

BX
5133
H54h

A
0
0
0
0
0
0
3
7
5
6



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

GIFT OF

Saul H. Brown

Mr. Merrill

to

Geo Leonard



THE
HUSBANDMAN'S
SPIRITUAL COMPANION.

Being the Substance of
SEVERAL SERMONS,

Preached in the Parish Church of

W A T H,

Near *Ripon* in *Yorkshire*.

By JOHN HILDROP, D. D.

Whatever ye do, do all to the Glory of God. 1 Cor. x. 31.

THE THIRD EDITION,



LONDON:

Printed for JOHN and JAMES RIVINGTON,
in *St. Paul's Church-yard*.

MDCCLVI.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1890

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1890

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1890

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



1890

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE

BX

5133

H54h

HUSBANDMAN'S Spiritual Companion.

*To my dear Friends and Neighbours the
Parishioners of WATH.*

BRETHREN,

M*Y heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved, Rom. x. i. and I humbly hope that no endeavours of mine have been wanting to promote it. I trust your conscience will bear witness with mine, that I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God, Acts xx. 27. and to show you both by doctrine and example how you ought to walk, and to please him in all virtue and godliness of living. The subject-matter of these discourses, the substance of which you have heard from the pulpit, is obvious and familiar to the meanest understandings; and I have endeavoured to make the spiritual part of them as useful to our souls, as they are healthful to your bodies, and profitable to yourselves and the community. I have now, by the advice of some judicious*

839709

friends,

friends, made them public for your benefit, and that of others in the same rank of life, who may need and be pleased with such a *faithful monitor and spiritual companion*.

Every article of the *husbandman's* labour, will suggest to a serious and religious mind such noble and useful subjects for meditation and prayer, as to make your several employments to be, as it were, so many different services and offices of devotion. It is a just observation, that those who live in villages, and are confined to the labours of husbandry, have not those opportunities of improving their understandings and polishing their manners, as those who live in towns and cities, converse with the gay or the learned world, and see the different manners of mankind: This was the observation of the wise son of *Sirach*, Eccelus. xxxviii. 25. *How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and glorieth in the goad; that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of bullocks? He giveth his mind to make furrows, and is diligent in giving his kine fodder.* This observation is so far true, that a man cannot get that wisdom that is learned in courts and camps, the schools and universities: he cannot be master of the learned languages or sciences, but he may learn the language and philosophy of nature, and *the book of nature is the book of God*. A just and serious attention therefore, to the various and visible works of God, and labours of men, may instruct us in such a knowledge of ourselves and them, as is much more valuable than any other, as it may tend to make us wise to salvation; and believe me, it will be found at last, that that knowledge is of more consequence than all the learning in the world without it. *Surely (saith the devout Thomas a Kempis) an humble Husbandman that serveth God, is better than a proud*

proud Philosopher, that, neglecting himself, studieth the course of the heavens, Book I. Ch. 2. The sanctification of our hearts, the amendment of our lives, and the salvation of our souls, is the only thing that can deserve our care, and reward and sweeten all our labours: so that religion, the knowledge and practice of our duty, is the greatest concern of our whole lives, - as it is the only real interest of our being; and did it require the greatest part of our time and strength to be wholly laid out upon that alone, it would be our highest wisdom so to employ it. But you see the goodness of Almighty God; he has not made religion inconsistent with your worldly business, but hath so ordered it, that you may attend to both at once; nay, which is much more, you have an advantage almost peculiar to your employment, that if it be not your own fault, you may at the same time be serving the interests of this world and that which is to come, and make all your labours tend to promote the glory of God, the instruction and edification of your souls, as well as the support of your families, and the improvement of your fortunes. No profession in life is so free from temptations as yours, none gives more conspicuous proofs of the goodness and providence of God, or more strongly teaches us the necessity of depending upon him for his blessing on all our labours.

C H A P. I.

Of Husbandry in general.

HUSBANDRY and tilling the ground was the employment of our first parents after their fall; and all the riches of the patriarchs and first inhabitants of the world consisted in the fruits of

the earth, the number of their flocks and herds, and servants to take care and attend them. So we read throughout the old testament, that the feeding their flocks was the employment of the best and greatest men among them: *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* were shepherds; *David* was taken from the sheepfold to be the shepherd of the people of God, and prince of all the tribes of *Israel*. It seems, indeed, to be the most natural and innocent employment of mankind: and continues still to be so, whatever bad uses men may make of it, now luxury and pride have introduced new necessities, and by consequence new arts, and professions, to supply the imaginary wants of a dissolute and wanton generation. Accordingly we find both in the old and new testament, as well as in other most antient writers, that all their most beautiful allegories, and lively similitudes, were taken from rural images, particularly tilling the ground and seeding cattle. In the old testament, particularly in the book of *Psalms*, God represents his care for the welfare of his creatures, under the character of a faithful and good shepherd. So *Pf. xxiii. i. The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing. Pf. lxxx. i. Hear, O thou shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep:* and innumerable other places which every one must observe that reads the scriptures with attention. And in the new testament it is observable, that most of our Lord's parables were taken from *tillage of the ground*, and observations concerning *flocks and herds*; and that he particularly sets himself forth under the character of a *good shepherd*, and his disciples and faithful servants as *his flock* that hear his voice, and follow his direction whithersoever he shall lead them. Thus *Matt. x. 6.* he gives his first commission to his apostles, *to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to whom,*
he

he tells us he was sent himself, *Matt. xv. 24.* *I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* The recovery of a lost sinner, is described under the figure of finding a *lost sheep*, *Matt. xviii. 12.* But the tenth chapter of *St. John's* gospel to v. 18. is nothing but the same image exhibited in different lights, setting himself forth as *the good shepherd, who layeth down his life for the sheep*, in opposition to *Thieves, Robbers, and Hirelings, who only come to steal, to kill, and to destroy.* And his last instruction to *St. Peter*, a little before his ascension into heaven was, *to feed his lambs and his sheep*; and the same allegory is pursued through the whole new testament. There seems indeed to be something in those retired contemplative employments, that particularly disposes a serious and virtuous mind to recollection and devotion, and more immediately qualifies them to be fit instruments in the hands of God, to execute the designs of his providence: in these happy retreats from the vanities and follies of the world, the enchantments of pleasure, and the empty glitter of high life, the virtuous mind surveys with an attentive eye, the wonders of providence, the order and beauties of the creation, the heavens above him, and the earth beneath him, both full of the Majesty of the divine glory; he sees and adores the hand that made and governs all these things, and, as it were loses himself in the immensity of the works of God. And this state of simplicity and silence is the truest preparation to know and do the will of God. It was doubtless in this disposition, that *Moses* was found by God feeding the flock of *Jethro* his father-in-law, and sent with a special commission to *Pharaoh*, and to be the deliverer and captain of his people *Israel*, *Exod. iii. 9. 10.* Thus *David* was taken from

the sheepfold to be the ruler of his people, 1 Sam. xvi. 11, 12, 13. *Pf.* lxxviii. 71, 72. Thus *Elisha* was taken from the plough, 1 Kings xix. 19. And *Amos* from among the herdsmen of *Tekoah*, to be endued with the spirit of prophecy and power, *Amos* i. 1, 7, 14. To the shepherds feeding their flocks by night, (as the custom was in those countries) was the first revelation made that we read of, *Luke* ii. of the glad tidings of our blessed Lord's nativity, v. 9. *Lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and the Angel said unto them, fear not; for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord; and suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, &c.*

Think what a joyful surprise it must be to these poor good souls to be thus visited in the dead of night by a glorious angel, to be surrounded with celestial glory, to hear the songs of the heavenly host proclaiming a joyful message of redemption to all mankind, by the birth of a Saviour in the city of *David*. How unspeakable an honour was it for these good creatures to see such glorious sights, and hear such gracious words as *many Kings and Prophets before them had longed to see and hear, and could not*, *Luke* x. 24. Let this assure you, that there is no state or profession of life so abounding with opportunities and incitements to devotion as yours. And though you cannot expect such sensible visitations as these, yet assure yourselves, that whilst you keep yourselves in a proper disposition to receive the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit, they will descend upon you as the dew of heaven, and nourish your souls to eternal life. The design of this work, therefore,

is to consider some of the most common articles of the husbandman's labour, and shew him how he may by a devout and serious turn of mind, improve every one of them to the glory of God, the interest of true religion, and the salvation of his soul.

C H A P. II.

Ploughing the Ground.

THE first labour that I shall mention is *ploughing the ground*; and a laborious employment it is, being a sad consequence of the curse entailed upon the earth by the transgression of our first parents, as we are expressly told, *Gen. iii. 17.* When God said to Adam, *curst is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life, thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, in the sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground, for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* In the days of primitive innocence there was no need of labour, the earth brought forth plenteously all her fruits in their greatest beauty and perfection; the blessing of the Most High was in them all; and the blessed inhabitants of paradise had nothing to do but to gather them, to eat and live, and praise the munificent author of so many blessings. Such was the happy state of the primitive earth, and such will it be again, when the curse shall be done away, and *the whole creation be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, Rom. viii. 21.* when there shall be a *new heaven and a new earth, to be the habitation of righteousness, 2 Pet. iii. 13.* which God has promised by the mouth
of

of all his holy prophets since the world began, Acts iii. 21. And when the tree of life shall grow on each side of the river of the water of life, which shall proceed from the throne of God and of the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 1, 2. Till that happy time shall come, we are doomed to labour and sorrow, and to get our bread out of the bowels of earth by the labour of our hands and the sweat of our brows. The business of *ploughing*, we all know, is as it were tearing the face of our common mother the earth, mangling and breaking it to pieces by violence; but such a violence as is absolutely necessary to make it fruitful, without which no seed could be sown, and by consequence no harvest be expected.

This may serve to put us in mind of the dreadful nature of sin, that has made so deplorable a change in the face of nature, and entailed so heavy a curse on the race of mankind.

2dly. The state of fallow-ground does aptly represent to us the natural unregenerate state of a sinner; for, as it has no seed sown in it, no fruit can grow upon it, and it can produce nothing but filth and weeds. Just so the sinner in his unregenerate state, not having the seed of divine grace sown in his heart, can produce no real and vital fruits of holiness; and whilst he so continues, unmolested, and as it were untilled, he remains utterly barren and unfruitful as to all the true purposes and ends of living; nor can he, without undergoing the inward discipline of the cross, a kind of spiritual martyrdom, be ever capable of bringing forth fruit to eternal life. God, therefore, in great mercy visits such souls with variety of crosses and afflictions, both inward and outward, tearing as it were, and breaking up their inward man, as the plough does the face of the ground. Thus holy *David* expresses his

own sufferings, *The ploughers ploughed upon my back, and made long furrows*, Pf. cxxix. 3. And when the soul is thus mortified, and broken to pieces by the rod of affliction, then and then only is it capable of receiving the seed of eternal life: this is that humble and contrite spirit which God hath promised not to despise, *To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word*. Is. lxvi. 2.

A man who can understand this, (and he must be very ignorant that cannot) will naturally fall into these meditations whilst he is following the plough, and from thence will find his heart kindled into a flame of devotion and prayer: he may hence learn to beg of God a soft and tender heart, fit to receive the seed of his holy word, the influences of his Holy Spirit, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance: he may pray for the grace of patience under afflictions, such as God sees necessary to lay upon him, to *break up the fallow ground of his heart*, as the prophet expresses it, *Jer. iv. 3*. And may assure himself that God lays no other afflictions upon him than what he sees necessary to mortify and purify his corrupt nature, and make him bring forth the fruits of righteousness to eternal life.

C H A P. III.

Sowing and Harrowing the Ground.

TH E next labour of husbandry which I shall mention is, *sowing and harrowing the ground*. The sower throws the seed into the earth that it may putrify and die, in order to rise again in a new form, and bring forth fruit abundantly; but if this seed were only carelessly thrown upon the surface

surface of the ground, it would be in danger of being devoured by the fowls of the air, or trodden under foot by passengers; or if not that, yet, unless it were so covered with earth as to rot and die, or if it should spring up, yet if it had not a proper depth of soil, it would wither away, and be unfruitful; therefore the husbandman harrows the ground to hollow it, and let in the seed to be covered from the fowls of the air, and to give it a proper depth, that it may lie and take root, and grow up to maturity.

