religion which the institution contained. They walked in, took their seats in a row directly before me, and looked me in the face, saying, by their countenances, most distinctly, 'Sir, we defy you, and all your religion:' and yet it was with that peculiar address with which a wild college student can execute his plans, so that there was not the slightest breach of any rule of external propriety, or any tangible evidence of intentional disrespect. Not one of them had, perhaps, ever been voluntarily in a religious meeting at college before, and every one in the room knew it. I can see the leader now, as distinctly as if he was before me; his tall form, manly countenance, and energetic look. He maintained his ground, as the enemy of God and religion, for a year after this time; but then, that is at the time described in my letter, his eyes were opened; he prayed with agony of spirit, hour after hour, in his open room, for forgiveness: and now he is in a foreign land, preaching to pagans the Saviour, whom I vainly endeavoured, on this occasion, to bring to him. I do not know whether this description will

ever reach him ; if it does, he will remember the meeting in the Freshman's recitation room, and be as bold *for God now* as he was then against him. He has been so already.

After a few similar efforts to this, the irreligious party, for it was almost a trained and organized party, determined to carry their system farther still. They accordingly formed a plan for a religious meeting, from which every friend of religion should be excluded. They circulated the information among themselves, taking special pains to secure the attendance of every one, and then, one evening after prayers, as the officers were coming out of the chapel, one of them was astonished at being accosted by two well-known enemies of every thing like piety, who appeared, as they said, from some of their friends, as a committee to invite him to attend a religious meeting that evening. The officer promised to come ; and when, after tea, he repaired to the room, he found it crowded with persons whose faces he had never seen at a voluntary meeting before. There they sat—the idle, the dissipated, the profane, and the hater and despiser of God ; there were also numerous others, moral and well-disposed, but regardless of religious duty ; but not a single one whom he had been accustomed to see in such a room, for such a purpose, was, on this occasion, allowed to be there.

The officer addressed them faithfully and plainly, urging their duties and their sins upon their consideration, while they sat still, in respectful, but heartless, silence ; looking intently upon him, with an expression of countenance which seemed to say, ' Here we all are, move us if you can.' And they conquered. They went home unmoved ; and all the indications of increasing seriousness soon disappeared. They continued to assemble for several weeks, inviting the officers in succession to be present ; and, at last, the few who remained conducted the meetings themselves, with burlesqued sermons and mock prayers, and closed the series at last, as I have been informed, by bringing in an ignorant black man, whose presence and assistance completed the victory they

had gained over influences from above. All this took place the year before, and it is to these circumstances that the next paragraph in the letter alludes.

‘It was probably with an intention somewhat similar to that which prompted the meetings which the irreligious students held by themselves the year before that the following plan was formed. A student, who was temporarily my room-mate, importuned me to invite one of the tutors to conduct a religious meeting at my room. I told him I would, if he would obtain the promise of certain individuals, ten in number, whom I named, that they would attend. I selected such individuals as I was confident would not consent to be present. In a short time he surprised me with the information that he had seen them all, and that they had consented to the proposal. Of course I was obliged, though reluctantly, to request the tutor to hold such a meeting. Most of us repaired to the place, at the appointed time, with feelings of levity, or of bitter hostility to religion. My room-mate had waggishly placed a Hebrew Bible on the stand. Whether this circumstance, or the character of his auditory, suggested the subject which the tutor chose I know not, but, after opening the meeting with prayer, he entered into a defence of the divine authority of the holy Scriptures, from external and internal evidence, which he maintained in the most convincing manner; and then, on the strength of this authority, he urged its promises and denunciations upon us as sinners. The effect was very powerful. Several retired deeply impressed, and all were made more serious, and better prepared to be influenced by the truth. So that this affair ‘fell out rather to the furtherance of the gospel.’

‘My own interest in the subject rapidly increased, and one day, while secluded in my apartment, and, overwhelmed with conflicting emotions of pride and despair, I was surprised by a visit from the President. He informed me that he had come with the hope of dissuading me from *doing any thing to hinder the progress of the revival*. After intimating that

he need feel no apprehensions on that point, I confessed to him with difficulty the agitation of my thoughts. Apparently much affected, he only said, 'Ah, I was afraid you would never have such feelings.' After remaining silent a few minutes, he engaged in prayer, and retired, advising me to attend a certain meeting of my class-mates for prayer. I felt very much like the Syrian general, when offended by the supposed neglect of the prophet; for I thought he would have seized the opportunity to do some great thing for the relief of my labouring mind.

'With feelings still more excited I repaired to one of my class-mates, who had the reputation of being one of the most consistent Christians among us. I asked him, with tears, to tell me what I should do to be saved. He, too, betrayed his wonder, and only resorted to prayer with me, in which he could do little but say, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on *us!*" Long afterwards, I learned that when he left me to join a circle assembled that evening for prayer, he told them that my inquiry for the way of salvation, made him feel as if he needed to learn it himself.'

The writer of the narrative which I have been transcribing had *then* a mother: she has since gone home. She was a widow, and he her only child. She was a Christian too, and her heart was oppressed, and her life saddened, by the character and conduct of her son. He wrote to her at this time, and among her papers after her death he found his letters, and has sent them to me. I wish I could put them, just as they are, into this description;—tattered and torn with frequent perusal. 'Those widowed and lonely mothers among my readers, whose lives are embittered by the impiety and wild irregularity of their unconverted sons, will understand the feelings which led her literally to wear these letters out with repeated readings. As they read them, let them look to God, and take courage, and remember that it is never too late to pray, and never too late for God to answer prayer.

In the first letter, he informs his mother of the indications

of a general awakening to an interest in religion among the students, and expresses a considerable personal interest in it. 'For the sake of the institution, of religion, and for my own sake, I feel most anxious that the work may go on with power. With what joy would I inform you, that I felt the strivings of the Holy Spirit in my breast! But I can only say, that I feel a growing sense of humiliation for sin. May it ripen into conviction, sincere repentance, and unfeigned dedication of my heart, soul, and powers, to God!' He then asks for his mother's prayers, and thanks her for all her past kindness to him.

The anxious suspense which this letter must have occasioned to the parent who received it, was dispelled a few days afterwards by the following. Before perusing it, I wish the reader would look around, in the village or town where he resides, fix his mind upon the leader in all the opposition to God and religion which is made there: some man of accomplished manners and address, superior intellect, and extensive influence, and the open and avowed opposer of piety, and all of its professors. You must have such a man in mind as the writer of this letter, in order to appreciate it at all. Then recollect, that this is from an only son to a widowed christian mother, transcribed exactly from the tattered fragments which I now carefully put together.

' *Amherst College, April 28, 1827.*

' My dearest Mother,

' Where shall I find words to declare the wonders of redeeming love? Even in my *low* state, Almighty God has not forgotten me, nor the prayers of my pious friends. How can I describe the peace of mind, the swelling, overwhelming tide of joy, which results from an entire submission to a merciful God! I can only say, that there is no happiness like the happiness of a heart devoted to the holy pleasure of its Maker; no peace, like the peace of a mind that is reconciled to God. At the beginning of the present week, my attention was strongly directed to the importance of the

soul. I immediately relinquished all other business, and devoted myself to this. My sense of the justice and excellence of the divine law, of the holiness of God, and my own dreadful and sinful condition, rapidly increased. Tuesday and Wednesday my distress and anxiety grew more and more overpowering. Under the alarming impression that I had committed the unpardonable sin, I devoted great and anxious inquiry to the nature of it. When I found reason to believe that this sin could not be brought up against me, there seemed to be a gleam of hope. I felt, or rather learned, that I must be wholly resigned to the will of God, yet there was great opposition in my heart. For a long time it seemed as if I would readily submit if I was only sure of pardon. I was making conditions, and struggling against impressions, and became almost desperate, believing that my guilt had shut up every avenue of hope. The conflict had prostrated my strength, and could not have been maintained much longer, when I was led to compare my situation with that of the lepers at the gate of Samaria, when that city was besieged by the Syrians: "If they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." If I continued to hold out against God, I should surely be cut off, and that without remedy; if I surrendered myself unconditionally, and with an undivided heart, I still could but die, while there was every reason to hope that God would not reject a heart offered in sincerity and truth. Accordingly I struggled to obtain this frame of mind, and at length, as I hope, subdued my pride and hostility, so as to melt into perfect submission to the will of God, heartily to confess the holiness and justice of the law, and freely acknowledge my own unworthiness. After I had been enabled by the Divine blessing to do this, it seemed so reasonable, so altogether necessary, and even so easy, that I marvelled at the blindness and hardness of heart that had prevented my doing it long since. At the same time, I was filled with such transport, that it seemed to me as if I never could leave the foot of the cross; as if I wished to retire from the world, to meditate and reflect on