This part of your labour the blessed Jesus has beautifully explained and applied in a spiritual sense, *Luke viii.* Where, under the parable of a *sower*, he describes the different success which the preaching of the gospel met with among the different sorts of hearers. He tells them, *verse 11.* That *the seed is the word of God*; that *the seed sown by the way side are they that hear, then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.* Another part of *the seed fell upon a rock*; by which are represented such people as *hear the word with joy*, are pleased to hear a good sermon, or an ingenious conversation upon serious and religious subjects, and even to approve and talk zealously for the interests of true religion and virtue so long as the fit continues; but as they have no root of holiness, no love of God in their hearts, after they have thought and talked of it a little while, the fervours abate, the fit goes off, they grow languid and indifferent, and upon the first temptation, forget all that they have heard or said, and become as very reprobates as ever. Another part of *the seed fell among thorns*: by these are represented a set of covetous, selfish, worldly-minded creatures, who are in their way notable, sensible
people

people about the business of the world, understand all the arts of improving their fortunes, and making the most of this life; many of these people are sober careful men, for drunkenness is an expensive vice, makes a man incapable of business, and apt to be over-reached and imposed upon in his dealings and bargains with other people; and as *religion, conscience, honesty, &c.* are very fine words, and may be of singular use in the traffic of this world, common sense will teach them the necessity of keeping up an appearance of religion, a form of godliness, even for their worldly conveniency: whenever, therefore, they can find leisure from their worldly affairs, and have really nothing else to do, they go to church, and seem very attentive to any discourse that does not interfere with their worldly schemes of interest and ambition; but they leave all their religion at the church-door. The exchange, the market, the traffic, or vanities of the world, engross the whole man, take up all his time, engage all his attention; but the whole affair of religion, the interests of eternity, the salvation of his soul, are not matters of immediate consequence, and are therefore put off to a long day, and deferred till they have nothing else to do. No wonder therefore, that such as these *bring no fruit to perfection.*

But that which fell upon *good ground*, represents those honest and sincere christians, *who in an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.* An *honest and good heart* (you see) is the only proper soil for the good word of God to take root and prosper, and whether you are in the number of those *honest and good Souls*, is worth your while to inquire, and very easy to discover. When therefore you are engaged in this part of your labour, it will be a
profitable

profitable and agreeable entertainment to a religious mind to consider the state of your souls, and what improvement you have made of the several means of grace that God has afforded you; and thus to reason with your own hearts: *As I am now sowing this seed in the ground, in hopes of a plentiful harvest: so has the good Spirit of God been many years sowing the seed of his holy word in my heart, that I might bring forth the fruits of righteousness to eternal life: I have for many years lived under the preaching of the gospel; I have enjoyed the benefit of the scriptures, and the communion of saints in the word and sacraments: what improvements have I made? what fruits have I brought forth? am I one jot more holy, more religious, more humble, charitable and devout than I was some years ago? have I in any sense, or in any respect, sown to the Spirit, i. e. sacrificed my temporal concerns, my worldly interests and pleasures to the glory of God, the good of mankind, and the salvation of my own soul, that I might reap life everlasting? have I not rather sown to the flesh? and have I not reason from thence to fear, that from the flesh I shall reap corruption? do I feel in my heart any quickning power, any tokens of spiritual life, any comfortable hopes that the good seed is yet living and growing in me, so as in due time to bring forth fruit to life everlasting? If to these inquiries your consciences can give you a satisfactory answer, you may have a reasonable confidence towards God: but if not, if your heart tells you that you have been an unfruitful field, an unprofitable servant, remember that it is intirely your own fault that you have not done your part, nor answered the gracious purposes of divine love towards you. You need not be told, that your ploughing and sowing are but lost labour without God's blessing; you sow and plant in vain, unless*

God

God give the increase! unless he send the former and the latter rain in their season, the most fruitful field will be barren, and the choicest seed will be unfruitful; and therefore you may be sure your want of spiritual fruit, is owing to your neglect of the means of grace, that you have neglected to ask the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, or not done it with sincerity and devotion; because he never fails to give to them that sincerely and devoutly ask it. This thought will naturally awaken in you a just sense of the necessity of the great duty of prayer, which you have so long neglected: and when you are truly and deeply sensible of your spiritual wants, and the readiness of God to supply them, you must be more stupid than the beasts, if you do not immediately apply yourselves with faith and devotion to the Father of mercies, from whom every good and every perfect gift cometh, begging him to *water with the dew of his heavenly blessing, the seed sown in your hearts, that it may increase and multiply, and bring forth fruit to everlasting life.*

Another use that may be made of the labour of sowing, is the application and use which St. Paul makes of it, *I Cor. xv.* to illustrate and explain the resurrection from the dead. *Some men will say, (says he) v. 35, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? To which he answers, Thou, fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die, and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain, but God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body: so also is the resurrection of the dead.* As if he had said: When you sow your seed in the ground, you sow nothing but a bare grain of some kind or other, which appears to the

eye to have no more a principle of life in it, than a piece of dry wood or a pebble; and even that life which we know it has, is destroyed by rotting in the earth to make room for a new life; it being a certain rule in nature, *that nothing is quickened, except it die*: after which it springs up in a new and beautiful form, first the blade, then the ear, then a large increase in the ear, and all this springing up by the omnipotent working of an invisible power, out of the grain whose husk and shell lies rotting in corruption. Just so it is with our mortal bodies, so soon as they are dead, they corrupt and putrefy, and must be deposited in the ground, to prevent their being noisome and poisonous to the living; there they become the food of worms and creeping things. A man that had never heard of the resurrection from the dead, would naturally and with good reason conclude, that when they were buried in the earth, there was an end of them, that they were buried without hope of ever returning to life again: but we have learned better things by the revelation of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ; we are taught not to be sorry, as men without hope, for them that *sleep in the Lord Jesus*, being taught by him *who cannot lye*, who is himself *the resurrection and the life*, John xi. 25. that there shall be a resurrection of the dead; that the bodies of the faithful now rotting in the grave, are no more lost than the seeds you sow in the earth, and shall like them, in their appointed season, rise with new life and glory; that though they are *sown in corruption*, they shall *rise in incorruption*; they are *sown in dishonour*, but shall *rise in glory*; they are *sown in weakness*, but shall *rise in power*; they are *sown natural bodies*, but shall be *raised spiritual bodies*.

This

This thought, duly impressed upon us, will teach us many useful lessons, and give us many beautiful hints and occasions for meditation and prayer.

I. It teaches us, that our good or evil thoughts, words or actions, are the seeds of our future good or evil sown into eternity, naturally producing their proper fruits, according to the kind and quality of the seeds that were sown. So the apostle tells us, *Gal. vi 7, 8. Be not deceived, what a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.* A wicked man, therefore, has no more reason to expect a blessed and happy resurrection, than the foolish husbandman has to reap a good crop of wheat where he has sown nothing but grass-seed or tares.

II. It teaches us not to be sorry as men without hope for our deceased friends, who have departed this life in the true faith and fear of God, and sleep in the Lord Jesus. When we see their bodies laid in the earth with the melancholy and affecting form of *earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust*, surrounded with weeping eyes and mournful faces, let us look up with faith to that gracious God whom they have served; let us remember what we every day see of the mighty power of God, in raising from the earth the seeds that are sown in the ground, and not doubt but that he will in like manner quicken and restore their and our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us, that they may be made like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

III. It teaches us the dignity of these mortal bodies of ours, which though in their present state are liable to corruption, and which when dead have no more appearance of a vital and spiritual

principle than a grain of corn thrown into the earth, are yet the temples of the Holy Ghost, who invisibly operates in them, and prepares them for a joyful and glorious resurrection.

And as all your labour in sowing will be lost, except you work over the ground again, that the seed may be buried and incorporated in the earth; so is the seed of the good word of God, barren and unfruitful, unless by close and frequent meditation it sink deep into your hearts, and incorporate (as I may say) with all the faculties and affections of your souls; and if all your labours are in vain except God give the increase, this should teach you to beg God's blessing upon the seed, as you are casting it into the ground, that he would be pleased so to bless and increase *the fruits of the earth, that in due time we may enjoy them*: and so in like manner are we taught and exhorted to pray in the words of our excellent liturgy, that God would bless the spiritual seed sown in our hearts, *that the words which we shall at any time hear with our outward ears, may be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honour and praise of God's holy name.*

C H A P. IV.

Mowing the grass, or Hay-Harvest.

THIS part of your labour will supply you with many useful hints to affect your hearts and inflame your devotions. The uncertainty of human life, and the vanity of human glory, are beautifully represented in many places of the prophets, by the blooming but withering condition of the grass and flowers of the field. *All flesh is grass, saith the Prophet Isaiah, chap. xl. 6.*
and

and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: Surely the people is grass. Holy David, in the 90th Psalm, which our church has appointed to be used at the burial of the dead, expresses it more emphatically. *As soon as thou scatterest them, they are even as asleep, and fade away suddenly like the grass; in the morning it is green and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered.* When therefore, you look upon a meadow in all its verdure and beauty, when we view the agreeable mixture of grass and flowers, it may be considered as a beautiful picture of human life, which in its highest bloom and glory is doomed to certain destruction, to be *cut down, dried up and withered.* The grass and flowers stand mixt together in a beautiful variety of smell and colour, without the least apprehension of approaching danger, till the mower enters with his scythe, and cuts down all before him, when grass and weeds and flowers, and all the beauty of the field, are thrown into one undistinguished heap of ruin and confusion. This is a melancholy but true picture of human life: for what are all the magnificent attendance of princes, the brilliant beauties of the drawing-room, the dreadful splendor of armies, the gay assemblies at the opera and theatre, or the rural scenes of horse-racing, country fairs, wakes, and merry-meetings, but collections of fine flowers, though perhaps not quite so sweet, not half so innocent as our vegetable beaux and belles, all equally doomed to certain destruction, and almost equally unconcerned and unprepared to meet it; for though, when they think and reason soberly, they cannot but know and acknowledge they must die, yet there is something so gloomy, so shocking in the prospect,

that we are forced to have recourse to all the little shifts and contrivances imaginable to divert the disagreeable thought, and keep the spectre out of our sight. It may be said, indeed, that the mower when he comes into the field, intends a general and sudden destruction, he comes with a resolution to cut down all before him, so that nothing can possibly escape him: which is very far from being our case: for there is no sickness so epidemical, no mortality so general, as to spare no body; no battle so hot as to let none escape: so that people need not be under such violent fears, such terrible apprehensions of being cut down all at once. But then let it be considered, that death, the great destroyer of mankind, is always busy, always executing the sentence upon some one or other of the sinful sons of *Adam*; that we are all under the actual sentence of death, are so many condemned prisoners: that the delay of execution is no more than a reprieve from day to day, and that no man can be sure whether it shall be granted for another, or this may be his last: but that he is sure his sentence is irreversibile, and he must sooner or later submit to the general fate, and therefore may conclude it to be a point of the highest prudence to prepare for it, that he may never be surprized, be it ever so sudden. But so stupid are the bulk of mankind, that they care not to talk or think about it. The young people take it for granted, that they have many years to live, and therefore it is their business to enjoy the present, to eat, drink, dance, dress, laugh and be merry, and put off the melancholy thoughts of death and judgment, till they are fit for nothing else: and even the oldest are apt to think they are not so old but they may live a year or two longer, and all live the mean time as if they were never to die at all. Whenever, therefore, you are employed, or

see others employed in this part of your labour, it will naturally raise in a religious well-disposed mind the thoughts of his own mortality; it will shew him, as in a picture, the true state and value of human life and worldly glory; it will shew him the vanity of all the glories and pleasures of this transitory world, that we, and all that we love, and all that we enjoy in this world, must soon sink into the grave, and be buried in everlasting forgetfulness: and can a man seriously think of these things, and not be affected with it? can a man consider the short, the uncertain time he has to continue in this vale of misery, and be immoderately concerned about the trifles he meets with here, which he knows are every day slipping from him, and will in a short time be lost for ever? can he consider the everlasting state to which he must be removed when he quits this earthly tabernacle, and make no provision for it? one would think it impossible, did not every day's sad experience convince us of the truth of it. Let then this certain, this amazing prospect, warn you of your approaching dissolution, and let it teach you to pray to God in the language of the holy Psalmist, that he would teach you *so to number your days, that you may apply your hearts unto wisdom.*

C H A P. V.

Weeding the Corn.

IT was a particular curse upon the transgression of our first parents, and a salutary part of their punishment, that the earth should produce thorns, and briars, and all sorts of hurtful weeds, to be at once the emblem of the numberless evil thoughts and inclinations of corrupt nature, that
spring

spring up in the soul of man, and of the cares and sorrows of human life, which briars, thorns, and thistles do properly represent; because those do, as it were, tear and wound the soul, as these do the flesh of our bodies: and both of them require much care and labour to root out and destroy them. Happy would it be, if it were possible by any art or management to prevent or hinder their growing up; but that is absolutely impossible. In the best ground, and under the best cultivation, they will spring up; all that can be done is to check and keep them under, that they may not overtop and choak the seeds and fruits that are mixt with them. Can a man be employed in this labour, and not reflect upon the corruptions of his own sinful heart; which, in spite of all his care, will be continually bringing forth evil thoughts, wicked desires, and corrupt affections: to prevent their growth, and check them in the first appearance, is all that human prudence and virtue can do; it will be the constant labour of the best men in this state of corruption, to keep them from getting the dominion over them, and intirely choaking the good seed of life sown in their hearts. But when we consider moreover, that besides the superfluity of naughtiness that naturally springs up in the corrupt ground of our hearts, we have an evil spirit constantly watching to surprize and destroy us, a vigilant and active enemy, ever ready to sow tares among the good seed, whilst the master and servants are asleep, (as we read in the gospel, *Mat. xiii. 25.*) we shall find we have double reason to be upon our guard. The season he watches to surprize us is when we are fast asleep, I mean not the natural sleep of our bodies, for that is a necessary refreshment of our nature, and therefore innocent: and some men may truly be said
never

never to be so innocent as when they are fast asleep ; for then if they are doing no good, however, they are doing no harm, which with some men is the highest pitch of virtue. But the dangerous sleep, which is the season of temptation, is the sleep of our souls, when we are intoxicated and drowned in sensuality and intemperance : for what is sleep but the suspension or locking up all the active and rational powers of the soul, when imagination and passion are broke loose, and the whole man in little better condition than that of a brute or a vegetable : for can any thing more resemble this state, than that indolent unthinking state of soul, which we cannot but observe in the vicious, lazy, sottish part of mankind, men that are perpetually stupifying their senses, and drowning their poor pittance of understanding in drunkenness and debauchery ; men that are afraid to be alone, to enter into their own hearts, to consider the state of their souls towards God, and what title they have to the hopes of a blessed immortality ; and are therefore perpetually contriving how to murder time and cool reflection ; are never easy but when they are surrounded with jolly companions, diverting the sense of their guilt and fears of punishment, by madness and folly, or dozing themselves into downright stupidity ! idleness and drunkenness give the tempter such advantages against us as he is sure never to neglect. The idle man exposes himself naked and defenceless to the most dangerous assaults of his enemy ; for the devil never fails to employ those who know not how to employ themselves ; and drunkenness we all know sets fire to all the secret springs of corrupt nature, it subdues our reason, stupifies our senses, and turns the man into a contemptible brute. Who can describe the brutish rage, the horrid oaths, the profane rant,

the

the leud nonsense, that furnish out a drunken conversation? how many quarrels, how many murders have been owing purely to these riotous drunken meetings? These are not properly the natural productions of our hearts, which (bad as they are) would in their sober senses and cool blood startle at the thoughts of those crimes, into which drunkenness drives a man by a kind of hellish violence; which shows that the devil takes the advantage of that loose unguarded state of soul, and infuses into it all the diabolical poison that can possibly enter into corrupt human nature. I have somewhere (I think in the Persian or Chinese tales) read a fable or story of a certain reprobate over whom the evil spirit had intire dominion, and led him captive at his will. He proposed to the poor wretch three things, one of which he was obliged to do; *To murder his own father, to debauch his own sister, or to get drunk.* Wicked as he was, he trembled at the two first; a proposal so diabolical, so brutish, nature itself abhorred, and therefore chose the latter, which (if it were a crime) was a very agreeable one, and which could hurt no body but himself. Accordingly he got very drunk, and in the height of his phrenzy, attacked his sister who came in his way, and actually forced her: her cries reached the father's ears, who came running to her rescue, upon which the villain rushed upon him and murdered him. See here the dreadful, the diabolical consequences of that brutish vice, which is now so freely indulged in every merry meeting, that even among persons of sense, character, and reputation, it hardly passes for a crime.