the loveliness of Christ. This happy change took place about Thursday noon. The period of my greatest mental distress was Wednesday night. Nature was so exhausted in a conflict of a few hours, that I could scarcely stand. I found it impossible to eat during a great part of this time. The flesh is still weak, but I rapidly recovered strength as I gained peace. I now for the first time realize what is meant by that saying, "Old things are passed away, and all things become new." I no longer see the same countenances, read the same Bible, or feel like the same person. The characters of all my acquaintances are entirely changed. My pious friends once appeared gloomy and reserved, now they are benevolent and cheerful. My gay acquaintances seem no longer happy, but mad. The *Book of God*, once seldom read, or when read, disrelished or misunderstood, now seems replete with interest and instruction. I am filled with joyful amazement as I learn from it the love which Jesus has manifested for the world, and the purity and excellence of the Divine character. At the same time, it teaches numerous lessons of humility, gives an odious aspect to sin, and warns against our deceiving hearts. I reflect with horror and dismay on my former course of forgetfulness of God, and feel as if it were a privilege to be allowed to attempt, though feebly, to pursue a totally opposite course. The sense I have of my former character makes me feel deeply for all my impenitent friends. I feel constrained to humble myself before them on account of my former bad example and influence, and even with tears beseech them to turn from their sinful ways to repentance and faith. In short, I feel a perfect good will, I hope, to all the world, and banish hatred and envy from my heart, where they had long been cherished. But, my dear mother, my hope is with great fear and trembling; sometimes it seems incredible that such an one as myself should find any favour with God; and if I have any hope, it is that Jesus Christ might show forth in me all long-suffering, for where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. Sometimes I feel as if I was in rebellion yet;

but I do not rest at such a time, till I resign myself anew, and without reserve, to my Maker. But, dear mother, I would that much fervent prayer might be offered up, that I may watch my heart diligently, and consider well the ground of my hope, and not be dangerously deceived; and if I find myself under such an awful mistake, that I may not rest there, but give myself no peace, till, by sincere repentance and faith, I may be reconciled to God in Christ. On the other hand, if it should seem that God has magnified his long-suffering, and the riches of his tender mercies in me, pray that I may be strengthened and established in repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that I may exercise all the christian virtues, and walk according to the law of God, increasing in the knowledge of the truth, and in growth in grace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Oh, my dear mother, on you, on me, and on all the world, may God pour out the influence of the Spirit, to guide and sanctify us, and fit us for an eternity of happiness in heaven! I would wish to write much more, but hope to see you next Saturday, or before. My sincere love, and prayers for you and for all friends.

‘ Your affectionate Son.’

I have thus followed out this particular case, in order to give to my readers, by means of a minute examination of one specimen, a clear idea of the nature of the changes which were effected. There were, however, many other cases, as marked and striking as this; so that any person who was a member of college at that time, might be in doubt, after reading the preceding description, which of half a dozen decided enemies of religion, who were at this time changed, was the one referred to. In fact, the feeling went through the college;—it took the whole. Nothing like opposition to it was known, except that, perhaps, in a very few cases individuals made efforts to shield themselves from its influence; and one or two did this successfully, by keeping themselves for many days under the influence of ardent spirits! With

a few exceptions of this kind, the unwonted and mysterious influence was welcomed by all. It was not, among Christians, a feeling of terror, of sadness and melancholy, but of delight. Their countenances were not gloomy and morose, as many persons suppose is the case at such a time, but they beamed with an expression of enjoyment, which seemed to be produced by the all-pervading sense of the immediate presence of God. I have seen, in other cases, *efforts to appear solemn*,—the affected gravity of countenance, and seriousness of tone;—but there was nothing of that here. Hearts were all full to overflowing, and it was with a mysterious mingling of peace and joy; an emotion of deep overwhelming gladness in the soul, though of a character so peculiar, that it expressed itself in the countenance by mingled smiles and tears.

The ordinary exercises of college were not interrupted. The President held two or three religious meetings during the week, but recitations went on unchanged, and I well recollect the appearance of my mathematical classes. The students would walk silently and slowly from their rooms, and assemble at the appointed place. It was plain that the hearts of many of them were full of such emotions as I have described. Others, whose peace was not made with God, would sit with downcast eyes, and when it came their turn to be questioned, would make an effort to control their feelings, and finding that they could not recite, would ask me to excuse them. Others, known heretofore as hardened enemies of God and religion, sat still, their heads reclined upon the seats before them, with hearts overwhelmed with remorse and sorrow, and eyes filled with tears. I could not ask them a question. One morning, I recollect, so strong and so universal were these feelings, that we could not go on. The room was silent as death. Every eye was down; I called upon one after another, but in vain; and we together prayed God to come and be with us, and bless us, and to save us and our class-mates from sin and suffering, and then silently went to our rooms.

The buildings were as still this week as if they had been depopulated. The students loved to be alone. They walked about silently. They said little when they met, as men always do when their hearts are full. Late in the evening they would collect in little circles in one another's rooms, to spend a few moments in prayer. I was often invited to these meetings, and it was delightful to see the little assembly coming into the room at the appointed time, each bringing his own chair, and gathering around the bright burning fire, with the armed-chair placed in one corner for their instructor, and the two occupants of the room together upon the other side. They who were present at these meetings will not soon forget the enjoyment with which their hearts were filled, as they here bowed in supplication before God.