Suppose any skilful husbandman should show you a way intirely to prevent the growth of weeds in your ground, how thankful would you be to

such

such a benefactor? suppose a man should offer you an estate, and insure it that it should never produce weed, thorn or briar, nor any thing but good grass or good corn, would you not think it a very valuable purchase, though you were to pay very dear for it? certainly you would. But can any weeds be so dangerous as the sins and corruptions of an unregenerate heart? can any worldly estate, nay, can the whole earth itself be so valuable as one immortal soul? Our Lord himself, who best knew the value of them, tells us there is no comparison, *For what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Mark viii. 36. No interest can be so truly valuable as our own souls, and the souls of our dear children. However we may have neglected the care of our own souls, and suffered them to be over-run with briars and thorns, with fleshly lusts, and corrupt affections; yet the souls of our children require all our care; they may, by God's blessing upon our best endeavours, be in a good degree preserved from the dreadful malignity; their hearts are young and tender, like new-broke ground, or a new made garden, fit to receive any impressions, or any seed you think fit to sow in them; and if you cultivate and dress them carefully, are capable of producing noble fruits unto everlasting life: but if you neglect them, and let them run rude and uncultivated, what can you expect but to see them over-run with ignorance and vice, and every thing that is noxious and detestable in human nature? Let it therefore, (I beseech you for their sakes, for your own sakes) be your constant care to watch over them, to observe and correct all the little iniquities of temper or humour, to check their growing passions, to tear up every sprout of stubbornness and wilfulness by the roots, and

and nip every appearance of evil in the very bud; by which means you will probably prevent their future ruin, and lay the foundation of your own peace, and their temporal and eternal happiness. You that are parents, I beseech you to dwell with me a little upon this affecting, this necessary thought, that little vices are the seeds of great ones, that the little faults of children, if not restrained by good advice or corrected by the rod, may grow up into such diabolical vices in the man, as may bring them to shame and the gallows here, and everlasting misery hereafter.

When, therefore, you are diverting yourselves with the little innocent actions of your children, and pleasing yourselves with the agreeable qualities which every fond parent sees in his own offspring; when you are laying schemes, and imagining the happy success of them for their future happiness: think then, what an unspeakable affliction it would be to you, to see, as they are growing up, their innocence ruined, their modesty debauched, their credit and reputation lost among the sober and religious part of mankind? When you are pleasing yourselves with their clean dress and pretty behaviour, think how it would cut you to the heart to see them abandoned to beastliness and excess, to see them wallowing like swine in the filth of their own drunkenness, to hear them belching out oaths and blasphemies against God, and curses against man, to see them given up to lewdness and uncleanness, sacrificing their strength and fortunes to harlots, and rotting alive with filthy diseases, and dying even whilst they live, with stench and corruption! Think how dreadful a sight it would be to see them sunk into poverty and contempt, cloathed with rags, and begging their bread from door to door.

These

These are frightful reflections: but this is not the worst of the case. Should you be so unhappy as to see them fall into the hands of justice, and forfeit their lives to the severity of the law; should you see them confined to a prison loaded with irons, condemned to die, and led like victims to the place of execution: I dare say there is not a parent in the world whose blood would not chill at such a dreadful thought; and yet the worst of these are but the natural consequences of a wicked undisciplined youth. These terrors, could we stop here, are too great for the heart of a tender parent to sustain: but alas! there is a more dreadful affecting scene yet behind.

Could a man in cold blood think of seeing his beloved child, who is dear to him as his own soul, not only miserable in this life, and hurried out of it by untimely violence, but condemned for ever to hopeless misery and despair in the next world, shut up in everlasting darkness with devils and accursed spirits, cursing his parents in the agonies of despair for bringing him by their cruel indulgence, or fatal negligence, into that place of torment! Good God! what a shocking thought is this? and yet, without any aggravation, this is the real state of the case.

Let us now consider this matter in another light, and see the folly and wickedness of a brutish unchristian education. Would you not think that parent worse than a brute, who should neglect or refuse to provide food and raiment for his children? How much more brutish and unnatural must he be, who neglects to provide for the welfare of their immortal souls, considering the infinite disproportion betwixt the soul and body, betwixt this short life and eternity.

Which of you could see your dear child running heedlessly into the fire or water, and not endeavour to prevent or pull him out? But would any man in his senses be so much a devil, as to see his child upon the brink of danger, and take a pleasure to push him into it! The supposition is so monstrous, that it seems to be a reflection upon human nature even to make it: and yet this is what every wicked careless parent does, who, for want of giving his children a christian and religious education, correcting and rooting up those vicious and sinful inclinations, which are the weeds and tares that grow up in an unregenerate soul, do, as it were, wantonly push them into certain destruction, and cast them into everlasting fire.

You would think him a very negligent careless husbandman, who should take no care to weed his corn; but you would think him worse than mad, who should be at great pains and expence to sow weeds and tares in his field, and take pleasure to see them prosper and choak the corn. But this madness is nothing to that of wicked parents, who, instead of correcting the vices of their children, take care to plant and encourage all sorts of iniquities in their tender souls, by their own wicked lives and scandalous examples. Let me then conjure you, for God's sake, for the love you bear to your dear children, by the love you bear to yourselves, by every thing that is near and dear to you in this world, and the interests of eternity, to take an earnest and early care for the christian education of your dear children. The seeds of iniquity are sown by the enemy of our salvation in the ground of human-nature, of which the best men living have a large share; they spring up with the first motions of sense, and dawnings of
reason;

reason; hence proceed the stubborn fits, the violent passions, the eager appetites, the perverse inclinations of children, which are discernable even in the nurse's arms, which if not weeded out and kept under by a watchful eye and a diligent hand, will grow up into monstrous crimes and diabolical wickednesses, too strong to be subdued, too deep to be rooted out, and must (without a miracle) infallibly end in everlasting ruin. Begin, therefore, betimes to root out every appearance of pride and passion, every thing that favours of stubbornness and disobedience: break the perverseness of their wills by prudent and regular restraints, and endeavour to implant in their tender minds, those amiable virtues and graces, of meekness, humility, and obedience, which are the fruits and ornaments of the christian life: teach them betimes to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and to offer up their prayers to him at least every morning and evening: teach them to have a profound reverence for his holy name and word, and whatever relates to his worship and service, and never to mention either without an awful and religious regard: teach them to be humble and dutiful, to be compassionate and merciful, and to think *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*, to be one of the truest ornaments of human nature.

For in vain will you attempt to do this by words, whilst they see you contradict it in practice: your best and wisest instructions will be lost upon them, whilst they find you talking one thing, and doing another. How absurd would it be to hear a lewd, wicked, drunken father, teaching sobriety and modesty to his children? Or a profane reprobate, gravely recommending the duties of religion? No, let your children see that you yourselves

practise the duties you recommend to them : then (and not till then) will they be induced to believe that you are really in earnest, and be persuaded to follow your good examples. But alas ! in vain does *Paul plant, or Apollos water, except God give the increase* ; it is his blessing only that can make your best endeavours effectual. This, therefore, shews you the necessity of praying to God without ceasing, for his special blessing upon you and your children : and if they were accustomed every night and morning to beg your blessing, and prayers to God for them, it would be a lesson of instruction both to them and you. They would hence learn to look upon you with reverence and honour, not only as their natural parents, but as intercessors with God for them. And you too should hence learn how regular and exemplary your lives ought to be, in order to perform it in a decent and proper manner, that your children may never see you in such a state of mind, or body, as to be afraid or ashamed to ask your blessing, or you unable to give it. The child that hears a passionate furious father pouring curses and damnation upon his family or neighbours upon every provocation, can have little reason to expect any good from his blessing : a drunken father that can neither speak nor understand, is absolutely incapable : and how can children expect that a profane irreligious father, who lives in defiance of all religion, should beg God's blessing upon them, when they know he never asks it for himself : There you cannot but see the necessity of your good example, and that *your light should so shine before them, that they, seeing your good works may be induced to love and reverence you, and glorify their and your Father, which is in heaven* : Then may you reasonably expect God's blessing on yourselves. And that your prayers
 be

be heard when you pray for your children, let it be a constant part of your prayers, that he would make them his own children by adoption and grace, that he would protect them by his holy spirit from the corruptions that are in the world, that he would preserve them blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation.

It must be confessed, that very excellent parents, notwithstanding all their endeavours and prayers, have been very unhappy in wicked and undutiful children. The first-born son of our first parents was *a child of the devil, and a murderer*, 1 Ep. *John* iii. 12. *Noah*, among three sons, had one so bad as to bring upon himself the *curse* of his good father, instead of a blessing, *Cursed be Canaan, &c.* *Gen.* ix. 25. The patriarch *Isaac* had one son so impious as to sell his birthright for a single refreshment, which action entitled him to the character of a *profane person*; for it is not improbable that *Esau's* great distress and faintness might be designed as a tryal of his faith and dependance upon God, as was *Abraham's* resolution to offer up *Isaac*, and *Isaac's* chearful submission to be offered; and that he justly forfeited that blessing by his distrust of providence, when such illustrious acts of faith had been set before him by his ancestors; and that this may explain and justify the apostle's calling him a *profane person* for selling his birthright, *Heb.* xii. 16. Good old *Eli* had two, and both so wicked, that they were both cut off in one day, by a signal vengeance from heaven, 1 *Sam.* ii. 34. Holy *David* was severely punished by dissolute and rebellious children; and his son *Solomon*, the wisest prince in the world, had the misfortune to leave a fool for his successor. How it so comes to pass, and

why it pleases God to permit men that seem to be very good to be thus visited, is a question not for us to ask: yet we may observe, that some of them plainly proceeded from too great parental indulgence; that this was the case of *Eli* in particular we are plainly told, 1 *Sam.* ii. 29. Where we read, that the man of God who came to denounce the intire destruction of his family, gave this for the reason: *Thou honourest thy sons above me.* And the same account of his guilt and punishment was revealed by God to *Samuel*, ch. iii. 13. *I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity that he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* *David's* case seems to have been something like it. We read, 1 *Kings* i. 6. that *Adonijah*, who rebelled against him as well as *Absalom*, had been treated with great indulgence: of the former it is said, *that his father had never displeased him at any time, in saying, why hast thou done so?* He never found fault with any thing that he did. He must have been an excellent child indeed, if he never did any thing to deserve reproof and correction; and if he did, it was an imprudent and criminal tenderness to let him escape without it: and there is great reason to believe, from the amiable description of *Absalom's* person, 2 *Sam.* xiv. 28. from the tenderness which the father showed, in commanding his General not to hurt the young man, if he should fall into their hands, 2 *Sam.* xviii. 12. and the immoderate grief he expressed at his death, ch. xviii. 33. I say, from all these, it should seem that *Absalom* was no less a favourite than *Adonijah*; which he requited by the most unnatural rebellion. It must also be confessed, there was a particular aggravation of *David's* guilt, that he must needs have contributed

to the corruption of his children by his own wicked example. Great and good as he was, he was betrayed into the crying sins of adultery and murder; and though his repentance was severe and bitter, as we read *Psal. li.* and so sincere, that it moved God to forgive his sin, so that *he should not die, 2 Sam. xii. 13.* Yet, as he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; so he doubtless gave his children great encouragement to offend, as they could not be strangers to his crimes, though they might be to his repentance; therefore they were made the instruments of his correction. *The sword* (says the prophet) *shall not depart from thy house,* i. e. from the children he then had in his family. And accordingly we read, that *Adonijah* was put to death by the command of his brother *Solomon, 1 Kings ii.* *Ammon* was murdered by *Absalom* for ravishing his sister *Tamar, 2 Sam. xiii.* And *Absalom* himself, soon after killed in rebellion against his own father, and fell by the hand of *Joab* his own uncle, *2 Sam. xviii. 14.* And we must acknowledge that, happen what will, *God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, Psal. cxlv.* All that we can do in this case is, to use our best endeavours, by precept, by example, by prayer, to teach them the good and the right way; and if all our labour be lost, we shall, however, have the satisfaction of having done all that is in our power, and we must submit, as good old *Eli* did; *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good, 1 Sam. iii. 18.*

C H A P. VI.

The Care of your Cattle.

THIS part of your labour, as I observed before, was the employment of the best and greatest men of the primitive ages; their flocks and herds were the riches of the ancient world, as we find in all the writings of antiquity, both sacred and profane; and many useful and excellent lessons have been learned from them, and finely applied by the inspired and moral writers. *All the creatures of God are good*, good in a certain degree, but in their first creation they were pronounced *very good*, i. e. perfectly good in their kind, *Gen. i. 31.* Endued with all those qualities and excellencies that were necessary for that rank in the scale of beings in which providence had placed them. Man was appointed the lord and governor of them all, *Gen. i. 26.* He received from the infinite fountain of blessing, a constant uninterrupted communication of life and blessedness, which were through him derived to all the several parts and inhabitants of the animal and vegetable creation, and thereby kept them in an absolute subjection and dependance upon him; so that he had an intire dominion over all the creatures and inhabitants of this lower world, according to the original charter, *Gen. i. 28.* And *God blessed them, and said unto them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it (i. e. keep it in subjection) and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the face of the earth.* As they were all created to fill up the several parts of the system in due harmony and pro-

proportion ; so they were all intended for the use and benefit of man, and were therefore entitled to an easy enjoyment of all the comforts of their being, in their several stations. This was the happy state of the primitive earth, 'till man by his transgression extinguished the divine light and life in himself, and by consequence involved them in the same state of condemnation and misery. The communication of divine life and power being suspended, man could receive nothing from above, nor communicate any to the creatures below him, nor by consequence could have any power over them, to direct or govern, or keep them in subjection. (Of all which I have treated very largely in my book, entitled, *Free thoughts upon the brute creation.*) The various uses you make of them, and advantages you receive from them, in the ordinary course of your labours, supply you with many useful lessons of instruction, and may be improved by a serious well-disposed mind to many excellent purposes of meditation and prayer.

Before I come to the particular consideration of the cattle and domestic animals, I shall premise one general observation which concerns them all, that it is a breach of natural justice, an indication of a brutish, or rather a diabolical temper, to abuse, torment, or oppress any of those poor brute creatures which minister to our pleasures or necessities in this world, to put them to unnecessary labours, to load them with immoderate burdens, or withhold from them those necessary refreshments which their state and condition requires. The wise man in the book of *Prov. xii. 10.* makes it an act of righteousness to be merciful to those poor creatures, *The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies*

mercies of the wicked are cruel. Where he plainly declares it to be the mark of a righteous man to be merciful to his cattle, and of a wicked man to be cruel. God himself, in the old law, guarded against this piece of cruelty by several express commands and prohibitions, particularly in the fourth commandment, where the Sabbath-day is appointed to be a day of rest for the cattle as well as for their owners, as it is more expressly declared, *Exod. xxiii. 12. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest, that thine ox and thine ass may rest, &c.* And in the fifth verse of the same chapter, a particular command is given, to be merciful even to the cattle of an enemy, *If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him. Deut. xxv. 4.* God prescribes a special law in favour of oxen, who trod out the corn as we now thresh it, that their mouths should not be muzzled whilst they were at their labour, but that they might eat as well as work.

We read in the book of *Jonah*, that when he had denounced the destruction of *Nineveh*, the King proclaimed a fast for the cattle as well as for the people. *Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them neither feed nor drink water, Jonah iii. 7.* And chap. iv. 11. God declares his compassion for the cattle of *Nineveh*, as well as for the inhabitants: *Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern betwixt their right-hand and their left, and also much cattle, Jonah iv. 11.* We read of one beast whose mouth was miraculously opened to upbraid his rider for his cruel usage, *Numb. xxii. 28.* And when the
angry

angry prophet justified his cruelty to the poor beast, the angel of the Lord pleaded for the ass, and condemned the rider. I am very sensible that this story has given occasion to some empty pretenders to wit and criticism, to laugh at it, as a thing ridiculous and impossible: But I would ask these merry gentlemen a few short questions. Can they deny that brutes have sense, reason, memory, and reflection? Are they not sensible of ill usage? Do they not distinguish betwixt their friends and their enemies, betwixt those who use them well, and those that injure and abuse them? Have they not a language among themselves, or some faculty analogous to it, whereby they communicate their sentiments, their wants and necessities, affections and resentments to each other? They that can deny this, are philosophers indeed: and can it be thought impossible for God, for weighty reasons, to give them power to communicate their wants and their sufferings to those who injure and abuse them? especially in a case where there seems to be something supernatural in it. And though they have not naturally this power of complaining in words, yet they have a power of expressing their pains, their wants, and their sufferings, which every body understands, and which every merciful good-natured man would endeavour to relieve or prevent. We may justly say of the whole brute creation, what *David* said of his innocent subjects, under the scourge of a destroying pestilence, *These sheep, what have they done?* They have no guilt to answer for, they have done no wrong, they answer the end of their creation, and yet are miserable; they suffer for and by the disobedience of man, their lord and governor, who should have been under God their guardian and protector. What then may not
sinful

sinful men expect, who are not so innocent as they? What shall be said for those who are to their own species savage and cruel as beasts of prey, lustful as goats, filthy as dogs or swine, crafty as foxes, or crocodiles, poisonous as asps and basilisks; not to mention the drunkards, who are guilty of such intemperance as the brutes themselves abhor? If these evil qualities are so detestable in beasts, how much more in men, how much more in christians? On the other hand, how charming is the meekness of the lamb? How useful and instructive the patience of the horse, the ox, and the ass? How many useful lessons do they teach us?

I shall therefore consider this branch of your employment,

I. With regard to your care of them.

II. Their returns to you, by the uses and advantages you receive from them.

I. Your care consists in providing them with proper food when they are well, and proper remedies when they are sick or maimed; to keep them from going astray, or running into danger. How diligent and careful is every good husbandman in each of these articles, to feed their flocks and herds in due season, to seek and bring home those that are gone astray, and protect them from violence and distempers. Does not this naturally bring to your remembrance the *good shepherd* and bishop, who laid down his life for his sheep? There is not, I dare say, a man of sense and good nature in the world, who is possessed of any sort or kind of cattle, excellently good and beautiful
in

in their kind, but has a secret tenderness and affection for them, abstracted from the uses and advantages he makes of them. And can any man doubt of God's love and compassion to all his creatures, particularly to those who faithfully love, honour and humbly obey him? When you drive them to the pasture, can you forbear repeating the 23^d Psalm, which abounds with affecting thoughts and beautiful images, *The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the still waters.* When you see how contentedly they feed in the pasture you have allotted for them, can you repine at the lot and portion that the good providence of God has allotted for you? When you observe how lovingly and peaceably they feed together, without envying or disputing, are you not ashamed of your malicious and barbarous behaviour to one another? When the snow has covered the face of the earth, that there is no grass for the cattle, they must perish, did not you provide fodder for them; and if you are so provident for your cattle, can you question whether God will take the same care of you and yours, in the most difficult seasons and trials of life? When there falls out a bad season or losses in your cattle, what disquiet does it give you, what concern for yourselves and families? And what pains do you take in a hard winter, an unkind season, or a contagious distemper among the cattle, to prevent the danger, and secure yourselves and them from the evils that threaten you? And can you doubt whether God can or will do as much for you and yours under the like difficulties, whilst you love and obey him and depend upon him? Consider how in a great famine he fed his prophet *Elijah*,

by a miracle, *commanding the Ravens to bring him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, as you read 1 Kings xvii. 6.* And how he multiplied the poor widow's barrel of meal and a cruise of oil, to preserve her and her family from perishing by famine, verse 17. It is the same God that still watches over his faithful servants, and will never leave them nor forsake them.

When any of your cattle are lost and gone astray, consider how careful and diligent you are to seek them, and bring them back: and can you forbear reflecting on the goodness and love of God to his sinful creatures, that *have erred and strayed from his ways like lost sheep*, as we confess every day in our prayers? Do you not remember how strongly and beautifully he hath represented his compassion to penitent sinners, in the parable of the lost sheep, *Luke xv.* When the good shepherd *left the ninety nine in the wilderness to seek a single one that was lost, and having found it, he laid it on his shoulders rejoicing.* And not content to rejoice by himself, *when he came home, he called together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you likewise, that there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance,* verses 4, 5, 6, 7. Do you not remember what our Lord tells you, *Matt. xv. 24.* that he was *sent to bring home the lost sheep of the house of Israel?* And that *he has other sheep which are not of that fold; that he must bring them also, that they may all be one fold under one shepherd,* *John x. 16.* Who can think of this without daily praying to God, that he would preserve and guide us under all the changes and chances of this mortal life,
even

even as a good shepherd does his sheep ; and that he would hasten that blessed and happy time, when the fullness of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* shall come in, so as to be *one fold under one shepherd*.

When your cattle are diseased, or maimed, or lame, how much care do you take to apply proper remedies to prevent the infection of those that are sound, and to cure the wounds and bruises of those that are hurt ? And can you forbear thinking of the incessant care and providence of God over his creatures, to cure all the diseases of their souls ? How many affectionate warnings he gives us to guard against the infection of wicked examples and corrupt conversation ? How does he command and beseech us to keep ourselves blameless and harmless, as the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation ? Do you not observe, when you go to fodder them at the usual times, what haste the poor creatures make to come to you, with what eagerness and relish they take the poor coarse food you bring them ? And can you forbear reflecting with how little gratitude you receive from the hands of God, the many blessings he bestows upon you ? How little do you consider the hand that feeds and cloaths you, and gives you plentifully all the necessaries and comforts of this life ? Thus God complains of the ungrateful *Jews*, Isa. i. 3. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know ; my people doth not consider.* I come now,

II. To consider the uses you make of them, and the benefits you receive from them. There is not one of them but performs with readiness and chearfulness the purposes of providence, the

end of their creation, and the services you expect from them: your horses and oxen draw your plough and your cart, carry you or your burdens as their well-known duty, without murmuring or repining; your cows supply you twice a day with sweet and wholesome food for you and your families; your sheep supply you with food and raiment, they cloath you with their wool, and in many countries supply great quantities of milk for the dairy. These benefits entitle them to a kind and merciful as well as just treatment, as a grateful recompense for the services they do us, being the chief end for which they were created: who that considers this, can reflect without blushing, that these poor creatures answer all the ends of their being, and the purposes of the Creator? whilst man, the lord of the universe, endued with understanding, and valuing himself upon the strength and extent of his reason, is the only rebellious creature in it, an enemy to himself, unjust to his neighbour, and disobedient to his God.

Their diligent quiet submission to the will of their owners, is a reproach to the lazy discontented repining part of mankind; they abundantly recompence the little good we do them, whilst ungrateful man neglects, dishonours, and disobeys the supreme infinite fountain of life and love, the giver of all good things, on whom alone all our joys, and all our hopes depend, both for this world and that which is to come. These poor creatures obey the will of God for our good only, whilst we neglect or refuse to obey it, though our own eternal interest depends intirely upon it. This consideration should make us pray without ceasing, that God would be pleased

pleased to give us a considerate and thankful heart, a chearful and obedient spirit, that we may resign ourseves wholly to his disposal, and do his will as chearfully as the rest of his creatures do it on earth, or rather, as his holy angels do it in heaven.

C H A P. VII.

The Harvest, or Reaping your Corn.

THIS happy season of cutting down, and bringing in the fruits of the earth, is the completion and reward of every labour of the year; it was the prospect and hope of a plentiful harvest that encouraged all your industry, engaged all your attention, and sweetened every toil of life: it was this hope that made you rise early, work hard, *eat the bread of carefulness, and late take rest*: for this you manured, ploughed and sowed your lands; this made you bear with patience the summer's scorching heat, and winter's piercing cold, because you were fully persuaded that the joyful season of harvest would come to answer all your hopes, and reward all your labours. All this while your eyes and thoughts were intent upon the state and condition of your lands, to observe what reasonable hopes you might have of a plentiful harvest. Every man of sense among you, took due care to do every thing that was necessary to promote this favourite view, to procure a good crop, and guard against every thing that might prevent or injure it, and defeat his expectations. You watch with a diligent and careful eye to see when it is ripe and fit for the sickle, and then set all hands to work to cut it down, to bind it in sheaves and carry it into the barn to be a provision for yourselves and your families.

Now this article may supply you with many useful instructions for your edification and comfort. Our blessed Lord has made use of it as the most significant emblem to represent to us the consummation of all things, or the end of the world, as we read *Matt. xiii.* where he explains the parable of the tares to his disciples. When the multitude were gone away, v. 36. *He answered and said unto them, he that soweth the good seed is the son of man, the field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one, the enemy that sowed them is the devil: THE HARVEST IS THE END OF THE WORLD, v. 39.* From hence I shall endeavour to shew you the spiritual improvement you ought to make of it, from the exact correspondence there is betwixt the annual harvest of the fruits of the earth, and the last universal harvest, which is the end of the world, when all shall be cut down, when all the beauties and glories of this corruptible transitory world shall be destroyed in one general conflagration, to make way for *new heavens and a new earth, to be an habitation of righteousness, 2. Pet. iii. 13.* *St. John, Rev. xiv.* has given us a very affecting and particular description of this last universal harvest. *I looked (says he) and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle; and another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sate on the cloud, thrust in thy sickle, and reap, for the time is come for thee to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe: and he that sate upon the cloud thrust in his sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped.* You see here, by the ripeness of the earth is expressed, the different states of the righteous and the wicked, the one ripe

ripe for deliverance and salvation, and the other for judgment and destruction. So the same sun ripens the good corn for the barn, and the tares and weeds for the fire: God in great mercy waits patiently for the ripeness of both, he does not cut off the wicked without allowing them sufficient time and space for repentance; he suffers them to live till they are past shame and repentance, till they are too bad to be mended, and are fit for nothing but to be cast into the fire. The wheat and the tares (as we read in this parable) are suffered to grow together, 'till the time of harvest, when the one shall be gathered into the barn, and the other bound up in bundles for the fire.

Let us now dwell a little upon our Lord's comparison between the yearly harvest of the fields, and the general harvest in the end of the world; and see what useful lessons of instruction the lowest degree of *common sense* may suggest to every serious and attentive mind.

1st. Every man of *common sense* who is possessed of a competent estate, expects and endeavours to raise out of it, a subsistence for himself and his family. Every man of *common sense*, that rents an estate of another, contrives so to proportion his time, his labour, and his expences, as to be able to maintain himself and his family, and to answer the demands of his landlord: he that in either case acts otherwise, is a fool.

2dly. Every man of *common sense* knows, that this can only be done by constant labour, and proper management of his land; he therefore that neglects the proper culture, that neither ploughs nor sows, but spends his time in idleness and luxury, and suffers his land to lye waste and uncultivated, can never expect to reap.

3dly.

3dly. Every man of *common sense* knows, that the crop he expects, must be answerable in quality and quantity to the seed he has sown. None but an idiot can expect to reap wheat where he has sown oats or barley; nor can he expect to reap good grain of any sort where he has sown nothing but tares or grass seed. It is an infallible maxim in reason and religion, that what a man sows, that shall he reap: and so with regard to the increase, revelation, reason and common sense agree, that both in the natural and spiritual world, *He that soweth little shall reap little, - and he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously,* 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7. Upon these plain and obvious principles you proceed with regard to the culture of your lands, and reasonable expectations of a plentiful increase; and you would laugh at any man who should act otherwise. You could not pity a man who should complain for the want of a good crop, when you knew he had done nothing to procure it; who could think of sowing upon fallow land, or the high road, or expect to reap a good crop of any sort, without preparing the ground, and sowing the proper seed to produce it? Just so it is and will be with our spiritual harvest. It is equally true in the spiritual sense as in the natural, that *what a man sows, that he shall also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.* He that lives an idle, dissolute, irreligious life, is sowing the seeds of distress, misery and shame in this world, and certain destruction in that which is to come, and can have no reasonable hopes of any thing else; whilst the truly pious and religious man, whose life is a constant habit of devotion towards God, and love and charity to mankind, is sowing the seeds of
 peace

peace and serenity of mind in this world, and of eternal happiness and glory in that which is to come.