On Tuesday and Thursday evenings we assembled in the largest lecture-room for more public worship. It was the same room where, a few weeks before, on the same occasions, we could see only here and there one among the vacant, gloomy seats. Now, how changed! At the summons of the evening bell, group after group ascended the stairs, and crowded the benches. It was the rhetorical lecture-room, and was arranged with rows of seats on the three sides, and a table for the Professor on a small platform on the fourth. The seats were soon full, and settees were brought in to fill the area left in the centre. The President was seated at the table; on either side of him the Professors; and beyond them, and all around, the room was crowded with young men hungering and thirsting after the word of God.

I recollect particularly one of these meetings. It was one of the earliest after the revival commenced, and before us, crowding the settees in the open area, were gathered all the wild, irreligious, vicious, and abandoned young men which the institution contained. There they were, the whole of them; all enmity gone, opposition silenced, and pride subdued, and they sat in silence, gazing at the President and drinking in all his words, as he pressed upon them their sins, and urged them to throw down the weapons of their rebellion,

and come and submit themselves to God. The text for the evening, if I recollect right, was this, "Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you." Every person in the room felt that it was nigh. He spoke in a calm, quiet, but impressive manner, and every word went to a hundred and fifty hearts. Many persons imagine that preaching in such a season is loud and noisy, and filled with exciting remarks, and extravagant gesticulations; and it is so sometimes, when men attempt to *make a revival* by their own power. But where the Spirit of God really comes, there are very different indications. Every one feels irresistibly that God is there, and that he himself must walk humbly and softly before Him. The almost supernatural power which preaching seems to have at such a time, is the power of simple truth on hearts bowed down before it by influences from above. Such a season robs eloquence and genius of all their power; declamation is more than useless, and all the arts of oratory of no avail. There are souls awed and subdued before God, and longing for the light of truth; and he who can supply these desires with the greatest calmness, and directness, and simplicity, will be the means of producing the most powerful effects. A man could scarcely give utterance to rant, and declamation, and noisy harangue in such a room, even if he had come all prepared to do it. As he should enter such a scene, he would be subdued and calmed by its irresistible influence. He would instinctively feel, that noisy eloquence there would grate upon every ear and shock every heart, and no bold assurance would be sufficient to carry him on.

We listened to the sermon, which was earnest and impressive, though direct, plain, and simple; it told the ungodly hearers before us, that the kingdom of heaven was nigh them, and urged them to enter it. We knew,—we could almost feel that they were entering it; and when, at the close of the meeting, we sang our parting hymn, I believe there was as much real, deep-flowing happiness in that small but crowded apartment, as four such walls ever contained.

When the indications of this visit from above first appeared, it was about a fortnight before the close of the term, and in about ten days its object was accomplished. Out of the whole number of those who had been irreligious at its commencement, about one half professed to have given themselves up to God; but as to all the talent, and power of opposition, and open enmity,—the vice, the profaneness, the dissipation,—the revival took the whole. With one or two exceptions, it took the whole. And when, a few weeks afterwards, the time arrived for those thus changed to make a public profession of religion, it was a striking spectacle to see them standing in a crowd in the broad aisle of the college chapel, purified, sanctified, and in the presence of all their fellow-students, renouncing sin, and solemnly consecrating themselves to God. Seven years have since elapsed, and they are in his service now. I have their names before me, and I do not know of one who does not continue faithful to his Master still.

But I have dwelt too long, perhaps, on this subject, and I must close this chapter. I have been intending, however, to say two things in conclusion, though I must now say them briefly.

1. There are many persons who, because they have seen or heard of many spurious and heartless efforts to *make* a revival of religion, accompanied by noise, and rant, and unprofitable excitement, doubt the genuineness of all these reformations. But I ask them whether the permanent alteration, in a week, of nearly all the wild, and ungovernable, and vicious students of a college, is not evidence of the operation of some extraordinary moral cause. We, who witnessed it, cannot doubt. Such cases, too, are not uncommon. They occur continually all over our land, producing entire changes in neighbourhoods, and villages, and towns, and very often in colleges. The effect, in this case, upon the police of the institution was astonishing. Before the revival, the officers of the institution were harassed and

perplexed with continual anxiety and care, from the turbulence and vice of their pupils. But from this time we had scarcely any thing to do with the discipline of the institution. Month after month every thing went smoothly and pleasantly, and we had nothing to do but to provide instruction for industrious, faithful, and regular young men; while before, the work of punishing misdemeanours, and repressing disorder, and repairing injuries, demanded far the greatest portion of our attention and care. Similar changes have often been produced in other communities, and the fact that so many persons have thus had the opportunity personally to witness them, is the real ground of the conviction which almost universally prevails among the most intelligent and substantial portions of the community, that they are the work of God. That there will be some counterfeits, is to be expected. As human nature is, it is certain. But we ought, when convinced that there are counterfeits, not to condemn all, but carefully to discriminate, and to bring before the world the marks of a counterfeit as distinctly as possible, so that nothing but what is genuine may obtain credit among mankind.