Consider now the happiness of that man, who has made a right use and improvement of his farm, who has manured and tilled his ground, and sowed good seed with a plentiful hand, which he daily sees growing and improving by the special blessing of God upon his labour. With what pleasure does such a one look back upon his past labours and forward to the time of harvest, which will be to him a day of recompence for all his expence and toil, when what he has sown in sweat and tears, he shall reap in joy, and eat the fruit of his labours with thanksgiving?

On the other hand how unhappy how hopeless, how unpitied will the state of that man be, who has made no improvement at all of his land, who has neither ploughed nor sowed, nor has any kind of stock upon his ground? Whilst he sees others rejoicing in the success of their labours, and the improvement of their fortunes, he alone has no share in the common joy, having nothing to satisfy the just demands of his landlord, nor to support himself and his family: such a man has no title to our pity, he does not deserve common compassion; his misery is of his own making, he is ruined by his own obstinate stupidity, and has no body to blame but himself.

Just the same will be the difference betwixt the righteous and the wicked, in the general harvest of the world: he who has spent his life in a steady uniform course of obedience to the laws of God, and affectionate devotion to his service, feels within himself a most comfortable expectation of a glorious reward: he comforts himself under all the difficulties and adversities of this life, that a day of retribution will come, when all his in-

ward

ward acts of devotion and faith, all his secret prayers and tears, like grain hid in the earth, shall spring and multiply an hundred fold to everlasting life. — Whilst the wicked and impenitent have nothing to hope, but every thing to fear: they that have neither feared God, nor regarded man, who have never begged God's mercy for themselves, nor shown any to their fellow-creatures, who have either spent their riches in riot and intemperance, or, which is not quite so bad, as not being attended with quite so bad consequences, hoarded it up as their chief treasure, and trusted in it as their God; they have sown no seed for eternal life, and therefore can have no comfortable ground of hope for the general harvest: he that has intirely neglected the culture of his ground, that has sown no seed, but has spent the season in drunkenness and sleep, has no reason to expect miracles to relieve necessities of his own making; but must expect the sluggard's curse, *Prov. xx. 4. The sluggard will not sow by reason of the cold, therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing.* He too that has dressed and ploughed his field, and instead of good grain has sown tares, nettles, and hemlock, or planted briars and thorns, has no reason to expect he shall reap wheat or barley from the one, or gather figs or grapes from the other; it being a general and infallible rule, that what a man sows that only he can expect to reap.

By this rule every honest and good soul may form a certain judgment concerning his spiritual estate, and his reasonable hopes of a comfortable portion in the universal harvest, or end of the world. No man can be at a loss to know what he has sown, and by consequence what he may reasonably expect to reap. Every thought word
and

action of our lives, are so many seeds sown into eternity, which cannot fail to produce their proper effects, as seeds sown in the ground do their proper fruits. *He that has sown to the flesh, will of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.* Sin of every kind is the never-failing seed of misery, shame and destruction; devotion and piety towards God, love and charity to our neighbours, the just and regular exercise of our reason, the mortification of our corrupt passions, and a temperate and religious use of the blessings of this life, are the certain seeds of peace, honour, health, and happiness in this world, and that which is to come. If, therefore, you chuse to live in an absolute contempt of religion, and neglect of all the means of grace, and yet expect to find mercy at the last, you are just as wise as if you should sow tares and hemlock, and expect to reap wheat and barley: nay farther yet, should you chuse to live an indolent, idle life, though with the appearances of decency and religion, should you abstain from all gross and scandalous sins, and yet give up yourselves intirely to what the world calls innocent pleasures and amusements of life, either in the field or the assembly, should you suffer your heads and hearts to be devoted to trifles, how innocent soever they may be in themselves when properly and prudently used; you may as wisely spend your time in sowing sand and saw-dust (very innocent things!) and expect to reap the noblest and choicest productions of the harvest. Deceive not yourselves with notions, that this or that diversion is innocent, that these games and sports are not sinful, and may therefore be innocently indulged; that which is innocent in itself, may become highly criminal by excessive fondness
for

for them, by using them at improper seasons or places, to the neglect of the necessary duties of our calling and station. Whatever engrosses your time and affections, and steals away your hearts from God, the care of your immortal souls, and the interest of eternity, cannot be innocent, but must be sinful and dangerous. Let this thought teach you to pray earnestly to God, that he would *so teach you to number your days, that you may apply your hearts unto wisdom.*

C H A P. VIII.

Tytbeing and Gleaning.

AS the harvest you have been reaping is entirely the gift of God, you are thereby instructed and called upon to acknowledge and adore the infinite power and goodness of Almighty God, in making this constant yearly provision for the subsistence of all his creatures: who, from such seemingly contemptible principles, produces such a wonderful variety of fruits and grain for the service of man and beast: for it is God alone that quickens the seed sown in the earth, which rots and dies before it rises to bring forth fruit; for one may plant, and another may water, *but it is God only that giveth the increase*, he alone it is *that maketh our garners full and plenteous with all manner of store, and giveth us all things richly to enjoy.* To him therefore we are bound to make all the proper acknowledgments that reason or revelation can dictate to us: reason itself teaches us, that if God be the giver of all these good things, he has a right to dispose of them as he sees fit, and to determine in what manner, under what restrictions, and with what reserves they are
to

to be enjoyed : he might command what portion he pleased to be applied to his own peculiar service, in the nature of a quit-rent or acknowledgment, to be paid to him as the chief lord of the soil : but as it is impossible for reason to discover what proportion ought to be thus applied, he has been graciously pleased to make his own appointment, and give us proper directions how to apply it, *Lev. xxvii. 30.* He tells us, *All the Tythe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's, it is holy unto the Lord.* The tenth part of all the produce of the earth, whether by seed or tree, he has reserved to himself, and expects it to be punctually paid by those who hope for God's blessing in the enjoyment of the other nine.

But here again it is impossible for reason to discover in what manner this acknowledgment is to be made, and to whom it is to be paid. God himself can neither want nor receive it, but may dispose of it to such persons, and for such uses as he shall see fit : and accordingly he tells, *Numb. xviii. 31.* *Behold I have given the children of Levi, all the tenth in Israel, for an inheritance for the service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, i. e. I have given the Tythe, or tenth part of all the produce of the land, for a perpetual inheritance to the priests that minister at my altar, to support and reward their attendance on my service.* And accordingly we find, that not only among the *Jews*, but even in heathen nations, the tenth part of the spoils taken in war, or the produce of lands, was the usual and ordinary proportion dedicated to their Gods ; and in the christian church, the clergy have always been thought to have as good a title to the

tenth part, as the proprietors have to the other nine ; and this title is as well guarded by repeated laws, as any other branch of property can be. I know very well the general silly clamours that are raised against the clergy, by weak or profane people, upon this account ; our demands are thought very unjust, and we are too often represented as a set of lazy people, who live upon other folks labours, who are unjustly compelled to give us what we have no right to demand or receive ; and therefore they think it no more crime to defraud us of those pretended dues, than to deceive a pick-pocket, or out-wit a robber. This is an imagination as silly as it is wicked. God, who is the supreme and absolute proprietor of the whole earth, has reserved the *tenth* to himself, the title is in him, though the uses and profits are given to us ; and the detaining those dues and offerings from us, he declares to be a robbery and injustice to himself. Thus the prophet *Malachi* expostulates with the *Jewish* nation on this account, chap. iii. 8. *Will a man rob God ? (says he) yet you have robbed me ; yet ye say, wherein have we robbed thee ? In tythes and offerings : ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.* But suppose we had no divine right to plead in this case, yet we have as good, if not a better legal title to the *tenth part*, as any other man to the other nine. The first founders of churches, (to go no higher) who had an undoubted right to dispose of their estates as they pleased, dedicated at least the *tenth part* to the glory of God, and the maintenance of the clergy for his service ; and whenever the property of those estates has been transferred to other owners, it has always been with a reserve of the *tenth part* ; so that the purchaser never buys, and the tenant never rents

more than nine parts in ten of the estate; for you all know, that when an estate is to be sold or let *tythe free*, the price rises in proportion. Since then the *nine parts* are only yours, and the tenth is reserved by God the great landlord, for his own service, you should with a devout and religious heart, separate it conscientiously from the rest, as an act of religious gratitude to God, who alone gives you the increase of your lands, and blesses the fruits of your labour. You may say perhaps, we are pleading for ourselves; and the same you may say to every other man who is pleading for truth and justice, in which every particular man is concerned. How severe would any of you be upon the character of any clergyman, whom you suspect to have done you an injury? and very justly; but pray consider, is it not the same iniquity for you to injure them? It is a very strange notion, that *the clergy* are the only people that may be cheated, without any checks of conscience, of a property settled upon them by the donation of God himself, and secured to them by the laws of their country. Certain it is, that whoever is guilty of this kind of injustice, must offend out of *mere malice or ignorance*; if the former, it must proceed from an irreligious unbelieving heart, not to be mended but by a miracle; but if the latter, if they offend through ignorance or mistake, if they were not satisfied about the title by which we claim them, and the obligations they were under to pay them; if they really desire to be better informed, and would resolve to act agreeably to their own convictions, I refer them to an excellent little treatise upon that subject, written by the *Reverend and learned Dr. Webster*.*

* An appeal to the common sense, common honesty, and common piety of the laity, in respect to the payment of TYTHE.
London, 1745.

And as God Almighty has thus reserved *the tenth* part to himself, and has expressly appropriated it for support and maintenance of the priests who attend his service, and wait at his altar; so he has another very reasonable demand upon you, in behalf of your poor neighbours, as it is clearly expressed, *Lev. xxiii. 22. When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them to the poor, and to the stranger: I am the Lord your God.* As if he had said, I am the Lord of the whole earth, the sole proprietor and disposer of all worldly blessings, and have therefore a right to command your obedience in this point, that you shew a tender and charitable regard to your poor neighbours, that they who by the providence of God are destitute of any possessions of their own, nor are able to support themselves by renting the estates of others, should have a moderate share of the blessings I bestow on you, and rejoice and bless God for the prosperity of their neighbours. This will bring God's blessing on all your labours, and multiply the fruit of your ground to your comfort and my glory.

Let this, my brethren, be your constant way of thinking and acting upon every return of this season, *That the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof*; that it is his blessing only that gives the former and the latter rain upon the earth, that multiplies the seed sown, and gives you the several fruits of the earth in their season. If you therefore expect his blessing, he will also expect your obedience, that you honestly and chearfully pay him those acknowledgments which he has required

quired of you. This will secure to you the continuance of his blessing here, and in the *general harvest*, which is *the end of the world*; you shall see all your just and pious, and charitable actions returning with a large and plentiful increase into your own bosoms: and your great Landlord shall approve and reward all your labours of love, with that comfortable welcome, *Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

C H A P. IX.

Going to Fairs and Markets.

THIS is a necessary part of your employment, but so full of temptations to lie, deceive and cheat one another, that it requires great constancy, and steady integrity to discharge this part of your duty, without wounding your consciences and injuring your neighbours. It is, a just and true observation of the son of *Sirach*, *As a nail sticketh fast between the joining of the stone, so doth sin stick close betwixt buying and selling.* Innumerable are the arts which the children of this world (who are called among themselves *notable men, shrewd fellows, cunning dealers*, who are indeed much wiser in their generation than the children of light) make use of to deceive and cheat the credulity or ignorance of their chapman; and a man that has not the fear of God before his eyes, will hardly stick at the very worst of them, when a good bargain or a gainful purchase are in view. How will the seller commend and magnify the value of the goods which he has to dispose of? How many infamous lies will he tell to raise their value,

value, and get a good price? On the other hand, how does the buyer vilify and depreciate the goods he is cheapening? It was *Solomon's* observation in his time, *It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer, and when he is gone away, he boasteth,* Prov. xx. 14. that he has been too cunning for his neighbour.

But you will say, perhaps, that you neither swear nor lie, but only make use of the usual honest arts to make the best of your market. It is impossible to fix any general rule to ascertain the value, and fix the standard of profit to be raised from the several articles of trade; but this must be said in general, that whosoever conceals any damage or fault in the goods he exposes to sale, and at the same time demands as good a price as the same commodity would bring if it had not that fault, is a cheat and a villain, whatever fashion and custom, in some particular articles, may offer to defend it. He that imposes upon the ignorance of a child, a servant, or any other unskilful person, so as to make him pay more for a thing than he knows it to be worth, is unjust to his neighbour, in spite of all the excuses and evasions he can offer for himself: and to say the truth, no man that deceives another in the goodness or value of what he sells, can plead ignorance; I mean, of his guilt; his own conscience tells him, he is playing the rogue whilst he is making his bargain, because he very well knows he would think and call that man a cheat and a villain, that should act by him as he has done by another.

To do to every man, as we expect or desire he should do to us, is the first fundamental law of natural

natural justice ; and at the same time so short and so plain, that any man of the meanest understanding may comprehend and reduce it to practice. If either of you should be imposed upon, and cheated in any article of your dealings, how natural is it for you to express your resentments of his villainy and your own suffering, in the most warm and passionate language, and wish you had it in your power to demand such satisfaction from him as the law will not give you ? There are numberless instances of flagrant injustice, against which the laws of the land have not, and perhaps cannot make a proper provision, from whence therefore you can expect no redress ; which are yet as criminal in the sight of God, as those open and notorious crimes which bring little scoundrels to shame and the gallows ; and which, though they may escape unpunished in this life, will infallibly meet with their due reward in the next. Now, put the case, you could securely cheat and wrong your neighbour, without any fear of discovery and punishment in this world, yet consider (I beseech you) what a foolish bargain you are making, and what will be the certain consequences of your knavery in the next world ; and very probably in this, your own heart will condemn you ; your consciences, if not quite stupified, and, in the language of the apostle, *seared with a hot iron*, will be perpetually upbraiding you with the injustice you have committed ; you will be under constant apprehensions of shame and punishment, in some shape or other, or being cheated by some cunninger villain than yourselves, as a just punishment of your injustice to others.