2. Reader! there is such a thing as having the heart filled with peace and joy, under the influences of the Spirit of God. Do not doubt it if you have not yourself experienced it, and do not forget it if you have. The mysterious influence shows itself in many ways. It whispers to the soul sometimes in solitude, at midnight, and beckons it away from the world to God and duty. The morning light, and the return of business and pleasures, silence it, perhaps; but then it will return in sickness, in affliction, and sorrow, and say to the spirit, still lingering about the world, 'Come away, come away!' It may be disregarded still, but it will hover near; and like a dove unwilling to leave its master, will flutter round, and light upon him again and again. It melts the soul into penitence for sins which have been thought of with cold insensibility for years,—it subdues stubbornness and pride,—it removes the veil from before the tomb, and brings God, and the judgment, and heaven to view. It gives life

and sensibility to the torpid soul ; arouses its powers, nerves the weak, humbles the proud, breaks the chains and fetters of sin, and under its magic power, the hardened, rebellious, stupid enemy of God, rises to life and to freedom. His restlessness, feverish anxiety is gone, and joy gladdens his heart, hope beams in his eye, and he comes to his Saviour, subdued, altered, purified for ever. Blessed Spirit ! thou art indeed the light and life of man ; the only real Comforter in this vale of sorrow and sin. We will pray for thee, and open our hearts to thee, and welcome thy coming.

Descend, Heavenly Influence, descend every where, and bring this sinning and suffering world back to its duty.



CHAPTER XI.

THE CONCLUSION.

“ If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

THE question which ought to arise in the mind of every reader, as he draws towards the close of a religious book, is this : ‘ What practical effect is this work to produce upon *my* mind ?’ The question is generally very easily answered. Some read from mere curiosity ; some, to beguile weary hours ; some, to be able to say that they have read what their friends and acquaintances have been reading. One man goes over the chapters of such a work as this, thinking all the time how its truths will apply to his neighbours ; another scrutinizes paragraph after paragraph, to discover, if possible, whether the writer believes in this theory or that, or to determine the religious party with which he is to be classed ; and a third, though he may attend to the practical bearings and relations

of the subject, is thinking, all the time, of *other persons*, in applying them. This chapter he appropriates to his wife; another to his child; and another he thinks admirably adapted to the spiritual condition of his neighbour. The number of readers who take up a religious book honestly and sincerely to promote their own personal piety is very small.

Still there are a few; and it is to these few that the remaining pages of this work ought now to be devoted. There are a few who do read with reference to the supply of their own spiritual wants. It would be too much to say that all of them have a sincere and honest desire to know and to do their duty, but they have at least some personal interest in it. If they are not really prepared to take the right course, at least the question whether they will take it or not comes up to view. It comes up in the light of a personal question, which they at least *consider*. Others read without admitting the claims of personal duty, even to a *hearing*. The intellect, the imagination, the taste, are perhaps in an accessible position; but the conscience, and all the moral powers, are far within, protected from all attack, every avenue sealed, and every channel of communication cut off, so that the moral slumber cannot be disturbed. It is those only who are *accessible* that we have to address in the few pages that now remain.

There is a great deal of perplexity often felt by a class of thoughtful, serious-minded persons, in regard to the difficulties which stand in the way of their own personal salvation. They *wish* to become Christians, they say, but there seems to be some mysterious, yet irresistible, agency, which keeps them back in the coldness and wretchedness of sin. In such cases there is, perhaps, a wish, a sincere wish, of a certain kind, to become a Christian; but it remains inert and powerless in their hearts; it does not lead them to piety itself; and they feel and act as if there was some mysterious obstacle to their obtaining what they sincerely and honestly desire.