But suppose you could so effectually secure that point as to be under no apprehensions of discovery

very or punishment, yet you can never hope or expect that your unjust gains will ever prosper with you or your families. How often do you read in scripture the judgments denounced against unrighteous dealings, against false weights, and balances, and every instance of injustice to your neighbour? Hear how emphatically holy Job represents the portion of oppressors, even in this life, ch. xx. v. 12. *Though wickedness, (i. e. his wicked and unjust gains, the rewards of his wickedness) be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue, though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth, yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him: he hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly. That which he laboured for shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down: according to his substance shall the restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein. Because he hath oppressed and forsaken the poor, because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not, surely he shall not find quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he desired. In the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits, every hand of the wicked shall come upon him. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places, a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart: and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath, This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God. Let no man therefore go beyond to defraud his brother in any matter, for the*

Lord is the avenger of all such, 1 Theff. iv. 6. How dreadful an entail is this, which unjust and unrighteous parents leave upon their families, whilst they stick at nothing to make them great and rich in this world. The curse of God will rest upon the unrighteous possession, and however they may seem to prosper in this world, will infallibly overtake them in the next. It was the observation of a wise heathen, *That an ill-gotten estate seldom descended to the third generation*; and a very slender acquaintance with the history of families, will furnish us with abundant instances to confirm it. A serious consideration of this article should awaken in every serious mind, a spirit of prayer and supplication to God, for grace to keep and preserve him from the sins that do so easily beset him in the commerce and traffic of the world. He should beg of God so to enlighten his mind, that he may see the vanity and emptiness of worldly riches, and the madness and folly of covetousness, so as never to be seduced to fraud or injustice, to increase or preserve his estate; that he may never be tempted to purchase the treasures of this world with the loss of a good conscience, knowing that *it will profit a man nothing, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul.* He should incessantly beg of God, to give him grace to be true and just in all his dealings, that *he may always keep innocency, and take heed heed to the thing that is right, for that only can give a man peace at the last; always remembering, that better is a little that the righteous hath, than great riches of the ungodly.*

C H A P. X.

The Rent-Day.

THIS one article is of more concern than all the rest, being the great end for which all the rest are designed. On this day you are to render an account to your respective landlords of the labours and profits of the whole year, in proportion to the value of the several estates you hold of them. A due attention to this article, and the good or bad use you make of it, is what distinguishes a good tenant from a bad one, and shows the difference betwixt a wise man and a fool; because, on this alone depends the favour of your landlords, the enjoyment of your farms, and all your reasonable hopes of prosperity for yourselves and families. An inconsiderate stupid fellow considers himself only as the occupier of so much land, out of which he can raise a certain yearly profit, which he spends as fast as it comes in, without making any provision to satisfy his landlord: and when the rent-day comes, think what an absurd ridiculous figure he must make. Could he be fool enough to own, that indeed he was a tenant, but as he had taken a great deal of pains to improve the estate, so he thought he had a right to spend it at he thought fit; that he had spent it very merrily, and had made a very good figure among his neighbours, but that he had really no money for him; but that he must have patience, 'till he could find out ways and means to procure it. What could such a blockhead reasonably expect from the most patient landlord, but to be turned out of his farm, perhaps to be confined to a jail for his life, and his poor family sent to work or beg their bread?

The honest tenant considers, that he is not the proprietor of the lands he occupies, but that he depends upon the favour of his landlord, and a due execution of the several articles of his lease: his tenure he knows is precarious, and therefore takes care so to proportion his expences, that he may lay by enough to satisfy the legal demands of his landlord, to secure his favour and the enjoyment of his farm. Does not every one of you see the difference of these characters? Can you, in your own sober reflections, acquit the one of injustice and stupidity? and do you not approve and applaud the provident care and justice of the latter? You must, you cannot do otherwise.

Now then let us see the religious use, the spiritual improvement you ought to make of this important article. *The Rent-Day*, or day of accounts with your landlords, naturally suggests to a serious and religious mind, the great and solemn day of account that we must all give to the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, at his appearance to judge the world in righteousness; for he will come in his own and in his Father's glory, to render to every man according to his works. All the inhabitants of the earth, high and low, princes and peasants, rich and poor, are all equally tenants to the supreme Lord: no man is the proprietor of what he possesses, nor has he so much as a lease for any term of years; he is at best but a tenant at will, liable to be turned out at a moment's warning, and obliged to come to a strict account as soon as he quits it, and to have his everlasting state determined by the good or evil use he has made of it. This consideration ought to affect the landlord as well as the tenant, the prince as well as the vassal, and to

speak

speak a plain and serious truth, much more; for the more a man has had committed to his charge, the greater is his obligation, and the severer will be the account he has to give. It is our Lord's rule, founded on the truest equity and nature of things, that *to whomsoever much is given, of him will much be required; and to whom men have given much, of him they will ask the more,* Luke xii. 48. The careless inconsiderate christian therefore, of whatever rank or condition he be, who spends his time and substance in pride and pleasure, in riot and intemperance, and takes no care to be rich in good works, and make a proper preparation for eternity, is ten times a more absurd unaccountable creature than the careless improvident tenant: the latter may possibly prevail upon the landlord's good-nature, to wait for his arrears of rent, or forgive him the whole debt; he may try his fortune in some other farm with better success, or by some lucky contingency in life may recover his former losses, and perhaps be richer than ever he was, or ever expected to be. All this, I say, may happen to a careless negligent tenant; but the careless impenitent christian, has not so much as the shadow of this hope to excuse his folly, or support his misfortunes. So soon as he turns out of this earthly tenement, the scene is closed upon upon him for ever; he is cut off from the land of the living, incapable of a second experiment, but is directly confined to a state of misery and despair. Our blessed Lord has shewn in a beautiful light the equity of this proceeding, under the parable of a steward to an absent lord; which is just the same case with this before us. *Luke xii. 42. The Lord said, who is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season. Blessed is that*

that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, he will make him ruler of all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the men servants, and the maid servants, and to eat and drink and to be drunken: the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour that he is not aware, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. The case is the very same with the careless inconsiderate christian; they both know, if they would but allow themselves to think seriously about it, that they are both one time or other to be called upon for an account, though the particular time be absolutely unknown; that their happiness or misery must depend on the righteous or unrighteous state of their accounts; that therefore, in common prudence, as well as justice, they ought to take care that they be just and fair, and fit to bear a strict examination whenever they are called for: to neglect this, to live at random, to leave the most important interests of eternity to chance, one would think were the height of folly. But (alas! I grieve to say it) there are to be found amongst us, more extravagant madmen than these; men, who by the peculiar favour of heaven, seem to want no manner of earthly blessings, live in the highest affluence and plenty, and therefore under the highest obligations of gratitude and duty to their heavenly benefactor; who yet take pains to abuse the blessings they enjoy, and dishonour and affront the God that bestows them; who instead of using their plenty to his honour and the relief and comfort of their poor neighbours, spend it in riot and intemperance, and sacrifice their strength, their time, their fortunes, their

bodies and souls to lust and sensuality; and not only so, but by their vicious lives and scandalous examples, do what in them lies to corrupt their dependants and inferiors, and harden them in principles of impiety and infidelity. Great is the influence of example, especially of superiors, upon those below them: people in low life take a pride in imitating their betters, and are naturally tempted to think, that if those whom they are taught to believe wiser and better than themselves, live in open defiance of God, and contempt of all religion, they must know more of the matter than they poor uneducated creatures can do; and therefore are induced to believe, that all the grave serious lessons they have been formerly taught concerning God and religion, heaven and hell, are all a jest; that they are under no manner of Obligation to perform those acts of piety and devotion, which they see universally neglected by those who are or ought to be, wiser and better than themselves.

I wish I could prevail upon these very wise gentlemen to consider seriously, how they would be pleased with their tenants and servants if they should all agree to treat them with the same contempt that they do their God, if they should all resolve together to dispute their titles to their estates, to defy their authority, and oppose or neglect all their commands. Should they plainly tell them, they despise them, and will pay them neither rent nor service, think how the proud spirit of a poor little sinner would swell under such a provocation, who yet dares to treat his God in the very same manner: would he not, think you, immediately discard such tenants and such servants. and execute the severity of the law upon them? And yet so stupid are these poor creatures, so infatuated
with

pride and vanity, as to think that the great Lord of heaven and earth, in whose sight all the inhabitants of the earth, are but *as the drops of a bucket, or the dust of a balance*, will overlook the impiety of this profane generation, and never enter into judgment with them for it. But let them not deceive themselves, *God will not be mocked*. They may laugh and be merry as they please, yet God is in earnest: they may sleep on in their sins, but the justice of God sleepeth not, but will infallibly overtake them one time or other. A righteous and dreadful day of account is coming, and draws on apace; when he only shall be approved and rewarded who has, with an honest and good heart, laboured diligently and faithfully in the station which his heavenly Father hath allotted him, and studied in all things to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

When therefore the tenant is paying and the landlord receiving his rent, it should naturally suggest to them both, the serious consideration of the last great account they have both to make of the several talents committed to their charge. The tenant must remember that he has an account to make up with his God as well as with his landlord; and the landlord, how great soever he be, that he has a landlord and master in heaven to whom he must be accountable, and according to whose righteous judgment, he must expect to be happy or miserable to all eternity. How can any man in his senses reflect on this tremendous day of account, without daily and resolute preparation for it? How ought this to be uppermost in all our thoughts, and have its just weight in all the affairs of life? How ought we to pray without ceasing, that *God would teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*, and at the

last great day be able to give up our accounts with joy, and be justified and glorified in the sight of men and angels.

C H A P. XI.

Keeping the Lord's Day.

HAVING gone through the several articles, and different labours of your employment, what remains but briefly to consider the duties of the Sabbath which God has mercifully appointed not only as a day of rest from your weekly labours, but as a type and symbol of that blessed *sabbatism or day of rest*, which he has promised to all his faithful servants, when they shall rest from all their labours, *Heb. iv. 9.* Though the designation of one particular day (as the seventh or the first) seems to be positive, yet the setting apart some portion of time for publick as well as private devotion, seems to be of moral Obligation, and a part of natural religion, and was doubtless as ancient as the creation itself. The reason given for the appointment of the seventh day in the fourth commandment, concluded as strongly, and (if possible) more strongly then, than it does now; and that it was accordingly observed from the beginning, is more than probable, not only from the nature of the thing and the reason on which it was enjoined, but from the testimony of scripture, particularly *Exod. xvi. 23.* *To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath to the Lord*, and this before the giving of the law in which the seventh day was appointed to be kept holy. This holy day, therefore, is properly and peculiarly *The Lord's Day*, and should be appropriated to his service, by all the exercises of public and private devotion.

By

By the necessary labours of your employment on the other six days, your time and thoughts are too much engaged in worldly affairs, to be able to spend much of it in reading, or more close thinking: but on this day you are happily relieved from them all, that you may be at leisure to attend the service of God, and the important interest of eternity. On this day, therefore, you are particularly called upon to attend the public worship of God in the church, and to bring as many of your family along with you as can be spared from the necessary labours of the house, to be early in your attendance, that you may be present at the beginning of the service, and join with the congregation in every part of it; for our liturgy is a regular and consistent form of devotion, every part of which has a just coherence and connection with the rest, and all together make one of the noblest offices of divine worship that ever was used in the christian church. Every sincere christian, therefore, who attends those religious assemblies on religious principles, must confess, that the neglecting or omitting any part of the service, does in a certain degree weaken or defeat the design and attention of the whole, and lessen or destroy the benefits and advantages we might reasonably expect to receive from it.

I speak this to those few sincere christians, who come to church upon christian principles to join with the congregation in a devout confession of their manifold sins and offences against God, and to receive the benefit and comfort of absolution, which God, by the mouth of his minister, doth declare and pronounce to all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel: to hear or read with devout attention the psalms and lessons selected for our admonition and instruction; to join

in the public petitions for the graces and blessings we stand in need of, and thanksgivings for those we enjoy. Such as these will think themselves obliged to be present at the beginning of the service, and to join in every part with such decency, humility and devotion, as a sinful indigent creature ought to pay to the best and greatest of beings, from whom every good and every perfect gift cometh, on whose favour alone all our hopes of happiness depend, both in this life and that which is to come.

But as for those who come out of fashion, custom, or curiosity, you see them dropping carelessly in, in the midst of the service, without any appearance of devotion to God, or reverence for his service; they clap themselves down on a seat, without any regard to the decent postures of standing or kneeling in the different parts of the service, and divert themselves with staring and gaping about, or perhaps falling fast asleep. If charity itself can plead nothing in excuse for such behaviour, if they can plead nothing to justify or excuse themselves; how much more inexcusable must they be, who seldom or never come at all? who make no other distinction betwixt the Lord's Day, and the other days of the week, than that of being more at leisure to be wicked on that day than any other. Charity may perhaps suggest some sort of apology for the lower part of mankind, who may have never been taught to know their duty in this point; or if they have, yet may have been seduced, by the wicked examples of their superiors, to neglect and desert it. Poor ignorant labourers, who are by their situation of life excluded, in a good degree, from all those pleasures and diversions for which they have as keen an appetite as their betters, will be greatly delighted to
be

be told by the 'squire, or any other great man in the parish, that all this *sunday devotion is a mere farce, intended merely for the benefit of the parson*; that the original intention was no more than that it should be a day of rest and pleasure for man and beast; for neither the one nor the other can work always, they must lye by and rest sometimes, and this day has, by common consent, been set apart for this use; which they have a right therefore, to spend in what place and in what manner they please; they that have a mind to go to church, may; and they that had rather stay at home and drink, or play, or sleep, or walk in the fields, or any other business or diversion they shall like better, are at liberty to please themselves. Now when the ignorant and the silly are thus instructed, and at the same time see their superiors taking the same liberties they prescribe, it is no hard matter, to conceive that men of small understandings and slender virtue, may be easily seduced from their duty; to whom, therefore, we charitably hope some merciful allowances may be made: but for those who by their wicked Persuasions and examples seduce the ignorant and silly from their duty, not even the least shadow of an excuse can be pleaded by common sense, or common charity.