The two great elementary principles of religion are these ; the duty of strong benevolent interest in every fellow-being, and of submission and gratitude towards the Supreme. Jesus Christ has said that these constitute the foundation on which all revealed religion rests ; and it is difficult to find words to express the perfect adaptation of these principles to the purposes of a great moral government—their admirable tendency to secure universal order and happiness. There is not a statesman or philosopher on the globe who can improve upon them, nor a savage low enough not to perceive their moral beauty and grandeur. They are the golden chain to bind all God's creatures to one another, and to him ; complete—for there is no other principle of duty which can even claim to be ranked with them ; unrivalled—for no other system can be proposed which would even promise to secure the results of this ; and undeniable in their excellence and efficacy—for never, since the world was formed, was a mind so perverse as to call them in question. They *cannot* be called in question. No person can doubt that a moral governor, presiding over moral and intelligent creatures, by prescribing such rules as the fundamental laws of his empire, takes the most direct and efficient cause to secure universal harmony and happiness. No man can utter a word against them. There is a feeling within him which would rise up and silence him if he should attempt to do it. They stand inscribed by conscience on every heart ; reason, and justice, and truth, have set their seals to the record, and they must stand in characters which cannot be obliterated.

But though mankind cannot question the excellence of the system of duty which God has established for his creatures, they can, in their practice, violate it : and a great many pleasures of various kinds will come by means of such violation. If a man will give up his neighbour's rights and happiness, he may secure some new indulgences for himself in consequence of it. If he will disobey God, he may find some gratifications in doing what he has forbidden. The question between holiness and sin, is not a question between

unalloyed happiness, and unmixed, uninterrupted misery. It is rather a question between two sorts of pleasures. There is guilty indulgence on one side, and holy peace of mind on the other. There is selfish interest or aggrandizement beckoning to this path, and the happiness of doing good inviting to the other. In the former, the heart may secure the feverish but real delight which gratified propensities and passions may afford; envy and anger may have their way,—revenge may be allowed its intoxicating triumph,—and sinful pleasure may bring her sparkling cup; in the latter are the peaceful enjoyments of piety,—the sense of protection,—the hope of undeserved forgiveness,—communion with God, and heart-felt interest in the welfare of men. Between these two classes of pleasures, the human soul must make its choice, and the real difficulty in the way of the salvation of men, is, that they do really *prefer the pleasures of sin to those of holiness*; and, of course, if they enjoy the one, they must forego the other.

There cannot be any obstacle whatever in the way of a return to God and to duty, when the heart really desires the return. Wishing for communion with God, reconciliation to him, forgiveness for the past, and guidance and protection for the future, implies every christian grace; and where the heart really feels such desires, it must, in some degree at least, experience the fruition.

And yet no idea is more common than that a person remaining impenitent may wish to be a Christian. You think, perhaps, my reader, that this is your case. You wish you were a Christian, you say; but the way is dark before you. There is some mysterious obstacle which you cannot overcome. But, reflect a moment, and you will see how impossible it is that there should be any such obstacle. It cannot be in your hearts; for the difficulty in the heart must have been surmounted before you could have any real love for piety. It cannot be any compulsion or physical restraint from without; for such causes cannot control the movements of the human soul. It cannot be in God; for he surely

wishes to have all those come to him who would love his service. It cannot exist at all. If you wish to be the Lord's, he is all ready to receive you. If you think you should be happy as a subject in the kingdom of heaven, the way is all open before you to enter it—go on. In beginning to love piety, if you have for it any love at all, you have passed by all the barriers which obstructed your way. You have henceforth only to drink as freely as you please of the waters which you say you love.

This work will fail of its design if it shall not be the means of leading some, at least, of its readers to these right desires. If, among all who shall read the volume, there is one who is led by it to seek God, and is now, as he draws towards the last page of it, resolved to live no longer in sin, but to enter into the service of his Maker, I cannot more appropriately close this chapter than by devoting the few remaining paragraphs in giving a few parting words to him. Reader, are you this individual? Have you, as you have passed on from chapter to chapter of this work, seen your sins,—felt your need of a Redeemer,—desired forgiveness in his name,—and felt some rising emotions of gratitude at the thought of the sufferings which he endured for you? Are you ready to enter God's service? If so, listen attentively to these my parting words.

1. Become *wholly* a Christian, if you mean to become one at all. Do not try to come and make half a peace with God, or to seek a secret reconciliation. If you have been in sin, renounce it entirely. If you have been in error, abandon it openly. Do not be ungrateful or cowardly enough to wish to conceal your new attachment to the cause of God, or to avoid an acknowledgment that you have been in the wrong. Take the side of God and duty openly, distinctly, fearlessly. This is your duty; and, besides, it is your happiness. A half Christian is always a most wretched one.

2. Be a humble Christian. Do not fancy yourself an extraordinary instance of religious zeal, or look down with affected wonder on the supposed inferiority of those who have been longer in their Master's service. You may be as ardent, as devoted, as pure and holy as you please; but do not draw comparisons between yourself and others, till you have been tried a little. Remember, that the evidence of piety is chiefly its fruits, and that well-grounded assurance can come only after years of devoted, and tried, and *proved* attachment to God.