To attempt to reduce these gentlemen to a serious sense of duty, by the most sober and candid use of reason, is as vain as singing to the deaf, or preaching to the dead; as the disorder lies intirely in the corruption of their hearts; none but he that made and searches their hearts, is able to rectify and cure them. But my address is to you, my brethren, who have not yet been misled by the persuasions or examples of these seducers, that you may not be misled by vain words or vici-

ous examples to your own destruction. If these men profess themselves to be christians, and to believe the scriptures, they cannot want clear and strong evidences of their duty in this article. The observation of the sabbath is enjoined as an indispensable duty through the whole law and the prophets, and the violation of it as an heinous act of disobedience and rebellion against God; and the severest punishments denounced against it. If any be so weak or so wicked as to declare he does not see it, he thereby plainly confesses he does not read them: if he says he knows it, he thereby confesses he does not believe them: but if he says he believes them, and yet acts in defiance of their plainest directions, he then may be truly said to add mockery to disobedience, and impudence to rebellion.

But they will say, perhaps, that they reject revelation of every sort and kind, and acknowledge no law but that of *nature* or *pure deism*, in which they can find no precept for distinction of days, or preferring one day before another. Not to enter into the reason of the thing, in which it is strongly implied, I would ask them, if they ever heard or read of any civilized nation in the gentile world, in which particular stated times for religious worship were not only not observed, but also not enjoined by the laws of their country, which whosoever neglected or profaned, was looked upon as a wicked and irreligious person? 'Till such an instance can be produced, it may reasonably be presumed, that such a particular designation was considered, in the nature of things, as a necessary circumstance of religious worship. Not to mention that one of the principles of *deism* (if I understand it right) is an external compliance (whether as a point of *honour*, *decency*, *conscience*, or *convenience*,

convenience, I cannot determine) with the religion of every country where they happen to reside, whether *London, Geneva, Rome or Constantinople*; in which view, a nonconforming deist must, upon his own principles, appear culpable even to himself. God give them all repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth and amendment of their lives, that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

To you, I hope I need not add more to convince you of your duty in this article; your regular and orderly attendance, every Lord's Day, at least, is to me a comfortable assurance that you are actuated by a principle of true religion. This is indeed, the principal duty of the day; but there is another article of religious sincerity, which seems particularly to demand your attention on this holy day of rest from your ordinary labours, and that is, the setting apart some small portion of the day to enter into a strict examination of the true state of your souls, in the several branches of your duty to God and your neighbour, to examine yourselves by the rule of God's commandments, whether you have done your duty, and in all things endeavoured *to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man*: and if upon due examination your consciences do not condemn you, then you may have a reasonable and well grounded confidence towards God; but if you find yourselves guilty of any unrepented violations of your duty to God or your neighbour, that then (in the language of the communion-office) *you should bewail your own sinfulness, and to confess yourselves to almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life; and to make such restitution and satisfaction to your neighbours, for any injuries or wrongs done to them, as you yourselves would in like circumstances*

circumstances expect from them. Without this uprightness of heart and tenderness of conscience, all your external services of religion are an abomination to God, and will only help to increase your damnation. You may perhaps say, that you do this constantly before you receive the holy communion. I hope you do: but if your hearts tell you, that you do not constantly receive it, it will appear that there must be a criminal neglect of both. Were this a regular part of every Sunday's duty, and sincerely and devoutly performed, as it ought to be, you would find an unspeakable advantage and satisfaction from it, as those that have experienced it can testify. But after all, this is but a low degree of christian perfection, though I fear a very uncommon one, and there is something more required to evince the reality and sincerity of true religion.

True christianity is a spiritual life: a life that is hid with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. The reality and power of which can only be known (as every other kind of life must be) by its sensibility and its operations. Every kind of life naturally desires and attracts whatever is necessary for its preservation, and avoids whatever may tend to hurt or destroy it; and the higher and more noble every kind of life is, the more active and vigorous are its desires, perceptions, and operations, and the more tender and delicate its sensibility. If men, therefore, be true christians, if the divine life be active and vigorous in them, they could not fail but hunger and thirst after that righteousness of God, which alone can nourish and support it: they would gladly embrace every opportunity of exerting that life by acts of duty and obedience towards God, and of mercy and charity towards men; and at the same time have a religious dread
and

and aversion to every thing that may be destructive to themselves, by being displeasing to God, or injurious to men. And if such a person should, through the violence of a temptation, and the treachery of his own heart, be betrayed into any criminal action, it would, upon the first recollection, appear to his cool reflection so dreadful in its nature and consequence, that he could have no rest in his soul, 'till by sincere humble repentance and true contrition, he had endeavoured to make his peace with God: he could no more be easy under such remorse of conscience, than he could with a nail sticking in his flesh, or a thorn in his eye; no more lye down to sleep with any unrepented guilt upon him, than he would if the house were on fire about his ears, or he were sure to be murdered before morning. The life of such a man would be truly and properly a spiritual life, and would prevent all that confusion and embarrassment that must attend an undisciplined life, an intermitting piety, a partial obedience.

This religious state of mind, this habit of devotion arising from a tenderness and uprightnes of heart, and a sensibility of God's continual presence with us, and protection over us, is the very essence and perfection of religion: this is that *walking with God*, which raised *Enoch* to a state of incorruption; he lived under a continual and powerful sense of the divine presence, under a strong conviction and vital experience, that in God he lived, and moved, and had his being, that he was the giver of all good gifts; and the author of all the blessings he enjoyed; that in himself he was nothing, and could do nothing, but *that all his sufficiency was of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. that it was therefore his whole duty and happiness to walk
before

before him with an humble, loving, and obedient heart, to avoid every appearance of evil, and to labour *in all things to keep a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man*, Acts xxiv. 16. In his prosperity, to look up to him as the sole author of all his blessings: in his adversity, as his only protector and deliverer, and in all the changes and chances of this mortal life, never to let go his faith and dependence on him. This was *Enoch's walking with God, and therefore God took him*, Gen. v. 24. took him out of this world to himself, and he was not any more seen upon earth, nor were any remains of him interred among the graves of his ancestors: he did not depart as others do, by a separation of his soul from his body; but he was taken up alive in his intire person, to be happy with God in his heavenly kingdom: this God was graciously pleased to do, to give that wicked and unbelieving generation a sensible and lively testimony of another life, and the generations to come a type of *the living saints, being caught up with Christ at the last day, to be with him for ever*, 1 Thess. iv. 17.

The same lesson of perfection was given by God to *Abraham, the father of the faithful. Walk before me, and be thou perfect*; and is directed through him to all his faithful children, who are partakers of the same hope, and heirs of the same promises, which therefore requires a particular consideration. In a general sense, all men and all creatures walk before God, because nothing can be hid from the immensity of his presence, and in him, and by him all things subsist: but *we* are not truly said to be present *with him*; but when we think on him, and attend to his presence: neither is the bare thought and attention sufficient, unless it be animated with devo-

tion,

tion, resignation and love. Philosophers, wicked men, and evil spirits *walk before God*, and even think upon him, and reason about him, but *are spiritually* far from him, receive no benefit nor comfort from his presence. The one disputes about his nature, attributes and government, the others contradict, and the others blaspheme: but this is not that presence of God, that can give us any comfort, or lead us to perfection; for, as I said before, we then only can be said to *walk before him* in a proper and agreeable manner, when we walk with a loving attention to his will, a delight in his service, and an intire trust and confidence in his mercy and providence, like that of a dutiful and affectionate child in the presence of an indulgent father, whom he regards with an inexpressible tenderness, takes a delight in conversing with him, hearkening to his counsels, receiving his commands, which he executes with fidelity, alacrity, and joy: such also is the presence of faithful and affectionate lovers and friends, whose hearts and interests are united by an intire affection; they need no monitors to direct their conversation, no rules or measures to be prescribed for the regulation and exercise of their love; but in general, they find an inexpressible pleasure in being together, and an insupportable anguish in separation.

I shall illustrate this by a familiar instance, of which common sense and experience shall be judges. Suppose any of you was confined as a prisoner under the custody of an indulgent keeper, who should lay you under no other than legal restraints, only confining you from the sight and conversation of your beloved friends: he would sometimes suffer you to take the fresh air; but

H

always

always in his company, and under his eye : he might endeavour to amuse you, and divert your melancholy, by shewing you some of the beauties or curiosities of the country, or telling you some diverting or entertaining story : think what confidence, what affection, what enjoyment could either of you taste in such a conversation ; what jealousy and distrust must he always have toward you, and with what secret anxiety and aversion would you look upon him ; how often would you be forced to hold an insipid disagreeable conversation with him, whilst your heart was full, and your eyes overflowing with tenderness for your absent friends. You would gladly make your escape, but know it is impossible ; he watches you with a jealous eye, and never suffers you to be out of his sight, till he has brought you back again to your cell ; there he locks you up with as much caution as he would his most valuable treasure : and, in the midst of all this, though you should want none of the necessary refreshments of life, yet would your condition be almost as bad as death itself. And whence does this proceed, but from the want of that mutual love and tender affection, which is the life of society, the soul of friendship ? Where there is no love, there can be no enjoyment ; friendship without it is an empty name ; good breeding and complaisance are but polite hypocrisy, that differs as widely from the sentiments of a warm and affectionate heart, as a shadow from the substance, as light from darkness : we say what we do not think, we profess to love what we inwardly despise or hate ; we submit and serve as slaves, only because we cannot help it. Such is the state of all wicked men with God !

Thought

Though they cannot be hid from his presence, nor in any degree conceal themselves from him, for *he is about their path, and about their bed, and spieth out all their ways*, Psal. cxxxix. 2. *There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves*, Job xxxv. 22. yet they can have no joy nor comfort in his presence: they secretly wish there were none at all, and in their sanguine fits of infidelity, endeavour to persuade one another, that there really is none; yet when they come to be sober, they find all nature gives them the lie, and forces upon them irresistible proofs to the contrary: and as this conviction is forced upon them, in spite of all their secret wishes to escape it: they regard him no otherwise than as a malicious spy upon their actions, who checks their warmest inclinations and appetites for pleasure, and dashes all their sweetest enjoyments with gall and wormwood: they would be glad to fly from Him; but all in vain. He is every where present to them; and by the voice of nature and conscience proclaims with the voice of thunder, that he is the maker and governor of the world, and will at last bring them into judgment, and render to every man according to his works. Under this perplexity of mind, the only refuge they have is to labour to forget him, and shut the disagreeable remembrance out of their thoughts: and this is vainly attempted by noise and laughter, by madness and folly; they endeavour to drown their fears in wine, and, like *Saul*, to allay the evil spirit with music, or to deface the remembrance of old sins, by the commission of new ones. Vain attempt! Some little relief may possibly be found this way, by people of robust health, high spirits, and an easy fortune, who can command and enjoy those delusive amusements; but, alas! they will find that these wretch-

ed frolics, like the habit of drinking drams, though they seem to cheer and elevate the spirits for the present, do, in the end, more effectually and fatally depress them : in spite of all their endeavours, the tormentor will return, conscience will be heard, and revenge the repeated affronts to its impartial authority, with louder cries, and more afflicting anguish ; in short, it will be in vain to expect the effect will cease till the cause is removed ; in vain will they speak peace to themselves, or hope to procure it by amusements and pleasures, till they return into the ways of truth and peace, by sincere repentance and amendment of life ; for sad experience, as well as reason and scripture, assure us, that *there is, there can be no peace to the wicked*, Isa. lvii. 61. And they themselves confess it openly to the world, by the ridiculous methods they take to conceal it. The true peace, and heart-felt joy, are sedate and serious things, not to be tasted but in the cool and calm of life, in retirement and recollection, which, to the men of pleasure (as they are falsely called) are not only insipid, but insupportable : hence you find these men never easy but in a crowd and a hurry ; always upon the stretch for new diversions and amusements, like froward children for new play-things ; any thing to murder time, and cool reflection, to relieve the insupportable burden of solitude and sober thinking. Whatever, therefore, tends to awaken in them the dreadful remembrance of God, and the terrors of death and judgment, is regarded with horror and aversion. Books of piety and devotion, places and offices of public worship, they shun, as things or places infected with the plague ; the conversation and friendship of pious and religious men, they avoid as insolvent debtors do
their

their creditors, who are teasing them with demands, which they are not able or willing to satisfy. Such is the presence of God to every wicked man!

How different is the state and behaviour of the true christian and lover of God! to him the presence of God is a perpetual source of happiness and joy. He beholds him in all the different states and circumstances of life as his merciful creator and preserver, his best benefactor, his truest friend, his compassionate father: these various titles and relations, founded on infinite goodness, wisdom, and power, awaken in him every tender sentiment of gratitude, devotion, and love. He knows that the one great and only business he has in this world, is to engage his favour and protection, by a dutiful and affectionate obedience to his will; because all his hopes and expectations of happiness, both here and hereafter, depend solely upon it; and therefore makes it his chief and only concern, amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life. When he is alone, retired from the presence and conversation of mankind, he considers himself in the presence of the best of beings, the father of mercies, and God of all compassion, to whom he pours out the overflowings of a tender and devout spirit, and receives such returns of inward peace and comfort, as the world can neither give nor take away. When business and company call him from his solitude, and engage him in the necessary affairs of life, he acts regularly, without hurry or distraction; and in all the different scenes of business and conversation through which he passes, takes special care never to sacrifice the innocency of his mind, nor the peace of his con-

H 3 science,

science, to any worldly interest, base designs, or unworthy prostitution to other mens follies and vices. If he prosper in the world, and enjoy the comforts and blessings of life, he sees and blesses the hand of God that bestows them; he abuses not his plenty, by riot and intemperance; nor exalts himself above others, on account of his being richer or greater than they; but knows, and considers well, that his fortune, his health, his friends, and all that he has or can hope for, are the sole gift of God; and therefore makes a right use of them, and enjoys them with humility, gratitude, and charity. If the world frown upon him, and storms of adversity overtake him; if wicked men, or wicked spirits afflict or oppress him, here also he sees and acknowledges the mighty hand of God, who, for wise reasons of providence, suffers him to be afflicted for a season, either for the punishment of his sins, or the trial of his faith and patience, to purify his soul, and dispose him for some greater good, either here or hereafter. *Yea, though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet he fears no evil; because God is with him, his rod and his staff comfort him,* Psal. xxiii. 14. For it is an infallible rule, that whatever happens to a resigned soul in every moment of life, whatever crosses or afflictions he suffers, either from wicked spirits, wicked men, or natural causes, they are the sensible effects of the will of God towards him, and of that special providence, by which the very hairs of our head are all numbered, *Matt. x. 30.* This is so universally true, that (excepting our own sins) whatever happens to us even by the sins of others, is the manifest will of God concerning us. Thus when *boly Job* was, for the trial of his faith and patience, by God's permission, abandoned for a season, as to his temporal

poral concerns, to the malice of the evil spirit, who had reduced him to the lowest degree of poverty and misery; the good man overlooked, as it were, the malice of the evil spirit, and the barbarity of the plunderers, who had destroyed his cattle and murdered his servants; but fixed his whole attention on the providence of God, without whose permission he knew, that neither men nor devils could hurt him: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord,* Job i. 21. So also we read, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. that when *Shimei* cursed *David*, and loaded him with bitter reproaches, the good king considered not the impudence of the reviler, suffered not his servants to punish him as he deserved; but submitted all to the will of God, who had permitted an outrageous villain thus to insult and abuse him. *So let him curse* (says he) *because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David: who then shall say wherefore has thou done so?* And our blessed Lord himself calls his own sacred passion, though contrived and executed by the extreme wickedness of men, *a cup which his father had given him to drink.* The cup (says he) *which my father has given me, shall I not drink it?* John xviii. 11.