3. Remember that your chief duty is, for some time to come, with your own heart. Look within, and make every thing right there. It is of fundamental importance, however, that when you look within, you do it, guided by the principles of the Bible and of common sense, and not by those of speculation and metaphysical philosophy. Try to see that your heart is right; endeavour to cultivate the plain and unquestionable characteristics of piety; but do not lose yourself in mystical speculations about the nature of regeneration, or in vain attempts to analyze and comprehend what will certainly elude your grasp.

Do not waste any time in trying to determine at what precise time you became a Christian, nor distress yourself because you cannot determine it: nor perplex your mind, and impede your religious progress, because you cannot positively ascertain whether you are really a Christian or not. If the service of God looks alluring to you, press forward into it, without stopping to consider the difficulties of determining how you came where you are.

There is, perhaps, no more common source of perplexity and discouragement to the young Christian than this. He thinks he must be able to tell precisely when he began to serve God, or else he can have no evidence that he really has begun to serve him at all: but that time cannot be determined. In a very large number of the cases where it is supposed to be determined, the period which is fixed is

probably fixed by mistake. Deposit a little seed in a place of warmth and moisture, and watch it as narrowly as you please, and see if you can tell when it begins to vegetate. Equally impossible is it, in most cases, to determine the precise period when the first holy desires sprung up in the human heart: and it is useless, as well as impossible. The only question of importance is, whether the seed is growing,—no matter when, or how it began to grow.

Or rather, I should perhaps say, the only question is, by what cultivation we can make the seed grow most rapidly: for important as it is, that every Christian should know what are his condition and his prospects in reference to God and eternity, there is undoubtedly such a fault, and it is a very common one, as pursuing this inquiry with too great earnestness and anxiety. Many a mind wears and wastes itself away, and exhausts its moral energy, in fruitless endeavours to determine its own spiritual state, when peace and happiness would soon come, if it would only press on in the work of duty.

Still, however, the Christian's first work is undoubtedly with his own heart; to examine its tendencies, to study its deceitful ways, to correct its waywardness, and to bring it more and more completely under the habitual dominion of the principles of piety. When a religious life is first commenced, the interest of novelty, and the various excitements of the new moral position which the soul assumes, withdraw it, as it were, from the influence of ordinary temptations, and sin falls asleep. The inexperienced and deluded disciple imagines that he has obtained a decisive and a final victory: but returning temptation will bring it out again with all its original power; and this power will be exercised with redoubled effect, on account of the unguarded position of the soul which it assails. Look within, then; keep up a constant watch and warfare there; and while you do not neglect your duties to those around you, remember that your first and greatest duty is, to secure the salvation and the spiritual progress of your own soul.

4. Cultivate as highly as possible what may be called the external excellencies of character. Be courageous, noble, generous, benevolent, just; and let all around you see that it is the tendency of Christianity to carry forward human nature in every respect,—to advance it to all the excellencies of which it is susceptible. On this principle, cultivate such habits of thought and feeling as shall lead you to shrink instinctively from every mean or unworthy act. Be frank, and open, and honourable in all that you do. Give no man any opportunity to complain of you for the spirit which manifests itself in your dealings with him. Avoid the reputation of being miserly, or close, or ill-humoured, or proud: and the best way to avoid the reputation of these things, is to avoid the reality. Rise to the possession of a nobler spirit than that which reigns in the selfish hearts with which the world is filled; you do, in reality, if you are a Christian, stand on loftier ground, and you should feel this, and be led by it to higher and more honourable principles of conduct than others exemplify.

5. In your feelings towards all around you, be indulgent and liberal. When you think of men living obstinately in sin, remember how long you were in the same condition, and let this reflection quell the rising emotion of impatience, and suppress the censorious tone. Make allowances for the circumstances and situation of those who are doing wrong;—not to excuse them, *for no temptation is an excuse for sin*, but to remind yourself that under a similar exposure you might very probably do the same; and to lead you to feel commiseration and sorrow, rather than to exhibit censorious and denunciatory zeal, in respect to the faults you witness.

Liberality, however, in respect to the opinions or conduct of others, does not require that you should admit or believe every body to be right; it only regulates the feelings with which you regard what you know to be wrong. Many persons seem to imagine that liberality forbids their saying or think-

ing that their neighbour is in error, or that his actions are to be condemned. But can any christian grace thus obliterate all moral distinctions, and bring confusion and derangement upon the lines which separate truth from falsehood, and right from wrong? No. Let your opinions on moral subjects be distinct and clear. Express them on proper occasions, frankly and fearlessly; but remember, while you do this, that you yourself have spent a large portion of your life involved in the common guilt of the human family, and that you have been preserved from its extreme enormities only by the influence of restraining circumstances, and by the grace of God. 'Who maketh me to differ?' should be your first thought, when you find yourself feeling a rising irritation against sin.

Do not exaggerate the religious differences between yourself and others, or overrate their importance. Be willing to see piety wherever you can find it, and be bound to all who possess it by a common sympathy. If they differ from you in this or that article of belief, do not fix your eye obstinately upon that difference, and dwell upon it, and dispute about it, till you effectually sunder the bond by which you might be united. Look for *piety*. Wherever you find it, welcome it to your confidence and sympathy. In all your efforts to do good, too, aim at the direct promotion of piety, not at the eradication of religious error. Your attacks upon error will only strengthen it in its entrenchments; but piety, wherever you can make it grow, will undermine and destroy error more surely than any other means you can employ.

6. In the formation of your own opinions be independent and bold, but cherish that modesty and humility which will always be inspired by a just estimate of the limits of human powers. In the first place, be independent; use your own reason, your own senses, your own Bible. Be untrammelled; throw off the chains and fetters which compel so many minds to believe only what they are told to believe, and to walk,

intellectually and morally, in paths marked out for them by human teachers. The Bible, and the field of moral observation, are open before all, and you ought to go into this field as an original and independent observer. In the second place, be modest. It is the characteristic of a weak mind to be dogmatical and positive. Such a mind makes up in dogged determination to believe what it wants in evidence. Come to your conclusions cautiously, and take care that your belief covers no more ground than your proofs. Do not dispute about what you do not understand, nor push your investigations beyond the boundaries of human knowledge. Men are often sadly perplexed with difficulties which arise from the simple fact that they have got beyond their depth. If we go far away from the region of practical duty, our light goes out; we are puzzled with difficulties and seeming contradictions which we cannot reconcile. We are like a school-boy with a map of the world before him. The delineations of England and America are plain; but when he goes out towards the boundaries of the circles, all is distorted by the effect of the projection, and his puzzled head cannot exactly understand how Greenland and Nova Zembla can come together. Be bold and independent, then, in forming your opinions within the region which is fairly before you, but proceed with a cautious and modest step when you go beyond these bounds.

7. *Grow in piety.* Many persons consider conversion as the completion of a change which leaves nothing to be done during the rest of life but to rest in idle expectation of the happiness of heaven. But conversion is not a change completed; it is a change *begun*. It is the first favourable turn in a desperate disease, and must be followed by the progress of convalescence, or health will never come. Make it your great work, therefore, to grow thus in piety. Watch your own heart, and take a special interest in studying its mysteries, and detecting its deceits, and understanding its sins.

Notice its changes, so as to observe the indications of progress, or the symptoms of decline. You will take a strong interest in this work if you engage in it in earnest. A man who has a large estate takes pleasure in planning and carrying forward improvements upon it. He supplies its deficiencies, and adds, in various ways, to its conveniences for business, or its means of enjoyment; and he takes pleasure in this, not merely on account of the increased value hereby given to his property, but because it is a source of direct gratification to watch the progress of improvement, especially when that progress is the effect of his own efforts, and is directed by his own skill. Now an interest, similar in nature to this, should be felt by every Christian in the moral and spiritual advancement of his own soul. You must not be content to be stationary—to go through, day after day, the same round of religious duty; merely as good a Christian to-day as you were yesterday, and looking forward to no improvement to-morrow. No; let it be your distinct understanding, that when you abandon your life of ungodliness and sin, and come and give yourself to the service of God, your work is *entered upon*, not *concluded*. Expect to press onward. Be vigilant, be faithful, and look forward to your future christian course as to a path of difficulty and trial. Go on in it perseveringly, from contest to contest, and from victory to victory.

3. Look to the Saviour for moral protection. Keep as near as possible to him. Do not trust to your own resolutions, or your own strength, for the means of resisting temptation and sin. Just so far as you do, your christian course will be a series of feeble, faltering efforts, alternating with continual slips and falls. The power which rescued you at first is the only one that can keep you now; and as you go on, therefore, through the years of trial, and temptation, and duty, which are before you, rest all your hopes on Him. The journey will be pleasant and safe, though

difficult, if you go under the Saviour's protection, and keep constantly near to him. It will be sad and sorrowful enough, both in its progress and in its termination, if you be left to go alone. Your hopes of forgiveness for the past should rest on Him; so should your hopes of spiritual protection for the future. In a word, the edifice of salvation must rest on Him as on its CORNER-STONE.

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