This happy state of mind naturally produces an habit of devotion, as easily acquired as the common means of procuring the necessaries of life. A devout man, under any sense of guilt or infirmity, any pressure or fear of evil, as naturally flies to the throne of grace for relief and comfort, as a hungry child runs to his parent for food, a sick man to his physician for help, or a man in distress implores the assistance of his friend for support or deliverance. This is truly *walking with*

with God, this is the path that leadeth to perfection; such was the religion of *Abel, Enoch, Noah, Job*, and all the holy men of old, the heroes of faith, celebrated by the author to the *Hebrews*, chap. xi. who firmly *believed in God, and that he was a rewarder of all such as diligently seek him.* To such a man every day is a sabbath, and every place is a temple: so saith the devout *Thomas à Kempis*, Book II. chap. i. *He that knows how to walk inwardly with God, in abstraction from earthly things, will never be at a loss for times and places of devotion; for in spirit he prayeth without ceasing.*

As therefore your necessary occupations keep you in a great measure from the use of spiritual books, and constant attendance on the public service of the church, especially on the week days, here you are in a peculiar situation engaged in such labours only as leave your heads and hearts, if devoutly and religiously disposed, quite at liberty for the noblest exercises of this inward and spiritual worship. When you are following your plough, your flocks, or your herds, you will find no difficulty in thinking upon God, the author of all your blessings, and devoting yourselves to his service: when you behold your fields smiling with plenty, your flocks and herds increasing with prosperity and success in all your labours; you cannot help remembering that it is God that blesses the seed sown, that sends the former and the latter rain upon the earth; it is he alone that multiplies your flocks and your herds, that *makes your oxen strong to labour, and suffers not your cattle to decrease*, that gives you health and strength to labour, and rejoice in all the works of your hands: to him therefore, every article of your employment

employment directs your devout attention and dutiful obedience. St. *Jerome*, in one of his epistles, tells us, that in the country where he lived, there was nothing more common than to hear the poor illiterate people singing divine and spiritual hymns, instead of idle and wanton songs, which vitiate and corrupt the mind: *you could not go into the fields, but you would hear the ploughman at his hallelujahs, the mower at his hymns, and the vine-dresser singing David's psalms*; for this is really no more than the plain and natural motion of a devout and religious heart; it is not confined to particular times, or places, or offices of life; it requires no hard study, or deep learning; it depends not on fine parts, or a clear head; but the most illiterate and simple person, with a devout and honest heart, and a will resigned to God, is as capable of it as the most learned man in the world; and indeed much more so, as our Lord himself has testified, *Mat. xi. 25. I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth; because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

The most remarkable instance of this kind that I have met with in modern story, is that of a poor servant-maid, in a noble family in *France*, whose life was written in *French* by an eminent person (I think a bishop) it has had several impressions, and been translated into most of the modern languages, under the title of *The good Armelle*. She could neither write nor read; but gave this account of herself to the person who wrote her life.*

* Extracted from part ii. c. 18. of the *Cologne* edition, 1704. this only part of it was translated into *English*, by way of specimen.

“As soon as I wake in the morning (saith she)
 “I throw myself into the arms of my *heavenly*
 “*Love*, as a child does into the arms of his fa-
 “ther. I rise with a design to serve and please
 “him; and if I have time to pray, I fall upon
 “my knees, in his holy presence, and speak to
 “him, as if I really saw him with my bodily
 “eyes. I give up myself wholly to him, and de-
 “fire him to fulfil all his holy will in me; and
 “that he would not suffer me that day to do the
 “least thing which might be offensive to him :
 “then I recommend to him all the prayers which
 “shall be made that day. In short, I love and
 “praise him as much and as long as my affairs
 “permit, though very often I have hardly so
 “much time as to say the Lord’s-prayer; but I
 “do not trouble myself about that, for I have
 “God always in my heart, as well when I am
 “about my business, which I do in obedience to
 “his will, as when I retire on purpose to pray to
 “him.

“I dress myself in his presence, and he shew-
 “eth me that his love supplies me with ray-
 “ment: and when I go about my business, even
 “then doth he not forsake me, nor I him; but
 “he converseth with me, and I with him; yea,
 “I am as much united to him, as when I am at
 “my prayers. O how sweet and easy is all labour
 “in such good company! Sometimes I perceive
 “such strength and support in my mind, that
 “nothing is too hard for me, and I think myself
 “alone able to manage the affairs of the whole
 “family; nothing but the body is at work, the
 “heart and myself burn with love, in the sweet
 “familiarity I entertain with God.

I eat and drink in his presence, as I do
 every thing else; and it is as if I dip every bit
 into the precious blood of my Saviour, and as
 if he himself gave me food, on purpose to
 inflame my love, and to engage it the more
 to himself.

When I am about my business in the day-
 time, running up and down, till the body
 begins to be weary, or to repine, or to desire
 unseasonable rest, being oppressed with anger
 or uneasiness; my divine love enlighteneth me
 forthwith, and sheweth me, how I ought to
 suppress those irregular motions of corrupt
 nature, not encouraging them, either by word
 or deed. This love keeps the door of my lips,
 and watches over my heart, that it may not
 in the least contribute to such rebellious pas-
 sions, which thus are crushed and subdued as
 soon as they rise.

But if at any time, for want of care, I am
 surprized with these or the like faults, I cannot
 be at rest till I have obtained pardon, and God
 is reconciled to me. I lye prostrate before his
 footstool confessing all my faults to him, as if
 he did not know them already; and there I
 continue till he has forgiven me, renewed his
 friendship with me, and confirmed it more than
 before; for so it always happens, through his
 infinite mercy, whenever I have committed a
 fault, which serves but to inflame my heart
 more and more with his divine love: if people
 raise scandals upon me, or any other way af-
 flict me, or evil spirits attack me with their
 temptations, and cast their fiery darts at me, I

“ presently run to my heavenly love, who stretch-
 “ es forth his arms to receive me, showing his
 “ heart and wounds open for my security, in
 “ which I hide myself, as in a strong castle or
 “ fortrefs; and then I am so mightily strengthen-
 “ ed, that if the whole army of hell itself, toge-
 “ ther with all the creatures, should come against
 “ me, I fear them no more than a fly; because
 “ I am under the protection of the most high God,
 “ the Lord of Hosts.

“ Many times I leave all, retiring into a cor-
 “ ner, giving vent to the tears and praises due to
 “ his majesty, wherewith my heart is overcharg-
 “ ed; and this I may do very well, since it is not
 “ the mere sense of his kindness; but rather him-
 “ self that I desire to enjoy, though, in the mean
 “ time, one ought thankfully to receive those ex-
 “ traordinary tokens of God's mercy and love, if
 “ it be his holy will so to deal with us.

“ If I am persuaded on holidays to be merry
 “ in company, I excuse myself; for nothing can
 “ be compared to the pleasures of my love, which
 “ are so much the sweeter and greater for my
 “ withdrawing from all company whatsoever: if
 “ they wonder how I can stay always at home
 “ alone, I think within myself, O! if you knew
 “ the glorious company I have, you would not
 “ say that I was alone; for I am never less alone
 “ than when I have no body with me.

“ After this manner I spend not only working
 “ days, but holidays too, being often as much
 “ employed in the latter as in the former: but
 “ that is no hindrance to me, to whom labour
 “ and rest, hard work and easy, all things are in-
 “ different, since I do not look upon what I have
 “ to do, but upon him for whose sake I do it.

“ But

“ But if I do any thing amifs, or out of feafon,
 “ I feel a violent pain and sorrow for my offence :
 “ I humble myfelf before God, and endeavour
 “ prefently to recover myfelf, that thinking of it
 “ no more, I may move ftrait forward on my
 “ way, turning afide neither to the right hand
 “ nor to the left; neither do I remember what is
 “ paft or to come, but only that I may love God
 “ to the utmoft of my power.

“ The night coming on, and every one going
 “ to reft, I find reft only in the arms of divine
 “ love; I fleep leaning on his holy breaft, like a
 “ child on his mother’s bofom: I fay, I go to fleep;
 “ but I am bufied about the love and praifes of
 “ my God, till I fall quite afleep. Many times
 “ this love roufeth up all my fenses, fo that I can-
 “ not fleep the greateft part of the night: but I
 “ fpend it in the embraces of the lovely grace of
 “ God, which never forfakes fuch a poor misera-
 “ ble creature as I am; but preserves me with a
 “ fpecial care in every ftate and condition of life.

“ When the fpirits of darknefs attempt to tor-
 “ ment me, and disturb my fleep (which fome-
 “ times happeneth) this divine love guards me,
 “ and driveth them away: yea, it giveth me
 “ ftrength to refift them couragiously, as if I
 “ were awake; for they feldom continue long to
 “ torment me, unlefs it be in my fleep.

“ This fort of life I have led for thefe twenty
 “ years paft, *etc.*”

What a bleffed ftate of life did this poor good
 creature enjoy! in comparifon of this, how mean
 and contemptible are all the pleasures, and glories,
 and pride of life, which the idle and the indolent,
 the ambitious and covetous, fo eagerly purfue?
 And yet this is no more than the pooreft, and
 moft ignorant perfon among us may obtain, if our

hearts be right, and our intentions pure. The good Spirit of God is continually calling and intreating us to be good, in order to be happy: he desires and labours by the outward means of grace, and his inward operations, to conquer the corruptions of our nature, and fill us with his sanctifying graces, which he is always ready to communicate to those who are willing to receive them. 'This our Lord himself has declared in numberless places of scripture. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled,* Matt. v. 6. So again ch. vii. 11. *If ye that are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?* which St. Luke explains; *by giving the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* Luke xi. 13. And again, Rev. iii. 20. *Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.* Even so come, Lord Jesus, into all our hearts, and so constantly dwell with us here by thy grace, that we may never be separated from thy glory.

'Till this happy state of mind can in some good degree be attained, and if once attained, will hardly be ever left off; I would earnestly recommend this Sunday's exercise as greatly conducing to it, with the exercise of private devotion, reading the scriptures and other good books, or religious conversation with your neighbours, or families, always concluding the day (as a good man should every day) with public prayers in your families: and this is a point which I cannot dismiss without some further consideration. Every christian family should be considered as so many servants of God, united under one head, who have all some common blessings to ask, some com-

mon

mon dangers to fear, some common mercies to give thanks for; therefore the governor of it should call together as many as can be at leisure, at least twice a day, in the morning and the evening; and by himself, or some one of the family, offer up their prayers for what they want, and their thanksgivings for what they enjoy. But, alas! I have reason to fear that in too many families it is never practised at all, to the eternal scandal and reproach of those who neglect it; for prayer is not only a principal part of divine service, but a necessary one too, as it both engages and enables us to perform the other parts of it; and where this is omitted, it is scarce to be expected that the rest should be performed. And now, how dreadful a sight must it be to any serious considerate christian, to see a family separate in an evening without the least appearances of christian devotion, and meet again the next morning, like the other animals of the family, only to be fed, without any thought of gratitude to almighty God for his past mercies, or any petition for his merciful protection for the future? In short it is a deplorable observation, that *Family Devotion*, and *saying Grace before and after meat*, are growing strangely out of fashion among those who are called *great folks*, and *the better sort of people*. Strange infatuation! monstrous ingratitude! that they who by the peculiar indulgence of heaven, enjoy the greatest share of worldly prosperity, should forget the hand that bestows it, refuse the poor returns of a thankful heart, and neglect to beg his blessing upon it. These are sad indications of a latent Infidelity, which is visibly spreading far and wide among the children of disobedience. But of you, my dear friends, give me leave to *hope better things, though I thus speak, and things that*

that accompany salvation, Heb. vi. 9. Let me beseech you, as an affectionate friend, let me conjure you, in God's name, as your minister and his servant, to remember your high and heavenly calling in Christ Jesus; and as you expect his blessing here, and everlasting happiness hereafter, to begin and end every day with prayers in your families, as well as in your closets: and let the christian Sabbath, in a peculiar manner, be kept holy to the Lord, for it is his day. Many are the blessings promised to those that religiously observe it, and many are the curses denounced against those that profane it. Be not ye of the number of those enemies of the Lord described by the prophet, *Lam. i. 7.* who *mock at his sabbaths.* Neither turn your backs on the *assemblies of the saints,* as the manner of some is, *Heb. x. 25.* But so sanctify the Lord's Sabbath here, by your devout attendance on the assembly of the church militant here on earth, that you may be thought worthy to be admitted into *the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven,* *Heb. xii. 23.* and for ever enjoy that everlasting rest that is reserved in heaven for the people of God, *Heb. iv. 9.*

F I N I S.



8

This book is DUE on the last
date stamped below.

10M-11-50(2555)470

REMINGTON RAND INC. 20

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES



