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# LETTERS

TO

*A YOUNG LADY,*

IN WHICH

THE DUTIES AND CHARACTER OF WOMEN  
ARE CONSIDERED,

CHIEFLY WITH

A REFERENCE TO PREVAILING OPINIONS.

BY MRS. WEST,

AUTHOR OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG MAN, ETC.

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*Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord,  
she shall be praised.* Prov. xxxi. 30.

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PUBLISHED

BY O. PENNIMAN AND CO. TROY, AND I. RILEY AND CO.  
NEW-YORK.

.....  
1806.



THESE LETTERS  
ON THE DUTIES AND CHARACTER OF WOMEN,

ARE

(BY PERMISSION)

APPROPRIATELY AND SUBMISSIVELY

INSCRIBED TO

*The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty;*

WHOSE EXALTED CHARACTER

ENFORCES, BY AN EXAMPLE MORE POWERFUL  
THAN PRECEPT,

THE STRICT PERFORMANCE

OF EVERY DOMESTIC, MORAL, AND

RELIGIOUS DUTY.

WITH THE DEEPEST SENSE OF THE HONOUR OF

THIS ILLUSTRIOUS PATRONAGE

THE AUTHOR SUBSCRIBES HERSELF

HER MAJESTY'S

MOST DUTIFUL,

AND MOST GRATEFULLY

DEVOTED SERVANT,

JANE WEST.



## PREFATORY ADDRESS.

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SINCE the publication of the much favoured "Letters" referred to in the title page, the author has been repeatedly advised to make the character and duties of her own sex the subject of a separate work, similar, and in some respects supplementary, to the former; yet still preserving those peculiar features which would render it more interesting and beneficial to women. It was urged on the one hand, that the late publication was in some parts adapted to female students. This was admitted; but it was further observed, that, though all rational creatures are circumscribed within one general pale of moral and religious obligation, the peculiar path of each sex is marked by those nice shades of appropriation, which only an all-wise Being, intent on the general benefit of the whole human race, could impose: and this remark was exemplified by shewing, that any violation of this prescribed decorum exposed the offender to a degree of opprobrium by no means commensurate with the offence. To the remark, that of late, women had been peculiarly fortunate in having had a number of admirable advisers, it was answered, that they had also been misled by many false lights, and were more exposed than at any former period to the artifices of seducers; who, intent to poison the minds of the unwary, had contrived to introduce their dangerous notions on manners, morals, and religion, into every species of composition, and all forms of society; the sentiments and regulations of which had lately, as far as concerns women, undergone an alarming change. And with regard to the many really valuable moralists who have attempted to stem this torrent, the observation which the author formerly made re-

pecting young men was equally true of women. The *extremes* of society were chiefly attended to; and if we judged by the style generally used by the instructor of the fair sex, we should think that the whole female world was divided into "high-lived company" and paupers;\* that numerous and important body the middle classes of society, whose duties are most complicated, and consequently most difficult, being generally overlooked; and yet the change of manners and pursuits among these are so marked, that the most superficial observers must be alarmed at the prospect of what it portends. Something too was said of the advantage, as well as of the propriety, of intrusting female practitioners with the preparation of nostrums for the moral diseases of their own sisterhood; and a hint was given, that it would be patriotic to endeavour to restore the reputation of the fair college of pharmacopologists, which has been grievously tarnished by the practice of those chariatans who had aggravated the diseases which they pretended to cure by stimulants or anodynes, till in many cases they were become too obstinate for any remedy. It was urged too, that a popular author was in conscience bound to employ the (perhaps) *transient* period of public approbation in using her most strenuous endeavour to repay the favour of generous protection, by endeavouring to give that turn to the taste and morals of society which would be most beneficial to its temporal and eternal interests. This solemn consideration, enforced by the dying injunctions of a much respected friend, who, near the close of his valuable life, addressed an awful charge to the author, that she should "Pursue the course in which she then trod, and let all her future works tend not only to moral but religious edification," has determined her to conquer the timid, or perhaps prudential motives, which advised a timely retreat from the field of literature, before the sure indications of neglect should prevent her from doing so with honour. The present work is the consequence of this recovered hardihood.

Aware that humble views are best suited to her abilities, she does not attempt to compose a correct and elaborate system of morals; nor will she examine the evidences and doctrines of religion with logical minuteness: able writers have preceded her in these departments. Her aim is, to present

\* This observation must be taken with exceptions: among which, Dr Gibbon's Tract on the Duties of Women holds a pre-eminent rank.



readers of her own sex, and station, with some admonitory reflections on those points which appeared to her of superior importance, either from their having been omitted or slightly discussed by other writers, or from the prevailing temper of the times requiring them to be recalled to general attention, and, if possible, placed in a novel and therefore more attractive point of view. To arrest the attention of those who are terrified by the uniform austerity of a melancholy censor, the sombre hue of precept will be relieved by such ornaments as can be adopted without injury to the main design. Perhaps this last intimation is but a specious apology for a manner of writing, at first natural, and now so confirmed by habit, that a determination to avoid it would certainly give a disgusting stiffness to the following lucubrations.

The author is aware that there is a considerable resemblance between this and her preceding work on a similar subject. This was unavoidable, unless she had omitted what she judged the most important part of her undertaking, or referred her present readers to another publication: in either case, the present would be incomplete. She has endeavoured to give all the variety in her power, by varying her expressions, and the order of her reflections; by throwing in such new remarks as recent occurrences, or her own subsequent reading, have supplied; by slightly passing over what she there attempted to explain in detail; and by supplying what an impartial review taught her to think deficient in her former work.

As these admonitions are chiefly designed for readers whose time is occupied in pursuits and duties which compel them to take up a book rather as an improving relaxation than a serious study, the epistolary style was adopted, as best suited to this purpose. It is, however, acknowledged, that these letters were *originally written* for the purpose of publication, although they are addressed to a young lady, the daughter of the dearest friend of the author's early life. By kindly permitting her name to be the vehicle for these reflections, Miss M—— has, in a considerable degree, beguiled the fatigue of authorship; for certainly there have been moments when the awful idea of public observation has failed to oppress the imagination which, instead of a load of future responsibility, presented the soothing image of listening, partial friendship; endeared by the lively recollection of he-

editary virtues, and every lively sensation which the indelible remembrance of a long lost, yet still dearly regretted friend can awake in a grateful and susceptible heart. But, to check a train of thought foreign to the purpose of this prefatory address, let it be observed, that though, so far as respects the feelings of the author, the appropriation of this composition has been most beneficial and agreeable, there is a kind of presumptuous impertinence in the choice of the medium through which these reflections are conveyed to the public, which only the sweetness of Miss M——'s disposition could excuse, or the unequivocal merit of her character counteract. Within the respectable circle which bounds her fame and her duties, it is well known, that, so far from wanting the advice of others, she teaches all who observe her conduct, by that noblest and most impressive mode of instruction, *example*.

# LETTERS,

Éc. Éc. Éc.



## LETTER I.

### *Introductory Sketch of the Design.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

TEN years have elapsed since the inevitable consequences of an excruciating and lingering decay deprived you of a mother, whose counsels and example would have been your best guide to all that was amiable and praise worthy in your sex. It is not for us misjudging mortals, whose views are bounded by the narrow horizon of seventy years, to question the decrees of that infinite Being whose eye pervades the measureless ages of eternity; nor can we say how far the relations and advantages of that endless existence, on which christianity allows us to believe the glorified spirit of your pious parent has now entered, depended upon the brief termination of her mortal course. Of this we are sure, that the merciful Father of the human race sees it expedient to perfect his creatures by sufferings, even as a child in a well regulated family is trained to virtue and knowledge by a system of discipline and restraint, of which it does not then discern the advantage. Thus, my dear Miss M——, your mother was doomed to pass through a rugged and painful passage in her early journey to eternity; and thus also, with respect to yourself, the young scion was left exposed just at that period when it seemed most to require shelter from the external violence of stormy winds, and from those diseases which arise from premature exposure, and often destroy the most promising vegetation.

The same stroke which deprived you of a mother, separated me from the friend whom I best loved; whose partial approbation first stimulated me to break through opposing

difficulties, and to bestow all the cultivation on my passion for literature which my situation in life allowed. Encouraged by her praises, guided by her taste, and (what was infinitely more important to me) corrected and improved in my moral judgment by the silent eloquence of her blameless manners, I started in the career of authorship with the most sanguine expectations of full and immediate success. The premonitory cautions which she thought it right to bestow, were too gentle to repress the warm hopes of youthful inexperience; and it was only the successive disappointment of my first attempts which taught me that it was easier to please the candid and judicious, than to propitiate the multitude, when unassisted by the patronage of a mighty name, and unrecommended by a blamable sacrifice to false principle.

I shall not forget the tender solicitude with which my late friend exerted herself to obviate the effects of those mortifications of which her prudence had in vain forewarned me, and from which her energetic exertions could not protect an unknown inexperienced writer. To the happy influence of her kindness, and her counsels, I may attribute my escape from the morbid pressure of despondency, and my still happier preservation from the torrent of false theories and disorganizing principles which was at that time poured into this country. As the effects of these subverting doctrines had not then appeared; and as, like their author Satan, they took the disguise of angels of light; a half cultivated romantic mind, ignorant of men and manners, and enthusiastically attached to those visions of independence, philanthropy, energy, and perfection, which are so dear to the votaries of the muses, might have been seduced by the fair semblance in which these apostles of anarchy were then enveloped; especially as they affected respect for the palladium of religion. The mature and enlightened understanding of your excellent mother saw through the imposture, and taught her credulous friend to distinguish between pretences to superior virtue, and the artless unboastful reality. You, doubtless, recollect the apprehensions which she felt, lest the spirit of insubordination and discontent, though discountenanced by all wise and worthy Britons, should be diffused among the lower orders, who, being more inclined to feel the disadvantages of ignorance, than to acknowledge the comforts of obedience, would in consequence be betrayed to renounce the simple path in which their forefathers walked, and to follow those new lights which pretended to direct

them to the tree of knowledge. She lived to see her apprehensions verified, nor has the evil yet ceased to work: may the Almighty, in his mercy, limit its progress!

Such were the obligations that I owed to your mother; and to which must be superadded, all the common offices of generous, active, affectionate friendship: no wonder then that the lapse of years has not diminished my attachment to her memory. The solemn scenes which preceded her dissolution afforded an instructive example, to all around her, of the possibility of discharging the hard duty of consecrating affliction; and they taught us to mingle with our tears for her loss, the consolations which arise from a conviction of her beatitude.

Among the injunctions that I received from her dying lips, there is one to which I shall now more particularly refer: I mean her earnest desire that I would "write to *you*, and remind *you* of *our* friendship." My dear young friend, our correspondence has not suffered any long interruption since that period; yet I often feel as if I had not, in my private addresses to you, fully accomplished the wishes of your mother. It is a most inexpressible satisfaction to me, to perceive that you attain the age of majority with every fair promise of being the true representative of the revered deceased; nor can I point out any part of your conduct which my knowledge of her sentiments persuades me she would have wished to be altered. Yet I feel such an exquisite satisfaction in the idea of being employed in (I must not say her service, but in) shewing my attachment to what she best loved, that I cannot refrain from asking your permission to address to you some counsels and admonitions, which many young women of your age would find but too necessary in these portentous times. That "mystery of iniquity," whose course is marked on the continent of Europe by subverted empires, and desolated realms, has on this island been at present busy in effecting those moral revolutions which are the precursors of political ones. The manly sense and independent pride of Britons have (with few exceptions) nobly disdained to adopt the *political* example of a people to whom they have been accustomed to give laws in the field of arms; but it is much to be feared, that they have not with equal wariness resisted the blandishments of their vicious example, or braced up their minds to repel the consequences which result from luxury, dissipation, and every varied form of pleasurable indulgence. By these assailants the weaker sex

are more particularly assaulted. Under the covert of continual amusement, pride, levity, selfishness, disregard of punctuality, extravagance, and religious indifference, have stolen unsuspected upon our unguarded hearts, and often have so far alienated us, as to occasion a total neglect of God's holy word and commandments. In this state, the mind is apt to weigh whatever is submitted to its judgment, rather by the loose scale of present expediency and convenience, than by the immutable standard of right, or the certain expectations of future consequences. Such is the process by which many are led to commit a crime, rather than make a breach in their politeness, and to injure their probity sooner than renounce an indulgence; and thus they lose, in the transient gratifications of the animal senses, the noblest distinctions and surest rewards of their intellectual being. But let us descend from general declamation, to particular instances of the change of public opinion as it relates to our sex.

The society, which young women who are devoted to a life of fashionable amusement frequently meet, creates a species of danger which in the present times is most truly alarming. The unblushing effrontery with which women of doubtful or lost character obtrude themselves upon public notice, is a marked characteristic of the age we live in, that was unknown to our ancestors (except, perhaps, in one profligate reign,) and strongly demonstrative that the outposts of female honour are given up. What can more tend to debase the purity of virtue, and to enfeeble the stability of principle, than to find that a notorious courtesan retains all the distinctions due to unspotted chastity; nay, even to see her pointed out as a most engaging creature, with a truly benevolent heart; while all retrospect of her flagitious conduct is prevented, by the observation, that we have nothing to do with people's private character. Can we wonder, that, since the age is become so liberal, profligacy should not feel the necessity of being *guarded* in its transgressions?

If we turn from these flagrant violations of divine and human laws, which even the grossest depravity cannot justify, nor the most subtle sophistry palliate; may we not, in the licensed freedom of modern manners, trace many deviations from rectitude and delicacy? To what description of conduct must we refer that marked attention which married women permit from fashionable libertines? Is it compatible with any of the peculiar traits of the matronly character, prudence, decorum, and consistency? What is that mode of dress which

they sanction by their example, the expense to which they devote their fortunes, or the amusements to which they sacrifice their time? A young woman who now adventures into the labyrinth of life, has more to fear from the seniors of her own sex, than from male artifices. The Lovelaces and Pollexfens have not indeed totally disappeared from the circle of fashion; but it is not youthful beauty and virgin innocence that *now* attract their pursuit. While the sprightly spinster waits till the coquetish wife dismisses her wearied Cecilio, to yawn out an unmeaning compliment to the immature attractions of nineteen, she must console her chagrin by resolving to take the first offer that she can meet with, provided the creature possesses the requisites of wealth and fashion to enable her to revenge her present wrongs on the *past* generation of beauties, and in her turn to triumph over the *succeeding*.

This reflection leads me to that passion for genteel appearance in dress, equipage, furniture, and every mode of expense, which is such a strong feature in the aspect of this luxurious age; and which really descends to every rank, even to those on whom poverty has stamped the marks of wretchedness. To outshine your equal in taste and smartness, is a rule which every understanding can comprehend, and which, requiring no great exertions of the mental or moral powers, becomes a marketable medium of fluctuating value in the commerce of life. Though the effects of this absurd propensity are most severely felt in the lower orders, its mischiefs are not unknown in those circles from which it was first derived. We females have had many monitors on this (to us) important topic; yet as the evil visibly gains ground, and even threatens to subvert all distinctions in society, all attempts to place in a clear point of view the absurdity of endeavouring to impose upon the world, by practising a cheat too familiar to deceive an idiot, deserve commendation.

Nor are the evils consequent on a life of dissipation the only dangers that young ladies may now dread. In retirement, they are haunted by another species of enemies, no less alarming to their understandings, to their morals, and to their repose. The species of reading, prepared to relieve the toils of dissipation, is faithful to its interest, and is either intended to mislead or to gratify. Under the former description may be ranked all those systems of ethics, and treatises on education, which are founded on the false doctrine of human perfectibility, and consequently reject the necessity of

divine revelation and supernatural agency. Many elementary works on the sciences come under this description; and by these the young student may learn that she is a free independent being, endowed with energies which she may exert at will, and restrained by no considerations but those which her own judgment may think it *expedient* to obey. She is taught, that the nature she inherits was originally perfect; that its present disordered state did not arise from an hereditary taint, the consequence of primeval rebellion, but from wretched systems of worldly policy, ill conceived laws, and illiberal restraints; which if happily removed, the human mind would at once start forth in a rapid pursuit of that perfection which it is fully able to attain. She will hear much praise bestowed on generosity, greatness of soul, liberality, benevolence, and this cast of virtues; but as their offices and properties would not be clearly defined, and as all reference to the preventing and assisting grace of God, or to the clear explanations which accompany Christian ethics, are systematically excluded from these compositions, it will not be wonderful if the bewildered reader should bestow these titles on the actions of pride, pertinacity, indiscretion, and extravagance. We have seen the effects of these theories on the vacant impetuous mind of uninstructed youth, sufficiently to determine, that, like the pagan corrupters of old times, who “changed the glory of the invisible God into an image made like unto corruptible man,” they, while “professing themselves to be wise, have become fools.”

But we will suppose a young woman happily free from the metaphysical mania, and influenced by no inordinate desire to distinguish herself among her companions by the disgusting affectation of superior knowledge; I mean by this, a common character, who is willing to slide with the world; who reads to kill time; who adopts the opinions that she hears, and suffers the passing scene to flit by her without much anxiety, or much reflection. Unengaging as this character is, I confess that I greatly prefer it to the petticoat philosopher, who seeks for eminence and distinction in infidelity and scepticism, or in the equally monstrous extravagancies of German morality. Women of ordinary abilities were in former times confined to their samplers or their confectionary; and surely they were as well employed in picking out the seeds of currants, or in stitching the “tale of Troy divine,” as now, when they are dependant on the circulating library for means to overcome the tedium of a *disengaged* day.



Novels, plays, and perhaps a little poetry, are the limits of their literary researches. Shall we inquire what impressions romantic adventures, high wrought scenes of passion, and all the turmoil of intrigue, incident, extravagant attachment, and improbable vicissitudes of fortune, must make upon a vacant mind, whose judgment has not been exercised either by real information, or the conclusions of experience and observation? The inferences that we *must* draw are self-evident.

Let us introduce a third possibility, and suppose a young woman well disposed, and possessed of such a superficial knowledge of religion as the fashion of the present day, and the time allotted to the acquisition of polite accomplishments, seem to permit. Such a one will, in her private studies, endeavour to improve her acquaintance with those eternal truths which will make her wise unto salvation. If she possess the consciousness of a sound understanding, and such pertinacity of temper as disposes her to independent thinking, is there not great danger of her adopting the leading dogmas of that indefatigable sect, which teaches us that reason is the paramount quality of the soul, and that it is our positive duty to *reject* whatever we do not *wholly* comprehend, notwithstanding any weight of testimony which supports the mysterious tenet, and maugre the experienced imbecility (or to use a more appropriate term) *unripeness* of the human intellect? She will not find such assaults upon her faith confined to books of divinity, nor to tracts of devotion. Writers of this class are extremely numerous; I hope, and I believe, that they are *proportionably* more so than their converts; for this mode of thinking is intimately connected with a passion for literary reputation. Their rage for profelycism is not impeded by the fear of impropriety or absurdity: be their subject biography, history, geography, the belles lettres, or indeed any of the more abstruse sciences, the same persevering eagerness to thrust in an often refuted objection to the established religion is apparent. Nothing, but a thorough investigation of the foundation on which that religion is built, can resist the undermining effects of these reiterated assaults.

If the character of the student lean to the saturnine cast, if she be inclined to view the world through the jaundiced eyes of misanthropy and melancholy, to make no allowance for human frailty, and to employ her attention rather in aggravating the errors of others, than in regulating the pro-

penfities of her own heart ; if to this unhappy difpofition to felf-gratulation a love of myfticifm, and an enthufiaftic imagination, fhould be fuperadded, ſhe is prepared for the affaults of difputants no lefs hostile to the religion in which I fuppoſe her to be baptized and educated. By them ſhe will be equally complimented with a liberty, which is ever moſt precious and defirable to thoſe who have the leaſt right to claim, or power to exerciſe it ; I mean that of judging for themſelves. She will be as much exonerated from reſpect to her regular paſtor, as the before mentioned diſciple of reaſon ; and ſhe will imbibe a perhaps ſuperior contempt for thoſe forms and ordinances, with which I repreſent her as having complied more from habit, than from a juſt comprehension of their utility and efficacy. If her understanding or imagination be of that caſt which can be warped by thoſe ſoothing deluſions of converſion, experience, and election, which are ſo inexplicably captivating to ſpiritual pride, ſhe will enjoy in the reveries of Calvinifm a degree of ſelf-gratulation beyond what the ſceptic can poſſibly feel ; for the belief of being peculiarly favoured by our Creator muſt elevate the mind to a higher pitch, than the ſuppoſed liberty of queſtioning the verity of the revelations that he has made of his nature and his will can poſſibly effect. In either caſe, the unhappy convert loſes the light of that guiding ſtar which would beſt direct her ſteps ; I mean the aſſiſtance of a pure and holy religion.

I forbear to mention the dangers which young women are expoſed to from faithleſs confidants, indiſcreet friends, artful parasites, needy dependants, and all that routine of intereſted ſervility ſo commonly appendant to beauty, birth, or fortune. Theſe reptiles are not the ſpawn of modern times ; I rather think, that as the world has grown leſs domeſtic, and more ſelf-engroſſed, ſycophants of all deſcriptions have been leſs neceſſary, and conſequently the trade is upon the decline. The beſt antidote to the enervating aſſiduities of theſe ear-ticklers is contained in thoſe talismanic words which modern manners leave little leiſure to obſerve, “ Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be ſtill.”

We have hitherto conſidered the fair adventurer in the voyage of life as only expoſed to external aſſailants ; but it muſt be remembered, that ſhe carries with her a rebellious crew of paſſions and affections, which are extremely apt to mutiny, eſpecially in times of extraordinary peril. The per-iſhable commodity of female fame is embarked in a flight

felucca, painted and gilded, indeed, and externally both convenient and beautiful; but by no means fitted for those distant voyages, and rough encounters with winds, seas, and enemies, which afford navigators of the other sex a welcome opportunity of showing their skill and magnanimity: yet the delicacy of the merchandize, joined to the fragility of these adorned vessels, imposes constant anxiety and labour on their commanders; not only lest their precious cargo should lose either its polish or its purity, but from fear of falling into the hands of pirates, who are ever on the watch to pillage or destroy them. The risk is considerably increased, by knowing, that though the pilot often possesses many excellent and engaging qualities, the helm is seldom managed with adroitness, and the ship is rarely able to veer, to tack, and to scud before the wind, till very late in the voyage: I cannot, therefore, think it expedient that these fragile barks should venture to do more than sail *coastwise*, till they are taken in tow by some stouter vessel; especially as they are totally destitute of all materials to remedy the misfortunes incident to shipwreck. Whether it proceed from the false opinions, prejudices, or injustice of men, as some say; or, as I am inclined to think, from the wisdom of divine Providence imposing a greater degree of chariness on that sex which he designed to make the conservator of morals; so it happens, that women find a greater degree of difficulty than men in throwing off any species of reproach, whether it be deserved, or the false imputation of malignant slander.

We may inquire, how are women fitted to answer those severe demands which custom, and I may add reason, make upon their conduct? This investigation will lead us into an ample field; as it will not only require us to consider what education does in forming habits of watchfulness and self-control, and in invigorating the discriminative and deliberative powers of the mind; but also, how far the present customs of society assist us in the proper discharge of our required duties. In the course of this inquiry, we shall discover ample reason to bless our Creator, who originally intended us to "take our noiseless way along the cool sequestered vale of life," since we shall find every departure from this appointed path attended with danger, either to our peace, or to our renown.

What those duties are which the God of Nature requires us to fulfil: what resources he allows us under the sorrows

incident to those duties ; and what are the incidental as well as future rewards which we are authorized to expect, will form an agreeable exercise to the well disposed mind, when it is wearied with viewing the labours and sorrows which result from fastidiousness, selfishness, vanity, irregular desires, and extravagant expectations. Think you, my dear Miss M——, that a discussion of such subjects will answer that idea of a correspondence, which occurred to your beloved mother at a most awful and mournful moment ? What pleasure shall I feel, in addressing my sex through the daughter of that friend from whom I derived what is most valuable in my sentiments and principles ! You were very young when you met with that severe misfortune which checked the gay career of fondly fostered childhood. Your age had not permitted you to reap the full profit of the attentions of your ever watchful parent. You felt that her sweet temper and serene cheerfulness made you happy ; but you could not then justly appreciate the superiority of her understanding. You had learned to obey her injunctions, but you could not know the prudent and virtuous ends which they were intended to produce. I lost her at a time when experience had taught me her full value. Though distance, and the intervention of nearer relations, and more imperious duties, rendered her life of less daily importance to me, those very circumstances combined to impress her observations and example deeper upon my memory. While my hands have been occupied in attending to the domestic calls of a rising family, my imagination has wandered to the scenes of early life, and to the beloved circle of which she was one of the brightest ornaments. The lively rally, the literary discussion, the perspicuous remark, have reflected pleasure on the sometimes tedious routine of daily avocation ; and especially (such is the general effect of true friendship) did I feel the justness of her sentiments, and the validity of her arguments, when “ the wheel was broken at the cistern,” and I could no more draw truth and knowledge from that fountain.

If my anxiety to discharge this hereditary obligation should make me deviate into the error of capricious testators, who like to bequeath their riches to their most *wealthy* connexions, I can excuse myself by pleading, that the beneficial effects of moral reflections and prudential counsels are not confined to those to whom they are imparted. Like mercy, they have a chance of “ being twice blessed ;” the giver is amended, if not the receiver. If serious reflections on “ our

being's end and aim" are likely to produce a wholesome indifference to the transient pleasures of this world, methodizing and improving those reflections must deepen their impression on the mind where they originated; and that heart must indeed be obdurate which can resist the energy of its own reproofs. Surely no common proficiency in hypocrisy is necessary to enable us to pen a sententious libel on our own conduct, or to fabricate a system contradictory to our lives.

I am aware, that the lively feelings of sentiment and affection which dictated my admonitory addresses to my eldest son, were the chief attraction which recommended that work to public favour. By permitting me to suppose your welfare connected with the present attempt, you will enable me to embark in it with the same sincerity, and *nearly* equal sollicitude. Whatever the pretended cosmopolites may boast of the effects of universal philanthropy and general benevolence, we must embody those indefinite ideas, and combine them with some strong tie of nature or of choice, before we can be really interested in the anomalous aggregate. A work coldly written, will be as frigidly perused; that on which the author's heart never engraved a discriminating token, cannot hope to stamp an indelible impression on the feelings of the reader.

You see, my dear Miss M——, how much of my literary reputation is in your power. Am I too presumptuous, if, building on our long friendship and your habitual kindness, I anticipate your acquiescence with my wishes? As soon as you announce it, I shall enter with spirit on my then pleasing task; and in the interim I remain

Your very affectionate friend, &c.

## LETTER II.

*Original Destination of Women.*

MY DEAR MISS M<sup>l</sup>—,

THE assurance that I have not imposed too great a burden on your affectionate partiality, by your promise to receive my labours with pleasure, and to peruse them with attention, has enabled me to enter on my proposed undertaking with alacrity, to which the manner of your communicating this welcome intelligence has given a yet more powerful impetus. I shall now hurry you along without any ceremony, and immediately commence the proposed inquiry into the situation, duties, trials, and errors of our sex.

When we address christian readers, we presuppose their acquiescence in the facts that are recorded in holy writ. Without wasting our time in a philosophical analysis of the peculiar construction of our intellects, or the physical organization of our bodies, we may rest assured that we are endowed with powers adequate to the design of our creation; namely, to be the helpmate of man, to partake of his labours, to alleviate his distresses, to regulate his domestic concerns, to rear and instruct the subsequent generation; and, having finished our probationary course as accountable beings, to enter on another state of endless existence.

It would be foreign to our purpose, to pursue a minute investigation respecting the situation of women in other regions: a very few general observations shall suffice. The nearer the country is to what is called the state of nature (but which, in correct language, should be termed savage degeneracy,) the more we find women depressed, servile, and miserable. The rude descendants of those wandering tribes, whom the miraculous interposition of the offended Deity at Babel dispersed through the distant quarters of the globe, amidst the degradation of mutual ignorance and mutual privation, have uniformly retained that superiority of the male species which it received at the creation, and which prevailed during the primeval state of the world. It is impossible to account for the universal subjugation of women among

savages on the ground of their mental imbecility, or bodily disadvantages; for it is a well known fact, that exertion invigorates both the intellectual and corporeal faculties; and as these wretched victims of male tyranny execute the tasks of intense and continual labour, while their more indolent lords engross all the sensual indulgencies which a state of barbarism affords, the general laws of even handed Providence must repay their hard services with more athletic vigour and acute intelligence. In consequence, travellers remark, that the women belonging to the wandering tribes of barbarians, whenever the restraints of jealousy have permitted them to hold intercourse with strangers, have generally displayed more quickness and reflection than the males, as well as a superior share of those virtues of compassion and benevolence, which are the sure indications that the mind has expanded beyond the merely selfish pursuits of animal life. This observation has little reference to our present inquiry; but every incidental remark that corroborates the testimony of holy writ, is conducive to the main design of this correspondence.

The progress of any people toward civilization is uniformly marked by allotting an increased degree of importance to the fair sex; but this is not always done with benevolent regard to their happiness. The violent passions and capricious humours of men intervene; and in the eastern and southern regions of the earth, where those passions are most impetuous, women are ever considered rather as a precarious and valuable property, than as rational creatures possessing a claim to self-enjoyment. Those restraints of barbarous policy under which Mahometan and Gentoowomen labour, are still more injurious to our genuine character, than the dangerous exertions of Patagonian divers, or the agricultural toil of female Africans. When women are only taught "to dance, to dress, to troll the tongue and roll the eye," voluptuous passions, frivolous pursuits, low artifices, and all that envy, revenge, jealousy, fear, and disguised hatred, can dictate to the doubtful favourite of an hour, must agitate the female breast; alternately solicitous to repair the ruins of time in her own person, and to counteract the attractions of a rival. In the secluded harem, where polygamy immures the victims of its passions and the disturbers of its repose, we must not look for the friend or helpmate of man.

In Europe, and its numerous colonies, the blessed influence of divine revelation has fixed our sex in a more happy

situation. Our equal claim to immortality, which the gospel recognized, removed many prejudices against us. The abolition of polygamy raised us, from mere objects of sensual desire, to friends and companions; and wherever the institution of marriage is formally acknowledged, women become a branch of the body politic, amenable to the laws of their country, and also to public opinion, which alike takes cognizance of their conduct and protects their persons. To the solemn obligation of this heaven ordained bond, this sacred source of all domestic relations and charities, all polished nations superadd that general sense of courtesy and refined attention which chivalry introduced; to whose enthusiastic and romantic, yet salutary modification of the rough martial manners of the middle ages, society is more deeply indebted, than this sceptical age is willing to allow. Its effects on the situation of our sex must not be limited to those times, when the mistress of the joust awarded the prize among contending assertors of her charms; we feel them in every act of complacency and politeness which we continue to receive from the lords of creation, in the high importance affixed to female virtue, in the assiduities of love, and in the decorums of society.

Our country has long been eminently distinguished as the seat of pure religion and enlightened laws. It cannot, therefore, excite surprise that travellers should admire the enviable state of our countrywomen, who appear to move in their natural sphere, and are neither treated with the phlegmatic neglect visible among our northern neighbours, nor with the ostentatious obsequiousness which the more polished nations of the continent practise to a degree of farcical affectation. The effect of this judicious treatment has been equally conspicuous in the mild chaste attractions of the British fair; their simple elegance, domestic habits, and all the graces of discretion, delicacy, and ingenuous attachment, have been as loudly praised, as the valour, magnanimity, and sound sense of their heroic partners.

I know, my dear Miss M——, your bosom possesses that share of patriotic virtue, which teaches you to exult with the proud feelings of conscious participation in the rank which Britain *now* holds among the nations of the earth. In every clime that the sun visits is her ingenuity admired, and her valour revered. But can this pre-eminence be long supported, if female virtue, degraded and abashed, shrinks from investigation, and resigns, with her claim to superiority, all



her pretensions to *reward* the present race of heroes, and to *model* the future? The triumph of the red-cross knight ceased, when lovely Anna no longer rode beside him in the attired panoply of vestal innocence.

Before we wander through the mazes of fashion, or review the changes which wealth and luxury have produced in our characters, let us consider our sex as fulfilling the designs of our Creator in this highly favoured country; where the laws of God and man were till lately assisted by the habits of society, and all united to make us become what we ought to be. It is not only in the conjugal state that we are designed to be the helpmates of our coheirs of immortality; as daughters, sisters, mothers, mistresses of families, neighbours, and friends, the active duties of female usefulness may be happily exerted. Even the insulated spinster has no right to consider herself exempt from the general obligation; the paucity of nearer claims leaves her *more* at liberty to pursue the wide range of benevolence; nor can she be justified in resigning her mind to the waywardness of self-indulgence, while there is a human being within her sphere of action whom she could benefit or relieve by the kind offices of humanity.

In our progress from the cradle to the grave, successive duties adapted to our different powers crowd upon our attention. The first tasks which filial duty requires are affection and obedience; which often compel us to participate in the sorrows and labours of our parents, before we feel from our own particular distresses "that man is born to woe." While attending on the sick bed to which fraternal affection has chained us, or while watching the languid couch of the source of our life with all the anxious observance of ready diligence, we gather that experience, and imbibe those habits of tenderness and patience, which in riper years we are required to exercise in our own families. During the short reign of beauty (or, to adopt a language more universally just, while courtship gives a seeming pre-eminence,) discretion teaches us a cautious use of power, especially over him whom we propose to select as the *arbiter* of our future lot. And when the awful marriage contract removes us from acting a subordinate part in the family of our parents, and fixes us as vicegerents of our husband's household, we enter upon the most extended circle in which (generally speaking) Providence designed us to move. Nor is that circle so circumscribed as to give cause to the most active mind to complain

of want of employment ; the duties that it requires are of such hourly, such momentary recurrence, that the impropriety of our engaging in public concerns becomes evident, from the consequent unavoidable neglect of our immediate affairs. A man, in most situations of life, may so arrange his private business, as to be able to attend the important calls of patriotism or public spirit ; but the presence of a woman in her own family is always so salutary, that she is not justified in withdrawing her attention from home, except in some call of plain positive duty. The management of that part of her husband's fortune which is committed to her trust ; the comfortable arrangement of domestic affairs ; the attention which the bodily wants of a rising family require ; the still greater vigilance which should be bestowed on the formation of their minds and the regulation of their tempers ; the superintendance of servants, which, as the establishment increases in number, becomes more important and more perplexing, and among whom a mistress ought in some sense to perform the part of a vigilant observer, a magistrate, and a protecting friend ; when, I repeat, it is considered that we owe these perpetual obligations to all those who are resident under our roof, those ranks of life which are exempt from the necessity of bodily labour seem supplied with ample occupation, by diligently observing the apostolical injunction, " of keeping at home, and guiding their own houses with discretion." But this is not all : by becoming wives, we do not cease to be daughters, sisters, or friends ; and the demands which arise out of these relationships are certainly of the number of those *plain positive* duties which justify a temporary dereliction of our own immediate charge. Society has also a claim upon us : they who entirely limit their attention to their own households, and will neither open their purses nor their hearts at the call of benevolence, nor bestow their time and their attention on the demands of good neighbourhood, must expect to live disliked or despised : they are indeed punished for their rebellion to general laws, by growing morose, narrow minded, or whimsical, and by contracting such *peculiar* habits as are the forerunners of spleen and misanthropy. Home should be made pleasant to our husbands ; and men are never more pleased with it, than when it affords them the agreeable change of pleasant society. The interest and welfare of our children require that we should introduce them to proper connections. These prudential considerations are enforced by the positive duties which we owe to

our superiors, equals, and inferiors : thence follow the obligations of respect, complaisance, and benevolence ; whoever needs our services, presents a claim to them, which can only be obviated by some stronger obligation ; and here discretion is to act as umpire.

But we have duties still more important than what we owe to kindred and society : I mean those of a creature to its Creator ; and surely a married woman, whose sensibilities are multiplied in so many dear connections, has the least excuse for neglecting this most important obligation. Can she forget the morning and evening sacrifice, whose tender feelings are so peculiarly susceptible of injury from every quarter by which sin or sorrow can assail the human mind ?

With the duties of a responsible dependant being, those of a rational creature are necessarily blended. What is that which is to survive the ruins of this clay built tenement, and to exist to all eternity ? Certainly it is our intellectual part ; and shall we, while in this probationary state, neglect its cultivation ? Talents, we know, are not bestowed to rust in inactivity ; and our desire for useful and improving knowledge, should only be bounded by our opportunity for acquiring it. This restraint makes it incumbent upon us, not to suffer our literary propensities to supersede the active duties which our situation and relative connexions peremptorily require ; and as these claims will in most cases leave us but little leisure, it behoves us to husband that little by applying it well. The knowledge that will be most useful claims the precedence ; that which may be most easily acquired seems to be entitled to the second preference. Though something should be granted to peculiar taste, especially when it appears to be the strong propensity of genius, and not the craving of caprice, it is in general advisable, that women should not (especially after they have embarked in the active duties of married life) devote their attention to any recondite study, or abstruse science. Uninviting as their aspect is to strangers, it is well known, that mathematical problems, and metaphysical deductions, afford such gratification to those who have made some progress in those branches of learning, that they often entirely absorb the faculties, and render the common duties of life tasteless and disgusting.

From the wide range of occupations which call upon us in middle age, let us extend our researches to the decline of life ; and here, as long as the power of usefulness is entrust-

ed to us, we find objects to claim its exertion. If we are deprived of our wedded partners, the sole management of our fortunes, or perhaps the active superintendance of the business which supports our families, devolves upon us. We should provide for this in early life, by gaining such knowledge of money transactions as will preserve us from imposition: few acquirements are more useful to females; and the increasing intricacy of public imposts and legal securities renders it daily more requisite. Here, too, that knowledge of the world which occasional intercourse with society affords becomes of high importance, as it enables us to guard against the blandishments of art, and the snares of villany, to which I believe our sex is more peculiarly exposed. When we have lost the advantage of a counsellor and friend, whose interest was inseparably connected with our own, we become doubly bound to recur to the stores which recollection furnishes, and to exert our most wary vigilance, lest we should be made the dupes of knaves, or the tools of parasites.

Our children, probably, at this period will not require our continual attention; but numerous occasions will arise to exercise our care and love, and to convince us that we do not live for ourselves alone. A third generation, too, generally steps forth, in whom the active calls of earlier life again revive. Much of the comfort of our old age depends upon our discharging the claims of *renovated* maternity with propriety. The season of life is now apt to suggest the love of ease, and at the same time confines our views to present objects and local pursuits. It now, therefore, becomes more than ever our duty to prevent the increasing influence of selfishness, by encouraging those benevolent affections which at this season of life are seldom so lively as to mislead us, unless we suffer them to wander into devious and crooked paths. It is now in our power to be highly beneficial to our fellow creatures, without those active exertions which our infirmities would probably render painful. Yet let it be remembered, that it is by kind assistance, or cautious interposition, not by officious interference, that age is enabled to reflect the light of its own experience on youth. As increasing pains and debilities warn us of the speedy termination of our earthly journey, it becomes *indispensably* necessary, that cheerfulness, patience, and fortitude should be our constant companions; for unless they are inmates in our bosom, we can only hope for the cold services of reluctant duty, or interestless assiduities, instead of the grateful attentions of attachment

and esteem. It not unfrequently happens, that, added to our own infirmities, we are still required to lend our aid to relieve those of our wedded partner. Generally speaking, the pains and privations of advanced life affect men more than women; for their happiness mostly consists in active exertions; their enjoyments are less domestic; they are not so accustomed to endure and to submit; and they often have it in their power to *control* or to *escape* from unpleasant sensations. To sympathize in the anguish, and endure the irritability of a beloved object, and at the same time to struggle against the burden of our own infirmities, is a task which is often imposed upon our declining years.

To these domestic duties and obligations, may be added what belongs to us in the aggregate, as the refiners of manners, and the conservators of morals; and in these cases every judicious statesman readily allows our relative importance. No nation has preserved its political independence for any long period after its women became dissipated and licentious. When the hallowed graces of the chaste matron have given place to the bold allurements of the courtesan, the rising generation always proclaims its base origin. Luxurious self-indulgence; frivolous or abandoned pursuits; indifference to every generous motive; mean attachment to interest; disdain of lawful authority, yet credulous subservience to artful demagogues; the blended vices of the savage, the sybarite, and the slave, proclaim a people ripe for ruin, and inviting the chains of a conqueror. As far as the records of past ages permit us to judge, female depravity preceded the downfall of those mighty states of Greece and Italy which once gave law to the world. We have inspired testimony, that the licentiousness, pride, and extravagance of "the daughters of Sion," during the latter part of her first monarchy, accelerated the divine judgments, and unsheathed the sword of the Babylonish destroyer.\* The events that we have witnessed in our own times confirm this position: in most of the realms that have been overcome by the arms of France, a notorious dereliction of female principle prevailed; and the state of manners in France itself, as far as related to our sex, had obtained such dreadful publicity, as allows us to ascribe the fall of that country in a great measure to the dissipated indelicate behaviour and loose morals of its

\* See various passages in the prophetic parts of Scripture; especially Isaiah.

women. Thus, though we are not entitled to a place in the senate, we become *legislators* in the most important sense of the word, by impressing on the minds of all around us the obligation which gives force to the statute. Were we but steadily united in resisting the corruption of the times, the boastful libertine, the professed man of gallantry, the vapid coxcomb, the profane scoffer, the indecent jester, and all the reptile swarm which perverted pride and false wit produce, would disappear. It is us that they seek to please, or rather to astonish; and if we were but steadily resolved to repay their vanity with contempt, and to bestow our smiles only on what was meritorious, or really brilliant, the habits of the gay world would undergo a most happy transformation.

Women are generally considered as in a great degree the arbiters of taste; nor is this a trivial distinction: taste is influenced by the moral qualities; the quick perception of what is grotesque or absurd, even in what are termed the fine arts, is rarely confined to mere mechanical proportion or effect. Undefined ideas of "perfect, fair, and good" associate with the rules by which we judge the merits of the performance. As these arts are designed to be the lively representations of nature, to decide on the fidelity of the imitation our souls must be alive to the sublimest feelings, capable of investigating the beauties of creation; and of deciding on the genuine expressions and gestures of heroic virtue; and thus exalted *moral* perceptions become requisite to the connoisseur, as well as to the artist. But the fine arts are capable of a yet superior exaltation: we do not merely admire the nice touches of Flaxman's chisel, nor the happy adjustment of parts which are so visible in his designs; we see in them the christian as well as the statuary. While devotion kindles at the paintings of Peters; while we contemplate with the rapture of anxious emulation the pious family bursting from the dark dungeon of the grave, or, with the spirit of the beatified child, avert our eyes from the distant blaze of rainbow-tinctured glory, the cogitations of critical virtue are suspended; and we confess that these artists (like our divine bard) have derived their inspiration from

"Siloa's sacred brook that flow'd  
Fast by the oracle of God."

Let us turn from these inanimate productions of genius, to public amusements, and those species of literature which are allowed to be influenced by female decision. What am-

ple improvements are here offered to our reforming taste ! Surely it is in our power to banish from the stage, not only what is offensive to decency, but what is seductive to principle. I even think that we might extend our proscription to what is grossly unnatural and absurdly improbable ; at least we might only leave a sufficient quantity of these latter qualities to exhilarate the spirits, and relieve the sombre effect of graver scenes. I have no *auslere* design of banishing wit, or even broad humour, from our theatres. The laughable equivoque, and all the extravagance of low character and absurd situation, shall retain their place : they are truly English, and may be so managed as to be perfectly innocent ; I only declare my hostility to practical jokes, extravagant grimace, irreverent allusions to sacred subjects, and, above all, to that inexhaustible fund of profane swearing, which liberal actors always keep at hand to supply the mental poverty of *necessitous* authors. I enter my strongest protest against the *wit* of an oath ; and, maugre the authority of Sterne, I even doubt its *benevolence*. Surely, the ancient expletives of a cough, or an application to the cambric handkerchief, were better substitutes for the barrenness of the author's brains, or the inattention of the prompter. The vocabulary of blasphemy is too limited to permit the lover of novelty to enjoy his darling gratification ; and, as Acres humorously observes, "nothing but their antiquity renders common oaths respectable." The most that can be done by the brightest imagination is, to ring changes upon a few worn out curses, by way of proving its supreme contempt for the institutions and religion of its country, and of instructing a full assemblage of high born beauty in the language of Wapping and Billingsgate. In private society, the presence of a woman is considered by all well bred men as an insurmountable restraint on this impious propensity : does the number of the offended diminish or increase the insult ? Are the penalties which our ancestors wisely imposed on profaneness *suspended* in the theatre ? These reflections are equally appropriate to those species of literary composition to which female cognizance or dominion extends. By steadily opposing and limiting the circulation of what is reprehensible, we might teach authors and publishers to feel a respect for public morals.

Simplicity is the chief characteristic of just taste ; and simplicity gives name to one of those amiable properties of the female heart whose absence cannot be supplied by affectation, nor concealed by artifice. We have confessedly improved

upon our ancestors in simplicity, as it respects dress, decoration, and manners; which are happily restored to a much greater degree of genuine elegance and classical purity. I fear, if we synonymise this term with singleness of heart, the balance will not be in our favour; for I will not allow the unblushing effrontery of hardened guilt to advance any pretensions to the praise of ingenuousness. But to return to the subject immediately under discussion: gorgeous, superfluous embellishment, offended the principles of propriety in a far less important point of view than indecent exposure. How far the attire now generally adopted calls for the correction of pure female taste deserves our strict attention. It is a subject which we must hereafter resume; I will, therefore, only observe in this place, that among those heathen nations whom we now profess to imitate, the vicious and the virtuous parts of the sex were as much distinguished by their apparel as by their manners. The chaste propriety of matronly and virgin attraction, was prohibited from adopting the incentives allowed to the courtesan, who avowed her aim by sacrificing modesty to allurements. It is true, the figures of these unhappy women, lightly shaded with loose drapery, supplied the statuary and the painter with those wanton graces which they consecrated as the attributes of the deity of licentious pleasures; yet, with a decorum which marked the prevailing sentiments of the times, they constantly adopted a very different paraphernalia when they formed a representation of the goddesses of marriage and wisdom. When we consider also, that this costume of Grecian impurity, this marked characteristic of the shameless idol of Paphos, has been yet further debased by being adopted by Parisian fiends, during the most bloody and most voluptuous scenes of a revolution which elevated poissardes into leading fashionables; English ladies, distinguished for modesty, elevated by birth, and enlightened by christianity, should certainly *reject* the degrading imitation with the most *lively disdain*.

This enumeration of the offices and duties of our sex naturally leads us to consider, by what peculiar trials our heavenly Father exercises our virtues, and prepares us for a happier world. They seem to result chiefly from the tempers, dispositions, infirmities, and misfortunes of our near connexions; for we are far less able than men to be the carvers of our own fortunes, and must generally consult *more* than our own inclinations in order to be happy. The colour of our lives is so influenced by the propensities of our wedded part-



ners, that in very many (perhaps in the majority of) marriages, the business of the wife is to controul her own inclinations, instead of projecting how she may gratify them. This subservience is not solely confined to the conjugal tie, nor does it only revert backward to the consecrated claims of paternity; our brothers, nay even our sons, will reap the privilege of Adam; and whenever we fix with them in a domestic residence, we must conform to their humours, anticipate their wishes, and alleviate their misfortunes, or else forfeit their affections and forego their society.

Observe, then, what numerous infelicities, from ill managed tempers, corrupt inclinations, criminal pursuits, capricious whims, imprudent determinations, and obstinate vices, threaten our repose on the one side; while, on the other, how frequently must we be summoned to attend the couch of restless agony, to minister all the few comforts which finite humanity can afford to lingering sickness, or even to sustain the dying head on the bosom of faithful sympathizing love. Our office of helpmate is not limited to the gay season of life. Like Prior's Emma, we are not only required to embark "on the smooth surface of a summer's sea:" we are not permitted

"To quit the ship and seek the shore,  
"When the winds rattle and the surges roar."

Our services are most valuable, and consequently most requisite, in the dreary season of distress; whether it be occasioned by adversity or disease; whether the storm proceed from false friends or secret enemies, or from the imprudence or guilt of the sufferer; whether it affect the fortune, the reputation, or the person of him with whom our fate is interwoven; the faithful wife, the tender mother, the dutiful daughter, or the affectionate sister, must still be the guardian angel to bring the cup of consolation; and though the world renounce or condemn the sufferer, her arms must (except in cases of very extraordinary turpitude) afford the wretched outcast a secure asylum.

Of all the sorrows that threaten our sex, none seem to me so exquisitely painful, as those which result from the vicious conduct of our near connexions. Indeed, these are so excruciating, as to be insupportable without the aid of religion. Yet, in this case, even her golden shield cannot entirely blunt the shafts of adversity; since the views that she presents of the future state of unrepentant sinners, must excite

awful apprehensions. Let us here stop to inquire, how far it is in our power to avoid a misfortune which it is so difficult to sustain; and I trust it will be found, that it is in our power to escape the sharpest of its many pangs, by so regulating our conduct, that we may never have cause to reproach ourselves with deserving such heavy affliction. Let us endeavour to lead a libertine brother or a deistical father to the safe paths of piety and virtue; showing them, by our own deportment, that they really are the paths of pleasantness. Let us resolve, that no charm of person and manner, no attraction of rank or fortune, shall prevail upon us to take for the partners of our lives men whose vices will either corrupt our principles, or wring our hearts with most poignant misery. Give not your unborn offspring a father whose example you must teach them to avoid. Choose not for your companion on earth, one from whom, as often as you reflect, you must hope to be eternally separated.\* If you are offered one who will assist you in your heaven-ward journey, and aid you in the highly important duty of leading your young ones to their heavenly home, give him a *decided* preference, however inferior he may be in worldly advantages to his profligate rival. And here we will observe, that, though a wife rarely has power to reclaim her dissolute spouse, a sedulous attention to the duties of a mother, in the important points of moral and religious instruction, will most probably preserve her from the severest of maternal pains: I am sorry to say only *most probably*; for, alas! we have seen many instances in which the best instruction has been found ineffectual. "Education," said one of the soundest divines of our church, "is not grace;" and he felt the force of that melancholy concession. One point, however, will be secured; we shall then know that we shall not be called to account for the loss of an *uninstructed* soul; beside, while the offender lives, we shall never renounce the hope of his reformation. "We cast the seed upon the waters," observes an eminent professor of the science of education,† "and we expect not to find it till after many days." The temptations of the world, the ebullitions of youthful passions, the seductions of bad example, may retard its germination; but if it has once been sown in early youth by a careful hand, while the mind was vacant and the memory vigorous, it will not be to-

\* See Letter 12.

† Dr. Vincent. See his Defence of Public Education.

tally destroyed. Even at the eleventh hour the labourer may recollect his neglected vineyard; and, if he were early initiated in the method, he may still anxiously work during the small portion of time that remains, and receive a limited reward.

The perplexities which pursue us in the management of our households, belong to that species of vexations which for a time occupy the whole mind, and afterwards appear in so trivial a light that we wonder how we could suffer them to tease us. In weak frivolous dispositions they are apt to gain such an ascendancy, as to form that very disgusting character a fretful scold; and sometimes as the Lilliputians contrived to bind down Gulliver, a multifarious combination of diminutive inconveniences will entammel superior faculties. Nothing gives us so mean an opinion of human nature, as the consideration of what petty circumstances are necessary to our comfort, and how much the best and wisest of our species owe even the blessing of self-possession to the success of mechanical contrivances, and the regularity of servile occupations. An ill dressed dinner shall not only cloud the temper, but also retard the plans of a statesman; the negligence of a valet may interrupt the formalities of law, or violate the decorums of parliament; the inattention of a clerk or subaltern may suspend the most important naval or military operations. No wonder then if women, whose daily round of domestic inspection exposes them to a continual recurrence of domestic vexations, and who must, if properly influenced by a sense of duty, feel anxious to preserve the decorums of family regularity, should often feel their minds unhinged by the inconveniences arising from the carelessness, ignorance, or depravity of those from whom they require diligence, ability, and fidelity. This species of trial often makes severe inroads upon our tempers, and not unfrequently contributes much to alienate the affections of our husbands; who, being less exposed to these provocations in trivial concerns, are apt to underrate their power of irritating the mind.

In most situations of life, the personal offices of the mistress of a family are occasionally requisite; in all, her *superintendance* is indispensable. It is our duty to avoid leading others into temptation; and we unquestionably do so, when, by a total intermission of observation, we teach mercenary people that they may be negligent or profligate with impu-

nity. To superintend and conduct a household with regularity, propriety, elegance, and good humour, is a happy art. The more important business in which men are mostly engaged, often wears their faculties and discomposes their minds; till, without considering that their little monarchies at home are liable to commotions, they think themselves entitled to find them at all times a pleasant retreat from perplexity and contradiction. This expectation may be unreasonable. I do not pretend to justify men from the charge of being selfish; but, as they certainly do expect that the smile of complacency should always illumine the countenances of their female companions, whenever it is not suspended by sympathy for them, it is both politic and praise-worthy in our sex to endeavour at that self-command, which certainly, when acquired, is our best title to superiority in the scale of moral excellence.

The care of children, especially in their earlier stages of existence, is a demand upon the patience and firmness of the mother, which, if she come only *poetically* prepared for the undertaking, she will find exceeds her ability. Sleepless nights, and anxious days, fall to the lot of those who steadily resolve to discharge every duty which the tender scion of humanity requires to raise it to maturity. Nor is the task of teaching the "young idea how to shoot" always delightful. The fertile soil will produce weeds, and the vigorous plant will often shoot with an unhappy curvature, which only constant attention can reform. "Line upon line, precept upon precept," must be supplied; and, like the prophets of old, the maternal instructress must throw in "here a little and there a little." And while we are thus employed in correcting others, we must also remember to watch ourselves with a special care. The observation of children, like their other faculties, is more acute than discriminating; they can readily discern when Mamma is peevish or passionate; but they do not understand that her troubles are more important than the dirtying of a doll, or the breaking of a favourite toy.

The slighter construction of our bodily organs, our sedentary habits, and the inconveniences and sufferings attached to maternity, exercise our patience in a species of trials, to which men are by nature less exposed; though in a state of society the dangers incident to war, navigation, and hazardous occupations, not to mention more frequent exposure to inclement seasons, or the diseases which spring from intem-

perance, prevent the comparison of length of days from preponderating in their favour. Yet if we consider, that the calamities of war, or sudden accidents, generally remove their victims by an *instantaneous* stroke, we must allow that women are ofteneft called to endure lingering decay and protracted suffering. Less equal to fatigue, less capable of exertion, we feel more of the evils incident to debility and lassitude. I am here speaking of English women in their natural state, not in the artificial character which fashion compels them to assume; for, certainly, were we to enumerate the toils which a fine lady *voluntarily* endures, we must allow that a porter is a less robust animal.

After reviewing the evils which beset us from without, let us revert to those bosom traitors which internally assault us: I mean the passions. I can by no means allow, that ours are naturally so violent as those of men; but I fear they are often less subjected to their lawful sovereign reason, and more under the domination of the usurper fancy. Precluded by our situation from an early or intimate acquaintance with the world, we are more exposed to the misrepresentations of interested reporters; and if our graver friends should fall into the common error of exhibiting their description of life in the dark shade of the phantasmagoria, the buoyant spirits of youth will determine us to consider the magic lantern with which our chambermaids, our romantic acquaintance, and novel writers, amuse us, as a more faithful delineation of *living* manners. Hence arises the eternal expectation of splendid conquests, faultless adorers, wonderful events, and extraordinary conflicts, all ending in perfect and uninterrupted felicity, which haunt the mind of youth. To this cause we must attribute the vacillations of vanity, the dreams of expectation, the fretfulness of competition, and the gloom of disappointment. Hence the humble duties of social life are rendered disgusting, and its simple pleasures vapid. Public places are thus converted into a field for knight-errantry; and the prudent friends who endeavour to confine us within the sphere that our narrow fortunes render necessary, assume the part of those giants of old who kept *princesses* immured in *castles*. In this situation of our minds, every tolerably agreeable man that we meet is in danger of becoming a conquering Paladin. If our acquaintance be extensive, and our tempers lively, coquetry is apt to steal upon the unpractised, yet designing female; a more limited circle, and greater susceptibility of disposition, give birth to some fixed attach-

ment; and as we persuade ourselves, that a union with the preferred object is all that is wanting to our happiness, every obstacle that occurs is considered, not as a trial incident to our mortal being, but as a wicked or inhuman contrivance against our repose. Hence arise envy and jealousy of real or imaginary rivals; resentment or dislike of friendly interference; and hence we become the inevitable prey of disappointment, either by the frustration or by the possession of our desires. For let no woman, who surrenders her mind to all the extravagance of romantic expectation, think that it is even *possible* she should ever know the bliss of full fruition. If, while she is exempt from the immediate pressure of pain or distress, she see nothing in the present scene which can call forth the amiable sympathies of her heart, let her rest assured that the gaily decorated future, which she paints in such vivid colours, is but the vision of fancy. It is like a distant landscape illuminated by the beams of the rising sun, all lovely, glowing, and splendid; but when she comes to travel over it, she will find the same inequalities of road, and all the difficulties which require that watchfulness, and cause that lassitude, of which she now complains. The humours of a husband will seem as intolerable as those of a parent; and "the rose distilled" will be annoyed by the same enemies which vexed it "while it grew on the virgin thorn."

Our internal trials, however, do not always proceed from the errors of vanity or the fictions of romance. Our sex generally possesses a most acute sensibility, which sometimes proceeds from the susceptibility of our bodily organs; often from the weakness of our judgment; occasionally from badness of temper, and frequently from real tenderness of heart. Since this latter must be acknowledged to be the only justifiable source of impassioned feeling, it behoves us, from our earliest years, to consider the irritation that proceeds from any other cause, as an infirmity which we must endeavour to subdue. Corporeal fragility seems to belong to the medical department; yet, as nervous cases are allowed to be the opprobrium of the healing art, and as they are alike anomalous and obstinate, it behoves us to inquire, whether there are any *preventive* medicines. Innocent cheerfulness, a constant habit of varied occupations, exercise, and above all

"Genial air, kind Nature's genuine gift,"

happily often

"Annihilate the train of nervous ills."

Persons who are a prey to these disorders are unquestionably real objects of pity ; but they usually deal so liberally in *self-compassion*, that they require to be but sparingly indulged with the *commiseration* of others. They would probably start at being told, that while they consider themselves as the most unhappy of the human species, they resemble tyrants in more than that miserable distinction. A nervous lady is a complete despot, who rules, if not with a rod of iron, at least with a sceptre that is infinitely more formidable to a generous mind. Happiness flies her approach, and even humble comfort cannot resist her assaults. These victims to imaginary ills and evils often possess a great share of real goodness of heart ; and an imperative appeal from benevolence, or affection, generally acts as an invincible stimulant to rouse the patient from the languor of hypochondria, and effects a local cure though the disease seldom fails to return, when the relaxed mind has lost its accidental energy. Does not this testify, that the malady is not wholly organic, and that, at least in its commencement, selfishness and imbecility contribute to its violence ? That it is attended with real suffering, is granted ; but it is equally certain, that the human mind is armed with power sufficient to resist the attack of pain ; because the same person who often sinks into the extremes of nervous depression, at other times may be produced as an instance of fortitude, by enduring extreme agony with cheerfulness. It is thus in the common affairs of life, we frequently see that mind irritated by “trifles light as air,” which has sustained real affliction with unyielding heroism. The state of the case seems to be, that when by bad habits and excessive dissipation, or through long confinement, over watchfulness, great anxiety, or severe misfortune, the spirits become broken and the body debilitated, every little addition of pain or inconvenience alarms us ; self predominates in all our thoughts ; we no longer compare ourselves with others, and judge from a fair drawn parallel ; but we accumulate upon our own heads every calamity and every disease, hereditary or contagious, which we can by any enchanting stretch of fancy carry to our own mountain of misery. The natural consequence is, that we sink under its pressure. I have bestowed the more time on this subject, from a conviction that this malady often assaults most amiable women, who would shrink from themselves with horror could they foresee the uneasiness that they cause, or the lamentable *transformation* which they suffer, while they are under the in-

fluence of this "foul fiend;" whom, though it is almost impossible to *vanquish*, it is easy to *avoid*. As the champion of my sex, I here enter my protest against the forced construction, that I suppose hypochondria to be merely a feminine infirmity. As it either originates in, or is aggravated by, the patient's permitting the imagination to revolve on the narrow pivot of self, the lords of the creation are indebted to their more athletic frames and active occupations, if (which is certainly questionable) they are more exempt than we from the assaults of nervous irritability.

Susceptibility, proceeding from weakness of judgment and badness of temper, takes a variety of forms. Sometimes it teases ourselves and our connexions in the shape of bodily complaint; but it often assumes the colour of an injured character, suffering from an ungrateful, perfidious, undiscerning world. It sharpens supposed neglects, creates imaginary afflictions, and delivers us over a prey to fastidiousness, resentment, and spleen; or perhaps it assumes the aspect of excessive tenderness and tremulous philanthropy. In this disguise, it is so admirably delineated, by the pencil of an *unknown* master in the school of poetry, that I must recall these well known lines to your recollection:

"Taught by nice scale to mete her feelings strong,  
 "False by degrees and exquisitely wrong,  
 "For the crush'd beetle first, the widow'd dove,  
 "And all the warbled sorrows of the grove,  
 "Next for poor suffering guilt, and last of all  
 "For parents, friends, a king's and country's fall.  
 "Mark her fair votaries prodigal of grief,  
 "With cureless pangs, and woes that mock relief,  
 "Drop in soft sorrow o'er a faded flower,  
 "O'er a dead jackals pour the pearly shower."\*

It is most true, my dear Miss M——, that this pseudo humanity always seats herself upon an inverted pyramid, which totters under her. The poor fly that is eaten by the spider, and the dear dog that *would* die of old age, form the basis of an ample superstructure; and her pity always increases in violence with her consciousness of its being utterly unavailing. She is most admirably described in a deservedly popular allegory,† as gazing through a telescope in search of distant distress, and overthrowing the petitioner who was at her elbow soliciting her hospitality.

\* New Morality, in the Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin.

† Progress of the Pilgrim Good Intent.



The trials which arise from real sensibility governed by good sense, are of that improving kind which immediately proceed from the will of Divine Providence, and bring with them present complacency and future reward. Some severe sects of christians seem desirous, by their too rigid interpretation of particular texts of scripture, to deprive us of all the consolation arising from conscious well doing. It is true, if we compare our finite virtues with the purity and goodness of our Creator, the largest accumulation of mortal excellence must become as dust upon the balance. It is also acknowledged, that when our whole lives are referred to the test of his holy laws, they must fall so infinitely below the prescribed standard, as to compel us to trust for mercy on a surer foundation than our own righteousness. We grant that in many things we offend, and that our best deeds are tainted by infirmity. Yet virtue, circumscribed, imperfect, back-sliding yet sincere virtue, still exists in the human heart. Her identity is acknowledged by every precept which requires her exertion; nay, she is even authorized to expect and to claim a *reward*\* from that God by whom she is exercised and sanctified.

Amid those qualities which will entitle their blessed possessors to shine like stars in the kingdom of their heavenly Father, genuine benevolence claims preeminence. Let us not, then, consider that tenderness of heart which leads our sex to exert this glorious quality, as one of our trials, but as our noblest distinction; a distinction which the concurrent voice of travellers determines to be limited to no climate, enfeebled by no external circumstances, but as active amid the privations and ignorance of savage life, as in the refinement and opulence of civilized society. In every age and nation, women are alike distinguished by their promptitude to assist the miserable, and to sympathize with the unfortunate, even at the expense of their own enjoyments.

But this world presents a mixed scene, in which artifice and fraud are constantly endeavouring to ensnare unsuspecting generosity; and hence arises the duty of placing our hearts under the guidance of our understanding, and of enlightening our judgments by the united radiance of knowledge and experience. The unavoidable trials of real sensibility chiefly arise from the difficulty of striking a due balance between the promptitude of a generous temper, and the caution of an

\* Matt. xxv. 21 and 23.

intelligent mind. Only general rules can be prescribed for our direction in this instance ; and as it is much easier to lay them down, than to apply them to individual cases, we must act for ourselves after all, and can seldom aspire to higher praise than purity of intention.

I forbear to mention the trials that proceed from change of fortune, from false friends, artful enemies, and opposite interests ; from disappointed ambition and defeated enterprise ; from accidental adventures, mysterious intrigue, and intricate business. To these troubles we are less exposed than men ; and, speaking collectively, we only feel them by repercussion. Providence has withdrawn us from the turmoil of worldly contention ; and it is only some peculiar circumstances, or the improper encouragement of a busy disposition, which removes us from our proper sphere, domestic retirement.

Instead of presuming, with culpable hardihood, to question the wisdom or the justice of that dispensation which has determined our lot in life, let us direct our attention, from what we might have been, to what we are ; and if we find, by the general constitution of our bodies, and the frame of our minds, that we are rightly placed ; if we discover, too, that our relative situation in society has many real advantages, let dissatisfaction and disobedience yield to acquiescence and gratitude.

Our weaker strength and more delicately organized frame evidently point out our unfitness for those laborious and dangerous exertions, which the common wants of civilized life demand from man. The necessity for our being thus exempted is further apparent, because the future generation would immaturely perish, or languish in the miseries incident to neglected infancy, if at one period we were exposed to severe fatigue and alarming perils, and at another were compelled by extreme toil to desert our feeble offspring, who, unlike the brute creation, plead by their helplessness for indulgence to their mothers. The laborious and hazardous undertakings to which women are compelled to submit in savage countries, are considered as the preventive of such an increase of inhabitants as would prove too redundant for their scanty supply of provisions. And if these physical causes present insurmountable obstacles to our engaging in athletic or dangerous employments, there seems to be no less substantial moral reasons for our withdrawing from the turmoil of that species of business in which the labours of the

head are principally required. An eccentric writer, who thought audacity a proof of genius, and mistook insubordination for independence and greatness of soul, seemed to suppose that the professions of a lawyer, a physician, and a merchant, were no ways incompatible with women. Little ingenuity is necessary to disprove a theory which puzzled for an hour, and then sunk into oblivion, overwhelmed by the weight of its own absurdity, till it was fished up again by some second-rate dealers in paradox and innovation. That we can neither gain happiness nor advantage, from renouncing the habits which nature communicated and custom has ratified, is evident, by considering the qualities for which we have been most valued, and how far they would amalgamate with an alteration in our relative situation. Could modesty endure the stare of public attention; could meekness preserve her olive wand unbroken amid the noisy contention of the bar; could delicacy escape uninjured through the initiatory studies of medicine; could cautious discretion venture upon those hazardous experiments which private as well as public utility often require; could melting compassion be the proper agent of impartial justice; or, would gentleness dictate those severe but wholesome restraints, which often preserve a nation from ruin? Though I am inclined to think highly of my own sex (so highly, that I fear all my claims in their behalf will not be readily allowed,) I confess that I can see nothing in the Utopian scheme of an Amazonian republic, which is not in the highest degree absurd and laughable. My conviction that we should make wretched generals, patriots, politicians, legislators, and advocates, proceeds from my never having yet seen a private family well conducted, that has been subjected to female usurpation. Notwithstanding any degree of science or talent which may have illuminated the fair vicegerent, the awkward situation of the *good man* in the *corner* has always excited risibility, and awakened such prying scrutiny into interior arrangements, as has never failed to discover "something rotten in the state of Denmark." For, alas! my dear Miss M——, it is not only the temperament of our virtues which indicates the necessity of our being shielded from the broad glare of observation; there is, generally speaking, (and, you know, Providence acts by general rules both in the natural and moral world) too much impetuosity of feeling, quickness of determination, and local-ity of observation in women, to enable us to discharge

public trusts or extensive duties with propriety. The warmth of our hearts overpowers the ductility of our judgments; and in our extreme desire to act *very* right, we want forbearance and accommodation, which makes our best designs often terminate exactly opposite to what we proposed. The qualities that we possess are admirably fitted to enable us to perform a second part in life's concert; but when we attempt to lead the band, our soft notes become scranell and discordant, by being strained beyond their pitch; and our tremulous melodies cause a disgusting dissonance, if they attempt to overpower the bold full tones of manly harmony, instead of agreeably filling up its pauses.

Experience, which enables men to penetrate into the designs of others, and to develope specious characters, is the result of such intimate knowledge of the world as must by us be very dearly bought. Fertility of resource and boldness of invention, which in the comprehensive mind of man become the parents of stupendous efforts, when modified by female passions, are apt to degenerate into petty craft. More energetic and sanguine, but less endowed with courage and perseverance, we should, I doubt not, make well intentioned and active, but rash and hasty reformers. Soon roused and soon intimidated; eager to adopt or to reject; unwilling to doubt, to temporize, or to examine; distracted by a multiplicity of cares, yet engrossed by one, how could we successfully manage the jarring interests and contending passions of the instruments that we should find it necessary to employ. Those nice susceptibilities of character, and that acuteness of moral feeling, which induce us to attend even to "the grace, the manner, and the decorum" of virtue, would never permit us to connive at a smaller evil in order to escape a greater; nor could we, consistently with our ingenuousness, act upon the politic principle of "divide and conquer." Our compassion and tenderness would never authorize us to exert that necessary severity, which is often obliged to devote a part to save the whole; yet both public and private affairs must often be conducted upon these principles. Our impatience of calumny would, on the one hand, urge us to that hasty vindication of our motives and actions, which would cause a premature disclosure of our designs; while, on the other, our strong perception of impropriety, and horror of reproach, would restrain us from adopting such measures as did not carry on their face their own justification. In fine we have too little of the "serpent's worldly wisdom" to in-

dennify us for bringing the "harmless dove" from its rural nest. Our administration, whether of public or private affairs, would want the great desiderata of vigour, consistency, and extension; and we should ourselves be mere visionary perfectionists, the dupes of the specious, and the prey of the ambitious. Would this change in our designation promote general happiness? Should we ourselves have cause to rejoice in it?

It is possible, I allow, to produce many illustrious examples of female heroism and capacity; but *singular* occurrences do not overthrow the general conclusions of experience. The reigns of some of our British Queens may be fairly urged in proof of women being capable of discharging the most arduous and complicated duties of government with ability and perseverance. My observations are not designed to recommend the expediency of a Salique law of exclusion from *hereditary* rank; but to strengthen the principles which consolidate *domestic* harmony. Besides, the sceptre's being ostensibly grasped by a female hand, does not reverse the general order of government. The representative of authority is then indeed changed in gender; but power is lodged in the same sex which was wont to exercise it; men still execute the measures which men advise; and the sovereign is but an heiress, whose conduct is restricted and influenced by those laws which are *virtually* her guardians. But, to relieve the tedium of a discussion which I fear you will think dry and unnecessary, suppose we indulge in a slight historical digression. Will you deem me very hardy, if I attempt to strengthen my argument by some observations on the instances which our own island has afforded us of female supremacy? I will not derive them from the *supposed* influence of royal consorts or mistresses, but from the reigns of our actual queens.

The history of the first Mary is directly in point. She was, indeed, destitute of those amiable qualities of mercy and gentleness, which are considered as our best and most natural endowments; but in lieu of these, she was possessed of tremendous perseverance and a sanguinary consistency. Good intentions, or at least sincerity of purpose, was never denied her; she aimed at what she thought reformation; she unquestionably wished her people to become "wise unto salvation" in her own way; and her narrow mind presented no better expedients to make them so, than the fagot and the block. In her eagerness to obtain the desired

end, she overlooked impossibilities : hence her marriage, in the decline of life, with a young foreign prince ; hence her mal-administration of the domestic concerns of the state, and of its continental alliances. Her reign is a melancholy expansion of the passions of a weak woman, driven to cruelty and self-disgust by the opposition of her subjects, the bigotry of her advisers, and her own ignorance, rashness, and obstinacy.

I shall not be driven from the tenets that I have defended by the bright splendour of the Elizabethian æra ; for no writers, except the parasites of her own court, ever ascribed *feminine* virtues to that *renowned* princess. Her education, conformably to the general taste of that age, was learned and comprehensive ; and her understanding possessed the rare advantage of being alike solid and penetrating. The difficulties of her early life taught her discretion, and may I not also add dissimulation ? while her long prospect of the throne which she was one day to ascend, induced her to study the science of government before she was called to wield the sceptre. In all but vanity, her mind was masculine. This vice certainly led her into a perfidious, though perhaps political sacrifice of a lovely competitor ; and induced her, when past her grand climacteric, to court the praise of beauty, which even in youth she never possessed ; and, unmindful of the deathless laurels which crowned her vigorous and successful administration, to decorate her withered brows with the myrtle of affected gallantry. If we compare her latter years with those of our first Edward, whom in her public actions she much resembled, our sex must feel humbled at the parallel.

The miseries of the unhappy Queen of Scotland, so evidently ascribable to the graces, the virtues, and the failings of her sex, must, while they still draw the tear of pity for her fate, excite our lively sympathy for every woman who is called to the dangerous estate of sovereign power ; especially in a realm where the fundamental rights of the constitution and the bounds of prerogative are not *decidedly* settled. How beautiful was the picture which she exhibited in early life of conjugal virtue and domestic felicity ! how must we regret the death of Francis, which banished her from “ Fair France,” and sent her to a kingdom barren of social delights, the haunt of ambition, and the den of morose fanaticism ! How do we participate in her reluctance to relinquish the charms of elegance and refinement ; in her endeavours to

soften the harsh character of her subjects, and to conciliate the alarmed suspicion of Elizabeth, to whose superior and more wisely cultivated understanding, she could only oppose graces and accomplishments, which were to her not only useless, but actually hastened her fall ! We see the weak precipitation of her sex in her rash assumption of her rival's title, and her hasty marriage with Darnley ; and we discover the unrestrained feelings of wounded sensibility, in her avowed contempt of him after her discovery of his ingratitude and meanness. The events immediately following are so perplexed by contradictory statements, that, though general opinion now seems inclined to consider her conduct rather as imprudent than wicked, I will pass them, and hasten to the last scenes of her life ; when, sinking with fatigue, destitute of friends, abandoned, helpless, and forlorn, the lovely fugitive threw herself upon the mercy of a sister queen ; and, through eighteen years of tedious confinement, saw the sun only rise

“ To mark how fierce her angry guardians frown'd,  
 “ To mark how fast her waning beauty flew.”

To the last period of her mournful days, she felt no other effect of her royal birth, than from its elevating her to be the alternate mark of jealousy and ambition. The symmetry of her person, the susceptibility of her temper, the graces of her manner, the elegance of her accomplishments, the warmth of her attachments, all that made the woman amiable, destroyed the queen.

Our second Mary only occasionally held a delegated sceptre ; and as her tuneful panegyrist\* justly observes, was “ instructed to command,” by obeying the hero William. Her regencies may be produced as the brightest example of female administration, combining all those qualities of firmness, promptitude, vigour, prudence, and clemency, which constitute the definition of a well ordered state. Yet this wise and amiable Princess certainly knew that the passive virtues were best suited to her sex. “ Never,” says a cotemporary author, “ were the reins of government more reluctantly assumed, more wisely managed, nor more willingly “ resigned.” Her conjugal deportment to a husband whom she eclipsed in amiable qualities, is a shining example of discreet acquiescence in general laws. Her positive refusal to accept a *solitary* sceptre, was not affectation, but wisdom.

\* Prior.

Her political interference was always marked by beneficial effects, because it was never unnecessarily obtrusive. The revered character of this exemplary lady, the sacred theme of Prior's chaster muse, adorned by every public and every private excellence, still call the virtues to weep over her early tomb. Should her imperial robes be destined to array another English queen, may they, like the mantle of Elijah, convey a portion of her hallowed spirit; and may the inheritrix of her regalia resemble the blessed spouse of William, in all but her premature exchange of an earthly for a heavenly diadem!

The royal sister of this illustrious princess ascended the throne with equally good intentions, but with inferior abilities. The splendid successes that attended her public administration are confessedly attributable to the wisdom of her statesmen, and the heroism of her naval and military commanders. Her private infelicities, and the distractions of her latter years, are a proof of the unsuitness of women to manage the intricate perplexities that arise from contending parties, or to struggle against those gentler sympathies of nature which in elevated situations must give place to the sterner virtues that extensive responsibility imposes. Her subservience to those violent tempers whom her station authorized her to overawe; her desire to accomplish ends which were utterly incompatible, and to reconcile characters essentially discordant; her attachment to her exiled disinherited brother, and to many ungrateful favourites who had recommended themselves to her esteem by specious qualities, rendered her dignity a crown of thorns, which pressed hard on the aching brows of imbecile sickness. Yet, considered as a woman, what can we censure in Queen Anne? Pious and sincere as a christian, anxious for peace, compassionate to the afflicted, affectionate to her kindred, an excellent wife, disposed to friendship, sincere, placable and compliant.

I allow, that the reigns of many of our kings present as many, or I will say more, enormous errors than the worst of those which I have specified; but let it be remembered, that their mal-administration arose from what, it must be acknowledged, were their errors or their vices. In most cases, it was from the predominance of some amiable *female* quality, that our queens erred in their public duties. You well know, that it is not my aim to affirm our absolute unsuitness to take the lead, whenever peculiar circumstances enforce the necessity of our so doing; for we may then, equal-



ly with the other sex, hope for that supply of preventing and restraining grace which will enable us to do our duty in the state of life to which we are *called*; and whenever the exaltation of a woman to a highly responsible situation can be foreseen, a particular regard to her education and early habits may enable her to blend the authoritative, magnanimous, and discriminating qualities that her station will require, with the milder virtues of her sex. These assistances we cannot hope to possess, if we rush madly from our sphere, and resolve, uncalled, to venture on untried and forbidden paths. Cheerful acquiescence in the will of him who disposes of the lot, and steady application to the improvement of the talents with which we are entrusted, is our duty; we have already proved, that it is also our interest.

The propriety of our seclusion from public affairs is necessarily interwoven with domestic subjection. The humour of the present age leans so strongly to the aspiring qualities, independence and self-controul have such attraction in their magical sound, that I must prudently shelter my opposition to their delusive enchantment under the protection of mighty names, when I pronounce the dependant situation of our sex *advantageous*. "One very common error," says Dr. Paley, "misleads the opinions of mankind on this head; viz. that, universally, authority is pleasant, and submission painful. In the general course of human affairs, the very reverse of this is nearer the truth: command is anxiety, obedience ease." While applying this admirable observation to ourselves, as dependant upon the wills of our near connexions, I shall not become the advocate of male tyranny. Referring to the origin of authority and submission, we may be assured, that they were imposed for mutual benefit. "Men do not," as another great divine observes, "claim the supremacy for any inherent superiority, nor for their own individual solace; but rather, that domestic peace may not be violated by perpetual competition. The right of command must be placed somewhere, or how could the little republic be regularly ordered; where then shall it be properly bestowed? Shall it be confided to strength and courage, enterprize and activity; or shall these qualities be made subservient to weakness, apprehension, gentleness, and a love of repose? Would not this be to constitute a state of perpetual warfare, as the qualities of the governor and governed would be diametrically opposite to what their respective duties required?"

No portrait can be more truly amiable, than that of a well disposed well informed woman ordering her domestic affairs with propriety, and guided in the more important concerns of life by the judgment of a worthy intelligent husband ; and if we meant also to draw a picture of human felicity, we could not do better than copy from the same original. A well disposed mind, conscious of its own imperfections (and no mind which is well disposed can avoid feeling them,) shrinks from the burden of unnecessary responsibility. It can make allowances for the errors and failings of others ; it cannot so lightly pardon its own. By committing our affairs to the disposal of one in whom we can confide, we always propose to ourselves quiet and self-enjoyment ; but in a voluntary choice every degree of mismanagement subjects us to the reproach of misplaced confidence ; where the choice is made for us, acquiescence is at least entitled to the solace of conscious rectitude ; the authority of the agent will not prevent the effects of his imbecility or mismanagement, but our submission is then justifiable.

Domestic retirement is not only the scene where the passive virtues display their heavenly energies ; it is also their secure asylum. From how many temptations is our sex preserved, by being placed in this enviable shade ! We are so hedged in, and separated from the contagion of many vices by general opinion, established customs, and even by the natural repugnance of our own minds, that we must use violence before we can burst through the sacred enclosure, and solicit, or rather seize, contamination. We will mention, as instances, intemperance, profaneness, treachery, and cruelty. Even in the eyes of debauchees, a female bouviant is contemptible ; and indecorum of expression startles the most profligate, when it proceeds from that sex, whose presence is acknowledged to be such a restraint upon the boldest blasphemer, as only ignorance and ill manners can surmount. Well might the inspired writer observe, that, “there is no wickedness like the wickedness of a woman ;” for the effrontery which enables her to brave infamy, ascertains the annihilation of those lively sensibilities which might have led her back to commiseration and contrition. It is observed in the lower walks of vice, that when a woman is concerned in a robbery, murder generally follows ; this is a probable consequence, for cowards are always cruel ; and those small remains of generosity, which even a course of rapine cannot always eradicate, are foreign to a heart which has only con-

quered the restraints, but not the selfishness of fear. In men we have often seen ambition united with many excellent qualities; it has even been styled the error of great minds. Conscious of ability, and insatiate of renown, conquerors and statesmen have generally been solicitous to do that "boldly which they would do highly;" but when woman has delivered herself up to unlawful cravings, her lively passions, and her eager desire to attain her purpose, combating with the sense of imbecility, has generally driven her upon the most detestable means of accomplishing a bad design. Macbeth, in the very act of murder, retains somewhat of the "milk of human kindness;" but "his fiend like queen" has no other thought than self-security. Do not object that we contemplate these historical characters through the medium of fiction; their portraits are delineated with the most perfect resemblance to human nature. That of Lady Macbeth presents what, I believe, is rather rare in the annals of vice, a woman *genuinely* ambitious; for in our sex ambition is commonly a falshorn quality, stimulated by love, hatred, revenge, fear, or vanity. Like Henrida in Shenstone's elegies, the aspiring female mostly anticipates "How sweet are slumbers on a couch of state," or else wishes "To crown at once the lover and the love." But the same baleful effects proceed from the mixed as from the primary passion; whenever an Athaliah covets undue preeminence, she arises with a determination "to cut off all the seed royal." These observations, my dear Miss M——, are not wholly irrelative to the million. Ambition presents other temptations beside crowns, and has less bloody, though equally destructive consequences as those to which we have just alluded. I am persuaded that we must refer to this passion, when, under the guidance of vanity, many of those extravagancies which we shall be called upon to lament in the course of our correspondence, as ruinous to domestic peace, and derogatory to female character.

I do not think that women have less temptation to anger than men; because in the routine of family affairs they generally meet with perpetual, though trivial, trials of meekness; and we know, that the solid rock is more likely to be fretted by continual droppings, than broken by the rushing of a hasty cataract; but the present forms of society, and I grieve to add, its seemingly irresistible propensities, may make us enumerate as one of our advantages, that anger is

not likely to involve *us* in very serious consequences. While the only sinful part of chivalry is preserved from that oblivion which has involved its high-foul'd chastity, integrity, and generosity, we must congratulate ourselves that we are not likely to be *called out* for an unguarded expression, perhaps uttered unconsciously in a moment of temporary delirium. You will smile at my enumerating this security amongst our advantages; but the bloody register of false honor is become so voluminous, that it really is a consolation to reflect, that the whizzing ball or gliding steel are not likely to be classed in the list of *our* mortal diseases.

The customs of society give us advantages not highly valuable of themselves, but capable of being converted to real benefit. The attentions that we receive as women may certainly be, as Mary Wolstonecraft terms them, "engines of refined voluptuousness," when they minister to our caprice, our vanity, and our frivolity; but they are capable of a higher direction, and may be so received, and so directed, as to reform the morals of those from whom we require them. Gallantry (I here use that term in its *inoffensive* signification) has been so modified and curtailed by prevailing manners, that it is to be hoped women will not join in a conspiracy to annihilate the small degree of knightly courtesy which yet exists, by themselves assuming the deportment of amazonian boldness, or affecting amazonian independence. By indelicacy of habit, by unblushing confidence in conversation, and by the discovery of a vindictive disposition, we forfeit the respect to which the passive virtues, our natural endowments, are entitled, and must receive from all but brutes or monsters.

The passive virtues, my dear young friend, are not mean, fervile, or cowardly. Dr. Paley places them in such a point of view, as may excite the emulation of the most aspiring mind. His definition is, "passive virtues are of all others the severest, the most sublime, and perhaps the most acceptable to the Deity." The foundation on which they stand is fortitude, magnanimity, and disinterestedness; and their sure reward is self-possession, and that peace of God which passeth understanding. The overstrained softness of affected refinement, is as inimical to these heavenly qualities, as the fury of a virago; a life of uselessness and indulgence can never be a life of happiness. Whoever erects herself into the golden idol of self-importance will be perpetually harassed, by seeing inflexible integrity refuse to fall prostrate

before her. Whatever painted gauds may pass upon the world as the trappings of happiness, it can only reside in the bosoms of those who are exercised in good works. The offices which are daily required of women, enable us to lay claim to this enviable distinction. Our relative situation in life preserves us from many temptations; we are more guarded by our natural propensities from some vices; and from others, we are more secured by habit and general opinion. We are in less danger of having our integrity censured by the allurements of fraud, ambition, or contending interests; but these are not our best advantages: our most glorious distinction is, that we are better fitted for receiving the tenets and obeying the precepts of that faith which will make us wise unto salvation; for, however infidels may misrepresent and cavil at lowliness and singleness of heart, these are the dispositions which fit us for the reception of the stupendous plan of redemption, and prepare us for evangelical holiness. Credulity and terror may make us superstitious, and obstinacy and ignorance may beget bigotry; but bigotry and superstition are mere opprobrious appellations when applied to true religion, and only reflect odium on the bestower. Here, then, our peculiar qualities give us advantages, which strength, courage, and wisdom, when unassisted by piety, cannot impart. A consciousness of infirmity is the admonition of nature, bidding us look up to "the rock from whence we were hewn," and depend upon the power that has promised "to save all who trust in him." Our general habits of submission and constraint tend to subdue our stormy passions, and to eradicate our corrupt desires; the humble offices of life in which most of us are engaged, make us acquainted with the wants of our fellow-creatures, and also dispose us to relieve the sorrows in which we have such full participation; while all the emotions of hope, fear, joy, grief, affection, and gratitude, to which our susceptible hearts are so peculiarly alive, form the very basis for a pure but animated devotion. Surely then, my dear Miss M——, contemplating these inestimable privileges, these securities from vice, these incentives to virtue, these helps of grace and hopes of glory, we may adopt the language of a nervous, though now neglected instructor\* of our sex, and "thank God that we were born women." Leaving you to improve these reflections as your piety will best suggest, I remain, &c.

\* The Author of the Ladies' Calling.

## LETTER III.

*Change of Manners in the Middle Classes.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

FROM the consideration of what we are designed to be by Providence, the proposed series of our correspondence leads us to inquire, what we become when we renounce the obligation of duty, and submit to be new modelled by caprice or affectation. Though the woman of fashion boasts of having emancipated herself from those restraints which fetter the inclination of the woman of propriety, we shall discover that she really is in a state of bondage, and has voluntarily submitted to injunctions no less numerous, and far more servile, than those which she has rejected. She has her trials too; for the wisdom of Divine Providence never suffers any glaring violation of its laws to brave its authority, without being reprov'd, or at least feeling the internal consequences of its pertinacity. We need not extend our researches to the comforts and advantages of a life of voluptuous dissipation, or indolent self-indulgence; they possess none. The punishments of the wicked do not, like the corrections of the faithful, heal the heart they are intended to probe.

Moralists are always censured, for giving an exaggerated caricature of their own times. I am ready to admit, that in some respects we have improved upon our ancestors; that vice ceases to be gross, and manners are no longer stiff or pedantic; that society is governed by more agreeable and convenient laws, and that dress, when it does not outrage modesty, is regulated by a purer taste than that which ordained long waists, long ruffles, high pokes, and farthingales. It is also acknowledged, that our comforts are materially increased by mechanical and mathematical discoveries, and that knowledge is more generally diffused. I believe the learned are agreed, that in profound studies, which do not depend upon experimental philosophy, mechanical contrivance, or natural history, this age cannot sustain a comparison with those which laid the foundation of our church, and per-

fectured our civil constitution. If the most proper study of mankind is man, our ancestors had the advantage of us in knowledge. Nor can we claim uncontested preeminence in charity; because donations from those ample stores which internal peace and commerce have diffused over this nation, must not be rated in arithmetical proportion with the *pittance* that could be spared from the urgent necessities of individuals, at a period when agriculture was ill understood, and often interrupted by civil wars, and when arts and manufactures were unknown. The benevolence, public spirit, and magnificent liberality of those perilous and needy times, are evinced by the irrefragable testimony of many religious and charitable foundations, by stately edifices devoted to the advancement of learning, by splendid asylums for infancy and sickness, and by comfortable habitations for age and penury.

Charity is therefore only, what it ever has been, a striking feature in our national character. It is, indeed, so predominant a distinction, that even selfishness, languishing in the dissipation and luxury of what is called high life, cannot avoid imparting some of its superflux to the poor and needy. Justice should be always done even to the least deserving; and it is to be lamented, that the author of a very spirited and well principled satire,\* while describing the "barren and dreary desert of the fashionable world," has neglected to mark out the green Oasis of charity. Perhaps it would have been false candour to have applied the name of this sublime christian grace to the liberality of philanthropy; however, as even that indicates some remnant of moral feeling, some interruption of the frigid cold of a life of pleasure, it should not be passed over without commendation, though its motives do not entitle it to the praise of religious obedience.

It is no new observation, that the extremes of society are unfavourable to virtue. Wise Agur formed a wish upon this head three thousand years ago,† which for piety and prudence is alike entitled to everlasting remembrance. The levity and dissipation of the middle ranks are the singular and alarming characteristics of the present times. A dissolute sensual nobility is no novelty. It is also upon record, that the lower orders in these kingdoms have been dissatisfied, clamorous, negligent of their proper duties, and inclined to assume political supremacy. But the middle classes, where

\* The Fashionable World Displayed.

† Prov. xxx. 3.

temperance, diligence, and propriety used to reside, the favourite abode of rectitude, good sense, and sound piety, have undergone a change within the last fifty years which must startle every considerate mind; so far as it relates to women, either as to the cause or the cure, it presents a topic demanding our close attention.

Though the effects of commercial prosperity are in some degree generally diffused over the nation, it has principally affected the intermediate orders. Successful adventure, professional skill, patient diligence, or laborious industry, often bring a rapid increase of wealth to families that have not, either by habit or education, been taught the proper use of it. The first blessing which fortune seems to offer to an ill regulated or ill informed mind is self-enjoyment, the second is distinction; hence arise luxurious modes of living, and absurd exhibitions of grandeur. It would be well, if the consequences of these errors were limited to what inevitably follows extreme indulgence, I mean disease and contempt; but the effects are rarely confined to the faulty individual. The gains of successful adventure are soon lost by a reverse of fortune; the savings of diligence and industry cannot supply the waste of carelessness and indolence; the profits of the professional man die with him, and nothing remains to his family but the hoard which frugality reserved in the hour of prosperity. Yet if people so circumstanced will vie in expense with hereditary wealth, what must be the consequence? what indeed, but that which we hourly see, in bankruptcies, suicides, helpless widows and destitute orphans, in every species of nefarious fraud, extortion, and swindling imposition; we must also add, that the ruin caused by this rage for luxury and show is visible in the madness of gaming-houses, and in the licentious haunts of prostitution.

Would to heaven our sex could be vindicated from the heavy censure that must fall upon those who, to purchase the *éclat* of a few years, not the *happiness* of an hour, involve themselves and families in destruction! An impartial review of living manners compels me to confess, that we are in this point often more culpable than our weakly indulgent partners. It is Eve who again entreats Adam to eat the forbidden fruit; he takes it, and is undone. Men in this rank of life have generally less *taste* than women; they are amused by their business through the day, and at its weary close they would generally be contented with the relaxation which their own families afforded, if those families were social, do-



mestic, cheerful, and desirous to promote their amusement. But since the potent decree of fashion determined it to be unfit for the wife of a man in reputable circumstances to employ herself in domestic arrangements, or useful needle work, time has proved a severe burden to people who are destitute of inclination for literature. To relieve themselves from a load, the weight of which they are too proud to acknowledge, they have felt obliged to mingle with what is called the world. Did any of these adventurous dames consider the heavy services which this association requires, did they fairly rate the fatigue, the perplexity, the slavery of being *very genteel* upon a *limited* scale, they would think it better to prefer a plain system of social comfort, even at the expense of that ridicule which, I lament to say, such a deviation from refinement would incur. Yet, when there is no housekeeper in the spiceroom, nor butler at the sideboard, an elegant entertainment occasions more labour and perplexity to the mistress of the house, than she would undergo by a regular performance of services highly beneficial and praiseworthy. What anxiety is there that every part of the splendid repast should be properly selected, well dressed, and served in style! What care to keep the every day garb of family economics out of sight, and to convince the guests that this is the usual style of living; though, if they credit the report, it must only confirm their suspicion that their hostess is actually insane. What blushing confusion do these *demi* fashionists discover, if detected in any employment that seems to indicate a little remaining regard for prudence and œconomy! What irregularity and inconvenience must the family experience during the days immediately preceding the gala! what irritation of temper, what neglect of children, what disregard of religious and social offices! And for what is all this sacrifice? to procure the honour of being talked of; for happiness, or even comfort, are rarely expected at such entertainments. Notwithstanding all due preparation, something goes wrong, either in the dinner or the company. The face of the inviter displays mortification, instead of exultation; and the invited disguise the sneer of ridicule under the fixed simper of affected politeness. Nor let the giver of the feast complain of disappointment. She aimed not to please, but to dazzle; not to gratify her guests by the cheerful hilarity of her table, but to announce her own superiority in taste or in expense. When the hospitable hostess spreads her plain but plentiful board for friendship and

kindred, for those whom she loves or respects, those whom she seeks to oblige, or those to whom she wishes to acknowledge obligation, where vanity and self are kept out of sight, and real generosity seeks no higher praise than that of giving a sufficient and comfortable repast with a pleasant welcome, a fastidious observance of any accidental mistake, or trivial error, might be justly called ill nature and ingratitude; but when ostentation summons her myrmidons to behold the triumph, let ridicule join the party, and proclaim the defeat.

But this insatiable monster, a rage for distinction, is not content with spoiling the comforts of the cheerful regale; luxury has invented a prodigious number of accommodations in the department of moveables; and the mistress of a tiny villa at Hackney, or a still more tiny drawingroom in Crutched Friars, only waits to know if her Grace has placed them in her baronial residence, to pronounce that they are comforts without which no soul can exist. Hence it becomes an undertaking of no little skill, to conduct one's person through an apartment twelve feet square, furnished in *style* by a lady of *taste*, without any injury to ourselves, or to the fauteuils, candelabras, consoletables, jardiniers, chiffoniers, &c. Should we, at entering the apartment, escape the workboxes, footstools, and cushions for lapdogs, our debut may still be celebrated by the overthrow of half a dozen top-gallant screens, as many perfume jars, or even by the total demolition of a glass cabinet stuck full of stuffed monsters. By an inadvertent remove of our chair backwards, we may thrust it through the paper frame of the book stand, or the pyramidal flower basket; and our nearer approach to the fire is barricadoed by nodding mandarines and branching lustres. It is well, if the height of the apartment permits us to glide secure under the impending danger of crystal lamps, chandeliers, and gilt bird cages inhabited by screaming canaries. An attempt to walk would be too presumptuous, amidst the opposition of a host of working tables, sofas, rout chairs, and ottomans. To return from a visit of this description without having *committed* or *suffered* any depredation, is an event almost similar to the famous expedition of the argonauts. The fair mistress, indeed, generally officiates as pilot; and by observing how she folds or unfurls her redundant train, and enlarges or contracts the waving of her plumes, one may practise the dilating or diminishing graces according to the most exact rules of geometrical proportion; happy if we can steal a mo-

ment from the circumspection that our arduous situation requires, to admire the quantity of pretty things which are collected together, and enquire if they are really of any use.

Dress is such an important subject to women, that I must claim permission to refer to it frequently. Two chief ends seem to be pursued by those who imitate the great in this particular; namely, that it should show their wealth, and proclaim their uselessness. When the cost of a gown excels the countess's which it resembles in shape, the wearer feels an immense satisfaction, no matter though her dress be but a publication of her vulgar manners; elegance is, in her opinion, a saleable commodity; she has the draper's bill in her pocket (I hope with a receipt to it,) and she knows that she is better dressed than her ladyship by fifteen shillings a yard. It may, however, happen, that deficiency in cash or credit may limit the taste of the fashionist to the mere vamping up and remodelling her old wardrobe; but, as an exact copy would argue a very little soul, it now becomes necessary to caricature the mode, and to exhibit in full extravagance that which, when really modified by taste and worn with propriety, was graceful and becoming. Either way the wearer announces her intention of not being mistaken for the drudge of patient utility. The flow of her drapery, the slight texture of her attire, the tasteful arrangement of her tresses, and the studiously inconvenient situation of her ornaments, proclaim an airy sylph, a Grecian nymph, a "mincing mammet," or, to speak in her own language, a very fine lady: they cannot possibly denote the industrious housewife, or the helpmate of man.

The pursuits of this *lufus nature*, this creature formed to feed on the toils of industry, consist of laborious idleness. As, after all her exertions, her situation in life does not allow of her being genteel in every thing, parsimonious economy and heedless expense take their turn. To be as smart, not as her equals, but as her superiors, it becomes necessary that she should excel in contrivance; I do not mean in that prudent forethought, which enables a good wife to proportion the family expenditure by the regular order of necessities, comforts, conveniences, and superfluities: this gradation must be reversed, and superfluities take the lead. French wines may be introduced on great occasions, by a daily retrenchment of small beer; and wax lights may be had for routs, by limiting the number of kitchen candles. If her

husband and children dine on hassled mutton, she can provide ices in the evening ; and by leaving their bed chambers comfortless and inconvenient, she can afford more drapery for the drawing room. Even white morning dresses will not be so very expensive, provided you are expert in haggling with the washer woman, and do not dislike being dirty when you are invisible ; and if you know cheap shops, and the art of driving bargains, you may even save money by making *useless* purchases. New modelling your household and personal ornaments is, I grant, an indispensable duty ; for no one can appear three times in the same gown, or have six parties without one additional vandyke or festoon to the window curtains. These employments will therefore occupy your mornings till the hour of visiting arrives ; then you must take care to dismiss the bed gown and workbag, and, having crammed every thing ungentle out of sight, assume the airs of that happy creature who has nothing in the world to do, and nothing to think of but killing time. Fashions are now to be discussed, public places criticised, shopping schemes adjusted, and evening parties fixed. After your morning ramble, you will just get time to treat your own family with a little of that spleen and chagrin which have been excited by your having seen an acquaintance in her carriage while you were still compelled to be on foot, or by having met one better dressed than yourself, whose husband cannot *half* so well afford it. You must, in compliance with the pressure of time, hurry over the business of the toilette ; and if during the remainder of the evening you are not quite in so great a crowd as a duchess, you may at least console yourself with the consideration that you are as useless to your family.

My dear young friend will smile when I add, that our second rate ladies plead that they undergo all this from motives of *conjugal duty* and *maternal affection*. It is necessary, they say, to keep up connexions ; their husbands' credit depends upon their appearance ; nobody notices them if they do not live like other people ; or perhaps the good man himself insists upon their being very smart and living in style. When this latter excuse happens to be the fact, we certainly must seem to sail with the stream ; but the plans of expense which we dare not openly oppose, a regard to our children, and indeed self-love, should induce us to counteract gradually. Vanity is rarely a prevailing feature in a man's character ; men sometimes, indeed, choose that their wives should

be gaily adorned, and hurried through a round of amusements, because they are their property; but much oftener they do this out of gallantry, with a view to gratify them, and by way of showing them their attachment. In the latter case, it is very possible to decline, with affection and steadiness, every expensive attention which prudence disapproves; and in the former, this mania of unconjugal *ostentation* may be checked, by appearing rather to *endure* than to *enjoy* the exhibition. Men are far more sensual than vain; they are less influenced by general opinion, and less affected by petty detraction. The passion of self-indulgence leads them into expensive habits. Disdaining the fictitious happiness which depends upon the breath of others, dissipated men pursue what they call *substantial* bliss. They know that the club will at least for an hour exclude sorrow, and ensure gaiety. The circulating glass has with them the united properties of Lethe and Helicon. To a man of this cast, the society of his wife and children is vapid, or at least not sufficiently poignant to be long entertaining. If his tavern engagements can be counteracted by a well dressed dinner, and a few cheerful friends at home, a woman is justified in resorting to these measures, by way of weaning him from his more dangerous propensities; even though she should be obliged to sacrifice those pure domestic pleasures, which happy wedlock affords those people whose fortunes are commensurate to their wants;

- “ An elegant sufficiency, content,
- “ Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
- “ Ease and alternate labour, useful life,
- “ Progressive virtue, and approving heaven.”

I cannot admit the generally received excuse, that convivial meetings and tavern associations are promoters of business; because I have known men transact a great deal, and even rise from low life to opulence, by means of an established character for probity, integrity, and sobriety. The general habits of the superior part of the mercantile world confirm my opinion; but, granting that the convenience of driving a bargain, or forcing trade, may withdraw the husband from the domestic circle, the dissipation of the wife is left without excuse. The craft of deceiving by false appearances is followed by too many, to be a profitable *speculation* any longer; and wealthy people, whom it is desirable to make dupes, are much sooner induced to trust a man by the appearance of order and œconomy in his family, than by hearing that it is

the genteelst in the street; which cautious traders often think is the surest omen of approaching bankruptcy. Nor is the wisdom of the mother more apparent than that of the wife, in thus cultivating taste at the expense of propriety, from a design of procuring respectable connexions for her daughter; which intention is almost sure to be frustrated by one circumstance: every body is embarking in the same traffic; and the market is so full of well dressed spinsters who are adepts in the art of spending money, that if our laws permitted the same plurality of wives to men of fortune, as the Koran sanctions, still many an elegant belle would be in want of a good *establishment*. The nymphs of modern times, who spend their days in music, and dancing, differ much from the ancient heroines of pastoral and romance; for these latter, if they fed at all, subsisted upon the wild productions of groves and meads, quaffed the limpid stream, and reposed under umbrageous trees; so that they really were very *cheap* companions. But now, ornaments are no longer composed of natural flowers, unless, like Lady Teazle, the fair one purchases roses at Christmas. Penelope (except we seek for her in the circle of royalty) cannot fabricate a vest for her son, or fire; and even "white handed Phyllis" disdains "to dress herbs and other country messes for Corydon and Thyrsis;" and indeed I much fear that those gentlemen would no longer find them "favoury." The rich gudgeon, for whom *partizanship* elegance drops such numerous baits, often possesses that most ungallant acquirement arithmetic; and, having discovered that a dowerless wife will have the same conjugal anxiety to support his pecuniary reputation, seems inclined to ally himself to a gold fish. Compassionating the claims of those numerous young women, who found their expectation of being supported on their total inability of helping themselves, I would advise by way of experiment, that some few mothers would show a wish of furnishing the next generation with *wives*, by cultivating those qualities in their daughters which will prevent them from being converted into *mistresses*. Diffidence, frugality, and industry, are indeed quite out; but for that very reason they will certainly be stared at, and may give their possessor that notoriety, which those who only herd with a crowd never can obtain; and it is even possible that some whimsical humourist may take a fancy to such vulgarity, and, remembering his old grandmother's proverb, may overlook the want of fortune with a wife, when there appears to be something in her which

promises to wear well. I grant that such a man must be a quiz; yet quizzes have made good husbands; at least, it is better to be the wife of such a one, than to be eternally transforming an old tambour mullin into fresh nets to entangle a Titus or a Brutus, who, being himself upon his preferment, perfectly understands the mystery of *entrapment*.

I can no longer support a strain of irony. My soul is moved to the liveliest indignation, and keenest sorrow, at the wilful degradation of my sex. With what propriety do we complain of the state of dependence in which God and the laws of our country have placed us, when we render ourselves infinitely more helpless, more destitute (shall we not say more servile and despicable?) by deserting our proper sphere, by neglecting the useful duties that we might perform, by sacrificing the interest and the affections of our families, not to be even an object of admiration, distinguished for elegant frivolity and expensive nothingness; but for the sake of starting in a crowd to run the race of folly, of echoing a forged tale of happiness and splendor, which has been too often told to be even specious? For let me once again repeat the often urged fact, dissipation, sinery, and extravagance, are *too frequent to attract attention*. Even if you strain the bursting nerves of credit, and not only squander every shilling of your children's property, but ruin every one whom you can ensnare, some rival, equally unprincipled, but better situated, will outshine you. Could these poor slaves of vanity, who judge by the supposed opinion of the world, bear the contemptuous sarcasms which this unsuitable parade and expense excite from those whom they attempt to propitiate? It is possible, that the dread of ridicule might prove a more powerful restraint, than the reproachful tears of their ruined offspring, and the curses of their creditors. In the higher circles, a more costly dress than the occasion requires is considered as an indelible proof of vulgarity; the grandeur of the lady's paraphernalia is contrasted with the pettiness of her attendant lacquey, the shabbiness of her buggy, or the leanness of her laborious Rozinante; and the suitability of the *tout ensemble* must be arranged with no common skill, if it escapes the prying glance of piqued superiority. An uncommon assemblage of feathers, a treble convolution of train, a double row of plaited Valenciennes, or a sleeve decorated till it reminds one of Petruchio's whimsical description,\* as

\* "What! up and down, carv'd like an appletart,  
"With snip, and nip, and cut." SHAKESPEARE.

indisputably announce the entry of some would be fine lady to a well bred assembly, as a copper complexion does a native American to the Canadian settlers; and the company wait, with the *nonchalance* of good breeding, till some cockney misapplication of the W, or provincial inversion of the aspirate, determines the stranger's tribe and latitude. For let it not be supposed, that the propensity to appear what we are not is limited to crowded cities: few retirements are so sequestered, as to prevent their being explored by the visitations of this ostentatious passion for *saleable* refinement. The village madam hopes her showy array, and fastidious scrupulosity, will convince you that her husband cannot be a farmer; and, at the peril of a brisk retort, forbear to insinuate to the market town *elegante*, that she may be wanted in the shop. They suppose that it is very vulgar to be thought useful; and the acknowledgment of an honest avocation is to them a reproach. Yet, though wealth and commerce have rendered the externals of the gentlewoman so attainable, that she is no longer to be distinguished by her habit; we have left it to more patient and less prosperous times to transcribe the complaisance, affability, condescending attention to the claims of others, love of propriety, and regard for decorum, which are the essentials of this desired distinction: the adoption of these is too arduous an undertaking, and requires too many privations. Rudeness of habit is soon cast aside, rudeness of manner is more adhesive. The country lass doffs the former at the dress maker's, where she leaves her red cloak and her humility; but she is infinitely too much delighted with her transformation, to suppose respect to superiors, or civility to equals, can be necessary, now that the Miss Stitchwells have pronounced her *quite another thing*. Is there, my dear Miss M——, a more disgusting produce than insolence engrafted on awkwardness? or are any airs so ridiculous, as those which are assumed by purse-proud ignorance?

Your excellent mother filled a situation in life too decidedly respectable to derive any real elevation from attempting to outstep the modesty of nature. Her good sense taught her both to perceive and preserve its advantages. I enjoy a soothing gratification from reflecting, that as, by avoiding the extremes of parsimony and extravagance, she gave an example of prudence to people of her own rank; so the wisdom of the maxims by which she governed her conduct was generally useful. When the pressure of the times presented



those claims to which country gentlemen are especially exposed, she did not plead public exigency as a reason for restraining private benevolence; nor did she make her domestics miserable by penurious restrictions. "The world," she observed, "will always allow you to spare from yourself. If you never attempt to outshine your neighbours, they will pardon your old gown, and permit you to stay at home unquestioned." By limiting our wardrobe, or giving up an excursion, it is possible to avoid the censure of being mean, and the pain of knowing that we embarrass our husband's affairs.

It is worth considering, at how much less expense of time, fortune, and comfort, you may purchase the reputation of solid, than you can of brilliant qualities, provided you are contented with being a good *plain* character; for few are inclined to contest the right of a claimant to that distinction. I do not advise you to gain it by struggling against the torrent, but by getting out of its way, and suffering it to glide quietly by you. If the attention of your superiors be the object at which you aim, this is the surest way to obtain it; for, to return to the observations of my deceased monitor, "though every rank in life has pressed into the station immediately preceding, none seem conscious of their own advancement, while all are piqued at the exaltation of their inferiors." The clergyman's daughter will express much indignation that the Misses Flamborough have imitated their Sunday hat, at the very moment that they are fabricating a head dress resembling what the baronet's lady wore at the last county assembly. It is in vain, therefore, to rush forward with precipitation; our superiors will only suffer us to overtake them for one moment; and then, with a smile of contempt, they will vault on a higher eminence, where you must try to perch beside them, or else be thrown down by the crowd of jostling inferiors who are pressing hard upon you. To step aside is the only wise method; and, to be convinced of the absolute necessity for our so doing, let us for a moment turn our eyes on the lower orders of society. Our attention shall be first directed to that with which we are most connected, domestic servants. What is their appearance; what are their pursuits; what, generally speaking, is their moral character? The propensity to appear what they are not, has operated so strongly in this class, that few mistresses, however besotted themselves, can refrain from complaining of its ill effects; and it is impossible to go into

a mixed company, without being assailed with narratives of the extravagance, ignorance, folly, and finery of maidservants. Yet, to say that they only faithfully copy the examples which are set before them, would not (generally speaking) be too severe an answer. But this subject must be reserved for future discussion.\*

We have seen, that no speculative advantages can accrue, either to our husbands or our daughters, by our extravagance. Suppose we now estimate the pleasure really enjoyed by a woman who devotes herself to expensive gratifications, who wears the most elegant dress, gives the most sumptuous entertainments, goes every where, and sees all that is to be seen. I allow that the Being thus occupied must be too much devoted to self-enjoyment to feel anxious about her deserted family; to care whether her children are brutes, idiots, or cripples, further than as they affect herself; to be solicitous how her husband amuses himself in her absence; to shrink at the apprehension of the carelessness or the dishonesty of her servants; or to mind having her morning slumbers broken by a levee of clamorous duns. We may deny that she ever attains what she pursues, pleasure; and our proof of this assertion is derived from the pallid effect of satiety on the physical constitution of our bodies; and from the certain fact, that pleasure ever flies away the fastest when it is most eagerly pursued. The rational dame, who spares one evening in the week from domestic occupations, will enjoy a lively party, a well acted play, a concert, or a ball. She will feel the force of contrast; and every agreeable incident will be engraven on her memory, for the purpose of amusing the beloved group, who will crowd around her next morning to inquire the history of the gay evening. She has a still greater chance of being gratified, as she will enter the festal scene with spirits undepressed by that load of bodily debility which sleepless nights and listless days must occasion; beside, amusement is not the business of her life; and if what she enters into falls short of her expectation, it is but a petty disappointment, and she has other resources.

“The sleep of the labouring man is sweet,” says the inspired penman; and surely nothing is so delightful, as, after a day spent in the peaceful exercise of some honest calling, to sink upon our pillows, conscious of well meant endeavours, and confiding in that God who has promised to accept them.

\* See Letter XLVII.

Fatigue of this kind never injures the animal frame; it is repaired by rest and refreshment; and the morning, which renews the *demand* for exertion, revives the *power* of compliance. The fatigue which arises from excessive dissipation is of another description. The exhausted body has lost the ability of resuscitation; the clamour of music, the clashing of carriages, assail its feverish slumbers; the mazes of the dance, and the glare of theatrical scenery, still flit before the frequently unclosed eyes; the passions are not yet calm in the throbbing bosom; envy enumerates the ornaments of a rival, and chagrin dwells upon the slight curtesy of an opulent acquaintance. The votary of pleasure rises unrefreshed, and a listless yawning morning is the penalty which she must pay to nature for having forced her beyond her ability. These are the moments that engender spleen; the dissatisfaction that she feels is averted from herself, on whom it ought to fall; but, as she really is unhappy, it must fix somewhere. Very probably, she will discover that her evening's chagrin was owing to her husband, who either *looked* as if he did not wish her to go out, or *prevented* her making a more pleasant party, or *restrained* her expenses, or *dropped* some harsh expression which broke her spirits, always meek and tenderly sensitive. Perhaps the children are troublesome, cross, humourful, and want more attention than she has leisure to give them; or perhaps the French governess may be negligent, the Abigail impertinent, or the cook tipsy. It is happy when the disease fixes in some remote part, and only prompts the sufferer to treat her family with a detail of the cruel usage that she has undergone; and a pathetic explanation of the extreme hardship, that she, who has such a relish for pleasure, should never be permitted to taste it. Mistaken creature! who told thee that this world was made for butterflies? Call me not too severe, nor suppose that I overcharge the portrait. I know the depravity of the human heart too well (shall I own too experimentally?) not to be convinced that they who have no time for self-consideration, and religious communing, may be esteemed fortunate if they do not fall into still grosser faults and misfortunes.

To descend a little from the line of society that we have been considering: I have often contemplated the good city pair, who set out for their box in the country on Saturday night, and return time enough to open shop on Monday morning. We rustics might suppose, that after the fatigue

of six days they would look forward to the sabbatical rest with ecstasy; and that their purpose for going into the country was to enjoy the heavenly blessings of reflection and devotion in retirement. Quite the reverse; their intention is to have a party of friends. The travelling vehicle is laden with provisions; and though the mistress of the "snug retreat" arrives at it late and weary, she must unpack her plate, dust her china, and arrange her dessert that evening. A little indulgence next morning would be excusable, provided the family were in readiness to perform the appropriate duties of the Sabbath; but, unhappily, there is a multiplicity of reasons to prevent this observance. The church is a long way off; it is cold and damp; the pew is in an obscure corner; the weather is suspicious, and a shower would destroy the patent net mantle; or perhaps (which is a still more insurmountable difficulty) the patent net mantle was left in London. The kitchen too now begins to give "dreadful note of preparation;" not from armourers accomplishing the knights, but from the shop maid's chopping force meat, the apprentice's cleaning knives, and the journeyman's receiving a *practical* lesson in the art of waiting at table. For, do not suppose that the entertainment is to be merely comfortable and social. No; it is to be a display, a set out, and as much intended to elevate and surprise as a Grosvenor square gala. Certainly it is fortunate, that the legislature still prohibits opening shop of a Sunday; as, but for this remission of worldly toil, many people would be obliged to leave the garden of taste quite uncultivated. The company at length arrive; they admire the furniture, praise the garden, and declare their intention of *coming very often*; for it is so delightful to be out of the smoke of London. Dinner is now served; and then "they eat, they drink," but probably not "in communion sweet;" nor do they "quaff immortality and joy," because they neglect to visit the fount where those blessings are dispensed. Surely, if it were not for being a *little* in the fashion, a quiet domestic religious Sunday would be quite as comfortable. But I betray my ignorance in using this term: comfort is abjured by all who enlist in the ranks of vanity; and as, among the high ton, the eclat of the fête depends upon the violence of the squeeze; so, among second ton, the prodigiousness of the preceding fufs determines the pleasure that your visitors are to give you. One morning's trouble would be enough for a common councilman's wife; but who would mind being perplexed in the extreme for a

whole week, provided one could say that we gave a dinner to *Alderman Marrowfat* and *all* his family?

Permit me to attend to an apology which is often made for this style of gentility; I mean, that it is patriotic; though, in refuting this pretence, I may deviate a little from the prescribed bounds of female authorship. It is allowed, that fine ladies of all descriptions are *nuisances* in their own families; but then it is said they are *public* benefits; they force trade, promote the circulation of cash, and reward the ingenuity of manufacturers. To preserve the metaphor, whatever is forced must be proportionably delicate and hazardous. If luxury, by becoming universal, increases the wealth of the community, the artificial wants of each individual are also multiplied; and though the merchant receives more for his commodities, the demands of his family, and the frequent insolvency of his connexions, leave him in a worse situation, than when frugality and moral honesty were more prevalent. Those, indeed, are the solid pillars upon which trade must rest; remove them, and its destruction is inevitable. The maxim, that private vices are public benefits, has sunk into contempt, with the deist\* who endeavoured to establish it.

All civilized states have agreed in cherishing those privileged orders whose rank or wealth made them the proper patrons of learning and the fine arts, and the encouragers of all the happy efforts of mechanical industry. From persons thus circumstanced, society demands munificence, splendour, and hospitality. Liberality, elegance, and refinement, are the required characteristics of their immediate inferiors. The third degree should be contented to be distinguished by benevolence, œconomy, and propriety. Humanity, diligence, and frugality, become indispensable duties to the fourth class. Industry, humility, and general good will, are so suited to the lowest state of life, that when the poor part with these virtues, they deprive themselves of their best consolation and richest possessions.

Let us look back on the times that are just past, and estimate the present by them. Soame Jenyns's popular description of the embarrassment of a country knight's family at an unexpected visit, would not now suit the domestic situation of a creditable farmer. Several steps in society have, therefore, been passed in the progress of refinement since the publication of *Doddsley's Miscellanies*. I have heard a well at-

\* Mandeville.

tested tradition of a country lady who was the heiress of large possessions, and, what was then called, genteelly educated. It was determined by the females of the family met in council upon the occasion, that she should appear in the great hall clear starching lawn ruffles, when she received the first visit of a favoured admirer. It is impossible to calculate how many degrees of manners are here passed, since the few who still continue to be notable, blush to be thought so: yet this event happened about the beginning of the last century. I need not multiply anecdotes of this kind; the archives of every family can supply numerous attestations in point.

In low life, the gradation used to be from rags and dirt to tidiness; from thence to comfort; from comfort, improvement proceeded to superfluity. But even the pauper, if she move at all, now strides from filth to finery. May not the discontent and depravity of the lower orders be attributed to this circumstance? and that such discontent and depravity do exist, those who have the opportunity of close observation cannot doubt, though it has not yet assumed sufficient ripeness to attract legislative attention.\* When pining want beheld its neighbour rising to decent comfort by unremitting industry and frugality, the possibility of obtaining equal advantages stimulated him to equal exertions. But the enormous wages which artificans now receive in many trades† support a style of living, to which the most rigorous toil of the day labourer, the worsted weaver, or many other less profitable occupations, would be totally inadequate. If the males in the artisan's family are sober and industrious, their earnings are sufficient for the maintenance of the whole household: the wife, no longer feeling the daily necessity of adding to the common stock by the notability of herself and her daughters, is often induced, not only to *remit vigilance*, but to *allow of waste*. A style of appearance is assumed, the expense of which leaves them totally unprovided in an hour of sickness and misfortune; and also, by its absurdity and impropriety, deprives them of the good opinion of their superiors, who certainly would have been inclined to have extended their kind aid to alleviate that distress, against which prudence had in vain endeavoured to provide an adequate

\* In Letter XIVth this subject is resumed.

† In several branches of the woollen trade, common hands may earn two guineas a week; yet even a short illness reduces them to extreme distress.

defence. What sort of servants, or poor men's wives, young women bred in idleness, and dressed in taste, are likely to make, is not *now* my inquiry : I speak of the effects of this unsuitable, and indeed useless abundance, upon the mind of the really indigent man ; and surely it must render his tattered garb still more comfortless, and his brown crust more unfavourable and degrading. He could have passed by the magnificent mansion of the gentleman, the elegant residence of the rector, or the comfortable dwelling of the farmer, without heaving a sigh, or uttering one complaint at his hard lot ; but the luxuries and indolence of those whose birth and education are the same as his own wring his soul with anguish ; and he supposes himself injuriously treated, since all ranks may be idle and extravagant except his own. Perhaps if we were so situated, we might be equally faulty. The contented cottager, quiet, sober, laborious, and cheerful, is fast disappearing from our rustic haunts ; wretchedness, with all its attendant train of vices, or thoughtless, and I may add insolent extravagance, the result of great gains and little foresight, supply his place.

And is the nation really benefited by this change of manners ? the loom may have more employment ; the straw manufacturer may have a greater demand ; indeed, trade of every kind may receive a momentary impetus ; but morals, which are the vital part of society, are attacked by a mortal disease. The middle ranks no longer feel ashamed of being in debt ; the lower do not blush at receiving (I should rather say at demanding) parochial relief, though œconomy might have preserved to them the blessing of independence. In vain does the mistress advise her servants to save the gains of prosperity ; she is answered, that what they earn is their own ; this is a land of liberty, and they have no notion of screening their parish. To assume a more dictatorial tone, even to paupers, is impossible ; they would tell you, that God made all men equal, and question your title to that pre-eminence which permits you to reprove them.

These are the effects of flourishing trade and prosperous manufacture : are they symptoms of national prosperity, or internal decay ? Allow me to quote the words of an eloquent writer ;\* who, having observed that this country was flourishing in all the arts of civil life, remarks, that “ perhaps it “ is running the same course which Rome had done before ;

\* See Dr. Middleton's Life of Cicero.

“ from virtuous industry to wealth ; from wealth to luxury ;  
 “ from luxury to impatience of discipline, and corruption of  
 “ morals ; till by a total degeneracy, and loss of virtue, be-  
 “ ing grown ripe for destruction, it falls a prey to some hardy  
 “ oppressor ; and, with loss of liberty losing every thing that  
 “ is valuable, sinks gradually again into its original barba-  
 “ rism.” Such an oppressor, my dear Miss M——, seems  
 near at hand. He wants neither ambition, hatred, boldness,  
 nor inclination to destroy us ; but let us hope that there still  
 remains enough of true religion among us, to obtain a *respite*  
 from that merciful God who promised to spare offending  
 Sodom, if ten righteous, or rather religious people, could  
 therein be found. And may we so profit by our present  
 chastisements, as to see the necessity of checking that career  
 of degeneracy which proved destructive to every nation that  
 has preceded us in empire, wealth, and renown !

My conviction that luxury, and affected refinement, have  
 already passed those bounds which defend private happiness  
 and public security, would induce me to confine our corre-  
 spondence entirely to those orders whose conduct is most im-  
 portant to society, and among whom the insinuating arts of  
 dissipation have lately gained a most alarming preponder-  
 ance ; but a regard for my literary reputation, together with  
 the zeal natural to all reformers, prompt me to endeavour to  
 obtain a fair hearing for my remonstrances, which I am con-  
 vinced my present labours never would receive, if I did not  
 occasionally introduce my readers to *very good company*. The  
 fascinating names of the Marquis, and Lady Elizabetha, have  
 caused many a village nymph to toil through six long vol-  
 umes of intricate adventure, of which they never would have  
 perused six pages, had the same story been told of plain John  
 and Betty. It is with some reluctance that I quit a field of  
 observation in which I have few competitors, to pursue a  
*beaten* track, wherein I am also preceded by personal experi-  
 ence and superior ability. Remarks on the manners of the  
 great world, cannot come with a good grace from one who  
 has seldom emerged from the bosom of retirement (I could  
 almost say, of domestic seclusion,) and who consequently must  
 feel a doubt whether the pictures from which she copies re-  
 ally were correctly sketched. Yet since I have promised to  
 make some observations on prevailing opinions, I must not  
 omit those leading characters whose conspicuous situation  
 draws the attention of the world, and who give law to nu-  
 merous awkward copyists. Considered in this point of view,



the manners and morals of the great assume an influential consequence that is highly important to society; though, if confined to themselves, their depravity is less intimately connected with national ruin, than a dereliction of principle in the great mass of the people would be; and especially among those who, by being placed in the medium between riches and poverty, should present a barrier to the vices and temptations of either extreme, and at the same time offer an asylum to every thing which is intrinsically estimable in both. The political importance which this rank possesses in England; the general information, sound sense, and unsophisticated manners, that were their marked characteristics; the blameless occupations, domestic tenderness, modesty, simplicity, and unaffected gentleness, that distinguished their wedded partners, all heighten my regret that these solid excellences should be bartered for German principles, illustrated by French practice. It is not that I believe the middle classes to be the most corrupted; it is because that corruption, if it fix here, destroys the vital principle, that I address the females of this most enviable, this most respectable order, with energetic entreaties to check their vain pursuit of false fame and absurd importance, and to resume the genuine graces of their natural character; beseeching them to remember, that none can become contemptible, or ridiculous, unless they desert the post at which the God of Nature has commanded them to stand. But I must now forsake my compeers, to address a more elevated station; conscious of being in many respects unequal to the task of public censor, and presuming only to gather a few scattered observations that have been overlooked by my predecessors, or to discover some noxious weeds which have recently shot forth. A new subject seems a hint for me to conclude my present epistle, and gives me an opportunity to assure you how fervently I am, &c.

## LETTER IV.

*Absurdities and Licentiousness among Women of Fashion.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

I RESUME our correspondence; happy in the assurance that you are interested in the subjects I have hitherto discussed; and presuming not only on the partial affection that you have long shown me, but also on your natural candour, which I know induces you to pardon inadvertencies wherein the head only is concerned, provided the heart be free from those bad intentions which transform imperfections into crimes. We will enter upon the topic proposed in the conclusion of my last letter, without the formality of a tedious prologue.

There are numerous and popular writers, who have employed themselves in traducing the order that we are about to scrutinize; describing it as an excrescence springing out of the body politic, and draining every useful member of its vital juices, in order to swell its own putrid mass into a most hideous and most dangerous deformity. I will tell you a few of the abusive terms bestowed on these "earth treading stars," by an author who was at least free from the feminine fault of mincing her language, and spoke out without the least ambiguity. She considered "monarchy and hereditary rank to be such evils, as balanced all the advantages which Europe derived from civilization; and so unnatural, that, in order to account for their introduction, men blasphemously supposed the human race had burst from its orbit, like a lawless planet, in order to steal the celestial fire of reason; while the vengeance of Heaven, lurking in the subtle flame like Pandora's box, afflicted the earth with these retributive curses to which all our misery and error are owing." In fine, she thought "that it was the pestiferous purple, and the honours that flow from it," which had reduced us poor women to the state of woeful degradation in which her writings found us, namely, without polit-

ical rights, without masculine strength, compelled to be obedient to our husbands, and inclined to expect filial obedience from our children; accustomed also to consider modesty and gentleness as constituent parts of our own character; disposed to attend to religious duties, and to look forward to another world, not as the place where our indefeasible perfectibility is to expand, but as the region where the promises of salvation shall be fulfilled. If the inversion of the present orders in society will also produce this change in the relative situation of our sex, how ought we to *cling* to the present state of affairs, and *supplicate* its continuance!

I have quoted from a book\* which, by supreme audacity and impudence, exposed to profound contempt the principles that it meant to support. It, indeed, amazed and confounded for a day; and it received all the assistance which an elaborate analysis could bestow, to elevate it into lasting celebrity. It was soon found, however, that the times were not sufficiently illuminated to bear such a strong doctrine; and the disciples of the school of equality have since found it more convenient to gloss, and soften, and misrepresent. The same democratical principles, however, pervade many popular works, especially dramatic performances, to which the *privileged* orders (as the nobility and gentry are cabalistically called) have most unwisely lent their patronage; and that not merely by countenancing the author, or applauding the scenic representations that are deeply tainted with the leaven of democracy. Party rage may now boast the same sacrifices as public virtue formerly enjoined; and though we have not our Curtii or our Decii, who *immolate* themselves to save their country, we have many men of birth and rank who seem inclined to pile their possessions and honours on the very brink of a precipice, to exalt the minion of the faction which they espouse. The first people in the kingdom have not scrupled to support, not merely the *equality*, but the *supremacy* of the mob, during the frenzy of a democratical contention for parliamentary honors; and thus they virtually signed the testimonial of their having long usurped unjustifiable ascendancy, and the certificate of their deserved degradation; little thinking that the sentiments and principles which they instilled into their clamorous adherents, would abide with them, and produce serious effects, when the tem-

\* The Rights of Women.

porary purpose for which they were promulgated was forgotten. How far ambitious motives may justify gentlemen in thus endeavouring to *assassinate* their own importance, is not the present question. Modern patriotism may determine, that it is noble to reverse the part of Sampson when he was prisoner among the Philistines, and to pull down the pillars of your own state, when you find that you cannot climb into its upper story. But since our sex are happily *prevented* from engaging in these turbulent scenes, by native delicacy, by regard to their general reputation, and even by their fears, I do not feel myself called upon to vindicate them from the charge of being accessory to that general contempt for their superiors, which is so marked a feature among the populace. Imbibing the spirit of Mrs. Candour, in that masterly (though in some respects dangerous) play, "The School for Scandal," I am resolved, "let the newspapers say what they please of canvassing beauties, haranguing toasts, and "mobbing demireps," not to believe one syllable; and if "I repeat such anecdotes," it is only to usher in my observation that the world is grown so censorious, it even credits *impossibilities*. I wish I could acquit the illustrious culprits of every other proof of their being concerned in a conspiracy against their own order and consequence, with as much expectation of being *credited*, at least by my *country* readers.

But though I profess myself a steady advocate for that gradation of wealth and rank, which, if not positively appointed by God in scripture, is there shown to have been nearly coeval with the world that we inhabit; and which is not only the natural consequence of the moral government of the Almighty, but also the medium through which he thinks fit to convey a greater portion of happiness to the human race than it could otherwise enjoy; I am not so infatuated, as to maintain that the blessings of education, wealth, rank, leisure, authority, and reputation, are granted to a few with uncontrollable occupation; but rather that their possessors should employ them to the benefit of the whole community; that such as labour may not have cause to reproach those who rest, for being drones in the state. The God and Judge of the whole earth does not bestow his spiritual or temporal blessings by any arbitrary rules of unconditional preference. When a talent is given to any one, an account is opened with the giver of it, who appoints a day in which he will arrive and "redemand his own with usury." Nor are these children of prosperity in reality so much better situated than

their lowly fellow-creatures, as the jaundiced eye of envy is apt to believe : at least, ignorant envy is sure to fix upon a wrong person, and to select, as the object whose affluence causes her pining discontent, some besotted sensualist, who, forgetting his stewardship, presumes to turn the estate of which he is guardian entirely to his own account, and not only to "eat and drink till he is drunken," but also to neglect, and even misuse, his fellow-servants. Independent of that fearful sentence which hangs over him, suspended by the gossamer thread of this frail existence ; namely, "the Lord when he cometh shall appoint him a portion with "unbelievers, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," the present situation of this self-devoted Dives is most miserable. Excessive indulgence breeds a thousand bodily pains and mental infirmities ; even supposing that it does not proceed to what are called criminal gratifications, capricious humours and unseasonable wishes haunt that breast whose desires centre in self-enjoyment. The expectation that we may be for ever lulled on the bosom of delight, is thwarted by the constitution of the world, and even by our own physical qualities. Pain is necessary, or we should never truly value pleasure. Rest must be bought by exertion, or it begets *ennui*. We cannot taste the full blessing of success, if we have never known disappointment or anxiety. The animal gratifications of our nature must be preceded by privations, or our appetites will not be satisfied, but palled. When penury has toiled hard for a scanty meal and a slight covering, it weakly supposes that rest, repletion, and sumptuous attire, must be felicity ; the indolent victim of spleen, the surfeited voluptuary, and the capricious victim of vanity, whose tortured imaginations are ever pursuing something new and strange, could, if pride permitted them to make a frank disclosure, present a very different picture of enjoyment ; and, in spite of its restrictions, the tortures of a diseased body, and the miseries of an afflicted spirit, often wring from them the agonizing regrets that they cannot change situations with the poor labourer who walks whistling by their window, returning cheerful from his daily task. Amid the numerous complaints with which discontent ungratefully assails Divine Providence, the most frequent arise from those who have squandered its bounty in such pursuits as are incapable of satisfying a rational being ; or who have supposed that the cup of blessing could not be enjoyed, but by quaffing such immoderate draughts as produce intoxication.

Where a woman who is born to the possession of rank and affluence properly appreciates those blessings, and, instead of circumscribing them within the narrow sphere of self-enjoyment, endeavours to diffuse improvement and comfort wherever her influence extends; if, through the conviction of being merely an agent, she lift her eyes to him who entrusted her with ample powers, she feels in the consciousness of well doing, and in the serene delight of reflected bliss, the purest earthly gratification. Her heart frequently speaks to her in the inspired language of the royal Psalmist, "The lot "is fallen unto me in a fair ground, yea I have a goodly "heritage." On the other hand, if she suppose herself to be some "mighty leviathan," sent into the ocean of existence "to take her pastime therein," the chain which held her to society is broken, or at least held together only by the fragile tie of interested dependence. She did not participate in the griefs of others, her own sorrows therefore shall be *all* her own; she sought not to make her fellow-creatures happy, they will not therefore rejoice in her prosperity. Now sorrow is a lonely sensation, and may be endured with heart breaking poignancy without any partaker, or even witness; nay, it is ever most intolerable and overwhelming, when unrelieved by sympathy and unsoftened by pity; but happiness, at least that species of it which selfish characters pursue, is a supervenient quality, and subsists by the agency, or at least upon the opinion, of the multitude. The proudest beauty, when shining in the full glare of magnificence, is more dependent than any of the wondering spectators past whom she glides with affected disdain; for, in reality, it is a persuasion that they admire her, which swells her vain heart with imaginary consequence. Does the mercenary bride, who sacrifices every prospect of domestic happiness to a stately equipage, a magnificent mansion, and a numerous retinue, really find her enjoyments increased in the hours of solitude by knowing that she possesses these baubles? No; it is while she shows her diamonds to a rival, or an enemy, that her vitiated taste appreciates their value, not by the pleasure they bestow, but by the pain they excite. For be it remembered, that though the benevolent passions possess the sanative quality of healing their own wounds; or, to speak without a figure, though even disappointed goodness administers satisfaction to the soul; the selfish appetites and malignant propensities have but one miserable chance of affording a transient enjoyment; as soon as the animal exultation subsides,

or the demoniacal conviction of having tormented another, has taken place, depression of spirits, and the stifled, yet powerful reproaches of the heart, convince the unhappy being who endures them, that she has mistaken her road to the bower of bliss.

Though the desire of living solely for themselves has been the characteristic of misused power and affluence ever since the days of Solomon, yet since commercial acquisitions, and mechanical inventions, have increased the number of luxurious enjoyments, and also the rage of competition, the temptations which beset the great and wealthy are in these days exceedingly multiplied; and whoever among them shall take that mistaken road to happiness which we have just described, will feel continually stimulated to deviate further from the right path, by that rash pursuit of their inferiors which was the subject of my last letter. Vanity ever labours to disprove the wise king's apophthegm, "that there is nothing new under the sun." She rejects the petition of every votary who cannot support his claim to eclat by the testimonial of novelty. What was esteemed great and elegant for a nobleman fifty years ago, would now be vulgar and mean for a successful mechanic. Nay, the extravagancies of the last winter must be outdone by the present, on peril of your becoming *nobody*, a term of reproach, which, though not formidable in its sound to those who have not been initiated in the mysteries of fashion, is known by adepts to contain the very quintessence of abuse, and to be much more derogatory to the unhappy being to whom it is applied, than all the epithets that Billingsgate or the Rue de St. Honore could invent.

Novelty must, therefore, be obtained; but how can it be acquired? Though loosely arrayed, like the fair queen Ogygia,\* you sit and sing by your fires of cedar in an apartment decorated by the purest rules of Attic simplicity; though you convert yourself into a beautiful Fatima, and recline on an embroidered carpet in your magnificent alhambra, where a thousand lamps reflect the blazing diamonds which clasp your robe; though the eastern and western Indies lavish their treasures on your board, where the fruits of the tropic blaze beneath the ice of the pole, the wife of some rich cit, whom you despise, will have a costume more truly Greek or Arabesque; she will sport finer diamonds, have richer fla-

\* Calypso.--See Telemachus, Book I.

voured wines, or produce her hot-house delicacies a fortnight before you. Did you ever resolve to effect by absurdity what you cannot do by taste, and to fetch your models from countries ignorant of just proportion and correct design, mandarins, dragons, pagodas, may be purchased; pyramids and sphinxes can be procured; a signpost painter can devise scrawls which ninety-nine out of a hundred will suppose are an hieroglyphic; and the rival lady and her villa will become completely Egyptienne, or la Chinoise, at the next gala. I scarcely think that the most glaring indelicacy, or the grossest vulgarity, would rescue you from the hazard of having that palm of celebrity which novelty bestows wrested from your grasp by fresh discoveries; for the fascination of a great name, and the magic charm of being *outré*, would soon so transmute our old ideas on those subjects, that we should think it was only owing to prejudice that we did not before discover the refinement of innodesty, and the delicacy of obscenity. The partial exposure of the person, or the limited rejection of those restraints, which formerly secured good manners and good morals, have been found of no avail. Your insatiable pursuers have followed you with remorseless activity; they have discarded more drapery, and dashed with less squeamishness. I almost doubt whether it would be possible for you to set them at fault by sheltering in the bath of Diana, or even in a kraal of Hottentots. What then must become of you? If you stand still, you will not only be overtaken, but preceded; and, melancholy to add, if you once give up this struggle of competition, your former triumphs are of no avail. It will be useless to say, "I *was* in fashion in the year four;" fashion admits no tense but the present. If fifty ladies fainted at one of your routs, *then* the fifteen who died away *last* night, at Lady Jostle's, furnishes conversation for the town this morning. Though your supper rooms resembled a grove of cherries last May, cherries at a guinea a pound this April overwhelms the remembrance. You have entered into the service of a severe task master, who, though you are crippled and exhausted by your former efforts, will still demand the wonted tale of bricks with rigorous exactness.

What is then to be done? Renounce all allegiance to these arbitrary mandates. Recollect that, though in proportion to the abundance of your fortune, or the vincibility of your family entails, you may be the first fashionist for one, two, or three seasons (nothing short of Midas can hope to hold



out longer,) fresh competitors are every year starting; and as the philosopher's stone is still undiscovered, you must at last be dethroned. Soften the pain of your certain humiliation, therefore, by a timely and graceful retreat. Resign the sceptre, even in the career of your glory, which you know you cannot long retain; and moderate the triumph of your successor, by appearing accessory to her exaltation. These, I grant, are the counsels of worldly prudence; but I am addressing those whom I suppose to be incapable of nobler motives.

Aware of the evanescent nature of that celebrity which is only founded on expensive inventions, some ladies of high ton have cherished the Satanical ambition of becoming pre-eminent in vice. Adopting the horrid sentiments ascribed to the prince of darkness, they declare by their actions, that "to reign is worth ambition, though in Hell." They have, therefore, torn off those coy disguises in which sinners of past times enveloped their enormities, and with unblushing fronts have proclaimed to the questioning world, that they "dare do every thing, because they dare." Their contempt of reputation, and bold defiance of mankind, were soon discovered by a species of writers that are fellow-labourers with those whom I mentioned in the beginning of this letter; these wishing to reduce the world to an equality in infamy, as the former do to introduce equality of misery. Aware that this marked effrontery of character shocked the feelings of all beholders too much to gain converts, they invented a set of phrases which softened its atrocity, and at the same time preserved its publicity. I know not where this new mode of language originated; but as it consists in nothing but the *inversion* and *perversion* of terms, it cannot be considered as any great proof of genius. It has been as eminently successful in the diplomatic papers, and other state fabrications of our Gallic neighbours, as the wand of Mercury in Dryden's Amphytrion; and has actually either charmed the world to sleep, or taught them that "black is not black, nor white so *very* white;" so that, though a sound more threatening than the Indian war hoop bellowed in their ears, they persist in calling it the peaceful lullaby of their innocent rocker. John Bull's natural aversion to *Mcounfeer's* cradle has hitherto prevented him from being completely swaddled; but his disposition to believe that people are what they call themselves, makes him run some danger of being duped by a misconception of the words patriot, honour, and independ-

ence. The principles of John's wife have been attacked in a stronger manner by those liberal apologists for vice and folly, who, setting out perhaps with a misapplication of a scripture text in praise of mercy, or enjoining charity to repentant sinners, soon proceeded to infuse into the unwary mind a *charity that is not scriptural*, by apologizing for sinners *who do not repent*, nay, who glory in their crimes. Hence the unreflecting, but well meaning reader, who possesses much candour and little information, is led to believe that the perjured adulteress, from whom she shrunk with abhorrence, may be a most *amiable, elegant, interesting* creature, with only *one* failing, a too susceptible heart; but then that heart was so benevolent, so condescending to the wishes of others, or perhaps so sincere, so incapable of disguising its own emotions, that it could not sacrifice what it felt to be its *invincible* propensities to the opinions of the world; which, after all (for nothing is certain,) are perhaps only founded on the dictates of prejudice. Here the guileless readers, whom I have supposed attending to this new ethical lecture, will perhaps start; but they are then gently reminded, that freedom of thought is the indisputable privilege of the inhabitants of this country; that many learned men (and here a long list of well founding names will be introduced, blending the obscure with the celebrated, to swell the pomp of evidence, and misquoting without fear of detection,) men most *exact* in moral conduct, and most celebrated for social virtues, have *doubted* whether, all things considered, the present aspect of the world might not be considerably improved, by a departure from those very *rigid* rules which were built on a too literal interpretation of the Jewish classics and early christian writers.\* A few shining examples, such as Aspasia, Sappho, and Ninon de l'Enclos, will then be brought forward, to prove that women may be very eminent for taste and science, and continue to be much respected, who have not strictly adhered to the decorums prescribed to the sex. It will then be allowed, that these severe tenets have expedience to recommend them, and therefore they are highly necessary for the great body of the people, who, if the cords of discipline were relaxed, might run into gross depravity; from which the refinement natural to cultivated minds, and polished manners, will inevitably preserve that part of our

\* These denominations have been most irreverently applied to that book which is dictated by the spirit of God.

species which might properly claim to be exempted from law, as being capable of giving law to themselves. These well-bred authors will then proceed to call your attention to the improvements which philosophy has introduced into arts and sciences of late years, preparatory to the bold assertion that morals are a science, and as much capable of improvements and discoveries as mechanics, chymistry, or astronomy. They will then enter that metaphysical maze in which plain sense is sure to be bewildered, and talk to you concerning the origin of moral obligation; but whether you are taught that it is self-love which vibrates from the centre to the extremity of social being, or whether you are assured that ethics originated from man's preposterously surrendering his natural rights in order to procure the doubtful blessing of society; in either case the freedom of man as an agent is preserved, and his right to do wrong, if he judges that wrong to be expedient to his well doing, is implied. Some few, indeed, of these apostles of falsehood have readorned the old necessitarian system, and, by making the human race the passive machines of overruling fate, have contrived to transfer our crimes either to our nature, or to the stars; but this scheme wants the gloss of novelty.

The principles thus laid down, the application follows. What would be highly criminal in the footman, and the chambermaid, becomes a pardonable *levity*, when referred to the actions of those whose rank in life secures the world from the political consequences of their indiscretions. The opprobrious terms of preciseness, uncharitableness, narrowness of sentiment, and littleness of soul, will be employed to deter you from thinking unfavourably of those *soft* indiscretions, which, though they may be somewhat wrong, hurt nobody else, and are accompanied by all the amiable virtues, and all the alluring graces. Perhaps, indeed, these apologists of licentiousness may proceed so far as to affirm, that it is not vice, but virtue, to obey the dictates of nature, and that the conscious mind is its own awful world. This, with an observation that no characters are faultless, that we must take people as we find them, that many mean very well who act a little indiscreetly, and that chastity is apt to be scandalous and religion morose, includes, I think, most of the arguments which these seductive advocates of candour employ, to mislead innocence and excuse guilt.

The ramifications of this pseudo liberality extend very far. They branch from that pernicious system of infidelity which has done such mischief in the world; and, though compelled to disguise its nefarious designs in England, still labours with unwearied but cautious diligence to sap the fair foundation of our national fame. It is supposed, that there are but few *tainted* characters in England, who are not willing to allow the political expediency of religious institutions. They, however, mostly engraft somewhat of papistical principles on deistical practices, and seek to commute with the laws of their country, by an occasional observance of one of its injunctions; I mean attendance on public worship. I know not whether this solemn mockery of the Deity be not more prejudicial to religion and morals, than if they "stood forth all infidel confest," and verbally denied the authority which their actions disclaim. Certainly, the national church is exposed to much undeserved odium on account of the scandalous lives of these *political* conformists, who cannot be justly ranked among her members. I have often heard it remarked, that the eyes of the congregation are naturally directed, during the reading of the commandments, to the conspicuous gallery in which some high born violater of these positive precepts lolls with graceful negligence, hears the divine vengeance plainly pointed at his offence, and perhaps articulately joins in the petition to be preserved from the cherished sin that he is determined to hug in his bosom. The effect of such mockery upon the minds of a large assembly, inferior in station and education, probably also in ability, must infinitely overbalance all the good which could be derived from the most impressive discourse that christian zeal and christian knowledge ever delivered from a pulpit. Nothing, indeed, but that supernatural grace which the Almighty has promised to those who ask it of him, can protect *all* who witness such hypocritical effrontery from feeling their faith and hope affected by its contaminating influence.

It is, indeed, much to be wished, that the church of England would again exert its *inert* but not *rescinded* authority, and banish notorious profligates from the house of God, while they continue to glory in their shame. It would be well too (I mean prudentially well) if these bold defiers of public opinion would recollect, that the populace, whose suffrages they court on other occasions, cannot be so very despicable, as to be unworthy of being even treated with the decencies of outward observance. It would be fruitless to

tell the arrogant infidel, or lofty debauchee, that the souls of those whom he puts in jeopardy by thus triumphantly displaying his impenetrable vices, will rise with him at the last day, equal in rank, equal in duration of existence, and will accuse him at the judgment seat of an impartial God, for having acted the part of the arch apostate, by betraying those who rashly confided in his superior intelligence and more enlarged information. To those who are armed with that shield of licentious derision which is only vulnerable in the days of sickness or calamity, I must only address temporal dissuatives. I must shew them that it is indiscreet, and madly adventurous, to thrust their crimes upon the observation of those who, however ignorant or misjudging, perfectly understand the equalizing nature of ignominy. The grosser vices receive no exaltation from being clad in ermine; their nature is so very brutal, that their combination with education, rank, splendour, and affluence, cannot diminish their hideous aspect, or lessen the contempt of those who know that it would be very easy to rise to such "a bad eminence." The dutchess who has violated her marriage oath, who is discarded by her husband and married to her gallant, is but the same degraded creature as the porter's wife who is transferred at Smithfield to a new purchaser. The reproachful epithets that we bestow upon the vulgar sinner, are by her scornfully rebanded to her dignified copartner in guilt; and let not the offender, who has only birth and wealth to boast, flatter herself that the world in general thinks those distinctions sacred. Public opinion is not yet so illuminiz'd as the ear tickling flatterers of greatness represent; and if they value their possessions more than they do their vices, they must rejoice that "many thousand knees in 'Britain' have never yet bowed to the false gods" of sophisticated morality. The virtues of probity and chastity are closely allied; and prescription will be found to be but a feeble support, where the solid pillars of affection and respect are undermined. But to return from, I hope, an improbable contingency, to what really happens: though the opprobrious epithets which the adulteress merits may not reach her own ears, they echo through a space commensurate with the circle which she was originally intended to enlighten and inform. She is there estimated, not by those arbitrary rules which her own depraved associates decree shall supersede common sense and moral obligation, but by the principles which, when she lies upon her death bed, she will

own are the unswerving dictates of rectitude and truth. At the bar of public opinion, the titled courtesan receives little mercy. Every plea which might be urged in favour of the poor night wanderer, who offends for bread, turns into an aggravation of the guilt of her who *courted* temptation. The friendless outcast, whom no one acknowledges, sins, deeply sins against her own soul; but she who was hedged in from ruin by fortune, fame, and family, involves a host of distinguished connexions in her disgrace, and stamps a stigma of opprobrium on every part of her (perhaps till then un sullied) lineage. The penniless prostitute is precluded from repentance; for will any one afford her an asylum, to try if that repentance be sincere? The prostitute of high life has only to stop in her shameless course, and to retreat to that retirement which is ever ready to shelter her disgrace and confirm her contrition. The former was most likely the child of ignorance, who knew little of good or evil till experience taught her a severe lesson, by which she became wise too late. Her passions were probably unrestrained by discipline or precept, and some seducer spread a snare for her personal chastity, before reflection and observation taught her its value. I fear I shall say too much, if I suppose that the noble wanton has been early trained in the principles of truth and holiness; but we must allow that she has been taught the necessity of restraining her passions, accustomed to respect the opinion of the world, and to regard those decorums in her *outward* manners which awe the licentious. If she was a wife (and I grieve to say that in high life the major part of lost characters belong to the matronly order,) the libertine was deterred from "assailing by his devilish art to reach the organs of her fancy," by the apprehension of those large pecuniary mulcts by which the law has lately attempted to deter adulterers, holding out the certain prospect of long imprisonment, or banishment from their native country, to that tribe of led captains, and "second brothers to men of quality," who are most apt to arrange themselves in the ranks of *cerisbeos* and gallants. But whether the lady be wife or spinster, she was equally defended by those laws of honour which compel the fashionable rake to be an expert swordsman before he aspires to be a seducer; and few of our gay *Lotharios* would choose to run the gauntlet with husbands, fathers, and brothers, unless persuaded that the guardians of their *Calista's* honour, "fierceness and pride,

would soon be charmed to rest," and the yielding fair be content to give up all for them.

Such are the inferences which common sense always draws from a story of criminal intrigue; and however the eloquence of the bar may seek to divert indignation, and ingeniously palliate the frail fair one's guilt, by representing her as the victim of her gallant's unremitting assiduity, or as being so supereminently endowed with taste, eloquence, and beauty, that all who beheld her must love; this rigid censor, inflexible as a British judge on the bench of justice, adheres to the honest bluntness of her original conclusion: taste, eloquence, and beauty, are too common adjuncts of polished society to disarm her security; and she determines that there must be a great degree of criminal levity in the conduct of a woman of rank and fortune, before any man, especially a mere opera loungee, or genteel dependant on the family, could dare to assail her with a criminal proposition. Here, therefore, the term seduction must be misapplied, except when the criminality, or studied negligence of the husband, has made him the active agent of his own disgrace. In this case, common sense may feel inclined to extenuate the lady's offences; but it will only be by lamenting that the manners of the age have an alarming tendency to promote conjugal infidelity, by sanctioning conjugal indifference; but she will still insist, that though a libertine, or contemptuous husband, must make his wife miserable, it is her own indiscretion that makes her criminal. An agreeable insinuating young man\* is too dangerous a companion for a resentful offended woman, to be admitted to confidence and intimacy. If her sorrows are too poignant to be confined to her own bosom, let her find a *female* friend with whom she may more safely repose them. If the solitude of home be insupportable, connexions may be formed, and amusements sought, which cannot endanger her fame, her virtue, or her peace. It is the madness of despair to rush into the arms of ruin because she has drawn a blank in the lottery of connubial happiness. Let a lady shew, by her conduct, that though her wedded protector deserts his charge, she still respects herself; and she will excite those sentiments of esteem, and chastised admiration, which suit the hallowed and indelible character that she has assumed; nor will she be often called upon to repress the insulting attentions of presumptuous audacity.

\* See Letter XII.

But, beside these prudential restraints, which the free censures of a really enlightened age should impose on that elevated station whose actions are most conspicuous, the democratical turn which public opinion has lately taken, offers still more *imperiously* momentous considerations to check the rash career of *open* profligacy. The melancholy fall of birth and grandeur in a neighbouring kingdom, may convince those who possess such distinctions in our own, that neither law, justice, nor power, can preserve their present superiority, if the voice of popular frenzy decree their overthrow. With whatever severity we may justly reprobate the mischievous doctrines which impose on the commonalty, and persuade them to imagine that the suppression of rank and opulence would contribute to their own exaltation, or even advantage, I must execrate the unblushing vices of those conspicuous sinners, who court publicity, and defy reproach; for they are a still surer engine of destruction to overwhelm our well poised state. If our nobility and gentry are swept away from remembrance, their ruin must be accelerated by an act of self-murder; I should rather say, by fratricide. In proof of what I have alledged, that the lower orders perfectly understand that vice puts all upon a level, I appeal to the tumultuary applause which has crowned that scene in the play of John Bull, where the brazier seizes the chair lately occupied by the justice, on the latter refusing to receive the frail daughter of the mechanic with open arms into his family, as a suitable wife for his libertine heir. Have not the boxes learned, during the almost innumerable representations of this popular piece, that when they echo the laugh of the galleries, they virtually degrade their own order?

This, though a striking, is only one instance of the reigning humour of the times. To represent the higher ranks as mean, absurd, vicious, mercenary, or tyrannical, seems a sure road to reputation among our dramatists; and the higher they have coloured the caricature, the more ample has been their success. Perhaps the passion for German imitation, which lately gave law to our stage, may have hurried our play-wrights into the adoption of a defamatory libel on greatness, without fully discerning its mischievous tendency. It is certain, that when they describe poverty as the native soil of exalted sentiment and disinterested virtue, they neither derive their inspiration from nature, nor the muse. But as this absurd passion for bombast sustian, trivial events, extravagant sentiment, outrageous liberality, and perverted mo-



rality, seems declining (thanks to the spirited satire with which it has been attacked,) let us hope that dramas of really English growth will be clear from this foreign excrescence. Let our own admirable Shakespeare serve here, as in other instances, for the model. He drew the great as they really are, disgraced by crimes, or glorious for virtues, struggling with the temptations incident to their stations or their nature, but not necessarily degraded by moving in that sphere of life to which Providence limits their trials and their duties. He depicted the unlettered vulgar too in their genuine colour, and with "a master's hand and prophet's fire." Two hundred years have not effaced the resemblance, notwithstanding the change of manners and opinions which luxury and opulence have introduced. Many a valiant Talbot and open hearted Hotspur still support the honour of their country in the tented field; and the latter seems indeed again "the glass wherein our noble youth do dress themselves." Many a pious Cordelia still ministers, in privacy, to the sorrows of a petulant unhappy father; and many a faithful Imogen pursues the steps of her truant lord, anxious to recover his affections, even at the expense of life and fortune. Be it remembered too, that many a ferocious Cade, and wrong headed Bevis, panting for change, yet ignorant of what change must produce, are watching and magnifying the crimes of a faithless Margaret, and intriguing Eleanor.\* But to return.

Next to that base abdication of her own importance, which the abandoned woman of rank tacitly ratifies whenever she permits the world to bruit her shame, the increasing facility with which ladies of lost character are readmitted to the once select and decorous circle of refined society, becomes a subject of alarm to considerate minds, intent on the preservation of every barrier to female innocence. The maxims which induced our ancestors to determine, that even if we "deplored our loss with tears, one false step for ever "damned the fame" of women, though apparently severe, were in reality merciful. This degradation might, indeed, harden a few reprobates in vice, who would otherwise have been hypocrites; but it sent many a real penitent to that re-

\* See Henry VI. part 2. The characters of these princesses are here spoken of in their poetical dress, not as they are preserved in the unprejudiced page of history, which does justice to the heroic constancy and conjugal affection of the magnanimous consort of "Holy Henry."

tirement which true repentance loves, and it preserved thousands of thoughtless impassioned victims from the allurements of guilty pleasure, by the consciousness that they could not endure a life of reproach. Whatever encouragement mercy and charity may hold out to a backsliding sister determined to renounce the evil of her ways, let not her who hesitates be excited to offend, by stripping vice either of its punishments or its horrors. Let the young and unexperienced ever think, that if they pass the bourne of chastity, society will disclaim them, and to return to it will be *impracticable*. If they venture on the guilty deed with the forethought encouragement, that they shall soon emerge from their night of shame, their sin is dreadfully aggravated. Our best divines maintain, that whatever hope the heavenly promise of forgiveness affords to true contrition, it is most desperate wickedness to transgress "that grace may abound." If, in that storm of passions which attends a strong temptation, reason can be heard to plead that it will be but a temporary disgrace, she has leisure to assert her natural superiority, and by betraying her trust becomes the ally, instead of the curb, of incontinence.

We will suppose (which I fear is far from being the case) that the principles of matronly ladies are so fixed, that they run no danger of contamination by frequently hearing the soft glosses which conscious offenders must cast over the crimes of which they have been publicly *convicted*; yet let us compassionate the tender bloom of virgin innocence, and save the youthful part of our sex from the pestilential blast of infectious sophistry. We will suppose that a young lady has been not only innocently, but wisely educated; taught to esteem virtue, and to shrink with abhorrence from audacious vice; accustomed only to contemplate respectable characters, and full of those ideas of worth and honour which are generally associated in an ingenuous inexperienced mind. She steps from the school room to the crowded rout, and beholds a lady splendid in her appearance, most fascinating in her manner, to whom every one pays obsequious court; the beaux crowd around her to catch her smiles and hear her whispers, and the belles shew their admiration by wearing her uniform. The unsuspecting tyro in the subtle game of life steps forward to inquire the name of this supposed paragon of the day, this Arria, this Cornelia, in whose hallowed form she fancies the domestic virtues are worshipped; and she hears with horror and astonishment

that it is one who has been branded in the public prints, degraded by the clear evidence of impartial justice, exposed by obscene caricatures, and ridiculed by the lowest witticisms; in fine, that she is a creature whom no one can *defame*, and whom any one may *abuse* with impunity. She turns away shuddering with disgust, and perhaps listens to the bon mots of a faded courtesan, whose early days passed in the low haunts of vulgar licentiousness, but who, in the wane of life, has persuaded her uxorious keeper to give her the name of his wife; not that she may repent of her former errors, nor yet to secure her such a competence that "lack of means enforce her not to evil;" but for the avowed purpose of introducing her into company high at least in rank, though low in ideas of decorum; and who must prepare themselves for her reception either by copious draughts of Lethe, or strong doses of candid sentiment. As I may suppose my fair novice possesses too much good sense to call such time-serving adulation compassion, or such egregious folly generous love, what must be her opinion of the women who thus boldly take the lead where they should not so much as wish to appear, and of the society who *suffer*, nay *court* the intrusion? Will she not, on comparing the world of manners and the world of books, exclaim, like the Roman patriot, "O virtue! have I worshipped thee as a substantial good, and art thou but an empty name!"

It is pleaded, that society owes so many pleasures to agreeable talents and polished manners, that those who possess these passports should be allowed to go every where, without being subjected to a rigorous examination. This is to weaken the basis of social intercourse, and to overload the superstructure; to endanger all the sacred "charities of father, son, and brother," that we may return from the fatiguing crowd of routs and assemblies, amused by a few sprightly sayings, or soothed by the suavity of polite attentions. Is not this folly similar to that of swallowing poison, because it has been dissolved in a well flavoured menstruum? But, after all, are we certain that we make this dreadful sacrifice to real wit and true elegance; or has fashion played the cheat here, as she has done in various instances, and dressed up a false Florimel of her own creation to impose upon her short sighted votaries? I know too little of the wiles in which these phænomena move to determine this important inquiry. I can only speak by hearsay evidence, and must

confess that, had I not been assured to the contrary, I should have referred what has been repeated to me as the pure attic wit of these English Ninons, to the inspiration of streams less simple than the Pierian; while the manners and attitudes which the enraptured describer spoke of as copied from the graces, seemed to me the signpost daub of effrontery, or the hasty sketch of capricious affectation. If we take our ideas of wit from Cowley's admirable definition, it seems impossible that any trace of it should remain in the mind of a woman who has so long renounced the distinguishing characteristic of her sex, that she can scarcely know how to ape its language, or to *guess* what were its pure ideas. And if we suppose Milton correct in his notions of elegance, what resemblance can the impenitent wanton bear to his picture of our general mother in her state of innocence?

“ Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,  
 “ In every gesture dignity and love.”

My limited knowledge of high life makes me suspect, that the blind infatuation of the worshipper often ascribes such piquancy to the manners and expressions of the idol, as could not possibly be tolerated in a well bred circle; and therefore that these *venerated* ladies are not quite so impudent and overwhelming as they are described to be; yet I must insist, that when the mind is deeply contaminated it will speak through its bodily organs, in spite of the most guarded caution. The eye will converse in a language unknown to the timid glances of modesty; the flexures of the countenance will betray secrets to which delicacy is a stranger; and decorum will be violated by a thousand minutiae to which even the practised actress has neglected to attend. But the danger does not rest here: simplicity may unwarily adopt what seems to procure celebrity; and though it solely aim at being fashionable, may transform its exterior into a likeness that it would abhor. Thus, while debauchees and deists rejoice in the increasing freedom of what may still be called virtuous society, our manners are in the most imminent danger of losing the proud distinctions of delicacy and purity; compared with which, wit and elegance, even when genuine, are but what the setting is to the diamond.

But, it may be asked, will not penitence rescind the severe interdiction which bars the doors of society against female frailty? Most unquestionably, so far as friendship or kindred

are concerned. A very able instructress\* of our sex has determined, that true penitence will not wish to exceed those bounds, or to mix in the crowded haunts of public life. Nor let a decision be censured for severity, which is really the dictate of mercy, sanctioned by a thorough knowledge of the human heart, and proceeding from lively sympathy for those who, though no longer *offending*, continue to be *unfortunate*. When the soul is really awakened by the sense of its own backslidings, when it feels the reproofs of conscience and the shame of contrition, it will naturally shrink from returning to those scenes which it knows are dangerous to reputation and peace. Convinced of her own weakness, afraid to trust her scarcely confirmed resolutions, and concluding by the publicity of her story, that all who see her will look upon her either with contempt, reproach, or pity, the true Magdalen wishes alike to avoid the hazard of falling into new transgressions, and the contumely attending the past. She is deafer than the adder to the syren strains of adulation; she knows too well the "ills that spring from beauty;" splendour has lost its attractions; she cannot derive amusement from crowds, because she can no longer mingle in them without feeling a sense of degradation. She considers too, that if she should again aspire to fashionable celebrity, her's would be an uphill painful task; every eye would be fixed upon her conduct; every tongue inclined to question the sincerity of her professions; what would be thought mere vivacity in unsuspected innocence, would in her be levity; and marked reserve would be construed into a prudish vizard thrown over the worst designs. Her whispers would be supposed to convey assignations, her reproofs would be called the splenetic dictates of jealousy. Besides, can she that has so weighty a task to perform afford to trifle away the important hours? Turn thee, backsliding daughter, turn to the cool sequestered vale of life, and thy troubled day may yet have a peaceful close. Rational amusement, renovated esteem, friendship, contentment, tranquility, and religious hope, may still be all thine own.

It is not, therefore, the harsh decree of *outrageous* virtue, but the mild counsels of kindness and sympathy, that determine the preservation of those distinctions which custom has long preserved between unsuspected and forfeited char-

\* See Mrs. Moore's Essays, and Strictures on Education.

acters. And if those, in whose favour these barriers might be broken down with safety, are too well convinced of their expedience to require their abolition, let us determine to defend the privileges of innocence from the pertinacious attacks of impudence and hardened depravity. The increasing facility of intercourse between the most profligate and the most irreproachable women, which is a marked and peculiar feature of these times, threatens more than our manners. The transition is very easy, and generally very rapid, from unrestrained freedom of behaviour, to unrestrained freedom of conduct; and especially when the mind has not been deeply imbued with religious truths, in which case the opinion of the world forms one of the strongest bulwarks of virtue. Banishment from parties of high ton, and estrangement from the amusements which every one talks of, have often intimidated the wavering fair one, and imposed a guarded decorum of manner on the determined wanton. Let us not, then, when the cardinal virtue of our sex is assailed by unusual perils, resign one of its most material outworks: we have an encouraging example set before us, which it behoves us to copy. There is a circle, and that the highest, where the *convicted* adulteress dares not show her audacious front. May this prohibition be coeval with the duration of our monarchy; and may the eyes of a British queen never be offended by the presence of such as glory in violating those laws of which her ivory sceptre constitutes her the guardian.

The next circumstance which has an unfavourable and alarming effect on female virtue is, that unremitting pursuit of amusement so universal in the great world. "Commune with thy own heart in thy chamber and be still," is the precept of the royal penitent, who knew too well what watchful attention the human heart requires in order to subdue its propensity to evil. Shall I injure the fair fashionist, if I suggest that her bosom inmate demands as frequent examination, and as constant controul, as that of the highly endowed, though greatly offending David? Little did he think when he twice spared the life of his inexorable enemy Saul, who denied him a shelter even among the rocks and wilds of his native land, that the time would come, when, securely sitting on the throne of Israel, he should meanly project the murder of the faithful veteran who bravely refused repose while the enemies of his king remained unsubdued. Can we trace any similitude between the self com-

manding hero, who, like our own Sidney, on the fatal plains of Zutphen, refused to taste the eagerly desired waters of the well of Bethlehem, because it had been purchased by the jeopardy of the lives of three of his valiant captains, and the lustful tyrant whose insatiable appetites violated the honour of defenceless beauty? Yet it was the same man who acted in these different characters; it was he who was alternately, as supported or deserted by the Almighty, the shepherd conqueror of Goliath, whom the virgins of Israel extolled in their songs, and the aged forlorn fugitive who fled from his rebellious offspring. Modern times are not destitute of examples to prove, that honour and prosperity are alike unstable; nor can we preserve either our spiritual or temporal affairs from disorder, but by continual vigilance. We are now considering the former; and let me remind all who shall honour these reflections with a perusal, that the road from the heights of virtue to the depths of vice does not lead you down a *steep* precipice, but a *gradual* slope. A slight indiscretion, which scarcely alarms the most scrupulous conscience, if suffered to pass without observation, prepares the mind for a serious error; error delivers it over to crime; and crime, when often repeated, petrifies the moral feelings into insensible depravity. The sensibilities of virtue should be cherished with as much care as the sensibilities of temper should be modified; and unless we allow the foul time to whisper to us in retirement, we can never catch its still soft voice amid the busy turmoil of dissipation.

Were the christian duty of self-examination rigorously performed, I am persuaded the world would exhibit a very different appearance, both with respect to sin, and to its constant associate, sorrow. Enfeebled virtue would recover its stability; nay, the seducer himself would pause in his guilty career, and perceive "consideration come like an angel to whip the offending Adam out of him," and show him the little value of what he seeks to purchase at the risk of eternal perdition. Nor are the uses of reflection and meditation confined to our moral conduct, though their exercise is here most important. It is by these means that the difficulties of science are conquered, and the refinements of taste acquired. The skilful artist is formed by this self-communion; and the plans of the statesman and the warrior are thus ripened into perfection. Even that which is known by the name of pleasure is more truly enjoyed by retrospection in the silence of your own apartment, than when the gaudy

scene actually passed your staring eyes, and the confused buzz of sound agitated your auricular organs. Such an act of the memory may be compared to the animal faculty of rumination; we at first swallow pleasure in the gross, and are too anxious to devour much, to discriminate its constituent parts; but when remasticated, we duly appreciate its pungency. A load of undigested pleasure (suffer me to continue the allusion) palls the satiated appetite; a small quantity, taken after proper intervals, exhilarates the spirits, and infuses alacrity into every part. This is especially true of the pleasures which arise from conversation. Refined wit and brilliant sense communicate an inward degree of satisfaction every time we recall them to our remembrance. Genius, whether we seek her in the walks of the imitative arts, or in the "nobler growth of thought," does not immediately pour her full radiance on our eyes; we must contemplate her splendour before we can appreciate its degree of brightness. Even elegance and beauty, when they belong to the higher degrees of excellence, solicit *minute* attention, and refuse to unveil their coy graces to the careless gaze of the hurried beholder.

Are these then, may we not ask, true voluptuaries, who fly from pleasure to pleasure, eager to grasp all, and yet securing none? No, my dear young friend, they are only another order of those *drudging* slaves of vanity, who would impose themselves upon us rustics as free and happy beings; or, to speak in fashionable *slang*, as people of very high ton. "Some demon whispered to them, have a taste;" but as nature had withheld from them that property, they determined to affect one. Without any real gusto to determine their choice, and perplexed by the decrees of fashion, as arbitrary as those of the Medes and Persians, but more variable than the shape of the clouds in a squally day, these unhappy people, without a relish for any thing, are forced to see all that is to be seen, and to go every where, lest they should omit the one amusement on which their eclat depends. You, who are accustomed to spend a happy evening in the enjoyment of domestic tranquility, would laugh to observe the multitudes which the world of fashion pours forth as soon as the world of business has retired to repose. Did you see that incessant routine of carriages which nightly pour through the streets and squares at the west end of the town, you would at least conclude that rest and domestic comfort were sacrificed to some exquisite enjoyment:



and that no one would reverse the order of nature without having some equivalent to balance the privations they must endure. Satisfied that the owners are going to be very happy, I suspect that your humane disposition would lead you to pity the servants, and even the horses, who must be exposed for many hours to the inclemency of the weather; but could you look within these splendid vehicles, you would confess that the real objects of pity were there. Languid and spiritless, the fine lady sets out upon her nightly round, more reluctant than the watchman does on his monotonous task. She must step in at all the places that are marked in her visiting list; but as time presses, and dispatch is necessary she can only just look in and see who is there before she flies to another quarter. She must go to such a public amusement, because it is the first night of an exhibition which every body talks of; she can, however, do no more than make her entry and exit, for her time is minuted, and a vast deal of generalship depends upon the expedition of her coachman. Ask this votary of fashion, whether she liked her preceding evening, and her account will only add to Solomon's mournful catalogue of deceitful vanities. She cannot tell you what was said or what was done; it is almost impossible for her to recollect whom she saw. There was the usual set at one place, and a very vulgar looking party at another. At a third house, she heard some detestable music; and every body seemed sleepy and stupid at a fourth. She made an attempt to look in at the dear dutchess's; but the crowd was so immense, that she could proceed no farther than the anti-room: in returning, she heard the most violent screaming, and her own carriage was broke to pieces. On the whole, she never was so alarmed nor so weary in her life; and this morning she is annoyed by an insufferable headache, which makes her miserable. Still, however, she has not a moment to spare; a party waits for her at Madame Lanchester's; from thence she must go to the Exhibition, where she can only run round the rooms, as she has six calls to make in her way to the Park; from whence she must return in time to dress for a dining party; then to the Opera; and after that she meets a few private friends at a *petite souper*. Observe, *inclination* and *pleasure* are never assigned as the motives for these Herculean labours; *compulsion* and *necessity* supply the impetus for motion. She dislikes all that she sees, the fatigue is insupportable, she knows it will kill her; but rigid duty proscribes reflection

and repose. To whom, you will ask, does she owe this duty; to her God, her King, or her family? No, she owes it to *vanity*, who calls this a life of pleasure. The toiling mill horse is not a greater slave, nor are his motions circumscribed by more arbitrary injunctions. For do not suppose that a certificate of your having driven about town all night is sufficient to acquit you of being a hum-drum; you must prove that you have been at the very high parties, and exactly at the genteel hour. You may naturally admire the graces of the tragic and comic muses; but let not the names of Siddons and Jordan tempt you to enter a side box till near the end of the third act; and be sure never to look at the stage till the former stabs herself, or the latter blindfolds Jack Bannister. In short, be content to see what fashion requires, and do not venture even *incog.* to what was only a last year's amusement. Learned pigs, invisible girls, and phantasmagorias, *have been*, I dare not venture to pronounce what are; for only Sybilline prescience could enable a country woman to name "the Cynthia of the minute."

The same rule must regulate your *friendships*: I believe this term is still preserved in the vocabulary of polite life, though, as it only means herding together, it ought to be changed to gregarious assemblages. Be sure to be always late enough to cut Mrs. Plainly's early party, and just in time to take up Lady Bab Frightful as she returns from the Countess of Hurricane's; though you may think the Plainlys very pleasant people, and Lady Bab and the Countess detestable; but then the two former are *ton*, and the latter knows nobody. You may visit the Squanders, though they had an execution in the house last week, because Lady Modely has decided that they ought to be countenanced; but never think of calling on the Overdo family, for they went quite out the moment it was *known* that they had spent their fortune. Be equally exact in your eating, and imprint upon your mind, that as fashion and nature are antipodes in climate, it is right to devour voraciously in April, what you faint at the sight of in August. This is called eating well, and really is a most complex science, involving so many concurrent circumstances, that a fine lady must devote much of her time and thoughts to this study before she can hope to see her dinners announced in the Morning Post, or have the honour of employing the toothpicks of the most sapient

epicures of the season, whose landaulets at your door are as sure attestations of your cook's abilities, as a flight of vultures are of the triumphs of a general.

I should be a most merciless tyrant, if I supposed it possible for a lady who lives in this continued bustle "to examine her ways," or to "commune with her own heart." Once, indeed, the sabbatical rest would have allowed her a few composed moments, which she might have allotted to useful reflection; but now, "Sunday shines no day of rest" for the daughters of dissipation. Some time ago this interregnum of amusement was appropriated to sleep or indisposition; but fashion is now unwilling to suspend her law of perpetual motion even for one day, and boldly disputes the palm with exhausted nature. Her votaries must continue upon the whirl; and as ladies can do nothing else during the early hours of Sunday morning, they put on the mantle of devotion, and drive to some chapel that is blessed with a *fashionable* auditory and an *elegant* preacher. But for fear the liturgical offices of our church should make a disagreeable impression, they must hurry from thence to Kensington gardens, to sport their promenade dresses, and observe who and who are together. During the sitting of parliament, this is the day for dining parties; which, with a concert in the evening, keeps them employed all day long, and renders them as happily forgetful of the services with which it commenced, as if they had devoted their morning to the worship of Morpheus.

It frequently happens, that these scenes of continual hurry and confusion so exhaust the frame, and dissipate the spirits, that the heart loses both its inclinations and its sympathies; and the fine lady becomes a mere self-moved automaton, incapable of either tenderness, resentment, or compassion. To a being that can neither be *roused* to virtue nor *seduced* to vice, cautions are unnecessary; but many a heart escapes the frigid cold of this arctic circle, and repines with secret sorrow, or frets with fruitless wishes, while the vacant eye seems only to ponder the fantastic scene of which it is an unconscious witness. To a person thus situated, consideration becomes of most momentous importance; for the wish should be analyzed, and the sorrow traced to its source. It ought to be known, whether her bosom anguish originates in her own faults, or belongs to that species to which she can only oppose the defence of patience and re-

signation. Her desires too should be so scrutinized, as to discover whether they are of that innocent kind which she may pray God to prosper; or whether she should not cast them from her heart, as she would the deadly worm of Nile. We shall not *materially* slander the circles of dissipation, if we embody this *grief* in the shape of a negligent or faithless husband; and connect those *wishes* with the person of an agreeable cecisbeo, whose attentions are the only pleasant interruption of the tedium of high life. It would prove me to be a mere Goth, if I supposed that a man and his wife could *designedly* appear in the same party; but I presume it may by chance happen, that my lord's chair may arrive before my lady's chariot is ordered up; and that she may be under the necessity of seeing that his early appearance is really in consequence of an assignation with the person she has long suspected to be his *chere amie*. Can any situation more peculiarly require the exercise of consideration, even if a fashionable Bronzely were not whispering agreeable nothings in her ear at that very moment, and forming by his observance a marked contrast to the *nonchalance*, or perhaps *hauteur*, of her husband? Yet she must hurry to some other scene, as joyless and as dangerous as what she now witnesses; and consideration is deferred to those agonizing hours, when her mind, torn with jealousy and vain regret, denies repose to her wearied body, by conjuring up the phantoms of stern ingratitude and respectful assiduity.

Surely, my dear young friend, fashion never passed any decree so injurious to the interests of conjugal fidelity, as when it ordained that the husband and the wife should *always* pursue different plans of pleasure. I do not wish the wedded pair to be inseparable; I know that occasional absence renders the dearest society more delightful; and that being engaged in different scenes gives spirit and variety to the conjugal *tête-à-tête*. But the duties of life impose a sufficient necessity for separation; and when the hours of amusement arrive, let the zest of pleasure be heightened by participation. General custom seems to imply that there is danger in public places; or why do ladies require protectors? and can a man of reflection expect to escape the reproach of wittol husband, who declines escorting *her* to those haunts of Comus, in whose preservation *he* is most interested? I am aware of the ridicule that a family party in a stage-box must excite; but a gentleman in Westminster hall often makes a more ridiculous, I might say detestable ap-

pearance. Much may be there said respecting the breach of a sacred trust; and many oratorical flourishes may be introduced about violating the laws of hospitality, and betraying the honour of confiding friendship; but unless the plaintiff can give better reasons for absenting himself from his wedded charge, than that he was in pursuit of some other amusement, reason and experience will condemn him for being guilty of culpable folly, in putting friendship to an unnecessary test. Were such husbands candid, they would exclaim in the words of Charles,

—————“ The crime was mine,  
 “ Who plac’d thee there, where only thou could’st fail;  
 “ Tho’ well I knew that dreadful post of honour  
 “ I gave thee to maintain. Ah! who could bear  
 “ Those eyes unhurt?” THE REVENGE.

You, my dear Miss M——, will readily conceive that I am not pleading for the treacherous friend or the recreant wife; I believe that genuine virtue, when strengthened by christian principle and supported by divine grace, can vanquish every temptation; but I know that divine grace is only given to those who ask it; and I fear, christian principles are not the predominant rule of conduct among the gay and giddy votaries of pleasure. Chastity, even when supported by such invulnerable guardians, should not be wantonly exposed to severe trials; and surely, when she cannot boast such protectors, the fragility of all human aids is too indisputable, to render it safe to put her upon such hard probation. Prudence may be pacified by precaution, pride can be soothed by flattery, reserve is often conquered by obsequiousness. When, instead of founding female honour on the immutable decrees of an omnipotent God, we build it upon the opinion of the world, we have only to be assured that no eye seeth, and virtue and vice lose their identity. Affection for our wedded partners will not be an equivalent barrier; for affection is but a vagrant property, that may be subdued by ill treatment, destroyed by contempt, restored by generosity and tenderness, or even created by assiduity and solicitation. We may appeal to those melancholy records of depravity which the archives of our civil courts will transmit to posterity, in proof of the evanescent nature of that preference which occasions what are commonly called love matches. The start of passion, which leads a lady to Scotland to become a wife, too often proceeds from some ro-

mantic expectations of eternal affection and consummate excellence, which is not, and indeed cannot be realized; and if she never experiences more than casual neglect, or common infirmities, she will have more reason to bless her good fortune, than her precipitation in choosing deserved. But if, instead of "the faultless monster which the world ne'er saw," a being much beneath the general run of humanity starts up, in the form of a stern tyrant, or negligent coxcomb, and still deems himself entitled to the continuance of that warm affection which she once professed, merely because "she had eyes and chose him;" I fear, affection would here be found a very brittle chain. If a husband, thus circumstanced, should think himself justified in pursuing pleasure through every haunt in which he supposes he may meet it, and conceives his own humour entitled to full license, provided his lady has a beau to attend her if she likes to go out; let not such a man complain of being *injured*, either in friendship or in love, though his wife drink deep of the cup of infamy.

But it is my own sex that I chiefly hope to benefit by my admonitions; and here let me earnestly entreat those ladies whose will gives law to the world of fashion, to endeavour to rescue matronly manners from that extreme affectation of levity, which is now become so general, that it is considered to be the associate of perfect innocency of intention. 'The shrine of virgin beauty is now deserted by its most desirable worshippers, who hover round the chair where love-lincks, already "link'd and wedlock bound," dispenses her *unmeaning* or *criminal* smiles. The married dame trips through the light maze of the dance, and shows her gay youthful partner to the provoked spinster, who is obliged to some antiquated *caro spisso* for not suffering her to sit shivering on the ottoman all the evening. A married lady may go any where, mix in all companies, dress in any style, say any thing, and do every thing not absolutely scandalous, without impeachment of her fair fame. If any allowance ought to be made for levity, should it not be granted to youthful inexperience, to indiscreet simplicity, and to the too frank disclosure of that wish to win hearts which is very natural to the early part of our lives? Why should a woman who has pledged her vows at the altar, and is thereby appropriated to one man by the laws of God and her country, try to gain admiration, which, if acquired, can only become a snare to her virtue or her peace? Her choice is made; it will there-

fore be in vain for her to try to captivate hearts which she must immediately restore. Will it add to her felicity, to discover that a gentleman superior to her husband in merit, fortune, or rank, considers her as the most charming of her sex? will it not rather lead to most dangerous comparisons, to regrets fatal to every hope of happiness, or even content? But let the infatuated woman, who gratifies her vanity at the hazard of her peace and reputation, know, that perhaps her conquest is not so very certain as she supposes. Her victim may have very different ends in view from that of swelling her triumphs. His own gross passions may fix him in her train, not to be trampled upon by her tyranny, but to be *her* conqueror. Whatever she may suppose, or he profess, she never would have been "his happiest choice," even had he seen her before she was assigned to another. He has too much aversion to the marriage yoke, for her charms to vanquish his prejudices; and her principal attraction, in his eye, is the conviction that he may flirt with her without an officious friend's requesting to know whether he has any serious intentions. This character is well described in the lively farce of the "Wedding day;" the regret of Lady Contest at not having seen the engaging lord before she had tied herself to old Sir Adam, and her surprize at his declining the honour of her hand when she was unexpectedly released from her former bonds, affords a valuable lesson to married coquettes.

Before I dismiss the subject of *matronly flirting*, allow me to answer one objection. Though particular attentions to one gentlemen are confessed to be both suspicious and dangerous, general ease and freedom are defended, on the ground of improving the pleasure and vivacity of society. I am so great a lover of cheerfulness, that I am willing to admit every species of sprightliness into the manner of married ladies, that can be fairly affirmed to be destitute of either design or immodesty. I acknowledge, that they may with propriety take a greater share of conversation, and indulge in more latitude of remark, than their *juniors*. You will perceive by that limitation, that I consider these more as the privileges of age, than as part of the hymeneal dowry. Let a married lady endeavour to promote the social enjoyments of the circle in which she moves. Let her consult her glass, and allow me to add her purse also, in the choice of appropriate and becoming ornaments. I permit her to aspire to the character of a very agreeable woman; but let not that

distinction be laid by on ordinary occasions, and only produced to male witnesses. If the best *bon-mots* are reserved for the beaux, if the favourite head dress is only worn when Lord Gaylove is expected, if her *ennui* and headache are apt to be cured by a *tête-à-tête* with a man of fashion, if she finds female parties dull and female conversation insipid; I must entreat the advocates for the ease and freedom of married ladies to remember, that cheerfulness is of no sex, and is as likely to visit a party of old women with her agreeable fallies, as a circle of box lobby loungers. Nay, it is more likely; for in the first instance it will be stimulated by the humane desire of amusing lassitude, while in the latter it will be checked by a modest apprehension of misconstruction. I should have premised, that these said old women should not be *splenetic*; for I do confess, ill nature gives the *coup de grace* to vivacity.

We have dwelt so minutely on some of the increasing improprieties of fashionable manners, that we must pass others with less observation. A rage for education is one of the marked features of the great world; and it has been much increased by the labour of writers who belong to the new school of morals. The hope of forming something superior to the present race of mortals, by merely human means, is one of the wildest theories that ever entered the brain of a visionary reformer; yet it is seriously acted upon by many indefatigable mothers, who weary the patience and injure the constitution of their children by the most unremitting attention to a multiplicity of pursuits; in the hope of being able to exhibit in their own families this mechanical compound of ethical and scientific perfection; which is to prove, that divine wisdom is not necessary either for informing our ignorance, or restraining our propensities to evil. All parents do not, indeed, aspire to this high standard of philosophical erudition and impeccability; but even that routine of masters who are necessary to form a young lady into the accomplished amateur, which is now deemed an essential part of the character of every woman of fashion, subjects a young lady to more privations, as much bodily fatigue, and a far greater exercise of patience and attention, than yonder little spinner encounters, who by her industry procures her own subsistence. We must, however, allow due praise to this severe discipline, on the same ground as we commend the rigid injunctions of Lycurgus: no laws but his could have formed the stern, indefatigable, impenetrable Spartan; nor could



a less inexorable course of self-denial and activity convert the artless happy girl into that extraordinary being, a woman of ton. Beside being compelled to pass through those extremes of climate, without discovering any sense of bodily inconvenience, as Milton, by a bold flight of well governed fancy, supposed to be part of the punishment of the fallen angels, the candidates for this evanescent honor are trained from their cradles to such habits of observance, patience, and control, in order to attract the attention of their fellow-creatures, as, if they were influenced by better motives, would secure them the approbation of beings of a higher order. What a pity, that so much pains should be exerted for such a subordinate purpose; and in which, since all those whom you seek to amaze are your competitors, your chance of success is so very limited! For if your daughter, after fourteen thousand hours\* spent in the acquisition of music, prove at last but a second-rate performer; if, after all that the dancing master has done in screwing her shoulders and modelling her steps, her person be inelegant and her motions ungraceful; if no expense nor waste of time can prevent her drawings from being daubs, or bagatelles, for what have the hours of early life been sacrificed? Taste and ton have no *degrees* of glory to allot to their worshippers; nor can ardent devotion, here, claim that reward for its sincerity, to which it is not entitled by talent. All that can be done for the unsuccessful candidate for fashionable eclat is, to remove her to some narrower sphere. A second-rate party, or a summer bathing place, is the only meridian which she can hope to illumine; while all who witnessed her former pretensions are tempted to exclaim, "Ill weav'd ambition, how much art thou shrunk!" Might not prudence here suggest the expediency of applying to another master, who acts upon very different principles from the cruel despot Vanity, by giving a certain retribution to the *motives*, not the *success* of our actions?

"No cold neglect the faithful heart repays,  
 "Whose steadfast aim solicits His regard;  
 "Each wish for merit, each attempt to please,  
 "He views, and His benignant smiles reward."

CARTER'S POEMS.

\* Mrs. More communicates this anecdote. The author cannot refer to the page, not being in possession of that Lady's *Strictures on Education*, which she read at their first appearance, and took from them a few ex-

It must, however, be acknowledged, that the favour of this wise and holy Being cannot be acquired by such an exercise of our faculties, or determination of our views; for he does not enjoin us to *excel* our fellow-creatures, but to *conquer* ourselves; nor will the splendour of the crown of immortality be decreased, because it blazes upon the brows of myriads of happy beings. Envy of successful competition, and jealousy of preeminent abilities, will never torment the bosom of the young christian, who, engrossed by the necessity of looking at her own ways, ceases to be a fretful observer of the progress of others; being assured, that at the day of judgment she cannot be *overlooked* amid an infinite host of happy spirits who claim the kingdom of their Father, nor *concealed* by a multitude of sinners who call in vain on the rocks and mountains to hide them from an omniscient eye.

In judging of the folly of those who seek to form their children upon the model which vanity presents, we must add, to the great hazard of success, the brevity of the acquisition. As the career of a fine lady is ever in danger of being arrested by rivals in expense and taste, so rivals in accomplishments are coming forward to dispute her pretensions to superiority. Nor is this all: every year brings in a new fashion, even in these particulars, and the business of education is never finished. If you choose to dance, paint, sing, and play, till you reach your climacteric, you must still have masters to teach you the *last* improvement, or you will be laid aside as old lumber. Our mothers, who danced all their lives to the tune of Lady Coventry's minuet, will scarcely conceive how ephemeral are the triumphs of the successors of that paragon, who had the good fortune to flourish at a period when the empire of beauty and taste dreaded no other enemies than the small-pox and old age. The minuet *de la cour* and the *cotillon* were afterwards thought better calculated to display the female figure to advantage, and these lasted in fashion long enough for one generation of dancers; but reels, strathspeys, and waltzes, now succeed each other with such rapidity, that only the most flexible form and fixed attention can rise to the praise of having learned the figure, before they must assume different contortions, and wind into another meander. The like observation extends to all

tracts; to which, while writing these Letters, she has occasionally referred. She will feel much flattered, if the reader should also trace an incidental and undesigned resemblance, arising from similarity of opinion on various points.

other accomplishments : there is even a fashion in language ; the accent must retreat, or advance, according as ton, not syntax, has ordained ; and the word of the year must hold a prominent place in our conversation. Our passions and sensations must be subject to like control ; we must either be immoderately happy, monstrously delighted, intensely charmed, or amazingly interested. But as expressions of extreme suffering are best adapted to the joyless career of a fine lady, we must allow that her task of learning will be chiefly bounded by the compound epithets of immensely dull, horribly fatiguing, and insufferably vapid. A few mornings observation will show her what *misfortune* is most in vogue, and give the proper tinge to her *dolours* for the ensuing winter.

If the quackery of education only extended to the formation of vain and frivolous beings, we should have far less reason to complain of its prevalence. Many strong minds would resist these shackles, and disappointment would divert ill directed understandings to some nobler pursuit. But as we have before observed, a system of morals is formed still more dangerous than this system of manners. The popularity of either mode of education seems to depend more on the situation than on the intellects of their respective partisans ; yet it appears as if the frivolous system was most in repute among second-rate gentility ; while the bold theory of human perfectibility seeks its converts among those who, feeling themselves to be above the immediate influence of the temporal considerations which restrain their fellow-creatures, would fain get released from the eternal consequences of indulging their guilty passions. A morality, therefore, which rejects the basis of religion, is admirably suited to people who, while they seem to make the opinions of others their standard of right and wrong in affairs of vanity and fancy, really bow to no other idol than selfishness, and amidst a life of real privation are secretly pursuing self-enjoyment. To banish from the mind the ideas of an omniscient God, and a retributive hereafter, gives an amazing release to the appetites ; but this emancipation will not satisfy these new organizers of the human soul. The passions must be made tyrants ; and for this end the most suitable means are provided. The habitual indulgence of violent desires, is by them called exerting the noblest energies ; and discarding the restraints of virtue, is misnamed ingenuousness and obedience

to the honest dictates of nature. These nefarious principles frequently preserve those external pretences of decorum, which are judged expedient to forward their universal adoption in this country; and those very systems which inculcate vice profess the greatest regard for virtue. To confine our observations to what we are now discussing; volumes have been written on the subject of education, which profess to form a most amiable and intelligent being, infinitely superior to the present inhabitants of this world, and which, but for the studied omission of revealed truths and religious motives, might pass for the effects of real philanthropy. The disappointment of those parents who attempt to form their children upon these models cannot be pitied, unless they really are ignorant that human wisdom never discovered a perfect system of ethics, without borrowing the aid of revelation; nor can she even then devise barriers sufficiently strong to prevent our frail natures from deviating into bye paths of error, unless she renounce the guidance of her own pale fires, and submit to be led by the clear radiance of the gospel.\*

The deficiency of this new system of self-dependent virtue, is not more apparent in the weakness of its restraints, and the feebleness of its motives, than in the very limited circle to which it even *pretends* to direct its improvements. Many christian graces are excluded from its good deeds; and the cardinal virtue of our ancestors, the very bond of social intercourse, is now little inculcated in education, or enforced by fashionable practice; I speak of moral honesty, and the simple but energetic principle of paying every one his just debts. The difficulty which I find in treating this point in such a manner as to render it palatable to polite readers, is a sufficient proof that the duty is *quite gone out*. Yet honour and honesty were once thought to have a reciprocal relation; and the alliance was so congenial, that I think the former quality has appeared to be in a hectic state ever since it has been separated from its correlative. A person of strict honour and independent principles, in debt to every tradesman he deals with, and actually living, if not by shuffling and evasion, at least by the forbearance of people whom he despises, seems a contradiction in nature; for generosity, pride, and dignity of sentiment, are supposed to be blended with meanness, servility, and cruelty of conduct. To live,

\* The subject of education is resumed in Letters Vth and XIIIth.

to breathe at the mercy of another, nay to feel that you are really injuring those on whose forbearance you depend, and introducing anxiety and distress into a rank of life of which you were born the guardians: how does this accord with the magnificent nobleman, or high spirited commoner, who know themselves to be parts of the legislature of their country? Yet even in those important branches of the state, the art not only of ruining themselves, but of living after they are ruined, is practised by many adepts in (must I say) the mystery of swindling. Living within the bounds of your income is so far from being considered as the test of a gentleman, that in the world of high fashion it conveys the oblique insinuation, that you are a narrow soul, destitute of taste, or at best merely a good sort of *spiritlefs* creature. This propensity to squander the bounty of Providence with careless profusion, has unhappily descended from the high to the lowly scenes of life. Its effects upon the middle and inferior orders have been already considered; in the higher it may be lamented, not only on account of the individual distress that it occasions, but as tending to make the humble classes think still more meanly of their superiors. I have ever been of opinion, that the influence of birth and rank was more beneficial to the community at large, than that of wealth, and that the faults of the former were less prejudicial. To instance in pride; which when it proceeds from hereditary superiority is generally polished by education, and softened by habitual restraint; whereas the pride of mere wealth mostly seizes an unimproved mind, at a period of life in which habits have been formed on vulgar models, and of course it must become more odious to those whom it affects. Whether it is engrafted on native servility or rudeness, or on the lately acquired consequence arising from the possession of money, ostentation and self-indulgence will be the result, unless checked by extraordinary goodness of disposition. The man of rank, on the other hand, knows his own title to the respect of his neighbourhood to be indefeasible, nor does he feel the necessity of continually defending the dignity which was handed down to him by his ancestors. He has been accustomed to the luxuries of life from his infancy, and his relish for them is too much palled by long indulgence to allow him to attach importance to such distinctions. This appears to be the natural bias of these two characters, unless they are diverted out of their course by any adventitious impulse. Let it be remembered too, that attachment

to hereditary patrons, and respect for the old manor house, the ancient possessors of which are deposited in the family vault under the parish church, are feelings congenial to the minds of the common people, and such as our constitution wisely cherishes. The influence which an ancient and respectable family possessed over its tenantry and neighbourhood, cannot be soon acquired by the nabob, or manufacturer, who purchases the estate, however estimable their character, or conciliatory their conduct. A series of years must elapse before they can form any tie, but what interest creates; and till the generation which served the old family has passed away, the new will be considered as interlopers, who have risen on the ruins of a race that was far more deserving. I must observe, that in these times every thing which tends to weaken the tie that connects the poorest man in the kingdom with the highest, is to be deprecated; and I regret the degradation which rank and station suffer in the eyes of the community, not only by the contagious influence of unbounded expense, but by transferring its power to other hands, which, even if as well disposed, will be less able to exert it beneficially.

Shall we not then, my dear Miss M——, reprobate that false candour, which induces us to give soft names to such a vice as extravagance? Heaven forbid that we should here withhold that pity from *undeserved* distress to which it is ever entitled! I am not speaking of those who, by unforeseen unavoidable misfortunes, by the pressure of domestic calamity, by the treachery of enemies, the uproar of the elements, or even by misplaced confidence, are involved in pecuniary difficulties. The sorrows of such are sacred; let the world compassionate, and, if it can, alluage them. I confine my censures to those who voluntarily offer their fair possessions, their extensive influence, and every other blessing of which God has made them the guardian, at the shrine of vanity. These I charge with contributing to the ruin of their country, as well as of themselves. I accuse them of perverting their highly responsible station to the corrupting of national habits, and to the subverting of the interests of the order to which they belong. These offences must not pass off with the slight censure, that they were very generous people, and no one's enemies but their own; and every eulogy on their taste, spirit, and hospitality, is a severe charge against them, for not bounding these propensities by their lawful ability of indulging them.

It is indeed allowed, that people eminently gifted with genius are apt to fall into these pecuniary embarrassments; and perhaps it is just, that a more lenient censure should attach to errors which seem rather to proceed from the limited faculties of our nature, than from intentional injustice to others, or overweening attachment to ourselves. The intenseness of thought which accompanies any extraordinary effort of intellect, whether it be engaged in "bodying forth the forms of things unseen," in developing the abstruse mazes of recondite science, or in conducting the intricate and cumbersome machine of public business, necessarily abstracts the attention from what seems comparatively petty considerations; and the harassed mind, fatigued by the painful stretch of its faculties, finds the hours of relaxation insufficient to recruit its exhausted powers. When such an excuse can be fairly urged for embarrassments, let us abstain from reproach; sufficient to such a culprit, is the punishment which the consequences of indiscretion must inflict; especially as people of this stamp are generally rather dupes than knaves, and suffer more from misplaced confidence, and the extravagance of their connexions, than from the ungoverned impertunity of their own desires.

Few, however, are lighted to ruin by the starry lamp of genius; and fewer yet can plead, that close attention to the welfare of the many compelled them to neglect their own. It is vanity which generally misleads the unthrifty; and the seductions of amusement, not the calls of business, deliver the careless spendthrift to the iron gripe of insolvency.

But let me recollect that it is my own sex I am now addressing; and as we cannot be called to such high responsible stations as preclude the possibility of those domestic attentions which form a principal part of our bounden duty, we can never plead the excuse that might shelter the improvident legislator, general, statesman, or magistrate, from severe censure. And though genius does not deny her visitations to women, she seldom pours such full influence upon our souls as to absorb the sense of other duties. I will not permit the fabricator of a novel, the composer of a poem, or even the writer of *moral essays*, to claim those privileges of abstraction, which I would grant to a Burke and a Bacon. Literature is with us an ornament, or an amusement, not a duty or profession; and when it is pursued with such avidity, as to withdraw us from the especial purposes of our creation, it becomes a crime.

So far are rank and station from excusing us from this obligation to pecuniary exactness, that they seem rather to bind it upon us the closer; for in the higher walks of life, the attention of the husband is often engrossed by what he owes his country; while the wife cannot shew her patriotism better than by exonerating her partner from the weight of domestic incumbrance, and acting as a faithful steward and intelligent agent in every affair which can be submitted to her management. Punctuality and regularity in money transactions are still acknowledged to be countinghouse requisites. May they long continue to distinguish and give respectability to the commercial world! but why should they be discarded from being supporters to the shield of ancestry and the coronet of nobility? I have heard it remarked (and the observation was judicious,) that arithmetic has been of more real service to the world, than all other remains of classical learning or science; and in what respect does considerate expenditure (we are now addressing a class to which the term frugality may seem unappropriate) imply the absence of any noble quality? Can generosity, can benevolence subsist upon funds which are not your own? When you bestowed what belonged to your children or your creditor, you did not *give*, but *surreptitiously appropriated the possessions of another*. The character of Charles Surface, in that very superior comedy "The School for Scandal," if not the hasty sketch of inconsiderate genius unconscious of its dangerous tendency, must be deemed a marked attack on the probity which is our national distinction. In either point of view, his celebrated animadversions on the old proverb, "Be just before you are generous," ought to be received with groans and hisses, not thunders of applause. They are, indeed, characteristic of a dishonest spendthrift; but they bear no mark of integrity hurried away by the violence of ill regulated passions; for they do not result from the strong impression made by a recent tale of distress, but from a mind *resolved* to be unjust, and enamoured of its own baseness. The sentiment which restrains him from selling the picture of his friend and benefactor, ought to have taught him that the necessities of Old Stanley might be supplied, by discharging his four valets with their bags and bouquets; from whose attendance only a consummate coxcomb could derive satisfaction, and not from a misappropriation of what he owns belonged to his tailor and hosier. How can the audience in the last scene acquiesce in Maria's destiny? Charles indeed



tells us, that he never more *can* err, because he shall now have a monitor and guide ; but has he not already told us, that he does an imprudent action precipitately, lest he should be checked by the *monitor* within him ? To such a character, the sober paces of justice will ever appear lame and hobbling ; but the misfortune is, it is not generosity, but dishonesty, which outstrips her. The insolvent must relinquish the sublime pleasure of relieving indigence, from an absolute *impossibility* of enjoying it. He may be *base*, he cannot be *benevolent* in any thing but desire. If he truly valued the ability of giving, he should have reserved some little remnant of his possessions from the gulph of dissipation, and saved his tender heart from the exquisite anguish of finding himself incapable of relieving misery.

Compassion is one of those inherent qualities of the female mind, which seem to defy the influence of situation. Even fashion dares not utter a decree against the sovereignty of benevolence ; and though a fine lady must be too frigid to *feel*, she thinks herself bound to *affect* tenderness. She is indeed allowed to be a little whimsical in the objects of her bounty, as all must be who renounce the dictates of nature, and resign themselves to the caprices of art ; yet, as it is necessary to have her name down in charitable subscriptions, though it be only to relieve

“ A fidler of note, who, for lace on his coat,  
“ To his tailor stands much in arrears ;”

we may observe, that without some attention to pecuniary concerns she cannot be (I will not be so uncouth as to say honest, but) *genteelly* benevolent. And yet, after all the abuse that can be bestowed upon the impertinence of tradesmen, they are necessary appendages to the votaries of vanity, without whose assistance every attempt to propitiate the idol they adore, or to outshine a rival, would be impossible. The aspect of a decoration painter, when he sets out an apartment in a style of elegance, is so very engaging, that if the obligations which are due to him were but subtilized by passing through the alembic of German sentiment, they might become native alcohol ; and no longer loading the feeble shoulders of the old beldame *Justice*, they would even serve as an impetus to aid the flight of Charles Surface’s admired equestrian nymph *Generosity*. By perusing the items which form the debts of a genteel bankrupt, we might dis-

cover what portion should be assigned to honour, and what to honesty. I hope no well bred person will deny, that expensive furniture, elegant clothes, magnificent houses, and sumptuous entertainments, are as necessary to eclat, as occasional bursts of liberality, or even as spirited manœuvres at the gaming table; every assistant, therefore, who lent his aid to expedite the Herculean labour of squandering a large fortune with rapidity, presents a claim upon *honour*, which if people are faithful to the principles they profess will be readily accredited, in an inverse ratio to the real utility of the service, or the moderation of the demanded recompense.

One word more upon an evil which, on account of its destructive tendency, should be hunted out of the world, by the heavy club of argument, and the missile shaft of ridicule: does not this inattention to the distresses which arise from extravagance, result from the want of more enlarged views in those who form the principles of youth? Education, whether it proceed upon the showy or the philosophical plan, is now directed to the formation of a selfish character. Even the minute attention which is bestowed upon children induces them to overrate their own importance, and to undervalue others. The love of praise, or of distinction, to which they are taught to make so many sacrifices, unquestionably seeks its own gratification; and when the exercise of benevolence is recommended as a means of enjoying pleasant and escaping painful emotions, self is still held forth as the predominant feature. But beside those whom we may wish to gain as admirers, or as pensioners, there is a very numerous body of our fellow-creatures to whom people of rank ought to extend their views; I mean those whose good opinion they do not think worth courting, and whose services they cannot command. Those who are conversant with the great, know well that they are apt to consider their own domestic servants as superior in situation to respectable tradesmen, or professional people not decidedly in the line of gentlemen. A contempt for every thing city, or bourgeois, forms a part of the instruction of young people of fashion: this is certainly very blamable, however it may be extenuated by the citizen or bourgeois deserting their own characters and assuming the cast airs of quality.

It seems doubtful, whether manners really have improved by breaking the connexion that subsisted in feudal times between the chieftain and his vassals. It might, now that the sword of civil discord sleeps, and the rage of family animosi-

ty has ceased, be converted into a most powerful means of ameliorating the habits of every order, and correcting the faults of all. But then the nobleman and his dependants must not meet on terms of equality. The yeoman's wife must not affront the baroness, by adopting her paraphernalia, or apeing her table; nor must the baroness invite her rustic neighbours to laugh at the simplicity which it is her interest to cherish.\* I am indulging a Utopian idea, that a spot in this island can still be found, in which affectation and false refinement has not corrupted the manners of the inhabitants; who therefore look up to their superiors as to their benefactors and friends, without envy, and without any ridiculous intention of imitating a style unsuitable to their station, and derogatory to their characters. Could such beings be found, surely occasional intercourse between respectful gratitude and generous affability, might afford superior pleasure to what the best conducted masquerade ever bestowed; as the mistress of the feast would enjoy the certainty of giving delight, and the partakers of it would not find it *difficult* to express gratification. Such meetings would also prove a noble school of instruction to the rising branches of a gentleman's family, who would thus contemplate characters with whom they had no other means of becoming acquainted, and practise duties for which the ordinary routine of high life, as divided into London, Bath, and Summer excursions, leaves no opening. By learning the pursuits, resources, and difficulties of classes not remotely separated from their own, they would imbibe a strong attachment to the obligations of justice, and would correct that criminal thoughtlessness which impedes the fulfilment of the divine precept, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them." They would see (and surely to see is to admire) that blunt intelligence which forms a predominant feature in the true Englishman. They would observe boldness of remark, originality of idea, and all those peculiar traits of character which courtly refinement amalgamates into one mass. A morning spent in unmeaning shopping, would then afford less retrospective pleasure to indolent beauty; and the foreseen perplexities of a disappointed tradesman would arrest the profusion of the prodigal. Patronage, too, would be thus assisted in discharging its high-

\* See Letter the XIVth.

ly responsible trust; and merit would have some hope of obtaining that attention which would divert the smiles of greatness from parasites and mercenaries, whom sickly vanity or capricious folly (confined to the partial sphere of domestic observation) selected as proper objects of reward. But, however the middle orders may suffer from the cold hauteur, the contracted views, or the careless disregard of greatness, they should remember, that till they substitute modesty, humility, and simplicity of manner, in the room of that dashing air of equality which they esteem so genteel, mutual disgust must increase that distance which it is the interest of both parties to diminish by mutual kindness. Such conduct our holy faith inculcates; and the consideration of what this country now is, leads us to consider what it would become, supposing we were christians in practice as well as in name.

The lukewarm religion of the fashionable world is the last topic that I mean to discuss in this letter. I am told, that the aspect of the times improves in externals; and that, except a few professed infidels and notorious demireps, ladies think themselves bound to consecrate one hour of the Sabbath by appearing at some place of public worship. But the claims of another world are not to be commuted by such a slight penance; the offering of prayer and praise must not be immediately succeeded by the sacrifice of fools. The denunciations of the law, and the promises of the gospel, must be meditated upon in private, and the preacher's exhortations must produce other effects than a compliment to the elegance of his manner, the perspicuity of his language, and the happiness of his allusions. The christian mother too, like pious Hannah, should take care to bring her young offspring to God as soon as they can be taught habits of attention; and the mistress of a family should resolve with Joshua, that she "and her household would serve the Lord." It must also be remembered, that our church has two services, corresponding with the divinely instituted morning and evening worship of the tabernacle. Nor is this all; religion has her private as well as her public duties; meditation, prayer, and reading the holy scriptures, require retirement. She who passes the day in a crowd, cannot abstract her thoughts from temporal objects; similar scenes must excite similar ideas, and the pursuits of vanity will be accompanied by their usual round of agitations and cares. The lady who thus attempts to divide her Sabbath between God and Mammon, feels indeed the servitude of both, but loses the re-

ward affixed to the spiritual duty ; I mean the serenity, the renewed strength, and the refreshment, which a Sunday spent in the bosom of domestic enjoyment and cheerful piety never fails to bestow.

I fear, my dear young friend, I have wearied you by this long review of abandoned, frivolous, or capricious characters ; who, by obtruding upon public attention, call themselves the world, and in the clamour of their vices and follies drown the mild voice of retired goodness. I am convinced, that even in the highest circle of fashion the number of really excellent women far exceed the profligate and thoughtless ; but as they are not “ ravished by the whistling of a name,” they choose to let their modest worth pass silently along, content with domestic affection, friendship, and cordial esteem. Do not misconstrue those observations into a general satire on birth and affluence, which proceed from a conviction that vice owes her most dangerous allurements to a false idea of her universality, and that she affords exquisite though temporary enjoyments. In speaking of the fashionable world, I adopt a well known phrase, which implies unity and populousness ; but I know that it contains many inhabitants who are discontented with its laws, and many who, though they are ranked among its citizens, yet never bowed down to its idols. It is my wish to prevent that which is in itself detestable, from being adopted as fashionable ; being aware that the unguarded are often cheated out of those principles by the magic of a name, which they would not sacrifice to passion, or yield to criminal importunity.

Your lenient temper may probably think that I have treated the mere fine lady, the pretty butterfly of vanity, with too much severity ; but if I could awaken these triflers from their dangerous torpor, surely severity would be mercy. They are probably responsible for many misemployed talents, at least they are sporting with that important trust, existence. While they falsely conceive themselves sent into the world to display their beauty, their accomplishments, and their taste, life glides from them ; the opportunity of improving lost time ceases ; and at the bar of a just God they will be questioned for sins of *omission*. It is not merely the evil that they have committed, but the good which they ought to have done, that will form the terrible inquisition. A life of selfish indolence is a life of guilt ; indulgence is that scriptural unfruitfulness whose punishment is so awfully

predicted. The attainments to which they sacrificed their lives will perish amid the morbid vapours of the grave; and the naked spirit will appear divested of every graceful ornament, unless its almsdeeds, its piety, and its works of justice and mercy, qualify it to be arrayed in the robes of righteousness.

I am not so sanguine as to expect that my efforts will produce an effect which has been denied to genius enriched by learning, and enforced by those strong powers of argument which result from the united bounty of nature and education. A recollection of the candid treatment which I have formerly experienced from the public encourages me to hope that my motives for this undertaking will apologize for its deficiencies. Works on religion and morals, in this country, can rarely pretend to any novelty, beside the title and the arrangement; but the mere name of something new bestows a momentary celebrity on even *jejune* productions; while the sterling compositions which they modernize sleep in the library. But if, while employed in reading a recent appeal to their consciences, one profligate should be converted, one prejudiced mind illuminated, one wavering understanding fixed, or one thoughtless being awakened from the dream of vanity, I may hope for more than an *earthly* reward, provided my admonitions are dictated by *singleness* of heart and *uprightness* of intention.

That you approve the instructions which you so little need, makes that a pleasure which would otherwise be a laborious task. Adieu, my dear Miss M——; may we never waste the rich legacy of friendship which was so tenderly bequeathed to us, prays your sincerely affectionate friend, &c.

## LETTER V.

*On Religious Knowledge, and the peculiar Notions of Calvin.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

WE have considered what our sex was intended to be by nature, and what criminal or ridiculous compliances with the caprices of vanity and affectation would make us. We have examined the inroads that luxury and wealth have made in our manners and comforts, and the temptations to which we are exposed from the celebrity that fashion often attaches to folly, and sometimes to vice. We have also seen the necessity of consideration; but consideration is of no avail, unless the mind is prepared by previous instruction to render its own reflections valuable. If criminal desires, vain pursuits, and irritable passions, follow us to our closets, they will never become the school of wisdom.

The mistakes which the most superior understanding is apt to fall into, when hurried on by an overweening confidence in its own powers, must strike every observer of human nature. Genius, indeed, often absurdly affects singularity, and diminishes both its respectability and its happiness by a *settled* determination to differ from other people. The dangerous mistakes to which this self-dependance betrays those who are so unhappy as to cherish it, should make us rejoice that custom has *immemorially* considered humility of judgment to be requisite to women. The general docility of our understandings disposes us rather to receive dogmas, than to build systems; and the liveliness of our sensibilities rather fits us for the exercise of ardent devotion, than for the indulgence of chilling doubts and perplexing discussions. We pity the weakness of our sex, when we see a sister deviate into enthusiasm or superstition; but when she turns a declaiming deist or contentious sceptic, we look upon her as an unnatural monster or frightful prodigy.

From the time that pure religion emerged from the corruptions of papal imposition, to the middle of the last centu-

ry, no one doubted that the best method of arming an inexperienced girl for the perilous conflict which she would be called to sustain against the world, the flesh, and the devil, would be by entrusting her with "the shield of faith," and teaching "her to wield the sword of the spirit, even the word of God." Our ancestors knew that these were the weapons with which the Captain of our salvation defeated the prince of darkness, when he made that memorable and instructive assault upon him in the wilderness, and vainly hoped that ambition, presumption, or the infirmities incident to his assumed nature, might induce him to defeat the ends of his incarnation. Our ancestors, poor indeed in *philosophical* illuminism, but rich in heavenly wisdom, did not suspect that by imprinting the christian doctrines deeply on the minds of their daughters, they fettered them with prejudices; nor did they suppose that they would make better women, by being kept in profound ignorance of the gospel terms of salvation, till their understandings were arrived at maturity, and enabled to meet their spiritual pastor with the bold objections of an expert caviller. They revered the book of God, they sincerely revered it; but they never thought that from motives of respect they ought to withhold it from childhood, much less from youth. They never suspected, that the awful simplicity of its narratives could *contaminate* the innocent ignorance of juvenile modesty; and though the sacred volume contained many abstruse doctrines, they ever found it easy to repress the inquiries of awakened intelligence when they verged on indecorous curiosity, by remarking that in time they would have clearer notions than what their tender age now permitted them to entertain, though the full developement of mystery was reserved for another state of existence.

The indefatigable assiduity of infidel philosophers has given popularity to other principles of instruction; and, under the pretence of avoiding superstitious prepossessions, the minds of young women are now often subjected to every impression that will prevent them from making revealed religion their future choice; for, will a rational being ever submit to a code of laws of which it neither sees the utility nor the obligation? Assured that morality will make her good, that science will enrich her with wisdom, and that accomplishments create elegance, what is there in the precepts of the gospel, or in the lives of its professors, to induce her to make it a voluntary choice, especially when she is assured



that she is free to reject it, and to choose the laws by which she shall be judged. Liberality looks as well as charity; conscious merit has a more imposing air than humility; a Sunday rout seems more pleasant than family devotion; and if faith and holiness are not necessary passports to a better state of existence, the woman of the world is for the most part a more desirable companion than the pious christian. If the task of religious instruction be not begun while learning is a duty, I know not at what period of life the mind will feel its own deficiencies, and set about acquiring what it perceives that it can do very well without. The seeds of science are sown in childhood, and left to ripen with our years; and yet we do not hear of *prejudiced* geographers, astronomers, or mathematicians. As the understanding unfolds, clearer views are obtained; the rudiments by which we gained our first ideas are neglected, the easy but perhaps circumlocutory terms by which we were enabled to conceive objects far removed from our observation are disused, and one comprehensive word conveys to us the meaning which we first learnt by a long periphrasis. The first principles of religion are not more difficult to be conveyed to the mind of a child, than the rules of grammar; and they who affirm that they have a tendency to cloud the understanding, and limit the bounds of ingenuous research, must urge their false tenets to hearers alike destitute of historical knowledge and personal observation.

But we will suppose a young woman, hitherto uninstructed in the precepts and doctrines of revelation, possessed of sufficient humility of mind to think all her literary and polite attainments insufficient. We will fancy her so ingenuously disposed, as not to start at several mysterious passages in the scripture, which bear hard upon the pride of reason, when it has been previously nurtured in the school of deism; and that she does not shrink from many positive injunctions inimical to the opinions and habits that she has long been accustomed to adopt. We will imagine (contrary to the experience of all who have, in latter times, attempted to make *adult* converts among those who are totally destitute of religious studies) that she will find her new studies easy; and we will even grant that their difficulties will not be increased by the intended disciples having ever resided in a christian country, against the creed of which (since she has not adopted it) she must certainly have conceived either contempt or dislike. We must suppose, that her early instruc-

tors have been able to give some satisfactory reason (which we cannot divine) why this knowledge has been so long withheld, and also have convinced her that there is *now* an imperious necessity for her being acquainted with her title to eternity, though if she had died younger she need not have known it. We must believe her willing to renounce what appears like *safe* ignorance, and desirous to incur the *fearful* responsibility which arises from knowing her duty. After all these allowances, we must still ask how will she have time to become a christian? A young woman of fashion has not an hour to spare, scarcely one disengaged moment, in which she can pursue reflection and strengthen conviction; and young women in humbler life are almost as fully occupied; for they must improve their school accomplishments, and make those ornaments in the morning which their evening engagements will call upon them to display. And yet, if they become christians from conviction at this period of their lives, they must encounter the labours of a philosopher with the courage of a hero. They must be *argued* out of the deism in which they have been tutored, and *persuaded* to renounce the motives and habits which they have been taught to adopt. "It is one thing," says Dr. Waterland, "to understand the doctrine, and quite another to be master of the controversy." A girl with a common capacity, who has received an ordinary education on christian principles, knows enough to entertain notions that are sufficiently clear to her own judgment, though she may not be able to answer every objection that may be urged against her belief; but adult converts must examine step by step the evidences on which our faith is built, and must be able to confute all gainsaying, before their new opinions can be said to be confirmed. And after they have done all this, they will still have their church to choose; and the pretensions of every denomination of christians must be examined before they can properly determine. This is requiring more labours from every *private* member of our congregation, than our ecclesiastical constitutions impose upon those who are to be masters in our Israel. The longest life (allowing for those interruptions which our new instructors cannot pretend to exclude) would not be sufficient to complete these *converts of reason*, who are supposed to be so much preferable to what are scornfully called *hereditary believers*. And when they are completed, what would they do to promote their own happiness, or that of others? The labour of acquiring the theo-

ry of duty, would occupy that season of life which ought to be devoted to the practice; there would be much scholastic discussion, and few christian graces. Yet those who recommend this method of disciplining the world, are the loudest in declaiming against the effects that theological controversy has upon the heart and understanding. The dry disquisitions of schoolmen and divines (for these disputants are always coupled, though nothing can be more dissimilar) is the favourite topic of abuse and ridicule among those who seek to form a nation of controversialists, and to forbid even a woman from clinging to the mercies of her Saviour, unless she can refute all the gainsaying of infidels; nay, she must herself have been reclaimed from deism by the power of argument. I by no means insinuate, that such a conversion is impossible. I only maintain, that it will be attended with so many difficulties that it must be too rare to be depended upon as a certain consequence.

We might now appeal to statesmen and legislators, who know the political importance of religious restraints, whether it be safe to run such a risk of national infidelity. Our laws are founded on, or at least adapted to, our religion; our habits grow out of both; our well being as a people is intimately bound and connected with the sincerity and universality of our christian profession. I introduce this motive, because, though a free thinker may renounce his God, his creed obliges him to call himself a patriot, and consequently he must affect to love his country. It is acknowledged too, that in his individual capacity no husband desires to have his wife destitute of principle, nor his daughters atheists; however convenient it may be to his passions, that other women should not be influenced by those restrictions.

We may safely lay it down as a position, that *religion must be taught in youth*, lest it should not be taught at all, or lest we should see the doughty polemic supersede devotion, humility, and charity; the times also require that it should be *thoroughly* taught. Let the young christian be well versed in the principles of her faith, and the ground on which it stands; she will often hear those principles ridiculed, and she will see that foundation sapped. You will not accuse me of contradicting my assertions concerning the bad effects of controversial studies; for it is very different, to *learn* doctrines while assisted by the simplicity, humility, and docility of childhood; and to be *reasoned* into their verity, when you

have long been under the influence of confirmed habits and pertinacious opinions. A much wider range of learning must be gone over in the latter case, than when our instructions are limited by the design of enabling our pupils to give "a reason for the hope that is in them." We may understand the Copernican system of the heavens, without being able to refute Tycho Brahe's; and we may adopt Sir Isaac Newton's theory of gravitation, without knowing how to disprove the absurdity of Descartes's vortices. Blind belief and prescriptive acquiescence have been exposed to much censure; and yet I trust, in times when religious disputation was unknown, and in situations to which it has never penetrated, many a sincere and humble soul has found them passports to the kingdom of God; and I fear too many individuals have reason to lament their natural tendency to doubt and scrutiny in matters of faith. We, however, admit, that in a general point of view religion has been benefited by the violence of her assailants. Her evidences have been examined; her mysteries cleared of many adventitious circumstances; the errors which had been surreptitiously introduced into her doctrines have been exploded; and her pure precepts have been more clearly enforced, and more beautifully developed.

We now live in times peculiarly dangerous to our faith; yet it seems as if the good providence of God had proportionably multiplied our protections. Hosts of learned, intelligent, and liberal divines, have rallied around the insulted cross of their blessed Master. A woman in humble circumstances, with common abilities and moderate information, may now know more of the religion she professes, than any but the most studious could acquire three hundred years ago. As fanatical zeal has increased in violence, so the pious champions of our faith have roused with fresh vigour to the combat. Pernicious doctrines have been multiplied and familiarized in every form; and the most eminent scholars of the age have also, by popular treatises, and even by addresses to the lowest vulgar, repelled their assailants. The subscribers to a market-town circulating library, when they choose their novel or their play, may truly say, "my bane and antidote are both before me." This is certainly consolatory; but the assurance that our principles will be assaulted, either by books or conversation, renders it no longer safe for us to rest in that limited information which was once thought sufficient for our sex; and since we may become

enlightened christians, without such expence of time, and hazard of our peculiar character, as makes it unadvisable for us to be in general deep readers, it most strictly behoves us to profit by the judicious instructions which have been adapted to our capacity and leisure; not in order that we may become disputants, but to prevent our being "tossed about by every wind of doctrine," or seduced by the evil spirits who are sure to attempt our destruction.

The above observations, my dear Miss M——, lead us to conclude, that we must not rest in what our parents do for us; but that we should in our riper years build upon the foundation which they laid in childhood, in order that our religious knowledge may keep pace with our other improvements. I remarked in my last letter, that the work of education is as endless a labour, so far as relates to accomplishments, as the task of Sisyphus; for grown ladies and gentlemen learning to dance, sing, draw, or even walk, is now too frequent to excite ridicule. But it would be a serious misfortune, if, while the hoary head must bend and the stiffened joints relax, to acquire the graces, and to excel in the amusements of youth, the studies most proper for mature and declining life should be laid aside the moment the girl is emancipated from the sway of the governess. If, to encourage industry and gratify opulence, we permit the order of the seasons to be reversed, and suffer the fruits and flowers of summer to adorn winter, who in return gives his ices to the fervid hours of July, let the products of *reason* be still restrained to their *natural* periods. The aim of modern education is, to make children prematurely wise; but as the forced plant wastes its vigour by its early redundance; so the human mind seldom fulfils that promise of future excellence, which an extraordinary degree of early cultivation deceitfully cherishes; it generally stops at a certain point of improvement; and when we expected our assiduity to produce a genius, the labouring mountain brings forth a coxcomb.\* This must be the consequence of a system, which stops too soon in essentials, and goes on too long in mere appendages; which supposes a girl of fifteen sufficiently taught in what relates to her *eternal* interests; and that a woman of fifty must receive lessons from a fashionable music master, that she may execute a new tune with all its scientific flourishes.

\* See Letter XIII.

Religious instruction, therefore, is of a twofold nature. It should be commenced early, not to instil prejudices, but to guard against prepossessions, and to impress the learner's mind with a proper conviction of the importance of the work. This instruction must be ever suited to the age and understanding of the pupil, both in matter and degree; but when the girl writes woman, let the mother deeply impress upon her daughter's mind this solemn consideration, that as religion discloses to us another world, in which the employment of the blessed, during the circling years of eternity, will be to know and to adore God, if we would enjoy the promised heaven, we must in this life cultivate those habits. For the soul carries with it the propensities that it acquired below; and how shall we become meet for the society of angels, if we neither understand nor delight in their occupations?

The scientific turn which education has lately taken, increases the necessity for early imbuing the juvenile mind with a sense of the divine authority of scripture, and of the insufficiency of human reason to discover the origin and end of man. Women are seldom very deeply versed in any branch of philosophy; and a smattering of science is extremely apt to generate that dependence upon second causes, which is one of the strong holds of deism in weak minds. A half informed young woman, when she has found out the *immediate* reason of vegetation, congelation, or any elementary process, is too apt to think that she has discovered *all*, without extending her views to the great God who at first endowed matter with those wonderful properties which it has possessed for many thousand years, and without whose continual influence every moment in the stupendous machine of nature would become confused and disordered. The danger of the young student's views being thus limited, is increased by the prevalent use of terms, adopted, perhaps, from a persuasion that they are comprehensive, but which an eminent scholar and divine\* proves to be unphilosophical; such as "the power of attraction, the law of vegetation, the order of the seasons," and the like. Inert matter," he observes, "has no power; a law presupposes a law-giver; and a propelling impetus must originate in something foreign to the thing thus overruled." Were we sure that these studies would be extended till mind ob-

\* Dr. Paley. See Natural Theology. Dr. Hey makes the same remark.

tained that link in the chain of science, which proves the necessary dependance of material nature on intellectual existence, we should be certain of gaining a sincere, though late convert to revealed truth; but when we consider how soon the progress of learning will be arrested by the frivolous pursuits or business of life, let us at least take care to run no hazard of unfitting the mind for the reception of what it is most necessary it should know.

I have taken for granted, that the books selected for the purpose of scientific instruction, though they may not, like the labours of the pious Ray, be purposely designed to lead the reader from nature to nature's God, have yet no covert intention of perverting the mind which they pretend to inform. But this is granting more than the generality of elementary tracts on the sciences will warrant: a respectable writer has clearly ascertained, by her highly judicious and salutary (though, to herself, irksome) investigation,\* that a *settled* design to overturn the established faith of this country, and to illumine the minds of the rising generation, are the chief motives of the multifarious books for the education of youth which have deluged the nation. In this design of fitting the rising hope of Britain for a pandemonium of philosophists, no branch of information has been suffered to escape untainted. If the young lady read history, she will find it questioned whether the propagation of the gospel really was accomplished by miracles or by human ingenuity; whether the early christians were martyrs or fanatics; and whether much good has resulted from the extension of the religion of Jesus? In biographical sketches, she will find piety, or at least attachment to any peculiar mode of worship, coupled with a weak understanding, or a contracted heart; while heathen persecutors, deists, and libertines, are adorned with the freshest flowers of eulogy. If she read geography, or travels, she will perceive it doubted, or perhaps denied, that the earth is of the age which the Mosaical chronology affirms, or that the events recorded in holy writ could have taken place in countries which it describes in such different colours from their present state. In natural history, she will find cavils against the miracles recorded in scripture; sarcasms on the histories of Balaam, Jonah, and the prophet of Judah, will be obtruded into descriptions of the natural properties of the ass, the whale, and

\* In the Guardian of Education.

the lion; and perhaps the wonderful preservation of the three pious captives from the rage of Nebuchadnezzar, may *humorously* illustrate the fable of the salamander. In chymistry and mineralogy, she will be informed of the astonishing effects that various combinations of ingredients, mechanical contrivances, and geometrical properties, can produce; and she will be reminded, that when natural preparations can assume appearances seemingly miraculous, we should scruple to call in an invisible agent. Some instances will be given of successful cheats; and it will then be asked, with much apparent modesty, if the flowering rod of Aaron might not have been a slight of hand illusion, and the cures of Christ have proceeded from a degree of medicinal knowledge unknown in a barbarous country? Astronomy also supplies a very powerful engine for shaking the faith of those who expected scripture to develop the secrets of nature, instead of the mysteries of grace; and that the inspired narrator of the creation, should have prematurely disclosed the laws of planetary motion, to gratify the curious; when his mission was intended to preserve, in one nation, a sense of their obligation to worship the "Lord God, who fashioned the earth and all things that are therein," who made the heavens and all their host, who sanctified the closing day of creation, and who suspended the punishment of disobedient man, and again set life and death before him.

When a young woman has been duly informed that scripture narration is designed to illustrate moral and theological truths, she will not reject it because its language is accommodated to the prevailing ideas of the times in which it was written. She well knows, that "the pillars of the round world," must be metaphorically understood, and that the rotation of the sun round the earth is a condescension to popular opinion. She will confess that the existence of deceit is no argument against the reality of truth; and she will make herself mistress of the different criteria by which true and false miracles are distinguished. She will see, that natural properties are no restraint on the possible interposition of the supernatural Power who bestowed them; and that if the Deity visibly interposes, he must act by miracle. She will allow, that a difference in government and cultivation will change the natural aspect of countries; and she will pay little respect to the pretended data of the high antiquity of the earth, when she perceives that the alledged facts are controverted, and that no two geologists draw the same infer-



ences from the same analysis. Lastly, she will not feel her faith shaken by the partial observations of infidel historians, or sceptical biographers; but will pity the situation of those who are resolutely bent to misstate and mislead. Their futile spleen will only serve to confirm her faith; for she must recollect her Lord's prediction, "that the world would say all manner of evil, *falsely*, of his disciples, for his name's sake."

After this certainly *faint* specimen of the liberal care with which our pretended perfectionists guard the ductile mind of youth from *prejudices* and *misconception*, will they have the effrontery to complain of unfair prepossession, if we endeavour to preoccupy the vacant foil? Had these or similar objections to the verity of Scripture any weight, had they never been refuted, or, like the dispossessed demoniacs, been even forced to bear testimony to the God whom they resisted, we might for a moment hesitate. But every objection which deists now raise against the gospel has been refuted numberless times. Our modern unbelievers must feel the pangs of wounded pride, at knowing that they can only throw the broken lances of vanquished cavillers against the invulnerable bulwark of religion. These pigmy opponents have so often been foiled in the field of controversy, that nothing is left them but to lurk in bye paths, with the cowardly hope of ensnaring silly women, and kidnapping unsuspecting children, under the common pretence of extraordinary kindness. We have historical testimony, that the nefarious Illuminati gave it in charge to their propagandists, to use every possible method to make *female converts*; well knowing that, though our dispositions and propensities did not so strongly stimulate us to throw off moral restrictions as the other sex, our minds were less enabled by nature and education to resist these sophists, who never could endure the Ithuriel spear of learning and deep investigation.

Religious knowledge will enable us to avoid this snare; and from my zeal to recommend this defensive armour to the youth of both sexes, I have been accused of enforcing theological erudition at the expense of religious practice. I can only say, that such was not my design; the most guarded language, however, cannot prevent *intentional* misconstruction. Many of our first divines, in the arguments which they oppose to the opinions of certain schismatics, affirm, that though our Lord improved morality to its highest possible perfection, by removing it from external behaviour to

the heart, his design, in coming into the world, was *not* to teach a pure system of morality, though this system is one of the consequences appertaining to his mission. They extend this observation to the Mosaical law, which they affirm was built upon, or rather took for granted, those notices of right and wrong, of the immortality of the soul, and the being of a God, which are often called natural religion; but which ought to be referred to the traditionary remains of that first revelation which God made to Adam in Paradise. When morality is taught upon merely worldly motives, however refined and exalted by light derived from the gospel dispensation, it is confined to exterior deportment; let us superadd the inducements which christianity presents, and it then becomes that perfection of virtue to which we are all commanded to aspire; being assured, that though it is unattainable as a whole, yet if pursued with singleness of heart, and with a sincere desire of progressive improvement, the weakness of our nature will be pardoned by a God who knows our infirmities, in consideration of the all sufficient merit of a sacrifice ordained by himself, to prove his abhorrence of sin, and his mercy to repentant offenders.

The foundations on which christianity is built, and its superiority to mere moral obligations, should be understood by every christian; but to separate faith from morals is the work of an enemy. It is only "through faith, working by love," that we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. The degree of our respective duties, of knowing and acting, depends upon our opportunity of exerting either faculty. Those whose limited understandings, or humble stations, prevent them from acquiring much information, may be truly sincere in the practice of christian virtue; but where abilities are granted, and leisure allowed, a more ample stock of christian knowledge is indispensable; and for this reason, because such persons are more exposed to those temptations from which it is the best human preservative. The readers whom I particularly address require this salutary aid. General opinion (except in those points wherein it is partially misled by fashion) prescribes those outward decorums of conduct which are necessary to pass well in the world; but those who are thus circumstanced require to be taught, that, unless they found this decorum on inward purity of heart, and a desire of obeying their Maker, bearing the name of Christ will not determine them truly to belong to the fold of which he is the appointed Shepherd.

Those who, we must acknowledge, appear to be merely nominal christians, are generally thus unfortunate from ignorance or inconsideration. Some few, indeed, are prejudiced by infidelity; but I hope, in this country, this description is not numerous. The generality of people are too much engaged by pleasure, or business, to pay due attention to the important distinctions which are implied in the name they bear; and many are persuaded, that if they lead regular lives, pay every one his due, and hurt no one, they need not inquire any further. On the other hand, as every virtue is bounded by two opposite vices, so true knowledge lies in a happy medium between gross ignorance and inquisitive research, and should be as much proportioned to the capacity and station of the incipient, as liberality should be adapted to the fortune of the giver. A thirst for what is called religious edification has transformed many an industrious simple mechanic into a vagabond fanatic, empty of every valuable quality suited to his rank and education, but swollen by conceit and spiritual pride into a false belief of supernatural endowments. A desire to penetrate into inscrutable mysteries has overset many a weak understanding, and perverted many an excellent housewife into the useless character of an enthusiastical devotee. These misfortunes, however, generally proceed from the *quality*, not the *quantity*, of knowledge which is imbibed. Here, as in the groves of Paradise, the tree produces both good and evil; and it unfortunately happens, that what is most suitable to our palates is often most pernicious to our constitutions. By some unaccountable propensity, weak minds are always most anxious to dive into unfathomable depths; their very incapacity to acquire what others know, stimulates their eagerness to discover what cannot be known.

As right principles are the best human means of procuring right conduct, I would earnestly solicit the young student to consult such guides,\* as will assist her in founding

\* Could the recommendation of an obscure partially informed woman add celebrity to the names of Gilbert, West, Sherlock, Paley, Hey, and Bryant, she would mention these authors as instances of that close investigation, and full view of the subjects on which they treat, which conveys perspicuous information to the mind of the reader. The name of Dr. Rogers may be added to the list, not only on account of his sermons, but of his valuable tract on the visible and invisible church of Christ; in which he enforces a duty now too much disregarded, I mean submission to our ecclesiastical superiors, in a clear and convincing manner.

her faith, rather on the convictions of her understanding, than on the impulses of fancy, or the warmth of devotional feeling; though this last will be superadded, in proportion as the certainty of faith increases, and as habit confirms piety. I would peculiarly recommend to my own sex such writers as aim at communicating *clear* ideas. When our understanding is thoroughly informed by these, we may with more safety consult florid and rhetorical authors, if our relish for their manner have not been abated by a more improving course of study. We are charged with being “of imagination all compact;” and one reason that is suggested against the expediency of our becoming deep theological readers, is our natural turn to enthusiasm. As the enthusiast is generally unhappy in herself, and certainly very unamiable to others, the utmost care should be taken to avoid this dangerous substitute for true piety; by not suffering *fancy* to interfere in so momentous a point, as that of *examining our title to salvation*. That modesty of knowledge, which is alike anxious to avoid being ignorant of what it ought to know, and of penetrating into “those secret things which belong to the Most High,” should be especially recommended to women. This would be our best preservative against the fallacious representations of a party, who now dreadfully disturb the peace of the church, and (I hope *undefignedly*) assault the foundation of the edifice which they affect to reverence. By recommending clear distinct ideas to the young members of our establishment, I also wish to discredit the assertions of another set of enemies to our Sion, who represent our creeds as formed on confused notions, and blind credulity; and our hierarchy, as one of the impositions which priest craft and spiritual ambition forced upon the servile mind of half awakened ignorance.

It is evident, however, that while we are encompassed by this wall of flesh, our perception of spiritual objects must be faint and indistinct. Of the personality and ubiquity of the Deity, for instance, the most learned men confess that no distinct notion can be formed. One of the reasons given by our philosophistical perfectionists, why children should not know that there is a God, proceeds from the impossibility of their forming just notions of Him. This overstrained respect is affected; for the most exalted human intellect labours under the same defect. May we not inquire, in what respect the doctrine of the unity of the triune Godhead is

less commensurate to the capacity of his finite creatures, than that God exists through all time and space ?

“Thus far shalt thou go and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,” said the creative Word, when the foaming ocean first poured into its prepared abyfs. The limits of human knowledge, though various as our understandings, have a similar curb affixed, beyond which they cannot pass. The first business, therefore, of tuition is, to draw this boundary line, and to inform the pupil what learning and attention can do, and what it must leave undone ; how far reason may developé mystery, and where she must bow her head, and confess her human fallibility. When an ambassador assures us that he comes from heaven, we may call upon reason to inquire into the nature of his message, and the validity of his credentials. When he preaches “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” she must confess that he speaks the language of his native country ; and when he appeals to miracle and prophecy, she allows that, according to her own preconceived ideas, the sovereign who employs him would thus accredit his messenger. He may, indeed, discover something of the *internal* affairs of those regions different from what reason imagined was the case ; and he may propose such *terms* of peace as she did not expect or enjoin ; such *confirmatory* ceremonies as she did not conceive to be absolutely necessary. If the ambassador only came from an unknown country, he might justly answer the inquiries of reason, by saying, “Such are “the customs of the nation to which I belong. With us, “they are of great utility ; though, as they are founded on “usages materially different from yours, I cannot fully explain them to you.” But if he be also the agent of our lawful king, against whom we have rebelled, and with whom we seek reconciliation, unless reason exceed her trust she can only ascertain the absolute verity of the envoy, and advise us to accept the offered mercy on the terms proposed. These may seem to us not so honourable to the nature of our prince, as some that we could have suggested ; but as we have never seen him, and do not know the precise rules of his internal government, our own presumption, in judging when we have not sufficient ground to form an opinion, deserves the severest censure. All that we know of him indeed, either by his visible acts, or by the discoveries made by his ambassador, bespeaks him holy, wise, just, and merciful ; but as we cannot discover how these attributes blend

with each other, so that none should preponderate, we are incapacitated from prescribing bounds to any of them. It cannot be said, that this ambassador may have misrepresented his master; for he has silenced this objection, by shewing what we all know to be the royal signet; a visible unequivocal interruption of the course of nature; which is, unquestionably, the method by which God would speak to man.

Reason, if faithful to her office, will also acknowledge, that a direct revelation is such a solemn interposition of Heaven, as cannot be lightly and casually afforded. It must not only be absolutely necessary to those to whom it is made; but it must discover truths which could not otherwise be known.\* Had the law and the gospel taught us nothing but what human reason could have discovered, we must then have allowed that sceptics are right in affirming that belief in revelation supposes a needless interposition of the Almighty. Every mysterious doctrine that scripture contains is in fact a confirmation of its authenticity. We shall hereafter inquire, whether, by its analogy to the incomprehensible parts of visible nature, we may not further ascertain, that the God whom we christians worship is most truly the Creator and Governor of the world; or, to speak more fully, that

\* The necessity of a divine revelation may be gathered from what the celebrated deistical writer, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, says of what he calls five short notices imprinted by God on the minds of all men. 1st, That there is one supreme God. 2dly, That he is chiefly to be worshipped. 3dly, That piety and virtue are the principal parts of his worship. 4thly, That we must repent of our sins; and if we do, God will pardon them. 5thly, That there are rewards for good, and punishments for bad men, in a future state. Our divines, in answer to these allegations against the necessity of revelation, justly observe, that we must not judge of natural religion, or deism, from what we *now* know, since even those who reject christianity partake of the light that it has diffused; but from what the world was previous to the coming of Christ. They propose the learned age of Augustus as a fair specimen. The first and second notices were then disregarded; for no nation, but the Jews, acknowledged or worshipped one supreme God. The most enlightened men of that period sacrificed to sensual and numerous deities. Nor would the third be more regarded; for the mode of propitiating false gods was by absurd and brutish rites. In respect to the fourth notice, the heathens reproached the christians for declaring that God would pardon sinners; and as to the 5th, it was hoped by some sects of philosophers, denied by others, and doubted by all. See Hey's Lectures, vol. i. p. 342.

The mere belief of the immortality of the soul, is very different from a persuasion that this future state will be retributive. Modern heathens proceed no further than, in the words of Pope, to expect "an equal heaven, in which their faithful dog will bear them company."

the system of the universe, the operations of Providence, and the covenant of grace, evince unity of design, and proceed upon the same fundamental principles.

The first duty of reason, therefore, is, to examine the evidences and credibility of christianity, considered as a whole; her next care should be, to determine to which of its various sects and denominations it is most expedient to belong. Solitary worship is always comfortless; and opinions insulated from all others are sure to run into some wild extreme; beside, it is most certain, that the promises of supernatural assistance, which Christ made to his followers, were given to that collective body, or (to refer to our ecclesiastical affirmation of faith) to “that congregation of faithful men, where “the true word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered,” which we call a church. By thus consecrating community to the purpose of sanctity, the author of our religion has not departed from the method which he follows in the ordinary providential government of the world; where we see good of various kinds, comfort, security, strength, pleasure, wealth, and prosperity, all flowing from men combining together; and misery, weakness, and poverty, ensuing from their acting separately or in opposition to each other. That it was the design of our blessed Lord, that all his followers should be knit together in the closest bond of concord and amity, cannot be doubted by any who carefully examine the sacred records of his life and conversation. I will point out one instance, the solemn commendatory prayer preserved in the seventeenth chapter of St. John’s gospel, which is particularly in point. Remember, Christ offered it not only for his immediate apostles, but “for all who should, through their preaching, believe in him in all the world;” and that it was an act immediately preceding his bitter passion. How urgent is the motive, how impressive are the requests that are contained in these awful words, “That they also may be one, even as thou, Father, “art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Are they indeed sincere, who attempt to diffuse the light of the gospel among heathen nations, and connect their missionary zeal with restless solicitude to increase the schisms and dissentions, which our Lord deprecates, as preventives of the universal reception of his faith? I fear, my dear Miss M——, the world will never know that *Jesus was sent by God*, while regard for truth is sacrificed to a blind zeal for mastery, and

the very name of *evangelical* is assumed as a mark of distinctive preeminence, and a taunting proverb of reproach.

The texts of scripture that enjoin this duty of unity and christian communion, are so numerous in the gospels, the acts, the epistles, and even in the revelations, that it is difficult to imagine how this vast body of evidence can be evaded, or rather braved. The primitive church acted upon this principle; and, with equal firmness, dealt her ecclesiastical censures on all who disturbed the peace of the community with new and strange doctrines, or disgraced it by their scandalous lives. Different formularies were indeed adopted in national, and even in provincial churches; but "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism," were universally preserved. Among the numerous dispersed and persecuted members of our holy religion, the leading principles of all churches were the same; the members of all joined in communion. The obligation to this unity and fellowship appeared so strong to the founders of the Reformation, that it was with the utmost reluctance, and in consequence not only of the scandalous corruptions, but the invincible obstinacy of the church of Rome, that they at length ventured to apply to themselves the angelic summons recorded in the apocalypse, and esteemed it to be their duty to "come out of the corrupted Babylon." Many wise and temperate men have *lamented* while they *acknowledged* the necessity for this secession, which doubtless opened the door to numerous dissenters, who have pleaded for a license and freedom of choosing, to which that precedent gives no countenance. The hazardous expedient of separation should never be resorted to, unless the seceders can prove, that the church, from which they disjoin themselves, has, like that of "Rome, erred not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith."

It cannot be denied, that even in the age of the apostles, and especially from the period when christianity received the sanction of the civil power, heresies, schisms, and furious disputes, have disturbed the peace of the christian world. Part of these troubles must doubtless be ascribed to the unremitting zeal with which the arch apostate (figuratively styled the dragon) opposes the mystical spouse of God. She is sometimes driven into the wilderness, harassed by persecution, and denied repose. At other times, she is attempted to be lulled by a fatal security into that lukewarmness and indifference, which is still more dangerous to her well being. Her afflictions are often from without, but yet more fre-



quently from false brethren. That the Almighty *suffers* these trials of his people as a community, on the same principles as he *permits* individual correction, was ever acknowledged; but to affirm, that he *made men to differ* in religious matters, is quite a modern discovery. He suffers evil, but he cannot be said to be the original author of it. He permits calamity; this world could not else be a probationary state; nor could virtue be perfected without suffering. Patience is prescribed as the softener of pain; pain is necessary to prepare us to resign this too much valued life; but will any one thence assert, that the Almighty made his creatures on purpose to suffer? \* The deist, who believes the Creator of the world to be a God of order and unity, would blush to assert, that physical and moral confusion and discord, were parts of his design. The christian, who traces the attributes of the author of nature through the course of two successive revelations, must be absurdly impious, if he seriously affirm, that God "made men to differ on such an important point as religious belief, on which he enjoined unity by precept, and enforced it by miracle."

"It must needs be that offences will come," said the Saviour of the world. It is necessary to the constitution of a probationary state, that there should be trials to afflict and punish vice, and to purify and exercise virtue. "But," he continues, "woe to that man by whom such offence cometh." It was determined by the foreknowledge and wisdom of God, before the foundation of the world, that, in the fulness of time, Christ should be offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; but woe to the treacherous, avaricious Judas, who betrayed his meek and holy master! All ages and nations of the christian world have joined in execrating the perfidious disciple, who was the immediate means of binding his Lord upon the cross, at the same time that they have clung to the benefits of the atonement. Woe also to him who, through the pride of reason, spiritual self-sufficiency, contempt of subordination, or ambition of preeminence, unnecessarily dissents from the church of Christ, or attempts to shake the faith of others, and to alienate their obedience! His vanity may, indeed, be gratified by the applauses of those who adopt his tenets; but what recompense can he make for giving occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme; or how can he heal those breaches which reli-

\* See Natural Theology, on the Goodness of the Deity.

gious disputation always makes in christian charity? If he thus offend lightly and unadvisedly, or if, from sinister views, he raise his disorganizing voice against the supplications of his dying Lord, the commands of the apostles, and the usage of the primitive christians, how fearful must be his guilt! He will, perhaps, plead some inward illuminations, some sensible and especial call of the Spirit of God; as we know, however, that the signs of an apostle have always accompanied any peculiar or unusual call to the ministry, we may well demand such an unequivocal proof of extraordinary unction from these self-commissioned teachers of the secret things of God. But if, recollecting the power which enthusiasm always assumes over weak, ill regulated, or ill informed minds, we hope that folly may excuse the faults of many; let us ourselves beware of leaving the true fold, to hearken to irregular or unskilful shepherds. Of their inward illuminations, assurances, and experiences, we can form no notion, and may only hope that they seem so far convincing to their bewildered minds, as to excuse them on the score of sincere ignorance; but their actions prove them to be amenable to the church of God, whose peace they disturb by verbose declamations, and contumacious disputes, concerning matters, either in themselves unimportant, or appertaining to those councils of God into which we dare not pretend to penetrate. It is considered as a fundamental principle in politics, that it is better to endure a small evil, than to attempt to remove it with hazard of interrupting the public peace; the church militant is a society of human beings, and, as such, fallible; she must, therefore, be governed by coercive laws, similar to those which regulate other communities; and provided her errors do not affect important points of faith, which might justify her members in renouncing their allegiance, she may claim their obedience in things indifferent, even on the sole ground of her own authority, without positive warranty of scripture. If scruples of conscience are really felt, on account of some of her institutions, a candid discovery of them to some judicious and religious friend, (let us say, to the parochial minister,) might enlighten the dubious judgment, and confirm the wavering mind. If after these measures are taken, apprehensions still remain, we must hope that, in such a case, dissent is not sinful. But let it be remembered, that an ingenuous and sincere mind is more apt to veil its discrepance in modest silence, and to *lament* it as a misfortune, than by *blazoning* its

nonconformity to the world, to communicate its scruples to others, and thus to make a merit of disobedience. When converts to any new opinions accompany this change by any marks of hostility to the party which they have deserted, somewhat very different from gospel sincerity, it is to be feared, lurks in their ostensibly regenerated hearts.

You will ask me, if I have not acknowledged that good has resulted to the church from these internal struggles? Most unquestionably, the assailing weapons of false brethren have, like the censers of Korah and his rebellious partisans, been converted into "broad plates for a covering for the altar." But though thus appropriated by that Providence who brings good out of evil, they were still "the censers of sinners against their own souls."\* That the defence and security of the church should grow out of the means that were concerted for her destruction, is analogous to the sensible operations of nature. Those violent gusts of wind, which wreck our stately vessels, and cover the earth with the ruins of her proudest structures, or fairest products, are deemed salubrious to the health of its inhabitants, by scattering the conglomerated seeds of pestilence, and restoring the vital purity of the atmosphere; yet notwithstanding this happy effect, the tempest is still a fore calamity. Why natural evil should subsist, has perplexed the minds of many philosophers; and perhaps the best answer that has been given is, that the scale of being is so extended, and its ramifications (especially if we extend our views to other worlds, and other orders of rational and dependant beings) are so complicated, that a great general advantage necessarily involves a particular calamity;† which calamity, in a probationary state of existence, is no impeachment of the justice of God. How moral evil came into this world, we learn from Holy Scripture; and when the Almighty makes good to issue from it, he gives, I may say, a visible proof, not only that he is "Lord of the Evil One," but that he does not "willingly afflict the children of men." The advantage, therefore, which has resulted to the church, from being thus continually forced to defend and examine her doctrines, cannot be urged in proof that God made men to differ in religion; or that it is his pleasure there should be a diversity

\* See Numbers, 16th chap. verse 38.

† This is the opinion of Dr. Paley.

of worship among christians. He enjoins concord and unity. That he suffers men to disobey this command, is no more a proof that it did not proceed from him, than that the existence of murder, adultery, and theft, *rescind* the obligation and *disannul* the authority of the commandments.

When I speak of the church in general, I keep our nineteenth article in my eye. This church, we are informed, is scattered over all the christian world; various modes of worship, and particular tenets, belong to its disjointed parts; yet I trust, in spite of the efforts of ill disposed men, some bond of union, some token of intercommunity, still subsists between its members; sufficient to allow us to speak of it as a whole, though certainly not as that closely cemented, well compacted building which its blessed Founder and his apostles laboured to form; and in point of purity, as well as doctrine, very different from that glorious church, which (in the language of eastern metaphor) is denominated the Spouse of the Lamb, and is to be presented to her Lord without spot or wrinkle, holy, undefiled, and glorious in majesty and beauty; while myriads of myriads join in singing one spousal song. Such is the promised state of the triumphal church: if we would partake of it, we must adhere to her during her militant probation; and, in the spirit of the royal psalmist, “we shall be solicitous to heal her breaches;” we “shall rejoice in her prosperity; and because of the house of the Lord our God, we shall seek to do her good.”

The church of England is that branch of the universal church, under whose shadow we are invited to take shelter. However lightly it may be esteemed by various fanatics who have sprouted forth under its mild protection, it is esteemed, by foreign protestants, as the preeminent sanctuary of the reformed religion. I will refer you to the decision of an eminent divine, who was highly celebrated all over the Continent for his learning and moderation, and was himself a member of the Presbyterian ministry. The name of Le Clerc sanctions his opinions with theological readers. Speaking of episcopacy, he observes, “I have always professed to believe, that episcopacy is of *apostolical* institution, and consequently very good and very lawful; that man has no right to change it in any place, unless it was impossible otherwise to reform the abuses that crept into christianity; that it was justly preserved in England, where the reformation was practicable without altering it; and that therefore the protestants in England, and other places where

“ there are bishops, do *very wrong* to separate from that discipline ; that they would do still worse in attempting to destroy it, in order to set up presbytery, fanaticism, and anarchy. Things ought not to be turned into a chaos, nor people seen every where without a call, and without learning, pretending to inspiration. Nothing is more proper to prevent them than the episcopal discipline, as by law established in England ; especially when those who preside in church government are persons of penetration, sobriety, and discretion.” He afterwards acknowledges that it has been so clearly proved, that the truth of it cannot be denied, that Christ and his apostles instituted the episcopal form of government ; and that the church never had any other for one thousand five hundred years, from our Saviour’s days downward.\*

The testimony of an adversary has great weight. From motives of political expediency, Mr. Le Clerc exercised the functions of a minister in a society of christians who had rejected the episcopal form which he so highly commends.

Notwithstanding the grateful obligations which we owe to the fathers of the Reformation, we cannot deny that they partook of the passions and infirmities of human nature. The cruel and perfidious treatment which they had experienced from the Romish church stimulated the protestants to an unwarrantable degree of fury, hatred, and revenge. The aim of many of these seems to have been, to make the separation and distinction between themselves and the apocalyptical Babylon as marked as possible. Thus, instead of taking the scriptures for their guide, and the primitive churches for their model, it was sufficient for them to reject many ancient and beneficial customs, merely because they had been adopted by their opponents, whose touch was esteemed to be contamination. Protestantism was not without severe provocations in England, as the reigns of Henry the VIIIth and Mary the Ist amply testify ; but whether it was owing to the more enlightened sobriety of the nation, or, as I believe, to the good providence of God, who at that time enlightened our Sion with luminaries of surprising splendour, the founders of our church, as well as its first establishment under King Edward the VIth, as at its reedification under Queen Elizabeth, were guided by the most admirable moderation. Nothing was rejected merely because it was the

\* Biblioth. tom. ix. page 159.

usage of popery, unless it was also tainted with the errors of that ambitious hierarchy. Nothing new was adopted, unless the utter unsuitness of former customs rendered the introduction of novelty unavoidable. Hence we retain not only the constitution of the primitive church, but also many of its usages. Nay more, our liturgy was *compiled*, rather than composed; with a respectful reference to venerable rituals, their doxologies and creeds were adopted; several prayers of our service were entirely translated from the formularies of early times, or from the writings of the fathers; and in others the sense has been condensed, and suited to our customs, modes of thinking, and the alteration of manners and situation.

Nor is it merely on account of her constitution, and liturgical service, that the church of England claims such high consideration; the same wise moderation which determined her to preserve what was valuable and important in these points, kept her also in a happy medium between those opposite errors which at that time distracted the peace of the world, and which, I grieve to say, still subsist. Perhaps, our best way of gaining a clear notion of the doctrines of our national church will be, to examine the notions of those who dissent from her; and though the antipodes are not wider\* from each other, and consequently though our church seems more likely to accord with either, than for them to form an agreement; such is the lamentable animosity with which they pursue her, that they almost seem to unite their discordant notions in order to procure her downfall. Is not this coalition a testimony that her existence is the firmest bulwark against the ambition of either party? Unless they are mutually insincere in their own religious professions, it is evident that they believe they would mutually prove but weak opponents to each other, supposing this formidable rival

\* Nothing, certainly, can be more pointedly opposite, than the distinguishing tenets of the Socinians and those of the strict Calvinists. The one holds Christ to have done all for our salvation, by his one oblation of himself; the other maintains, that such oblation never was offered. One affirms, that we are mere machines in the hands of God; the other, that moral virtue entitles us to reward, &c. Yet in numberless periodical publications, professedly hostile to our church, we may trace a suspicious forbearance, a tacit agreement, if not an actual approbation, of works of either of the above description, if hostile to the establishment; which hostility appears to be the rallying point of either party. Does this verisimilitude consist with that singleness of heart which alone can justify dissent?

could be overthrown. This is a strong argument, to persuade every lover of temperate opinions to support what is such an object of terror to those of violent and extreme notions.

But before we proceed to the proposed investigation, I will mention one other claim which the national church has to our obedience. It is the established form of worship. I do not propose to found spiritual belief on political expediency; but I assert, that the religion of our country has a prior right to our attention, so far as to induce us to give it a serious investigation; and if her doctrines are found to be evangelical, and her usages, as far as change of manners will allow, apostolical; if in that human mixture which must always be admitted into ecclesiastical institutions, there be nothing contrary to scripture; if she affect no wanton exercise of authority, and assume no high pretensions to infallibility, nor absolute control over the consciences of men; it seems as if no reason can be urged for renouncing her communion, except it be the strong predilection which arises from our having been educated in some other religious society. Had we only nonconformists of this latter description to lament, the aspect of the present times would not be so alarming to the friends of our venerable establishment, because such opponents are the most moderate, steady, and respectable; but the dreadful opinions that arise out of the abuse of religious toleration, namely, that in this land of liberty every one has a right to choose his religion, gains ground; and the pride of exercising a supposed privilege, joined to the desire of being distinguished by superior intelligence and discrimination, and, I fear I must add, the arts and allurements of the enemies of all religion, seduce many unstable minds, especially in the lower ranks of life; who renounce the communion of the church from which they have received baptism; with the same inconsideration and indifference as they assimilate their garments to the prevailing fashion.\*

\* That schism is not considered as a light and trivial offence by the regular ministers of the presbyterian form of worship, may be perceived in the following extract from the works of an eminent Scotch divine, who indeed does but echo the sentiments of all well constituted churches ancient and modern, not excepting those founded by Calvin, or his *immediate* disciples. Dr. Hill, in his *Theological Institutes*, observes, "The name of schism, therefore, is reserved for separation proceeding upon some frivolous reason, which is often merely a pretext for gratifying the passions of ambition, avarice, resentment, and envy. When attachments to par-

As women are most disposed to think seriously, and to be sincere in their religious professions, hence arises the necessity of their not only being well instructed in the general outline of christianity, but also that they should know the peculiar tenets of the church to which they belong, and the guilt of unnecessary separation from her; which church, as far as relates to my readers, I suppose to be that by law established. You, my dear young friend, have had the happiness of improving the elementary knowledge which you early imbibed of this, as far as human fallibility will admit, excellently well constituted society, into the solid preference which results from having investigated the propriety of its institutions and doctrines. Yet, as I know that your attention has been much engrossed by your favourite study of elegant literature, it is probable you may not have attended to a very sinister attempt to overturn our church, which has been involved in a pretended affection to her original in-

“ ticular teachers form christians into parties, they fall under the censure  
 “ which Paul addressed to the Corinthians, “ I hear that there are con-  
 “ tentions and schisms among you. Every one of you saith, ‘ I am of  
 “ Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?’  
 “ When the separation proceeds from the idea of forming a more perfect  
 “ establishment, it is seldom duly considered that no human institution can  
 “ be faultless, and that the evils which necessarily arise from schism far  
 “ counterbalance any advantages which may be expected from improve-  
 “ ments not essential to the constitution of the church. When christians  
 “ separate, because the discipline of the church does not appear to them  
 “ sufficiently strict, they act as if the comfort and benefits derived from  
 “ the ordinances of religion depended upon the character of those who  
 “ partake with us; or as if the purity which the anabaptists require in  
 “ the church of Christ could be attained on this side the grave. And  
 “ when their only complaint is with some regulations of the church con-  
 “ cerning matters acknowledged to be in themselves indifferent, they for-  
 “ get that it is impossible to frame any regulations of such matters which  
 “ will meet the prejudices and opinions of all; that obedience to compe-  
 “ tent authority enjoining what is not unlawful for the sake of order,  
 “ does not imply a sacrifice of christian liberty; and that the new con-  
 “ gregation cannot exist, and attain the purposes of its institution, with-  
 “ out some exercise of the same authority.

“ Whatever be the nature of the frivolous or corrupt motives which  
 “ give to separation the character of schism, the conduct of all who attain  
 “ the name of schismatics is blameworthy. It does not correspond to the  
 “ description of the catholic church, which is said in scripture to be ‘ one  
 “ body, in which there ought to be no schism;’ it is contrary to the ex-  
 “ hortations and entreaties of the apostles, recommending unity and peace;  
 “ and in all ages it has appeared to the church deserving of the same re-  
 “ prehension and censure which the apostles directed against a similar  
 “ spirit in their days.” A modern author calls schism ‘ a bugbear, that  
 “ formerly tormented weak consciences, but now completely exploded like  
 “ witchcraft and magic.’



stitutions, and zeal against a supposed perversion of what, it is asserted, were her fundamental doctrines. This controversy is so extraordinary and recent, that I conceive I shall be of some service to my readers, by enlarging upon and refuting an ill founded charge.

The party which thus calumniates our existing church recommends itself to the favour of its readers by arrogating the title of evangelical christians. An ephemeral publication is circulated, addressed to our sex *exclusively*, in which the names of about one hundred and fifty chapels, churches, and meetinghouses, are enumerated, where the ministers whose names are subjoined are said to *preach the gospel*. The inference fairly is, that the gospel can only be heard in those specified places. The most learned, impressive, enlightened, and, I may add, valuable clergy of the establishment are not in this number; it is therefore obliquely denied that the gospel is preached by them.

If we ask these pretenders to superior light what their gospel is, they will perhaps answer in the language of a charming poet and worthy man, whose mind was unhappily warped by this prejudice, "It is the divinity of the glorious reformation; I mean in contradiction to armenianism, and all the isms that ever were broached in this world of error and ignorance. The divinity of the reformation is called calvinism, but injuriously; it has been that of the church of Christ in all ages. It is the divinity of Paul, and of Paul's master, who appeared to him in his way to Damascus."\* According to this account, Luther, Melancthon, Erasmus, and Cranmer, were *not* reformers.

\* See Mr. Cowper's Life, vol. i. page 374. Does the letter from which this extract is taken deserve praise, either for liberal ideas, enlarged information, or correct expression? When were the peculiar doctrines of Calvin the religion of the church, unless we bound the church to his *immediate partisans*? and to his *singular* tenets only can the term Calvinism be justly applied. Calvin indeed pretended to shield them behind some misconstrued texts in St. Paul's epistles; but where are they taught by Paul's master? Surely not when he met him in the road to Damascus; for if this great apostle was predestinated to be saved, that astonishing vision was unnecessary. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" is not a favourable text for those who hold unconditional election, and the impeccability of the elect. I should conceive that Mr. Cowper had only read one side of the controversy between the Arminians and Calvinists; and, like many others, confounded Calvin's very dangerous and distinguishing tenets, with those which he held in common with the other reformers.

If we again inquire what are the tenets of Calvin, they will answer (at least, they thus answer in books held out to ensnare the multitude,) they are the doctrine of original sin, of the benefit and necessity of the atonement, of the Trinity, and of the assistances of the Holy Spirit. But these are the acknowledged doctrines of the church of England, for which she has been long assailed by her other opponents, who, with a degree of unfounded self-flattery similar to the evangelical, call themselves unitarian christians; forgetting that the first article of our church is a solemn profession of her belief in *one* God. But to return: to discover the reason for the controversy that we are now considering, we must search deeper, and we shall then find that, beside the particulars in which Calvin joined other protestants, the sombrous hue of his imagination, and his impatience of superiority, induced him to adopt singularities in doctrine and discipline. In the former, by reviving the exploded notions of the necessitarians; and in the latter, by establishing the presbyterian form of church government, which, according to the concession of Mr. Le Clerc, was an anomaly in the christian church. As the church of England preserved that form of ecclesiastical government which had been universal for fifteen hundred years, we might, without going further, infer that she did not subscribe to the still more reprehensible parts of a system that has caused such a long, and, it is to be feared, incurable schism among the reformed churches. But these evangelical teachers affirm that she did; and it is these very doctrines, which in their opinion constitute that purity of the gospel, and those original principles of our church, which they are anxious to restore.

To repel this charge, not only from our present hierarchy, but from its venerable founders, many learned divines have stood forward, and manfully encountered a torrent of, not only professional but personal obloquy. In this contest, the names of Kipling, Daubeny, and Pearson, are especially celebrated. The first gentleman, in a small but irresistible pamphlet, plainly shows, by extracts from Calvin's works, what these much debated doctrines really are. A translation is subjoined,\* which enables even the unlearned reader to

\* They are given in Latin, with references to the works from which they are taken. Many evasory replies have been made to this pamphlet; but, the author believes, no clear refutation.

determine how far they are supported by the authority of scripture, or corroborated by the public acts of our church. I hope the reverend author will pardon me, if, from a wish to introduce his valuable remarks to those to whom they may prove impenetrably defensive armour against the assaults of very vigilant adversaries, I take the liberty of making a large extract from this work. The knowledge of what strict calvinism really is, must precede our attempt to justify our church from the charge of having apostatized. The opinions of Calvin, which the Dean of Peterborough has translated, are,

First, "That omnipotent Being, who has existed from all eternity, after he had decreed to create man in his own image, foreordained his fall from original righteousness, by which fall Adam's own nature would be corrupted and depraved; and viewed with the eye of prescience the whole of Adam's offspring as a mass of corruption and perdition.

2dly, "Among the vast multitude of human beings composing this mass of corruption and perdition, Almighty God decreed, before the foundation of the world, to bring some to everlasting salvation, and to damn all the rest eternally. This decree or purpose of God is termed by Calvin *predestination*; one being thereby predestined to everlasting happiness, and others condemned by it to everlasting misery.

3dly, "The objects of this decree are, not collective bodies of men, as Jews, Gentiles, Greeks, Romans; but individuals, as John, Matthew, Thomas, Peter, every one of whose fate after death is fixed by it, before he is born, immutably and everlastingly.

4thly, "Adam, agreeably to the preordination of God (for we are now coming to the execution of his decrees,) fell from innocence; and in consequence of this lapse, the whole of man's nature, as the Deity had foreseen and foreordained, underwent a complete change: it became corrupt, depraved, vicious; and every descendant of Adam, through his first parents' transgression, became a lost, a damned, and accursed creature, and fuel for the flame of divine vengeance.

5thly, "From the birth of Abraham (if not from an earlier period) to this present time, the Deity, agreeably to his eternal purpose and immutable decree, hath constantly been taking, and will continue daily to take, those indi-

“viduals, whom he predestinated before the world began to everlasting salvation, out of this mass of corruption and perdition. All the rest, every one, whom he passeth by, and leaves in this state of corruption and perdition, he reprobates; *i. e.* abandons to wickedness in this life, and will torture eternally in the next. Those, whom he makes choice of, selects, and segregates for salvation, are called *elect*. Those whom he leaves in their original pollution, abandons, and will eternally torment, are called sometimes preterites, but most commonly reprobates. By election and reprobation, is executed the immutable decree of predestination.

6thly, “This discrimination made by the Deity between the elect and the reprobates is arbitrary; in no degree owing to any superior excellence, worth, or merit in the former, either present and actual, or future and foreseen, but wholly and solely to God’s will and pleasure. He extricates the elect from destruction for a demonstration of his goodness. He leaves the reprobates in their original state of perdition for a display of his power and glory.

7thly, “After the elect are put under the custody and protection of Christ Jesus; *do what they will in this life,\** they cannot fail of being finally saved, being under an immutable decree and guarded by Omnipotence. The reprobates, how much *soever they may exert themselves for the purpose,\** cannot attain everlasting salvation, being hindered therefrom, and repelled by Almighty God. As the final salvation of the elect is in no degree doubtful, from their first entrance into this world to their departure out of it, but is all that time fixed and certain; so neither is the eternal damnation of a reprobate ever uncertain during his passage through this world, but is even before he is born unalterably fixed and sure. That he should perish, is the very purpose for which he was created.

8thly, “Neither the best purposes, nor the best endeavors, nor the best acts of an elect, even after regeneration, are in any way preparatory to eternal salvation. On the contrary, as the elect people of God, under the Mosaical dispensation, were commanded to desist from their worldly occupations; so, in respect of all spiritual concerns, the elect under the gospel dispensation are enjoined to bid

\* The advocates of Calvin deny that the words in italics are in his writings. They are however fair inferences from what precedes them.

“ adieu to all wills, works, and endeavours of their own, and  
 “ to keep most religiously a perpetual Sabbath; that there  
 “ may be free and ample scope within them for the opera-  
 “ tions of God’s Spirit.

9thly, “ God, who of his own will and pleasure predesti-  
 “ nated the elect to eternal salvation, *himself prepares* and fits  
 “ them for it. The means used by him for this purpose are  
 “ the preaching of his word, and the operations of his Spi-  
 “ rit; both which together constitute what is denominated  
 “ special calling.

10thly, “ The operations of God’s Spirit are manifold.  
 “ 1st, He forms in the elect a new understanding. 2dly, He  
 “ destroys their natural, and creates in them a new will.  
 “ 3dly, Every propensity they may have, and every effort  
 “ they may make, to do works pleasing and acceptable to  
 “ God, is his. 4thly, He also it is, who begins, continues,  
 “ and finishes every good work done by them, and who  
 “ makes them persevere to the end in well doing. In each  
 “ of these operations, he does not concur or co-operate with  
 “ the elect, but is *sole and entire operator*; and they are his  
 “ instruments or organs.

11thly, “ Though the elect may for a time resist the grace  
 “ of God, they cannot finally overcome it. This grace is  
 “ sovereign and invincible in its operation.

12thly, “ God, who arbitrarily predestinated the repro-  
 “ bates to eternal destruction, himself also prepares and fits  
 “ them for it. He does this by blinding their minds, hard-  
 “ ening their hearts, stupifying their intellects, depriving  
 “ them of the knowledge of himself, withholding from them  
 “ the influence of his Spirit, and delivering them over to  
 “ the devil.

13thly, “ The number of the elect is very small; the re-  
 “ probates, of course, must be numerous.

Lastly, “ The reprobates, those numberless rational beings,  
 “ whom Almighty God hath raised up for the illustration of  
 “ his glory, are hateful to him. He also hates in propor-  
 “ tion to their naughtiness the chosen few.”\*

I think, my dear Miss M——, I see you start at hearing  
 such abominable tenets ascribed to the church of which you  
 are an affectionate member; and perhaps for a moment you  
 may wonder how you overlooked their absurdity and impie-

\* Other reformers held the doctrine of absolute predestination, particu-  
 larly Zuinglius.

ty, when you gave your hearty assent to the compendium of her doctrines. But be not alarmed. I hope these blasphemous dogmas do not constitute the gospel of *all* the one hundred and fifty meetinghouses, chapels, and churches, where *evangelical* ministers deliver their numerous lectures. I am certain, that such are not, nor ever were, the tenets of the church of England. Many who call themselves Calvinists do not go to these lengths; that is to say, though they adopt the name of calvinistic, as a rallying point for their party, they really are not disciples of Calvin; and among his professed followers, it is extremely difficult to persuade them to state their sentiments ingenuously when engaged in controversy; though in their extemporaneous addresses to their flock, they insist upon the absolute depravity and inertness of man; on the superiority of preaching, as a means of grace, over the written word of God or the sacraments; on sensible and immediate conversion, or regeneration; and on the impeccability, or, as I believe it is oftener called, assurance of the elect. On the 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th dogmas, expounded by spiritual pride and enthusiasm, depend all the rhapsodies relating to the pangs of the new birth, wrestling with God, full conviction of future salvation, and entire change of affections and dispositions: this they suppose is contained in the scriptural expression regeneration; which, with them, is to turn from complete wickedness to sinless purity, though the early christians confined this term to the sacrament of baptism, and the inward grace therein conveyed.\* These opinions are founded chiefly on some detached texts of St. Paul's controversial epistles; in which he was debating a subject very different from that of the arbitrary election and reprobation of individual christians, namely, the rejection of the Jewish nation, and the call of the gentile world. By separating these texts from their contexts, and by disclaiming to attend to the general analogy of scripture, a saturnine imagination composed that extraordinary system which Dr. Jortin defines to consist of "human beings without liberty, doctrines without sense, faith without reason, and a God without mercy."

I purpose, in a subsequent letter, to solicit your attention to a few instances of misquotation; to shew that, by the method just alluded to, scripture may be made to prove whatever an artful polemic shall think fit. I must first ref-

\* See Hey's Lectures, vol. iv. page 292.

cue the church of England from the charge thus brought against her ; and, happily, we are enabled to repel it by those articles, and liturgical formularies, which it has been so long the aim of our unitarian adversaries to wrest from us. Had we been destitute of those authoritative standards of consistency and verity, and had we had nothing to appeal to but the writings of individuals, or the loose unweighed prayers and exhortations of private preachers, we could not have stood upon our defence with so much boldness. For, though the main body of our clergy have always resisted Calvin's doctrines, a few have leaned to his errors ; and, it is melancholy to own, men of profound learning as well as piety and goodness. This, however, is only a proof of human infirmity, and no more affects the general agreement of our church, than St. Peter's temporizing opinions, respecting the necessity of Jewish observances, impeached the validity of the sentence pronounced in that case by the apostolical college.

A slight review of our articles and liturgy will be sufficient ; in which I shall closely follow the steps of the venerable guide to whom I have just referred you.\* It must be observed, that our liturgy is addressed to the people, our articles to the learned. In the latter, it was necessary to mention the opinions which were at that time much agitated ; and as it was the wish of the founders of our church to enlarge its pale as widely as possible, many of those articles were couched in terms, to which all who were not absolute bigots might subscribe ; if therefore, in this mitigated and prudential confession of national faith, Calvinism be abjured,† what shall we say of the principles of our opponents, who endeavour to fix this stigma upon us ?

I will first observe, that our articles uniformly assert the *universal possibility of salvation* ; which is directly contrary to Calvin's declaration, that much the greater part of the human race are absolutely and unconditionally excluded from mercy. The 31st article affirms, " That the death of Christ is a perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for *all* the sins of the whole world, both original and actual ;" which implies, not only that all christians are offered eternal salvation ; but that the heathen world are de-

\* Dr. Kipling.

† By Calvinism, nothing can be meant but the peculiar tenets which Calvin held. They who disown these are not Calvinists.

livered from the imputation of the original guilt of Adam, and also from the eternal consequences of actual transgression, provided they frame their lives according to the imperfect knowledge which they possess. Unless, therefore, universal redemption can be reconciled with the utter reprobation of a vast majority of mankind, this article might decide the controversy. You well know, universal redemption does not mean that all men *will*, but that all men *may*, be saved.

On the doctrine of original sin, our church, in her 9th article, acknowledges that in every one born into the world, even in the regenerated (or baptized and obedient christians,) a propensity to evil still remains (the conscience of every one must attest this truth,) which partakes so much of the nature of sin as to deserve damnation. Between *deferring* damnation from the justice of God, and being damned without the interposition of mercy, the difference is immense.

Calvin terms good works the fruits of grace; that is to say, he ascribes them solely to the overruling power of God. Our 12th article determines them to be "the fruits of faith;" that is, as being produced by our co-operation with our divine Assistant. This is farther specified in the 10th article, where the grace of God "is said to work *with us*."

The 15th and 16th articles decide so pointedly against Calvin's idea of the impeccability of the elect, that to refer to them is sufficient to show that our church never held tenets so contrary to scripture, and so apt to engender the deadly sin of spiritual pride. I call it deadly, because there is so little hope that they who have fallen into it should ever experience a real conversion and true repentance.

The 17th article, which the Calvinists chiefly build upon, uses the term election, indeed; but not as confined to particular persons. It speaks of the deliverance of the whole Christian world, not only from curse and damnation, but also God's intention to bring them to everlasting salvation, as vessels made for honour. While it encourages godly persons to rejoice, and to meditate on the high promises to which as christians they are entitled; it dissuades curious and carnal persons from attempting to penetrate into those mysteries of God's secret counsels, by which the "devil doth either thrust them into desperation or into wretchedness of unclean living, no less perilous than desperation."



The word reprobation is not mentioned in this article; in Calvin's system, it ever stands opposed to election; the election therefore here meant, cannot be Calvin's election. And sure it was a strange absurdity in our ecclesiastical founders, to dissuade the members of their community from *studying* the doctrine which they publicly asserted, by assuring them that it was one of the arts by which *the devil would attempt to plunge them in libertinism and despair*. I must press this advice upon your mind; it is a proof what opinion our primitive divines formed of the tendency of Calvin's distinguishing tenets.\*

The proofs from our liturgy might be multiplied to almost a transcript of its various offices. I will again take Dr. Kipling's pamphlet for my guide. Our absolution cannot accord with Calvinism; for would its compiler dare to affront the Deity, by ascribing to him attributes directly contrary to what he believed him to possess? Calvin's God *desires and ordains* the death of myriads of sinners, to whom he denies all power "of turning from their wickedness." The prayer of St. Chrysostom, the collect for the 4th Sunday after Trinity, the petition to be delivered from eternal damnation in the litany, the blessing which concludes it, every sentence which testifies that at the last judgment all men shall give an account of their works, the first prayer in the office of baptism, the exhortation which succeeds the gospel in that office, the prayer which consecrates the water, and the requests that *who ever* is dedicated to God by the priestly office and ministry, may be everlastingly *rewarded*, are anti-calvinistic; and, not to multiply examples without bound, every prayer which entreats an increase of virtue, or preservation from guilt, is decidedly hostile to these terrible ideas.

The Calvinists, when hard pressed for reasons to justify God's justice in thus arbitrarily foredooming his creatures to perdition, reply, we cannot say what effect this may have on probationary beings in other worlds. In answer, it is acknowledged the effect may be powerful; and the argu-

\* It is most earnestly to be wished, that those who have leisure would enlarge their knowledge of the doctrines of our church, by studying some of our later expositors of the articles. These would be *most* useful, as they treat of controversies now in existence, and agitated with uncommon animosity. A very imperfect abstract was attempted in another work of this author, which can only be useful to those who want leisure to apply to the fountains from whence the derived information.

ment would be valid, if those beings at the same time perceived that the wicked man perishes on *account* of his wickedness, and not by an *overruling* decree which he cannot withstand.

To those who objected to this system, that it renders prayer not only useless but absurd, Calvin was accustomed to answer, that as no individual knows whether he is elect or reprobate, therefore supplication must be permissible. It should seem as if his followers had not then risen to that degree of enthusiasm which they have since attained; for, to know this, comes under those terms of experience and illumination, to which they now so generally pretend. But whatever he might urge on this head in respect to private prayer, it cannot reconcile the propriety of such general addresses as the confession, in which God is implored to forgive all sinners, or the entreaty that he would "have mercy upon *all* men, Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics;" or that the sins of dying men, which, if pardoned at all, have already been pardoned by an eternal and irreversible decree, "may be done away by his mercy in Christ Jesus, and their pardon sealed in heaven before they go hence, and be no more seen."

Thus refuted, our adversaries ought, in propriety, to have confessed their mistake, and renounced the charge; but another subterfuge remains: they insist, that our first reformers were Calvinists. If the assurance of their own words can avail, Cranmer, Hooper, Latimer, and Ridley, were decidedly anti-calvinists.\* History confirms their testimony by recording their conduct. It is known, that the venerable archbishop, to whom we look up as the builder of our Sion, *rejected* the assistance of Calvin, and *solicited* the advice of Melancthon, who was the most mild and candid of all the foreign reformers. It is also certain, that the apostle of Geneva was *dissatisfied* with what he thought our imperfect reformation. The views of archbishop Parker and his coadjutors, who, on the accession of Elizabeth, re-edified our desolate church, were congenial to their renowned predecessors. It is acknowledged, that our clergy became afterwards much tinged with Calvinism, having imbibed it at Geneva, whither many of them had fled for shelter during the Marian persecution. But still those who adopted such opinions were considered as *disturbers* of the establish-

\* See Anti-Jacobin Review for September, 1801

ment, not as *assertors* of its original doctrines; which is a striking difference.

In the reign of king James I. this party grew to be so very numerous, that a conference was held between them and their opponents; in which the Calvinists attempted to establish several new articles, that had been agitated during the latter part of the reign of queen Elizabeth. As a proof that the absolute predestinarians in those days were more ingenuous than their offspring, by confessing that our thirty-nine articles would not suit their purpose in their present form, I will subjoin a copy of the celebrated Lambeth articles, proposed by the Calvinists in the time of queen Elizabeth, and brought forward at the Hampton court conference in the reign of her successor.

1st, God from eternity hath predestinated certain men to life; certain men he hath reprobated.

2d, The moving or efficient cause of predestination unto life, is not the foresight of faith, or of perseverance, or of good, or of any thing that is in the person predestinated; but only the good will and pleasure of God.

3d, There is a certain number of the predestinated, which can neither be augmented nor diminished.

4th, Those who are not predestinated to salvation, shall be necessarily damned for their sins.

5th, A true living and justifying faith, and the spirit of God justifying, is not extinguished, falleth not away, it vanissheth not away in the elect, either finally or totally.

6th, A man truly faithful, that is, such an one who is endued with a justifying faith, is certain, with the full assurance of faith, of the remission of his sins, and of final salvation by Christ.

7th, Saving grace is not granted, is not communicated, to all men, by which they may be saved if they will.

What horrid blasphemy!

8th, No man can come unto Christ, unless it shall be given unto him, and unless the Father draw him; *and all men are not drawn by the Father.*

9th, It is not in the will or power of every man to be saved.

The difference of these articles from those of our church need not be pointed out, nor will I expatiate on their unscriptural absurdity and dreadful tendency. There is a degree of clumsy management in the 8th; which, considering

the care with which they were framed, is surprising. It begins with a text of scripture, which is made to speak as they would have it, by an *absolute addition* of their own, for which there is not the least authority. But to return to historical testimony: though king James had been educated in the Scotch church, he disliked these harsh sayings; his clergy opposed them; and it was by the advice of archbishop Laud that the royal declaration was afterwards prefixed to our articles, ordering them to be understood in their "literal grammatical sense." The Calvinists of these times have actually appealed to this regal instrument, to testify that the king intended our articles should be understood as favourable to their opinions; though it is positively known, that his majesty was influenced by the advice of Laud, a known (and, considering the times he lived in, imprudent) Armenian.\* In the close of king Charles the first's reign, Calvinism indeed triumphed; but the victory was not gained by reason; the sword was the terrible arbitrator; the king and the primate bled upon the scaffold; the house of lords was abolished, its members massacred, or exiled; the gentry ruined; the clergy sequestered; and the country became the seat of civil war, the sport of contending factions, the scene of fraud and oppression, where God was insulted with hypocritical worship, and man preyed on man. The prime mover of this vast machine of mischief closed his guilty career unrepentant for the numberless murders and perjuries which his ambition had prompted him to commit; true, to the last, to the dreadful tenets of his faith, and in full persuasion that he was an elect and chosen vessel, so entitled to eternal glory, that no crimes could forfeit his claim.

\* An explanation of this term may not be useless. The following is an extract from the British Encyclopedia:—Armenius was the great opposer of Calvin; on predestination, he held, that the decrees of God are conditional, in consequence of foreseen faith and virtue, or foreseen infidelity and wickedness. On universal redemption, he says, that though Christ made atonement for all mankind, none but those who believe in him can claim that benefit. On the corruption of man, it is his opinion, that we are incapable of doing or saying any thing good, without the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost; yet divine grace may be resisted, and rendered ineffectual, by the perverse will of the impenitent sinner. That it is the grace of God which preserves us in a regenerate state; but that the righteous may lose their justifying faith and die in their sins.

At the synod of Dort, summoned in 1618, on account of this controversy, our divines bore public and decided testimony to the doctrines of universal redemption and free agency; and the king, with the greatest part of our clergy, disapproved the proceedings of that synod, and preferred Armenius to Calvin.

• Allow me to relieve your fatigued attention, by directing it to the death of a gentleman, who, I think, was the only *eminent* instance of a person's taking the dark side of Calvinism, by believing himself to be a reprobate, and incapable of the mercy of God; I mean the humble, melancholy, and too keenly susceptible Cowper. In early life when he had just recovered from a dreadful mental disease, he fell into the society of some well meaning people who had adopted those unfortunate notions. The grateful bard, attached by their kindness, united himself to them by the strongest ties of affection, and suffered his enlarged understanding to be warped by their system. His biographer does not state at what period of his life the fatal notion of his own reprobation was imprinted on his mind; but knowing that this was the case, we cannot wonder at his frequent fits of despondency, nor at that frightful lapse into intense despair which at last swallowed up all his literary and social talents, and almost petrified his benevolent heart. The idea of his utter rejection by God, was attended by a belief that every attempt to counteract it would but aggravate the severity of his doom. He did not, therefore, dare to go to any place of worship, nor even to pray. The last of his posthumous compositions, published by Mr. Hayley, entitled the *Cast-away*, when read with this clue, appears to me the most affecting lines that ever flowed from the pen of genius; and it pleads more strongly than a thousand arguments against permitting such unworthy ideas of the Almighty to enter into our minds. May the example of a Cowper's despair not plead in vain! then shall we cease to lament the years which the amiable, but, in this point, bewildered sufferer spent in agonizing woe; the innocence of his life, and the amiable tenor of his writings, seem to justify the resplendent vision of hope which depicts him as awakening from his long night of wretchedness, at the rapturous sound of "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

To return to our historical detail. It is not even pretended, that Calvinism predominated during the reign of Charles the III. The resignation of the nonconformist clergy during that period proceeded no less from their abhorrence of episcopacy, than from their dissatisfaction at the *doctrines* of the restored church, whose funds they had appropriated to themselves during the suspension of her lawful ministers. I believe the temporary favour which King James

the Id showed to the dissenters was never urged in proof of the prevalence of Calvinism in his reign; for this ostensible countenance was merely a vizard to cover that monarch's design of introducing popery, under the surreptitious pretence of universal toleration. The subsequent reign is accused of patronizing errors of a different sort; and the style of merely moral exhortation, adopted by some of our clergy, has been urged, as a reason for the revival of Calvinism, under the name of Methodism, about the middle of the last century. During the period in which our church is charged with having kept the great doctrines of our religion too much out of sight, she still, by her articles and liturgy, retained her original tenets and integral constitution. It is remarkable, that those eminent divines whose vindications of the mysteries of our holy faith have immortalized their own names,\* and that of their country, flourished at this very period, when, according to the representations of our enemies, nothing but the oratory of a Whitfield, or the labours of a Wesley, could have saved us from the total loss of christian principles and vital religion.

It is not necessary to subjoin any additional proofs to the above justification of our church from the charge of Calvinism; but as partial election is the key stone on which that system is built, I will just mention, as a corroborative testimony, that our church always held the contrary doctrine of universal redemption, or that every man has it in his power to be saved. I will refer you to the Homilies, and especially to the preface to them, and to archbishop Parker's preface to that translation of scripture called the Bishop's bible, published in the year 1572, just after the ratification of our articles. These were both acts of authority; and, as such, may be properly appealed to, in testimony of the real doctrine of our church. With a few miscellaneous remarks we will dismiss the subject of strict Calvinism; I wish I could say to the oblivion that it deserves.

We will first observe, that preaching Calvinism, as Christianity, must lessen the influence of pure religion, except in weak and depraved minds. One of the offices of reason, as we have before remarked, is, to judge by the tenor of the message, whether it comes from God. Now, whatever diminishes our sense of moral obligation, is contrary to those

\* Tillotson, Sherlock, Sled, Warburton, Rogers, Waterland, Jones, &c.

preconceived notions of the justice and goodness of the Deity which revelation is intended to confirm. To say, therefore, that the elect cannot sin, or, what is nearly the same, that their sins will not make them *forfeit* divine favour, or, that the reprobate, do what they will, cannot *attain* it, impeaches the attributes of God, and weakens the moral feeling in man. A confused understanding may blunder upon this notion, and really believe it to be tenable; but a depraved heart will cling to it as a defence of its own enormities.

On the other hand, no good can arise from maintaining these doctrines. If an *irreversible* decree save the elect and condemn the reprobate, faith and virtue are no ways necessary to the future blessedness or misery of either; and if belief in the great doctrines of redemption are not requisite, such acquiescence in the opinions of Calvin cannot be indispensable. A Socinian, a Papist, a Jew, a Turk, or an Infidel, if previously *ordained* to bliss, has the same title to glory as the most determined propagandist of unconditional election.

All controversies on points which are mutually allowed to be not essential to salvation are much to be deprecated, as they engender violent animosities, instead of that spirit of brotherly love which was intended to be the distinguishing token of christianity. They unsettle the faith of weak minds, who in a variety of opinions know not which to prefer; and they weaken the influence of our faith among infidels, who may justly reproach us with not suffering our principles of unity to influence our practice. The seventeenth chapter of St. John, which I before quoted, seems also to justify me in observing, that these dissensions retard the extension of our faith among heathen nations.

Some may here ask, is the blame of controversy then all on one side? Why does not the church give up these disputed points, and adopt what her adversaries require? It may be answered, that in these realms she is the constituted guardian of the national religion, and is therefore legally *empowered* to execute the divine command of "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." The forcible arguments by which she proves these tenets to be founded on a misinterpretation of holy writ, and particularly on a misconception of St. Paul's design in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, which seem by St. Peter's account to have given rise to early controversies in the church,

would take more space than I can allow to this subject. The authors to which I have referred you will supply them. I have only endeavoured to recapitulate that part of their labours which vindicates our establishment from having *renounced* her original doctrines.

Before I conclude this letter, two circumstances more must be observed. Even if we sacrificed truth to peace, unity could not be obtained. The nearer we advance to Calvinism, the further we retreat from Socinianism. The total annihilation of our church, (may, God, in his mercy, avert that evil!) would not promote the universal accord for which all parties affect to wish. Indeed, from the moderation of her tenets, she is considered by impartial foreigners to be the rallying point at which it may be hoped her contrarious opponents will one day meet. By extending her influence, we cement the bond of union; by lessening the number of her members, we recruit the armies of contention.

An established church never *begins* controversy. Having gained the desired ascendancy, she rests secure. Her errors proceed from supineness, not from activity. They who wish to obtain the eminence that she occupies, recommend themselves to those who are impatient of controul, or desirous of change, by complaints against her tyranny or apostacy. To the first of these clamours it may be answered, that no society of Christians can assemble without adopting various rules and forms that are not enjoined in scripture; that the majority here, as in other cases, must have power to bind the minority; and that the decisions of the former, when sanctioned by the civil power, possess the obligation of law, to which every member of the community is bound to yield obedience; unless the required terms of communion are evidently contrary to the law of God. A change of spiritual masters would only produce a change in the manner of government, not in the measure of submission; and I quote from a known enemy to our church when I ask, "Would not the loins of an imposing Independent, or Anabaptist, be as heavy as the loins of an imposing Prelate, or Presbyter?"\*

With a sentiment so much in favour of acquiescence in the present order of things, from one who was so little to be suspected of partiality to episcopal supremacy, I conclude

\* Henry Cromwell's letter to Flectwood. See *Elegant Epistles*, page 261.



this letter. In my next, I must notice symptoms of hostility from a quarter, whence, according to their professions, we should look for the most cordial co-operation in the great work of promoting the eternal salvation of our fellow-creatures. The task in which we are engaged is irksome; but the prospect of the times announces its sad necessity. In the hope that my labours are welcome to you, and may be useful to others,

I remain, &c.

## LETTER VI.

*Further Observations on the Calvinistic Controversy.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

IN justice to our opponents, we must now acknowledge, that the doctrines of Calvin, arrayed in all their original horrors, are too sombrous for the adoption of all who arrange themselves under his *distinguishing* banner. A more limited (and we must add indistinct) idea of predestination is entertained by many who, in the present times, assume the title of moderate Calvinists. As these seceders seem rather inclined to dispute with us for words than for things, and are in many respects highly valuable members of Christianity, we are in this instance rather called upon to lament infirmity, than to reprobate gross error. A desire of being wise above what is written, a contentious spirit, and the absence of clear ideas, are failings which we should seek to remedy in ourselves, and meekly endeavour to reform in others.

Our ablest logicians affirm, that the phrase moderate Calvinism\* is a solecism; that this system must be adopted wholly, or totally rejected; that without reprobates, no meaning can be assigned to the word elect; and that without human agency, there can be no virtue. I am not equal to these niceties of disputation; it is sufficient for my purpose, that the above appellation is adopted by many, who use it as the sign of their dissent from the great body of the established church. To me it appears a distinction without a difference; or rather, that the disputed points are of such a metaphysical subtle nature, as to elude the research of ordinary understandings.

It is not my wish to lead you into a maze of controversy; but only to guard you against all schismatical persuasives,

\* Some explain moderate Calvinism to mean people who hold the doctrine of absolute predestination themselves, but do not consider such belief to be necessary to salvation, or an essential article of Christian faith. Some explain it to be, only holding parts of that reformer's singular opinions.

which may come recommended by the imposing names of seriousness and extraordinary piety, or of more profound gospel knowledge. Instead of proscribing piety and seriousness, our church requires them from all her members; she has appointed offices for morning and evening prayer; and she commemorates every festival connected with christianity, either in relation to its mysteries, or to the example of its primitive worthies. So far from withholding the scriptures from the congregation, she enjoins the frequent use of them to all her members; and she prays, that they may not only "read," but "mark, learn, and inwardly digest them." If, therefore, we really are in search of piety, virtue, and knowledge, we need not wander from her fold.

It is true, our Church rejects all similitude to the boastful merit of the Pharisee, on whatever pretext that merit is supposed to be founded. She admits no positive judging of the religious state of others, further than as their actions speak their hearts; and she encourages us to direct our attention to our own lives as well as principles. She requires great modesty of judgment on abstruse and mysterious points, especially as to what relates to our spiritual condition, or to the manner in which divine grace is conveyed to the soul; and it must be confessed, she expects her members rather to be *learners* and *bearers*, than *expostulators* and *expounders*; that they should be clothed with humility, instead of self-sufficiency; and that they should submit themselves to their "spiritual pastors and masters," instead of cavilling at those who "watch over them in the Lord." What passes for spiritual gifts in the eyes of many, she esteems the folly of "curious and carnal men;" and to the long tautological extemporary effusions of overweening confidence, she opposes her formularies, conceived "in obedience to the sober counsels of the Royal Preacher:" Be not "rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God."

In another point she is also decided; I mean as to the independency of her ministers; who, "being stewards of the mysteries of God," derive their commission from him, and certainly ought not to be amenable to the congregation whom they are ordained to instruct, and from whom they are not to withhold what is profitable. The liberty of choosing their own instructors, or, what is tantamount, of deserting their parochial church if it be occupied by a clergyman

whose manner of preaching they dislike, is asserted by most moderate Calvinists; who, while they affect respect for the hierarchy, claim a degree of licence for its lay members inconsistent with the regular subordination on which it is founded; and degrade a spiritual function, by judging it with the same rules of preference and inclination as they apply to temporal occupations. The greatest law authority in this kingdom has just given a public opinion on the inexpediency of officiating clergymen being elected by parochial ballot; by which means, in the first instance, a parish is sure to be rendered the seat of contention and cabal. And with what lamentable impediments must the successful candidate commence his sacred functions, in a congregation among whom he has been the engine of discord before he can attempt to be the minister of peace! Can the word of charity and holiness be received with due effect, by those whom the eager zeal of a popular contest has prepared rather to cavil than to obey? What opinion should we form of a school, that recommended itself to public attention by an assurance that the boys should be permitted to choose their instructors,\* and decide upon the propriety of rewards and punishments? A congregation *electing* the teacher who shall distribute to them the word and bread of life, is not less contradictory to the sober notions of ecclesiastical gradation; for it must be recollected, that, though some of its members may be in reality enlightened Christians, the deciding majority are ignorant, and consequently exposed to the errors and prejudices of ignorance. The very idea of needing instruction, implies the unfitness of choosing a teacher; if we already know, why do we ask to be taught; if we are adequate judges of the degree or kind of information that we want, we have advanced beyond the bounds of pupilage. Beside, must not these spiritual guides, who owe their elevation to their popularity, feel, that a “breath may unmake them, as a breath has made?” and will they not lie under a strong temptation to act like the feeble minded prophets of Judah, when the people called upon them to “prophecy unto them smooth things,” and thus preach the lying words of vanity, instead of the law of God? When we consider the manifest danger that must result to faith and morals

\* Absurd as this suggestion must seem, it was *seriously* proposed by a philosophical reformer, as a likely means of *improving* our national system of education.

from thus transposing the situations of tuition and obedience, making powerless precept depend on dominating pupilage, we must rejoice that a very small part of the establishment is at present subject to this inverted rule of patronage, and sincerely pray that moderate Calvinism may ever want power to increase the number of *dependent* clergymen.

I will pass the subject of itinerance in public worship with a brief observation.\* It is one of the evils that arise from confounding the ideas of the civil licence which toleration has given us, with our spiritual freedom as Christians. The law of England says, "though offices of high trust and responsibility can only be delegated to those who are professionally members of the established church, you are permitted to worship God in whatever way your conscience dictates, without fear of molestation." The gospel enjoins us to avoid "heresies and contentions;" it prescribes obedience to those who "rule over us in the Lord;" it bids us mark those who "cause divisions among us;" and it represents schism as a most serious offence. We may therefore choose what teacher we will follow: no *physical* inability prevents us from so doing; nor is any *temporal* penalty attached to the offence; but if we choose unadvisedly, or from any sinister motive, we exercise this freedom at the peril of our own souls. Wandering from our parish church in search of a palatable preacher, is perhaps one of the least culpable methods of exercising this supposed right; but the breaking of any mental barrier is like the letting out of waters. When once we depart from that humility and regularity which we are enjoined to revere, no one can say at what degree of scepticism or fanaticism we shall finally arrive.

These wanderings are generally justified on the score of a love of edification. When the pretence of edification leads the congregation of a sound, learned, and pious divine, to follow those who distinguish themselves by the appellation of Gospel preachers, I confess myself at a loss to understand in what sense they apply this term; for it is well known, that these orators delight to expatiate on *God's part* of the covenant of grace in such strong language, as to induce a suspicion that they mean to represent man as a passive agent. The topics on which they chiefly treat, are those referred to in the second book of our articles; which are rather ren-

\* This subject is more copiously treated in a former publication of the Author's.

dered more abstruse, than explained, by diffusive expositions; and which, when taught to unlearned Christians, should never be separately enforced, but delivered as a whole; one tenet limiting and explaining another. Sermons of this description are also very apt to be mystical and parabolical, full of abrupt transitions and rhapsodical addresses to the passions of their hearers; and we very frequently meet a scantiness of moral instruction, if not a systematic exclusion of the obligations of Christian obedience. If we add to these faults, the verbosity and repetition which distinguish these harangues, we must conclude that they really are difficult to be understood by unlearned hearers. A learned divine observes, “that he never listened to a preacher of this description, without reflecting how very different their manner is from that of Christ and his Apostles, whose discourses were also generally addressed to the multitude.” Clearness, comprehensiveness, and persuasive instruction, were (as might be expected) the tokens of that peculiar inspiration which accompanied the Divine Founder and first promulgators of our faith; and if after the lapse of eighteen centuries, notwithstanding the disadvantages which must attend that dissimilarity of manner, climates, custom, and language, under which we now receive the sacred canon, we feel our hearts burn within us at the perusal, what must have been their power of affecting those to whom they were first addressed! Well might the word of God be then compared to a two edged sword, piercing the reins and the heart.

The embarrassment which unlearned preachers evidently feel, when they attempt to make abstruse doctrines familiar to ignorant minds, may tempt one to say to them, “Understandest thou what thou teachest?” A favourite topic with them is, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the redeemed, and our sins to him. This doctrine, which Dr. Hey rightly terms wholly inconceivable, “*is not supported by the express words of Scripture,*” and is a human refinement upon the atonement of Christ, that great key stone of our religion; proceeding upon the supposition, that a just God would not punish an innocent, or pardon a guilty person; therefore, as mankind were all sinners, and are yet forgiven; and as Christ, though perfectly spotless, was offered up for us, he not only “bore our infirmities and became a curse for us,” but our offences were actually *attributed* to him, and our spotted garments were not only washed in his blood, but we are also attired in the robes of *his* righteousness. Your in-

timate acquaintance with the sacred volume will shew you how much human subtilty has refined upon the simplicity of scripture; deducing *doctrines* from the figurative language of ardent devotion or prophetic fervour, which even go beyond the glowing colours of the enraptured original. The preacher who enters on this difficult and (I conceive) unedifying topic, ought to possess a clear head, a sound judgment, great precision of expression, and command of language, in order to convince his unlettered auditors that there is an insurmountable distinction between *imputed* and *inherent* righteousness, and that they may as easily discard the covering of their Redeemer's merits, as renounce the benefits of his passion. The orator should also recollect, that when once he exceeds the limit of scripture, he is in danger of approaching the confines of blasphemy; and that while he exalts the humility of the Lamb of God, he must also remember that he was a holy, undefiled, and spotless sacrifice. In speaking of doctrines above our comprehensions, the language of Scripture should be preferred; and though this authorizes us to say the "Lord our righteousness," surely we exceed our warrant when we affirm that his personal obedience is attributed to us. Christ is made unto us "wisdom," as well as righteousness.\* does this text authorize us to claim the omniscience of our Saviour? I should answer, in the same sense as it does his holiness.

Our Church has not admitted this idea of imputation into her offices, or articles. Dr. Hey, in explaining the sentence, "accounted righteous before God," distinguishes between being "accounted" and "being made righteous."† It is a leading idea in many devotional tracts composed as preparatory to the Sacrament; but is not admitted into the sound and masterly composition of Bishop Wilson on that subject. It was much amplified in the works of the late Mr. James Hervey, who should rather be termed a *devotional poet* than an *instructive divine*. Indeed, it is more like a poetical idea than an article of belief; and, though it may warm an ardent imagination, seems incapable of practical application. When united with the Calvinistic doctrine of election, it is extremely dangerous, tending to confirm spiritual self-sufficiency, and all the extravagance of religious frenzy. To know that our Blessed Lord suffered to redeem us, must suf-

\* 1st Corinthians, 1st chapter, 30th verse.

† Hey's Lectures, vol. 3d, page 268.

ficiently inspire abhorrence of sin, and gratitude to the Redeemer, without entertaining those confusing notions of alternate imputation which confound every idea of identity and responsibility. When Jesus poured forth his blood upon the cross, he did an action highly acceptable to his Heavenly Father, and was no more *guilty* than the pardoned thief became *innocent* by our Saviour's promising to admit him into Paradise. Omnipotence has no power over the *past*. Sins once committed cannot be unperformed. The penitent was forgiven, on account of his extraordinary faith in the great act of expiation which he was admitted to witness, and enabled to discern. In the language of Scripture, "his robes were washed in the blood of the Lamb;" but it is in his own robes of *inherent* righteousness that Christ pleads for us at the mercy seat of God.\*

Another favourite practice of these preachers is, to introduce a philippick against morality, under the term of "the filthy rags of our own righteousness." This metaphorical expression is adopted from the Prophet Isaiah, who was then lamenting the gross corruption and approaching desolation of the Jewish Church. By comparing the 6th verse of the 64th chapter, with the 57th and 58th chapters, we shall find, that the Jews called the outward ceremonial observances of the law by the name of righteousness, and expected justification from fasts and sacrifices, while they went on in the practice of every atrocious wickedness.† Well might the prophet, in his penitentiary addresses to Heaven, call such obedience by the name of "filthiness;" and all his earnest expostulations "to put away the evil of their doings, to cease to do evil, to learn to do well," clearly point out that he had no intention to decry *moral observance*. If the context were regarded, the text might be used as an admonition to those who neglect their duties, and their honest callings, to listen to florid unedifying harangues. When this quotation is introduced without any explanation of the sense in which it should be applied, it may be called a declamation

\* There is a text in Revelations which seems to disprove the tenet of imputed righteousness; but I speak as an English reader ignorant of the original language: it occurs in the 19th chapter, 8th verse, where the heavenly spouse (or the Church) is described as attired "in the righteousness of the Saints."

† See also the 1st chapter of Isaiah.



against all the social virtues; and, instead of being an effort to save souls from Satan, is indeed an attempt to extend his empire.

They who wish to have their offences excused, rather than eradicated, are often allured from their regular minister by the exonerating explanations of those who enlarge the doctrine, that man has no power "to come to God unless he is drawn by him,"\* till they utterly abolish human responsibility. That we are "unable of ourselves to help ourselves," is a truth which even the dim light of natural religion discovered. "In God we live, and move, and have our being." On God we depend for health, life, prosperity, and understanding. But as in our natural life our dependance on the Deity does not supersede human exertion, so in our spiritual existence our best endeavours must co-operate with the divine influence. To say that "we are unable of ourselves to help ourselves," is a devout acknowledgment of the dependance of creatures, who feel that the power of motion and ratiocination depends upon the will of the Creator; who can in an instant suspend the operation of every animal function or mental organ, as easily as he can interrupt the ordinary routine of inert nature. But because miracles have sometimes happened, we are not to expect their frequent recurrence in the natural world; nor because there have been singular interpositions of divine grace, and extraordinary conversions, are we allowed "to dash our foot against a stone," in expectation of angelical interference; nor to "tempt the Lord our God," in assurance that he will *draw* us into the fold of faith.

The manner in which divine prescience influences human free will, is an undiscovered mystery, to which probably our present faculties are not commensurate; but no one ever omitted a duty, or yielded to a vice, without *feeling* that they had a *power* of *observing* the commandment, or *avoiding* the transgression. When a man's understanding is so far enlightened as to know his duty, he may certainly be said to be drawn of God. A superior intellect may perhaps possess sufficient acuteness to discover a difference between that foreknowledge which discerns, and that which propels, and may also perceive that they feel in themselves that power of choosing which is an irrefragable evidence of the justice of God. Such persons may not find it dangerous to push their

\* See Remarks on the Lambeth Articles, Letter the 5th.

inquiries into these subtle (and we must add unprofitable) speculations; but the edification of a popular audience cannot be promoted, by *confining* their instruction to the obvious truth, that they can neither serve God nor Man unless God enables them so to do. This doctrine (which is but another way of saying, that we can neither walk nor breathe without Almighty permission) should always be coupled with an assurance, that God enables all who are sincerely desirous of so doing “to work out their own salvation,” or we refer our own perverse courses to the Author of our existence, and make the holy, wise, and just God culpable for our wilful reprobation. For, if we had no power to do right, how can we be said to do wrong? or how are we responsible for the misuse of a talent that we never possessed? Surely the perverseness of human nature cannot be more strongly shewn, than by thus turning the omnipotence of God into a cloak for sin. If our opponents plead scripture in support of their opinions, we must here, as in other cases, bid them look at the *whole* scripture; for, in order to prevent this truth from being pushed into a dangerous extreme, it is fenced in by every moral precept and persuasive to holiness, which uniformly admit the free agency of man, by supposing him capable of “choosing good and refusing evil.”

Our absolute dependence upon God, both for spiritual and temporal good, is inculcated to give ardour to our devotion and spirituality to our thoughts; not to paralyse the efforts of piety, virtue, and industry. Saving grace is given to all who implore it; and they who know this, yet do not ask for this blessing, “resist the Spirit of God,” and deserve the condemnation which will be their portion.

Connected with the preceding doctrines, are the favourite methodistical tenets, that Christ has done all for us, and that the human heart is utterly depraved. This last doctrine is said to be the foundation of humility; but humility is described as thinking “soberly” of itself; and surely, to suppose ourselves utterly vile and diabolical cannot consist with sobriety of judgment; for from such a corrupt tree good fruit cannot be expected. Humility is founded on a consideration of our own individual demerits, and not on the weakness or imperfection of the order of creatures to which we belong. But, lest you should suspect the validity of my unauthorised opinion, I will sanction my sentiments by the introduction of a justly venerated name. “It is no act of “humiliation,” says Bishop Taylor, “to confess a crime that

“ all the world are equally guilty of, that could not have  
 “ been avoided by our timeliest industry, and that serves for  
 “ so many ends in the excuse and minoration of our actual  
 “ impieties; so that, as Diogenes trampled upon the pride  
 “ of Plato with a greater fastidiousness and humorous ostenta-  
 “ tion, so do we with original sin, declaim against it bitter-  
 “ ly, to save the other harmless; and are free in the publi-  
 “ cation of this, that we may be instructed to conceal the  
 “ actual. We charge our guilt upon Adam,” continues he,  
 “ to lessen the imputation upon us, or to increase the licence  
 “ or the confidence; when every one of us is the Adam,  
 “ the man of sin, and the parent of our own impurities;  
 “ whatever mischief Adam did to us, we do more to our-  
 “ selves.”\* It will scarcely be insinuated, that Jeremy Tay-  
 lor was infected with the Pelagian heresy; that he insisted  
 on the doctrine of self-justification, or doubted the necessity  
 of a Saviour. But he lived in times which afforded most  
 lamentable examples of the effects of pushing scriptural doc-  
 trines too far; an error which the primitive reformers un-  
 questionably fell into, in their zeal for opposing the Romish  
 doctrine of man’s merits, which at that age was generally un-  
 derstood to mean such superstitious services and observances  
 as bore a near resemblance to what the prophet Isaiah justly  
 decried in his admonitions to the corrupted church of Israel.  
 But, as justification by faith, if it be enforced without its  
 correlative restriction, of the necessity of good works, must  
 inculcate Antinomian licentiousness; so if the preacher in-  
 sists on human corruption, further than to convince his hear-  
 ers of the necessity of a Saviour and a Sanctifier, he gives  
 them an *excuse* for their sins, instead of a  *motive* to vanquish  
 them. It is true, many passages in Scripture describe, in  
 vivid colours, the taint which mankind received by the fall  
 of their ancestor; but it is likewise true, that the same scrip-  
 ture as strongly and clearly represents every individual of-  
 fender as the author of his own destruction, and the victim  
 of his own vices. Are we then to employ Scripture to com-  
 bat Scripture, and thus engage the members of Christ in  
 eternal controversy? No; surely these seemingly opposite  
 passages were inserted in the sacred volume to *preserve us from*  
*falling into extremes of opinion*. A text that asserts our free  
 agency, is intended to be our barrier against believing abso-

\* Life of Christ, pages 37 and 38.

lute predestination; and we can have no stronger proof, that we must not take the "desperate wickedness of man" in its strongest sense, than the assurance that we are capable of "becoming good and faithful servants of God."

In the heat of controversy (as I before observed,) many of our great reformers made use of expressions, which even the bold figures of oriental imagery scarcely justified them in adopting. I can no where find in holy writ, that at the fall "Adam lost the image of God, and became the image of the Devil; that, instead of the citizen of Heaven, he became the bond-slave of Hell, having in himself no one part of his former purity and cleanness, but being altogether spotted and defiled; insomuch that he now seemed to be nothing but a lump of sin, and therefore, by the just judgment of God, was condemned to everlasting death."\* If this description refer to the *natural individual* Adam, it is most certainly contradicted by scripture, where the father of the human race is represented as a sinner, but as a reprieved contrite sinner, depending upon the divine promise,† full of hope in the God who had punished him, and favoured (as we may infer from the 4th of Genesis, 14th verse) with *special* manifestations of the Deity. And since scripture has no where told us what was the final fate of this eminent offender, with whom the covenant of mercy was first made, it is highly indecorous in us to presume to explain "Death" in any other than its temporal sense. Rather let us hope that, like all his redeemed offspring, the first Adam will be made alive by the second.

If Adam be spoken of metaphorically in the above passage, as the representative of mankind, we have scripture proof that even the gross corruption and extreme wickedness of the antediluvian world did not efface the image of God in man.‡ The "*Righteousness*" of Abel is acknowledged by an apostle;§ and of Enoch it is expressly said, that "he pleased God."|| If it be urged, that it was faith which entitled these worthies to this exalted eulogium, my argument is not weakened; for I consider faith as a virtue which is produced by our co-operating with the grace of God, and not an

\* Romily on Salvation. In Reading controversial works, we should carefully distinguish between rhetoric and argument.

† Observe the names of his children.

‡ Genesis, 9th chap. 6th verse.

§ Hebrews, 11th chap. verse 4th.

|| Ibid, verse 5th.

extraneous quality forcibly superinduced into a passive machine by an overruling power. Is it not charging God foolishly, when we give these dark colourings to human nature? for if man be so utterly vile and diabolical, has not God been partial in excluding Satan and his rebel host from the *possibility* of salvation? Why are they reserved in chains and darkness to the judgment of the great day, and man permitted to rejoice in the mercies of a Saviour?

The guilt of self-righteousness, cannot be charged upon the belief that God has given us a nature capable of obeying him, or in affirming that, notwithstanding our hereditary debasement, it is still possible for us so to do; for, whether this power of serving God be derived from nature, or from the assisting grace of God, the glory is still his, as he is our Creator and Sanctifier. The most offensive species of self-righteousness must be incurred by attributing to ourselves what we deny to our fellow-creatures; and believing that we are the chosen vessels, into which God's spiritual blessings are largely poured; while others, though their *external* conduct seems as pious and correct as our own, are reprobated as formalists and slaves of perdition.

We may call upon Calvinists, and Semi-Calvinists, to explain how they can expect the Christian grace of humility will spring out of a soil that tends to engender those excuses for sin which prevent the sense of contrition. I cannot be humbled by the recollection of sins which I could not avoid; but if, knowing that I was "made a little lower than the angels," and intended to be "crowned with glory and worship," I have sold "myself to work all uncleanness with greediness," I am indeed self-degraded, and must seem vile in my own eyes. "The confession of original sin," says the venerable prelate whom I have just quoted, "is no imitation of Christ's humility in suffering circumcision;\* but too often an act of pride, carelessness, and security."

You see that in the opinion of this truly evangelical author, it is dangerous, instead of edifying, to inculcate a belief of *original*, without endeavouring to awaken the conscience to a sense of *actual* depravity. The divines of our Church must, if they conform to her doctrines and offices, teach their flock, that, with power to stand upright, man has a natural propensity to fall; but the consciousness of this weakness

\* Life of Christ, page 39. Bishop Taylor is then meditating on Christ's circumcision.

should make us fly to the mercies of Him for whose sake imperfect obedience will be accepted, if it be the willing service of a sincere mind ; but since we are unable even to do this of ourselves, we should, “by diligent and fervent prayer,” implore that “special” or peculiar grace which will make us “continually given to all good works ;” which supplications we are encouraged to offer by the assurance that God “is ever more ready to hear than we to pray.” This view of human agency, and divine assistance, corresponds with experience, and is sanctioned by scripture. Every terror or uneasiness which wicked men feel when they commit sin, tells them that they might have avoided the crime at which they shudder to look back ; they are also proofs, that even in its most faulty copies human nature retains some remnant of its original purity ; and that when we break through the barriers of conscience, we participate in the guilt, as well as in the punishment of Adam ; who like ourselves was “free to stand or fall,” though it is supposed that his inclinations did not so powerfully incline him to evil, nor did his passions rise in such strong opposition to his intellectual faculties. Every exhortation in the New Testament which enjoins us “to make our calling and election sure,” to walk “worthy of the vocation whereunto we are called,” and “to strive for the prize of our high calling which is in Christ Jesus,” alike proves the mixed nature of man, and that the merits of Christ will only be applied to those who do not resist the Spirit of God.

The extravagant expressions by which Calvinistic teachers disgust sober hearers, and captivate or astonish weak minds, often proceed from an injudicious imitation or erroneous application of scriptural phraseology. Allegorical allusions, types, and parables, formed a mode of instruction which was used by our Lord with remarkable clearness and effect. It was peculiarly suited to the customs of Eastern nations ; but our great dissimilarity in manners renders the propriety of similar apologies in this kingdom questionable ; I mean as a popular method of instructing the ignorant ; for there can be no doubt of the suitability of apposite allusion, and picturesque similitude, when we address our discourses to those who are competently informed. Whenever the allegorical and figurative style is adopted, perspicuity, precision, and appropriateness, are indispensable, especially when it is applied to a passage of scripture ; otherwise the text is darkened, not elucidated, by the designed explanation. A vol-

ume of sermons lies before me, from which I will quote an instance of what I call strained similitude and perverted allegory. The author fancies that at the remarkable appearance of the Almighty which is recorded in the nineteenth chapter of the first book of Kings, "the small still voice" in which God only was to be found was an *emblem* of the virtue of humility; and that storms and tempests, earthquakes and lightnings, were the ante-types of moral commotions, blustering passions, and political revolutions, because these latter were brought about by the agency of the prince of the power of the air. This is *imagination*, not *instruction*. Who can grow wiser or better, by listening to such reveries?

It is most certain, that the coming of our blessed Lord, and the great events of his life, were typified by many analogous events that are recorded in the old testament. This similitude was intended as a preparatory mode of instruction, to fit the Jews for the appearance of the Messiah. It is observed, that christianity makes no use of types, because it leads to no future dispensation. A strong fancy, when it is not restrained by an equally sound judgment, may multiply resemblances between the Old and New Testament, or what is still more prejudicial, between the important events which they record, and the common incidents of life; till what was in itself serious and awful becomes ludicrous, and a theme for profane wit. Lectures on scripture characters appear to me not wholly free from the censure of overstrained allusion, or from the charge of sentimental refinements on the noble simplicity of holy writ. When the humour of typifying and allegorizing is unrestrained by learning or genius, the consequences are most lamentable; for scripture is thus converted into a bye-word of reproach among the profligate. We should reflect, that though fantastical hearers always think that sermon the best which they can least understand, it is *impossible* that they can be edified by what they cannot *comprehend*. What imagination can figure to itself any idea of Death and Hell conquered, as being one of the dishes that shall be served up "at the feast of fat things," which the prophet Isaiah mentions as prepared by God for his chosen people? Who can suppose, that Abigail falling at the feet of David, prefigured Mary anointing the feet of Christ; or, that the two thieves between whom Christ was crucified were types of Lucifer and Adam?

I once questioned a rather intelligent person in low life, respecting the purport of a discourse which had been just

delivered by a clergyman who affected to be distinguished as a Gospel preacher. I was told, that they were ordered to "kick away the thorns and briars which lay in their road "to Heaven." I inquired whether these thorns and briars were supposed to mean their cares, their sorrows, or their sins; and was answered, that the gentleman "did not tell them what they were." This is a proof, that whoever admits these sorts of decorations, should take care that the *comprehension* of their hearers keeps pace with the fallies of their own *imagination*s.

I shall here perhaps be told, that the Holy Spirit will assist the influence of the word of God, and cause it to operate on the heart and life of the true believer. I answer, that since the miracles which established Christianity have ceased, the method by which God seeks to convince us of sacred truths is by an appeal to our understandings. The sensible and apparent influences of the Holy Ghost, are a favourite theme with Calvinistic teachers. That the Divine Comforter assists all true worshippers, is a certain and most consolatory truth; but that we can distinguish his workings from the ordinary suggestions of our own minds, is an *unwarrantable inference*.\* Dr. Law, prebendary of Carlisle, in a sermon on the Limits of our Inquiries, observes "Much perplexity and infidelity have resulted from too minute investigation, especially of three points, which reason must ever in vain attempt to resolve: First, concerning the influence and operation of the Holy Spirit. 'The Comforter,' says Christ, is to abide with ye for ever.' "Yet "is there no passage in scripture which, when *fairly interpreted*, will afford any countenance to the opinions of those "who pretend to a sensible experience of the Spirit, an irresistible impulse, an immediate conversion, and who attempt to point out the exact line of partition between human efforts and divine illumination. This species of ignorance our Saviour seems to intimate in his discourse with Nicodemus. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and ye "hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh,

\* The venerated name of Gisborne sanctions the above assertion. In a sermon on Religious Comfort he severely arraigns the methodistical tenet above referred to, and asks, "Where is your warrant to place your confidence on an inward feeling; to regard an indeterminate impulse as an impression from the Holy Ghost, as a token and seal of forgiveness?"



“nor whither it goeth : so is every man that is born of the Spirit.”\*

The other points, on which this learned divine censures the folly of too minute inquiry, are, attempting to reconcile human liberty with God’s foreknowledge, and the mystery of the Trinity.

We must regret, that the desire of being wise above what is written, should induce many well meaning people to perplex themselves, by endeavouring to discover the manner in which this mysterious similitude to a rushing wind acts upon the human heart. No subject has afforded an ampler field for ridicule, than those pretensions which go under the name of calls, experiences, and conversions, and which are so frequent among enthusiasts; and though I cannot allow, that even fanaticism, when really accompanied by sincerity, is a proper subject for ridicule, I cannot ascribe any merit to the wounded feelings of those who may rather be said to provoke obloquy by their absurdity, than to endure persecution for their piety. This is not *enduring* the cross as a disciple of Jesus Christ, but *snatching* at it like a partizan of Swift’s Jack. Whoever appeals to his inward feelings, removes the matter in debate from the jurisdiction of reason, and leaves it wholly dependent on his own veracity. Let him take care that his character will endure the scrutiny which his affectation of superior sanctity provokes. Let him remember too, that he is not now contending for the great truths of the gospel, in which dispute he would be supported by Scripture, but about an inward consciousness respecting which Scripture is *silent*, or (judging from the acknowledgment of the great apostle to the Gentiles) *hostile* to his pretensions. Though St. Paul was favoured by visions and revelations, and guided by the Spirit of God in a supereminent degree,

\* It is very evident, that the Apostles and Prophets were sensible of inspiration; but the above observations only extend to those ordinary gifts of the Spirit which are promised to all Christians: such as enable us to bring forth the fruits of faith, and to secure our individual salvation; not such as gave the founders of our religion power to convert heathen nations, and to spread the knowledge of the Lord over all the earth.

By the continual superintendance of the Spirit, the sacred penmen were furnished, in the gospels, in the doctrinal parts of the epistles, and in the prophecies which they delivered, with that measure of inspiration which the nature of the subject required; so as to render their writings an infallible standard of Christian faith. As chosen ministers of the grace of God, their actions also were governed by a more immediate and overruling providence, than others can presume to expect.

these distinctions were not vouchsafed him for his own sake. His conversion was miraculous; but it was so ordained, in order that his authority among those to whom he was to preach the Gospel might be unquestioned. Even when he was near the close of his glorious labour, he appeared not to consider his own salvation as *certain*, but that he might still forfeit "the prize of his high calling," and, "after having preached to others, become a cast-away." Previous to his appearance before Nero, he implores the prayers of his converts, that utterance might be given him; at other times he confesses himself uninspired; and in his exhortation to the Centurion, that the soldiers should be prevented from escaping from the wreck, he intimates that even in miraculous interpositions the Deity works by the powers of nature, or by human agency. At other times St. Paul writes like one who was lifted out of the body, sensible of inspiration, glorying in unutterable visions, confident of future bliss, and anxious to depart this life, that he might be with his Lord. This is a lively and just picture of a pious mind, in which human weakness and religious fortitude alternately prevail; in which we sometimes see the persecuted and afflicted man, and at others the inspired Apostle. But to return from these, in some degree, digressive remarks (which will apply to other points of the contest that we are at present considering;) when we allow for the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and the designed mystery in which the awful subject of supernatural assistance is involved, we must own that the brightest understanding may err, if it attempt to ascertain when and where it acted under the immediate guidance of God; to expatiate, therefore, on our capability of so doing, can no way edify a popular audience. The general statement, that God puts into our minds good desires, and that the Devil, our own corrupt inclinations, and the seductions of the world, tempt us to sin, appears to be as clear an account of this intricate business as it is requisite for us to give. If we would employ the time spent in such unprofitable disquisitions, which can only end in uncertainty and error, in earnest prayers to God that he would enable us to improve all godly motions, edification would be effectually promoted.

I proceed to another observation on the conduct of many dissenters from the establishment: I mean the comparatively little importance which they affix to the duty of prayer, especially if offered in a prescribed form of devotion. The sermon is the attraction to most itinerant hearers; and if

they can hurry into the distant sanctuary, where their favourite orator harangues, time enough to catch the honey dropping from his lips, they are content to omit their own indispensable duty, of offering the Christian sacrifice, by praying to the Lord God, Creator of Heaven and earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who sanctified the sabbath for *his worship*. The number of those who go to church totally ignorant of Christianity, or of moral duty, is comparatively small; yet the duty of publicly assembling ourselves together is incumbent upon *all*. Our better informed ancestors knew, that *bearing* was not the principal occupation of the day of rest; but, that instruction ought to be preceded and sanctified by holy supplication. The advantage of a set form of prayer, in which all may join with premeditated attention, is too obvious to be denied; and when such a composition as our liturgy, for sense, copiousness, sublimity, and piety, solicits our preference, a composition compiled from the best devotional tracts of the ancient fathers, and from the pure rituals of early churches, aided by the labours of those exemplary founders of our own who became martyrs and confessors to the truths which they maintained; surely it must be no ordinary self-sufficiency, no common portion of vanity and conceit, that can decry this admirable service as formal and cold, and prefer to it the rhapsodies of an extemporary preacher, who, in despite of Solomon's caution, pours forth a torrent of words before his Creator. It is evident, that the congregation cannot join in these unpremeditated addresses; for desire must precede request, and knowledge must go before assent. Edification, therefore, cannot be promoted, if prayer, the means by which God has promised to convey his Spirit to them who ask it, be omitted, or only performed by one person. Those who listen to the devotions of the preacher may be called *hearers of his word*, but not *the Word of God*. They imbibe the words of a man, who has confidence and vanity enough to think himself able to speak better things than the most diligent research into past times can collect. Here, again, we are called upon to lament that unfortunate rage for novelty which characterises the present times.

If you will trust my judgment, edification cannot be promoted by that style of enamoured familiarity which appears in the hymns, the ejaculatory addresses, and often in the sermons of dissenting congregations. Allowing Calvin's idea

of the Deity to be juſt, and believing ourſelves alſo (as his modern diſciples often do) of the number of the elect, thoſe fond and paſſionate epithets, which are borrowed from the amorous ſoftneſs of ſenſual attachment, muſt be inapplicable to the unpitying and remorseleſs power, who, ſolely from his own determination, wills the greater part of his creatures to deſtruction. Our ſex has been charged with being peculiarly apt to confound the very oppoſite characters of their Redeemer, and an earthly lover; and it is ſaid, that the Church of Rome has reconciled many a virgin victim to monaſtic ſeverities and ſecluſion, by captivating her imagination with the fallacious title of the Spouſe of God. The poetical latitude of Eaſtern literature has certainly beſtowed this name, among many others, on the Church; and the metaphor, when taken in this general ſenſe, is as appropriate and beautiful, as it is dangerous and abſurd when lowered by individual application. The compositions that I reprobate profeſs to take the Song of Solomon for their model; which is known to be an Epithalamium addreſſed by that uxorious monarch to one of his brides. It is preſerved in our canon of ſcripture as the production of an inſpired writer, and on account of its containing ſeveral propheticall alluſions to the different ſtates of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Churches, which (as I have before obſerved) were often poetically deſcribed under the images of a beautiful and ſpotleſs, or a faithleſs and rejected wife, according as they have abounded in graces or been degraded by impiety. The Church of England received it, as ſhe did all the other Jewiſh ſcriptures; but by paſſing it over in her rubrics, and offices, we may conclude that ſhe conſiders it to be of too allegorical and myſtical a nature to be ſafely recommended to the ſtudy of her *ordinary* members. That it is particularly unſuitable to the younger part of our ſex, who are apt to mingle the idea of lovers and conqueſts with ſubjects extremely diſſimilar, muſt be apparent to every ſober minded perſon. A particular recommendation of this poem to the young and inexperienced, accompanied with an analyſis of its contents, in which the miſinterpretation that I have juſt objected to is adopted, and the Redeemer is deſcribed as making love to the ſoul in the character of its bridegroom, is ſurely a diſgrace to the party that has admitted it into an annual pocket-book, calculated to allure the well meaning by its plauſible title, and which muſt *miſlead* thoſe readers whom it does not *diſguſt*.

The Song of Solomon is justly admired by all lovers of exquisite poetry, beautiful allegory, and splendid diction; but the work itself (much less its gross and almost blasphemous imitations) does not seem calculated to enlighten the ignorant mind, or to amend the depraved heart. So much previous information respecting the design of the composition, so much knowledge of oriental customs, such clear judgment, and, ought we not to add, such a chaste and correct imagination, are necessary for understanding it rightly, that the song of songs appears best suited to be the *cabinet* companion of a Horsley, a Bryant, or a Jones. Allegories addressed to the passions have done infinite harm in unskilful hands: I will not absolutely say that they have occasioned gross vices; but they have bewildered the weak understandings of many, who, under the tuition of sober pastors, might have become sincere humble christians and valuable members of society.

The ideas which are generally promulgated respecting innocence, guilt, and holiness, by this species of dissenters, are very opposite to the tenor of scripture exhortation, and argue great ignorance of the human character, and the ordinary affairs of life. Most unquestionably, in the eyes of an infinitely holy and pure God, we must all, even the best of us, be considered as offenders; yet comparatively, and with reference to one another, the distinction of virtuous and vicious behaviour becomes suitable. No notion can be more prejudicial to the cause of religion, than that we must be called from a state of indifference or depravity, by the terrors of an alarmed conscience, to a supposed assurance of holiness and salvation. The Gentile world was indeed "called from darkness into light;" and the Apostles, with great propriety, enlarge upon the amazing change which the pure precepts and rational doctrines of christianity made in the lives and sentiments of those, who had been taught to propitiate brutish deities by most infamous actions. But this contrast between past and present morals can rarely take place among the members of a Christian Church, who have been educated in the knowledge of the true God, without scandal to the faith that we profess. Every exhortation to early piety contained in scripture, every instruction which is bestowed on youth, even our dedication of infants to God by the initiatory sacrament of baptism, implies our being in a state of grace, and proves innocence more acceptable to the Almighty than repentance. Our Lord, indeed, is said to

have preached the doctrine of forgiveness of sins ; but it must be remembered, that the Almighty's disposition to be reconciled to sinners was till then unknown. Natural religion never discovered this truth.\* The law *promised* it, as far as respects the temporal remission of national punishments ; but only *typically* shadowed out the hope of eternal mercy to individual offenders, under the promise of a future prophet, whom the Jews were commanded to hear, and the annual commemoration of an anticipated expiatory sacrifice. Well, therefore, might he, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt, rejoice the hearts of his hearers by his beautiful parables of the lost sheep, and the returning prodigal ; but the stray charge is not described as being *dearer* to the heavenly shepherd, than the ninety and nine who had not wandered from the fold ; nor was the weeping spendthrift *preferred* to his industrious obedient brother, who, though tinged with jealousy and envy, is yet pronounced *heir to all his father's wealth*. Indeed, as our divines justly observe, one of the proofs that Jesus was more than man consists in his perfect developement of human nature, which could only arise from his knowing the secrets of all hearts. Except the blessed author of our religion, scripture delineates no perfect portrait. The Saint and the Sinner are intermixed, and alternately prevail, in every character that is minutely detailed. In the same chapter our Lord addresses the fervent, irresolute, yet sincere Peter, with "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona ;" and, Get thee behind me Satan, for thou favour-est not the things that be of God." Our own hearts can testify, that this is the case with us all. At times we seem to rise above the corruption of our nature ; at other times, to sink beneath its acknowledged imbecility.

We shall not, therefore, make any progress in real edification, by endeavouring to ascertain our assurance of having received saving grace, or to state the time when we felt a call† to newness of life. I hope that I am addressing readers who have never been ignorant that they were accountable beings, and commanded to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling." I trust they have ever avoid-

\* Hey's Lectures, vol. 1st, p. 326.

† The word called, or converted, is indeed always used by the Apostles ; but scripture offers no instance of a person born of christian parents, and regularly educated in christian knowledge. The case of Timothy comes nearest ; and the children of the elect Lady (see the 2d epistle of John) were probably educated in christianity.

ed gross enormities; and I fear that they have found, and ever will find it difficult to reach that standard of perfection to which they know it is their bounden duty to aspire. If their minds are properly fortified by sound principles, founded on that clearness of idea, and humility of inquiry, which becomes our finite but improveable faculties, they will start at the presumption of attributing an instantaneous conversion to the florid declamation or theatrical gestures of a popular orator, while the written word of God has failed to effect it, and which did not result from an humble and steady use of those means of grace that are of divine appointment; I mean prayer, and the holy eucharist. Should the preacher whom we attend attempt to illustrate his proselyting labours by telling his auditory, that from a grievous sinner he was metamorphosed into an eminent instrument of God's glory to convert others from *carnal formality* to *vital religion*, I trust we shall rather feel disgusted at the egotism of self-praise, and the effrontery of avowed wickedness, than induced to believe that we are listening to a repentant Peter, or a miraculously converted Paul. Contrition weeps over its crimes, and confesses them to God in secret; but true contrition will never glory in its shame, by such a public contrast of its past and present life as adds to the number of its offences the sins of vanity and presumption; vanity in boasting of its present state, and presumption in publishing the transgressions which unfitted it for the office that it has assumed.\*

You will not, my dear Miss M——, infer from these observations, that I wish to discourage you from a sincere and frequent examination of your growth in grace. To commune with our own hearts, is not only an important but an indispensable duty; but it must not be performed under the guidance of enthusiasm. We are not to examine ourselves in order to determine whether we belong to the class of saints

\* We are forbidden to say our prayers standing in the public corners of the streets; surely then we are restrained from publishing our former sins, as a contrast to our present purity, *especially in the sanctuary*. The Mosaic law required personal symmetry and decorum of manners from its officials; the religion of Christ alters these qualifications, to the utmost possible purity of life and morals. See Timothy, 3d chapter, Titus 1st chapter. Our Church requires testimonials of sobriety and regularity from every candidate for holy orders; a pious, or at least an inoffensive previous conduct seems indispensable to all who would become teachers of the gospel. What shall we say, then, of those *self-convicted r. probates*, who prove their present light by their former darknels?

or finners; the mixed nature of man only allows us to use these terms in a qualified sense; and if we read our own hearts aright, we shall discover many things partaking of both those characters. If, by being born again, we are to understand perfect holiness in thought, word, and deed, the church *triumphant* can receive no addition in number from her *militant* associate. It is certain from scripture, that the same person does in the course of life many times offend and be forgiven, and is alternately at peace or at enmity with God. "If the sinner departs from his evil ways, his offences shall be remembered no more;" again, "if the upright man forsakes his integrity and does evil, in the sin which he committed he shall die." When scripture uses this plain language, to what purpose is it to perplex ourselves by an inquisitive scrutiny, whether we have ever felt the *assurance of salvation*, or, in the words of the evangelizers, been *born again*? If we feel in our hearts a lively faith, and a sincere purpose of obedience to the divine laws; if in our conversation and actions we seek to promote God's glory, and the good of our fellow-creatures; if, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we endeavour to go on from grace to grace, submitting ourselves and all our concerns to the divine will, may we not hope (I say,) when we find our minds so disposed, that we are in "that state of salvation" to which, in the language of our church, we *were called by baptism*? But since, owing to the infirmity of human nature, we can rarely continue stationary in our Christian duties, self-examination becomes necessary, to discover whether we are progressive or retrograde in faith and virtue. If we perceive an improvement in our habits of piety and goodness, let us rejoice with that humility which becomes those who cannot be confident that "they stand, without being in danger of falling." If we discover that our constitutional bad habits have gained ground upon us, or that some new sin assails us with powerful and successful temptation, let our repentance be as sincere and profound towards God, as it is unobvious and unobtrusive to man. Long indulged habits are apt to return; the strongest motive by which we endeavour to deter youth from transgressing God's laws is, the extreme difficulty of weaning the mind from sinful courses; self-examination will discover to us our natural propensities, and teach us to place guards where they are most required.

I have ever thought, that the disputes subsisting between the steady members of the Church of England, and moderate



Calvinists, on the subject of regeneration, have proceeded more from the want of clear ideas and definite language, than from any material difference of opinion on the subject. Both hold salvation to be the free gift of God by Jesus Christ; and both, I trust, acknowledge that good works are required to be the fruit of Christian faith; by which, though we cannot in strictness be said to *merit* salvation, we discharge our part of the christian covenant, and become capable of it. Our adversaries certainly misrepresent the Church of England, when they describe her as distinguishing between baptism and regeneration; the very answer in the catechism to which they appeal confutes them; as it makes the sacrament of baptism (like that of the Lord's supper) to consist of two parts; of which "water is the outward sign;" and "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, the inward and spiritual grace." To say that we look only to the external sprinkling, is to charge us both falsely and foolishly; but we say that we cannot judge of the heart, and therefore the Church supposes all on whom this outward sign is impressed to be called to a state of salvation, regenerated, received as the adopted child of God, incorporated into the holy church, dead to sin, living unto righteousness, and partaker of the death of Christ.\* Of another determinate positive new birth, subsequent to baptism, we know nothing; † though every time that we turn from sin, to serve the living God, we may be said to rise to newness of life, but not, as I before observed, to impeccable holiness.

I have never been able clearly to understand what Methodists, or moderate Calvinists (for I consider these terms as nearly synonymous,) mean by regeneration. They seem to intimate, that a sensible change takes place at some period of a person's life, almost similar to what heathen converts formerly experienced; and, if I am rightly informed, a young person is required to give proof that this change has passed in his mind, before he is admitted to break bread. A description of this perceptible call, and of the manner of God's dealing with his soul, is to be repeated to the elders of the congregation, who are to judge, by the answers given to their inquiries, whether the candidate for full communion has experienced a *conversion*. This, in my opinion, is opening the door to loquacious presumption and hypocrisy, and

\* See the Thanksgiving after Baptism.

† See Bishop Taylor's Life of Christ, page 314.

shutting it against diffidence, which is more likely to prove the casket in which genuine piety is inshrined. But to proceed: After this regenerating operation has once taken place in the mind, the sanctified convert appears, in their opinion, to be placed in a much greater state of security than he was before; contrary to the tenor of experience, and the words of scripture, which alike warn us to beware of thinking that we stand. You will perceive, my dear Miss M——, that no rule is, or indeed can be, laid down, to shew us when and how this work should be performed; and I am persuaded, that persons who hold these notions must find their opinions as to their being *effectually regenerated* vary with their different dispositions of mind, and even the state of their nerves; being sometimes disposed to think themselves the “children of wrath,” and at others “born from above;” I mean that if spiritual pride have not entirely vanquished humility, the backslidings of a regenerated Methodist must wear, in his own eyes, a most formidable aspect.\*

Far more consolatory, and scriptural, is the avowed opinion of our Church, which holds, that though we are all made in baptism “the children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven,” we may *forfeit* these privileges by sin, and *recover* them by repentance. Far more charitable and just is the judgment by which she determines on the conduct of her members, whom, if she sees them regular in their religious and moral duties, she supposes to be in a state of grace, and does not terrify nor offend them by an inquisitorial examination as to what peculiar fancies and opinions they may privately indulge, provided these do not affect their outward conduct. To notorious ill livers she denies the eucharistical feast as long as they continue in their sins. An externally sober, honest, and religious person, has no right to be thrust from the Lord’s table by a fellow-creature, who does not possess the gift of omniscience. Such a one *may* be a hypocrite; and a strong persuasion that he has been regenerated, will not preserve him from the *crime of dissimulation*. To the Searcher of hearts we must leave that offence which walks unseen on earth, and can alike assume the lawn of episcopacy, or the stiff garb of Puritanical singularity.

\* Whoever wishes for a specimen of the arguments of our opponents on this head, may consult two sermons on Original Sin, and the New Birth, printed by J. Paramore, at the Foundry, Moorfields, 1782, and which are said on the title page not to be sold, but given away.

The last remark which I mean to make on that pretended desire of edification which leads many to desert their church, or at least, while they abide within its pale, to exhibit a compound of hostility and conformity, shall relate to that objection of "moral preaching," which is often brought against the sermons of our regular divines. We might properly enough reply, that as the temptations to offend God are more apt to spring up in the way of our practice, than in that of our faith, our spiritual guides are right in fixing their strongest guards in those places where their flock may be most easily assailed. The liturgy of the church is doctrinal, as well as supplicative; so are her articles; and the manual in which they are contained is in the possession of nearly all her members. She has provided especial offices for the education of her youth; and if parents and sponsors did their duty, our knowledge of the mysteries of religion could not depend on the *discretionary* instructions of our pastors. We might further observe, that knowledge, once acquired, is not in danger of being soon lost; but that the deceitfulness of sin so disguises darling vices and fashionable indulgencies, that we need more impartial observation than our own to rescue our inflamed passions from the fatal fascination of habit, authority, or importunity. Nor are we on this point compelled to stand merely on the defensive: did not a fear of widening the breach that is between us enjoin a degree of caution which almost exceeds the prescribed bounds of moderation, we might ask those who urge this charge against it, if they think that depreciating a life of comparative innocence is the best method of recommending our religion to infidels. The 10th chapter of the Acts teaches us, that though morality is not sufficient to salvation, it is the likeliest means of disposing the mind for the reception of Christian graces. We have an apostolical command to add to our faith *virtue*; and the inquisition at the great audit will proceed upon the principle, that righteousness is acceptable to God. "Well done, good and faithful servant;" and "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity;" are words addressed to free and moral agents, who come to receive the reward of *good deeds*, or the punishment of *evil actions*.

It is, however, by no means true, that the preachers of our national church are, generally speaking, mere moral essayists. Some few spruce chaplains may indeed, like Pope's

soft Dean, avoid "naming hell to cars polite;" as some few among the more ignorant of our opponents preach open Antinomianism; but in a very numerous majority of our churches, *virtue* is always recommended on Christian motives, and enforced by Christian hopes. A sermon is a popular and brief address to a mixed auditory, who are supposed to be previously instructed in the elementary knowledge of their religion. On particular festivals, the mystery then especially commemorated is judiciously selected as the prevailing topic, either by commenting on the scripture narrative, shewing its connexion with preceding prophecies, and refuting the cavils of sceptics; or, by drawing such practical inferences from the dispensations of Almighty God, as may induce us to add to our faith that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Those who reproach us as mixing persuasives to moral purity with the doctrines of the gospel, surely forget that the most perfect ethical composition was spoken by our Blessed Lord to the multitude who stood around the Sinai of the Gospel, and heard our High Priest extend the precepts of the Decalogue to universal holiness and purity of heart. He condemned particular vices; he pronounced the beatitude of particular virtues; and shall they who labour in the fold that he has set up in this kingdom, be blamed for following his example? By a most lively allusion to an ill erected building, he illustrated the important truth, that *profitable* attendance on the word of God consists, not merely in hearing, but in doing his will; and if they built but upon a sandy foundation, who only *listened* to the Son of God, what term shall we find appropriate to the baseless fabrics of those who neglect their useful vocations, and suppose that religion consists in collecting a crude undigested mass of confused ideas, perplexing their minds with vain inquiries and minute distinctions, preferring the fastidiousness of the critic to the docility of the pupil, and complaining of *unwholesome* doctrine, because their lawful teachers strive to ameliorate their *stubborn hearts*, and to *correct* their *vicious lives*, instead of gratifying their itching ears, or soothing their fantastic imaginations?

Were we to follow the brainfick inconstancy of enthusiasm in all its deplorable changes, we might lament that the hungry wanderers from our episcopal church are often fed with the meagre ebullitions of strained metaphor, forced conceit, colloquial impertinence, and irreverent, or I might say, frequently blasphemous applications of scriptural lan-

guage or events to familiar occurrences ; such as the supposed conversion of the gifted mechanic who harangues them, or the providences and experiences that have befallen a recent convert. It is particularly observable, that this species of seceders from the establishment avoid enforcing the duties appending to the fifth commandment. The reason is evident ; for, were they to be explained as they are in that admirable comment upon them which is contained in the church catechism,\* they would bear so hard upon the dissent of these self-appointed teachers, as would convince their followers that they greatly *sinned* by that schismatical pertinacity to their true spiritual pastors, which they are now taught to consider as their duty. To preach the same doctrine with those from whom we wish to gain hearers, is but to open a new seminary upon an old place. Novelty of *manner* is not sufficient ; there must be novelty of *matter* too. The reason which illiterate people generally give for deserting their regular minister, is, that he does not teach them how they are to be saved. Ask them, if he has never said, that by God's mercy, through Jesus Christ, and through faith in his merits, their sincere though fallible obedience to his laws will be rewarded with life everlasting ? and they generally answer by a hesitating yes ; and then add, that they want to know more. What ! more than our liturgy teaches ? Yes. More than the Holy Scriptures, which our Church exhorts all her members to read diligently, reveals ? I am grieved to say, that I was once, by implication, answered yes ; and that too by a person who has since officiated as a lay teacher. What poisonous herbage must that flock devour, whose shepherd fancies that man can relate more than God has told him. This *more*, when ingenuously discovered, proves to be the dangerous doctrine,† that a sinner's acceptance with God does not rest or depend on the conformity of his will to the divine law ; but that, as Christ has done all for us, and as his righteousness is imputed to us, we have nothing to do *but to lay hold on him*. It must be apparent to you, my dear Miss M——, that rigid Calvinism is so totally adverse to

\* “ To love, honour, and succour my father and mother ; to honour  
“ and obey the king and all that are put in authority under him ; to sub-  
“ mit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters ;  
“ to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters.”

† That this doctrine is eminently dangerous, see Matthew, 7th chapter, verses 21st, 22d, and 23d.

human responsibility, that it will be difficult to discover any motive which a teacher, who professes those opinions, can consistently use to dissuade his auditors from the most atrocious crimes; and even the more moderate adherents to the apostle of Geneva, who hold man to be merely passive in the work of salvation, certainly deprive themselves of the strongest arguments that can be urged on the side of virtue, namely, the promise of its future reward; which term, though actually used by our Saviour, they frequently cavil at in the discourses of our clergy. We may generally observe, that no style of preaching can promote Christian edification which diminishes the sense of human responsibility, and makes either our Maker or our nature answerable for our actual offences. I believe we have examined with sufficient minuteness that pretended love of edification, which draws many weak people from the church in which they received baptism, and from whose pale it is *criminal* for them to depart on light and frivolous pretences. We have seen how little reason they have to expect such advantages, either from the matter or the manner of their new instructors; but, on the other hand, how much danger there is, that the light within them will be quenched by a superincumbence of words without knowledge, and opinions without argument. It is most earnestly to be wished, for their own sakes, as well as for the peace of our Jerusalem, that these, perhaps well meaning, but certainly blamable wanderers, would be content to see what is plainly their duty, and to avoid such curious mysteries as human intellect can never clearly explore.

Sometimes, dissatisfaction proceeds no further than censure and complaint against our ordinances and officials, and does not amount to that breach of communion which constitutes the offence of schism. I would earnestly exhort persons thus circumstanced, in the words of a very learned and amiable divine, "You are haunted with scruples and misgivings; pursue your own course, and see what will be the result. You are discontented with something in your own church; look out for another: supposing you found one perfectly to your mind; yet even then you ought not to join it, except the change will compensate for the mischiefs of schism, and for any accidental inconveniencies, such as increase of distance, &c. But the supposition of a church perfectly unexceptionable is not to be admitted; such perfection is so improbable, that, guiding ourselves by experience, we must expect that if you find any number

“ of errors or faults in your own church, you will find some  
 “ in other churches; perhaps as many as in your own, or  
 “ more: you cannot then be consistent in that case, except  
 “ you quit them all: the question then would be, whether  
 “ you *may* quit all religious societies, and worship God in  
 “ solitude? We answer, every thing in the nature of the  
 “ thing, every thing in the expressions of scripture, is against  
 “ such a measure. If you are alone, you must lose most of  
 “ the benefits of religion; instruction and sympathy wholly,  
 “ and association in a great degree; even reading and med-  
 “ itation grow either dead or extravagant. And the pre-  
 “ tence is trifling; nor are you at liberty to act upon it, ex-  
 “ cept you also determine to retire from civil society, and to  
 “ fix yourself in some desert or uninhabited island, because  
 “ in monarchies you have found some oppression, in democ-  
 “ racies some turbulence, and in every form of civil govern-  
 “ ment something inconsistent with your ideas of perfec-  
 “ tion.”\*

I have been thus copious on what I feel to be a very painful subject, on account of the rapid progress which ecclesiastical insubordination is making, especially among the humbler walks of life. I have not used the name of evangelicals, assumed by our opponents, out of reproach; nor yet by any means as acquiescing in the arrogant pretension, that they have a superior right to the title, or that the light of the gospel is no where diffused in this island, but where they have raised the standard of separation from the church, or surreptitiously attempted to pass for her only genuine offspring. Less danger results to our establishment from open foes, than from those who excite disputations under the pretext of zealous duty. I call upon these, in the name of God, to say why, if they really teach the same doctrine as their clerical brethren, they affect to consider themselves as a distinct body? Why do they treat their fellow-labourers with contempt and obloquy? Why do they lay claim to superior knowledge, illumination, and purity, and prevent the advantages which would result from mutually labouring to promote the interests of unity and holiness? Discord is not only the natural impediment, but the *predicted hinderance* to the progress of the gospel of peace. Are they disputing about words only? Can vague expressions, or peculiar style in the preacher, be a justifiable cause of contention? Or can

\* Hey's Lectures, vol. 2d, pages 119, 120.

nice points and subtilities, which few can comprehend, and all must use much circumspection and precision to state with accuracy, be a defence for schism? Can such pretences justify them at the day of judgment for all the mischiefs which angry disputations occasion? If worldly motives influence their conduct; if they clamour for fame, eminence, or valuable preferment, they must resign all pretensions to singleness of heart. If they really imagine, that the interests of true Christianity can be promoted by inflaming the imaginations, perplexing the understandings, and unfixing the principles of their ignorant auditors, by their continually expatiating on obscure and disorganizing topics, we may pity the confusion of their minds, and give those allowances to their sincerity which we detract from their vanity.

I may possibly alarm the well intentioned part of such feeders, by transcribing the opinion of the learned translator of Mosheim. Speaking of the dangers to be apprehended to the Protestant religion, he observes, "If Popery should  
 " any way be re-introduced, it must be through the means  
 " of fanaticism; which by discrediting free inquiry, decry-  
 " ing human learning, and encouraging those pretended illu-  
 " minations and impulses which give the imagination an *un-*  
 " *due* ascendant in religion, lays weak minds open to the fe-  
 " ductions of a church which has always made its conquests  
 " by wild visions and false miracles. Cry down reason,  
 " preach up implicit faith, make inward experience the test  
 " of truth, extinguish free inquiry, and the main barriers to  
 " Popery will be removed."

Supported by such authority I will venture to give my opinion, that itinerant Calvinists\* little suspect how far they are advanced toward the most odious doctrines of popery. But, indeed, those who set off with a violent resolution to get as far as possible from what they hate, are ever doomed to run in a circle, and thus finally meet what they determine to avoid. For, not to draw the obvious parallel between the lying wonders of the Romish church, and the extraordinary interpositions of Heaven which they style providences and experiences, is not their passion for gifted preachers, that is for enthusiastical coxcombs destitute of learning, exactly similar to the Romish doctrine, which holds the power of the priest to be not only *declaratory* and *ministerial*, but *essential*

\* By this phrase is meant all who leave their regular teachers.



and *conclusive*? a tenet that our church solemnly abjures.\* How shall we else account for the inconveniencies to which these eager hearers expose themselves, by deserting the more regular minister of their own persuasions, to follow him who has had the *latest call*? It is certain, that among these people popularity is never lasting, and the benefit of holy worship always seems to depend upon those who administer it. The merit also which they seem to attach to the long journeys and severe privations that they undergo to hear a fine new man, favours greatly of the supposed benefits that were formerly ascribed to penances and pilgrimages. Do these professed haters of anti-christ and lovers of liberty know, that their favourite doctrine, that no one should submit to the civil institutions of any state unless he had first given his consent to them, was invented by the agents of the papacy to raise the power of the Pontiff over secular princes, and was found eminently serviceable to the clergy of that hierarchy, who, having an unbounded sway over the consciences of the people, by making popular authority paramount to regal dominion, cunningly established their own supremacy?†

“Heresies,” as the venerable Bishop Horne observes, “however defeated, however triumphantly answered, are only conquered for a time. They seem to make their periodical revolutions in the church, like comets in the heavens, now disappearing, and now appearing again in their erratic course.” Can this be wondered at? It is the spirit of the mystery of iniquity, which always speaks; and when the old embroidered suit of popery is worn thread-bare, it will dispute in the quaint garb of puritanism.

Theological controversy, considered in its best light, I mean as keeping alive a zeal for religion, is even then a most humiliating proof of human imperfection, and shews that we are still at an immense distance from possessing that peace which Christ bequeathed to us. “The wolf cannot dwell with the lamb, nor the leopard with the kid; the lion will not eat straw with the ox, nor the sucking child play with the asp;” while the trumpet of discord sounds “in the holy mountains;” nor “shall the knowledge of the

\* Article 26th.

† The custom among Dissenters and Methodists, of teachers changing congregations with each other, is more political than pious, and turns religion into an entertainment.

“ Lord cover the earth as the waters cover the sea,” till missions are no longer founded in schism, nor children taught that a diversity of opinions in religion is acceptable and pleasing to God. Contention is always a punishment, unanimity a blessing; and never was discord among sincere Christians more to be dreaded than in these times, when irreligion and licentiousness wear such a formidable aspect. Let us hope, then, that the truly devout, aware of the evils of affected singularity, and controversies on points which both parties confess are not *essential to salvation*, will avoid the sin of causeless separation, by cheerfully sacrificing their private scruples to the great blessing of public uniformity. “ And may the God of Peace so compose our minds, that if our brains differ, our hearts and tongues may agree.” At least, may all who profess to have the same God, Lord, faith, and baptism, in their individual capacities, shew forth that meek and holy charity “ which seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and vaunteth not itself.” The wounds of our Sion would then be speedily healed.

Before I close this letter, I will remark, that in this dissipated and licentious age, the charge of methodism is often unwarrantably urged against many valuable and steady members of our church; merely on account of the extraordinary piety and seriousness of their behaviour. Pretensions to superior sanctity are always dangerous, as they provoke a scrutiny which human rectitude can rarely sustain. God forbid, however, that because there have been devotees and hypocrites, we should therefore deny the existence of genuine devotion. It is much to be wished, that persons who have a regard to religion would never deviate into moroseness of manner, nor, by a total seclusion of themselves from the world, neglect the precept of letting their light shine before men. Might we not hope, that if the truly good would oftener mix in the public haunts of men, their presence and union might awe the effrontery of the licentious, and correct the frivolity of the dissipated? Might they not (for I do not consider this body to be inconsiderable either in rank or number) introduce such a change into public amusements, and general customs, as would produce the happiest effects on public morals? The undertaking, I grant, would be arduous; it would require great exertion of fortitude, perfect command of temper, and above all, such an assumption of consequence, and avowal of merit, as is most repugnant to the modest feelings of real desert. Virtue, then, must ge-

nerally reside in the shade: it is the region in which she best flourishes. Yet, conscious of her own fallibility, let her examine herself there, and be cautious of acquiring peculiarities that will lessen her influence. On the other hand, let us make allowances for natural temper, for the pressure of severe calamity, for disappointments, or, possibly, for the lively feelings of remorse, in a really contrite and renovated heart; nor let us stamp with the opprobrious stigma of schismatic a devout Anna, who spends her time in the temple; an attentive Mary, who listens to the voice of her Lord; a repentant Magdalen, who bathes the feet of Jesus with tears; or a charitable Dorcas, who makes garments for the naked. The Church to which we belong interdicts no degrees of virtue or piety. Seriousness is not separation; strictness is not nonconformity. If a few of her community seem to pay too little attention to things of this world, the majority of her professors are too indifferent to that which is to come. That the divine Power, who enables us "both to will and to do" what is good, may ever preserve you in the happy medium, prays your sincerely affectionate, &c.

## LETTER VII.

*On the Tenets of Rational Christians, or Unitarians.\**

MY DEAR MISS M——,

SINCE you permit me to pursue the course adopted in a former publication of a similar nature to my present attempt, I shall now call your attention to a set of Dissenters, who err in the contrary extreme from what we last considered. For, as those generally decrie the guidance of reason, and the advantages of human learning, these latter maintain the supremacy of our limited faculties, and are too apt to discard every tenet of revelation that cannot be lowered to the *grasp* of our scanty intellect, or which can in any way be supposed to contradict the discoveries of science. While the Calvinists tell us, that Christ has done all for us, and that we are mere machines, unresisting recipients of the overwhelming grace of God; the Socinians reject the atonement and mediatorial office of the Redeemer, depose him from his exalted rank of filiation, and lower him to a created being, nay even to mortal and peccable man. Proud of the dignity of their nature, they assert our free agency, at the expence of divine supremacy; and they make our salvation to depend so entirely on ourselves, as to limit, if not annihilate, the co-operating assistance of the Spirit of God. You will perceive, that these opinions are rather addressed to the pride of philosophy, than to the passions of the multitude; they are, however, disseminated with great zeal amongst all ranks of society; and they are combined with such pretensions to

\* Here, as in the case of the opponents whom we have just dismissed, we may complain of the unfairness of the distinguishing terms that are adopted by our adversaries. The Calvinists have no more claim to the term evangelical, than churchmen; and when we are as rational and as true believers in our God, as the Unitarians, these denominations are assumed for sinister and political purposes. The uninformed always feel a great charm in words.

free inquiry, the right of private judgment, and absolute impunity in matters of opinion, as are most likely to ensure their popularity. Much mental strength is enrolled in the ranks of these disputants; and a periodical work, esteemed by many to be unique in wit and vigour, is the avowed champion of this cause, and the vigilant and merciless castigatour of its adversaries. It is believed, that a *most decided majority* of the people of England refuse to be laughed, or reasoned, out of what they have long considered to be the *peculiarly distinguishing* tenets of their religion. I cannot help suspecting, however, that the amazing pains which were taken a few years ago to instill into the unsuspecting mind of youth a firm persuasion, that modes of faith are unessential, and settled religious principles another name for bigotry, have not been without effect, though they may not have added to the numbers of the sect by whom this laxity of faith was peculiarly recommended. Whence is it, that this age is so fertile in new and strange opinions? How comes it, that the austere but sincere piety of former periods should lapse into lukewarm acquiescence with established forms, of the meaning of which we rather glory than blush to be ignorant; or else evaporate into the frothy ebullitions of whimsical enthusiasm? It is certain, that the latitudinarian and the fanatic mutually prepare profelytes for each other. When once the mind is loosened from the steady anchor of fixed principles, it is ready to drive with every wind of doctrine, and never knows the comfort of secure repose.\* The re-

\* There cannot be a fairer specimen of the style of criticism which is employed to shake the foundations of religious principle, than the following remarks on the maternal instructions which a lady of fashion addressed to her son. The respectable author had the hardihood to exchange vague and indefinite admonitions, for an express recommendation of the national faith. "With respect to the *doctrines of Christianity*, without combating the positions here laid down, we confess we should have been better pleased, if the *orthodox* faith of the fair writer had been offered to her pupil in a more modest and less decided tone. When an author's tenets are founded solely on the authority of the English translation of the New Testament, which may chance to convey more or less than the original fairly implies, a certain degree of diffidence should surely accompany assertions, especially on points which are yet contested among the learned divines of the reformed churches. A single text may be good *verbal proof*, and such as may prove satisfactory to *fair divines*; but there are others who would hesitate to establish their faith on such slender grounds, and they would recollect the remark of the poet: In religion

"What damned error, but some sober brow

"Will bless it, and approve it with a text.

"SHAKESPEARE."

peated admonitions that have been given to parents, to avoid making their children bigots, or teaching them mysteries before their reason ripened, has caused young people to be trained up in such ignorance of the faith which they profess, as would have astonished every age since the Reformation. To this, I am persuaded, we must ascribe the recent progress of Calvinism; and not, as it is invidiously stated, to the *neglect* of our regular clergy. Elementary instruction is a branch of *parental* duty; it is the foundation on which the superstructure of Christian knowledge must be raised; and we might as well cavil with Eton and Westminster for not teaching the primer, as condemn our spiritual pastor for not publicly teaching "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ." If, under the idea of being an enlightened and liberal parent, we suffer our children to remain in ignorance of the terms and obligations of their baptismal vow; if we tell them, that they are free to choose the way in which they will worship the universal God, who is alike pleased with the homage of "the Saint, the Savage, and the Sage," let us not seek for the reason of their future maladies in the unwholesome nutriment that they receive from their parochial minister, but in our having neglected to feed their infant years with the milk of God's holy word, lest we should thereby prejudice them in favour of what the wisest of mankind have pronounced to be ten thousand times more precious than the riches of Ophir.

There is something so formidable in the term *bigot*, especially when coupled with its ally *persecutor*, that I do not wonder our latitudinarian sectaries have found these names most useful artillery to drive weak mothers from performing their duty, and to intimidate diffident people from avowing the principles that they professed. What if I shew, that these alarming epithets are not appropriate, if ascribed to the conscientious members of a church constituted upon such principles as that to which we belong! But I must appeal from the judgment of those who do not acknowledge the di-

Miss let not one ask the author of this ingenious mode of combating *fair dealers*, on what *single text* has our church founded any of its doctrines? Is it impossible for a mere English reader to obtain such a view of the controversy, as to discover which party brings the strongest scriptural evidence, or most ably supports its opinion? I presume, the conductors of this review only mean to prohibit *orthodox* females from using a decided tone; for I recollect that the daring assertions of an audacious advocate of impiety and revolt received no harsh reproof; but the public were invited to read *his* writings, by calling them spirited and original.

vine authority of our whole Scriptures, and only use a mutilated and garbled edition of such parts of the sacred writings as suit their own purposes. I might advert to the epistles of St. Paul, who authoritatively denounces various heresies, and excommunicates heretics in the churches which he founded, and governed, either by himself or his immediate agents. I might bring forward the examples of St. Peter and St. Jude, who exhorted their converts to “beware of those who privily bring in damnable heresies, even *denying the Lord who bought them* ;” and “to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,” because certain men have crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation ; ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ ;” but I will rest my proof on the doctrines of the beloved disciple St. John. As he was most honoured with the friendship of his master, we have reason to believe that his character was most assimilated to that perfect model of all excellence which the incarnate Deity presented. In his writings we trace two distinguishing features ; a sublime and clear view of the sacred mysteries, and an ardent affection for his fellow-creatures. His Gospel opens with a full and unequivocal testimony of the divinity of his Master ; a text which, according to the conception of the learned German commentator Michaelis, has never been in the least affected by the most diligent inquiry, and minute criticism, of those who would banish that doctrine from the articles of religion. Instead of its authenticity being *shaken* by the collections of two celebrated collators of manuscripts, Mills and Wetstein, it has been *rendered more certain than ever*.\* When we consider that the numerous manuscripts of this gospel which are preserved have been made by transcribers differing in sentiments, and for opposite purposes ; that they lived in countries and ages remote from each other, and used different languages and idioms ; we must look upon the authentic identity of this text as a peculiar interposition of the same Holy Spirit, which first inspired the venerable apostle to pen this important truth, to refute the fallacies of heretics who, even in the first ages of the church, refused to bow the pride of human reason to those attesting miracles which witnessed the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God. It is generally acknowledged, that the

\* The same is observed of Romans, 9th chapter and 5th verse.

gospel of St. John was written at a time when heresies had crept into the church ;\* and every attentive reader of this sacred treatise must acknowledge, that it is diametrically opposite to the notion of the mere humanity of our Lord. It seems singular, that the Socinians should venture to assert, that their opinions were what was anciently esteemed to be orthodox, in the very teeth of an apostolical history, composed for the especial purpose of asserting the doctrine which is maintained by every Christian community but their own.

I fear that I have been led to digress a little from my purpose. It was rather my design to propose to you the *example* of St. John, than at this time to enlarge upon his *doctrine*. The proofs of those fundamental articles of our faith (the divinity and atonement of Christ) are more numerous in the writings of this apostle, than in any other of the sacred penmen ; yet none of them appear to have glowed with such ardent, such universal benevolence, as this evangelist. He even makes our love to our brother the pledge and criterion of our boasted love to our Maker. His first or catholic epistle is generally believed to have been written in extreme old age, when he was on the eve of beholding his friend and master in the full fruition of uncreated glory. How pathetic, how energetic are his admonitory adieus to that flock which he had so long attended ! He salutes them with the epithet of “ beloved ;” he calls them “ his little children ;” he conjures and entreats them “ to keep steadfast in the faith ; and he admonishes them “ to love one another,” as the mark of their religion. Did he, who leaned on the bosom of Christ, believe modes of faith to be *immaterial*, or that the characters of a firm champion of the truth, and a genuine philanthropist, are incompatible ? Did I say philanthropy ? Let me reject a term so often perverted to the basest purposes, and substitute the christian epithet of charity. Shall we accuse the beloved disciple of inconsistency or bigotry ; and can the master, who selected him from all human beings as most worthy of the glorious title of his friend, be sere ned from the charge of weak partiality ? We will not tax God foolishly, nor lightly impeach the conduct of the most distinguished of mankind. True benevolence extends to the souls as well as to the bodies of our fellow-creatures ; and what greater kindness can be shewn to the former, than in steadily resisting dreadful and seductive doctrines ?

\* The first deniers of Christ's divinity were the Gnostics.



From the testimony which the writings of St. John afford of his character in advanced life, we may discover the efficacy of his master's lessons on his naturally vehement and vindictive character. In the warm enthusiasm of early youth, he was anxious to "call down fire from Heaven" on those cities that would not receive his Lord; but the unction of that blessed Spirit, of which he received so copious a share on the day of Pentecost, taught him the *manner* in which he was to enforce his mission. He now knew, that he was not appointed ruler of the Asian churches to use the arm of the flesh, or to afflict and torment others. But, as no two things can be more opposite, than tacit acquiescence in false opinions, and cruelty to erring brethren, he has left us a shining example of zeal for truth, without that base alloy of uncharitableness, which human passions are so apt to intermix in whatever deeply interests the mind.\*

Bigotry and prejudice are as much the bugbears of this age, as the Pope and the Pretender were formerly. It is impossible to defend what is right, without danger of encountering the obloquy annexed to tyranny, persecution, ignorance, fanaticism, and narrowness of soul. Yet it seems as if few were so bigoted as those who loudly declaim in praise of unbounded freedom of opinion; which, when nicely analyzed, is generally found to mean a restless desire of establishing our own sentiments as the universal doctrine. Surely, when we praise the liberality of our own notions, we discover too much vanity to bring the sentiments of our adversaries into discredit with any intelligent reader.

\* I am unwilling to mix with the *certain* authority of scripture, the doubtful attestation of human testimony; yet I wish to repeat two anecdotes of this apostle, authenticated by Irenæus, a father of the second century, who professed that he had them from Polycarp, the immediate disciple of St. John. Whatever may be their authenticity, Irenæus must have thought that they corresponded with the then well known character of this apostle. The one is, that coming into the bath at Ephesus, and hearing that the noted heretic Cerinthus was then there, he immediately left it, warning his followers to do the same, lest the place which contained so great an enemy to the truth should fall upon their heads. The other anecdote is, that when age disabled him from preaching at every public meeting, he exhorted his flock with these words, "Little children, love one another." His auditors, wearied with the repetition, inquired the reason of it; and received for answer, "This is what our Lord commanded; and if we can do this, we need do nothing else." I have quoted this account from an excellent work, *once* studied by every family; I mean Nelson's Companion to the Feasts and Fasts of the Church of England. It may be found in various authors.

To apply this remark to that species of Dissenters which is most vehement in charging the establishment with bigotry: According to their acknowledged tenets, modes of faith are *immaterial* in the eyes of the Deity. The Romanists, who believe salvation to be circumscribed within the papal pale, are justifiable in their zeal for making converts; but what motive can we assign to those, who teach that "God made men to differ in points of faith," and who yet pursue every method, and move every engine, to bring the world to a conformity with their own opinion? Is not this using one measure for our neighbours, and another for ourselves, and crying out against the intolerance that we practise? Does this proceed from zeal for truth? No; with them, "the conscious mind is its own awful world;" and what seems right to a man is determined to be right to him. The motive must, therefore, be, either the love of contention, or that ambitious desire of superiority, and bigoted attachment to their own notions, which they charge as heinous offences against us; who dreading the threatenings denounced against those that *mutilate* the sacred volume, dare not erase a truth which pervades the whole series of scripture, from the brief but awful and instructive narrative of the formation and fall of man, to that prophetic close of the sacred volume which lifts the mysterious veil of futurity, to shew us the final renovation of the human species in the city of the living God.

I need not inform my dear young friend, that the truth to which I have alluded is, the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God; by which the Almighty Father was pleased at once to shew his hatred to sin, and his compassion to sinners. I do not intend to pursue the long series of promises, analogies, ceremonial institutions, and prophecies, by which the world was prepared for this great event; a volume devoted to the subject would give but a brief view of the types and predictions which announced its unexampled importance. To this point all the promises made to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the rest of the Patriarchs, preeminently tended; even those which appear to *us* to be merely of a personal, temporary nature, to *them* (as we may learn from other parts of scripture) disclosed views which extended beyond this transitory state, and the temporal concerns of their offspring. To prepare mankind, by previous conceptions of the manner in which the offended justice of the Almighty must be propitiated, sacrifices were introduced (and it is believed by di-

vine appointment) immediately after the fall; they were revived in the renewed covenant made with Noah after the flood; and *positively* enjoined to the Patriarchs during their various migrations. When the Mosaical law was given by God to the Jews, it was esteemed of such consequence, that the regulation of it forms one entire book of the Pentateuch; and during the whole of the Jewish œconomy this ceremonial was regularly observed, though often contaminated by idolatrous intermixture.

Considered in itself, slaying a beast in honor of a spiritual being, must appear an absurd and indecorous mode of homage. There is no natural connexion between shedding of blood, and pardon of sin; these purple libations, therefore, must originally have been of superhuman appointment, and intended to prepare the minds of men for that event which was to happen in fulness of time. It is evident, from the numerous reproofs of the prophets, that the Jews were apt to look no further than to the mere visible ordinance; the 50th Psalm, and the 1st chapter of Isaiah, are lively instances of an endeavour to *spiritualize* the minds of the people, and to convince them that it was not the blood of calves and of goats that was really acceptable to God.

If it be asked by our opponents, why God would not grant the pardon that he intended, without requiring so severe a ransom as the precious blood of Christ? we may answer, "it was not his pleasure so to do." To argue on this point from what we should suppose to be *noble* in the conduct of a human creature, is to produce a parallel which fails in all the known points of resemblance. It is to compare finite with infinite, in every point of view in which we can suppose prescience, purity, justice, mercy, power, and remuneration to act. The king, who should offer the *heir* of his throne as a sacrifice for the *crimes* of his subjects, must have the power of raising him from the grave, before he can be produced as a comparison for the Almighty; and he must be himself *sinless*, before he can consistently thus express his irreconcilableness to *guilt*. From our confessed incapacity of judging of any thing so remote from us as the Deity, acquiescence in what he has revealed becomes not only expedient, but our bounden duty. All that we know of God is from the works of his hands, and the book dictated by his Spirit; and from both we may learn, that "he seeth not as man seeth; that his ways are equal, though ours are unequal;

“and that his purposes are past finding out.” At present, “we see through a glass darkly;” because our faculties are too limited to give us a just and adequate idea, either of his attributes, or of the laws of that invisible state in which he is more conspicuously revealed. Is it so extraordinary, that the creature cannot comprehend the Creator? Does such a description of the God whom we Christians worship, prove him to be any ways different from that author of nature, for whose mysterious operations philosophers cannot satisfactorily account in many minute instances, though the general result of the visible creation compels them to confess that he is, and that he is infinitely wise and benevolent? In the moral government of the world, does not Providence frequently permit affliction to fall upon virtue, and suffer vice to prosper even by the means of its own wicked machinations? This correspondence between the character and conduct of the Almighty, as described by his word and his works, opens a very copious field for observation, upon which we will presently touch, though my knowledge of natural philosophy and science is too limited to enable me to do it the justice that I wish.

But let us first pursue our observations on the testimony of holy writ on these two momentous points, the redemption of the world, and the plurality of persons in the Godhead. The opponents with whom we now contend admit Jesus Christ to be a prophet sent from God; and by their lately ascribing to him the term Lord, I hope they have generally rejected Dr. Priestley’s impious notion that he was mere man, and acknowledge him to be a great preexistent spirit, probably the first of created beings, and the delegated head of the Christian church. As they must, therefore, have got over what was to them so long a stumbling block, the miraculous incarnation, it is much to be lamented that they could not bring their minds to receive the *whole truth*; for how we can address prayers to or through any *created* being without being guilty of idolatry, or having mean and unworthy ideas of God, they must explain; and if he be our Lord and spiritual head, it is *from* him, as well as *for* his sake, that we must expect blessing and protection. They still deny the atonement, or that the world was reconciled to God by the death of Christ; but they admit that he really was crucified, and rose from the dead in proof and confirmation of the truth of the doctrine that he was sent into the world to teach; namely, the resurrection of the body,

and immortal life. They say, it is inconsistent with the ideas that we ought to form of divine justice, to suppose that God would not pardon the guilty, without some innocent person paid the stipulated ransom of their souls, by submitting to temporal death, to rescue the world from eternal punishment. As they make such a point of explaining all the actions of the Deity on human grounds, they must tell us how they justify God for suffering this innocent person to die, in order to convince a stubborn and incredulous world of the truth of his mission. We may tell *them*, that God could have made use of means more suited to *our* ideas of rectitude, to convince sceptics who had resisted the power of unexampled miracles, with as much applicability of argument to their notions, as they can urge against our creeds, that a less exceptionable mode of pardoning sinners might have been adopted. If they plead, that the resurrection of Christ removes all idea of injustice from their explanation of this proceeding, we may reply, that, that event is equally justificatory of the righteous dealings of God in our system. According to them, the Resurrection of Christ merely told the world that he was a true prophet; we have the words of an apostle on our side when we add, that it was also the joyful confirmation of our own restoration to divine favour. "Christ is risen from the dead, and therefore our faith is not vain; we are no longer in our sins."\* The Unitarians generally allow, that Christ intercedes for us in Heaven. Is it not as derogatory to the divine attribute of mercy, as measured by our finite reason, that sinners should need an *advocate* and *remembrancer* to move the Almighty to pardon their failings and relieve their wants, as that their offences should require a *ransom*? Into these absurdities and contradictions men are apt to fall, who open the sacred volume with a predetermined idea of making it bend to their own notions, not of humbly learning, and piously submitting to what they are there taught.

If the doctrines of the Trinity,† and the atonement, rest upon a few particular passages of scripture of doubtful

\* 1st Corinthians, 15th chapter, 17th verse.

† The Socinians strongly object to several of the terms and expressions that are used in our church, as unscriptural; especially to this of the Trinity. It is acknowledged, that this word, or any aggregate epitome of this doctrine, is not to be found in holy writ. It is a compendious expression adopted by the early fathers in their controversy with the Heretics who denied this doctrine, as more convenient than a long periphrase.

interpretation, as is the case with the positive decrees that we lately considered,\* it would be incumbent on us to reflect, whether we are not called upon to make concessions for the sake of unity, and even to enter upon a careful revision of our national belief, that we might excise what was unscriptural. But the reverse of this is so far acknowledged by our adversaries, that as they cannot by the most minute investigation, the most subtle arguments, the most strained concessions, and every varied rule of interpretation, get rid of the numerous and stubborn texts which not only press hard upon, but actually annihilate their notions, they have been forced to say, that scripture was early *interpolated* for the purposes of the Trinitarians. No attempt at proving the time or place when this was done has ever been made; indeed, as there is not the smallest historical testimony to support this assertion, they are forced to rest it upon conjecture. They tell us, that marginal notes, written by some partizan of our cause, may have been foisted into the original text, through the ignorance, carelessness, or bigotry of the transcribers. But then all transcripts of the bible must have had these marginal notes, and all transcribers must have acted in concert (a supposition that would prove all the early Christians to have been Trinitarians;) for it is difficult to conceive how these faults in any particular copy, or set of men, could occasion an *exactly similar* change in the thousands of thousand manuscripts of the New Testament that certainly had been in existence previous to the discovery of the art of printing.

The Unitarians again assert, that these mysterious doctrines are often contained in passages evidently parenthetical. Is the parenthesis only used by sacred writers; is it not a common licence adopted by all authors, especially early ones; and has the genuineness of the text of any ancient classic been disputed, merely because of the involution of his sentences? We might further ask, if all, or even the greater

fis. It would not be too great a sacrifice for peace to give up this word, if another equally comprehensive, and of as acknowledged and determinate import, could be substituted by mutual consent. But it is well known, that this is not what our adversaries desire. Their opposition glances from the expression to the doctrine, which is so plainly inculcated in the New Testament that we dare not relinquish it, lest we should incur the curse pronounced on those who diminish from the book. See Rev. 12th chap. 15th verse.

\* Letter V.

part of texts asserting the divinity and the atonement of our Lord are of this description ; but the gross absurdity of a charge, of which they do not attempt to give any proof, scarcely deserves confutation.

Another mode of evasion has also been adopted. We are told, that our present received gospels, &c. are “ far from “ being unchanged, or the only ones given and used here- “ tofore on *equally allowed* authority.” This affirmation must indeed considerably alarm the unlearned female christian, who may well tremble with the apprehension that what she considers as her charter of salvation, is only a mutilated fragment full of errors and unwarranted doctrines ; in short, the composition of priestcraft and fraud, or the melancholy wreck of a clearer and more instructive title to the kingdom of her father. But let her be comforted ; this is an *assertion*, not a *fact*. Other histories of the Life of our Saviour have indeed existed, and other compositions have been attributed to the apostles ; but they were only human imitations of divinely tutored originals ; or the pious, though unauthenticated, compositions of well meaning, but uninspired men ; which never had any authority in the church, though they might be occasionally read by individuals, as we read literary forgeries, or continuations of the works of different authors by inferior hands. Our learned divines have proved, by unanswerable arguments, that though early heretics forged spurious gospels to support their false doctrines, the primitive church detected and disowned them. The quotations made from the gospels and epistles which we now possess, are so numerous in the works of the fathers of the second and third centuries, that they almost amount to a transcript of the New Testament. The interpolation of passages, or change of treatises, which our opponents pretend to have happened, must therefore have taken place in the first century ; that is to say, during the life time of Saint John, who is known to have survived till anno 94 ; and his own gospel, which on the earliest calculation was not written till 70, must have been more interpolated and altered than any other part of scripture, and this even during his life. Till we are shewn an historical record which proves when and how this was done, we will simply answer, *the crime was impossible*.

Another supposition has been started, which it is to be feared may open a new door for controversy ; this is an opinion, that the first three evangelists wrote from some com-

mon document, from which they paraphrastically transcribed their respective gospels. This is the suggestion of a very learned commentator, who, in his desire to produce a perfect harmony among the sacred writers, and to account for every lesser difficulty which a critical scrutiny may find in their narratives, hazarded an opinion, probably without fully appreciating the alarming conclusions that might be drawn from such a concession, sanctioned by such a name. No stronger proof can be given that such a document never existed, than that for eighteen centuries the Christian church has never heard of it. The preface to St. Luke's gospel, about which so much has been lately said, far from warranting the idea of one *fictioned original* history of the life of Christ, positively asserts that many had even then "taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed." Spurious gospels, therefore, existed at that time, as well as the genuine compositions of St. Matthew and St. Mark. The similitude of expression between the evangelists, which induced Mr. Marsh to form this novel and unsatisfactory hypothesis, may, as a periodical writer justly remarks,\* be easily accounted for, by admitting "that they really did all draw from one common source; but that this source was no other than the remembered conversations and miracles of their Lord, which they had often discussed among themselves, and which also the Holy Spirit was promised more especially to bring to their remembrance."

With regard to the verity of the facts recorded in scripture, we may observe, that from what we now know of the spurious narratives of our Lord's life, they all joined in describing the same sort of character, and relating the same great outline of his birth, habits, doctrine, and sufferings. The early enemies of our religion also lend their unwilling testimony to the same events. When Constantine the Great established Christianity as the religion of his extended empire, the works of those who had written against it sunk into gradual contempt, and, it is certain, soon disappeared. Of all that wit and science composed against the verity of our faith, nothing remains, but a few scattered fragments of Celsus and Porphyry, two philosophers, and of the emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate; and these are preserved in the writings of those fathers who *refuted* their er-

\* Anti-Jacobin Review for June, 1805, page 125.



rors. Their arguments are so completely puerile, that they would not now unsettle the weakest Christian; but their testimony to the general truth of our religion is invaluable. For these bitter enemies of Christ, who were desirous that his name should never more be heard among men, and who lived within two, three, or four hundred years of the events recorded in our gospels, acknowledged the identity, sufferings, and miracles of our Lord, and testified the general promulgation of his religion. But the point, which I now wish more particularly to observe, is, that they quoted out of the Gospels, the Acts, and many of the epistles, which we *now* possess, and *not* out of any of those supposititious gospels, &c. which we are now told were of *equal* authority.

I have mentioned to you the name of Michaelis, a most laborious commentator on the original text of the New Testament, which he was anxious to bring to the greatest possible degree of verbal purity. After the most minute investigation, and collation of manuscripts and versions, he observes, "That though the number of passages which assert the mysterious doctrines of Christianity may be lessened by the various readings which occur, the proof is not weakened, when we remember that the manuscripts now in our possession are of various dates and nations, and possessed by persons of various sects and heresies, as well as by the orthodox." He adds, "That the most important readings which make an alteration in sense, relate in general to subjects that have no connexion with articles of faith; by far the greater part are trifling, and make no alteration in the sense." His general conclusion is, "That the sacred writings have been transmitted to us from the earliest times to the present age, without *material alteration*; and that our text, if we except the passages which are rendered doubtful by an opposition in the readings, is the same which proceeded from the hands of the apostles."

You will, I doubt not, cordially rejoice in this testimony, which you must recollect does not come from the pen of a *fair divine*, or the devoted bigot of any sect or establishment; but from a man of uncommon erudition and eager investigation, who seems to have brought to the important study to which he devoted his life, a mind open to conviction, and ready to acquiesce in whatever conclusion truth should compel him to adopt. We unlearned Christians may enjoy the benefit of labours to which we are so unequal; and with

due reverence to the venerable repositories of apostolical inspiration entrusted to our care, let us study the sacred code of life and immortality with double diligence. "To throw away notices from Heaven, because we do not understand them, is like savages throwing gold and jewels into the sea. It is the same, if, in order to avoid difficult discussions, we *lower* them to what we think common sense. Whether we understand God's message or not, it is our business to record it faithfully; and by prayers, sermons, hymns, &c. to imprint it on our minds."\*

We must not, therefore, out of affected respect to the scruples of others, presume to dispute the *terms* on which we are offered the gift of eternal life. Nor can a Liturgical service be framed so as to suit Socinian scruples, with which we *ought* to be contented. It is melancholy, therefore, to discover, that with this society, who call themselves by the name of Christ, we *must* not be in communion. There cannot be "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," with those who may rather be said to fabricate than receive their creed; who deny the most important sense in which Christ is our Lord; and who, in baptism, do not admit that dedication to the blessed Trinity, which, as enjoined by the highest authority, we dare not omit.† With them, the sacrament of the Lord's supper is merely a commemoration of a benefactor; with us, it is a feast upon a sacrifice, or the setting forth of our Lord's death until he come; being as truly designed to indicate and shew our faith in, and reliance on the merits of Christ's death, as the anterior sacrifices of the Mosaic law were designed to convey, to the souls of all who sincerely offered them, the benefits arising from the death of the Lamb of God, slain in the counsels of the Most High before the foundation of the world. The change therefore, to which we are invited in the most specious terms, is not light and trivial; it is not to abandon "a few obsolete creeds, musty articles, and unmeaning forms." It is, to reject the

\* Hey's Lectures.

† The Monthly Reviewers for October 1804, page 216, inquire "what advantage the pious author" of a work then under consideration "can suppose the youthful reader will derive, from being told that the Trinity created the world?" I suppose the youthful reader is one who has been dedicated to the Trinity in baptism. He must therefore derive some valuable information in learning (if he has never before been taught) that the God whom he has vowed to obey is the Creator of all things visible and invisible in Heaven and in Earth.

inward and spiritual meaning of those outward and visible signs which were instituted by Christ himself. It is observed, that the two great doctrines, of atonement, and the Trinity, form the most marked distinctions between the Mahomedan and the Christian faith.\* May the Almighty expedite the fulfilment of those prophecies, which, from present appearances, seem to be rapidly unfolding; and may we, with our mistaken brethren, who have long believed in the lying testimony of the Arabian impostor, meet in social worship before the altar of the true God! but this event cannot be forwarded by our renunciation of the truths which are committed to our charge. Whenever the seven golden candlesticks shall be replaced in the desolated cities of Asia Minor, and the seven angels, purified by afflictions, return with renovated strength to their reedified churches, the song of the thrice holy Lord, and the praises of "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, who was slain and behold he liveth," must echo through the long silent walls, as it did in those early times when true Christianity flourished in those beautiful regions, under the fostering care of the beloved disciple.

You will perhaps be told, that as the Scriptures were written in the east, the lively metaphors, bold allusions, and strained similitudes, which are so congenial to oriental idioms will be made to imply more than was originally intended, if literally translated into our vernacular tongue; and you will be particularly shewn, that the term Son of God has been applied to many created beings. Three passages of scripture will be sufficient to enable you to escape the danger of this cautionary suggestion. Is there any scriptural evidence, that a created being was ever joined with the Almighty in the solemn act of dedication or benediction? The archangel Michael is said to be the guardian angel of the Jews; he is also described as high among the heavenly host, if not the highest. Moses was the most honored of the human race; he was the mediator through whom God made the first solemn covenant with mankind: in this, as well as in his personal and intimate intercourse with the Deity, and in his prophetic and legislative capacity, he is no unfit comparison to our Saviour. Were the infant Israelites dedicated to God, Michael, and Moses? Did God, Michael, and Moses, bless the people? The form of our initiatory sacrament was pre-

\* See Lady W. Montague's Letters, vol. 2d, page 6, 3d Edition.

scribed by Christ himself: "Go ye, therefore, and teach  
 "all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and  
 "of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."\* The apostolical  
 benediction is as decisive: "The grace of our Lord Jesus  
 "Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the  
 "Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."†

Our Lord's reply to the High Priest, as recorded in the  
 fourteenth chapter of St. Mark gives a still stronger attesta-  
 tion of his right to a *peculiar* and *deifying* sonship: "Art thou  
 the Christ, the Son of the Blessed," is the question; to which  
 our Lord answered, "I am," and appealed to the last judg-  
 ment, at which time they should see him visibly enthroned  
 in divine majesty. On which the sanhedrim condemned  
 him to death, *as being guilty of blasphemy*. If the title that our  
 Lord here assumed only meant, as the Socinians say, Messiah  
 or prophet, the Jews would not have condemned him for  
 blasphemy, but imposture. The pretended crime, therefore,  
 for which our Lord was doomed to die, was the declaring  
 himself to be the Son of God in that sense of the word  
 which the most learned of the Jewish nation (who were ac-  
 customed to its other definitions) considered to be *blasphemous*;  
 that is, as assuming the divine nature.‡

But, say some, "Reason can never assure nor strengthen  
 "a faith which is contradictory to it; nor is it possible to  
 "induce an unprejudiced mind to believe, that a wise and  
 "good Creator will ever offer a mode of faith, to regulate  
 "the conduct of his dependant creatures, wholly inconsistent  
 "with, and repugnant to, that faculty with which he has in  
 "a supreme degree endowed them, in order to guide and  
 "direct them in judging of right from wrong." If Chris-  
 tianity, as taught by our national church, really were such a  
 mode, we might doubt how it could be defended. But  
 mysterious, or, as they are sometimes called, unintelligible  
 doctrines, are of two kinds; one of which is above our com-  
 prehension, the other contradictory to our experience or our  
 feelings. It is contradictory to all our received opinions, to  
 make God the author of evil, and delighting in the destruc-  
 tion of his creatures, or willing their damnation from arbi-  
 trary motives. It is contradictory to our senses to say, that

\* Matthew, 28th chapter, 19th verse.

† 2d Corinthians, 13th chapter, 14th verse.

‡ See the 3d chapter of John, 15th verse, which ascribes ubiquity to  
 our Lord.

three are one, and that one is three; but we do not violate any natural or moral sense, when we say, scripture has revealed to us, that with the most perfect unity of counsel in the Godhead, there is a diversity of person; or that the wilful disobedience of Adam so far debased his nature, that it is impossible for his offspring, of themselves, to attain such degrees of piety and holiness, as would gain the approbation of a perfectly pure and righteous God. I am persuaded, that many a sceptic, who starts at these propositions, admits many facts in natural philosophy equally mysterious; I mean equally beyond the clear comprehensions of our limited faculties; and I greatly wonder, that those who reject them on the score of their being contrary to reason and analogy, can yet profess their belief in the properties of magnetism and electricity. If we were commanded to tell why or how these things are so ordered, we might allowably start at what would then really be "a hard saying:" but we are only required to acknowledge that such things *are*, and this on the weight of such evidence as *was never before offered to the world*. Added to this, we are also assured, that as the understanding of an infant by a gradual progress ripens in to the knowledge of the man; "so we, who now can only know in part, shall hereafter know even as we are known."

The evidence on which Christianity is offered to our acceptance, is not disputed by our present adversaries, because they also affect to receive it as an originally divine, but since falsified, revelation. It may, however, be expedient to remind you, that, beside its antecedent attestation, prophecy, and its accompanying testimony, miracle,\* the inimitably conceived and exquisitely original character of our Saviour, so perfectly similar in all the gospels, and so unlike every other that has been exhibited to our view, is to us, in these latter ages, a wonderfully corroborating proof of its divine origin. The sufferings of the first preachers of our faith, its speedy promulgation in defiance of all human methods to oppose its course, the dignity of its sentiments, and the unrivalled purity and precision of its moral precepts, are all circumstan-

\* The miracles of the New Testament, it should ever be remembered, were a series of facts tending to establish a supernatural mission. What is in itself incredible, becomes a proof of divine interposition when referred to some important end. It is thus that the miracles of the gospel were distinguished from all other lying wonders, which are described as tending to no end at all, or to a criminal or trifling purpose.

ces which, when minutely investigated, attest "that this work and counsel came from God."\*

The praise which is justly due to the exalted morality of the gospel, brings me to the point wherein we differ both from the Calvinistic and Socinian school. The former, by supposing man to be so wholly dependant that it is impossible for him even to *assist* in working out his own salvation, by implication accuse our divine instructor of inconsistency, in prescribing a law which, on the one hand, it was impossible for us to obey, and on the other, if we did, would not have rendered us more acceptable to the Deity. The latter, by representing Christ as a mere *moral* teacher, or the prophet of the resurrection and life everlasting, omit the real purpose of his coming upon earth; namely, the redemption of the world. It corresponds with what we should suppose of the infinitely wise and holy God (as our church always acknowledges,) that Christ should instruct his followers in the laws of righteousness; but that this was the ultimate end of our Lord's mission is denied by our best divines; who justly observe, that no *new discoveries can be made in morals*. Our Lord perfected the natural notices of reason and conscience, and increased the knowledge which the Mosaical law had diffused of moral obligation; removing the obligation to purity from visible actions, to the unseen, and almost unacknowledged, intentions of our hearts; teaching us to eradicate the seeds of those evil inclinations which are within us, when they first begin to germinate; and exciting us to holiness, not so much by any particular specific compliance with any prescribed rule, as by a general determination of doing every thing to the glory of God. Yet our Lord did not teach these sublime ethics as a regular system, or as the express purpose for which he was come into the world. Except in a few passages (the sermon on the Mount for instance,) moral improvement seems to rise, incidentally, from reflections that were more intimately connected with his character as the Redeemer of the world. The beautiful parable of the prodigal son was not intended to en-

\* The justly celebrated work of Archdeacon Paley, on the Evidences of Christianity, and the Treatise on the Authenticity of the Scriptures by the learned Mr. Bryant, may here be recommended to the attention of young women, as perspicuous and satisfactory, capable of strengthening their faith, without engaging them in a maze of controversy. Some excellent remarks on the incidents, manners, sentiments, and expressions of the Gospels, may be found in Hey's Lectures, vol. 1st, page 138.

force relenting tenderness to offended fathers ; but to inculcate the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, then first authoritatively preached to the world. To us, the good Samaritan teaches universal benevolence ; but it was originally meant to shew the prejudiced Jew, that the partition wall between him and the Gentile was about to be broken down ; and that even the hated Samaritan, the impostor\* who reviled his religion, the enemy who cruelly triumphed in his distress, † was *virtually* his neighbour.

It will appear, that moral instruction was not the principal purpose of our Lord's mission, by attentively considering the preparatory ministry of the baptist. This extraordinary personage had all the marks of a reformer of merely human origin. Austere in his manners, blameless in his conduct, singular in habit, bold in reproof, superior even to the innocent indulgences of natural appetite, unawed by danger, unfeduced by flattery, he "preached in the wilderness the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." No system of ethics could be more strict than the Baptist's, no reprover of vice could be more free from sinister designs or criminal indulgences. From the despised, and almost infamous publican, with whom the meanest Jew scorned to associate, to Herod on the throne of tributary royalty, his penetrating eye discovered vice, and his energetic voice boldly reprov'd it, and enjoined the opposite course of virtue and integrity. When we consider that this new Elias was foretold by prophecy and prefigured by type, that his birth was miraculous, and that he too died in confirmation of the doctrine he taught, why, may we not ask, did we need another moral teacher to repeat the same precepts and endure similar sufferings ? Yet we have all the testimony that the positive assertion of scripture can give, to shew that the baptism of John was insufficient to salvation. Himself acknowledges the inferiority of his introductory office. With all the noble candour suited to his exalted merit, he anticipates and rejoices in the future triumphs of him who was to eclipse his fame and supersede his office. "He it is," said the magnanimous Ascetic, "who, coming after me, is preferred before me. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom ; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth

\* St. John, 4th chapter, 22d verse.

† Nehemiah, 4th chapter 8th verse.

“greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. This my joy, “therefore, is fulfilled.” He refers every inquirer to the true Messiah, whose coming he was merely to announce; and so entire was his conquest over the most lively passions of human nature, that he sends two of his own converts to Christ, with this sublime intimation, “Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.”\* The insufficiency of repentance, without faith in Christ, is clearly affirmed in two passages of the Acts; namely, the 18th chapter, 25th and 26th verses; and the 19th chapter and 2d verse; where it is judged necessary, that those converts who had only received the former (or John’s) baptism, should have the way of God expounded to them more perfectly, and receive the initiatory rite of the Christian faith.

The eternity of hell torments, is a subject upon which we differ from the Socinians; and many persons, who reject the other errors of that sect, entertain a hope, that after a certain period, when the punishment of sinners can no longer answer the purpose of deterring offenders, it will not be continued as a means of vengeance. Dr. Hey observes, that it is owing to the moderation of our Church, that her ministers are not called upon to *subscribe* to this doctrine of eternal torments, which was part of the original articles in the reign of Edward the sixth.

The terms everlasting death, everlasting fire, and other similar expressions in our liturgy, are taken from scripture; and whether they are to be considered in their full tremendous import, or in the more limited sense of long duration, I presume not to determine. I think (with submission to the learning and piety of those who have descanted upon this awful subject) this is one of those secret purposes of God into which it is *presumptuous* to attempt to penetrate. Our interpretation of his decree in this point will not affect its nature or duration; and if the terrors of eternal punishment are found insufficient to deter sinners from guilt, or to awaken them to repentance, surely holding forth more lenient prospects may tend to encourage them in sin; and what excuse will they, who suggest these false hopes, make at the day of judgment, if they shall then be found to have proceeded without the warranty of scripture, and only on those notions of *reasonableness* and *expediency* which must be futile when opposed by the express word of God? We may fur-

\* See Bishop of London’s Lectures on the Gospel of St. Matthew.



ther observe, that these threatenings to sinners are couched in the *same terms*, in respect to duration, with the promises of eternal life to the righteous; and as we hope that millions of years will not diminish the happiness of the blessed, may we not fear that the sufferings of the impenetrably wicked will be commensurate? At least, let us rest assured, that the wrath of a long suffering and placable God, when roused by obstinate and determined guilt, must be infinitely terrible. We do not limit his mercy by exhorting all men to fear his vengeance. The charge, that we take delight in gloomy doctrines, and deliver our fellow-creatures to endless damnation without remorse, is equally false and injurious. Our voice at the day of judgment will be lifted up in imploring pardon for ourselves, not in imprecating punishment on others; and if our Clergy refuse to disguise or to palliate the threatened terrors of the Lord, and dissuade men from dangerous speculations, it is not from cruelty or bigotry, but from that christian charity which seeks to enlarge the kingdom of the blessed. No man was ever driven from religion by believing the *threatenings* of the Almighty.

The future state of the heathen world, is another subject on which much discussion has arisen. I know not that it is properly connected with the present controversy; for I believe our church has not officially declared any further opinion on the subject, than what is contained in the eighteenth article; namely, that "we cannot be saved by obedience to the laws or religion we profess; but, solely, by the merits of Christ." This most scriptural doctrine has been strained by our adversaries into a positive sentence of damnation to the whole heathen world; but the charge only proves, that they who bring it are tyros in theology. Why we are saved, and by what we shall be judged, are very distinct inquiries. "There is no other name under Heaven by which men can be saved but that of Jesus Christ;" but it is certain, "he died for all the world;"\* and we are also assured, "that the Judge of all the earth will do right." At the great day of audit, we Christians shall be judged by the holy law that we have received; the Jews,† by their preparatory covenant; the Gentiles, by the law of nature.

\* Article 31st. This article should be compared with the 18th, which it illustrates.

† This is only meant of those Jews who lived before the coming of Christ, or who have never heard of the Messiah.

We are only concerned with what relates to our own state ; but if curiosity prompt us to search further, the 11th of St. Matthew's gospel 21st verse, the 12th chapter 41st and 42d verses, and Romans the 2d chapter 11th and following verses, will shew us by what rules justice will be meted to the heathen world. Our reformers were too well versed in scripture to overlook such plain testimony ; but we cannot wonder that the Socinians should endeavour to misrepresent the eighteenth article ; it being framed against the Pelagian heresy, of which their's is a branch.

I will now request your candid attention to a few remarks on the wonderful coincidence between the covenants of grace, the ordinary dealings of Divine Providence, and the works of nature. I make them with a full consciousness of my own inadequacy to the subject ; which yet appeared to me to be too striking and apposite to be wholly omitted in a work of this kind, intended for readers to whom popular topics are most useful. What I say, may probably induce others to meditate on what must confirm their faith, and to pursue the inquiries which must present themselves to their minds, till they shall become able to give suitable answers to gainfayers, who are generally more competent to *make* than to *answer* objections. I am convinced, that if this species of argument were pursued with the learning and ability necessary to give it full force,\* a deist would find it difficult to decry revelation on the ground of its being opposite to the divine attributes ; and he must either take refuge in the deep gloom of atheism, or acknowledge that, as the most High speaks the same language in his revealed will, as he does in the visible creation, the holy scriptures bear indubitable marks of proceeding from the Creator of the world.

It has been asked, why, if so many blessings and privileges are annexed to the profession of Christianity, it has been so limited in its extent ? why do not all the nations of the earth, why did not all past generations rejoice in the rising of this Sun of righteousness ? It has been answered, that if Christians are blessed with a purer law and better promises, they also incur a more fearful responsibility. They are the servants entrusted with ten talents, while only one is committed to the charge of pagan ignorance. But may not the naturalist ask these sceptics to account why the earth is not

\* The Author has heard that Butler's Analogy proceeds on this plan. She regrets, not having read it.

one temperate zone? why the vegetating powers of light and heat are unequally bestowed; so that the inhabitants of Africa scorch beneath a vertical sun, while the human stature shrinks to dwarfish deformity, and the mind chills into idiotic insensibility, in the polar regions, where the summer sun, enveloped in mist, and shorn of his golden effulgence, creeps in a narrow circle along the distant verge of the horizon,\* and gives a long protracted day, that affords neither variety, plenty, nor that sweet vicissitude of rest, and toil, which the quick succession of day and night bestows on happier climates? Are the Esquimaux and the Greenlanders offspring of another Creator; or, is "the God of all the families of the earth," to them only a severe and cruel Lord, instead of a kind and indulgent parent? The naturalist will receive a similar answer to what the vindicators of Christianity have given. These apparently miserable beings have their peculiar joys. The story of the Greenlander who pined in captivity, and repeatedly attempted to escape from all the comforts of a milder climate and civilized life, proves that we do not indulge a merely poetical fancy, when we describe them as attached to "their long night of revelry and ease." Yet we must allow, that to our judgment there is a great apparent inequality of blessings; and if we be wise, we shall not pursue this subject into insolent cavils against the impartial justice of God, but rest in saying, "secret things belong to the Most High."

Corresponding to this is my next observation. Why, it has often been asked, was the seed of Abraham selected as the peculiar people of God, and honored with a clearer notion of the divine nature than other nations who appeared to be more deserving? Ingenious Greece, martial Rome, learned Egypt, and refined Persia, served gods of wood and stone, images of the most licentious of mortals, or even resemblances of brute beasts and creeping things; while "a stiffnecked stubborn generation," undistinguished in the history of the world, the illiberal prejudiced inhabitants of a narrow slip of land, without power, arts, or commerce, were made the repositories of the laws and promises of God.

We might answer, that, as the Jews are the only early nation

\* See this circumstance beautifully described in Acerbi's Travels, who viewed this awful appearance of the sun from the lofty promontory that forms the northern extremity of Lapland.

of whom we possess an *impartial* history, it is very probable that they were not so much inferior to their cotemporaries as is supposed; but, on the contrary, as their prophets recorded their crimes and disgraces for example's sake, while other historians chiefly dwell on the renown and the virtues of their countrymen, we have reason to think that these despised people really might possess more merit than those who have been so highly extolled, though they fell far short of that holiness which their peculiar endowments required. Martial celebrity, in particular, it is well known, rarely increases the moral virtues of any people. But, waving this defence, we direct the objector's attention to the ordinary dispensations of Providence, and ask him to tell us why are wisdom, strength, beauty, learning, taste, riches, power, and any other endowment of mind or body, or any relative advantage, so diversely, and, as it should seem, capriciously bestowed; since often they neither reward nor accompany desert, but, on the other hand, frequently seem to be more of a trial than a blessing to their immediate possessor? Few men were more eminently endowed with graces and talents than our illustrious Crammer; yet from the period of his attracting the notice of the capricious and tyrannical Henry, till, at the mandate of that bloodthirsty monarch's more cruel daughter, our venerable archbishop expired in tortures, his days were consumed by continual anxiety, peril, and sorrow; for he held his domestic comforts, and even his life, by the most dubious and uncertain tenure. May we not say, that he was raised up by Providence as an extraordinary instrument to forward the work of reformation in this country; and that his wonderful endowments were more a blessing to others than to himself, at least so far as relates to this state of existence? This is one instance, but thousands might be given, of superior abilities *instrumentally* bestowed, from which the possessor reaped little *individual* advantage or enjoyment. Other equally numerous cases might be suggested, in which, though the gift was evidently misapplied and ill bestowed, it was not withdrawn; especially the gift of power, of which we have seen in these days a fearful example; the ability of doing further injury, appearing to increase with the misapplication of the means of doing good. If all these instances do not impugn our belief in the general government of a wise and good Providence, why should our faith be staggered (allowing the Jews to have been as unworthy as their enemies represent,) because the lively oracles of God were en-

trusted to a people who reaped comparatively few advantages from the sacred deposit; and who, though they were alternately rebellious apostates and miserable captives, yet approved themselves equal to the task that was required of them, by faithfully preserving their sacred trust.

The analogy between all the various parts of animated and inanimate nature; the suitability of parts to the whole, and of the whole to parts; the fitness of each element to the creatures that inhabit it; the admirable appropriation of labour to day, and rest to night; these and various other coincidences in the works of God are admirably delineated by a Christian philosopher, with whose instructive and popular work on Natural Theology every young woman above the lower classes would do well to be intimately acquainted; for it teaches us, that God is the God of order, and that design, *minute intricate* design, pervades every branch of creation. And shall the sceptic scoffingly question the divine authority of the Jewish ceremonial law, because it seems derogatory from his notion of the dignity of the high and holy One who inhabits eternity, to specify the forms and dimensions of the curtains, the rings, the candlesticks, the sockets, the bars, the shovels, the fleshhooks, and the firepans, that were to be used in his sanctuary; or the ephod, breastplate, embroidery, and mitre of his consecrated high priest? Idle reviler of what thou dost not understand, this is the same God who formed the proboscis of a bee with such just proportion, and who painted the tufted crest of a gnat with such diversified colours. It is by a thousand imperceptible, yet nicely adjusted, mechanical contrivances, seemingly as unimportant in the wide system of universal nature, that thou art now able to raise thy voice against him who endowed thee with ability to employ the exquisitely organized muscles which constitute that property.

I will here stop to make a remark rather than a comparison. Scientifical observations generally ascend in a climax from the least perfect to the most highly finished. Is it in imitation of the order of creation, or is this coincidence (as I suspect) an undesigned analogy? The book of Genesis was written before system and arrangement were established among the learned; yet let us observe the gradation in which the various productions of the earth appeared; first grass, then herbs and plants, trees, fishes, birds, beasts; and lastly, man. The scale gradually rises in importance, and ends in the delegated Lord of animated nature.

It is asked, why was God's design of redeeming the world so long enveloped in obscurity, and at last so partially and cautiously revealed? Should it not, instead of being darkly shadowed in metaphor, type, and allegory, imparted in prophetic visions to a few individuals, and, as it should seem, *shrouded* in mystery from the generality of mankind, have been proclaimed by angels, announced by astonishing prodigies, and *forced* by incontestable attestations on an assenting world? We may answer, that faith, like virtue, must have its trials; and that when incontrovertible evidence bears down opposition, acquiescence has no claim to approbation. But very high authority\* permits me to recognize a similitude between this gradual developement of the Christian covenant, and the slow perfectionating of the natural world. I shall confine my observations to the progressive state of the human understanding from childhood to manhood. Why are we brought into the world less perfect in respect to our nature, and more dependant, than any other creature; feeble and helpless in body; imbecile, and almost idiotic, in mind? Who, in the irritable and tender infant, which appears to be only alive to animal sensations, can trace the dawning genius of a Milton, or the clear intellect of a Newton? and when the understanding begins to unfold, how slow is its progress! A fifth part of the active period of our lives is consumed in the mere acquisition of elementary knowledge, and another fifth nearly transpires in connecting and methodizing those acquisitions, in gaining a complete knowledge of the trade or profession by which we are to earn our livelihood, or in obtaining that acquaintance with men and things which is called experience. Would it not have been more suitable to the dignity and happiness of a rational creature, at least would it not have conduced much more to the improvement of the arts and sciences, if we had come into the world with all our faculties perfect, and capable of being immediately exerted on the stage of trial? It would be impossible to doubt but God *could* have thus formed us. We are also sure, that if he had so pleased, the obedience of the second Adam might have immediately succeeded to the offence of the first. In either instance, it seemed good to the Almighty to determine otherwise. And as the wants of human nature in infancy exercise the tenderness and patience of mature age; so may we say in respect to the promulga-

\* The Bishop of St. David's.

tion of Christianity, such a degree of evidence has been imparted as is sufficient to *exercise* the faith, not to *overwhelm* the understanding, of probationary beings.

It is universally allowed by those who have thought deeply upon the subject, that the pure and sublime doctrines of Christianity are most suited to a highly civilized and improved state of society. It was therefore withheld from the dark eyes of the early world, when man first felt the fatal consequences of "that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste brought death into the world, and all our woe." Abandoned in a great measure by supernatural aid, and left to his own misrule, man slowly and by painful experience gathered those fruits of knowledge for which he had forfeited the tree of life. Our religion (we urge this in triumph to our enemies) was produced to mankind at a time when human intellect had exerted all its capability, when science, learning, acuteness, and curiosity, had reached its height. Like the more abstruse and recondite parts of learning, it was adapted to the *manhood* of the world. Whether, from some subtle mechanical arrangement that has eluded human research, it is a necessary part of the present formation of our souls to unfold their powers slowly, and expand with the extension of the corporal frame in which they are incased, it is improbable that any anatomist will be able to discover while he himself is in the body; but, allowing (as most political observers do) that the stages of society correspond with those of the individual in gradual amelioration and decay, we must acknowledge that our Saviour, by appearing in the Augustan age, chose the period most favourable to the investigation and reception of his doctrines. The text that terms him "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," will here be present to your mind; and you will remember it is expressly revealed, that the *benefits* of his sacrifice were *retrospective* as well as *future*.

The apparent dissolution and revivification of seed in the earth, is compared to the restoration of man from the grave, by the inspired Apostle of the Gentiles, with all the bold illustration of sublime simplicity. No comparison can be more just, no analogy more convincing, and (we may also say) consolatory. Those precious relics, my dear Miss M——, which *we* have seen committed to the earth, would, if now exposed to inspection, disgust our loathing eye, and excite at once grief and horror. But they contain the apparently perished, though really unfolding, seed of immortality. Or,

to change the figure, the exuvia of (in the instance to which I allude, the strongest expressions of christian hope are permissible) a *glorified being*, who at the hour determined in the counsels of the Most High shall burst from its incrusting mass of corruption, and rise to its promised blessedness. You have often watched the torpid chrysalis, which is another expressive symbol of the state of mortality. Could you, unless experience had prepared you for the event, expect a beautiful winged animal to burst from that shapeless and inert mass? When you see the earth desolate and disconsolate in winter, could you, without previous notice, conceive that its present dreary and inanimate appearance was only a *suspension* of its productive powers, or that the great work of vegetation was even then proceeding in the seemingly withered fibres of the naked plants that surround you? We are so prepared to expect these events, that we cease to think them surprizing; but their constant recurrence should teach us to rest with undoubting confidence in the promises of that God, who has assured us, that, like the grain we cast into the earth, our mortal bodies will most *truly* live after they have *seemed* to die.

My next observation rather relates to the dispensations of Providence in the relative situation of mankind, than to an express doctrine of revelation; but as the conditions of high and low, rich and poor, are sanctioned by the authority of holy writ, which propounds to each rank its respective and distinguishing duties, and also by the testimony of our only authentic account of the infant world, which assures us that such distinctions have taken place from the earliest times; it will not be foreign to my purpose to call your attention to the various gradations, both in rank and value, that are visible in the creation, and the close connection between the respective orders, with the advantages which are mutually derived from this difference of destination and diversity of faculties. If our observations commence in the celestial regions, we shall not only perceive, in the language of St. Paul, that "one star differeth from another star in glory;" but we shall also, by means of the mechanical instruments that have assisted the wonderful discoveries of astronomy in latter times, ascertain that they differ also in size, quality, and use. One star is a globe of ignited matter ever burning, yet never consumed; another, a dense opaque substance, resembling (as far as our distant inspection can discover) the orb on which we reside. These latter revolve (shall we say



*clateously* or *advantageously* ? ) around the vivifying centre from which they in "their golden urns draw light." Again, as the most perfect order is observed in their motions, so there seems to be a difference in the properties bestowed upon them, which points out their relative rank in the creation; for while the comparatively diminutive orb of Mercury scorches in the vicinity of that immense luminary which enforces his near attendance by a more powerful exercise of the magnetic influence of attraction; Saturn, and the newly discovered Georgium Sidus, fixed near the outer verge of the space which our Sun illuminates, as diligently perform their stupendous rotations around a spheroid, which, if their worlds and the visual organs of their supposed inhabitants, are constituted like ours, affords them but little more light and comfort than we derive from the scintillations of the dog-star. Yet are these solitary and cheerless regions governors (may I not use this term to indicate commanding influence?) of several opaque attendants, who respectively await on them, and afford, by their mutually refracted light, those advantages which their remote situation from the common centre would not otherwise allow them to enjoy.

The same law of distinction of degree, and reciprocity of benefit, extends through every rank of *created* being. The benefits which we derive from the animal creation are too many, and too well known, to need any enumeration. Nor can it be doubted, but that, while man fulfils his original design of being the ruler, not the tyrant of the visible world, all domestic creatures who have submitted to his government derive many comforts from his prescience and humane attention to their wants and misfortunes. You will, perhaps, think me degenerating into sophistry, or trifling, and quote against me the couplets of Pope, "Man exclaims, see all things for my use; See man for mine, &c.;" but certainly it is not merely for his own species that man labours. "The birds of heaven will vindicate their grain;" and in a well cultivated country the most valuable and useful, as well as the most happy tribes of irrational existence receive an amazing increase. Do we not also see, in all animals submitted to our minute observation, degrees of beauty, symmetry, strength, swiftness, and, in many, diversity of understanding? The inference is plain, and strictly applicable to the variety of talent, fortune, and happiness which is proportioned among the human race. In this respect, certainly, God made men to differ; since by their diversity of rank the world is made

capable of containing a larger number of inhabitants, and all are bound together by that chain of mutual convenience and dependance which, if rightly considered, must prepare our minds not only for mere benevolence, but for the exercise of that sublime virtue Christian charity. I will conclude this observation by reminding you, that as revelation always presupposes natural religion, this order and cohesion of all the parts of creation was one of those striking notices of the Deity which St. Paul often reproves his heathen converts for not having regarded.\*

I wish here to introduce an idea that floats in my mind, but of the philosophical or theological precision of which I dare not be confident. I will preface it with a remark of Dr. Hey's, who observes,† that "he recollects nothing in the account Moses gives of the creation, that is *contrary* to modern discoveries in the planetary system." This seems a wonderful confirmation of the divine origin of the pentateuch, especially considering the state of science at the time he wrote, and that revelation was not intended to improve it. I offer it as my humble opinion, that the modern conclusion respecting the probability of a plurality of *inhabited* worlds, is rather strengthened than weakened by holy writ. Near two hundred generations of men have finished their mortal course since the creation of this earth. We are assured, that the souls of all these exist either in happiness or misery, waiting their reunion to their seemingly annihilated bodies; the particles of which must, after having passed through a variety of mutations, now form no inconsiderable part of this terrestrial globe. Of the nature and wants of spiritual existence, we know very little. Scripture informs us, that angels are spirits, and gives us frequent accounts of their *visibly* ministering to mankind. Whether they assumed the appearance of a bright glorified body, in compliance with our limited organs of perception; or whether such a body be a constituent part of their existence, we know not. We generally find, that the description of an angelical vision includes the circumstance of their being clothed in white or shining garments; and they are frequently said to have partaken of those earthly aliments which contribute to the sup-

\* See Romans, 1st chapter, 19th verse.

† Hey's Lectures, vol. 1st. page 196. This observation may be extended to what St. Paul says of the apparent glory of the stars; it being equally true of their real superiority of purpose.

port of our gross and material bodies. "Angel's food" is more than once mentioned in scripture, especially as a descriptive epithet of that sustenance which fed the children of Israel in the wilderness. These may be all symbolical allusions, or assumed properties adapted to our present perceptions, or they may be real notices of the state of the invisible world. Supposing them to be the latter, I do not see how we can oppose them by those conclusions of any essential difference between matter and spirit, which arise merely from our having only analyzed the former quality as far as we can discover its inherent principles in this world. He surely would be a hardy chymist who should assert, that material substance may not be so modified in other parts of the universe as to conduce to the preservation of spirit or glorified matter, and that (according to the sublime painting of the apocalypse) "the trees of heaven may not bring forth fruit" meet for the sustenance of its blessed inhabitants. The fine poetical use which Milton makes of this scriptural description is too well known to require quotation; especially as I am cautious of warming your imagination, where I wish to recommend the utmost humility of devout inquiry.

The conclusion that presents itself to my mind is, that *many* worlds like our own are necessary for the inhabitation of *past* generations of the human race. Supposing that there are more probationary beings than ourselves, we shall soon find inmates for the numerous globes which we have every reason to believe roll their fully peopled regions through the immensity of space, beside those happy glorious beings who neither die nor are born, and those depraved spirits, who have fallen from their original purity, and are become the accusers and seducers of their fellow-creatures, and who probably may be allowed to wander from orb to orb till confined to some fearful region of punishment by the sentence of the last day. It seems to enlarge our conception of the immensity and coincidence of the Almighty's designs, and of the primitive dignity of man\* (which is never wholly obliterated, and is capable of being completely restored by the divine mercy,) to consider this minute point of the vast creation as a mother country sending out her colonies to people the starry regions. But I am so well aware of the danger

\* True piety will not cavil at this expression: It was for man that the King of Glory died.

and mischief that arises from a desire of starting new ideas, and I am so little capable of appreciating the conclusions that may be drawn from this opinion, that I merely suggest it because it seemed to me to be capable of silencing some objections against the scriptures, on the score of their being contrary to philosophical deductions.

I am indebted, for one analogy, to a writer with whose works I have already taken great liberty. After acknowledging that the original autographs of Scripture do not exist, Dr. Hey observes,\* “Let no one be discouraged by this : “the Author of nature may be, nevertheless, the Author of “the gospel ; for we are left to take the bad consequences “of the carelessness of mankind in the things of nature, as “well as in the dispensations of grace. Those who are dis- “couraged by human accidents happening to the sacred “writings, seem to mistake the nature of what is called a “particular providence.” You will permit me to dilate this comprehensive idea. Conformably to the covenant with Noah, summer and winter, seed time and harvest, have never ceased since the flood ; and thus God preserved a witness of his existence during the night of Pagan ignorance and depravity. But to compel men to improve these dispensations with industry and intelligence, would have been to bind “human will, as well as nature, fast in fate.” The seasons return in their accustomed course ; but plenty and famine are often made to depend *instrumentally* upon human exertion or skill ; and thus, though the original promise has remained unbroken, its consequences have been partially suspended. The earth has never experienced an annihilation of fecundity by a suspension of its products. She seemed but to wait for the necessary contingents, to command “her vallies to laugh and sing” beneath the burden of her plentiful crops. Husbandmen can tell you, that she proves a most trusty deposit to whatever species of vegetation has been committed to her care. A state of pasturage is so unfavourable to the growth of some species of plants, that they are never found in grass grounds ; but let the plough be introduced, and the torpid seeds that have lain beneath the surface perhaps for a longer period than the life of man, exert their germinating power, and in a few harvests they will produce a crop that shall almost equal in quantity the lately introduced grain. Your attention to horticulture has taught you the extreme

\* Hey's Lectures, vol. 1st, page 37.

difficulty, if not absolute impossibility, of eradicating indigenous plants, which, though never suffered to reach maturity, are continually threatening to overpower the flowers that you wished to cultivate. Thus careful is the God of nature of all even her meanest productions, which are very rarely destroyed either by the carelessness or the purposes of man. The observation extends to animal life: those tribes of creatures who, from their minuteness, defencelessness, or disgusting qualities, seem most in danger of being annihilated, are preserved by superabundant fecundity.\* It has been questioned, whether any species of plant or animal has entirely disappeared since the creation. If we contrast this doubt with the discoveries or inventions of man, how vast is the difference!

We will not fall into an error that we condemn, by giving *identity* to a *quality*. The preservation of all the numerous tribes of animal and vegetable life does not depend upon the *care of nature*, but on *the power of God*. Scripture and ecclesiastical history afford us equal proof, that he is the same God who says all his "counsels shall stand, and that he will do all his pleasure," by the extraordinary protection he has afforded to his *written word* and *visible church*. In your biblical studies you will meet with ample occasions to remark, how often the true church has been snatched like a burning brand out of the fire, when the malice of her enemies, or the corruption of her members, threatened her immediate destruction. The remark of Michaelis on the almost miraculous preservation of every essential point of faith and doctrine, amid the numerous transcripts of scripture that have been made by ignorant, prejudiced, or careless transcribers, leads me to reflect on the extraordinary continuation of Christianity, amidst the general wreck of arts and learning which followed the overthrow of the Roman empire by the northern barbarians in the fifth century, when every thing else that was useful and elegant was obliterated by those fierce conquerors. We may again observe, that the reformed religion, emerging from papal corruption and tyrannical restraint, was truly analogous to the revivification of seed that has been long buried in the earth; and though the greater part of those who *then* laboured in the Lord's heritage seemed more desirous to *burn* the wheat than to *root* out the tares, the care of the celestial Sower was wonderfully exemplified.

\* See Paley's Natural Theology, page 385.

Amid the terrors of persecution, renovated Christianity grew and flourished, and seemed, as in her early trials, to be refreshed and enriched by the blood of martyrs. In these times of peril, when the enemy tempts us with external prosperity and internal discord, it will be consolatory to us to recollect the positive assurances of scripture, that the church of God, when founded on the rock of Christ, cannot be overthrown. Vain are the machinations of infidel adversaries, vain are the wicked devices of false brethren. "The counsels of the Holy One of Israel are from everlasting." I need not inform you, that here, as in other parts of scripture, the epithet Israel does not imply the descendants of Abraham; but the ancient church, to which the first covenant was addressed, and which, on the death of Christ, gave place to the Christian.

We might extend our inquiries very far; but, however instructive the research would prove, the space that I am called upon to allot to other subjects will not permit me to extend this topic. Enough has been said to prove the similitude which I wished to enforce. The Creator and Governor of the world is the God of revelation: a God of order, wisdom, justice, and mercy; but a God who "hideth himself, and whose ways are past finding out." To this scientific philosophizing age he says, as he did in early times to the Arabian sages, "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. Where wert thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding."

When all the mysteries of visible nature are satisfactorily solved, not by the use of *abstract indefinite* terms, not by ascribing power to *inert* matter, nor by a reference to the laws of qualities that are acted upon, instead of acting; but by explanations suited to the comprehensions of plain understandings; we may then debate upon the expediency of rejecting the mysteries relating to that part of revelation which "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." When we know why the loadstone attracts only one metal, why a thin covering of silk repels a subtile fluid which can penetrate the most dense bodies, nay even when we can analyze ourselves and name the organ of consciousness, or dissect the minute vessels of intellectual perception, we may with less apparent audacity talk of the supremacy of sovereign reason, and refuse to admit as truths what we cannot *fully* comprehend.

In many instances, we see only the immediate agent by which God acts in the material world. In many things we discover infinite care and pains employed for apparently a trivial purpose; but as we enlarge our researches, and extend them into the more abstruse parts of nature, we become convinced that means and ends are so blended, that nothing can be said to be independent; and that what appears in itself unimportant, really is a necessary part of some superior contrivance, which also fills a subordinate station in a yet more *consequential* design. Providence acts by the same rules in human affairs. No one (unless, like Mrs. Wolstonecraft's lawless planets, they rush madly from their sphere) lives for himself. We are formed for society; and in society we must act, or be wretched. Nothing but incurable, and, I may add, criminally indulged sorrow, or the strong enthusiasm of abstracted devotion, can support the miseries, the destitution, and the privations of total seclusion.

And is not Christianity, as taught by our church, a humanizing, a social, and benevolent theory? Admitting the consequences of Adam's transgression to imply that total depravity which is ascribed to us by those of our divines who have leaned to Calvin's notions, and that these really were the original tenets of our church\* (a fact which our present, as well as our former opposers would find it *impossible* to prove,) even here we shall find, that a remedy has been provided commensurate to the disease. The hatred of the Almighty to sin (so strongly marked by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ) is not more alarming, than the proof of his mercy to sinners, which that event confirms, is consolatory: what right then have those, who affect to be distinguished by the name of Unitarians, to say, as is done in the periodical work which is considered as their organ,† “that as long as the “prevailing religion of a country is blended with gloom, it “will be no easy matter to induce parents to bring up children under convictions contrary to their own impressions?” Equally insidious is their more recent declaration, “that “they thought the question of the divinity of Christ had “been set at rest for ever.” Their subsequent critic on a learned work, which adds fresh confirmation to this doc-

\* The church of England is not founded in exact conformity to the doctrines of any reformer. The *errors* of Luther and Calvin were alike rejected, as was the rigid system of Zuinglius.

† See monthly Review for August 1802, page 413.

trine, by shewing the peculiar use of the definitive article in the Greek language, forbids us to look upon the preceding remark as a confession of their having recanted their former opinions; and they certainly are not ignorant, that this doctrine has received the strongest confirmation by researches into Asiatic antiquities; by more acute investigation of the septuagint copy of the pentateuch; by the labours of Michaelis, who has so carefully inspected the various versions of the New Testament; and by the masterly disquisitions of many of our own divines, especially by several eminent ornaments of episcopacy who have lately turned their attention to the fundamental doctrines of our church. It is by such bold remarks, and unfounded assertions, that they often shake the principles of the uninformed; and it is by decrying the utility of orthodox instruction, that they hope to recommend their own system of faith to the easy assent of the credulous.

Our dispute with our present opponents about church government, and established forms of worship, proceeds upon the principles that we had before occasion to discuss. We may briefly repeat the remark, that as union is *enjoined* by Christ, disunion is a *breach* of his command. The direct form of Christian worship is not absolutely stated in the New Testament; but numerous ceremonies were positively commanded in the Old; and we know that the orders of our hierarchy,\* and many of our liturgical forms, usages, and customs, expressly correspond with those of primitive times, to which the apostles in their epistles frequently allude. No society can exist without government; and God has not only blessed society for the ordinary uses of life, but it is to a *firmly united society, that his gospel promises are especially made.*

We will sum up all that we have said in answer to those who reject our established faith because it contains mysteries which are above our comprehension, by repeating the remark, that this is the strongest internal testimony that the revelation on which it is founded proceeds from the Author of Nature. Incomprehensibility may, in this sense, be con-

\* Dr. Hill, who writes in Support of the Scotch Presbyterian church, argues strongly in favour of the union of church and state. He admits, that in the second century the office of bishop was separated from that of presbyter, and applied as episcopalians now use it. In the first century *we* can name, as bishops, Titus at Crete, Timothy at Ephesus, Epaphroditus at Philippi, and the seven angels of the seven churches of Asia Minor. None of these were apostles.



sidered as the attesting seal of the Most High ; for could we have received that manifestation of our Creator as being really of divine origin, which lowered the ineffable and infinite nature of the Deity to the bounded capacity of fallible man ? It is true, our reason is capable of progressive improvement ; but by that very circumstance it is confessedly unfit, in our present infancy of existence, to contain ideas commensurate to the unbounded essence of the Power who bestowed upon us this wonderful faculty. In the management of this our prime distinction from the brute creation, the humility of a true Christian is exemplified ; for a mind duly impressed with sentiments of piety and veneration will alike fear to reject the notices of Heaven, or to pry into “ those secret things” which must in this world remain unknown.

Believe me, my dear Miss M——, your most affectionate, &c.

## LETTER VIII.

*On the Duty of studying the Scriptures, and on Religious Conformity.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

**HISTORY** presents such numerous examples of the disgusting extravagancies into which religious fanaticism has betrayed probably well intentioned people, as are sufficient to deter a prudent and considerate person from venturing to forsake “the old paths,” by adopting or inventing new and strange opinions. The word of God does not countenance that rage for novelty which is a marked characteristic of these times. In the history of four thousand years, only two changes in the religious system of the world are recorded. Both were predicted by prophecy, both were confirmed by miracle; and the former was expressly prelude of the second, which is as plainly declared to be final.

Instead, therefore, of there being any real reproach in the terms “obsolete,” “antiquated,” and “musty,” which I have seen applied to the doctrines and constitutions of our Church by some of her enemies, who possess more zeal than elegance or argument, she claims a superior share of consideration on the very ground of her being a *faithful repository* of *old* doctrines, and of having fashioned her constitution to as close a resemblance of primitive rules as the present habits of the world will admit. For, though scriptural knowledge is most eminently requisite, it should not be the *only* qualification of those who undertake the arduous office of uniting a mixed multitude in one associated congregation, for the purpose of Christian worship and edification. How eminently our reformers were distinguished by these essential ingredients, knowledge of the human heart, and political wisdom, need not be stated to any who are in the least versed in the history of those times. They had indeed two peculiar advantages; they were assisted in their efforts by the civil power, and they were warned by the previous miscarriages of several reformers on the continent, who, conceiv-

ing zeal to be the one thing needful in the great work that they had undertaken, discarded expediency; and, being heated by persecution and opposition, fancied that pulling down an old fabric was similar to erecting a new one. Forgetting that all human societies must be accommodated to the imperfections and necessities of the fallible beings of whom they are composed; in their attempt to fabricate a religious establishment on the basis of ideal perfection, and uncomplying austere simplicity, they opened a door for the grossest enthusiasm and wildest misrule. Their notions of Christian liberty led them to exclude the authority of the civil magistrate; and thus they rushed into the enormities of open rebellion. They extended their notion of the obligation of charity to that communion of goods, which, except in times that are guided by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit, must produce idleness, extravagance, and extreme poverty. They construed the prohibition of swearing so literally, as to refuse taking an oath in a court of justice, which has been considered by the wisest law givers as the surest guard of the life and property of ourselves and others. They denied the lawfulness even of *defensive* war; and thus, by laying themselves open to the assaults of every enemy, virtually surrendered to aliens that liberty which they so scrupulously guarded from the regulations that their lawful rulers sought to impose; and by an erroneous and strained interpretation of the sixth commandment, they declared against the legality of capital punishment, even for the most atrocious crimes. Our last three articles, which oppose the notions of these would be perfectionists, are dictated by the most sound knowledge of scripture, combined with the justest ideas of civil government.

A prescribed form of liturgical service; a fixed compendium of doctrine, to which every officiating minister must subscribe, and promise to teach nothing contrary to the contents thereof; and a ministry independent of the congregation to whom they are to impart the saving truths of the gospel; which ministry, rising in rank and fortune in degrees nearly similar to the gradations of civil society, is governed by laws not wholly dependent upon, but yet amenable to, the legal magistrate; must have powerful recommendations to the favour of all who do not, in their rage for christian liberty, overlook the duties of christian submission and humility. But, beside private benefit, there is one great pub-

lic consideration, which I must beg to repeat. While the nation is faithful in its allegiance to its ecclesiastical institutions, it is "not blown about by every wind of doctrine." Not to mention less numerous or more equivocal seceders, we maintain (as I hope I have proved) a happy medium between two extremes of opinion, that are contradictory to the general tenor of scripture, and highly prejudicial to moral and christian improvement.

I must here admit, that all our sectaries (except the Socinians, who make reason paramount to revelation, and resolve to discard what they cannot fully explain) plead scripture as the ground of their opinions; and this leads me to consider the mischiefs that have arisen from private interpretation of difficult passages of holy writ by illiterate and enthusiastic, and sometimes by learned, but uncandid and obstinate people. Has not the Reformation, it is asked, restored the scriptures to the common people; and does not our church authorize, nay enjoin, all her members to *study* them? Most unquestionably, so far as moral improvement, or the fundamental rules of faith, are concerned. I believe too, that every Englishman has a right, and is required, to study the laws of his county; and I think it the duty of all to know so much of them, as to avoid infringing them. But I do not conceive that every understanding is capable of discerning the exact bounds of regal prerogative, of comprehending the law and usage of parliament, and the origin and foundation of our civil and political rights. Few people have leisure to study the statutes at large; and though you and I ought to know enough to be good subjects, it would be advisable in us both, in case of a lawsuit, to be directed by the advice of an able solicitor. We may have some little notion of the physical organization of our bodies, and may even dabble so far in medicine as to prepare a few compounds, and administer them in trifling indispositions; but in case of a serious illness, we should think it madness not to call in superior judgment. And shall we controvert those religious principles which are established by laborious investigation and profound learning, with the knowledge derived from slight investigation and superficial research? I will not ask *you*, whether we shall resign our national creed transmitted to us from apostolical times, and adopt the fancies of illuminated cobblers, brainsick weavers, or philosophistical half educated sceptics, whom we should ridicule for coxcombs if they presumed to give an opinion respecting the temperature

of our pulse or the management of our fortune, and yet are willingly submitted to, as expounders of the oracles of God? This question is to *you* happily unappropriate; but it is really necessary to many, who, but for this ridiculous mixture of pride and fervility, this strange prostration of the liberty of which they are so tenacious, to the quackery that they would despise in the common affairs of life, might pass for intelligent people.

The history of the Reformation affords us so many instances of the evils which arise from misinterpreted texts of scripture, and promiscuous preaching,\* that we cannot be too grateful for living under an establishment which limits and discourages these dangerous licences. To understand God's word aright, I mean so to comprehend it as truly to expound its difficulties, a knowledge of the original language is absolutely necessary. To this should be added, a thorough acquaintance with the customs and history of the nation of which it treats; for, without this, the allusions that oriental writers abound in cannot be understood. Other requisites might be mentioned: but I mean chiefly to dwell upon one. The interpreter ought to have a clear comprehension of the general design and plan of *the whole scripture*. Such an enlarged idea is required from every commentator on an ancient classic; and certainly, as the New and Old Testament, though disjoined into parts, are connected as a whole, we cannot here be satisfied with the omission of what is deemed indispensable in other interpreters.

A text taken without its context, or without reference to the main design of the speaker or actor, may be brought to recommend falsehood, heresy, blasphemy, or any other "damned error." I promised to give some explanatory instances of such misapplications; and we will cast a cursory glance over the first chapters of St. John's Gospel. Did we look no further than Nathaniel's reply to Philip, chapter 1st, verse 46th, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" we should determine that this inquirer, instead of following, *rejected* the Messiah, and that he was an example of prejudice, instead of singleness of heart. The next verse contains the highest eulogium on this man's character, pronounced by the voice of Omniscience; the context shews that he be-

\* It is most certain that Luther, in the heat of his opposition to Rome, asserted the right of private judgment in religion, in an indefinite way, of which he afterwards repented.

came an *immediate* disciple and follower of our Lord; and he is generally supposed to have been the same as St. Bartholomew, and one of the chosen twelve. Does not this remark apply to those who, from some expressions occasionally used by our Saviour with reference to his humanity, overlook or deny the force of those passages in which, in his divine nature, he claims to be equal with God?

At the 4th verse of the 2d chapter of St. John, we have what many have called a harsh answer from the blessed Jesus to a friendly intimation of his mother's; which might be blasphemously explained, as if that rude independent deportment to parents, which is so marked a feature in these times, was sanctioned by the conduct of this our perfect Exemplar. That the words were not intended to convey an abrupt refusal, is evident, by our Lord's immediate compliance with her wishes. We must conclude, therefore, that they were either proverbial, or alluded to a particular idiom which in this remote time and nation we cannot fully understand. But to clear our Lord's character from this aspersion, we must look further. The 51st verse of the 2d of Luke, and the 26th and 27th of the 19th chapter of St. John, prove, that they who seek to justify filial impertinence, or disrespect, by the above passage, *contradict* instead of *explaining* scripture, and mistake the character of him who, though Lord of all, was eminently distinguished by his dutiful conduct to the source of his mortal being.

I have heard the discourse of our Lord with the woman of Samaria so explained (and that from the pulpit of instruction) as to represent it to be immaterial where and how, that is to say, in what place and with what forms, God is worshipped. The words thus misapplied were "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Was the preceding verse *intentionally* or *accidentally* overlooked? John, 4th and 22d verse, "Ye worship," says our Lord to the schismatical Samaritans, "ye know not what; but we know what we worship, for *salvation is of the Jews.*" It will be difficult to find a plainer testimony in favour of a faith founded on divine revelation, or of an authorized ecclesiastical establishment.

I will give but one more express instance of the possibility (or rather the probability) of such misinterpretation of scripture by *unskilful* or *disbonest* hands. It is the behaviour of our Lord to the woman taken in adultery, which is record-

ed in the 8th chapter of this gospel. When she tells him that no man had condemned her, he replies, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." What! did not our Lord condemn this heinous crime? how, then, could he say he came to "fulfil the law and the prophets," which with one voice condemn and reprobate this gross violation of personal purity and solemn obligation? It may be answered, that the words are plain, level to every understanding; and that the fact corresponded, for the woman was *dismissed*. Sinning no more, therefore, cancels the preceding offence; and thus the bands of wickedness may be loosed, and German morality founded upon a literal construction of our Lord's words.

But we must not rest in such partial examinations of scripture. We must look at the history of Jesus, and at the designs of his enemies. The Scribes and Pharisees who brought this offender to our Lord, were desirous of ensnaring him by some action which they might construe into an exercise of regal or magisterial power, and thus find a pretence of accusing him to the Romans as an infringer of the authority of Cæsar. Their laws (observe, they were also the laws of God) condemned the adulterers to death; and they insidiously brought this acknowledged culprit to Christ, in the hope that if he merely ratified the justice of the sentence which Moses had pronounced, they might so pervert his words as to turn them into *constructive* rebellion. This incident, therefore, is recorded as an instance of the *extraordinary wisdom* with which our Saviour frustrated the intrigues of an infamous cabal who sought his destruction; and cannot, without misapplication, be adduced for any moral purpose, except to check that censorious spirit which is eager to punish others, while unrepented transgressions rankle in their own bosoms. It is not as the omniscient Judge of man, but as one who was expected to act as the temporal ruler of Israel, that he refuses to condemn the guilty creature who stood trembling before him. As a teacher of pure morals, he dismisses her with an exhortation to sin no more; which, if her heart was not entirely hardened, would be the means of obtaining forgiveness for her at the tribunal of Heaven. A reference to the 27th and 28th verses of the sixth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, will shew you the rule of inward purity by which Christians must regulate even the secret affections of their hearts. The Redeemer of the world was no inconsistent teacher; he had no alternately loose and

rigid morality, no convenient doctrines suited to times and seasons, no palliatives to screen the mighty, no stimulants to goad the unprotected; no popular morality for the mob, no specious disquisitions for the learned. They who attribute such incongruity to him, look at a part, not at the whole. It is from such partial and confined views of scripture that dissentions and heresies arise. The Calvinists build their notions on a mistaken conception of St. Paul's design in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, wherein the words election and rejection are mentioned; but certainly in general terms,\* and with application to the calling of the Gentiles to occupy that place in the church of God which the Jews forfeited by not acknowledging the Messiah. Yet that this great body of unbelieving Israel would not be finally reprobate, or shut out from the Christian covenant, the eleventh chapter of Romans, and many prophetic parts of scripture, unequivocally declare; and its whole tenor pronounces universal redemption. Equally confined are the views of those who, denying the divinity of our Lord, adduce those expressions in the gospels to confirm their notions, in which he acknowledges inferiority to the Father, which in respect to his human nature is *unquestionably* true. Considered in this view, their favourite reference to the Sent and the Sender, and even the text of "My Father is greater than I," are easily reconcilable to orthodox opinions. But as a learned Prelate† observes, "the texts that affirm "the divinity of Christ are too plain, and too positive, to bend to their expositions; they must therefore erase them, or receive the doctrines they contain." Contrary to all evidence or probability, they prefer the latter.

To guard against these and many other evils, I strongly recommend to my sex an *early* and *thorough* intimacy with their bibles. I wish them to be so versed and grounded in scriptural knowledge, that they may comprehend the whole series of history and prophecy, as well as the moral instruction which the sacred volume contains. Such blessed advantage over the present age was possessed by our ancestors at the time of the Reformation. Thus did the primitive Christians digest and understand the *whole* word of God; and at

\* Commentators have agreed that no instance of individual election appears in scripture.

† This remark is taken from the Bishop of Lincoln's Elements of Theology; but not having the work to refer to, the page cannot be specified.



both these periods, it was this thorough conviction of the truth and purport of holy writ, which supported timid beauty and feeble youth through the torments of martyrdom with more than manly courage. We are not called to mount the blazing pile, nor to step into the bloody amphitheatre, for the love of Christ. Blessed be his name that we are not! for could we be expected to die for him of whom we have scarcely heard? But we are called to endure that trial, of mocking and scoffing, to which the doctrine (now, as once the person) of our Saviour is exposed. It is a most perverse and wicked wit, which can attempt to debase the charter of salvation by profane or ludicrous allusions. In this country, the New Testament at present is seldom openly travestied; but some unguarded expressions used by a popular divine, only intended to assert that, from the clearness of its internal and historical evidence, the *gospel* of Christ may rest on its own support, without recurring to the Old Testament for proofs, seem to have been hailed as an auspicious signal by "filthy talkers and jesters," proclaiming that the first covenant may be lawfully turned into ridicule. Can a public corrector of taste and morals be justified for describing, as an "exquisite addition" to a poem, "a droll transformation of the story of Nebuchadnezzar and his fiery furnace, with the three Hebrew salamanders who could not be burnt;" owning, "that for this burlesque exhibition of his Majesty of Babylon they owe to the playful poet a hearty laugh?" Was the editor of this critique aware, that the book in which this affecting narrative is contained was authenticated by two express quotations of our Lord;\* in one of which he acknowledges Daniel's prophetic character? Does a jocular parody of a solemn and instructive event, recorded by one whose prescience is divinely attested, become him who, as a Christian, must defend the verity of all our Lord's assertions?†

\* See Matthew, 13th chapter, 43d verse, 24th chapter, 15th verse.

† The following anecdote is given on newspaper testimony, with a wish that it may have had no foundation in truth; for it will then act as a caution, instead of a censure: A New Jerusalem teacher surreptitiously obtained an appointment to a meeting belonging to some regular dissenters. A trial at law ensued; and the preacher, who had been an itinerant music-master, and petty shopkeeper, was defended by his very elaborate counsel, who is said to have introduced David's skill upon the harp, and the humble professions of the apostles, as a parallel that was applicable to this schismatic's change of occupation. Did this learned gentleman not know, or did he purposely forget, that these apostles were miraculously

A thorough acquaintance with holy writ will inspire such habitual reverence for it, as a whole, as must prevent us from encouraging those degrading parodies of any detached part of it, which some voluble unprincipled rhymers brought into fashion, whose works are now happily sinking into the oblivion which they deserve; I hope, never more to be revived or imitated. In the writings of a certain florid genius, whose richly dressed poetry for some time directed the national ton (I will not call it taste,) there are several allusions to the narratives of holy writ, which, though seriously worded, are degraded by being applied to petty similitudes. Since we are assured in the New Testament, that "all scripture" (by which the Jewish scriptures only could be meant) "is given by inspiration;" since the two most extraordinary, and, it should seem to us, improbable occurrences which they contain, the histories of Jonah and Balaam, are confirmed, the former by five comparisons in the discourses of our Lord, the latter by the inferences of St. Peter and St. Jude; "droll transformations of narratives," or even light allusions to biblical histories, must be considered not only as criminal in those who thus abuse their talents, but as arguing great ignorance of the foundation of their religion, and its connexion with Jewish history, in every admirer of these perverted efforts of wit and ingenuity.

The study that I so earnestly recommend will, if assisted by the invaluable labours of sound and able expositors, enable you to repel many oblique attacks which may be made upon your faith, on account of the seeming incongruity of particular incidents. The miracles of our Lord have not escaped the petulant criticism of short sighted cavillers. They are said to have been limited and puerile; and certainly they were upon a less grand and awful scale than the impressive wonders which freed the Hebrew captives from Egyptian bondage, and prepared them for the reception of the Mosaical covenant. Our Lord came to a people who were in expectation of a wonderful personage; to a nation by whom it was preordained that he was to be rejected and sacrificed; yet among whom he was to meet with many

endowed by the Spirit of God with all knowledge, all faith, and the power of curing all diseases? What resemblance then can possibly exist between these supernaturally instructed teachers, and an ignorant and (as was clearly proved) knavish mechanic? Surely the wit of this absurd comparison is too strained to pass, even in a careless auditory, as an excuse for its falshood and irreverence.

converts, and from whose narrow region his gospel was to burst like a resistless torrent, and overflow the world. The power of working miracles, which was in the first instance confined to the Jewish Lawgiver and High Priest, was in the latter, with great propriety, extended to every ambassador who bore this high mission to any part of the world. As in the Asiatic and Grecian cities, so on the barren rock of Melita, and in the remote confines of imperial Rome, St. Paul displayed the unequivocal attestations of accompanying Deity. Ecclesiastical history assures us, that the like effects attended the yet more distant journies of the other apostles.

In *number* therefore, though not in *individual importance*, the miracles which ushered in the gospel exceeded the supernatural evidences of the law. They were also strictly applicable to the different natures of the two dispensations. For recalling the world to the almost extinguished knowledge of one God, terror and majesty were awfully combined. Benevolence was the characteristical feature of those mild wonders, which announced the purpose of the Almighty to be reconciled to his offending, but repentant creatures. "Thus, though the whole system of Christian miracles was intended to convince men that Jesus was sent by God, and not to confer extraordinary benefits on particular persons; yet their incidental benevolence, this going about doing good, is a strong attestation of the divine origin of that miraculous power which Jesus Christ possessed."\*

May we not expect that this general enlarged attention to the whole design of scripture will considerably abate the virulence of that religious animosity, which is most apt to arise from contracted views, and partial attachment to some few peculiar doctrines? We sometimes adopt erroneous opinions from pertinacity, or intentional singularity; but oftener through that infirmity of judgment which will not permit an ardent imagination to rest within the sober bounds of truth, or to confine itself to the prescribed limits of revelation; which, it must ever be remembered, is calculated to comfort the faithful, and to support the weak; not to satisfy "curious and carnal persons." Charity has received as much injury from extreme refinements and minute subtilties of expression, as mysterious doctrines have from diffuse expla-

\* This remark is taken from Hey's Lectures.

nations, or injudicious and unwarrantable applications. Thus people are often brought to differ in words, who agree in things; and to attach consequence to merely speculative distinctions, which they do not understand. Hence arose those miserable and unaccountable dissensions (which may be justly termed theological quibbling) that perplexed the school divines; hence the disputes between Friars of different orders, the quarrels of Jesuits and Janfenists, and the numerous altercations that have divided and subdivided all classes of dissenters from our establishment. But if, instead of thus inspecting a part of our religion with microscopic attention, of *lifting up one text as our banner*, and fighting under it against all our fellow-christians, we applied ourselves to study the beauty and consistency of *all* the sacred volume, our zeal for peculiar tenets, and all that criminal desire of being singular which makes men hazard the welfare of their souls in vindication of supposed rights, would be absorbed by the anxious desire of truly obeying what we felt to be so excellent, and knew to be so divine. Then might we hope that the professors of the faith of Jesus would, as in early times, be marked by this flattering distinction, “Behold how these Christians love one another.”

At the time when the impostor Mahomet promulgated his bloody and voluptuous doctrines, the eastern part of the Christian world was torne by miserable contention, and the western was wasted by war and depressed by ignorance. All historians concur in stating, that the hatred and animosity which Christians bore to each other expedited the triumphs of the cruel Arabian and his proselyting banditti. The schisms which then rent the church disposed many to become his converts; to state what they were, is to give an awful lesson to these times: many then questioned the *divinity of our Saviour*; and the doctrine of *absolute predestination* was inculcated with great zeal by the adherents of St. Augustine.

May we not now inquire, what are the signs of the times in which we live? Within our church there is a schism, in which the old Pharisaical superciliousness, of “stand apart, I am more holy than thou,” is too apparent. Beyond her pale, we see new modes of worship multiplied, and disunion engrafted on dissention. The church of Scotland, which was one of the first to reject prescription, and to venture boldly in untried paths, terrified at the unwarrantable licence

assumed by her refractory members,\* is forced to resume the renounced restraint of ecclesiastical coercion. With us, the blessing of toleration has let in the curses of fanaticism, scepticism, and licentiousness. Hosts of ignorant self-sufficient preachers are yearly licenced to mislead the weak and irresolute, and to inspire the illiterate with contempt for their proper pastors. Among the higher ranks, the latitudinarian gains many converts to the attractive sound of liberality, and enlarged opinions; and from the latitudinarian the scale of error mounts to infidelity. But indifference is the more prevailing characteristic of this age; and it is so very prevalent among the higher circles, that seriousness and devotion are constantly confounded with sectarian enthusiasm. The duty of worshipping the God of our fathers is made to depend upon convenience, upon fashion, upon a warm chapel, or upon an agreeable preacher. From the lives of these nominal Christians, or from the repulsive manners of those who "make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the hem of their garments," the well bred deist, and mere moral man of the world, affect to form their notion of the influence of religion upon the heart and mind. Alas! that the many thousands, who in this island have "never bowed the knee to Baal," nor omitted that "worship in spirit and truth" which our Creator prescribes, would sometimes emerge from their beloved retirement, and shew an admiring world, "Virtue in her own shape how lovely."

It must however be acknowledged, that the lives of too many sincere Christians will not bear a comparison with the pure and holy rules which they profess to receive as the guide of their conduct; and I am informed, that our present race of deists justify their rejection of religion by saying, "Why do not you believers lead better lives? I entertain no such hopes respecting futurity as you do; I reject your creed; I disavow the divine assistances which you pretend to receive; yet my moral rectitude challenges a comparison with your's. I acknowledge no laws that debar me from those gratifications which you solemnly renounce as sins, yet frequently practise. Allowing, therefore, the verity and reality of your religious obligations, my offences must receive a less severe condemnation than your's."

The reply to this justificatory recrimination is so appar-

\* For this account of the state of the presbytery in Scotland, see Dr. Hill's Theological Institutes.

ent, that, had I not been assured that such expressions are the common apology of deists, I should have thought it derogatory to their acuteness to attribute to them such mean and jejune subtleties. Here a remark of our Saviour's must recur to your remembrance, and you will again feelingly acknowledge that he knew what was in man: "Men" still "love darkness better than light," and for the same reason as when Christ was upon earth, "because their deeds are evil." It is the purity and holiness of the gospel that make the slaves of Mammon and Belial cavil at its authority. It is not because it rests on insufficient evidence, that they deny its divine origin; but because it will not accommodate itself to a darling vice, or a predominant passion, that they determine not to let it rule over them.

But whether we reject or acknowledge the government of the blessed Jesus in this world, we shall all stand at his judgment seat hereafter. The pleas that will be admitted in behalf of those to whom the evangelical tidings of a Redeemer were never proclaimed, cannot be urged in favour of *Pagans by choice*, who, though born, baptized, and educated in a Christian country, preferred the darkness of Deism to the light which shone around them. Whoever lives where Christianity is professed, is by birth a subject of the Lamb of God. He may renounce his allegiance, he may insult and despise his Sovereign; but these frantic acts do not transform him into an alien, but a rebel. Born under the legislation of the gospel, it is against that dispensation that he sins, and it is by that he will be judged. His boasted liberty, of being free to choose his master, extends only to the grave. Even if his moral conduct were such as to suggest hopes of escaping future vengeance, the penalty will attach to his *principles*. The gaudy show of benevolence, integrity, or liberality, which proceeded not from the desire of pleasing God, and were not offered to him with the sweet smelling favour of faith in Christ, only constitute that defective righteousness which, we are assured, will not be accepted by God from those whom he has called to the knowledge of his Son.

It is certain, that the "infection of man's nature,"\* as our church terms it, remains in some degree in us all; so that, even in the most sincere Christians "there is a law of the flesh that is continually warring against the law of God."

\* Article 9th.

The Church of England makes no pretensions either to aggregate or individual perfection. In conformity with the sacred code from which she derives her ordinances, she acknowledges her militant state; and, conscious that her members "are beset with so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of their mortal nature they cannot always stand upright, she implores such supplies of strength and protection as may carry them through all temptations."\* The allusions to a Christian's life on earth are not taken from a state of triumph, security, or even repose: it is ever described as an arduous race, a painful conflict, a day of labour and sorrow, a struggle with the powers of darkness. We have scripture and our maternal church on our side, when we suggest an opinion, that the spiritual enemy is more busily employed in assailing the liege subjects of the King of Heaven, than in securing the condemnation of those who, by their anti-christian prejudices, have surrendered their minds to that infidelity which is the parent of every vice. These the prince of darkness can leave to work out their own destruction; but he must penetrate into the retirements of piety, and endeavour to disturb the prayers, corrode the temper, or seduce the integrity, of those who he fears are becoming "meet for the inheritance of the Saints in Light."

But beside those who, though not exempt from human error, yet on the whole appear to "walk" worthy of the vocation whereunto they are called, there are many who, with sincere intentions of keeping the fear of God always before their eyes, do occasionally fall into great and aggravated sins. Offenders of this description furnish the infidel with much seeming occasion for exultation; but the triumph is merely visionary. When we search into the history of these unhappy culprits, we shall find many natural reasons for their infirmities; either they have strong passions, or defective tempers; perhaps their education has been injudicious, or their relative situation in life is attended with some peculiarly irritating or dangerous circumstances. The sceptic's prejudice against religion leads him to consider it as the *cause* of those errors which it is constantly endeavouring to coun-

\* "A good Christian, not being one who has no inclination to sin: but "one who, through the grace of God, immediately checks, and suffers not "such inclinations to grow into evil habits." See Bishop Wilson's short and plain instructions for the Lord's Supper, page 50.

*teract.* I must exclude from the pale of true Christianity, (that is, from the number of sincere servants of the blessed Jesus) all who live in the habitual practice of what they know to be vice; but they who divide their time between sinning and forrowing, who promise with the impassioned and confident Peter, and like him offend and weep, exhibit, though not so glorious, yet as strong a proof of the power of religion on a weak but sincere mind, as the dying Stephen did when he prayed to his Lord in glory, amid his mortal agonies. Though the certainty of another world has not eradicated the bosom infirmity, it makes "the strong man tremble," and compels the rebel inclinations to fall prostrate for pardon before the throne of Mercy; by whom, we trust, though they may be *corrected* as *offenders*, they will not be *sentenced* as *apostates*.

Deist, dost thou inquire what religion has done for those who continually transgress and reform? I answer, it is the powerful attraction which prevented them from flying off, as thou hast done, into the dark and cheerless regions of chaotic doubt and terror. What would these half emancipated slaves of furious passions, irregular desires, and perverted inclinations have been, if they had also denied their God, and rejected the saving mercies of their Saviour? "He who knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are "but dust," will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss by those who maintain a constant struggle with an ill regulated ill tutored mind. Leave them to the mercy of the master they have chosen. But if, in the pride of moral rectitude, thou presumest to set thy specious goodness in opposition to the contrite Publican who weeps beside thee; beware, Sinner; thou too art weighed in the balance and art found wanting. Dost thou possess a native sweetness of disposition; this is the soil in which thou shouldst have planted the Christian grace of charity. Hast thou a keen perception of what is perfect, fair and good; this talent was given thee to be improved into a "knowledge of the ways of the Most High." Do thy well regulated passions obey the curb of discretion, convenience, and regard to character; this is not enough; thou shouldst have subjected them to that inward purity, without which "no man can see the Lord." Is thy reputation unspotted; dost thou feed the hungry, and clothe the naked; art thou exact in thy dealings between man and man, and guarded in thy words as well as in thy actions; nature and habit have done much for thee, but



thou hast not solicited for that grace which would have done infinitely more. "The wisdom that is from above" would have told thee, that the praise of men is not *always* compatible with the praise of God, and that they who idolize reputation must often sacrifice conscience to her mandates. "They who do their good deeds to be seen of men, receive in the praise of men their reward." But it is an apostle who tells thee, that thou mayest "bestow all thy goods to feed the poor, and yet it shall profit thee nothing." Honesty and punctuality are the virtues of prudence, on which industry and convenience depend for many temporal advantages: the outward observance of them is enforced by human laws; but in the sight of God they are of no value, unless they are rooted in the inward man of the heart, and confirmed by the assurance that with "whatsoever measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again." Thou, who hast hidden thy numerous talents under the cold investment of moral fitness, instead of applying them to the purchase of the inestimable merchandize of christian graces, scoff not at him who, conscious of infirmity, clings to the rock of his salvation, and supplicates *forgiveness*, not *reward*. The world cannot judge between the good deeds that thou dost, to be seen of men, and the secret aspirations of the soul of the penitent; for the world is not endued with omniscience, and can only determine by what it is permitted to see. But it is by thy inward motives, not by thy ostensible deeds, that thou shalt be sentenced at the awful tribunal of him, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who will fearfully reclaim the apostate who rejected his authority, in the closing scenes of his mediatorial kingdom, before it emerges into the full dominion of paternal Deity.

The prevalence of suicide is another instance by which we may judge of the state of religion in this kingdom; for unquestionably, unless it proceed from mental derangement, we must pronounce the self-murderer ignorant of the *obligations* and *power* of Christianity. If he really believed in God, would he dare to rush uncalled into his presence, or make the last action of his life a crime of which he never can repent? The prevalence of this offence among the Pagans of old times is indisputable; it was even considered as somewhat of a brave and commendable action, by which their greatest and wisest men, and their most virtuous women, heroically resolved to escape from pain, disgrace, and sorrow. Equally indisputable is the fact, that the religion of Jesus

conquered this daring propensity; since its most eminent professors deemed it less infamous to expire in excruciating tortures as public criminals, than gently to languish away with the mock dignity of a Seneca, or to tear open their own bowels with the ruthless frenzy of a Cato. The revival of this humour of self-destruction in France is so notorious, that it is lamented even by those who still see, in that atheistical revolution, much to admire, and who fruitlessly wish to palliate all its enormities.\*

Self-murder, when it is not a sudden act of madness or passion, must proceed from the sudden resolve of wounded pride, conscious of merit and impatient of disappointment. How opposite is this temper to the self-abasement, the lowly resignation of a christian soul, who receives temporal calamities as the *deserved chastisements* of his Father and his God, and who hopes, through his mercy, not only the pardon of his sins, but the promises annexed to patient submission! It is those who presume to think highly of their own deservings, who depend upon merit, who *demand* reward, and who limit their views of happiness to temporal possession on this side Jordan, that are most inclined, like treacherous centinels, to desert the post which they deem unworthy of their high deservings.

Suicide, therefore, is most frequently the stern determination of indignant deism, warring in its pride against the will of the Highest. It often too proceeds from the keen tortures of accusing conscience, or from a poignant sense of the embarrassments and anxieties to which a life of guilt generally exposes the offender. Divines have remarked, that as, in this life, the natural consequences of sin often continue to pursue the offender, in the shape of bodily pain or calamity, long after he has become sincerely penitent for his faults, the heathens had no chance of discovering, from what they saw of the Almighty's providential government of the world, that the eternal consequences of sin would ever be remitted. As Christians have brighter hopes on this important subject, penitence is now bound by stronger bonds to endure the temporal afflictions, which it is conscious of deserving, from the hope that its present resignation may cancel its former misdeeds, and, in the language of the apostle, that it "may live to bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

\* It is affirmed, on an average calculation, that five Frenchmen perish in two days by their own hands. See Holcroft's Travels into France.

There are yet other reasons which bind the Christian even to a joyless and miserable existence. In a probationary state, the time of trial cannot be over till our Master bids "us rest from our labours." The dying flame, which seems expiring in the socket, may yet cast out a light sufficient to recall some wandering connexion from the broad road of destruction. Are we not in the hands of a merciful God, who willeth not the eternal death of a sinner; and may we not hope, that if we patiently abide his summons, he will not remove us hence, but "with all due advantage for eternity, "when we shall be in a holy disposition of soul, in a perfect "renunciation of the guise of this mad and sinful world?"\*

That the crime of self-destruction by actual violence has not yet made such progress amongst us, as it has done amongst our revolutionized and illuminizd neighbours, affords great solace to the reflecting mind, anxious to discover some grounds for confiding in the protection of the Most High during our present arduous conflict. But the frequency of that self-destruction which is accomplished by dissipation and vice presents a less consolatory prospect. However, as this species of suicide does not assume such determined hostility to Heaven in its aspect, we may charitably hope that a death-bed is *sometimes* the scene of *true* repentance.

Possibly I shall here be arraigned, for limiting that unbounded mercy and compassion of the Deity, which is such a favourite topic among our new expositors of the Christian religion. I acknowledge these qualities to be infinite; all the attributes of the Godhead are so; their only limits are those other attributes which we also know to be essential to his nature. Whenever we enter on the incomprehensible theme of Deity, whether our attention be turned to his attributes or his nature, we ought to advance with trembling steps; and, conscious of the awful difficulties by which we are surrounded, we should be alike careful of touching the mysterious palladium with irreverent hands, or defending it by injudicious means. Uzzah† must not officiously attempt to support the ark; a power unseen resides within, who will as surely repel the obtrusive aid of ignorance and folly, as it will punish the wickedness of blasphemous impugnors of the

\* See the admirable prayers in the service for Easter Eve, in Nelson's Companion to the Fasts and Festivals.

† See 2d of Samuel, 6th chapter, 7th verse.

truth. In one instance, the inconceivable union of *perfect* justice and *perfect* compassion was levelled to the comprehension of man. In the sacrifice of Christ, the Almighty shewed his hatred to sin and his mercy to sinners. Let not the wicked man, therefore, go on in his wickedness, lest he should experience the terror of infinite justice, who would not be reconciled to an offending world without an expiatory offering of inestimable price; and let not the contrite heart despair of being forgiven by Him, "who so loved the world, that he gave his only son for us." Even in the eleventh hour, if true repentance knock, the door of mercy will be opened; but the *application* must be made. Religion now, as she did of yore;\* crieth without and uttereth her voice in the streets. Infinite are her blessings; but still they are only found of those who seek them. "If we search for them as hidden treasures, then shall we understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

This knowledge differs so essentially from the worldly wisdom which men of intrigue, ambition, and business pursue, instead of the true riches; and from the inquisitive speculative philosophy which sports upon the surface of the material world; that we cannot wonder at a period, wherein a long continuance of temporal security and prosperity has engendered a dependance on second causes, an undue regard for this life, and an indifference to future prospects; that the ordinances of religion, which are not recommended by their relation to political considerations, should sink into neglect; especially if we (mighty disputants) cannot discern the *reason* of their institution, owing to their abstract and spiritual nature. To this must we ascribe the general disuse of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the dear remembrance of his meritorious death, and which is not only the memorial of a benefactor, but the appointed means of conveying his mercy to us, and of expressing our gratitude for the benefit. Of this duty it may be remarked, that the disciples were prepared to observe it by a prophetic admonition. A year preceding that memorable feast, which determined that the Christian should supersede the Jewish Paschal supper, our Lord, as we find by the sixth chapter of St. John's gospel, informed his auditors of the nature and sign of the future sacrament of the new covenant. The Jews, interpreting this communication as they did their own

\* Proverbs, 1st chapter, 20th verse.

law, according to the letter and not the spirit, exclaimed with incredulous astonishment, "This is an hard saying. Can this man give us his flesh to eat?" And the sacred narrative proceeds to inform us, "that from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." So exactly do the inspired historians adhere to the truth of character. A mysterious ordinance, painfully appealing to the passions, repulsive of the pride of human nature, abstracted from every scheme of policy or worldly advantage, and requiring total resignation, and dependance upon God, to sanctify the means whereby he chooses to convey his promised graces to us, was likely to prove a stumbling block to those who looked to temporal prosperity as the end of religious worship. Our Lord did not *then* inform these gain-sayers by what sign, or visible medium, this living bread was to be represented. He properly reserved this discovery for the vigil of the sacrifice which it was to commemorate. The sacred rite was then solemnized, and the command given for its perpetual observance. The three evangelists who first published their gospels having recorded this *action* of their Master's, St. John, who wrote with a design of supplying their omissions, passes over the *history* of the institution, and enlarges on the *doctrinal* part. Nothing can be more authoritative and obligatory than the solemn declaration which our Saviour made to the amazed Synagogue at Capernaum; "Verily verily I say unto you, except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." If we combine this explanation of the *benefits* of the sacrament, with the *narrative* of our Lord's breaking the bread and blessing the wine, and delivering them to his apostles, commanding them to "do so in remembrance of him," we must discern the *positive* obligation which all Christians lie under to partake of this memorial of their redemption.\* We know, from inspired testimony, that the primitive church was constant and frequent in the use of this outward visible sign of the inward spiritual grace; for there are many allusions to this holy rite in the Acts and the Epistles, beside

\* See Bishop Cleaver's sermons on the nature of the sacrament.

directions for the orderly management of the eucharistical feast contained in the eleventh chapter of the first of Corinthians. How grace and pardon are conveyed to the souls of those communicants who, with sincere faith and devout minds, partake of this holy ordinance, remains among the secrets of the Most High. It was no more necessary that we should penetrate into this mystery, than that we should comprehend all God's part of the covenant of grace; but though the reasons on which his purposes are founded are hidden from curiosity, his determinations, and the promises annexed to his commands, are plainly disclosed, to excite faith and to stimulate obedience. The humble are instructed, the wise in their own conceit are left uninformed.

It is true that our Lord has declared, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you?" Is it also an acknowledged fact, that immediately preceding the last scenes of his mortality he took bread and wine, blessed them, pronounced them his body and blood, and *commanded* his disciples to receive those consecrated elements in "remembrance of him?" How *dare* we then, knowing these things to be true, *omit* the rite, *disobey* the command, and *brave* the threatening? Alas! being united with the Saviour of the world in spiritual communion, is of far less consequence than being admitted into a fashionable circle, or ranked in a certain set. In spite of the general levity with which sacred things are treated, the eucharist still exacts somewhat of awful reverence, even from those who relish "droll transformations" of holy writ, and, under the seemingly modest plea of unworthiness, decline undertaking those duties of examination, confession, and serious exclusion, which they still think ought to precede this more immediate approach to the presence of God. But have we not positive assurance, that the sins and negligences which unfit us for the Lord's table will effectually bar the everlasting doors of Heaven against us? The wedding garment, which we are required to put on for the sacrificial feast at the altar, is the same robe which we must wear in the New Jerusalem, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. And surely, every wilful omission of the enjoined memorial of "the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ," must add to the number of these excluding offences. For the case of the *negligent Christian*, whose attachment to worldly pleasure or business operates more powerfully on his mind than obedience to his Lord's commands,

and that of the *deist*, living in a *Christian country*, are familiar; they will be judged by the laws which they *knew*, but *refused* to obey.

That eagerness of inquiry, and laxity of performance, which is another sign of these times, is forcibly described in the sacred pages by the epithet of "having itching ears, ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth." Again let me press on the attention of every female into whose hands these pages may fall, to consider seriously how much this restless spirit of curiosity, this sceptical doubt, this dissatisfaction with the religious knowledge of past times, is inimical to the diffident and retired character which our sex should constantly preserve. From the partial rejection of doubt, the mind easily slides to the contumacy of disbelief. A female politician is the favourite theme of satire; a female deist, if not so ridiculous, is more alarming and detestable. Devout dependance on a heavenly protector, is so congenial to the apprehensions of weakness, and the privations of submission, that to renounce religious hope appears to be a far more masculine action, than to take the command of an army. In all the peculiar sufferings to which our sex are exposed, notwithstanding all the mortifications, disappointments, and sorrows, which the predominant controul of man necessarily occasions us, our peculiar fitness to embrace the truths, and to obey the precepts of the gospel, gives us advantages that far exceed the boasted privileges of our temporal superiors. Let us not renounce our high hopes, through the specious allurements of the agents of the Prince of Darkness, who, in a new form, again invite the inquisitive daughters of Eve to pluck the forbidden fruit of knowledge. Infidelity possesses no real advantage over faith; it can only "know in part;" there are mysteries in nature which will elude penetration as long as this world endures; and if we reject the mysteries of grace because we cannot *love* them to our finite comprehension, we only start new difficulties, and discover the insignificance of our boasted penetration.

I have little hope, that my humble lucubrations will influence the judgment of those whose situation enables them to promote the best human means of preserving true religion among us; I mean the maintenance of our national church; which may be justly entitled a hiding place from the tempests of false and contrarious doctrines, as well as the firm ally and moral sanctioner of our civil rights. I know, that

coercive laws, and severe restrictions, are generally found to defeat the purposes for which they are framed; and my wishes extend no further, than that our rulers and legislators would, in their *private* conduct, as well as in their *public* station, evince their sincere reverence for that spiritual parent into whose arms they were received at baptism, and also uniformly consult her welfare, and recommend her doctrines. Taking scripture for her guide, and acknowledging God as the foundation of all civil authority, she represses the ebullitions of violence and faction; yet, as she annexes no infallibility either to her spiritual or temporal rulers, she not only prays for them, but admonishes them of their high responsibility, and inculcates no tenets that are inimical to the temperate exercise of Christian liberty. Her explanations of those mysterious doctrines which are necessary to be believed, are couched in reverent and modest terms;\* and in her anathemas against unbelievers, she proceeds no further than scripture authorizes.† On doubtful, obscure, and complicated opinions, she delivers her judgment in such a manner as might rather tend to reconcile than widen the differences between Christians. She expresses a just sense of the merits of the Redeemer, and the necessity of divine revelation, without opening the door of communion to Antinomian licentiousness and sceptical morality, or barring the gates of Heaven on those to whom the glad tidings of salvation have never been made known; and after having declared her confidence in the promises of God, she cautions her members against curious nicety of inquiry on points which are rather speculative and dangerous, than practicable and profitable.‡

The ceremonies instituted by the church of England are few and impressive; connected on the one hand with the apostolical command, “that all things should be done decently and in order;” and on the other, with the imperfections and wants of those fallible creatures of which every as-

\* I believe the beginning of our first article has never been objected to: it is wonderfully sublime and impressive. Yet the understanding that can form clear conceptions of a Being without body, parts, or passions (as God certainly must be,) must possess such an acuteness and profundity of intellect, as will prevent it from finding the latter part of this article *incomprehensible*.

† See Dr. Hey on the Athanasian creed; which is considered as the most objectionable part of our liturgy.

‡ See articles 11th and 17th.



fembly of militant Christians must be composed. Our liturgical services afford the most sublime *uninspired* examples of devotion in all its various branches, of humiliation, adoration, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition, that any national ritual can present. The litany, both in its deprecatory and supplicatory clauses, breathes in an extraordinary degree the spirit of glory to God and good will to man.\* As our entrance into life is marked with a religious ceremony of *divine* appointment, our church has judiciously prepared a most pathetic service to distinguish our return to our parent earth with decent solemnity. It seems impossible for man to compose a form of words, in which plaintive condolence is more happily blended with religious consolation, or which more strictly corresponds with the idea of not sorrowing as men without hope. The concluding prayers, in which the minister blesses God for taking "the deceased out of the miseries of this sinful world," and entreats him to raise the witnesses of this sad scene from "the death of sin" "to the life of righteousness, that when they depart this life they may all rest in him, as they hope the spirit of him whose mortal remains they have deposited in the earth doth," expresses a triumph of pious confidence over human anguish, which I trust seldom fails to convey a more than momentary consolation to the agonized bosom of bereaved affection; while the dejected eye is raised from the grave at the exhilarating sound, and pursues the holy consolation to the Heaven from which it descended. Thus is that common event, which happens to us all, improved, by our church, into an opportunity of distributing the most admirable instruction to her members, who, either as spectators or mourners, are frequently called to behold the last scene of the ruined exuvire of *immortal* man. It is to be lamented, that this pious design is often counteracted by the *cumbrous* pomp and *unseasonable* parade which ostentatious wealth annexes to this ceremony, and thus converts the most impressive lesson into "a gaze for fools." When the minister of

\* To those who object to the frequent repetitions which occur in our liturgy, we can plead, not merely primitive and apostolical, but also divine example. Our blessed Lord, on the same night that he was betrayed, thrice retired to present his sorrowful petitions to his Heavenly Father, using the same words (Matt. 25th chapter, 44th verse.) And surely our frail nature, and vain wandering imaginations, must perceive the advantage of having more than one opportunity of addressing our great Creator, especially in those comprehensive words which have been consecrated by the injunctions of filial Deity.

God receives the plain and simple, but decent procession, at the bounds of the consecrated precincts, how does the unaffected tenderness of real affection, filling up the pauses of the solemn service with the half smothered bursts of heartfelt sorrow, exceed the trappings of pompous magnificence, with its numerous retinue of venal mourners, who feel no other interest in the corpse that they attend, than that the show should be very great, and the expence very enormous! Allow me here to introduce the modest funeral, which even respectable affluence would do wisely to prefer, as described by fraternal love dictating to the pen of genius :

“ I see the hearse,  
 “ With sable plumes and fullen footed steeds,  
 “ The village church approach. I see the corse,  
 “ From its dark cell releas'd by many a hand,  
 “ Uplifted heavily. I hear the bell  
 “ Toll to the dull and melancholy sound  
 “ Of mute procession; the white priest before,  
 “ The mourners following; and in the midst  
 “ Thee my delight, my treasure, and my hope,  
 “ Borne through the portals of thy native church;  
 “ Thence never to return. I hear a voice  
 “ Consign thee to oblivion; dust to dust,  
 “ Ashes to ashes.”

*Tears of Affection, by Hurdis.*

A similar regard to our relative situations in life has determined our church, in her selection of offices appropriate to momentous changes in our connexions, to the ignorance of childhood, the precipitancy of adolescence, and the apprehensions of sickness. Marriage is not, with us, merely a civil contract, as was the case with the republican Calvinists during the Cromwellian usurpation; nor is it elevated into a Sacrament, as the church of Rome still considers it. It is sanctioned by a religious ceremony, at once instructive and supplicatory, to strengthen the obligations that affection contracts; and the vows, which death or enormous guilt alone can dissolve, are pledged in the presence of God. A brief compendium of the conditions of the Christian covenant with respect to faith and morals, together with an explanation of the advantages and duty of prayer, and the nature and design of the initiatory and commemorative sacraments, is commanded to be taught to the young members of our church, as soon as they are able to “learn what a solemn vow, “promise, and profession, they made at their baptism to “God.” It would be well for our civil, and also for our

ecclesiastical Sion, if all who have the care of children would most *scrupulously* attend to this positive duty, by giving their charge not merely a *verbal*, but a *practical* and intelligent acquaintance with that excellent composition the church catechism. The answer to the question respecting our duties to our neighbours, would, if deeply engraven on the heart of the learner, be found a sure preservative from the errors of the times. Even in nursery compositions, children are now taught to decide on the functions and obligations of situations which it is not only improbable, but impossible, they should ever fill. The evil spirit of insubordination, thus early acquired, accompanies the pupils in their progress through life. The subject first studies the duties of a king; the scholar learns what his teacher ought to be; the flock are taught to scrutinize the defects of their pastor; the servant proclaims his master's improprieties; the inferior sees every aggravation of his superior's faults; and yet, at the last day, we shall only be questioned, whether we ourselves have done "our duty in that state of life to which it pleased God to call us." Our crimes as subjects, scholars, servants, or inferiors, will be proclaimed before men and angels. Our cruel oppressors, or negligent instructors, will answer for their *own* offences.

When the seeds of morality, and the words of sound doctrine, are thus incorporated with the first impressions of memory and dawns of reflection, we must watch them while they ripen into perfect holiness. Supposing we could not plead apostolical\* or primitive practice in favour of the rite of confirmation, what better or more probable means could we use, to implore the strengthening and directing grace of God, than to lead the catechumens to the altar, and there to require of them a solemn avowal of their religious obligation; concluding the service with episcopal benediction, and benevolent intercession, that the "everlasting God would for ever extend his fatherly hand over these (self-devoted) servants; that his holy spirit would so lead them in the knowledge and obedience of his word, that in the end they might attain eternal life?" Such a service our Church has provided; and both for its venerable antiquity, and excellent intention, it deserves far better than the ridicule and contempt which it too generally experiences from

\* See Hebrews, 6th chapter, 2d verse.

inveterate enemies or thoughtless neutrals. The Romanists erroneously rank confirmation among their sacraments; we do not presume to say that "it was given and ordained by Christ himself."

The peculiar trials of our sex have not escaped the benevolent attention of the compilers of our liturgical services. Beside the petition in the litany for those undergoing the pains of parturition, an office is prepared to rewelcome the joyful mother to the congregation, in which the Levitical oblation and sin offering of a lamb, and a young pigeon, is commuted for the christian sacrifice of praise and intercession. In this service, the pious intentions of former times are preserved, and the superstitious idolatrous pomp which the Church of Rome interpolated is wisely rejected.

With equal wisdom of discrimination, the wants and sorrows of sickness are supplied with a spiritual comforter. Intercession, exhortation, and examination, precede confession of sins; and in case of the humble and hearty desire of the sick person, the officiating priest is permitted to use a more authoritative form of absolution, than our church prescribes in her other services. Still, however, this form is considered as merely declaratory and conditional, ascribing no efficacious power to the ministring instrument, save what our Lord bequeathed to his church in St. John's gospel, 20th chapter, 23d verse. This absolution, therefore, depends as much upon the *faith* and *contrition* of the penitent, as those that are couched in the *petitionary* form, which our church probably changed upon this occasion, to comfort the feeble minded in the hour of extreme distress. The prayers that follow this absolution, rank among the most pathetic and impressive compositions of human sympathy, yearning over the severest trials of mortal man. As at such a period the most solemn rite of religion should never be omitted, a short communion service, suited to the occasion, has been provided; but the ceremony of extreme unction, which the Romish Church engrafted on the practice of the primitive Christians, has been properly discarded. We learn from St. James, that while miraculous powers were vested in the disciples of Jesus, the elders of the church were accustomed, at the request of diseased persons, not only to pray over them, and assist their spiritual necessities, but also to "anoint them  
" with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith  
" would save the sick, and the Lord would raise him up,  
" and if he had committed sins they should be forgiven."

The continuance of this unction, after the supernatural endowments from which it originated had been resumed, is one proof, among many, of the restless avidity with which the Romish hierarchy exercised domination over the consciences of men; since they could not pretend to work bodily cures, they extended the supposed efficacy of their ministry to a world from which no *telltale* traveller could return to complain of *imposition*; and they have had the audacity to give a source of emolument and aggrandisement the name of a sacrament; that is to say, of "the outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace ordained by Christ himself;" none of which essential distinctions are to be found in the Romanists anointing a dying person with oil, as an assurance of forgiveness of sins.

The offices for the ordination of priests and deacons, and for the consecration of Bishops and Archbishops, form a most sublime and instructive part of our ritual. It seems perfectly consistent with every preconceived idea of decency and order, that the ministers who are destined to wait upon the altar should be prepared by education, distinguished by habits, separated from the common mass of society by a particular provision, which excludes the necessity of their application to any ordinary calling; and also that they should be *dedicated* to God by express and solemn appropriation. The Old Testament sanctions all these suggestions, by the rules therein laid down for the instruction, attire, endowment, and consecration of the Levitical Priesthood. The solemnity which substituted the faithful apostle Matthias in lieu of the traitor Judas, is recorded in the first chapter of the Acts. From many other passages of that most instructive treatise we may gather, that an express designation, or setting apart, preceded the assumption of ministerial powers; and from various parts of the epistles we discover, that the custom of imparting the office of Deacon, Priest, or Bishop, by the imposition of hands, was continued as long as we possess any inspired record of the practice of the primitive church. It is true, in those days the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God precluded the necessity of human learning; and the liberality and zeal of the early converts supplied the want of a pecuniary provision for those who watched over them in the Lord; for a fixed maintenance could not be completely and regularly provided for the Clergy, till the predicted time so rapturously anticipated by prophecy, when "Kings and Queens were to become the nursing fathers and mo-

“thers of the Church of God.” The comfort and reciprocal benefit of an *independent* ministry, who may speak the word of God with all boldness, has been discussed. The utility and importance of human learning for expounding the truths, and clearing the difficulties of scripture, is too obvious to be disputed by any but fanatics, disordered by the inflated deceits of spiritual pride: and surely the decent regularity of a prescribed form, destined to impress the mind of him who is thus awfully separated from the common mass of mankind, must be apparent to all who wish to be able to consider previously what they promise to perform, and to join with intense purpose of supplication in the petitions that are to be offered; which cannot be the case, unless *foreknowledge* precedes *utterance*. Here again we are called upon to remark the moderation of our mother church, while steering her course between two opposite errors: alike avoiding the slovenly negligence which discerns no difference between sacred and profane functions, and the idolatrous priestcraft of Popery, who, as she exalts her ministers into infallible teachers of truth and workers of miracles, consistently with her own doctrines, numbers the ceremony of their consecration among her sacraments. General readers may derive much useful information, respecting the degrees and authority of the Christian Priesthood, from Nelson on the Ember Fast. Every member of the Church would do well to fortify his mind against the errors of the times, by acquiring a competent knowledge of his relative duties as a member of that society of which Christ is the head. The tenets now too generally scouted, under the opprobrious term of high church doctrines, would be found safe preservatives from that predicted “gainsaying of Korah,” which has so long disturbed the peace of the Christian world.

We have now briefly reviewed the offices of our church, except five services for particular days. To the first day of Lent a solemn form of humiliation is appointed, preceded by denunciations of God’s vengeance against impenitent sinners; repeated verbatim from scripture, and introduced by an explanation of the design of the ceremony; namely, “that the congregation, being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners, may the rather be moved to earnest and true repentance. This service has been scandalously named cursing our neighbour. Reading the imprecatory psalms, or the 27th chapter of Deuteronomy, from whence this part of the service is taken, as justly de-

deserves such a censure; which, on the same forced and fastidious pretence, might induce us to pass over all moral prohibitions of the New Testament, lest some individual offender should *rubb* to our minds, when we read over the black catalogue of crimes which St. Paul assures us will prevent our inheriting the kingdom of God.

Three great national events are made the distinct subjects of solemn commemoration. The deliverance of the three estates, assembled in Parliament, from a ferocious conspiracy, intended to restore the horrors of papal tyranny and superstition, formed a subject of devout exultation to our ancestors, who remembered the blazing piles of Smithfield, and abhorred the idolatrous worship of the mass and crucifix. In those times, they had not learned that "God made men to differ" in their way of worship, or that diversity of religions was of no consequence. A subsequent deliverance from the same enemy, and the establishment of regal power upon a more *defined* and *circumscribed* yet *securer* basis, excited the devout gratitude of the succeeding age; who, in the landing of the "hero William," on the same day as "quenched the fiery mine, and still'd the tempest under ground," discovered the same providence which had preserved our Sion from all her enemies, and frustrated their devices.

The murder of a religious and well principled (if ill advised) Prince upon the scaffold, by a party who had overturned the civil and religious constitution of the kingdom, sown the seeds of discord in the courts of the Lord's house, and broken the bands of that justice which they pretended to revere, was considered as a *deep national disgrace* by all ranks of people, as soon as the phrenzy raised by the cry of King Jesus, and the visionary dreams of a Utopian republic, had subsided into the chilling convictions of shame and folly. Let us hope, that the erasure of these reminiscences from our calendar is yet distant. The mementos of the malevolence of our two ancient enemies should not be swept from the public mind, while indifference to an establishment which neither sanctifies murder, nor authorizes rebellion, is taught as a liberal rudiment of enlarged education. The crest fallen hierarchy of Rome need not be insulted in this day of their humiliation; but as we have seen, that what again appeared "like the deadly wound of the beast" has been healed, and its temporal annihilation *suspended*, by its union with apostasy and infidelity, we should be assured, that the spiritual pretensions of the papacy are lowered, and that

it has renounced its system of perfidious hostility, before we again leave them at liberty to sharpen their blunted weapons of offence. And we should also know, from incontestable evidence, that the attachment of Calvinism to the limited monarchy of this realm, proceeds from more than regard to expediency, or repentment at having been deceived by those airy vows to liberty, which a fortunate marauder long since gave to the winds, before we can permit her to stand (as she demands to do) by the side of Episcopacy, as a twin supporter of the English throne.\*

Another service was appointed, to welcome the re-establishment of regal and ecclesiastical authority upon its ancient basis. The manners of the prince under whose reign this was accomplished, have given occasion to many, beside the champions of republicanism, to doubt whether the Restoration of the second Charles was indeed a blessing. The evils which his administration and debaucheries introduced have passed away; the good which his restoration confirmed still remains. The nation welcomed the *prepossessing* son of their murdered Prince with frantic rapture; and, as was natural, rushed from the extremes of sullen grimace and insolent pertinacity, to licentious gaiety and fawning obsequiousness. Rebellion was changed to servility; profaneness occupied the place of hypocrisy; arbitrary measures on the part of the court, rendered the necessity of a better check in the constitution apparent; and this happy alteration known by the name of the Revolution, was appointed to be commemorated by those additional prayers and praises to "Him who reigneth, be the earth ever so unquiet," on which we have before remarked, in treating of the service for the fifth of November. Let our enemies explain, on what grounds they can pretend to charge with functioning arbitrary power, a church which has thus solemnly asserted the expedience of sober and judicious resistance to tyrannical and unconstitutional measures. She who blesses God for a deliverance from arbitrary power, cannot be a preacher of the doctrine of passive obedience; though, with true Christian piety and sound political wisdom, she refers every extraordinary event, whether humiliating or joyful, not to the agency of man, but to the overruling will of God, and founds obedience to Kings on submission to the Most High.

\* The author alludes to the attempts to abolish the Test and Corporation Acts in England.



The fifth office is intended for the day on which the reigning Sovereign ascends the throne of his ancestors. We, who have been so long blessed with the paternal sway of a mild and virtuous monarch, must join in this service with sentiments of peculiar gratitude; for we must ardently implore the prolongation of his valuable life, and that he may be protected from every foreign and domestic enemy. But this form of prayer is not of such a limited and local nature, as to depend upon the personal virtues of the sovereign for its propriety. A regular government is a blessing; it is a blessing to be under the protection of wise and beneficent laws; it is a blessing to enjoy personal security, to possess political rights, and to have full power over our lawful property, or honest earnings; "to sit under our own vine, and to pluck the fruit of our own figtree." By commemorating the accession of a limited monarch, we hail the confirmation which those blessings derive from the renewal of that regular administration. In praying for the duration of the present royal race, we pray against anarchy and confusion, and all the evils that attend revolutionary interruptions of the succession, and the infirm and capricious government of a new dynasty with a doubtful title to sovereignty. The Church of England is too sensible of her heavenly trust, to adopt the mean adulation which aspiring sects pour into the greedy ear of usurped or dubious greatness, to gain the long desired, long envied supremacy. An established religion has nothing more to ask from the state, and readily acquiesces in the modest dignified obedience of a contented subject. The fawning whine of the sycophant, or the base arts of the slave, would degrade the purity of respectful loyalty. She renders to her Cæsars the tribute and the honour which are their due. She calls them gracious and excellent; and she has scripture on her side, when she addresses persons of high eminence in terms of respect and honour;\* but she considers even her present beloved and venerable King as most honoured by the title of "the servant of God." She requests "that he may be endued with wisdom and strength, "that justice, truth, holiness, and peace, and all other christian virtues, may flourish in his days." She implores "Heaven that he may rightly discharge his high duty, and "that the work of God may prosper in his hand;" and she earnestly supplicates for that unity of "mind and doctrine"

\* See Acts, 26th chapter, 25th verse; Luke, 1st chapter, 3d verse.

which the Prince of Peace so strongly enjoined. She requests "that all her members may obey their King cheerfully and willingly, for conscience sake;" and thus, dividing her attention between the safety, honour, and welfare of the prince, and the happiness of the subject, she implores for the one "immortal life, after a long and prosperous reign," and for the other every blessing that religious peace and virtue can bestow. Though worldly prosperity may result from the successful machinations of crooked policy, immortal life can only be given to sincere worshippers and faithful servants of God. It will be difficult in these, or any other addresses of our Church, to trace that servile spirit of adulation, that passive submission to mere domination, with which our enemies reproach us.\*

We will now pause. The importance of religion to every human character is generally acknowledged; the peculiar comfort and support which it affords to our sex is equally indisputable; the obligation to Christian unity, and communion of worship, is plainly asserted in scripture; it remains therefore to inquire, to what society do we belong? If we have been baptized into the established Church, our choice was *decided* by that act in our infancy; for unless we are *convinced* that she is unscriptural, we cannot *wander* from her pale and be *guiltless*. We have examined her doctrines, as contrasted with the opposite tenets of her most conspicuous opponents; and, from their yet more marked dissimilarity to each other, we have seen, that, so far from promoting the cause of union, the destruction of our hierarchy would destroy that rallying point at which we trust contending parties may one day meet: her preservation, therefore, ought to be the wish of all who really pray for the peace of the Christian world.

In a secondary, but not unimportant point of view, we have considered the establishment, not only as being a faithful expounder of the word of God, but as accommodating herself to the character and habits of society, especially to the constitution and sentiments of this nation; her claims to our preference, consequently stand upon very high ground. She is sanctioned by the word of God, and supported by the

\* I have not been able to find, in our ritual, more than one epithet that can be construed into a personal compliment to a sovereign, and that is "religious" in the prayer for the high court of parliament. In the present reign, every one will acknowledge its peculiar appropriateness; yet it seems only generally designed to denote professing Christianity.

laws of the realm, general advantage, and individual feeling. A willing obedience to wise and salutary institutions, is the noblest and the happiest use that we can make of the liberty of choice, of which we are so justly tenacious. In the ark which rests on the sure promises of God, we shall be preserved from being tossed about "with every wind of doctrine;" a vast advantage in times like the present. But let us not attribute to our church the *talismanical* powers of an impenetrable *sanctity*. The purest constituted society cannot bestow impeccability on its individual members. Many who drank instruction at the fountain of all truth, and received the words of life from the lips of the Son of God, will, we are assured by indubitable testimony, be commanded at the last day to "depart as workers of iniquity." Satan still continues to range to and fro through the earth, seeking to accuse the brethren; and no severer charge can he bring against them, than that they have neglected to improve those means of grace which have been amply afforded them.

The fruit of right principles is a life of piety and virtue. Christianity is the leaven which imparts its sanctifying energy to every action of this probationary existence. No required duty is too humble to be precluded from intermixing with evangelical graces. The cup of cold water, kindly and devoutly offered to the thirsty lip of want, will, like the widow's mite, be measured by the ability and intention of the giver; while the pompous alms of ostentation will receive their reward in that praise of men which they sought to obtain.

We will, in my next letter, discuss those amiable virtues of womanhood which flow from, and are sanctioned by, a spirit of true religion. The short remains of the present epistle shall be devoted to a consideration, which ought never to be banished from theological controversy; I mean *Christian*, not *philosophical* liberality. As the latter holds all forms of faith indifferent, the former determines that if we would work out our own salvation we must not rest in form. As the latter conceives disputation to mean the art of establishing your own importance by the defeat of your adversary, the former separates the cause from the advocate, and mingles compassion for deceivers, with abhorrence of deception.\* With one, all means are lawful that secure conquest;

\* "Though Christ hath no fellowship with Belial," says the seraphic Taylor in his life of Christ; "yet the consideration of the crime of heresy, which is a spiritual wickedness, is to be separated from the person

with the other, truth itself must not be defended by unwarrantable measures.

Again let me repeat, that as there were offenders under the old law, and yet the law was "holy, just, and good;" so in the purest congregation in point of doctrine, there may be the most corrupt and barren members. Our church urges no general or particular claims to infallibility. She is a "congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all things that of necessity are requisite to the same."\* But "as no congregation can be assembled in unity of worship, without many previous forms and binding rules, not absolutely prescribed by scripture,"† it follows, that as what is human must be imperfect, there will be some defects in the constitution of the society, as well as faults in the practice of its members. Allowing that those who seek to remedy these errors are really influenced by singleness of heart, these renovators are still not angels, but men, finite beings, not the unerring wisdom of God. Whoever knows the world, will confess that more mischief is done by defective judgment, than by positive depravity. The wisdom of past ages has erected for us a noble pile, under which we may safely shelter. Its architecture is constructed by those established rules which ensure beauty, strength, convenience, and durability. In the orna-

"of the heretic, who is material;" page 188. He proceeds to state the danger, to weak minds, of conversing with subtle heretics; and, quoting the story of St. John and Cerinthus from Irenæus, commends the apostle in such an *extreme* case, but cautions us against severity of judgment on *slight* grounds. The name of Bishop Taylor having been mentioned, it may not be improper to observe, that though his fervent piety, acting upon a lively and brilliant imagination, sometimes transports him into the bounds of mysticism and fancy, yet he appears rather inclined to ascetic than puritanic errors. He borrows his illustrations from pagan history, or popish martyrologies. On the disputed points of doctrine, he appears steadily in opposition to Calvin's distinguishing tenets. He was himself a prelate, and a sound friend to episcopacy. He determines predestination to be "God's great secret, not to be inquired into curiously;" (ibid, page 313.) His opinion of original sin has been already noticed. In opposition to the doctrine of assurance or certainty of salvation, he quotes the strong case of Judas, to whom a throne in Heaven, and the judgment of a tribe, were promised. In opposition to the doctrine of invincible grace, see page 216. These references are enough to disprove what some of our opponents would persuade the uninformed to believe, that this great luminary of our church was a Calvinist.

\* Article 19th.

† Hey's Lectures.

ments, the builders have somewhat indulged their fancy; and neglect has not only obliterated some of its exquisite carvings, but the injuries that it has received from external violence make it necessary to repair its parapets, and to strengthen its walls with additional buttresses. Yet all who feel the comfortable protection of this venerable sanctuary, will equally guard against the admission of *new* and *fantastical* embellishments on the one hand, and those *retrenchments* that would eventually weaken the building on the other; even though they were recommended by the plea of rendering it more light and airy, and better adapted to the present times. The errors and the pertinacity of the papacy *imposed* an awful *responsibility* on our ancestors. Blessed be God! we are not called upon to *build* a church, but to *defend* one. Let us fight her battles with the holy weapons of Christian charity, and endeavour by the liveliness of our faith, and the innocency of our lives, to prevent her from becoming that adulterous and barren spouse, who shall be finally repudiated by her long suffering but righteous Lord.

While one description of our adversaries accuses us for neglecting morals, another charges us with being cold formalists, and dependers upon our own righteousness. I trust these censures are, generally speaking, unjust. But the appeal must be made to the Searcher of hearts, not to the partial imbecile judgment of man. Much industry has of late been used, in obtruding upon popular attention, the biographical characters of schismatics and nonconformists. I mean not to question the verity of the high qualifications ascribed to them. I sincerely wish their virtues may be such as will stand the scrutiny of the great audit. But as a warning to others I must remark, that the distinguishing feature of their characters, which seems to be the reason for giving them this celebrity, was a *fault* or a *misfortune*, not an *excellence* or *advantage*. While their dissent from the establishment is placed in the most prominent point of view, are we uncandid in suspecting that these worthies are not removed from "the cool sequestered vale of life," and held up to public estimation, to recommend the practice of Christian or domestic duty; but to give a preponderance to the party which they espoused, and to seduce those by example, who cannot be convinced by argument? The true method of parrying such assaults is, not to rake into the secrets of private families for petty anecdotes of detraction; but to remember, that we also are inhabitants of "a city that is set on a hill and can-

*not be hid.*" Though we are forbidden to "do our good works" purposely "to be seen of men," or to look to the praise of our fellow-mortals as an *adequate* and *substantial* reward; yet we are commanded to avoid all occasion of reproach, and to "let our light shine before men, that they "may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is "in Heaven."

But if the force of our arguments, or the sanctity of our manners (which are the true Christian weapons of controversy,) will not avail to enlarge the courts of the daughter of Sion, we must not adopt the Satanical warfare, of unjust coercion or illiberal invective. You are not *compelled* to embrace the scruples and conceits of your neighbours, to whom you are *required* to render all the common offices of general benevolence or particular good will. Though the absurd or vicious consequences of their singularities of opinion may strike you forcibly, their intellectual perception may be too indistinct to discover their own backslidings; and thus, what in you would be *sin*, may in them be only *error*. To conclude: let us be especially careful, never to render railing for railing, nor to charge our adversaries falsely, nor to transfer the sayings or vices of any individual to the whole party to which he belongs. To use the words of an eminent ornament and champion of our church, "As we know not "what degrees of incredulity will exclude men from Heaven, let not Christian zeal overthrow Christian charity. "The Searcher of Hearts alone knows the circumstances "which may diminish the guilt of infidelity; and to his uncovenanted mercies let us leave the rejecter of his revelation, and the impenitent breaker of his laws."\*

I remain, my dear Miss M——, &c.

\* Bishop of Lincoln's Elements of Theology.

## LETTER IX.

*On the Virtues more especially feminine.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

IT has often been observed, that principle speaks in practice; right opinions, faithfully adhered to, will operate in virtuous and steady conduct; otherwise they must increase the condemnation and confirm the misery of the mind that lives at variance with its own determinations, and suffers its judgment to satirize its actions.

If we look at the general manners of the age, and particularly of our own sex, since *fixed* religious principles were voted to be the cumbrous brocade of illiberal bigotry; we must acknowledge, that indifference has dressed out the world in a very airy summer suit of changeable levity. Novelty prescribes the mode which negligence adopts; and provided there be but a change, no matter whether we vary from bad to good, or from bad to worse. We plume ourselves on having renounced the stubborn pertinacity of our ancestors; but, alas! our attachment to our new customs, new discoveries, new virtues, and new religions (don't smile at my supposed mistake; *virtues* and *religions* now sprout like mushrooms, and are of as equivocal a generation,) makes up in warmth, what it wants in duration; and thus, like Dryden's Zimri, we continue

“ Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong;  
“ Every thing by starts, and nothing long.”

To commence our observations with the cardinal virtue of our sex. General opinion has undergone an amazing change within a few years on the subject of chastity: I do not speak of those who have really violated her laws, but of the indifference or playful sarcasm with which untainted characters speak of the most flagrant derelictions of decorum. I am not one of those rigid censors, who would bar an unhappy woman's return to virtue, by excluding her from every cheer-

ing prospect of compassion and hope. The punishment of *culprits* should in this, as in every other instance, be determined by what is due to the *unoffending* part of society. It was formerly thought, that with respect to women, a forfeited reputation in this particular could never be regained. It was not from enmity to real penitence, but from an anxiety to preserve innocence, that a woman was supposed to have so far degraded herself by unchastity, as to be rendered incapable of ever more filling her former rank in society. To hide herself from the world, or to fly to some spot where her shame was unknown, used to be the wish of humbled, but not abandoned frailty; and while her weeping companions pitied her sorrow, they were roused by her disgrace to more vigilant circumspection; and thus the mournful consequences of one seduction prevented many.

How pathetically, and with what delicate respect to the chariness of female reputation, has Shenstone pourtrayed his lovely, deluded, and repentant Jessy! She is, indeed, the artless maid, "sustain'd by virtue, but subdued by love." She falls, as a really innocent girl is most likely to fall, not by the temptation of vanity, avarice, or ambition; but by the desire of removing from the mind of the beloved object, "affected scorn, artful doubts, and pretended rage." She will sacrifice herself, rather than suffer her insidious seducer to suspect the reality of her affection. The sacrifice is made, and she becomes, not as a poet would now paint her, more interesting, more amiable, by her credulity; "but, scorn'd by virtue, stigmatiz'd by fame," and compelled to fly from a deriding world, she implores the compassion of the traitor by whom she had been undone. But what, shall we ask, is the purport of her appeal? Is it to call upon him to fulfil the promise which enthralled her weakness, or to threaten him with public punishment? Does an *obstreperous abusive* father accompany the vindicative offender; proposing, by his overwhelming insolence, to found the future aggrandisement of his family on his daughter's shame? No, the dejected Jessy, deeply conscious that Henry's arts could not have completed her ruin had not her treacherous heart been his ally, comes, without those whose cheeks she had tinged with shame, to solicit such a pittance as might preserve her from mingling in "the vulgar crew," or begging "her scanty bread," and allow her to hide her woes in some remote corner, where, "banish'd from the form she "lov'd, her weeping virtue would relapse no more." With a deli-



cacy of sentiment which could only enter into the most refined imagination, she appeals to no other passion than his pity. The name of wife, which some artful female might endeavour to acquire, would, she justly observes, "neither sooth her grief nor clear her fame;" since it could no longer be the free gift of generous love, but the reluctant bond of reproachful compassion. With all the mildness of genuine modesty, she rather considers the pangs that her miseries may give her betrayer, than the woes which she herself endures; and though every object that she beholds speaks reproach to her susceptible heart, and tells her, "we are spotless, Jessy; we are pure;" she dares not ask for the death for which she languishes, "lest her sad fate should nourish pangs for" her still beloved Henry.

If we form an opinion of the present state of national manners from the most favoured productions of the theatre, how great must be our falling off; not in *verbal decorum* indeed, but in what is far more important, *virtuous principle*. In what we now consider as the licentious period of British comedy, vicious women were introduced; but it was in the light of degraded and disgusting objects. It is true, even the heroines often talked indelicately; but they always acted chastely. The times were then unrefined, and blunt\* coarseness of expression was not considered as an offence against morals or manners. I am unwilling to admit, that the character of our sex is really as much debased as their theatrical portrait persuades us to suppose. I rather hope, that the magic of the scene, and the attractive colourings of favourite actors, have made exceptionable passages pass unregarded, and diverted the attention of the audience from the tendency of the plot, to the sprightliness of the exhibition. Yet it is an extraordinary coincidence, that in the three pieces that have been of late most honored with public favour, the Stranger, Pizarro, and John Bull, the heroines are women of lost character.† The first of these plays has already encountered the just reprehensions of an admirable moralist.‡ I think this Lady observes, that Adelaide was the first adulteress who was ever exhibited in a favourable point of view to a British audience. It escaped her recol-

\* Examples of what we should now call inelegant bluntness may be taken from the justly admired letters of Lady Rachel Russell.

† The same remark applies to *Lover's Vows*.

‡ See Mrs. More's *Strictures on Education*.

lection at the moment, that Rowe had contrived to give our sex an excellent lesson in his historical play of Jane Shore. But though we pity and forgive this *real* penitent, and though she is by far the most interesting character in this captivating tragedy, we return from seeing it exhibited, with very different sentiments from those with which we have witnessed the efforts of its German copyist. By the one, *virtue* is confirmed, from seeing the predicted "ruin, reproach, and endless shame," dreadfully exemplified; by the other, her foundation is undermined, and conjugal infidelity seems not so sad or so irreparable an offence; since it appears likely that Adelaide and her injured Lord will be very happy after all that has passed.

Elvira, in the play of Pizarro, does not lay claim to our favour by even the *pretence* of repentance. As a professed religionist, she is perjured; as a daughter, disobedient; as a woman, indelicate; as a mistress, furious and vindictive. She follows a foldier of fortune in quest of adventures; her love, stung by neglect, changes to hatred: and she endeavours to instigate a man, whom her gallant had injured, to commit the murder which her heart dictated, though her arm wanted courage to perform. Yet she is, after all, a most benevolent creature, and by much the best of the Christian groupe in this avowedly *Pagan* composition. Cora, the all attractive savage, only *alludes* to the former part of her history in this piece; but if we trace it through the first part of Kotzebue's Peruvian Drama's, we shall find her equally qualified, by liberality of idea, and freedom of conduct, to secure the applause of a German auditory. I must felicitate my country women that the Virgin of the Sun, Stella, and the Robbers, are still thought too strong to be submitted to the decision of an English audience; the inference, that we are less corrupted than our neighbours, would present some consolatory ideas, did not a play of native growth call for severe castigation.\*

The seduction of Mary Thornbury, in John Bull, is so *unnecessary* to the plot, that many believe it was gratuitously introduced, to conciliate the favour of the frail sisterhood, who form so *numerous* and *conspicuous* a part of the audience. A broken contract would have served the author's ends quite

\* There is so much genuine humour in the low characters in this play, that it is mortifying to see it sophisticated by a mixture of mawkish sentiment and pseudo morality.

as well as personal violation, and given (in the opinion of some people) a better pretence for that fine stage effect in which a British handicraftsman blackguards a British magistrate, to the infinite satisfaction of the roaring galleries. That a young woman's being a strumpet gives her a right to be a wife, is *new* doctrine; but it must be in perfect unison with the sentiments of all the pretty housemaids and smart abigails in the kingdom; and must induce them to persevere in that style of dress, and mode of behaviour, which is best calculated to convince the young heir of the family that they may be prevailed upon to qualify for the title of "My Lady." It is so evidently the author's design to compliment the mobility, at the expence of the privileged orders, that I suppose he considered the very moderate share of intellect which he has allowed to Mary, as giving her such a decided superiority over his *fools* of quality, that it would have been invidious supererogation to have added the discretion and innocence of a Pamela. Are our gentry and nobles then so very corrupt, that a brazier's daughter is too *deserving* to be adopted into a great family, unless prostitution has lowered her to the level of their contamination?

But would not the libertine's being compelled to marry the victim of his treachery be a means of checking the crime of seduction? It might, indeed, make men more *guarded* through *fear*; but is there not great reason to conclude, that it would render women *profligate*, from *cunning* and *ambition*? The sex of the offence might be changed, but the frequency of seduction would be increased. Let women (especially those in humble life) suspect that modesty and innocence are no longer their chief recommendations to a creditable establishment, and inconceivable mischiefs will ensue. The contrary opinion has already gained ground. Seduction, strictly speaking, is now a rare offence. Jealousy for the honour of my own sex makes me wish, that the Henrys of the present day did not find us too easy a conquest, to need "that expence, and art, and toil," which constitute the superior guilt of the betrayer of unsuspecting virtue. I fear the criminals of either sex now meet on more equal ground; for in that rank of life in which the prowling debauchee used to look for his bashful and retiring prey, I see the wanton lure of artifice, and the bold front of invitation.

An examination of the tendency of that class of literature which meets with the most numerous readers, would prove

very derogatory to those pure elevated ideas of virtue by which we used to estimate the character of English women. Not to dwell on the tenderness with which most novel writers treat female unchastity, let us advert to the recent production\* of a fair illuminati, as a proof of the melancholy justness of the remark, that loose morals, disguised in guarded language, are more dangerous, because less alarmingly obvious, than the warm colouring of Congreve and Farquhar, or the gross indecency of Vanbrugh. Nothing can be so dangerous to virtue, as the soft names that are given to vice. Dressed in the engaging shape of "amiable indiscretions," and "venial errors," or perhaps in the bolder attire of "those frailties which honour the heart," we must take some time to reflect, before we can discover that we are speaking of Sin, the daughter of Satan, and mother of Death.

I have already cautioned you against the phrases of liberality of sentiment, enlarged ideas, and universal philanthropy, as far as relates to your religious opinions. I have ventured to assure you, that principle is not prejudice, nor steadiness bigotry. These cautionary suggestions will extend to the subject of which we now treat. At a period wherein the distant motives of a future state of existence have so little hold upon most people, the opinion of the world, and general behaviour, ought not to relax in any point which may be favourable to immorality. I know of nothing more likely to do this, than the turn which the public mind has taken on the subject of female profligacy. It really seems as if beauty could not be made engaging, nor simplicity amiable, unless relieved by the dark shade of illicit love. In the high walks of society, how few hesitate at visiting *blasted* characters, or shewing them the respect to which only untainted reputation was once thought entitled! and those who still avoid them are sure to be ranked among the outrageously virtuous, who, piquing themselves upon one good quality, commute, by their severity to a fallen sister, for every sordid or splenetic inclination. Opinion (I know not on what stable ground) has established a fantastic alliance between light behaviour and benevolence, and a good heart is always pleaded in excuse for vile conduct.

But shall not the penitent be forgiven? Unquestionably she shall. Let kindred and friendship hasten to lead home the wanderer, and act, as nearly as frail mortality can, the

\* *Delphine*, by Madame Staël.

part of those pure and blessed spirits who rejoice over the *contrite* sinner. Let her home be made as comfortable as forgiveness can make it; but let not kindness, with mistaken zeal, seek to divert the mild dejection which ought to accompany remorse, by scenes of dissipation, or by giving celebrity to what requires to be concealed. The interests of virtue cannot be promoted, by permitting those who have wandered from her path to preside at scenes of public festivity, or to dictate amusements. The penitent Jessy had no wish to shew the face which grief had furrowed, among the happy and the innocent: concealment and forgetfulness bounded her earthly views.

Humanity to the broken hearted victim of conscious error, differs so widely from the servile court which we every day see paid to prosperous vice, that nothing but an invidious design of lowering all moral distinctions could confound the two principles. If we rightly analyze the opinions and practices of these advocates for indiscriminate mixture of company, we shall find, that it is not for the sake of the sad recluse, that these *tender hearted* apologists solicit us to be kind to a frail sister's faults; but for some most engaging creature, the "ornament of society," who it is "millions of pities" should be lost to the world. It is some faded courtesan, some elegant accomplished genius, who has *rather* deviated from the straight path of virtue, and who now, finding herself deserted by lovers, wishes to acquire patrons and friends. It is some one who *sorrows*, not *repents*; and let us observe, that this distinction is important. The one, like Julia in Measure for Measure, "repents her that it is a sin, and takes the shame with joy." The latter, like the voluptuous Cleopatra, laments that she has lost "her curled Anthonny," that the juice of Egypt's grape no more shall moist "her lip," or, "that she shall be shewn in her fallen state to the shouting varletry of censuring Rome."

It is not uncommon for women of this latter description to complain of cruel usage, and to censure the world which they have scandalized by their conduct. They once indeed enjoyed celebrity; but it was the celebrity of guilt and extravagance; and where is it promised, that these shall possess "an abiding city" even in *this* world? The treasures which these daughters of licentiousness squandered were not only the wages of sin, but *purloined* from the funds of justice or benevolence; or, possibly, the long accumulated deposit of some noble family, whose thoughtless heir easily fell into

their net, and sacrificed to their caprice the honourable reward of the labours or heroism of his ancestors. The parasites and followers which those treasures purchased were nothing but a swarm of summer insects, who prey upon the fostering carrion. The winter of affliction or neglect ever sends "these slaves to thousands" to seek a new idol, who then "flames in the ascendant." We have all of us but too great reason to say with the prophet, "Wherefore should a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins?" But surely the exculpatory style of flighted merit, or injured desert, is peculiarly unsuitable to those polluted lips, whose voice should never be publicly heard, but in supplications for mercy and forgiveness. Women of pleasure have formerly published their histories; but I believe those licentious compositions were then thought only calculated for their own impure meridian, nor did they *publicly* lie on the toilette of high born uncontaminated beauty. As a proof that gentle words and insinuating address increase the dangerous attractions of vice, let me remark, that no woman now blushes to own that she has read the apologetical narratives of the courtezans of these days. Infamy is so disguised, so dressed, so tricked out with false colours, that even chastity stops to inquire whether any thing really was wrong; perplexed by the well sounding sentences of "marriages made in Heaven," "attachments of the heart," and "interesting friendships."

Severe censors are apt to complain, that the freedom of modern manners borders upon a degree of levity inimical to decorum. As the starched formality of our ancestors seemed better calculated to be the state cloak of design, than the every day attire of artless innocence, I do not lament that some of the lines of circumvallation, which sage sagacity drew around heedless beauty, are demolished; and that the youth of both sexes are permitted to enjoy the pleasure of easy society, without the eternal restraint of the prying duenna, or suspicious maiden aunt. But this relaxation in manners more strongly enforces the necessity of defending the heart by a yet stronger horror of vice. Unless principle guards the mind, bars and bolts cannot protect the person. By filling a young woman's ideas with supposed plots against her honour, you teach her intrigue and cunning, instead of discretion; and it is very probable, that you may inspire the generally fatal wish of spreading her net to entrap the imaginary seducer, and thus really expose herself to the snares

which her own folly has created. A prudent young woman, who is destitute of any sinister design, unless beside the treacherous gift of beauty she happen to be placed in a situation of conspicuous danger, or uneasy dependance, has little cause to fear the arts of a libertine; who, like the felon kite, rarely pounces but upon *certain* prey.

The decline of what are termed gallant attentions to the younger part of our sex, and the yawning indifference with which our fine gentlemen endure the fatigue of talking to *the girls* at public places, bespeak a strange revolution in manners, which our grey haired spinsters attribute to the relaxed deportment of the present race of belles, bespeaking them ready to be won before they are *wooed*. I feel more apt to transfer the censure to the *married* part of our sex, who too often set an example of freedom of carriage, and impropriety of dress, which custom has not yet warranted a young woman to adopt. Chastity is finely described, as a beautiful form, "With blushes reddening as she moves along, disorder'd at the deep regard she draws;" not because her pure imagination has converted every beholder into a tremendous giant, who is preparing to enmesh her in his ponderous net; but because observation hurts her retiring delicacy. Should such a gentle passenger fall into any of those deep abyffes which are scattered in her path, it will not be from her curiosity to explore those regions of darkness, nor from having her attention diverted from her own steps, by a desire to captivate the bye-standers with her soft attractions. Her danger will, however, be materially increased, if the mouths of these caverns are strewed with flowers; the peril becomes more imminent, if those warning memorials, which were inscribed with the narratives of past misfortune, are *insidiously* removed; but if the witnesses of this fair lady's pilgrimage unite to assure her, that these fearful caves are in reality only pleasant agreeable grottos, and that if (contrary to their expectation) she should *happen* to dislike the society and accommodations which they afford, she will not be detained a prisoner in these subterraneous dwellings, but may revisit the light of day, or, like the famous twins of Leda, alternately inhabit the infernal and celestial regions, partake of the impure banquet of Proserpine, or drink nectar with the gods; to whom shall we ascribe the fault, if the fair traveller no longer passes on with "unblemished majesty," but yields "to pride or to presumption?"

Allegory is a pleasant mode of illustrating our opinions. Let us suppose another pilgrim journeying through the wilds of life, whose character renders these mementos of danger still more necessary, though certainly her fall would be less lamented. The manners of the times, and the prevailing style of education, tend to render women at once extravagant and dependant; girls can do nothing to maintain themselves; they must therefore at all events *get husbands*; it requires a considerable expence to support them in style; there is no living out of style; a *rich husband* therefore is also necessary; I grant, that a good establishment in life has been the point at which young women always have aimed; but as, formerly, they were not quite reduced to such a style of helplessness, as to be merely a peg on which you are to hang finery, it was not necessary that husbands should be so very rich; and then, as there was more of the commodity in the market, the intended purchasers were not forced to look so very sharp. As adventurers of this latter description are more likely to fall into ambushes, and as I fear their number is far more numerous than that of those faintly maidens whom we have just noticed, surely, instead of cutting down the direction posts, they should be *multiplied* at every corner. In that contest between the sexes, which consists in the lady's endeavouring to entrap a wealthy partner who will let her dash, and the gentleman's wishing to seize upon some pretty girl who will look smart in his phaeton, success (as it is called) generally crowns the hero. Let not this combat of artifice be rendered yet more unequal on the heroine's side, by her being preassured that to *yield* is to *conquer*; nor let the smiling sophist of false compassion assure her, that so little disgrace is attached to defeat, that people go on just as well *without* as *with* a character.

It is superfluous to state how strongly religion recommends the virtue of which we have been treating, or how positively it denounces the wrath of God against all who live in a course of those sins, which are now adorned in such soft colours by our pseudo sentimental moralists. It is only by a dereliction of religious principle, that the world can lose sight of the enormity of those vices which are opposite to purity. I will therefore only repeat the observation, that our Lord has extended those personal restraints, which the law of nature and the Mosaical covenant enjoined, to "the inward man;" and, having banished sin from its secret holds,



he pronounced the sublime beatitude of the pure in heart, namely, that "they shall see God."

The next feminine quality on which I mean to offer a few remarks is benevolence. This is a plant which, if not of native growth, is so congenial to the soil of this country, that there is no period of our history in which its fruits have not been copious. Wealth, like a rich manure, has produced a yet more redundant crop; and in these times of commercial prosperity, it seems only necessary to publish distress to procure liberal aid. To stimulate the hand of affluence to shake its superflux to want, is therefore an unnecessary task; fashion has lent her aid to beneficence; and avarice is with one consent hunted from society, and forced to hide in contempt behind his heaps of gold. Shall I be classed among his *latent* votaries, if I lament, that in the rage of crying down *parsimony*, a very valuable housewife of past times, who assisted our ancestors in distributing their frugal bounty, has been sent to Coventry, after that "curled carle hated of God and men?" And yet, without *economy*, benevolence can have few disciples. To give what you scarcely know how else to apply; can hardly be called an exercise of that charity "which seeketh not her own." It is by the sacrifice of our pleasures, or by the limitation of our desires and accustomed comforts, that we fulfil the two injunctions of "letting our moderation be known to all men," and of "doing to others as we would they should do unto us." *Benevolence*, like "mercy, is blessed in him who gives and in him who takes," when, by exercising this quality at the expense of a favourite inclination, we prevent our passions from gaining domination over us, and obtain a real conquest over ourselves by the act which administers succour to the afflicted. The pleasure of giving, is never so exquisitely felt as when, by experiencing some privation, we can more forcibly contrast the different sensations of enjoyment and want. In proportion as the cravings of self-love are forced into a narrow sphere, the generous feelings of good will expand. Nor is the advantage limited to this one point; by thinking less of our own wants and desires, the real evils of life are rendered more supportable. I have seen (and your recollection, my dear Miss M——, will enable you to identify the instance I allude to) the pangs of an excruciating disease diminished, by the attention of the sufferer being diverted to the wants of the sick villagers; and when food failed to strengthen her own languid frame, and medicine had noth-

ing to offer but the Lethean draught of *suspended sense*, we have both beheld the pallid countenance lighted up by the benevolent intentions of a heart practised in the duty of considering the necessities of its fellow-creatures.

Unless benevolence chance to be the adopted child of affluence, it must acknowledge self-denial and œconomy for its parents. If it have the Christian grace of charity for its instructor, and the love of God for its motive, it must *prefer* but not *affect* privacy. It speaks in all the actions of social life, and it brightens the smile of conjugal or maternal affection. As a daughter, it is attentive and dutiful; it is liberal and considerate as a sister. It exercises its heavenly mind-cdness in various ways, beside the mere act of giving; and among its valuable endowments we must reckon the meekness with which it endures the reproach of parsimony, from those who only discern its care to *avoid* unnecessary expence, but not its *appropriation* of its little hoards. It is not anxious to be known as the first patroness of any new institution; but if the wants of those who have a claim to its assistance leave any surplus, it drops its dole unobserved into the treasury of some approved institution. You will observe, I am here speaking of that style of beneficence which suits a woman of a private station and moderate fortune. When rank, power, or affluence, enlarge the sphere of our influence, our efforts to serve our fellow-creatures should take a wider range, and consequently must attract celebrity. It is the consideration, that limited powers cannot do much, well; and that a *little*, well performed, is better than a lame partial execution of *great* designs, which makes me recommend to the generality of my sex the regular performance of known virtues, in preference to that eager pursuit of distant theoretical good, which is likely to expose them to the assaults of vanity, or the misery of disappointment. In the station where Providence has placed us, our exertion is most required and will be most beneficial.

Contrasted with the character of inborn, and often unobserved benevolence, let us next exhibit that showy liberality which passes so extremely well in the world. It has been humorously identified, by a person's anxiously soliciting to carry the plate at public contributions, as the only way of *escaping* from subscribing his mite. Great zeal for the indigent, is adopted by many as the readiest passport to the tables of the great; where, by a willing sacrifice of time, and a little adroit management, they gain the name of "most

worthy creatures." If they have no near connexions to reproach them with inattention, I have only to hope that their judgment and integrity are as unquestionable as their zeal is conspicuous; they may then prove safe and expeditious channels to convey the overflowings of prosperity to the thirsty soil of want. Yet, unless circumstances impose a necessity for so doing, I would, on many accounts, interdict the intervention of an almoner; and this on more general motives than the misapplications which sometimes occur. The giver should not lose the benefit of that personal acquaintance with sorrow, which strengthens the social ties, corrects the caprices of fastidious self-importance, and turns the narrow aims of individual gratification, into gratitude to that Providence who appoints wealth as the *steward* and *dispenser*, rather than the *consumer* of its accumulated bounties. I might also add, how much this benevolent intercourse between the rich and poor, the great and lowly, enlarges the mind and improves the manners of both parties. When a lady of rank surveys a healthy groupe of young cottagers, vying with each other for skill and adroitness at their various occupations, and watching with anxious glance the hour-glass, which, if nearly exhausted, upbraids them with having previously loitered, and reminds them of the probability of their dame's inflicting an additional task, she may form some notion of the value of the moments which she is anxious to waste. Or when she sees the care-worn mother dividing the brown loaf in equal portions among her children, whose countenances brighten with the glow of pleasure as they successively relieve the cravings of hunger, she may learn to compare the expences of vanity and benevolence, and to estimate their specific gratifications. But the bed of sickness, especially when attended by its frightful concomitant, penury, will afford her the best lesson to check the repinings of discontent, and all the various pangs of envy, ambition, and pride, which reach the sickly daughters of spleen to quarrel with prosperity. On the side of the indigent, this social intercourse with their superiors would prove the best check to the democratical spirit that is let loose among them. They would find themselves often called upon to observe the attractions of graceful manners, and the advantage of superior information. The narrow, but too general prejudice, which has been excited against the apparently more favoured part of our species, would be abated; and

grateful attachment to friends and benefactors, would soon eradicate the idea that lords and ladies are but poor creatures, were it not that they have got the upper hand in this world.

Much previous knowledge of humble life is necessary, to enable the liberally disposed heart to distribute its bounty with discretion. Indiscriminate relief is worse than injudicious; it is prejudicial. Knowledge of what a poor family ought to earn, and what they must spend, should (except in extreme cases) precede relief. Much public injury is done by increasing the luxurious habits which are become so very prevalent in the lower classes. High wages and great earnings are, in general, the parents of dissipation and want. As a trading nation, these exorbitant demands must ultimately ruin our manufactures, by enhancing their price; and if we consider the case as relating to a Christian country, we have only to compare the morals of the poor in a flourishing manufacturing town, and in an obscure country village, to see the evils that ensue from profuse gains.

Society, therefore, cannot be benefited by introducing expensive refinements into humble life; and it is melancholy to reflect, that habitual eleemosynary relief, if *very liberally* bestowed, often corrupts the manners of the individual whom it particularizes. Industry should be *assisted* and *stimulated*, not *deadened* or *superfeded*; and, except in cases of urgent calamity, a moral preference should be observed. This is certainly contrary to the inverted climax, by which false philanthropy ascends "from the crush'd beetle," to "poor suffering guilt," and excludes from its sympathy only those objects which should most powerfully attract it; but false philanthropy is the puling offspring of sentiment and feeling, not of principle. Beneath its influence, a Peregrine Rochdale, who has run away from his father without any provocation, shall only be anxious to preserve the ten thousand pounds which he capriciously destines to reward an accidental benefaction; but shall express no solicitude to know whether his deserted family are in existence, or need his assistance; though he certainly must have owed them infinitely superior obligations, which he does not even pretend were cancelled by unkindness. A Charles Surface, directed by the same tutor, shall defraud a creditor, and bestow a large sum on an unknown petitioner. But those who direct the feelings of humanity by the light of the gospel well know, that they are first required to shew "piety at home,

“and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God;”\* because “if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” Thus expressly does the religion of the blessed Jesus strengthen and confirm that evidence which nature bears to the primary obligation of domestic duties, and especially to the filial and parental, which our philanthropists, in their rage for improvement, call the “blindest modification of self-love,” and determine, that “the mind should be steeled against the absurd prejudice of obeying a parent, merely because he is a parent.” And with respect to our allowing liberality to precede honesty, scripture records a decided prohibition, by exhorting us to “provide things honest in the sight of all men,” and “to owe no man any thing, save to love one another.” These are plain contradictions to the tenets of the new Lyceum, which here, as in every other case, decrees that pleasure should precede duty.†

We must not, however, argue from these positive precepts, that because we have relations or creditors, we may neglect the general exercise of benevolence. One scripture rule must be expounded by another; and every virtue kept in its right position by a close contact with its neighbouring good quality. “Who so hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up the bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” Compassion and lenity are placed in the Gospel on a much more stable basis than sentiment or feeling could provide. We are to forgive our offending brethren, because “God has forgiven us;” we are to relieve the distresses of those who want our aid, “because of the exceeding great kindness which our heavenly Father and our only Saviour have shewn to us.” If our limited means will not keep pace with our wishes of doing good, we must not enlarge them by an unjust appropriation of what is not lawfully our own, but by the cheerful retrenchment or sacrifice of individual enjoyment. We must husband our little modicum with more care, bestow it with more cautious selection; and endeavour to add to its value by such an appropriation of *time* or *talents*, as our conscience shall tell us

\* 1st Timothy, chapter 5th, 4th and 8th verses.

† Who ever bestowed an alms, without feeling that giving was the most exquisite of pleasures?

will best answer the end of promoting the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures.

As a contrast to the random or dishonest schemes which false liberality presents, in fantastic arbitrary rewards of mere favourites, accidental benefactors, partizans, or interesting sufferers, who have only local or capricious claims to attention, permit me to recommend to your serious consideration, that example of *discreet benevolence*, which the *secondary* purpose of the parable of the Good Samaritan presents to all subsequent ages of the Christian world, as forcibly as its *first intention* spake to the hearts of its immediate hearers. This truly beneficent character does not neglect his own immediate concerns, and set off on a romantic pilgrimage in search of people in distress. He is quietly journeying, when he meets with a man lying on the road, robbed, stripped of his raiment, severely wounded, and half dead. A priest and a Levite, the interpreter of the law and officiating minister of religion, have not only *seen* the sufferer at a distance, but have actually *gone near* him, discovered it to be no case of *pretended* calamity, and having thus gratified their curiosity, with unnatural indifference they "have passed by on the other side," and left him to the care of chance passengers, regardless whether these will assist his miseries, or imitate their own inhumanity. But in the heart of the Samaritan compassion is an innate principle, which only waits to be called into action. He stays not to inquire, whether the sufferer be a countryman or a stranger, a friend or a foe. He hastens to him, "binds up his wounds, pours in oil and wine, sets him upon his own beast, brings him to an inn, and takes care of him." A sentimental philanthropist of the new school would have considered this delineation of the offices of benevolence as very *cold* and *insipid*. The Samaritan, with them, would have *devoted* himself to the services of this unhappy unknown; every plan of business, every tie of private affection or early connection, would have been *superseded*, if not *annihilated*. We should have seen the kind benefactor incessantly watching by the bed of the wounded man, who, if he recovered, would have become from thenceforth his dearest friend, or if he died would have been the object of his perpetual regret. The scripture, however, informs us, that the Good Samaritan *departed* on the morrow in pursuit of his own affairs; but, not satisfied with having brought the miserable being whom he had saved from death to a place where his wants might be supplied, he deposited a sum

of money, suited either to his own moderate ability or to the probable wants of the sufferer, with an injunction to the host to take care of him ; assuring him that if it should be necessary to incur more expence, it should be faithfully repaid. Any long comment on this instructive parable (which many have supposed to be a real history) is unnecessary. The prejudiced Jew learned by it, that the bond of neighbourly good will and assistance was intended to comprize all mankind ; and while it reproves the stony heart of apathy or avarice, to the remotest ages of the world, it will also *instruct* the soul of melting tenderness so to regulate its feelings, that one virtue shall not encroach upon another.

Candour is a virtue closely allied to benevolence ; and here also the humour of the times makes it rather necessary that we should define its restraints than encourage its unbounded exercise. It is most true, that every virtue is situated between two opposite vices, into one of which we are sure to fall the moment we exceed the limit of moderation. To define what that moderation is, we must take scripture for our guide ; and here, as I before observed in points of doctrine, we are not to force a particular text into the service of a preconceived opinion or ruling passion ; but by a faithful examination of the whole tenor of the sacred pages, endeavour with singleness of heart to discover how far our own belief and practice accords with the revealed will of God. As it is certainly contrary to the purposes of the Almighty, to confound the distinction of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, vice and virtue, we are not required, in our manner of speaking of these opposite qualities, to *forget* that they are not only *distinct* but *irreconcilable*. When we read or hear of monstrous crimes, the equivocal expressions of “ we hope all is for the best,” or “ whatever is, is right,” do not imply candour, but imbecility, indifference, or even a latent prepossession in favour of what we ought to condemn in positive terms ; unless we further explain our meaning to be, that we entirely rely on the secret counsels of that Divine Being, who makes even the stubborn wills and unruly desires of men advance the designs of his overruling Providence.

The soft extenuating tone which is often used when we describe the licentious vices, is as offensive to true candour, as it is to genuine purity. We may (nay, indeed, as Christians, we must) *pity* the slaves of sin ; but then we must pity them as *slaves* and *sinners*. Apology for great offences is not

only undue lenity to offenders, but it is uncharitableness to innocence, whose danger (as it has been before observed) is thereby increased. I cannot, however, allot the praise of superior candour, or even *gentleness*, to those who thus profess themselves the excusers of vice. They are seldom unskilled in "taunting proverbs of reproach," which are bestowed with little mercy on all the venial errors of the friends of order, decorum, and religion, if not in the shape of personal invective, at least as an aggregate body. Abstract abuse is here very servicable; bigotry, rigidity, formality, fastidiousness, and scrupulous punctilio, may, by that latitude of inverted meaning which the new system of elocution permits, be converted into most powerful engines to batter down respect for all ancient institutions, and even for the laws of God, which candour (a heavenly emanation from the pure spirit of charity) may thus be made to destroy.

Is candour then to be totally banished in these cases? By no means. When we read a controversial work, or one that opposes our own principles, we must not strain the author's meaning, by such inuendos and inferences as an impartial umpire would pronounce to be unfair, I do not say, as the author would himself disclaim; for ingenuousness is not the characteristic of literary discussion; or do they who are smitten with the wish of making converts, always *discover* the yoke to which their pupils are to submit. Do not, without sufficient evidence, believe that a reasonable creature can coolly justify the horrid deeds which anarchy and atheism have recently committed; but if you perceive the leaven of democracy to work in the mass, a few condolatory exclamations at the sad extremes to which *good intentions* have been hurried by *opposition*, must not cheat your simplicity. And with respect to flagrant breaches in moral rectitude, your sentiments must principally be determined by the proofs on which the accusation rests. To detect slander is the province of candour; yet if the guilt be indisputable, you must not let the consideration of the beauty, sweetness, elegance, benevolence, or local situation of the offender, make you insensible of the enormity of the offence; for candour does not consist in mitigating crimes, but in distrusting their reality, or in hoping that the culprits retain some good properties which may ultimately lead them back to repentance.

Our chief opportunity for exercising candour is with the lesser errors and imperfections of our fellow-creatures, and especially of those with whom we are most nearly connected.



The allowances that we are called upon to make for human infirmity, whenever our minds become *painfully* impressed by a sense of ill usage, misconduct, unkindness, neglect, or severity, will be most properly considered under the head of sweetness of temper; a quality which our male partners consider as so indispensably necessary to our sex, that they seldom will allow any other virtue, however preeminently excellent, to be an adequate substitute for this fundamental principle of female worth and utility.

I am one of those who think, that a predilection for unresisting sweetness may be urged to an extreme that is unfavourable to the virtue and happiness of both sexes. The primeval design of God in the creation of woman, that she should be the help-mate of man, certainly extended to his *spiritual* as well as *temporal* existence. If, from mixing less with the busy scenes of active life, she be less capable of deciding with propriety in points wherein acuteness, penetration, and what is termed policy, are necessary, her principles, it must be granted, are for this reason less likely to be contaminated by collision of interest, and all the crooked machinations of overreaching ambition. This subject might be best considered, when we come to that most intimate connexion with men, of which obedience forms our distinctive obligation. But as, with few exceptions, subservience is claimed from us by all our male relatives, it may not be improper to observe, that whenever they err, either in morals or principles, a *mild yet marked* disapprobation is not *pertinacity*, but *fortitude*. It is, perhaps, the most difficult instance which a really amiable woman can give of command of temper; since nothing can be more contrary to her feelings, than to find herself called upon by conscience to prefer contention to acquiescence, or constraint to cordial intercourse. You will readily suppose, that I am not claiming a licence to defend the vanities, the punctilios, or the distinctions, which weak or wayward women deem of so much importance, but for which the wife would never risk the blessing of domestic concord. I am supposing the occasion which gives rise to opposition to be really important, and to proceed from a sense of duty to a parent, justice to an injured sister, affection to an ill treated child, attachment to a deserving friend, or a full conviction of the bad consequences of the errors that we wish to check. The less the question in dispute is connected with *self*, the less suspicious will be the contest; and as the *object* for which we contend should be indubitably im-

portant, the *means* by which we endeavour to gain our point should be blameless. Loud keen invective, known by the name of scolding, is not only blameable, but injudicious; for it is the surest means of defeating the purpose which it seeks to secure. Sullen moroseness is still worse; and tears of anger or disdain, affected indisposition, and every species of art and trick, though more generally successful than the straight forward method of the blunt virago, constitute, in the opinion of every ingenuous person, a far more detestable character.

I must here observe (though with some degree of apprehension, for I feel that I am treading on very tender ground, and tremble at the thought of leaguering every son of Adam against me in defence of their darling prerogative,) that when men elevated smiling acquiescence into the first of female excellences, they indulged their humour at the expence of their understandings. This preference indicates a consciousness that they themselves are *wayward children*, who require to be *soothed* and *flattered*, and not the *guardians* and *instructors* of the inferior sex; the slave of their own passions, and not the "offspring of heaven and earth, and all earth's lord." Are a sycophant and a slave really more valuable than a monitor and a friend? They must not pretend to urge, that they need no monitor; for in that case they would be destitute of those capricious humours for which they claim indulgence, and which they say it is our chief duty and destination to attend to. Is not fidelity, I would ask, valuable; is not discretion a pearl above price, and pure affection a blessing which makes earth like heaven? And can she be faithful, discreet, or affectionate, who sees you totter on a precipice, or madly sport with your reputation, health, or fortune, and can yet preserve the smile of tranquillity, and forbear to warn you of your danger? But I must stop this excursive expostulation; our present design, my dear Miss M——, is with the characters and duties of women; and as the latter often spring out of the faults of men, we should consider how we may best adapt our minds to our lot, rather than spend our time in uselessly lamenting that this "lot is not always cast in fair ground."

The right (I should speak more correctly in saying the duty) of resistance, upon really important occasions, being admitted, and the exercise of it limited within the most exact bounds of prudence and ingenuousness, I must now observe, that as our relative situation causes us many trials from

the coercion of our wills, and from opposition to our interests, we should be careful of adding to the number, by introducing domestic traitors into our own bosoms. For a very short period of our lives, during the reign of youth and beauty, man affects to compliment us with an ostentatious show of preeminence; I should rather have said, *used to affect* to compliment us; for fashion has now almost annihilated our fantastic empire, by confining the attentions of gallantry to that part of our lives when they must either be unmeaning or criminal. Many (may I not say most?) of our sex, from their cradle to their grave, scarcely know the exercise of free will, either in the disposal of their time or their fortunes, in the choice of pleasures or pursuits, in the selection of friends or acquaintance, or even in determining the spot of earth on which they would reside. I am far from insinuating, or believing, that this dependant state is really a misfortune; I acquiesce in the sapient conclusion, that to a conscientious mind "Command is anxiety, and obedience ease;" yet as obedience is our lot, how ought we, from early youth, to cultivate the passive virtues; how carefully should we restrain and check those stormy passions, irregular desires, and eager wishes, which will in our future lives prove to us like the stream which increased the consuming thirst of Tantalus! Since there is a probability that we shall never be permitted to set out in search of adventitious pleasures, at least not to select such as we fancy would be most gratifying to our taste, how careful should we be to make our own bosoms the seat of that peace which, as "the world cannot give," so, most happily, "the world cannot take away!" I am not here recommending melancholy abstraction, or mortified indifference to sublunary things; the disposition of mind that I would inculcate, is humble resignation and cheerful content. It is a rejoicing in the good that we possess, and a quiet surrender of our own wills; which temper results alike from a firm confidence in the goodness of God, a proper sense of our own unworthiness, and a just estimation of terrestrial objects, whether considered with respect to their value or duration, as they affect ourselves or our fellow-creatures. When sweetness of temper is thus founded upon principle, I will not suffer any *male* orator to be its more *devoted* panegyrist. It deserves every epithet of heavenly and angelical; for it is, indeed, the temper of angels, and the frame of mind which predominates among the bless-

ed inhabitants of Heaven. Yet, notwithstanding this holy elevation of soul, and benign composedness of character, I must suppose it possible, that a woman thus endowed is not an *indifferent* spectator of the passing scene. She cannot meet the man, to whom she is linked by the tie of kindred or affection, with a gay good humour, when he is disguised by passion or deformed by vice. Sincerity (I must repeat) is a prime ingredient in the character of real sweetness; and when pained affection forcibly wrings the heart, the smile of gentleness can but feebly break (not through the cloud of passion but) through the night of woe.

Little merit should be ascribed to that sort of animal good humour, which consists in being insensible to the finer feelings of morality. If we analyze this quality, we shall perceive that it is really nothing better than mere selfishness, which, provided no immediate ill affects itself, is willing (in the well known phrase) to "let the world slide." I allow as little credit to that *exterior polish*, and ground down *smoothness* of deportment, which substitutes command of temper for real suavity. The known predilection which men entertain for easy partners, has made many female hypocrites, and (especially in the second classes of society) has introduced an unvarying softness, a guarded acquiescence, a cautious equanimity of manner, as remote from real gentleness, as the drawling sentimental whine by which it is accompanied is from true benevolence. A remarkably low tone of voice, and an unswerving quietness of manner, are the disguises which the conscious termagant would *naturally* assume, who, fearing her own vehemence, dares not permit her feelings the least indulgence in public; and atones for these occasional restrictions, by suffering the accumulated load of spleen to burst in a torrent on her near connexions or dependants. But as the easy elegance of the true woman of fashion, is easily distinguishable from the overcharged finery of vulgar imitators, who endeavour to awe you into admiration of their costly attire; so a discerning eye will soon discriminate between the artless ease of real meekness, and the guarded evenness of assumed gentleness. The consciousness of having nothing to disguise, will give an honest animation to the countenance of the former; while every feature of the latter remains fixed in the icy coldness of frigid propriety; for it dares not venture on the honest blush of kindling sensibility, or the spontaneous exclamation of generous indignation. The whole deportment of the studied character will

be so very right, as to be in reality wrong ; so very obliging, as never to oblige ; and so uniformly amiable, as to excite the distrust of all who give themselves time to reflect, that where so much care has been bestowed upon *manners*, the *inward* dispositions of the heart are likely to have remained unregulated. Yet so many resolute bashaw batchelors, skilled in the *theory* of connubial despotism, have surrendered at discretion to these piratical shrews, cruising under the false colours of unresisting suavity ; that I am persuaded, an inversion of the plot of the celebrated comedy of, “Rule a Wife and have a Wife,” would present a just resemblance of the *interior* œconomy of many families. I can only account for its nonintroduction on the stage, at a time when novelty is so much required, by supposing that John Bull’s high attachment to his own prerogative would not *patiently* permit an exhibition which would discover “the secrets of his *prison* house.”

Having removed the seat of Gentleness from the features and manner to the heart, let us now attend to her conduct, and enumerate her attendant graces. She is nearly allied to Christian charity, or rather she is such an integral part of that celestial quality, that it cannot exist without her. In the eye of the world, her attention being diverted from herself, ingenuousness often precedes consideration ; but in the privacy of retirement, and amidst the narrow circle of domestic duty, she walks with circumscribed attention. She does not permit disdain, envy, pride, or malice, to intrude into the hallowed sacristy of her bosom. Shrinking from every tendency to tyranny, caprice, or petulance, she considers the wants and errors of all with whom she is connected ; she allows for human infirmities ; and if her resentment be roused by flagitious offences, she remembers the apostolical precept, and *sins* not in her *anger*. She is particularly observant in her conduct to all who are in any way dependant upon her humour ; and the claims of an inferior are in her eye sacred. She cannot only endure, but obey, the waywardness of an aged friend ; and she can submit without murmuring to the privations which mistaken tenderness, or too officious care, unwarrantably imposes. For patience is one of her handmaids, by whose instructions she not only sustains disappointments and vexations, but endures the still more difficult trial of personal suffering. This passive fortitude, so highly becoming to our sex, is generally found to exist in its highest perfection in the gentlest tempers and

most delicate constitutions. Indeed, as it is the exact reverse of pride and selfishness, where should we look for it, but in the soil in which humility and benevolence generally abound. From whence proceed all the irreverent complaints against the dispensations of Providence? Who are they that are perpetually quarreling with their lot in this world, and who have always some story of extreme distress, or cruel usage, to weary the good natured ear of those who long to blend reproof with pity? Are they not the selfish, the proud, and the envious? Have not their disappointments proceeded from an extravagant opinion of their own deserts; and may we not oftener trace the unkindness of which they complain, to a previous insensibility of the claims and expectations of others?

Contentedness is so genuine a feature of good temper, that, unless in cases of very peculiar distress, it rarely fails to be the predominant distinction of a placid well disposed mind. It is unquestionably a branch of that charity which "seeketh not her own, and endureth all things;" but, unless it be the result of natural apathy and coldness of disposition, it assumes many more of those glorious epithets which discriminate the exalted character of the true Christian. A consciousness of our own unworthiness, leads us to consider every blessing that we enjoy as the undeserved favour of a liberal benefactor: and every pain that we endure and every privation that we feel, as the merciful correction of a wise parent and just master. Thus contentment becomes united with humility, resignation, and devout gratitude; and how truly proper are these sentiments to this fallible and militant state! Where, my dear young friend, shall we find the unhappy wretch who has no endowment of body, mind, fortune, or connexion, for which he is not, with respect to the donor, an *insolvent* debtor? And where shall we meet with that unfulfilled virtue which does not require to be *perfected* through *affliction*.

There is a placid calm contentedness which is even practicable in severe suffering; but when our temporal affairs are prosperous, cheerfulness must be considered as a most agreeable addition to composure and placidity. Its attractions are so powerful, especially to the majority of men, that merely on prudential reasons, I would urgently advise every woman to endeavour to embellish home with this strong allurement. It is most certain, that the lords of the creation are in general less disposed to acquiesce in mortifications and

uncomfortable sensations than women; their active natures prompt them to *subdue* difficulties, and to *fly* from trouble; and few men require a better excuse for a habit of dissipation, than that their own fire-sides presented nothing that was agreeable. To the mothers, sisters, or wives of young men, this admonition is especially seasonable. The words "a dull evening," have a magnetic influence upon the impetuous passions and quick animal spirits of youth; and it is generally in the early period of life that those habits are formed, which determine man to be the domestic companion, or the bon vivant. I fear there are some natures so very erratic, that even the wit of a Seigné, or the elegant archness of a Montagu, would not detach them from the circling glass and its noisy merriment; but I wish such people to be left without excuse, and that the *deserted* female should never accuse herself, during the lonely hours of watchful solicitude, of having *bunted* her stray turtle from his nest with the scream of dissonance, or the hum of melancholy. I dwell more seriously on this subject, as I am convinced that many valuable women fall into this error, especially those who still belong to the diminishing order of domestic industrious housewives. The cross events that are continually occurring in the little monarchy of our own households, though individually petty and trivial, become important by accumulation, and teasing by frequency. One consideration should here be attended to; if we find that our attention to good management *materially* affects our temper or harasses our spirits, we may be assured that we are giving an undue weight to worldly concerns, and are pursuing a duty till we advance into the confines of error. A recollection of our motives for these exertions, and an estimation of the intrinsic value of all temporal things, will recal us within the prescribed limits of what is right. We cannot serve our family, if we make home *disgusting* to the members of which it consists; and we cannot be said to "set our affections on things above," if we surrender our whole mind to the *encumbering* cares of Martha.

Nothing is more unjust than to confound cheerfulness with levity; their characteristics are essentially distinct. The one is perfectly independent, or at least requires nothing but the absence of pain, calamity, and ill humour; the other can only live in a crowd, where it meets with the food on which it subsists, admiration and amusement. Cheerfulness is self-amused; all nature, in its estimation, wears a smiling aspect;

and it goes forth, like the child in the fable, inviting every object "to play with it," and partake of its hilarity. Levity has smiles for its ball-dress, and tears for its dishabille. It is not unusual for cheerfulness to feel overpowered in a crowd, distracted by clamour, and fatigued by a succession of what are generally termed pleasures, which do not leave it leisure to commune with the agreeable inmate in its own bosom. The cheerful woman feels more satisfaction from describing gay scenes to a friendly circle, than from the absolute enjoyment of them. The dissipated female languishes at the recollection of past delights, and can only be said to live while she either participates in, or plans splendid amusements. She who can remain at home without imbibing melancholy or moroseness, who can contrive diversions within the precincts of retirement, who never complains of ennui, and can at all times exert sufficient mental strength to throw a stone at the Goliath spleen,\* gives sure indication of possessing that "peace of mind which passeth all understanding." But she who hurries from one crowd to another, and wastes in public that time which is the most precious of our entrusted talents, and those animal spirits which were given her to exhilarate the labours of social duty, discloses the mournful secret, that she is flying from a hated enemy, whose conversation is *insupportable*; I mean, herself.

Beside the prudential value of cheerfulness, as it affects our connexions, or our own estimation with others, allow me to prescribe it as one of the best nostrums for the preservation of health. Cheerfulness, unless incapacitated by some infirmity, is always active; and the value of an agile body, and energetic mind, can only be estimated by those who have experienced an accidental suspension of those enjoyments. How much may the comforts, and indeed the animal uses, of food be augmented or diminished, by devoting the social meal to cheerful and instructive conversation, or by rendering it the chosen season of debate and complaint! A hearty laugh after dinner, has been prescribed as a medicinal recipe to promote nutritive concoction; and, thank God! every family may occasionally enjoy the luxury of this *wholesome dessert*. Very little is necessary to compound it, supposing (as I before observed) the absence of severe pain

\* "Throw but a stone, the giant dies."

*Green's Poem on Spleen.*



er calamity. It is but endeavouring to be pleased ; it is only giving agreeable answers, and avoiding long mournful narratives of trivial distresses ; a style of conversation more infectious than the influenza, and always sure of heaping up such a mountain of miseries, as the most sprightly disposition must sink under. I am not here endeavouring to banish improving and serious conversation ; for the latter, there are due times and stated seasons, in which mirth would be not only unbecoming, but criminal. I only want to exile those *unedifying* dolours, which make a party uncomfortable, they know not why, and mopish instead of intelligent. It is a false idea, that improvement must speak in a tone of puritanical solemnity. Wit is a more useful ally to wisdom, than spleen ; and humour has vanquished many a foible, against which gravity remonstrated in vain.

But the bounds of cheerfulness must be defined ; it must never attempt to triumph over the sorrows of a dejected broken spirit ; for then it is no longer the child of benevolence, but of ostentation and malignity. When an effort to exhilarate would be unseasonable, it must gently try to amuse sorrow or to soothe despair. In its gayest sallies, it must ever preserve the sanctities of decorum ; for it has no alliance with indelicacy, profaneness, malice, or slander. Its raillery should be the light tickling of a feather, not the excoriating lash of punishment. Desirous to please others, not sedulous to display itself ; careless of admiration, playful, easy, and discreet ; observant to stop the laugh when the jest is grown vapid, and to suspend the jest when the inclination to laugh is exhausted : in fine, always remembering the wise King of Israel's admonition, "that there is a time to weep as well as a time to laugh, a time to dance, and a time to mourn."

I know no surer indication of a happy disposition, nor a more likely means to promote the comfort of those around us, than the habit of attending to little observances, and avoiding petty contradictions. No minutiae are undeserving of serious consideration, which contribute to the peace and good will of the little kingdom over which we exert viceregal dignity. Goldsmith proved his intimacy with human nature, when he made his engaging Dr. Primrose ascribe the harmony of his family to his strict enforcement of the laws of good breeding. It was observed, by one who well knew how to appreciate the excellences of your revered mother, that she possessed the amiable and singular quality of "nev-

er difappointing any one by her replies." It was not meant by this, that ſhe never refuſed an improper requeſt, nor checked an impertinent obſervation; but that her answers were always ſuch as the *reconfideration* of the party to whom they were addreſſed could not fail to approve. Thoſe who have obſerved, how often the happineſs of a party is interrupted by an untoward or contradictionary answer, will rightly value this happy ſuitability. But I am wandering from the quality of good temper, to that outward expreſſion of it which properly belongs to another department.

Amuſement and occupation are ſo neceſſary, in order to preſerve our minds in a happy contented ſtate, that idleneſs is ever rightly denominated the parent of ſpleen, ill humour, and caprice. To answer the deſirable ends of employment, it is neceſſary that our purſuits, whether of buſineſs or pleaſure, ſhould be innocent. Nor is it an improper reſtriction (at leaſt to the generality of my ſex) to add that they ſhould be unexpenſive, as well as rational. Some ſpecies of employment is eſſential to every ſtation; but in amuſement (after duty has determined the portion of time that it ſhould claim) taſte may be allowed in *ſome degree* to make the ſelection; I ſay in ſome degree; for our connexion with, and dependance upon, the other ſex, will ſeldom allow us to be *ſovereign*, even in the choice of our *rattles*. Two cautions may here be uſeful to the younger part of my ſex. In the firſt place, let them avoid acquiring a taſte for expenſive amuſements; their fortunes and expectations muſt be the rule by which they are to determine what they are to call ſo; recollecting alſo, that œconomy ſhould be more rigidly exerciſed in the department of bagatelles. Drawing and muſic, though moſt pleaſing accompliſhments and agreeable methods of employing leiſure, may be ſo far purſued, as to prove a ſerious conſumption of time and fortune. Gardening, if ſuffered to deviate into an artificial taſte for what is curious, and tender, is liable to the ſame objection. Indeed, like many other overſtrained propenſities, it ceases to be what nature deſigned it, one of our moſt ſimple, rational, healthful, and innocent enjoyments; and aſſumes the ſhape of thoſe faſtidious vanities, which luxury has introduced to ſupplant genuine delight. Taſte may be gratified and diſplayed in the diſpoſition of a roſarie, as well as in an orangerie; and "Nerina's woodbine bower," or even a cottage garden, with its clipped hedge and almoſt ſpontaneous flowers, often comprize as many beauties, though not ſo many cares and difappoint-

ments, as the stately conservatory, or the shaded parterre stored with the "pride of Ganges."

I can scarcely tear myself from a subject which has afforded me so many hours of amusement and days of health. It is fortunate that I have enough self-command to avoid reminding you, that gardening was the employment of Paradise, or quoting all that our best poets have said on this enchanting theme. I must, however, stop to say, that that sorrow must indeed be of a desperate nature, which can resist the soft allurements of "vernal delight." Nature reviving from the sleep of winter, flourishing in plants, blossoming in flowers, and productive in fruits, exhibits an aspect of cheerfulness which no well regulated mind can fail to enjoy, unless heavily laden with the burden of recent misery.

We will *chat* hereafter about those studies which may agreeably and usefully fill up the intervals of avocation; but having somewhat prematurely introduced the topic of amusement as influencing temper, it would be considered as an unpardonable negligence to omit mentioning cards. I hear you object, that I shall arrange them improperly under that head; cards being now really a science and a labour, if not a duty. As an amusement, I am inclined to treat cards with lenity; but then they must be confined within the limits of recreation. They must not consume much time; they must be enjoyed at a small expence; and they must *exhilarate* the mind, not *oppress* and *agitate* the temper. Cards, when accompanied by vivacity and good humour, often afford relief to the flagging conversation; and especially in the decline of life, they offer a happy interruption to that listlessness which is apt to overcloud the spirits, a sure attendant on decaying faculties and fatigued attention. But in this point, as in most others, refinement has banished comfort. The social but small party, with all its friendliness, ease, and hilarity, no longer possesses any attraction; and if compassion still plead in behalf of some decrepit invalid, so far as to induce the votaries of pleasure to employ a disengaged evening in diverting the pains of infirmity, the severe penance is ranked among those works of supererogation, the merits of which may be drawn upon to commute for former sins. Yet in this crowded rout, with all its brilliant lights, elegant refreshments, whispering beaux, and fashionable habiliments, the heart-felt gaiety which our ancestors enjoyed at five-card loo, or one-and-thirty, are utterly unknown

The dreadful vice of gaming must here be mentioned, as the most certain corroder of the temper, as well as the destroyer of every beauty, delicacy, or grace, that is usually ascribed to women. Let us imagine the contracted heart of a miser, joined to the countenance of a fury; let us unite inordinate covetousness, with rage, envy, terror and despair; behold dependance and imbecility on the one hand, on the other impending ruin and infamy, from which the wretched victim has no resource but death. And can it be wondered at, that she who has dared to sport with the reputation and fortune of her family, should stake the interests of that hereafter, of which perhaps she has heard little, and meditated less, as madly as she has risked those temporal enjoyments to which her covetous and selfish heart was attached with such destructive idolatry? A female gamester, like a female deist, sins against all those moral restraints which general opinion, education, and custom had placed around her sex, as well as against the natural feelings of her heart. Instead of delicacy, timidity, and generosity, she becomes confident, bold, and mean; avarice and chicane usurp the place of liberality and ingenuousness. Peace will never more enter into her bosom; and if placidity dwell upon her lips, it will be but the *meretricious* smile of dissimulation, "the painted sepulchre," that covers the most humiliating vestige of degraded mortality.

There needs little rhetoric to prove, that all criminal pursuits and violent passions must be destructive of real good humour; because sweetness of temper can only subsist with a conscience satisfied with its general conduct. It will be a more difficult task to persuade my young readers, that the very sensibility which renders good humour so attractive, if indulged beyond its proper bound, infallibly destroys its charming associate. Yet, as this finely tempered human machine is so constituted, that a redundancy of any vital secretion begets disease; so in the moral world, vice treads so close upon the heels of virtue, that you cannot open the door to one, without danger of admitting the other. Hence the utility of constant watchfulness; hence the necessity of frequent application to Heaven for its directing and restraining grace; and in no point is divine assistance more necessary, than in the warfare which is continually kept up between our *feelings* and our *judgment*. If we renounce the former, we become a disgusting lump of apathy; if the latter, a whirlpool of confusion.

There is no circumstance by which the keen sensations of virtuous sensibility are more agonizingly distended, than by the misconduct of near and dear connections. I think this is such a hard trial of temper, that mere human complacency must shrink from the conflict. With God, however, all things are possible. The only earthly means of rendering such an affliction supportable is, to behave to all around us with such a conscientious observance of duty, and to preserve such a purity of conduct, that we may truly say, "neither through neglect nor evil example have I expedited this misery." When to this consolatory self-reflection we add our prayers to Heaven for the reformation of the sinner, wisdom directs that we should as much as possible withdraw our attention from the painful object; and (if justice and propriety ascertain the suitability of such conduct) endeavour to bestow our misplaced affections on a more deserving person. This, I grant, cannot and ought not always to be done; but when it is impracticable, and the cord that binds us to the offender is drawn *closer* in proportion as it *cuts* deeper; still let us reflect, that it is the memento of one never failing friend, who, by shewing us the painful nature of all worldly dependence, endeavours to attach us closer to himself.

The like consolatory reflections may be extended to the other trials of virtuous feeling; I mean the loss of health, of fortune, or of friends. When sorrow appears as the immediate infliction of Providence, a well disposed mind will find less difficulty in submission; and, however agonizing it may be to the feelings of self-love, it certainly does not wear such an alarming aspect with respect to futurity; as the Christian believer must discern, when she contemplates the conduct of some dear but hardened sinner, whom she can neither *renounce* nor *reclaim*. Examples, however, have not been wanting, of those who, while they were ever ready with most lively compassion to interest themselves in the sorrows of others, have endured the pangs of "their own distress," with magnanimous fortitude. This triumph of benevolence and resignation, over native tenderness and self-love, is one of the most exalted perfections to which women can aspire. It may be useful to suggest to all who are called to this hard duty, that though complaint *wearies* friends, it does not *diminish* suffering. When we offer a sacrifice to God, let us endeavour to make it perfect. If he call upon us to surren-

der our *comforts*, let us lay our *regrets* also on his altar. Alas ! while I pen this admonition, how forcibly does my rebel heart remind me, that it is easier to *preach* than to *perform*.

But sensibility oftener suffers from trials of its own creating, than from the corrections of Heaven. The praise which the imitators of Sterne bestowed on acute feeling, gave our sex a fantastical irritability of mind, which was every thing but amiable and meritorious. Some few years ago, our souls were harrowed up by pathetic narratives of the sufferings of hares, partridges, fishes, horses, and reptiles ; and man was abused for tyranny, in destroying his fellow-animals, and for gluttony in devouring the *joint* tenants of this sublunary sphere. At last, some sapient discoverer perceived that many of these much pitied beings actually subsisted by destroying some other species ; and then the benevolent feelings of many good children were exercised in rescuing "captive mice," and "benetted flies," at the hazard of starving *cats* and *spiders*. The German school, especially the illuminized Bishop of Saxe Weimar,\* refined upon this system, till there was manifest danger not only of our becoming a nation of Bramins, but that *eating would be cried down* as an act of cruelty ; since it is impossible to cultivate the ground, or to produce vegetables, without annihilating many harmless worms, destroying colonies of industrious ants, or crushing a sacred deposit of minute caterpillars, who would in time expand into beautiful butterflies. As I do not profess myself one of those abstracted Fakirs who would willingly abdicate our sublunary empire to gnats and cockchaffers, I must rejoice in the popularity of such a work as "Natural Theology ;" in which the ridiculous refinements of extreme susceptibility are admirably corrected, by those just sentiments which an enlarged mind is sure to inculcate after it has contemplated the *whole works of God*.

Among the false glosses by which sensibility deceives and corrodes the heart in which it is suffered to have too great influence, I wish to mention the exaggeration of trifles, or the giving of too much weight to things really important. Many an amiable heart is at this moment bleeding under the wounds which unkindness, neglect, and cruelty, are supposed to have inflicted. The wounds are real, but the inflictors of them are imaginary, or rather it was mistake, inadver-

\* Herder.

tence, or absence of mind, which shot a few *random* darts, as they were running after some other object. Women cannot too deeply imprint upon their minds the connubial counsels of Desdemona; "Men," Heaven knows, "are but men;" I much doubt whether even women are really angels. The lords of the creation are apt to have their "tempers puddled," and they are more inclined to *require* than to "*show* observance." Certainly they are often guiltless of the wrong which susceptibility so deeply laments; and as often heartily desirous of repairing the undesigned injury, if they can do it without derogating from their own dignity. Yet let our sex beware of taxing the generous warmth of affection, by imposing upon it the hard duty of unpleasant acknowledgement. Rather let us set about the practicable task of strengthening our own weakness. Assuredly, the intended reproof or avowed displeasure of a parent or a husband should never be disregarded; even their *undeserved* petulance should be watched, footed, and diverted; and as assuredly we should beware of exercising our imaginations at the expence of our repose, in searching for *slights*, *taunts*, and *neglects*, which exist only in our *own* perturbed spirits.

As extreme sensibility, whether it act in the shape of overstrained benevolence or keen susceptibility, is destructive of equanimity of mind; so meekness and fortitude are the faithful guardians of sweetness and tranquility. No virtues are more requisite to our sex, and it behoves every mother to impress them upon the minds of her daughters. A passionate woman is but like a wasp in a glass phial; her frenzy and her impotence can only excite disgust and ridicule. The physical strength of man, as well as his political situation, gives dignity to his resentment; but we can only stamp and rave; our little powers will be soon exhausted, and we must sink into an abject depression, proportioned to our vain attempt to swell into undue consequence. Aware of the impossibility of vanquishing by violence, many women have attempted to raise their empire out of their imbecility; and thus originated a numerous groupe of *exquisite* creatures, who founded their consequence on their being really *good for nothing*, either as friends, companions, helpmates, or handmaids. They seemed indeed of less intrinsic value than the painted blocks on which the priestesses of fashion display their sacrificial garlands; since, though, like the race I am speaking of, these dolls could neither *walk* nor *work*, they

really could *stand*, and were not *mischievous*. I rejoice that the revolutions of fashion have decreed usefulness to be outré, or at least a flimsy appendage to that second-rate gentility which is no gentility at all. Strength of mind, and bodily agility, are now considered as elegant requisites to the female character; and a woman of high ton at least *pretends* to be equal to the *labours* of Hercules, or the *mental* exertions of Locke. As I am a staunch advocate for all the rights of my sex, I wish our claims to activity and fortitude really might be permitted to stand upon a more permanent basis than *whim*. I wish that, instead of "daring to do every thing because we dare," it were made an established law to *dare* to do all we *ought*. I feel hurt at any attentions from men, which indicate affected weakness in us. If a man help to carve our food, or fetch us a chair, with an air that seems to say, "these *poor creatures* cannot assist themselves," the attention is mortifying; but if he do this with a view of obliging his coheirs of immortality, we ought to repay the modern Amadis with our best curtesy. But it is absurd to talk of manners that are only preserved among a few antiquated students of Sir Charles Grandison; and I perceive that I am bewildered in the labyrinth of digression. To return to those mincing "*minaudieres*," who found their importance on being able to "jig, lisp, amble, and nick-name God's creatures," I exclude these something nothings from all pretension to gentleness; for though they claim that distinction, because they are always in temper, we must never confound the qualities of the *bee* and the *butterfly*. Gentleness and sweetness are the offspring of inward peace of mind; and can those possess them, who are only excused from the torment of reproach by being utterly void of reflection?

I will mention but one more circumstance, which is injurious alike to temper and character; I mean the permitting any *single* circumstance or desire to impress the fancy. Dissipation has many temptations; but it is a great folly to suppose, that retirement is free from them, or that by sincerely persevering in a course of duty we are safe from the attacks of our ghostly enemy. It was well imagined by an old writer,\* that *one* sleeping devil was sufficient to secure the allegiance of a riotous disorderly town, while a *legion* of ac-

\* Sir P. Herbert, in his Conceptions to his Son. It is a part of the story on which Parnel founded his Hermit.



*tive* mischievous infernals were necessary to vanquish a convent full of pious monks. We have scripture authority for believing, that when we are best employed Satan is most active. A garden and a wilderness were the scenes of the most memorable temptations that ever were recorded. To apply this truth to our present subject: as solitude engenders strong passions, so a lively desire of doing right is apt to infuse a wish for acquiring some *peculiar* excellence. Let us beware of nourishing a hope of being distinguished by any particular virtue or grace, however excellent or estimable. By giving up our time to the pursuit of any one accomplishment or study, there is reason to suppose that we may be an amateur in something, and a fool in every thing else; but in morals there is great danger of overshooting the mark, and missing what we risked all to obtain. She who aims at praise for her piety will run great hazard of being only a devotee. She who wishes to be thought remarkable for œconomy and housewifery, will most likely be a vixen and a drudge. Those who are ambitious to be thought very good humoured and pleasant, are apt to prove criminally compliant, or offensively loquacious. As one idea taking possession of the imagination is the general forerunner of insanity, or morbid gloom; so fixing our desires on one species of excellence is the sure stimulant of *error*; possibly also the precursor of depravity.

Providence has provided for all our moral diseases. The love of praise is deeply imprinted on the human mind; and I believe the softer texture of our souls makes us peculiarly susceptible of its influence. This susceptibility, which, under the guidance of merely human motives, betrays us to all the littlenesses of vanity, idle fear, and false shame, is yet capable of a most exalted direction. Only let us substitute the praise of God for the praise of men, and look to our own consciences for a satisfaction which public acclamations cannot bestow; and, unless our judgments are warped by false principles, we are safe. If with "singleness of heart we do our duty as to the Lord, and not unto men;" not absolutely *indifferent* to the opinions of our fellow-creatures, but far from proposing their applause as the *reward*, or their judgment as the *criterion* of our actions; we may rest assured, that our backslidings will not be numerous or irretrievable. No *one* virtue will mount us heavenward, if it be counterpoised by the weight of *opposite* offences.

Though I have been very diffuse on the subject of female graces, I must not omit to mention their crowning gem; I mean, piety. But as, like the sun in the firmament, it diffuses its splendor over the whole moral world, and pervades every good action, every well seasoned expression, every chastened thought, I need not separately enlarge on this point. On the principles on which it should be founded, we have already largely descanted; the duty and advantages of devout exercises, and habitual recollections of the Almighty, will give rise to a few brief observations, with which I shall conclude this epistle.

Since no situation in life is exempted from the infliction of death or calamity, our absolute dependance upon the Ruler of the Universe should excite in every mind, not an occasional and stated, but a constant and uniform remembrance of Him "in whom we live, move, and have our being." The still more important views which revelation discloses, the certainty of future judgment, and the knowledge that neither rank, wealth, talents, nor beauty, can avail us at the awful audit, added to the lively consciousness of our weakness and infirmity, of which Scripture has *told* us the *origin*, and we *feel* the *effects* in ourselves, strengthen this obligation. To weak, helpless, and frail womanhood, it becomes the only staff of sure dependance, whereon we can safely lean during our earthly pilgrimage.

So congenial are the sentiments of piety to our sex, that even a life of dissipation can hardly eradicate them. Sterne tells us, that French women regularly pass through the stated gradations of Beauties, Belles, Esprits, and Devotees. I trust the intermediate class, who distinguish themselves by ridiculing that religion at which they soon after tremble, is not *numerous* in England. Yet I fear too many of us may be justly reckoned under the opposite banners of *indifferents* and *enthusiasts*, who must be equally strangers to the comforts of true devotion, and to the principles of sound piety. But we have in the preceding pages lamented this criminal negligence of the "pearl of price," and this infusion of the "bitter leaven" of moroseness into the bread of life.

I think, however, that in those animadversions I did not sufficiently explain an error which fanaticism has introduced into devotion. The doctrine that Christ has done all for us, is apt to engender in a weak and unpassioned mind a sort of amatory attachment, so very different from the lowly, aw-

ful, and restrained affection, which the character of our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier, ought to inspire, that addresses composed for the purpose of expressing this affection are not only apt to be irreverent, but to favour of blasphemy. The terms celestial Bridegroom, or Spouse of the Soul, become dangerous when lowered to individual application. But such expressions as, "Thou absent love, thou dear unknown, thou fairest of ten thousand fairs," are fitter for a song than a hymn, and are more suited to express carnal passion than a desire for spiritual communion. It would be easy to quote epithets and descriptions from some admired Calvinistical compositions, which far outgo the utmost warranty of Scripture, even if we pervert the prophetic allegories of Eastern poetry, by degrading them from the general communion of Christ with all his faithful followers, to the particular feelings of one impassioned soul.

The standard which our blessed Lord prescribed as the pattern for devotion,\* is so directly opposite to these amatory addresses, that we may with confidence assert that they cannot be pleasing to a pure and spiritual God. From the examples which holy writ records of the prayers of devout men in past ages, we may learn, that good sense, perspicuity, diffidence, humility, and spirituality of sentiment, have constantly characterized the favoured petitions of man to Heaven. Our liturgy is framed in this spirit; let the same predominate in the compositions which you select for your *closet* exercises. It is not necessary, in order to your prayers being heard, that you should work up your feelings to *fervid* ebullition. *Intenseness* of thought, and *sincerity* of purpose, are the human means of making those requests heard at the throne of grace, which are offered with faith in the great Intercessor.

Rational piety is our best defence against the temptations of the world. You well know, that piety should not be confined to the church or the closet. When genuine, she is our *constant* companion; spiritualizing every event, influencing all our actions, seasoning our ordinary conversation, and lifting our souls in frequent ejaculations above this transitory world, to hold communion with that which is eter-

\* Some fanatics in low life have affirmed, that the Lord's Prayer is not worth using, and that they are *above* the Commandments.

nal. It is piety which must sanctify chastity, or we shall only be discreet from fear, "not pure in heart." She must direct the alms of benevolence, or liberality will stop short of the blessedness of charity. Candour is only caution without her; and sweetness of temper, a mere animal propensity. May this sacred plant continue to increase and flourish in your soul, till it ripens into the fruit of immortality, prays your truly affectionate friend, &c.

## LETTER X.

*On Female Employments and Studies.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

WE have considered employment as necessary to preserve our minds in that happy state of equilibrium which is essential to good humour ; but we might have taken a more enlarged and formidable view of idleness, and described her effect upon the *extremes* of society, where she appears as the close ally of dissipation and profligacy. For, as perfect inactivity is repugnant to our natures, vice and mischief alike spring from the source of indolence ; and when we are not occupied in doing what is right, our frail natures continually urges us to do what is wrong.

With respect to employment, women are more happily circumstanced than the other sex ; the important and fatiguing avocations of men necessarily impose seasons of inactivity ; and, unless among those of a literary turn, there are many hours in a day which a man scarcely knows how to occupy. That useful implement the needle, which is no interruption to conversation, which does not absolutely chain down attention, and fatigues neither the body nor the mind, is *our* constant preservative from lassitude ; at the same time that in the majority of families it is an invaluable ally to œconomy, neatness, and elegance. I do acknowledge, that sometimes, when it gets into the hands of a pretty trifler, its productions deserve no better name than laborious idleness ; but the thorough housewife would not exchange it for the cestus of Venus ; and she knows how to make it as powerful a talisman, to preserve conjugal esteem and domestic order.

I think the goddesses all excelled in the arts of female industry, except the hoyden Diana ; and you know she *always* continued a *spinster*. The heroines of old time shone at the loom and the distaff, and were so passionately attached to these occupations, that it is even recorded they *sighed* at be-

ing called from them to look at *martial beaux*. The history of the fair Nausicaa proves, that the operation of washing clothes was not only venerable and salutary, but really dignified. The Goddess of Wisdom descends from Olympus to order a Princess to superintend the suds; and gives as the ostensible reason, that such a housewifely occupation would expedite the time of her nuptials. I recommend this book of the Odyssey to our treble refined second-rate elegantes, who consider laundresses as a more reproachful name than courtesan; reminding them at the same time, that the "Father of verse" and first of mortal bards has immortalized that employment which they call servile and degrading; a convincing proof, that only false taste will consider that to be contemptible which is useful. The most distinguished women of our own country have handed down their names to posterity, by excelling in works of taste and ingenuity. But we need not search old annals to describe the tapestry and embroidery of our Matildas and Marys; industry and taste still claim an intimate alliance with royalty; and where they cannot excite emulation, at least rouse commendable, though humble imitation.\*

I feel great pleasure in the expectation, that *doing* nothing will speedily be as vulgar and gothic as *being* nothing; and that those to whom useful employment is a positive duty, will be obliged to have recourse to it in order to be thought genteel. In one particular, I think the legislature might interfere with advantage to female industry. I am not going to propose so bold a measure, as that summer bathing places should be made *inaccessibile* to all but *real* invalids; or that no lady should spend her mornings in shopping, but those who really want to make purchases. The regulation that I wish to propose relates to my own sisterhood. Suppose no woman should be permitted to publish an essay on industry, till she can produce a written certificate that her own wardrobe is kept in perfect order; or to *dress* out fictitious character, unless she can prove (like the good wife in the Proverbs) that she has *clothed* her household with the labour of her hands. Some advantages would certainly result from such an ordinance; the *readers* of small wares might hope to keep pace with the *writers*; and the price of paper would be di-

\* See the behaviour of Helen, in the third Iliad, when summoned by Paris to the Trojan walls.

minished by the prefs being only occupied with fuch works as are not the labours of idlenefs.

But, except in the inferior claffes of fociety, female induftry is not compelled to constant diligence in mechanical employment. We are defigned to be the companions as well as the help-mates of man; and it is as much our duty to render ourfelves converfable and agreeable, by enlightening our minds, as it is to fuperintend our houfeholds, and to endeavour by our perfonal exertions to conduct every thing with frugality and propriety. As the age feems difpofed to pay at leaft *fufficient* regard to what are called accomplifhments, fome detached obfervations on female ftudies fhall form the fubject of this letter.

When a competent ftock of religious knowledge has been acquired in early life, we may fafely turn our minds from the word to the works of God; but I muft efpecially prefs it upon mothers, that fuch theological information as may infure ftability of principle, fhould precede all but an elementary acquaintance with the fcience.\* Much injury, I am perfuaded, has been done by purfuing the contrary order of inftruction; for knowledge is extremely apt to puff up the mind of young ftudents, who are foon fatisfied with their own acquirements. Many have been thus taught to reft in fecond caufes, and many have been confused by fuch an erroneous application of abftraft terms, as afcribes almoft divine powers to the paffive inftruments of the Almighty. When we have learned to diftinguifh between the Creator and the created; when we have obtained fufficient knowledge of the limits of human underftanding, to beware of pushing our enquiries into thofe regions of obfcurity, where reigns the "God who hideth himfelf;" when our faith is too firmly built to be fhaken by thofe difficulties and objections which lurk at the threshold of fcience, and prove dangerous ftumbling blocks to precipitation and felf-conceit, then, and not till then, we may attempt to become philofophers; for the fruit of the tree of knowledge muft not be gathered in preference to the fruit of the tree of life.

Great caution fhould be ufed in the felection of authors from which we receive fcientific inftruction. French writers have generally a pleafant method of conveying information; but many of their works (as alfo feveral popular German productions of this kind) are fo tinctured with deifm,

\* See Letter 5th, where this fubject is more largely treated.

as to be *unsafe* preceptors; especially to inexperience, which is ever more apt to be charmed by wit and elegance, than attentive to argumentative deductions. My knowledge of the sciences is by much too limited to permit me to state what books would be most proper for tyros. I would only advise the young student to make fondness of principle an essential requisite in inquiries of this sort; and never to venture on the perusal of a deistical author (however celebrated,) unless she be *guided* in her studies by some judicious friend, who will point out the objectionable passages, and detect the fallacies which they are intended to support.

I have already observed, that profound or abstruse learning does not seem so well suited to our sex as ethics and the belles lettres; because the length of time and abstraction of mind that the former require, are generally incompatible with our duties in life, which, though comparatively less important than those of men, are hourly recurring. Many women, however are exempted by situation from these obligations; and when leisure and inclination are united to ability, there can be no reasonable objection to our employing our talents in such researches as must, when properly directed, promote the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures. Natural history,\* experimental philosophy, botany, and astronomy, open a delightful field of instructive entertainment to every young woman; and if pursued with propriety and discretion, cannot fail to furnish them with many agreeable ideas to sojourn the winter of life, when our infirmities in a great measure seclude us from society, and the falling away of our dear connexions compels us to depend on self-amusement. A temperate pursuit of these sciences will also be of great service in quickening our observation, or rather in diverting it from frivolous objects, and in forming habits of close attention and argumentative deduction; qualities in which women are supposed to be defective. But I must also add, that intense study is apt to engender querulous irritability, and all that train of evils which attend on nervous affections; and if the more vigorous strength, more capacious intellect, and more solid judgment of man cannot resist these effects; what may we not expect will be

\* The delicate and compassionate female need not be cautioned against disgusting or cruel experiments. She will not be required to perform surgical operations, which can alone warrant those exposures of the human form divine, or those wanton tortures of animals, which can be excused on no other ground.



the result, when the infirmities of nature are added to the infirmities of recondite abstraction? Men of profound science generally acquire some unpleasant habits; and the ridicule attached to their foibles is not entirely obviated by the consideration of the utility of their labours, or the *necessity* for their prosecuting them with *avidity*. As custom has not taught us to expect such advantages from the philosophical researches of women, we seem to have a less just defence from raillery when we overstrain them. The learned lady, in Roderic Random, is a more amusing caricature than Madam D'Arblay's Dr. Orkbone; and the reason is that she appears more out of her sphere and latitude, and like the bear in a boat, encountering an element on which she had no business to embark. When a woman *sets up* for the *distinction* of scientific, she at least shews that she has vanquished those wise sensibilities of her sex, which made her peculiarly susceptible of the shafts of satire.

Will you pardon me should my peculiar taste give a bias to my judgment when I determine that history, and those species of composition which have been distinguished by the name of British classics, constitute the species of study that is most suitable to the capacity, situation, and disposition of women? Precluded from taking an actual view of human nature as it is exhibited in the different walks of life, it is yet highly necessary that we should know the beings with whom we are destined to sojourn. History and those agreeably instructive essayists who form an almost unique class in our national literature, mutually illustrate the respective pages which teach us what man *is* in private life, and how he *has* acted as an aggregate body. In the historical record, it is delightful to observe how the individual nature of man has been modified by external circumstances, and how the same train of political causes uniformly produces similar events, varied in circumstances, but corresponding in result. From tracing the progress of society through the gradations of barbarism, improvement, civilization, refinement, luxury, degradation, corruption, and decay; we turn with delight to those powerful moralists who develop the minute springs of action, and endeavour to restrain those bosom traitors who sap the foundation of private virtue, and prove more destructive to states and empires than legions of enemies; and we rise from the perusal with a virtuous determination not to accelerate the ruin of our country, either by increasing the fa-

tal preponderance of national guilt, or the burden of collective imbecility.

“ Among those sundry advantages,” says the learned and intelligent Howel, “ which accrue to a reader of history, one “ is, that no modern accident can seem strange to him. He “ will leave off wondering at any thing, in regard he may remember to have heard the same, or much the same event, “ which hath happened in former times ; therefore he doth “ not stand staring like a child at an unusual spectacle, like “ that simple American who, the first time he saw a Spaniard on horseback, thought the man and the beast to be “ but one creature. Now indeed, not to be an historian, “ that is, not to know what foreign nations and our forefathers did, is still to be a child who gazeth at every thing ; “ whence may be inferred that there is no knowledge which “ ripeneth judgment, and puts one out of his nonage, sooner “ than history.” The peculiar applicability of these observations to the alarming and eventful times in which we live, is too obvious to need discussion.

If, as is generally allowed, judgment be the point wherein women are most defective, the advantage of historical reading, to our sex, is at once decided. But as information and utility should always precede amusement, I must request the young student to sit down to the venerable folio, or thick octavo, rather with a determination to be *entertained by instruction*, than to apply to *instruction* for the *mere* purpose of *entertainment* ; she should therefore be taught to prefer digested details of facts, to bundles of anecdotes. The rage for multitudinous acquisitions, which has unhappily superseded a desire of *solid* attainments, has given popularity to writers of memoirs and detailers of bon mots, to the great disadvantage of grave narrators. Events dressed up in the style of romance partake too much of fiction to be instructive ; and the historian should be too much devoted to the service of truth, to step out of his road for any embellishment foreign to his great design. Court gallantries are as uninformative as the memoirs of courtezans, and probably as exaggerated, if not as spurious. Readers who confine their knowledge of past times to these faint sketches, may become *good gossips*, but can never be *historians*.

Biography is a branch of history, and in skilful and ingenious hands becomes a source of elegant and instructive entertainment. I lament that public curiosity should have stimulated this very agreeable species of literature into the

confines of tittle tattle; or that private affection should have adorned it with the too vivid colours of eulogy. No sooner does a distinguished writer take his flight to the world of spirits, but approbation swells into admiration; every defect in his moral or literary reputation is for the moment obliterated, and not only do his precious notes seem sweeter, but every ear is turned to catch the unknown strains of the departed Swan, and to learn every particular of a character on which death has set its seal. Friendship readily prepares, not merely his *requiem*, but his *apotheosis*. Vices are either passed in silence, or so dressed and painted, that an illicit attachment, or a notorious error, has a chance of becoming the seraphic flame of Platonic love, or the ingenuous devotion of a strong mind to truth. We might allow some palliation of infirmity, or some exaggeration of excellence, to the wounded feelings of bereaved affection, agonized by a recent loss; but such impositions on public principle are often too audacious to pass unchastised. Even the genius and stern virtue of a Milton, should not be permitted to sanction his defence of what the express words of our Saviour positively forbids;\* nor should the romantic, but unquestionably pure affection of the devout bard of Vacluse, be produced as an allowable parallel for the equivocal Laura of a deistical voluptuary.

Can the cause of morals or of just taste be benefited by that very minute research into the ashes of the dead, which now constitutes the ton of reading? Human nature is never free from errors or weaknesses; and a benefactor of the public (which every good writer certainly is) deserves better than to have all his lesser peccadillos exhibited to the triumphant gaze of literary eaves-droppers. No one who enters on the thorny maze of lettered life can hope to escape enemies; how precious to such is every petty detail, which, in reality, only proves that the author was a *frail* as well as a *mortal* being! Even the utility of their labours is diminished, by thus raking into the private characters of those who have deserved renown as public instructors. Steele was elegant as a writer, and persuasive as a moralist. True; but Steele acted by other laws than those which he enforced; for he was a debauchee and a spendthrift. Will those who know this be equally convinced by his arguments, or restrained by

\* On the subject of divorce, see Matt. 5th chap. 32d verse.

his satire? Johnson was a sloven, a dogmatist, and a voracious eater, uncouth in his person, and displeasing in his manners. Had we only known him from his literary remains, we should have pronounced him a gentleman, a sage, and a saint.

And shall we then make enquiries after those whose voice was once heard in all lands, after they are laid cold and silent in the dark house of their forefathers? Shall no memorial be placed upon their graves, but what their own genius raised during their lives? None, perhaps, can be equally appropriate; but if we allow friendship or literary attachment to bring an offering, let the garland be chaste and dignified. Let not an irreverent hand heedlessly tear away that sacred veil, which should cover the failings as well as the ruins of mortality. But if their errors were so interwoven with their history that they must be mentioned, or if the good of the living stimulates you to disregard the privacy of the grave, *beware*, as you value your own immortal soul, or would avoid being responsible for the seduction of thousands whom your false glosses may vitiate, beware of giving to what is *wrong* the disguise of *merit*. Call not impiety by the name of singularity; ascribe not the praise of liberality to licentiousness. Let not a traducer of the word of God be recorded as its zealous illustrator; and never call an apostle of sedition a peaceable and valuable subject. If you narrate the actions of a Tom Paine or a Jonathan Wild, do not copy their mental portraits from a Walsingham or a Crichton. The life of a bad man may be rendered as instructive as the adventures of a hero; but not by *confounding* their *irreconcilable* characteristics.

When a biographer avoids these errors, and remains alike faithful to truth and to delicacy, his labours may be classed among the most instructive studies, provided he be sufficiently guarded against the prevailing error of dilation. Of late years, books seem to be infected with the disease of the enchanted helmet of Otranto; and have taken to such an enormous heaving and swelling, that many sage prognosticators foretel that they will certainly overwhelm the castle of literature. Conscious that my own labours have somewhat contributed to this stupendous mass, I will confine my censures to a species of publication in which at *present* I *have clean hands*. The *private* letters of deceased public characters, promise to furnish such an inexhaustible supply of materials to the gormandizing appetite of readers, that it may

indeed be doubted (if we may, without irreverence, apply the words of inspiration to another subject) "whether the world will contain the books that *will* be written." Nothing can be better calculated to gratify those who *devour* rather than *digest* reading, than fragments happily rescued from the lumber garrets, and escaped the brooms of housemaids and the fury of cooks; for the *majority* of these compositions will never prove the least burden to the memory, and must at every perusal possess all the charms of novelty, save that of being wet from the press. When the *confidential* communications of *really* eminent people are thus forced into notice, we may call it the most barbarous method of assassinating literature that has ever been invented; for it is compelling the dead to murder their own reputation, and enjoining the living to restrain all those ebullitions of the heart which give value to friendly correspondence. It is strange, that conscience does not operate as a check upon this book making propensity. The suggestions of a literary friend are too sacred to be exposed to vanity; nor should a page of a deceased author be committed to public view, which we are convinced the writer intended to consign to oblivion. Surely, to do so is as indecorous as to tear the decaying body from the concealing grave, and to exhibit its humiliating corruption. Let those whose eager curiosity is gratified by these perusals, put themselves in the place of the writer, and then decide on the rectitude and delicacy of these exposures.

The history of the globe that we inhabit, unquestionably holds the next place to the study of the nature, duties, and actions of mankind. Voyages and travels, illustrated by a competent acquaintance with geography and natural history, form a most instructive branch of literature, extremely well calculated to improve and inform the understanding of our sex; for here, as I before observed of history, we must generally be contented to know things by report, instead of actual observation. It is much to be lamented, that this species of knowledge, like natural philosophy, has been used as a medium for conveying the poison of deism; and that nature, in this instance also, should be so misrepresented as to make her *speak* a language *hostile* to revelation. Those pests of society, the illuminized philosophers of anarchy, have still further soiled the pure page of science, by the introduction of descriptions at which chastity would revolt, and have shewn themselves such hardy advocates of depravity, as to

sacrifice unity of design to the desire of contaminating others. There are, however, many works of this kind *exempt* from these strong objections; and a young woman in easy circumstances cannot, without gross ignorance, neglect a branch of information which brings her acquainted with the world of which she is an inhabitant.

The adventures of travellers and sailors are often so extraordinary, and the vicissitudes and dangers to which they are exposed are so interesting, that I cannot help recommending this description of reading, to rouse the attention and correct the errors of those pitiable people, who are the victims of *imaginary* distresses. Spleen, ennui, chagrin, lassitude, and all the various train of miseries which extreme indulgence, dissipation, or romantic expectation, are apt to engender, must surely feel their own insignificance, and the absurdity of their petty woes, when they accompany a Byron around the barren shores of Terra del Fuego, in search of the spontaneous productions of penurious nature; or sail with an Inglefield in an open boat, destitute of food, across the wide expanse of the Atlantic ocean. Is it really such a misery to be left out of a pleasant party, to have a dinner spoiled, or a gown ill made? Look at Alexander Selkirk on his solitary island, divided, as the experience of many an annual fun had told him, from human society, and exposed to the horrid prospect of perishing for want, when decrepitude should prevent him from employing his bodily agility in procuring his daily food. Contemplate the heroic associates of Cook at their *boasted* repast; yet undauntedly persevering in the magnanimous design of ascertaining, whether the cheerless domains of the Antarctic Pole could add to the renown or strength of their country. Behold the brave Ledyard, or the patient Park, naked, sick, and destitute in the wilds of Samoedia, or the morasses of Bambara. Remember that they had bodies and minds framed of the same materials with your own; blush at disguising your fastidious selfishness under the name of sensibility, and lift up your eyes to heaven in pious gratitude at your *happier* lot.

From fact and moral illustration, let us now turn to the regions of fiction; where, with your permission, I will endeavour to draw a brief contrast between ancient and modern romance, as far as it may be supposed to be connected with national character. That fair assemblage of loveliness, peace, simplicity, and purity, which youthful poets used to paint, and Surreys and Sydneys pursued, has now deserted the

ideas of the bard and romancer. I scarcely dare confess the partiality which I feel for the exiled muses, or lament that, unless they are devoted to some local or farcical subject, they can scarcely be *endured* by the fair languid student, even during the moment when "her gentle foubrette tastefully arranges her braided tresses," or folds in seeming negligence the undulating flow of her drapery. Modern discoveries have clearly ascertained, that it was a geographical absurdity to suppose that Arcadia ever formed a part of Old England; and the removal of this region of disinterested love and pure sentiment has been followed by the banishment of all its inhabitants. Nymphs and swains, dancing fauns, and piping satyrs, all have vanished, together with those invaluable tokens of inviolable attachment, "true lovers knots," and "crooks bestudded" around. We are become so much more enlightened than our immediate predecessors, that I question whether Maid Marian would now condescend to accept a garland of vale flowers from Colin Clout, without informing him that Miss Betty Blackberry laughed at all flowers which were not made by the milliner.

The fair *imaginer* of the present day is formed upon the model of some lovely heroine, whose name runs through five syllables of vowels and liquids, and whose character and endowments are a compendium of the wonderful. She is either born in very high life, or by some happy arrangement gets among Dukes, Earls, and Lords, or, it may be, a Prince or two, by way of variety; where she vanquishes a sufficient number of hearts, and loses her own to some very rich and exemplary man, with whom it is necessary she should have a vast many misunderstandings; sometimes arising from mistakes, and sometimes from the villany of rivals or relations. Either the gentleman or the lady must be sure to lose a fortune; but then they must also (do what is so very common in real life) find a much greater *unexpectedly*. They must also be very near dying; but this must be about the end of the sixth volume, by way of smoothing all difficulties to the marriage ceremony, which takes place in the seventh, and dismisses the unparalleled pair to *certain* felicity; the *eventful* part of their lives being now *over*, they are only to frisk like lambs or coo like doves.

It may indeed happen, that the costume of the romance may change, and the heroine be conducted through the enchanted labyrinth of gothic scenery and adventure, instead

of summer bathing places and winter galas. Here it will be necessary to produce *less* embarrassment and *more* misery. If there be less edifying conversation, the reader will be oftener chilled by horror and petrified with astonishment. She will here recognize many old acquaintance; the modern valet and pert chambermaid will be antiquated in nothing but dress and name. Parents and rivals will retain their inveterate obliquity; and the grand requisites, an unexceptionable lover and a splendid fortune, will never be omitted. Few studies would be more improving than the perusal of a familiar fictitious narrative really written in days of yore. To know how the belles of antiquity thought, talked, and acted,\* would afford an exquisite treat to (I hope not irreverent) curiosity; but we can derive but little gratification from seeing the luxurious, sentimental, philosophizing female of the eighteenth century, placed in the bower window, where, three hundred years ago, the Lady of the Castle "sat in pensive mood, and look'd o'er hill and dale." Is it not like a Bond-street dress maker attired in the stole of the empress Julia?

The higher walk of a gothic narrative has been successfully occupied by a lady of real genius and informed judgment. She seems to have varied the eventful scene as far as our knowledge of other times will admit; but her power has been chiefly shewn in contriving mysteries so dreadful and inexplicable, that even her own fertile imagination can do no more than break the spell at once, as it is impossible to make the denouement fully gratify the soul harrowing suspense by which it was preceded. I have suspected, that this writer, with all her appropriate knowledge of her subjects, felt the difficulty of supporting the propriety of manners of which so few traits have been preserved; and therefore compressed the narrative part of her works, by bestowing more space on her descriptions of nature, which are always sublime and beautiful; though the reader feels them sometimes painfully suspend the progress of the story. This local painting is, however, descriptive of the manners of the times that she treats of, as well as of the unaltered face of rural beauty. In times of feudal grandeur, the solitary Barons must (while her Lord was engaged in the sports of

\* The Memoirs of Agrippina might here be commended as a sufficiently faithful transcript of ancient manners, but they aspire to still higher applause.



the chase, or the toils of war) have often amused her penfive hours by seeing the setting sun light up the autumnal foliage of the forest into a thousand glowing tints, or in tracing "the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow" on the fullen waters of the lake. But to return from this digressive commendation.

What effect shall we enquire, has the general turn of fictitious adventure on an age in which *every* young woman reads, and *many* confine their knowledge to this species of misinformation? Does it teach them what things *have been*, or what things *are*? Certainly not; for such beings and such an order of things, never did nor ever can exist. Parents are quite as apt to judge rightly for their children, as children are to form a proper estimate of what is good for themselves; and the chance between the *disinterestedness* of paternal affection, and that of him who plays the lover's part, is in favour of the former. Heroes and heroines, or, in plain English, men and women, never did possess such an accumulation of splendid graces and virtues as are collected together in these false prisms. The unreasonably suspicious lover is sure to make an unreasonably jealous husband. Violent attachments are either never lasting, or the source of unhappiness, being always accompanied with painful irritation of mind. Suitable offers of marriage occur too rarely, for a young woman to expect more from the majority of her followers, than that evanescent admiration which is paid to all who have the reputation of fortune, wit, or beauty. Virtue is more severely tried by a *multiplicity* of petty evils, than by *great* conflicts; and benevolence displays her heavenly nature by minute attentions, oftener, and with more beneficial effect, than by extraordinary exertions. Sudden reverses of fortune are unusual, and so are acts of great liberality. Adventures *rarely* happen to a prudent woman, and *never* without injury to her reputation. Licentious intentions are seldom formed without a prospect of success, and the most hardened rake may be awed by unassuming discretion;

"In part, she is to blame who has been tried,  
"He comes too near, who comes to be denied."

The first motions of evil may be *resisted*, if the thoughts be not permitted to stray towards an *unlawful* object, or to *ponder* on the means by which wicked ends may be *accom-*

*plished.* They who trifle with temptation expose themselves to the danger of defeat, and deserve the ruin which they sustain. Marriage may be said rather to open than to close the eventful period of female life; since it is by that means that we enter on a scene of enlarged usefulness, activity, and responsibility; nor is marrying the man whom we fondly love an invulnerable protection from the shafts of sorrow; perhaps it is oftener a ready inlet to the pangs of disappointment, or the cares of solicitude.

I could write volumes to expose those false views of human life, which doubtless have accelerated that change of female manners which we all see and deplore. Had not so much idolatrous incense been offered to beauty, grace, and nymph-like elegance; had so many fascinating descriptions never been given of the pleasures, enjoyments, and advantages of rank and fortune, the elegantes of humble life would have been far less numerous, and we should have retained some valuable stuff, capable of being converted into the wives of traders and yeomen. Let not those who confine themselves to this style of reading make a merit of having been *at their books*. Mischievous reading is worse than unsophisticated ignorance.

It would, however, be culpable fastidiousness, and gross injustice, to involve all fictitious narrative in this severe censure. A species of writing, that is enriched by the compositions of many of our most distinguished moralists and sages, cannot be undeserving of a particular attention from the most liberal and well informed mind. While, therefore, we stigmatize the reptile brood who annually vivify with the summer heat, as at once the *offspring* and the *food* of idleness; let us acknowledge, that next to those moral essays which breathe the wisdom of a Johnson or the suavity of an Addison, a well written novel is the best introduction to the knowledge of life and manners, and may justly claim to be the associate, but not the substitute, of graver studies. It has lately been denied, that Richardson painted manners as they really were; his moral excellence will, however, preserve him a place in the esteem of every well principled reader; and his pathetic and descriptive powers will enchain attention, while his piety must transfuse some devout sentiments into the most cold and worldly bosom. You will observe, that I confine this commendation to his *Clarissa* and *Grandison*. Fielding and Smollet preferred the exhibition of the grotesque and depraved part of our species: such al-

most intuitive knowledge of the human heart as the former possessed, combined with the morality and pathos of Richardson, *would* have formed the desideratum in this class of literature. The simplicity, innocence, and nature of Goldsmith, have never been equalled; and among the many copyists of the fine gothic romance of Otranto, only *female* genius can urge any pretensions to success. I could mention many novels in the narrative, or, what is more difficult, in the epistolary style, which well deserve a place in your library; but a too frequent perusal even of these should be avoided, as it may vitiate your taste, and cause you to *disrelish* more important studies.

Poetry is so much out of fashion, and so changed in its character, that I feel at a loss what to say publicly on what I know is your favourite reading. The muses have been charged with doing very serious mischief to us females; but I confess that I think their crimes have been exaggerated, or at least that they were less faulty than the compositions which have supplanted them. They rarely ventured out of the world of imagination; and few readers would be so green in judgment, as to mistake their language for that of real life. The modern muse has been accused of incurring the guilt of democracy: it is allowed, that even her genuine offspring have ever strung their lyres to the high key of liberty; but then it was to that liberty which is *consistent* with *order*, *justice*, and *virtue*; those cherished feelings of every real lover of this charming science. But we must also observe, that an alien colony, whose members have for ages been endeavouring to *scramble* up the heights of Parnassus by bye-roads, and who very much resemble monkies, not only in their style of climbing, but in the art of *degrading imitation*, have produced nothing but "scannel notes" from the bladder and string, which they would persuade us is the genuine harp of Tyrtæus. These certainly, to speak in the voice of a true votary of Phœbus, "mean licence when they cry liberty."\* The dreadful acts of anarchy which this age has witnessed, have also rather untuned the public ear for the song of freedom; and made us *suspect* danger, where our ancestors would only have *felt* rapture. I am not apologizing for the discordant bards of faction, whose jejune malice I at once detest and despise. I am only supposing it *possible*, that the glow-

\* See Milton's Sonnets.

ing visions of a vivid imagination may have occasioned some inadvertent fallies, which the temper of the times renders dangerous; and the consequences of which the writers themselves, when the "fine frenzy" of imagination subsides, will be the first to deplore.

Of late years (except in the political light which we have just noticed) poetry has rarely deserved the reproach of misleading the passions; being mostly either descriptive, didactic, or metaphysical. In the hand of a Hayley and a Seward, it has successfully shown its capability of forcibly narrating domestic incidents, or elucidating critical research. Its power of analyzing metaphysical properties has been successfully proved by Rogers and Campbell. The turgid attire of bombastic epithet, and the cold uninteresting accumulation of abstract ideas, so lately puffed into fashion, seems yielding to that force of feeling, elegant simplicity of expression, and lucid yet elevated arrangement of ideas, which characterized the happiest efforts of the muse in her days of exaltation. The popularity of Cowper's poems has doubtless contributed to this happy change; in which the sterling grandeur of the thought, and the exquisite appropriateness of the imagery, compensates for carelessness of expression, or occasional untuneableness of the measure. We must, however, lament that the peculiar turn of his religious principles deprives this charming poet of his natural suavity, whenever the Clergy of the Church of England, or our system of public education, falls within the reach of his observations.

But though we hail with rapture the auspicious omens of a purer taste in poetry, the times are for ever vanished which sanctioned the allegorical triumphs of Orpheus. Good verse requires *consideration*; without which, it is *impossible* to appreciate its beauties. Poetry also is one of those unfortunate sciences which have never been gifted with a golden key to unlock the temple of Mammon. Can we therefore wonder, that in a speculating mercenary age she should chaunt forth her strains to the unregarding ear of neglect? Yet, though the later efforts of the muses have been comparatively unsuccessful, fashion has not yet dared to degrade those bards of deathless fame to whom the concurring voice of *past* ages has ascribed a safe preeminence, and whom, consequently, all are *forced* to *praise*, though few *read*, and fewer *understand* them. As the charm of polished numbers must add beauty to every description, and force to every senti-

ment, a well chosen selection of poetry becomes a proper garniture to every young lady's closet; and she would do well to commit to memory such passages as are most distinguished for exquisite imagery or impressive observation. I have derived much moral improvement, as well as intellectual enjoyment, by recalling the tasks of my early life to my remembrance; for by so doing I have soothed the hour of anxiety, diverted the languor of fatigue, and held communion with the most exalted minds, at a time when I could not have procured any other amusement.

I wish to distinguish the tragic and comic muses from their poetical sisters, because I fear that they may be more justly charged with high crimes and misdemeanors. As they certainly continue to be public favourites, they are truly culpable for renouncing their allegiance to their sovereign Phœbus, and betraying that strong hold, the public amusements of a polished nation, into the hands of the Goddess of Nonsense, or the Demon of Anarchy, to the great danger of the understanding and welfare of the said nation. The preceding pages must have taught you, that I *suspect* this charge to be just. Public diversions have a material influence on public morals, and therefore are connected with every part of the extensive subject that we are investigating. It was remarked by a spirited and intelligent observer of life and manners,\* in the middle of the last century, that "most popular compositions were alarmingly democratical;" and the predicted consequences that we have lived to see realized. Yet, notwithstanding the conviction which must arise from the experience of evil, and the detection of absurdity, our "Sovereign the people" continue to receive as much incense from Melpomene and Thalia, as if we had never found out that his Majesty was only a usurper. You will probably remind me, that these ladies are really innocent; that the things to which I allude, whether I call them "physic or farces," were made to be seen and sold, not to be read and remembered; and therefore they are improperly introduced under the title of female *studies*. I stand corrected, and will only detain you with a few remarks on the dramatical remains of former times.

Few censors are so rigid as to prohibit the best efforts of the tragic muse; and unquestionably the pages of Shakespeare, independent of the coruscations of *genius*, beam with

\* Lady M. W. Montague. See her Posthumous Works.

the unclouded blaze of *moral* splendour. The like may be said of the pure untainted plays of Thomson, whose chaste and classic scenes must ever delight in the closet. Nor do the stronger colouring and warmer passions of Rowe mislead his readers from the hallowed shrine of virtue, though he frequently sacrifices nature to description and declamation. A writer would deserve much from the public, who should purify the mixed dramas of Otway and Southerne, and preserve what genius has immortalized, without its nauseous and poisonous alloy. Our early comedies deserve and require a similar purgation; but in many, *excision* will not be sufficient; the plot, as well as the language, must be reformed, to make them *safe* companions. It is much to be lamented, that a conviction of these faults has not operated upon our present race of writers, further than to make them verbally modest. While blasphemy retains the place of indelicacy, we may rather talk of change than reformation. We have little cause of exultation on the score of morality in design; and when we inquire after that spirit of genius which gives a zest to these compositions, we must acknowledge that its subtle nature has evaporated through the flimsy texture of modern composition. In probability, character, and wit, the mortifying difference is too discernible. Some favourable appearances in the theatrical world have lately excited a hope that we are entering on a more auspicious æra; and even in what I may term the *Vandalism* of our dramas, a few successful efforts will deserve your attention; though not equal, in number or excellence, to those which were produced when theatrical taste was at once embellished and regulated by the histrionic powers and intelligence of a Garrick.

You will ask me, if I allow the stage to be such a faithful copy of living manners, as to permit scenic exhibitions to influence our judgments. In general, certainly it is not; characters and events must be *exaggerated* in order to stimulate attention. Those pieces which copy the more delicate touches of sentiment and incident, seldom afford enough of situation and effect to please in the representation, though for the former reason they are the best closet companions. It is only the province of care and superior genius to combine impression and simplicity; and even these catch the best likenesses when they paint the soul in a storm of passion. Dramatical reading, therefore, should neither *precede* nor *exclude* those just views of men and things, which moral, his-

torical, and geographical knowledge, cannot fail to produce. As guides in our progress through life, we must consider that they lie under all the disadvantages which Dr. Priestly ascribes to fictitious narratives; but I think that those plays which are removed from the manners and language of common life are less likely to mislead than novels, which ever affect the garb of true narrative, and sometimes actually profess to describe real events. I recommend a select assortment of plays, as an improvement to your taste, as capable of storing your memory with elegant and improving ideas, and as a corrective to that dull monotony and rigid contraction of conversation which characterises mere *matter of fact* readers.

Works of humour, whether satirical or playful, come next to be considered; and here again I am fearful that my observations may betray more of *attachment* than *judgment*. I would, however, avert all just censure, by strictly prohibiting every composition in the smallest degree infected by indelicacy, ribaldry, or profaneness. My motive for recommending mirthful productions is, to check the extreme acuteness of sensibility, which our sex is apt to indulge at the expense of our repose; and which is best corrected by the admission of lively ideas. Our propensity to run into the absurdities of sentiment, makes it dangerous for us to read much of what is addressed to the imagination and the passions, without applying to the powerful antidotes of romance, humour, and satire. I know you will not ask me, whether it would be advisable to prohibit all writings of the former tendency; because you will perceive that it is austerity, not prudence, which interdicts us from partaking of a delicious fruit, lest our gratified appetite should gorge to surfeit. A bright imagination, a glow of generous sentiment and polished and correct expression, are all parts of the character of an accomplished female; diversity of idea, and playful allusion, may also claim admission into this charming groupe of sister graces.

*Well principled* ridicule has often done infinite service to the cause of good sense. Even virtue and religion have received considerable benefit from its scintillating darts; and in the opinion of an eminent theologian,\* humorous illu-

\* Dr. Hey. He alludes to our Saviour's reproof of Pharisaical punctilio, straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. See *Theological Lectures* vol. 1st, page 455.

trations and ludicrous contrasts have been honoured by divine adoption. Yet even well principled ridicule may be pushed too far. Hudibras, who certainly "laughed a frantic nation into sense," has been censured for bringing religious seriousness into disrepute. Surely, the fault lay with his readers, who, disgusted with the hypocritical fanaticism by which they had been bewildered, assimilated the very opposite qualities of piety and enthusiasm, and transferred that castigation to the former, which the author meant to confine to the latter. It must, however, be granted, that whoever undertakes to lash puritanical excesses enters on dangerous ground. "It can never be well done, as the just quoted respectable authority observes," unless by a person who clearly comprehends the distinction "between excess and propriety." I am inclined to allow, that religious extravagance is not a proper subject for satirical exhibition, unless it be accompanied by *diffimulation*. The folly of an idiot, or the eccentricities of a madman, may make one smile; but we should turn with pain and disgust from a caricature of such pitiable objects. So when fanatics are sincere, we ought to consider them as the victims of a disordered intellect; and they should alike move our pity for their misfortunes, and our endeavours to effect their cure. But no weapon is so proper as the dart of satire, to detect the deformity, and humble the self-consequence of hypocrisy.

Ridicule has been a useful ally to taste. I need not refer to the well known effects produced by the vigorous pen of Cervantes; we have many happy instances of the power of wit in our own country. To confine our observations to the more modern, that spirited pamphlet, entitled *Anticipation*, compelled the great opposition leaders of those times to change their mode of attack, and to use more nicety of *selection* in the quality and quantity of the *lumber* by which they clogged the wheels of government, lest they should be cried down for plagiarism; and it is observed, that brevity, and application, have since been preferred to rhetorical flourishes, in this species of oratorical warfare. Poetry has derived infinite advantages from the celebrity of the Baviad; which proved as fatal to the Della Cruscan, as the Loves of the Triangles did to the Darwinian phraseology. No specific object seems to be pursued in the play of the Critic; but it is well worthy of the talents of a Sheridan to *write down* modern dramas; and I have too much respect for that gentleman's *taste* to believe that he would avoid so fair a vic-



tory because some of his own later offspring may appear among the "small infantry" which his giant spear could easily overthrow.

I shall infallibly expose myself to the snare of some vigilant opponent, who lies perdue to catch me tripping, by naming politics as a suitable subject of female study. If I proposed loading your table with controversial pamphlets, journals, replies, observations, queries, and all the ephemeral publications to which local circumstances ascribe consequence, and which posterity tosses to oblivion, I would submit to be the subject of all the good things that ever have been said on petticoated quidnuncs. But I am not disposed to withdraw you from the pure founts of Siloa and Aganippe, to plunge you into the puddle of party contest, from which our sex is happily fenced off; I say *happily*; for certainly the most steadfast virtue, and the greatest tranquillity and constancy of soul, can scarcely hope to escape *uncontaminated* from the infectious contact of public life.

But though we are excused from undergoing the labours and difficulties of statesmen and warriors, I trust that the affections and duties of a patriot are not inimical to the female character. If our tender feelings are excited by the objects around, we must love our country in which those objects subsist. The scene of our early delights presents enjoyments, and future hopes must be dear to us, even on selfish considerations. And could we willingly behold those scenes defaced; could we, without an almost mortal pang, contemplate the desolation of what is pleasant, and the loss of what is dear? Is there really in nature such a sensation as *solitary unconnected* enjoyment; could we be happy in a lonely wild, or a dreary cavern, from which we had no prospect to escape; and what is this world, but a cave or wilderness, when all that habit rendered agreeable, or attachment made necessary, is gone? We love, then, that community with which we are connected; and by analogy that spot of earth where we act and move. This spot is our country; this community our fellow-citizens, with whom we have inherently contracted an indissoluble league, and formed an obligation to mutual aid and affection.

Let us here recal to our more serious consideration those awful motives, which, though I trust not *contrary* to, were yet not so *intimately* connected with, the subjects that we have just discussed, and consider our relation to society, according to the views and motives of religion. And as it is

impossible to practise our duty without understanding it, a knowledge of the principles of government, and the peculiar construction and advantages of our own, are indispensably necessary to all who would act as they ought to their king and their country, their superiors and inferiors, their equals, their children, and their servants. This sort of information differs *in toto* from the party discussions of the day, and seems our best preservative from those confined politics which both degrade and debase the female character.

Holy writ informs us, that gradations of rank proceed from the good pleasure of the Almighty, who founded universal happiness and security, in mutual want and dependance. No one is rich, powerful, or exalted, for their own sake; predominance in any worldly advantage always includes increased responsibility; and they who misuse greatness are fearfully amenable as treacherous betrayers of a sacred trust. But considering the more numerous temptations, to which eminence of any kind is exposed, it may justly require to have its actions viewed with candour, and that it should be *assisted* rather than *counteracted* in all its *salutary* purposes. Scripture gives us precisely this view of our duty as subjects, and enforces it by the peculiar obligations of Christianity.\* Of this we will speak hereafter; let us now remark, that since the limits of power are so circumscribed, and its obligations so numerous, it seems rather a trial to be *dreaded*, than a good to be *sought*. Hereditary rule may appear to a recluse observer a contrivance to enforce the assumption of painful preeminence, instead of a defence against the encroachments of unqualified intrusion. The fruit of "the accursed tree" has, however, so intoxicated mankind, that though, to a well disposed mind, "obedience is ease," many determine that "to reign is worth ambition, even in Hell." When power is pursued by undue means, there is every reason to apprehend that it will be misapplied; hence the perversity of men's hearts render it necessary to secure magisterial and regal authority from the grasp of the multitude on the one hand; and on the other, to restrain it within those salutary limits, which may prevent it from assuming such undue weight as would enable it to crush those whom it was intended to protect.

\* See Romans, 13th chapter, and 1st Peter, 2d chapter, on Christian obedience, as proceeding from a sense of duty to God.

The excellency of the British constitution, in all the fundamental points of right government, is acknowledged. It secures personal liberty and private property; it renders the peasant, as far as relates to his domestic situation, as secure as the sovereign; and it precludes the sovereign himself from the power of infringing the right of the subject. Liberty is well defined to be, not the power of doing what you please, for that is licentiousness, but the security that others shall not do as they please with you. Holy writ furnishes memorable examples of the miseries that ensued from "every man's doing that which was right in his own eyes."\* A more striking view of the changeable humour of a mob, and the blind turbulence of popular commotion, cannot be given, than what was exhibited in the last scenes of our Lord's life, or in the trials which his faithful apostle Paul experienced at Lystra and Ephesus.

Your historical pursuits will explain to you the advantages which our political constitution possesses beyond what any other nation can boast; and your attachment to this your country will consequently become infinitely stronger, through the obligations of preference and gratitude, than what early habits or casual residence could impose. Contemplated as the sacred inclosure which embraces and protects one of the fairest scions of the church of Christ, our love should strengthen with faith; and though our preference should carefully avoid that narrowness of sentiment, which hates or despises every thing foreign, we should feel our interests and hopes so interwoven with the welfare of our native land, as to be incapable of separation. Patriotic attachment, forms a marked feature in the character of those worthies of old who are recorded in holy writ. And the Saviour of the World, by condescending to imbibe this predilection for the soil in which he was born and suffered,† has most effectually rescued the genuine feelings of the patriot from the undeserved reproach of prejudice and narrowness of soul. The cosmopolite, who affects to despise distinctions which the Lord of Life has sanctioned, may well be reproved in the spirit of St. John's-retort to the unchar-

\* Judges, 17th chapter, 6th verse; 21st chapter, 25th verse.

† Yet Christianity has been defined to be incompatible with the character of a patriot. How much has our faith been injured by injudicious defences!

itable, "If ye love not what ye have seen, how can ye love what ye have not seen?"

But how shall women show their love to their country? They cannot fight its battles, nor direct its counsels; their purses are seldom at their own disposals, and their actions are circumscribed, not only by physical, but by civil restrictions; they can only devote their wishes and their prayers to the service of the common weal. Allowing that we could do nothing more, we should then be better than passive patriots. But surely it is still further in our power to avert from our Jerusalem, those sore judgments which have caused the downfall of every nation that has yet sunk from greatness to desolation. The *discontented* politician, or the *exiled* statesman, seeks for the cause of national disasters in the baseness or imbecility of his rulers; but the Christian refers them to the overruling will of an offended and chastizing God. We do not attribute pestilence merely to a fortuitous accumulation or negligent importation of poisonous miasmata, but to a preordained concurrence of second causes, or, in the words of scripture, to "unsheathing the sword of the destroying angel." We deduce famine and scarcity, not from the extortion or ignorance of the cultivators of the earth, not from chance, not from combination but from the sovereign will of the Author of the seasons, who may, for the providential purposes of his righteous government, suspend the operation of his gracious promise that "seed time and harvest shall never fail." Whence come wars and fightings among us? not merely from the ambition of royal cut-throats, as mob orators insist, but from private vices, from pride engendered by opulence; and, if we confine our views to our own times, from a spirit of insubordination, from the violent passions of the rabble let loose from all civil and religious restraints, from the aspiring designs of artful demagogues and rapacious marauders, from the multiplied lusts of luxury, and from the restless spirit of commercial enterprise. It is most certain, from holy writ, that war, famine, pestilence, and all other general calamities, are the means which the Almighty employs to *correct* the wickedness of offending nations, who can only be chastized while they remain a *collective* body, and though in that case the good must suffer with the sinful, yet if we consider that there will come a day of *individual* restitution, the divine attribute of justice is no way impugned by this proceeding. Beside, as we are all offenders, the best of us may be considered but as stray

sheep, who need these heavenly warnings to be recalled to the fold. National sins, therefore, do not mean the sins of our governors, as some most perversely misrepresent; but the aggregate offences of individuals. That we have "been blessed beyond other nations in a greater share of the light of the gospel, in wise and just laws, in a mild and yet vigilant government, in internal peace and opulence, and in external renown and prosperity," is most true. That we have improved these blessings as we ought to have done, is more than doubtful. Insubordination daily gains ground; and what is insubordination, but rebellion against the *providential* government of God; for in the language of holy writ, "what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?"\* Indifference as to the principles of religion, and laxity in performing the duties which it enjoins, become more and more evident in the manners of all classes. The habit of referring all events to second causes, than which nothing is more opposite to the principles and feelings of a Christian, increases; and luxurious indulgence, and inordinate attachment to worldly pleasures, are the characteristics of the times. These are sins for which our rulers are no otherwise accountable, than as they *commit* them; and they who, in precept and practice, steadily endeavour to abate their prevalence are most truly *patriots*; preventing, as far as is in their power, the ruin which the tyrants of our own creating will bring on the subjugated people who willingly submit to their galling yoke.

When I recommend regard to order, condescension, pious sentiments, regular conduct, and temperance in pleasure, to my sex, I certainly act in perfect conformity to our pristine character; which, unless corrupted by evil habits and examples, *predisposes* us to whatever is calm, amiable, and of good report. In our relative situation, as mothers and mistresses of families, we possess so much influence, that if we were uniformly to exert it in the manner which the times require, we might produce a most happy change in the morals of the people; and in peril of being thought superstitious, I avow my firm belief, that such a change would conduce more to extricate us from our present difficulties, than the wisdom of our counsellors, or the valour of our fleets and armies. We should, however, alike avoid resting in the arm of the flesh, like a self-dependent worldling, and

\* Numbers, 16th chapter, verse 11th.

supposing, like a presumptuous fanatic, that the sword of the spirit is the only weapon that we have permission to use. The lawfulness of even defensive war has been denied by many (I hope sincere, but I am sure) ill judging Christians; who forget that our Blessed Lord never could mean to rescind one of those first laws of our nature, which himself, in the character of our Creator, imposed upon us, and the necessity of which he experimentally proved; I mean the law of self-defence. The precepts which his eminent forerunner gave respecting the conduct of military men, the frequent allusions to a state of warfare in the apostolical writings, and the practice of the earliest converts, many of whom were soldiers, and certainly did not renounce their military duties on commencing Christians; all these considerations must decide the question in the opinion of reasonable people. When we consider that it is *impossible* to prevent violence and aggression, otherwise than by resistance; and that when once the floodgates of war are opened, circumstances must decide whether we shall content ourselves with restraining it within its banks, or attempt to turn its wasteful current on hostile plains; we must rather pity the weakness of those who could perplex themselves with such scruples, than admit that they are founded on the word of God.

But is not war an evil? Certainly, or it would not be denominated the sword of the Lord. Should it not be avoided, if possible? Unquestionably, it should. Go and humble thyself before God for those sins which deserve such a chastisement. But are not our rulers the mediate causes of this calamity; I speak not of past but of present times, and answer No. The predicted spirit has arisen out of the bottomless pit, who "is presumptuous, disobedient, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities." If you doubt the fact, look at the state of your own household, at the dress, conversation, and conduct of your servants. Observe the air of equality, or the lower of discontent, which you may see even in those rustic countenances, who used to greet you with the smile of respectful attachment. Consider the alarming combinations in various trades; not that workmen may possess the means of *subsisting* their indigent families, but that a larger portion of every week may be *allotted* to idleness and intemperance. Contemplate the universal thirst for political knowledge, the irreverence with which the most elevated characters are spoken of; and, above all, reflect on the probable consequence of two opinions which are almost

universal among the lower orders ; namely, that in this land of liberty every man may do as he pleases, and that he has a right to choose his civil governors and spiritual instructors.

Permit me to enforce my opinion respecting the folly of the higher orders countenancing the growth of democracy, by quoting the authority of a scholar whom every party reveres ; I mean Sir William Jones. After observing, that “ the original form of our constitution is almost divine, to such a degree that no state of Greece or Rome could ever boast one superior to it, nor could Plato, Aristotle, nor any legislator, even conceive a more perfect model of a state,” he proceeds : “ What can be more difficult to devise, than a constitution which, while it guards the dignity of the sovereign, and the liberty of the subject, from any incroachment, by the influence and power of the nobility, preserves the force and majesty of the laws from violation by popular liberty. This was the case formerly in our island, and would be so still, if the folly of some had not prompted them to spur on the populace, instead of holding them in.” The times that he alludes to were, when Wilkes was the *still burning* volcano of sedition : but the folly that he reprobates has since alarmingly increased ; and party, of late, has never scrupled to excite a contempt for those principles, which must yet form the foundation of the power that it wishes to assume. Is there not reason to think, that the continental wars in which we have been engaged, almost during the whole of his present Majesty’s reign, were *providentially* necessary to drain off these violent humours of the nation, by devoting those corrupt members of society to the sword in a *foreign* climate, who, had they continued at home, might probably have kindled the still more destructive flames of *civil* war ?

Maternal tenderness is apt to urge objections to war, which state necessity cannot successfully combat, unless in cases of near and immediate danger. Unquestionably, much consideration is necessary, before we devote our sons to the military profession, without *knowing* that they have a *decided* predilection for that dangerous but honourable occupation ; but when it is *their choice*, it behoves us to practise the duty of acquiescence. Since it is judged necessary, that during the present awful aspect of continental affairs, every young man should sufficiently understand the use of arms, to be assisting in defending his native shores in case of attack, it is

to be hoped that maternal timidity will never check the operation of a measure, which, though (if followed up with that steady resolution which can alone make it of real utility) it includes privation, bodily fatigue, and even danger, the sacred call of public duty imperiously enjoins. Her tender sollicitude for the welfare of her offspring may be most judiciously exerted, in fortifying the young volunteer against those temptations to excess and licentiousness, which must ever attend numerous associations of young men removed from parental inspection or control, and exposed to the enticements, or still more dangerous sarcasms, of practised debauchees. A serious mind must ardently pray, that the unparalleled bravery and public spirit which the rising hope of England has shewn at this memorable period, may not be so perverted as to render "the thing which should have been for our health an occasion of falling, by still further provoking the God of Hosts, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

To those whose anxious fears now follow a beloved relation to the post of danger on some hostile plain, or iron girt coast, I would suggest one trite, but not puerile reflection. Death is the inevitable lot of all; therefore, they who fall in battle do but prematurely resign a mortal existence which a few years must have closed, and probably by a more agonizing mode of termination. The pangs of mortal disease, or that slow and painful death which attends old age, seems more appalling to the feelings of nature, than the excruciating but swift hand of violence. Dr. Paley has successfully proved, that Providence, by ordering one species of animal life to subsist by preying upon another, ordained the most *merciful* way of ending a being in which the seeds of dissolution were indubitably sown. An hospital presents as pitiable a sight as a field of battle; I mean as far as relates to human misery. It is true, the latter does not admit of those kind ministrations of attentive sympathy which appear so exquisitely precious; but whoever has stood by the bed of pain, disease, or death, must have felt, in every fruitless wish and thrilling fear, how very little we can do in lightening the heavy burden of *extreme* bodily distress. Perhaps, when we wipe the faint dews from the languid face, convey some small drop of sustenance into the speechless mouth, or smooth the pillows under the restless head, the self-engrossed sufferer perceives not our assistance, or even feels his anguish heightened by our sollicitude



But I have in some measure wandered from my subject: let me regain the ravelled clue, by observing, that the increase of sound principles and Christian practice will expedite the time "when nation shall not lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." The Millennium, to which piety looks forward, is not founded on that equalization of station and authority, which the frantic adorers of King Jesus pleaded as an excuse for licentiousness or rebellion; nor is it the reign of the goddess Reason, to whom infidel anarchists blasphemously sacrificed their Christian hopes. If the period so often described in prophecy, *really* relate to the *temporal* rule of our Blessed Redeemer, those who "have rebelled against their" earthly "king," and sat in judgment on him, must expect to be exiled from the peaceable region of order and perfect righteousness, and to be consigned to *punishment*, not reward, either in that triumphal state of the true church of God, or at the great day of final account, when we shall all be questioned how we have obeyed these precepts, "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God."

The notices which revelation has given us of the future world, are, as we might expect them to be, few, mysterious, and impressive; such as leave no doubt as to its certainty and duration; but so far envelope its pleasures and employments in figure and analogy, as to convince us that separate spirits and glorified bodies are engrossed by *different* pursuits, and capable of more *exquisite* delights, than we mortals can *conceive*. But, whenever the sacred page *incidentally* discloses a view of Heaven, it describes it as the seat of order and government, gradation of rank, supremacy, and obedience. "Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers," are the apostolical designations of angelic dignities. Our Lord declares, that "there are in his Father's house many mansions;" *many* as to number, and to gradation too, according to the opinion of learned commentators. Every where Heaven is spoken of as a kingdom; God is described as its supreme sovereign, surrounded by innumerable hosts of ministring spirits, all blessed, glorious, and happy; but enjoying these advantages as the fruit of obedience and peace; and among these distinguished beings two are mentioned in the canonical books of scripture, Michael and Raphael, to whom great-

er preeminence and the honourable title of archangel, are assigned.

There cannot be a surer sign of the decay of religion in any country, than in a general inclination to give pagan virtues\* a preference over Christian graces. The precept of "Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of the Lord," seems to be universally renounced, for the injunction of, Maintain your own sacred rights. Are these duties incompatible? Is not obstinate resistance as likely to engender tyranny, as slavish obedience? There is an absolute necessity that some should rule; society cannot be held together without this bond. If, therefore, the subordinate parts will press upon the higher, authority must drop its *sceptre* and wield its *sword*. At all events, anarchy must be subdued, or the state will be annihilated. Compliance, by skinning over the surface, only enlarges the corroding ulcer, which putrifies underneath. A turbulent community never long preserved its freedom; it only exchanged lawful and limited rulers for tyrannical usurpers.

The Church of England has been charged with enforcing the obligation of Christian obedience beyond the bounds of civil liberty. We have seen, that her public offices are undeserving of this censure; and it is unjust to accuse her on account of the tenets of some of her members or officials, who, in the heat of their opposition to the wild advocates of licentiousness, have sometimes, by extreme tenacity, injured the cause which they supported. The duty of our Sovereign, to govern us by the laws of this realm, is as decidedly recognized, as our obligation of obedience is positively determined. The question is, who is to be judge whether the prince observes or falsifies his engagements? and we may constitutionally answer, *Not the people*. An intermediate state exists, to whom, in cases of such emergency, both parties should appeal. Our history informs us, that a sovereign has been thus judged to have forfeited his high trust; and the remaining parts of our legitimate government (which certainly, during the interregnum, continued to be our lawful rulers) nominated the next in succession, against whom no plea of *ineligibility* could be urged, to fill the vacant throne; who on their parts promised observance of the constitution which they came to preserve. By this

\* The contrast between these is ably enforced in the *Memoirs of Agrippina*.

the people did not *choose* their ruler ; but the *law supplied the vacancy* which had been caused by the misrule of the executive power. It is to the law of these realms, that the people owe allegiance. That law recognizes the king, not only as the fountain of authority, but as the determining ratifier, whose approbation converts legislative decisions into laws. His prerogative, therefore, is so knit together, and interwoven with our constitution, that we cannot respect the one, without reverencing the other, unless the king exposes himself to assault, by casting away the shield that rendered him invulnerable ; the probability of which event has been decreasing ever since the Revolution. Should it again happen, that misguided royalty prefers usurped to constitutional power, the same steady regard to truth and justice, and attachment to the welfare of our beloved native land, that now calls upon us to *resist* the torrent of insubordination, will, we trust, rouse our posterity to defend those bulwarks which, unless betrayed by the baseness and venality of their natural guardians, must ever restrain the advancements of tyranny.

Having often remarked, how strongly the scriptures impose the duty of obedience on subjects, it may not be unadvisable to observe, that they abound with reproofs to wicked rulers, and record several instances of approved resistance to cruelty and oppression.\* St Paul, especially, is distinguished for his bold assertion of his civil rights, and spirited opposition to injustice, though actually seated on the tribunal of legal power. Christian obedience, therefore, is not abject submission ; but it is humility of mind. It is not thinking of ourselves highly, or only considering the *errors* of our governors, and our own *deserts* ; but it is thinking soberly, making allowances for their failings, and acknowledging our own. It is giving "tribute where tribute is due," and "submitting to the ordinances of man ;" not from fear, not from any sinister purpose, but "for the Lord's sake," with a thorough conviction that we owe the blessing of regular government to God, and that the obedience which we pay to the human representatives of his power, the earthen vessels in which the treasures of order, peace, and security, are deposited, is well pleasing in his sight. Such a conscientious

\* Particularly 1st Kings, 21st chapter, verse 3d ; and Genesis, 14th chapter.

attachment to our King and country, enlightened by historical knowledge, is as much political information as our sex requires. It will be a preservative from party violence, and from that agitating interest in local disputes which overpowers weak minds. It will put us upon our guard against the pseudo-patriots, who use the welfare of the public, as a catchword to persuade the deluded multitude to raise them to the lofty eyrie of greatness, from which they may successfully dart upon those to whom they owe their exaltation. For power, like the fountain of Lethe, has the infallible quality of inducing those who taste it with the habit of forgetting *former* friends and *early* professions. As this has been the invariable conduct of all popular idols, nothing but the ignorance of their votaries can render it successful. Would we but look a little less at what is present, and more at what is past, we should scorn to be cheated by the method which distinguished the rebellion of a disobedient specious demagogue three thousand years ago.\*

Having escaped out of the dangerous labyrinth of politics (may I hope with safety?) let me now enforce a caution which the last topic has brought to my recollection; I mean, against the very common fault of confining your attention to new publications and local topics. I know that you are above the vanity of being thought a literary lady, which induces many a would be Aspasia to toil through volumes of inanity, only that she may be said to read every thing that comes out. "Prince Postery," as Swift humorously terms the future, is generally just to us scribblers; and it is as safe for those who have not much leisure to bestow on books, to wait till their value has been determined by his highness's preceptor, Time. What a mass of rubbish does every year consign to the trunk-maker! yet it is possible, that many of these defunct compositions were admired by many beside their *disastrous parent*. "The older an author is," says Howel, "commonly the more solid he is, and the greater teller of truth;" the reason is evident, the impartial censure of the public *annihilates* all others. The pleasure and the improvement which we derive from reading, consists in our preferring a well digested selection; and even persons of the brightest understandings, who are compelled by their situation to read every thing, generally complain that their minds are retrograde in respect to useful or agreeable information.

\* 2d Samuel, 15th chapter, 4th verse.

There is a species of composition which is very popular, but should, in my opinion, only be sought for by those who have little leisure; and even then, since it is more useful to know a few things well, than to imbibe a confused jumble of every thing, even such readers might employ their time more advantageously; I speak of those works which go by the name of Extracts, Anecdotes, Beauties, and Anas. If to amuse be the object of the compilers of these volumes, I fear they lose their aim, except with very volatile students; for you are scarcely permitted to be *interested* with one subject, before you are *hurried* to another, with an abruptness that rather *exhausts* than *exhilarates*. A beauty, torn from its native soil, often becomes a deformity, because a judicious writer always contrives that situation should heighten the effect of his splendid passages. The bathos was never more strongly exhibited, than in an attempt to introduce some of Mrs. Ratcliffe's fine romances upon the stage. The incidents and characters were indeed *verbally* preserved; but the nice arrangement and preparation which rendered them striking, was considered by the dramatizer as *unnecessary*; of course, the same story which once harrowed up the soul, now convulses us with laughter.

Criticism is the last topic to which I shall call your attention, in what, I fear, my awful censurers will call my "literary gossiping;" I mean if they should determine to bestow any castigation on a *hardened* offender, who has often dared to utter a jest at their dread tribunals. Were I not afraid, that some one would discover me to be of a most malicious turn of mind, I should confess that it is a species of reading from which I derive uncommon pleasure. Learning, genius, and wit, cannot be more usefully employed, than when they officiate as porters to the temple of the muses; but since it sometimes happens in these *evil* days, that people appoint themselves to this office, without having had their credentials signed by Phœbus, I would advise you, if you have a relish for this high seasoned food, to apply to more than one caterer; or you will, by depending on his bill of fare, encounter "a crow in a perigord pie;" I mean, that prejudice and party will so disguise an author, as either to prevent you from enjoying a mental luxury, or oblige you to swallow a nauseous composition. In these times of violent contention, party intrudes its cloven foot into every subject; and works are estimated by every other rule than intrinsic merit. The public is, however, generally more just; an illiberal critique

has seldom enough solidity to arrest the flight of genius ; and it rarely happens, that dulness can *long* soar on the plumage which partiality had folded on its preponderating lead, though its effort is assisted by the *puff direct*, as well as the *puff by implication*.

Periodical critiques have been thought unfavourable to the cause of literature. When the number of them was small, few people had access to more than one ; and as its decision was uncontroverted, its *dictum* was received as infallible ; but since this monarchy (or call it a triumvirate) has been split into petty principalities, the mighty whole resembles a fang drawn lion, on which *we* literary mice may sport with impunity. Especially as, instead of a general federative union among the various cantons of censorial inquisition, they forget their common interest, and are not only rivals but enemies. At that important æra, when, in the spirit of Turkish policy, criticism resolved to have “no brother near the throne,” the veil was drawn from the eye of the public, and the unerring sage sunk into the literary prize fighter, who purchased renown by *enduring* and *giving* bastinadoes. From that happy moment, the natives of Grubstreet, who were wont to stand silent to be pecked at, till their serene tormentors were fatiated with looking at their bare anatomy, now chuckle and crow in their turn ; for who is afraid of a *reviewed reviewer* ? I beg pardon for thus frequently alluding to my own dear fraternity ; the recollection of our sufferings must excuse a little triumph at our being for ever emancipated from our silent bondage, and permitted, like the slaves in the infernal regions, to lash the tyrants who once made us groan.

Since the opportunity of comparing various critiques effectually combats every objection that could be made on the score of prejudicing the mind, when your own principles are generally fixed, there is no danger in learning the character of a work from a journal opposite to your own notions, provided you keep an antidote at hand. You will thus be able to detect the excesses and false glosses of either party ; and discussion will prevent your *moderation* from degenerating into *lukewarmness*, or your *zeal* from evaporating into *extravagance*. This requires a solidity of judgment, to which I know you are equal ; the attempt, however, would be unsafe to our sex during their salad days. But beside periodical productions, which are unavoidably tainted with the imperfections incident to local discussions, we possess a mine

of critical treasures, to whose sterling ore time has fixed his indubitable attestation. Among the most valuable of these, we may rank the effort of female taste in defence of our national favourite Shakespeare, and the animadversions interspersed in the biographical labours of Johnson. Criticism also occupies a distinguished and instructive part of those periodical essays which I formerly recommended to your attention. Nor do I wish to confine my commendations of this branch of polite literature to the Augustan ages of the Spectator or the Rambler; living authors have added much valuable matter; and even in the ephemeral productions of the day we often meet with remarks replete with so much wit and ingenuity, as inclines a reclusive observer to consider the national taste as being materially *improved*, notwithstanding the melancholy caveat which the degrading state of the *drama* enters against this *exhilarating* reflection.

Vapid criticism is verbose and tedious; but invective or adulation are its basest and most frequent faults. The popularity of this species of reading has certainly turned us into a nation of disputants and censors. Pope complains, that "ten censure wrong, for one who writes amiss;" and every author feelingly assents to the truth of this oracular declaration. But the character that I have been so long supporting, upon recollection, covers me with shame and terror; since, however I might hope to escape under cover of my sex as an author, in my new character of critic I can expect nothing but the fate of the disastrous jackdaw, who ventured into an assembly of peacocks. I shall not, however, be stripped of *all* my borrowed plumage; much of it belonged to *one* who *cannot now reclaim his own ideas*. The grave, which prematurely closed on as much genius, information, and taste, as can distinguish an individual, *effectually* conceals my plagiarism.

I shall conclude this letter by repeating a caution, which will certainly come unopportunately from one who speaks through the pigmy defile of twenty duodecimos. I mean, that valuable knowledge is not increased by *multifarious* reading. One well digested book will improve the mind and the heart more than many volumes hastily devoured for the purpose of saying that we have read them. This appetite for universal scholarship is rather increased by periodical annotators; for they seem to suppose that it is reproachful, for any who pretend to literary taste, to be *unacquainted* with any *celebrated* work. I believe few people possess such clear

heads, and retentive memories, as to be able to comprehend a long work at one perusal; and few have sufficient leisure to bestow circumspect investigation on a great variety. A selection of sound authors of acknowledged merit is, therefore, most serviceable to general readers; for it is not the images of words passing before the eyes, but ideas imprinted upon the soul by the blended powers of memory and understanding, that can make us either better or wiser for our studies.

I remain, my dear Miss M——, &c.



## LETTER XI.

*On Conversation, Society, and Friendship.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

TWO advantages are annexed to literary pursuits ; first, as they tend to improve those wonderful faculties by which we are distinguished from the brute creation, to our own comfort ; and, secondly, as knowledge is calculated to make us more agreeable and pleasing in the eyes of our fellow-creatures.

It has always been the unfortunate error of mankind, to bestow most care and attention on what, in their calmer moments, they confess is least deserving solicitude. Thus it happens, that the present world gains the ascendancy of the future ; that agreeableness procures more admirers than desert ; and that the appearance of enjoyment is preferred to the reality. The same erroneous judgment has elevated the secondary end of study into undue ascendancy ; and hence it cannot be wondered at, that when the superstructure is not founded on a really enlightened intellect, a good heart, and a corrected temper, the desire of pleasing and the passion for shining should be confounded. Nothing is more natural to an ingenuous soul, than a wish to be thought amiable by all with whom we converse. To have our approach hailed with the smile of undisguised complacence, and our departure deprecated by something less equivocal than the ceremonious entreaty of good breeding, constitutes a species of personal importance which even a stoic can but *affect* to despise. But I must tell the young lady whose whole soul is engrossed by the determination of pleasing, that this propensity will carry her beyond the desired goal. Admiration and affection are very distinct sentiments : you cannot excite the former in any considerable degree without alarming a host of competitors, who, being engaged in the same pursuit, will narrowly investigate your conduct ; and if any indirect steps, or unfounded pretensions, can be dis-

covered, you must dread the consequences of vigilant scrutiny. Affection, on the other hand, is *won*, not *vanquished*; when we cherish it, we indulge ourselves, instead of paying homage to others. It has the agreeable property of veiling those imperfections which the envy attached to admiration never fails to expose. It is therefore better adapted to the disposition of our sex, who must ever feel their desire of éclat checked by the timid apprehension of reproach. We cannot stray far from that privacy which is our happiest and most natural foil, without incurring danger.

The love of admiration has never been more prejudicial to women, than in the article of literary pursuits; for knowledge and understanding are distinctions, of which the lords of the creation are highly tenacious; and they are most unwilling to allow, that more than a few particles of those precious metals can possibly amalgamate with that vast preponderance of quicksilver irritability, which they affirm constituted the superinduced stamina of the sophisticated rib. Though I verily believe there are many more male than female pedants, and though I maintain that our understandings are equally well adapted to the duties that we are called upon to perform, and therefore cannot in strictness be denominated *inferior*; I would wish my sex to remember, that advantageous reading, being peculiar and personal, may be enjoyed in its fullest extent, without exciting those constant attendants of celebrity, detraction and scurrility. I wish also to add, that by securing those principal ends of study, the secondary uses follow of necessity. She who has really improved her understanding, her principles, and her temper, by knowledge or science, must be courted as a companion and loved as a friend; and though the general diffusion of literature, and increased liberality of opinion (I do not now use that word ironically,) permit our sex to display acquirements that would formerly have been deemed ridiculous, it is certainly safer for us, as a general rule, to consider science rather as the *mirror* of Juno, by which she attired herself for Jove, than as the lambent flame which played around the head of Iulus, and *distinguished* him from his young competitors. The enlightening of our understandings should not be our first aim when we enter upon a course of study. Our distinctions as moral and immortal beings, are superior to the faculty of enlarged intelligence; our hearts and lives therefore, should be amended through the medium of our intellectual powers, or we read and reflect in vain.

Improved capacity always implies increased responsibility; knowledge is a most precious talent, and must pay the highest premium. The errors of ignorance are sometimes an excuse for crimes; but the backslidings of sapience ever imply criminality.

Is it not safer then to remain ignorant? Certainly not; for the *consciousness* of ignorance is a *degree* of knowledge; and an indolent preference of darkness to light, when we are convinced that we sit in darkness, betrays also a consciousness that we *know* our deeds to be evil. Sincerity of intention must accompany mental imbecility, or its weakness is no apology.

The advantages of a relish for literature are most forcibly felt in solitude and in old age; the inconveniencies\* attached to both these situations are seldom successfully parried, unless by those who to the blessing of a clear conscience add the variety of gratifications which a well cultivated mind can supply. While we live in the gay world, or even in domestic society, we are only one of a pic-nic party; and the trouble of the entertainment is so diminished by the number of *contributors*, as to prevent us from thinking how it has been provided. But when, like a Canadian settler, we are confined to our own log house, prudential preparations for the ensuing winter assume a most serious aspect, and become interwoven with the care of our existence. We must have oil for our lamps, covering for our beds, and fuel for our fire; we want cordials to exhilarate us, food to strengthen us, employments to exercise our bodies, and expectations to stimulate our minds, besides medicinal provision for accidental sickness or calamity. To drop the allusion: what a fund of innate cheerfulness, tranquillity, energy, and contentment, is necessary for those who hope to live comfortably by themselves, especially for such as continue to ruminate when all the powers of activity are suspended, or finally destroyed! Happy the mind which at such a period can turn inward, and contemplate those forms of "perfect, fair, and good," which a correct judgment sketched in early life on the still *undefaced* tablet of memory!

We will pursue this theme in the conclusion of our correspondence. It is my present intention to proceed from literary acquirements, to the field in which they publicly dif-

\* See Letter 15th.

play themselves: I mean conversation. Now, though information certainly adds a thousand delicacies "to the feast of reason and the flow of soul," it should be like the charms of our general mother, "not obvious, not obtrusive, but retired." Like the sylphs that accompanied Belinda in her aquatic triumph,\* it may add a multitude of minute graces to the nymph around whom it hovers; but, unless in the select parties of private friendship, it must rarely assume so dense a body as to be discernible by vulgar eyes. Nor must it (presuming on its ethereal origin) affect a contempt for those earth-born gnomes yeapt household cares; which, though far less rarefied than the scintillations of science, are quite as necessary to the comforts of animal existence. By way of closing the competition which has long subsisted between the soaring daughter of genius, the flatteringly metaphysician, the "square elbowed family drudge," and the light robed nymph of fashion, suppose we take some of the distinct qualities of each, and with them form a female paragon, permitting conversation to *unite* the brilliant, the profound, the useful, and the trifling; for, I fear, whoever determines to exclude any of these ingredients will deprive the compound of an agreeable zest or balsamic property. Conversation was never so happily allegorized as by a resemblance to a collection of musical instruments; and I believe we never return from a pleasant intellectual concert, without acknowledging that our gratification proceeded from its *variety* as well as its *sweetness*. We felt obliged to the leading kettle-drum (provided she did not play too long or too loud,) as well as to the harmonizing flute; and the sprightly kit would have given us less amusement, had it not been contrasted with the sober strains of the virginal.†

It has been remarked, that though in this age of equalization one rank slides into another in the article of dress, luxury, and amusement, conversation still preserves its *aristocratical* distinctions; and I am afraid that my inveterate dislike of democracy will be deduced from the observation I am going to make, that it would have been well for society, if the politeness and accommodation of our superiors were

\* See Rape of the Lock.

† See Tatler, vol. 3. no. 153. I cannot for this reason approve the hy-meneal scheme which the ingenious author subjoins. Who, for Heaven's sake, could live with a drum and kettle drum, or endure the monotony of a bagpipe and castanets?

as imitable, as the form of their attire or the arrangements of their tables. Purposing to say much upon this head, it will be expedient to qualify the bitter potion by a previous introduction of what is so palatable to human pertinacity; I mean the abuse of those who are above us. And to begin with a subject which will I am sure be *popular*, courtiers are proverbially *insincere* in their smiles and promises; and whoever builds on their favour more than convenience warrants, erects "the baseless fabric of a vision." Something has been said in favour of these proscribed beings, who are professionally exposed to solicitation, and politically restrained from offending suitors by refusals; but as I write for the middle orders, I shall leave the exculpation of the great to their own professed advocates, and condemn the folly of those who continue to become the dupes of what the experience of all ages assures us is synonymous to the trackless wind; I mean the assiduity of great ladies and the promises of great men. The language of high life, like its apparent good humour, is uniform and local; and when a plain-character ventures into the enchanted labyrinth, he should carry with him an explanatory vocabulary adapted to the society that he mixes with, as constantly as a traveller does an interpreter when he ventures into a foreign country with whose language he is unacquainted. Courtliness of expression is so essential an adjunct to highly polished manners, that it rarely incurs the guilt of deception, unless some stray bourgeois adventurer wanders among these "gorgeous dames and barons bold," with enough native vanity to be credulous. Did this ourang-outang (for so, with permission, I long to tell him he is considered by *pretended* admirers,) but confine his expectations to momentary enjoyment, his wishes might be gratified; but if, like the ambassador of Bantam, he will explain "devoted humble servant" according to the lingo of his own hemisphere, he must painfully discover that, instead of the bower of Acrasia, he has only been bewildered in "Fool's Paradise."

As it would be absurd to seek among "high lived company" for what its constitutional laws compel it to disclaim, sincerity; let us confine our censures to the defects which those laws must acknowledge to be essential. The spoiled children of opulence and prosperity are too apt to sink all other faculties in the capacity of enjoyment; and being pleasant or interesting are, in their opinion, superior qualities to being estimable or improving. Hence, among the

high circles, conversation is more like a *déjeuné* than an old English repast; it abounds in bon-bons and syllabubs; it is deficient in substantials. We all know that a subject should not be quite exhausted, nor an idea fairly run down: but certainly, as starting a multitude of game disappoints instead of delighting the sportsman; so extreme volatility and mutability in the subjects that we discuss render conversation *fatiguing*, rather than *delightful*. *Good things* lose their effect, unless contrasted by *sound words*; and they both appear more brilliant when relieved by a back ground of *common sense*. As with the sensations of fruition and delight, " 'Tis bliss but to a certain bound, beyond, is agony;" so wit and vivacity exhaust the powers of enjoyment, unless placid ease and benevolent feeling are allowed to unstring the high toned imagination.

The quality that is most striking in very refined conversation is, the art of always seeming pleased and happy; and, of course, the general air of complacency that is diffused over the scene. Now, though I am convinced that the gentle tone of approbation is often but the cover for inward discontent, and that disgust lurks in the dimple of placid delight; I still maintain, that only *apparent* satisfaction communicates hilarity to others, and contributes to diffuse the external requisites of pleasure. Ill humour, being considered under her political character of ill breeding, can only venture into the higher circles in masquerade. It being impossible to exterminate the canker brood of this hydra, I wish that the laws of social intercourse were every where so strict, as to compel them to *disguise* their joy expelling properties in every party.

The licentiousness of patrician conversation is a fruitful theme for popular declamation; but I hope, as the publicity attached to dissoluteness of manners engenders an unfounded credulity as to the universality of depravity; so the notoriety of any breach of decency, where we expected decorum, misdirects the tide of virtuous indignation, and teaches us to deplore the frequency, instead of the perversity, of profligacy. It is a public calamity, when depravity of sentiment or manners is accompanied by such fascinating graces of behaviour, as must persuade many weak minds, that what is so very attractive cannot be very wrong. Here, as in the case of knowledge, the guilt is increased by the refinement of the offender. Those attractions of deportment, which naturally draw the delighted eye of every beholder, proclaim

the mind to be capable of all the nice reserves and keen sensibilities of virtuous feeling. A man of true taste will not think a woman completely charming unless, when in a serious mood, he could describe her as having

“ Grace in all her steps, heaven in her eye,  
“ In every gesture dignity and love ;”\*

and shall grace, piety, dignity, and benevolence sparkle in the eye, step, and gesture, yet never shed their divine influence over the *lips* and the *heart*? What a laborious mimic is she, who, through life, either affects what she does not feel, or acts in constant opposition to her feelings; who paints the pallid cheek of licentiousness with the blush of modesty, conceals the furious glare of guilty passions under the faintly glance of purity, and pours the language of ribaldry from the cherubic lips of innocence! With half the pains that she takes to *astonish* a world which at once wonders at and abhors her, she might procure the esteem of the virtuous, and the approbation of her own heart.

The unhappy propensity to copy the defects of celebrated characters, instead of their excellencies, has greatly affected the lower ranks of life in the particular of indecorum. Yet I may venture to assure the members of all the fashionable pandæmoniums, who affect the language of infernals, that *originality* in indelicacy has not raised them to that “bad eminence.” They may, indeed, boast of dressing up Billingsgate slang, or Wapping sentiment, in better phrase or gaudier colours; but those seminaries are the only endowed colleges absolutely devoted to the science of obscenity; and it is in the power of the lowest of human beings to be profane and immoral. I gladly quit a most disgusting subject, to attend to the real advantages that are usually annexed to polished conversation.

We will begin by considering, on what principles the superiority of polished conversation over the ruder habits of society is founded; and since good sense, intelligence, and humour, are national characteristics by no means confined to any rank, we must conclude that it arises more from the manner than the matter of what is said. Every one must allow this, who considers how differently an anecdote or an observation sounds when dressed in good language, and ac-

\* This favourite definition of beauty has been inserted in Letter 4th, though not exactly in the same manner.

accompanied by an agreeable manner, from what the same tale or sentiment does when stripped of these ornaments. A remark originally insignificant, may become witty, sarcastic, stupid or luminous, according to the humour of the repeater. Though, in fictitious stories, we are at liberty so to vary the narrative as to heighten the effect; when we aim at the elucidation of character, or recitation of fact, singleness of heart must proscribe every designed variation. The disgrace which fashionable manners affix to downright falsehood deserves general imitation. Let us now proceed to the minutiae of good breeding.

Authors are supposed (or rather have been required) to qualify themselves for writing by previous reading; and I believe it is esteemed essential for a speaker in conversation, first to serve a probationary apprenticeship in the character of a hearer. The term of this initiatory state is generally supposed to expire with our teens; yet a frequent return to the manners of pupillage is one of the rules which distinguish a very well bred person; attentive silence to a speaker being one of the most *fundamental* laws of politeness. Let me just hint a situation, in which prudence requires you to act contrary to the *ostensible* expectation. If you should ever be introduced to some one who has expressed great admiration of you, and a vast inclination for your society, remember that these words, properly translated, mean a *craving desire to be known to you*; and you will find the art of hearing the most essential requisite at such an interview. Woe be to the wight who prepares herself for this introduction by a store of just remarks and acute observations! The inspecting party is then sure to return dissatisfied, and full of complaint that people never *answer* expectation. But if she resolve so to husband her faculties, as to confine intelligence to *acquiescence*, and discernment to *compliment*, she will infallibly rise in the scale of wonders to something that is supernatural. These precautionary admonitions are only meant to intimate that vanity is universal, and to teach the *gazer* and the *gazed at* to scrutinize their own hearts. But to return to the valuable ordinances of polite manners: when information, authority, or talent, assumes the *oracular chair*, it behoves the rest of the company to commence *auditors*; the right and the time for occupying it should indeed be limited by sound judgment; but unless the usurpation be very manifest, and very tiresome, inattention or interruption are considered as



more flagrant breaches of the laws of good manners, than those which they voluntarily attempt to chastize.

Attention to engagements and promises might be referred to the indissoluble ties of moral honesty; but it rarely happens that people apply those important considerations to trifles; and yet let me again repeat the truism, that it is in trifles that virtue is most conspicuous. Verfatility in petty obligations gives a most unfavourable idea of the moral character, and generally designates a person on whom one can place no dependance. The inconveniencies which little breaches of punctuality cause in society are, however, of themselves sufficient to determine the culpability of such laxity of mind, even if it never proceeded to more enormous acts of prevarication. A person who breaks an engagement seldom reflects on the inconveniencies that he causes; he may be compared to a stone thrown into a pool, which disturbs circle after circle till the whole surface is discomposed. Do you recollect Steele's excellent paper upon this subject, in which he censures his own acknowledged failing (the parent, perhaps, of his still more criminal failings) with all the frankness and all the irresolution of lively feeling and culpable vacillation?

Among the rougher forms of society, it is not unfrequent to hear civility and sincerity contrasted, as if they were in their natures irreconcilable; but we only require common sense, and a good disposition, to render a well bred person as inartificial as the rudest Joan Blunt that ever harrowed up our feelings under the pretence of telling us her mind. I am convinced that vulgarity is oftener *artful* than *ingenuous*. The foundation of polite behaviour should be laid in the christian precept of "in honor preferring one another;" which extends the obligation to civility to all the world: friends and enemies, strangers and acquaintance, superiors and inferiors; all have an equal demand to have their intercourse with us regulated by the rules of decorum. Obedience to these laws is no infraction of the higher claims of truth and justice, affection and gratitude. The common offices of life may be conducted with urbanity and gentleness, though affection and confidence are reserved for friendship. If we have occasion to meet a person with whom we are at enmity, we need not scowl defiance with our eyes, or awaken his passions by menaces or insult. We have certainly no right to disturb the peace of any society by our *previous* quarrels: bitterness does but increase the difficulty of reconcilia-

tion; while a pleasant word, or a civil attention, at an occasional interview, have often been known to dissipate wrath, and to vanquish disgust. Judicious persons will preserve this general habit of complacency, without forfeiting sincerity; they will avoid expressing particular regard, or soliciting particular intimacy, in cases where the heart does not dictate the request; nor will they fall into the very common method of indiscriminate offers of service, which are generally taken in a still more enlarged extent than they are designed. A few general rules seem to constitute the fundamentals of agreeable manners. We should be careful neither to offend nor to mislead those with whom we converse. Now, if our behaviour be not *assumed*, but the genuine effect of a humble and benevolent heart, though we may err in some of those minute points which custom has introduced and experience sanctioned, we never can be guilty of any great lapses. When the heart dictates the external carriage, it cannot be artificial; and simplicity not only charms all beholders, but is an accredited passport to really good society.

An adherence to the precept of "in honour preferring one another," will certainly repress ostentation, which is one of the most fruitful, and, let me add, most vulgar sources of our social solecisms. Whoever meet company with an intention of making a display, may rest assured that, though there is a chance of their being so fortunate as to astonish a *few*, they will be sure to displease *many*. The native pride of human nature renders us very hostile to the claims of superiority; and if it appear but in the shape of an ornament, it is sure to have its pretensions contested. The same may be observed of every natural or acquired eminence, unless the envied distinction is so enveloped in modesty and complacency, as to diminish all the invidious effects of superiority; but these, indeed, generally accompany a genuine claimant to particular regard. The equilibrium of society is oftener destroyed by the preponderance of *wispy* pretenders, than by the acknowledged gravity of wit, taste, elegance, or information. The cawing rooks outscram the sweet warblings of the nightingale.

The desire of calling forth *all* the latent talents of the party, by an exhilarating attention to every individual of whom it is composed, principally causes the zest of that refined society where, indisputably, we ought to search for the *advantages*, as well as the *laws*, of good breeding. The motive for endeavouring to make every one pleased with him-

self may be selfish ; but the effect is grateful to all. When this duty is well understood and practised by the host and hostess, a general suavity of look and manner is sure to be the consequence. Would it not be advisable, if, in certain walks of life, the provision for the animal part of the entertained were diminished, and more sollicitude shown for the preparation of mental delicacies ? A plain dinner, seasoned with sense and cheerfulness, is infinitely preferable to a thousand luxuries served with the languid air of fatigued ostentation.

Young women who copy their gentility from faulty models are extremely apt to suppose that fastidiousness is a proof of taste ; or else, that excessive laughing demonstrates a prodigious deal of wit, or a monstrous quantity of good humour. The first of these mistaken fashionists, like Dr. Johnson's Anthea, predetermines to *spoil* every party, to *meet* with nothing right, and, in fact, to realize the power attributed to the toad, of extracting poison from every object. The gigglers belong to the gregarious tribe of animals ; they generally lurk in holes and corners, to the vast annoyance of all forlorn looking people, who, however worthy or intelligent, must not hope to escape the denomination of quizzes, and consequently become lawful prey. Having never been informed that real wit or innocent vivacity is even *suspected* of exciting this local merriment, I suppose those naturalists may be right who maintain, that as the female glow worm possesses the quality of shining, in order to point out her retreat to her winged mate, so these earth born nymphs, possessing no inherent brightness, have the defect supplied by a sort of sympathetic laughter ; for it is observed, that the appearance of a beau *increases* the convulsion even to *apparent* agony. I might apply severer terms to the affectedly discontented, or the affectedly gay ; but probably my admonition will have greater weight when I simply tell them that their manners are *ungentle*. Would they but let "nature be their goddesses," their distresses would interest, and their hilarity would please ; we should not then be disgusted by a capricious adoption of fashionable words or tonish phrases ; nor should we see muscular contractions and hideous gestures assumed, under the lamentable idea that they constitute beauty and elegance.

Nothing shows propriety of judgment more than estimating the opinion of the world at its *true value*. Young peo-

ple are extremely apt to err in this particular, either by despising what others say of them, or by making too great sacrifices to obtain applause. Another error is in their calling their own "little set the world." Many a young woman has been irretrievably confirmed in her faults by the flattery of her own acquaintance, who have taught her to consider the reproofs of her true friends as the censure of spiteful, ill natured, narrow minded tabbies. To this cause we must ascribe the diffusive imitation of fashionable awkwardnesses, and that confident style of assertion which so distinguishes the vulgar girls of the present time. It shows pride and yet poverty of judgment, engendered by local and circumscribed observation, and fostered by the opinion of congregated triflers, whom the habits of this age allow to prate in full assembly, instead of sitching their samplers at home, as the manners of past times compelled their grandmothers to do. If folly be indeed the predominant feature of the human race, we must lament the relaxation of that discipline which gave it, by restraint, the *exterior* of wisdom. It is not true, however, that the majority of women are incapable of thinking right; it is because the leading principles of modern education do not put their ideas into a right train for profitable reflection. The opinion of the world, or rather that of connoisseurs, is courted on the score of accomplishments; why not, then, aim to acquire the approbation of sound judges in manners and morals? Propriety and elegance are determinable by laws as unalterable as those of the Persians, however they may be supposed to be subject to the light decrees of fashion, by those who confound essentials with appendages. A bold stare, a masculine swing, a projected chin, and curved shoulders, cannot present the outline or the movements of Grecian grace and symmetry. A few *dear loves* may pronounce the *sweet creature* quite captivating, and the very essence of the present mode; but genuine taste will join with the aunts and grandmothers of the party, in protesting against all distortions of the human figure, under the false notion of improvement. I question whether her interdiction against the stiff bridle, and swimming step, of former times was promulgated with half such severity.

But affectation is only one of the methods by which self-conceit displays its conscious importance. Egotism belongs to the same error of undue self-preference; it is not indeed quite so dogmatical as pertinacity, nor so disgusting as dis-

tortion ; but we cannot admire the monotonous bell of the pack-horse, although it do not harass us like the grating of a grindstone, or deafen us with the thunder of a fulling mill. Nothing upon earth is so dull and tiresome as long histories about our own petty perplexities ; narratives that possess neither interest, humour, nor instruction ; especially when interlarded (as is generally the case) with a plentiful quantum of self-praise. We need not, however, absolutely banish self from conversation, though it must be prohibited from assuming the part of a heroine, either on account of uncommon merit or singular disasters. I once knew an instance, in which egotism was made so infinitely agreeable, that the listeners were never weary of its narratives ; but then it was introduced to correct its own foibles, somewhat in the disguise of a jack-pudding, and it recounted, not *wonders*, but *mockeries*. This would, however, be a dangerous expedient to all who had not sufficient strength and dignity of character to check merriment before it approached the confines of contempt. This was eminently the case with the Lady that I allude to ; at whom the most impertinent witling could not laugh one moment longer than she condescended to fiddle for his amusement. She possessed the art of showing us, in all her ludicrous narratives of her own dilemmas, that the ridicule attached to the whimsical situation in which she was placed, and not to her own inherent folly. When humour can be thus managed, it assumes that shape of *harmless playfulness*, which is the most exhilarating cordial of the soul.

If ever, then, we happen to be seized with an invincible desire of talking of ourselves in company, let us be sure to render the theme very agreeable. This cannot be done by putting on our best array, by paint or by patches. No credit will be given us for the witty things which we profess we said or did on such an occasion ; the tale " smells of the lamp ;" and our injudiciousness in repeating former triumphs destroys our credibility. A really clever woman has no occasion to employ the past tense in suing for her credentials of intelligence. Do we not, by so doing, expose ourselves to the retort which Esop tells us silenced the lying traveller, who boasted of his agility in Rhodes, by the company begging him to consider the present occasion as a proper scene for an *original* exhibition of talent ?

Conversation resembles, in many particulars, a game of chance. The best players are those who, still keeping in view the established rules, adapt themselves to accidental va-

riations with skill and adroitness. Whoever engages in it with a steadfast resolution of making particular strokes, or ties himself down by a preconcerted manner, will be sure to lose; and he who resolves to keep the game in his own hands plays unfairly. "A civil guest," says the old poet, "will neither talk all nor eat all the feast." When we talk, let us consider rather what will be *requisite* for us to say, than what we shall be *gratified* in saying. After keeping the ball in our hand a due time, let us resign it to another player, and only occasionally catch it in its rebound. But let us, in that case, beware of arresting it by too hard a blow. Petty contradictions are not the spur, but the quietus, of agreeable conversation. They proceed from a habit formed in early life, to which parents in the middle ranks of society are never sufficiently attentive. If half the pains that are taken in teaching young women accomplishments were bestowed on the regulation of their tempers, and the improvement of their manners, our social pleasures would receive most valuable improvements. It is to be lamented, that this most teasing habit often distinguishes very worthy people, who adopt it from a mistaken regard to truth and sincerity. As these are especially apt to suppose that a domestic party releases every body from all restraints, they frequently contrive to convert a family meeting into a battle royal; somewhat resembling the contest of a brood of turkey pouts, in which every one gets pecked, and none discover for what reason. The most miserable fate, however, awaits a stranger, who, supposing this engagement to proceed from secret enmity, unfortunately interferes to restore peace, and does not, till after he has received the rebuffs of every combatant, discover that they were all the while *cackling* in perfect friendship. This humour generally breaks out in the midst of some narrative, in which the repeater is interrupted with something quite as unessential as Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs's elucidations of Lady Blarney's criminal story, in the Vicar of Wakefield; and as both parties instantly quit the main point, to ascertain the verity of the appendage, all the spirit of the tale (if it ever had any) instantly evaporates, and leaves the combatants to fight over a dead body, like the heroic Greeks and magnanimous Trojans. A love of detailing wonders (another lamentable fault in conversation) is extremely apt to rouse this contradictory spirit, which really is a sort of wild fire very liable to agitation, irresistible in its progress, and incapable of extinction until it

has consumed all the fuel within its reach. It is not always harmless, unless it is ignited among the weeds which overrun a rich but neglected soil. We may deduce family dissensions, breach of friendship, nay irreconcilable enmity, from this source, much oftener than we can ascribe these lamentable consequences to any great violations of the principles of morality.

Whenever, therefore, we feel inclined to deny what has just been advanced, let us previously reflect whether our motive for interference be such as will justify that interruption of general harmony which contradiction always endangers. Is the misrepresentation gross, is the mistake at once palpable and important? If so, a duty paramount to the laws of good breeding compels us actively to support the cause of truth; but (even then) we should still recollect, that no cause is *well supported* without moderation and urbanity. There is no occasion for the loud scream of reprobation; a hint is more forcible, if not to the offender, at least to the bystander. If the culprit refuses to receive this admonition, and even maintains her own opinion or statement with pertinacity, it will be more advisable to decline the contest, than to enter on, what is quite inimical to the nature of social converse, a long angry argument. Discussions of important points may sometimes be pursued in company with improvement or pleasure; but then the weapons of controversy must be wielded by masters of the science, who possess real command of temper as well as information, who can *gracefully* submit to *defeat*, and who scorn to *pursue* a *victory* after it has been *acknowledged*. Such talents are too seldom found in unison, to induce me to rescind my affirmation, that contradiction and argument are the pests of conversation; and, unfortunately, the more insignificant the occasion, the more irritating are the consequences.

Giving unpleasant answers has been already alluded to: bitter irony is another solecism of the rules of politeness. To say what you are certain will give unnecessary pain, is not only a breach in manners but in morals. If wit be restrained by the fundamental laws of her own empire from lacerating by her keenness, shall the usurper Dulness be allowed to use her mallet, to do what the bright daughter of Fancy renounces her legitimacy by attempting! Rude sarcasms might always be corrected by the company before whom the offence is committed. If there were no *thoughtless* laughers, there would be no *offensive* jesters. 'The heaven

of vanity operates in this instance, as it does in most of our petty faults. Solicitous of distinction, yet ignorant of worthy means to procure it, the splenetic dullard resolves to be celebrated, though it be only as the *destroyer* of that comfort which he cannot *promote*. Banishment to Coventry would be a deserved and salutary punishment; nothing can sooner reclaim malignity than to show it its own insignificance. But, to undertake the execution of this sentence, requires more hardihood than generally accords with the female character.

An adept in the practice of christian candour knows that we must invariably conform to the precept of "thinking no evil." Among the minute but highly important ramifications of this extensive duty, we may rank all unpleasant constructions of the words of our associates; and, when they really will bear no other interpretation, endeavouring to show the speaker that we are desirous of understanding them in a favourable light. A good humoured answer to a splenetic remark constitutes those "soft words" which Solomon commends; and there are few tempers so truly diabolical but will yield, if not to the suavity, at least to the address of gentle management: I except passionate people, who, if they are generous (the usual concomitant of warmth,) are always soonest vanquished, by showing them that the darts they throw about at *random* make *painful* wounds.

The precept of "in honour preferring one another," will teach us a habit extremely gratifying to all with whom we associate: I mean that of appearing interested in their affairs. This species of attention is especially due to those who are in affliction or perplexity. We cannot expect that people who are so circumstanced can enter into the ordinary style of conversation with ease and cheerfulness; and, it is probable, we have no other way of softening their calamities than by taking an interest in their affairs. What, shall we ask, is so grateful as pity; what so soothing as sympathetic attention? The veriest wretch that ever languished in calamity would turn his woe worn face to catch the accents of commiseration. Consolation is certainly a most difficult office; we never can discharge it well, if we do not understand it rather with a heart disposed to perform it as a duty, than with a mind prepared to enter upon it as a field wherein we may display our powers. The great evil that perfects conversation, intrudes also into this part of social intercourse; I mean vanity. Though nothing is so galling to



the excoriated heart as reproof, most comforters are apt to consider *cenſure* as the grand *ſpecific* for woe. "Miferable comforters are ye all," ſaid Job to the declaimers who crowded round him to tell him that his *ſins deſerved* chaſtiſement. The ſons and daughters of affliction oftener find relief from ſelf-exertion than from the trite arguments, or rousing ſtimulants, which are ſo often injudiciously applied by thoſe who yet pique themſelves on a diligent attendance on the houſe of mourning. Among the requiſites proper to enable us to diſcharge this duty as we ought, diſcretion and tenderneſs hold the preeminence. The feſtering ulcers of the wounded ſpirit ſhould be cleaned with a light hand and feeling heart. Allow much for the petulance of affliction; do not aſſume the ſevere cenſor, and ſcrutinize every wayward expreſſion; you will be oftener required to liſten than to ſpeak. Be patiently attentive to the tale of miſery till the firſt pangs of grief ſubſide, and exhausted feeling wears a momentary reſemblance to apathy; you may then apply yourſelf to *extract* the thorn with ſome proſpect of ſucceſs. Gradually introduce other ſubjects; at firſt, ſuch only will intereſt as are analogous to the ſituation of the ſufferer. If you conceive that the mind bends ſo much as to miſtake murmuring for ſenſibility, in your converſation dwell on the virtue of fortitude, or rather recommend chriſtian reſignation. You may do this incidentally, by introducing ſuch examples as Lady Rachel Ruſſel, or Miſs Bowdler. The one ſhewed that it was poſſible for the hopes of immortality to vanquiſh the *acute* ſenſe of the moſt ſevere, uncommon, and repeated deprivations; while the other proved its capacity of triumphing over the *extremeſt* tortures of bodily anguiſh. In both inſtances, the chriſtian principle had to contend with great natural ſenſibility.

Advice is a duty analogous to conſolation, and requires as much delicacy in the adminiſtring it, to render it beneficial; but as the right of giving it is circumscribed within narrow bounds, we will here only enter a proteſt againſt thoſe very buſy people, who are troubled with ſuch an overflow of wiſdom, that they are always giving lectures on propriety, and correcting every thing which they ſuſpect to be an error. Unleſs we are ſanctioned by the ties of affinity, intimate friendſhip, or that accidental ſuperiority which the dependent ſituation of the adviſed creates, we ſhould ſeldom venture on the invidious taſk of a counſellor, unleſs by gentle hints or ſilent intimations of diſſent; which duties we ſhall

be required to perform as often as the interests of truth or morality are called in question. But it sometimes happens, that comparative strangers will ask our opinions on their conduct; this, however, is rarely done, except when they have made up their minds upon the subject, and wish to strengthen their resolution by these unfairly collected suffrages. On such an occasion, it is wrong to sacrifice our integrity to insidious vanity. Silence is the wisest mode; but if we must speak, our opinion should be ingenuous, only couched in respectful language.

I have not yet touched upon the principle fault of conversation: I mean slander. When it proceeds from maliciousness, or when it is embellished with falsehood, it belongs to a species of vices that exceed the jurisdiction of minor morals. There is, however, a description of detraction known by the name of gossiping, which is the general pest of all rural associations, and seems quite an equivalent for that immoderate love of pleasure which contaminates a town life. What, may we ask, is that perverted industry which is ever busied in the *minute* concerns of our neighbour, but restless indolence? Too dissipated to be quiet, too imbecile to be self-amused, we rustics are compelled to go out of ourselves in search of some pungent stimulant to drug the vapid cup of life. The misadventures of all around them are an exquisite treat to spirits of this cast; their vital stream would inevitably stagnate, did it not receive some impetus from a *faux-pas* or an elopement. Had I a mind to jingle upon words, I could say that they would be *ruined* without *bankruptcies*, and *miserable* without *misfortunes*; a typhus in your family cures them of a nervous intermittent, and a breach in your domestic felicity creates amusement for half your acquaintance. In the gloomy month of November, when most people are shut up in their own castles, or during any extraordinary stagnation of news, what is to become of the unfortunate beings who subsist upon report? Sooner than be quite famished, they must provide themselves with some improper aliment; and when they can no longer *see* what their neighbours are doing, they may *surmise* what they say or think; and it is possible, through Mrs. Nokes, aided by the discoveries of Miss Styles, strengthened by the hints of Mr. Richard Roe, confirmed by a plentiful share of Abigail testimony, we may find out that they have been talking about us while sitting round their fullen sea-coal fire. How gloriously does our indignation rise at this discovery! In the lan-

guage of Vapid, in the Dramatist, "Here's a field! here's a situation! what an opening! talk about *us*? Infamous." Memorandum: Is it not extraordinary, that conscience never tells us that our grand resource during this dreary season has been talking about *them*? But the conscience of a thorough paced gossip is not the most just emblem of susceptibility.

Selfishness is certainly the motive for encouraging this busy tattling humour; yet if we consulted our own true interests, we should scarcely find a companion more inimical to peace than this general inquisitiveness, and restless intrusion into the thoughts and affairs of our neighbours. In vain shall we hope to quench our appetite for this indulgence, when we once allow it to intrude upon our mind; it is irresistible; and there is no alternative between exterminating the inclination and enduring the thirst of Tantalus. At first, it introduces itself under the habit of playfulness, and attempts no more than a harmless laugh at the foibles which it discovers; but unless we possess great good temper, and live in a soil remarkably fertile in ridiculous solecisms, increase of appetite soon impels us to asperity; or, possibly some remark on Mrs. Heavyside's Arcadian *drapery* is so very good, that we cannot keep it within due bounds; and thus being circulated beyond our own immediate sphere, it reaches the ears of the lady herself, who, in a spirit of vindictive sarcasm, returns the retort uncourteous upon our *wig*. When affairs arrive at this state, nothing is wanting but a go-between (of which commodity there is always plenty in every gossiping neighbourhood,) to blow up these embers into a tremendous blaze. It is singular, that people often declaim against the petty causes which set empires at variance, without having the candour to recollect, that it is trivial events operating on the same stormy passions of individuals, which produce all the hatred and ill will that disturb the serenity of private life.

The opposite offence to tattling and censoriousness is flattery. The lower we descend for our examples of this vice, the more disgusting is its appearance. The smooth courtliness of polished manners leads people of rank to overdrug the potion of civility; but it is by graceful attentions, and elegant allusions, that they recommend the charmed cup to your fascinated taste. When the mixture is prepared less scientifically, the "soft insinuating oil" is apt to be too apparently swimming on the surface; inferior cooks are still

more inclined to "make the gruel thick and slab," till, in the hands of your chambermaid, it becomes such a hodge-podge as would nauseate any but the craving appetite of insatiable vanity. Is it not strange, that flattery in its grossest state proves palatable even to the refined taste of superior intelligence? The Muse records this foible of one of her favourite sons:\*

"Of praise a mere glutton, he swallow'd what came,  
 "And the puff of a dunce he mistook it for fame;  
 "Till his relish grown callous almost to disease,  
 "Who pepper'd the highest was furest to please."

It *still* sometimes happens, that a young woman, disgusted with the predominant mode of behaviour, and wishing to be thought very civil, turns parasite, or at least never attains independence of character. This betrays a lamentable want of dignity of mind; but the error is generally confined to the unhappy department of humble cousins, and may therefore rather be styled a misfortune than a vice. The general fault of the present times is *inattention* and not *excess* of civility. The modern belle not only has an opinion, but takes care to maintain it at the expense of the comforts of others.

This leads me to speak of accommodation, a duty which certainly holds a chief rank among the claims of society, and which, as I have mingled the subjects of conversation and good neighbourhood, it is proper that we should here discuss. The course of human affairs or rather our relative situation, and the intervention of other duties, so limit the active exertions of benevolence, that many cannot, except in will and purpose, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and relieve the oppressed. Is benevolence then to languish like a smothered fire? No; she will shed her cherishing warmth over all the common offices of life; she will comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, and restrain the presumptuous; or (to adapt her duties to our present theme) she will, by banishing all immoderate desire of self-enjoyment, direct her attention to the comforts, conveniencies, inclinations, and claims of others. She will restrain those appetites which interfere with what she conceives to be a primary consideration; and, viewing herself as she really is, but as one little emmet in a mole-hill, she will see that it is desirable,

\* Garrick. See Goldsmith's poem of Retaliation.

that the welfare of many should be preferred to her caprices, and not that they should subjugate the well being of others. She will not only "love a sister's praise, or hear with unwounded ear sighs for a daughter," but she will never attempt to spoil a ball to which she has not been invited, nor send excuses to an old friend if she can spend a more pleasant evening. In her engagements, she will consider what is right and proper; in her manner of spending her time, what is useful and necessary; and, suffer me to suggest an observation of high concernment to those who walk in the distinguished paths of life; she will inquire how, by a proper arrangement of those actions which are to herself *immaterial*, she can promote the *comfort* and *convenience* of those who depend upon her will for their enjoyment. Her expenses will be regulated by similar motives; self will not be the Aaron's serpent to swallow up every other item; charity and liberality will put in their claims at the first division, and not wait (as they are often compelled to do) to pick up the casual crumbs of extravagance. If all other means of showing her regard to her fellow-creatures are withheld, she will at least regulate her speech by proper maxims; she will give to every one their due importance; and, by ingenuously aiming at performing her own duty, she will acquire that eminence for which ostentation wearies itself in vain.

It may seem extraordinary, to a mind deeply impressed with the majesty and immensity of the Almighty, that in the revelation which he has made to mankind, his Holy Spirit should have condescended to dictate rules applicable to the ordinary habits and offices of society; or, in other words, that the Gospel should regulate *manners*. Yet most unquestionably this is the case; and whoever fully imbibes the spirit of our religion, acquires the *principles* on which true politeness is founded. I mean, humility and benevolence. But to descend from general observation; where shall we find precepts more fitted to promote domestic happiness, and social enjoyment, than the following comprehensive rules? "Blessed are the Peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. Be kindly affectioned one to another, in honour preferring one another. Recompense to no man evil for evil. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. When thou art bidden to a feast, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden, and he that bade thee and him come and say unto thee, 'Give this man

“place;’ and thou begin with shame to take the lowest  
 “room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the  
 “lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may  
 “say unto thee, ‘Friend, go up higher;’ then shalt thou  
 “have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with  
 “thee. For whoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and  
 “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Be of the same  
 “mind one toward another; mind not high things, conde-  
 “scend to men of low estate; let love be without dissimu-  
 “lation; be pitiful (that is, tender or compassionate,) be  
 “courteous. Be not wise in your own conceits. Judge not  
 “one another. Be not slothful in business; provide things  
 “honest in the sight of all men. Use hospitality without  
 “grudging. He that will not work, neither let him eat.  
 “Let your conversation be without covetousness. Be con-  
 “tent with such things as ye have.” If to this brief system  
 of social duty we add the numerous reprehensions of idlers,  
 of tattling wandering busy bodies, and negligent parents who  
 do not provide for their own house, we shall discover a com-  
 pendium of morals which, if strictly obeyed, would render  
 every private society the seat of happiness and delight. For  
 though this world, in its physical constitution, exhibits so  
 many marks of ruined magnificence, and punitory inflictions,  
 as justify the *verity* of sacred testimony, and prove it to have  
 participated in the *chastisements* of its *offending* master, it is  
 not the inclemency of the seasons, the disappointments of  
 fortune, external calamity, nor even disease and death, that  
 make our existence burthenfome; but it is irregular hu-  
 mours, inordinate desires, and criminal propensities, either in  
 ourselves or in those with whom we are most nearly con-  
 nected, that make us turn from the cup of God’s bounty  
 with distaste, and view the fair face of nature with despair.

Suppose a family, each individual of which diligently stud-  
 ies to do what they know to be right. Let all of them con-  
 sider and appreciate the claims of others, before they consult  
 their own inclinations; and let them steadily resolve to sub-  
 due caprice, restlessness, and vanity. Who is there that can  
 picture to his mind the harmony, tranquillity, tenderness,  
 and joy of such a party, without wishing to pitch his taber-  
 nacle among them? We will only require, that hopeless an-  
 guish and penury should be banished; and though infirmity  
 should occasionally want our aid, or frugality deny us all  
 but common comforts, the bower of Acrasia, or the baths of

Capreae, will be esteemed but as the tents of "Kedar and Mesech" to a mind capable of estimating and enjoying true felicity.

We have now travelled over the positive duties which we owe to society in general; but before we enter on those important ties which spring from our sexual relations, let us call to mind a peculiar obligation, the bond of choice or habit; I mean, friendship.

Men have often disputed the capacity of women for this tender and amiable connexion; they have ascribed to us too *much* irritability, and too *little* judgment and consistency, to complete the character of a faithful and valuable friend. Every man who possesses a good wife, has it in his power to refute this sophism; for no wife can really be a good one, without being in every sense, and every possible extension of the word, the *friend* of her husband. But it is argued, that this connexion is strengthened by ties, and distinguished by relative obligations, that cannot subsist between two females; and therefore that it is no way analogous to the subject we are now considering. A wife knows that she must *submit* to, and cannot *forfake*, her husband. A husband also knows that he must defend and provide for his wife. A leading and a subordinate character, bound by an indissoluble bond, afford no parallel for a connexion founded on equality, and capable of being rescinded. I acknowledge the latter dissimilarity; and confess, that in the marriage state, the inviolability of the engagement often acts as a prudential restraint upon vice and folly; but it is an erroneous conclusion, to suppose that the most promising friendships are founded upon equality. The most beneficial engagements of this kind admit dissimilarity of circumstances.

Total opposition of character is, I grant, incompatible with affection; but when a woman chooses her friend wisely, she will select one who may supply her own deficiencies either in age, understanding, discretion, knowledge, temper, or manners. If she look out for the echo of her own defects, she merely retains a parasite. It is an injudicious selection, rather than a want of capability for lasting attachments, that has brought female friendship into disrepute. Yet I cannot see that the intimacies of girls, who are alike votaries of the idol admiration, deserve severer censure, than the gregarious habits of the worshippers of Bacchus or Belial. Every boon companion and every dissipated rake possesses a *dear friend*: are these engagements better founded, or likely to be more

stable, than the keen sensibilities of romantic nymphs, or the violent intimacies of coquets?

But recrimination is not exculpation; we are always told, that supposing celibacy may afford instances of two spinsters playing daily at piquet when tabbies, who played at ball when girls, marriage is *constantly* the grave of female friendship. I am ready to admit, that our dependent state and circumscribed abilities render us less competent to the active duties of this obligation than man, who possesses the power as well as the will of obeying the dictates of his heart. It is most certain, that the authority which the husband exercises over the actions of his wife, often compels her to sacrifice less consecrated attachments. Sometimes the matrimonial tie removes her to a distance that will not permit her to cherish an intimacy with her with whom she once flourished "like twin roses on one stalk;" and still more frequently, the occupations and duties incident to her new connexion, insensibly and undesignedly divert her from attending to claims which necessity and reason alike assure her are of secondary obligation. The interests, habits, and opinions of the family into which she is adopted, are rarely congenial with those of the society from which she is withdrawn. Her exertions to serve an old friend must be limited by the permission of her husband, and by what she owes to his interests and to those of her children. I am urging so many circumstances against the permanence of friendship in married women, that you will say it is more to be wondered at that it ever continues, than that it is often obliterated. Yet surely, granting this to be the case, men have no cause to reproach us with versatility, for yielding to the primæval obligations of our being; nor should we sink in their estimation, for that submission to their humours, and devotedness to their interests, which are at once *obligatory* and *unavoidable*. But a suspension of the expressions or offices of friendship, when it proceeds from these causes, does not imply an alienation of heart; declining a correspondence, or interrupting an intimacy, is not relinquishing a friend. Circumstances may and often do arise, which admit of regathering the *unravell'd* but not *broken* clue of love; which should never be separated, except from discovering the baseness or unseemliness of its texture. If the friends of our youth are so disjoined from us by intervening connexions, that they cannot conduce to the comfort or convenience of our maturer years, they are (if intrinsically valuable) an excellent



commodity to lay by upon the shelf. They may prove the cordial restorative of broken spirits, the *sole* enlivener of life's long wintry eve, when the possessions which prudence taught us to prefer have all been taken from us, and the solitary mind wants vigour to form new acquaintance, powers to create attachments, and animation to enjoy any thing which use has not rendered palatable, or demonstrated to be salutary.

We will not, therefore, excise friendship from the catalogue of feminine connexions; but assign its place to the extremes of early and declining life, in which its influence may be most largely exerted. Not that we are authorized entirely to banish it from that busy part of our existence which is generally occupied by the conjugal engagement; we only suppose it as acting during that period in a circumscribed and subordinate station. Since I have acknowledged myself to be inclined to plead against the justice of absolutely passive obedience in a wife, I will here put in a retainer for friendship, as being a kind of claimant that has a right to lift up her voice against the absolute authority of a husband. I plead not for dangerous, indiscreet, or unfuitable attachments. I am an avowed enemy to exclusive intimacies and unlimited confidence, especially among married women. I bar all neglect of family cares, for the sake of imparting family *histories* to a dear correspondent; and all professions, or attentions, that can introduce the green eyed monster, jealousy, into a bosom which, feeling its right to undivided rule, will neither endure a brother nor a sister near the throne. All these paraphernalia of affection I renounce; and every sensible woman, who values her own happiness, or her own character, will renounce it too. But has she a discreet and faithful friend, who, though she sincerely loves her, is content to retain only this limited portion of her heart, nay, who has too much principle to think that she *ought* to possess more; does this friend conduct herself with obliging attention to the ruling power; does she avoid making court to either party by unworthy means; does she alike endeavour to avoid officiousness and inattention; does she not only conceal the secrets of the family, but, I may say, shut her eyes upon such part of its private arcana as she is not desired to inspect, and refuse to *know* what should not be *told*; such a friend is an inestimable treasure, and we ought to feel its value. I hope it may be justly affirmed, that few men would wish to deprive their wives of such an associate. Should caprice, however, so

cloud their judgments, I conceive that every humble entreaty, every temperate remonstrance, which female eloquence can suggest, should deprecate the privation; which, if hard necessity compels, female sensibility must with *slow* reluctance *painfully endure*.

In order to render friendship either a permanent or a happy tie, it seems necessary that the choice should be made with great caution; and yet accident, or local situation, generally determines intimacies which afterwards ripen into sincere attachments. Moralists always load young women with directions respecting the qualities that they should prefer in their friends; forgetting that this advice presupposes a ripeness of discernment, which is incompatible with the age that they address. There is no doubt that good sense, good temper, discretion, &c. are preferable to their opposite bad properties; but how is a young girl to discriminate between these and their *counterfeits*, or to disjoin them from the various qualities by which they are obscured or counteracted? It is only by long observation that we can estimate the real disposition and value of our closest intimates. General character, especially of very young people, is extremely deceitful; their very limited sphere of action, and the restraint imposed upon their behaviour, leave ample room for conjecture; and as the partial reports of friends or the representations of enemies prevail, their companions believe them to be agreeable or horrid creatures, excessively good humoured or monstrously reserved.

For these and similar reasons, it has been doubted, whether youth be really the season in which this precious plant should be introduced into the heart. It is to be apprehended, that if it be not cultivated in early life, it will never take root. What we then want in discrimination, we possess in energy; and though our judgments are then weak, our candour, our sincerity, and desire to please, are most strong. Besides, friendship does not presuppose us other than imperfect beings; it implies mutual errors and mutual wants, by the fundamental laws of its empire. Let two well educated young women, possessing common sense, and having no particular bad tendency, nor too much enthusiasm, entertain a sincere affection for each other, and there is a great chance that it will mutually render them more amiable. The disgrace that is thrown upon early friendships proceeds from our confusing the properties of *intimacy* and *attachment*. Circumstances will throw young people in each other's way

who are totally indifferent to, or even dislike each other. What never existed cannot be annihilated.

Though I should not think favourably of a young woman's heart, who has attained the age of puberty without discovering a peculiar attachment to some favourite companion; I acknowledge, that romance and extravagance are so apt to intermingle with these connexions, that they are never entirely safe, unless subjected to the superintendance of more experienced heads, who will endeavour to repress enthusiasm, and to correct folly. As a fundamental rule, it may be premised that no good girl will form a friendship which is *disapproved* by the seniors of both houses, nor will she permit the intercourse of even a sanctioned attachment to assume a *clandestine* aspect. This endearing and improving bond never so truly executes its original purpose, as when a mother so far disarms herself of restraint and severity as to become the chosen companion of her daughters, who on their part strengthen obedience by confidence and esteem. A well disposed ingenuous girl, conversing with an intelligent mother, possesses all the advantages of indisputable sincerity and tenderness. Here there is no danger that trust will be too implicit, or that affection will become too passionate. Rivalship cannot exist in these circumstances; advice will never be invidious; and though reproof may sometimes mistake its object, it must always design the good of the advised. A judicious friend, in whom there is a similar disparity of years, may in some cases act as a *substitute* for a maternal adviser.

But as sameness of character is the result of confined intercourse, and as we do not wish to see the "fear and yellow leaf" predominate among the tender verdure of spring, it is desirable that young women should have connexions of their own age. Every judicious mother will certainly aim at securing the confidence of her daughter, and acting as her counsellor and guide, if not as her preferred companion. By this happy influence, she may hope to save her from one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall young spinsters; I mean, an *indiscreet* friend. I am not merely alluding to the difficulties in which such a character will involve them, or the disgrace to which they may be exposed by her levity, for a good understanding and good behaviour would in time obliterate or prevent these bad consequences; but I speak of the irremediable warp that she may communicate to their

dispositions; and this even by what, if separately considered, are valuable properties; for she may confirm all their bad inclinations, and foster all their ill humours, even by her sincerity and affection. That our friend is our other self, is religiously believed by all juvenile associates; and by a misapplication of this rule the hatreds, disgusts, prejudices, and particularities of *their very dear friends* become their *own*; not to be corrected and subdued, but cherished and vindicated. This violent adhesion to each other is seen in full force in boarding schools; where every girl has her enemy and her partisan; and right and wrong, truth and falsehood, are considered more as they affect "dear souls" and "odious creatures," than on account of their inherent properties. But this deifying and anathematizing spirit is not confined to fifteen; too many women are apt to confound the duties of friend and parasite, and even to suppose that peculiarity of attachment is somehow inconsistent with universal good will, or else that strong affection never subsists but when it is founded on imaginary perfection. Surely, since the faults of our dear connexions give us most pain, our perception of them must be most acute, and our desire to counteract or eradicate them most lively. Reproof and advice are the most sacred and the most frequent duties of friendship. Happy the woman who finds her dearest associate capable of tempering the healthful draught of admonition with kindness and delicacy; but more happy is she who has sufficient greatness of soul (which is synonymous with true humility) to accept it in its most unfavourable form, even if it should be presented by the invidious hand of ill will or envy. To convert the unkind offices of malevolence into our own moral improvement, is the surest way of bringing good out of evil, and assisting to make "the wrath of man work the righteousness of God."

But to return to those doughty champions who think even the *errors* of a friend too sacred to be censured; let us ask them, if they really serve the goddesses of their idolatry by entering into their enmities, flattering their foibles, or forwarding their unworthy designs. It is a proof of affection, as well as of good sense and integrity, to refuse all such participation of interests with the utmost steadiness. We must, however, be careful to let our disjunction in these particulars appear like inflexible rectitude, not alienating indifference. If we cannot convince our friend of her errors, it is our duty to try to *conceal* them from others: I mean, if

they are not notorious either in publicity or enormity : for truth possesses preeminent claims ; and if our friend's garment be visibly bespattered with foul misdeeds, we must not endeavour to conceal them, at the hazard of staining the purity of our own. In the case of gross offences, those whom we cannot *reclaim* we must *abandon*. In other instances, when we meet with less debasing contaminations, we may find affection insensibly diminished by those errors which annihilate esteem. In all circumstances, if we perceive our own integrity or discretion to be endangered, separation is advisable. This is only acknowledging that our judgment has been fallible ; but to preserve an unworthy connexion, alike exposes our character, our principles, and our repose.

Let not, however, versatility of inclination claim a privilege which can only be afforded to the higher claims of moral security. There is nothing so disgraceful as inconsistency ; and an old friend, independent of the ties of gratitude and reciprocal obligation, may always claim this advantage over a new one, that you know both her excellencies and her faults ; and what is known, may always be guarded against or depended upon. If you are in search of a faultless human being, you are engaged in a *hopeless* labour. Do you possess the great requisites of sincerity, affection, and discretion, in your old friend ; never change these staple commodities for the comparative gew-gaws of insinuating address, easy manners, nor even for an enlarged capacity of serving or pleasing you. Above all, beware of sacrificing truth to the courtliness of a sycophant, or the subservience of a parasite. A woman of the world may afford you an agreeable evening, a flatterer may send you home in good humour ; but a friend will act for you in all seasons and in all humours, and you will find her most useful in the storm of passion or the night of adversity.

I have used the word friend in the singular number ; but as I by no means subscribe to the apophthegm of Gay, " that friendship is but a name, unless stinted to one," I here acknowledge that friendship is not *monarchical* in its constitution, like love ; and therefore it has no right to be exposed to the inroads of *jealousy*, who can have no just pretence to endeavour to erect it into a despotic empire. It does not, moreover, admit of that innumerable divisibility, which modern language sanctions, by transposing the names of friends and general acquaintance. In the largest sense of the word, we may call those friends in whose welfare we feel a lively

interest, and who, we are persuaded, bear us a degree of regard which exceeds the bounds of general good will. These seem to be probationary candidates for the more circumscribed meaning of the word, or to require nothing but local circumstances to be promoted to the honours of confidence and close intimacy. A discreet woman will not admit a numerous herd into these sacred precincts, especially into those of confidence. When we reveal our secret wishes, unbosom our private affairs, or disclose our most undisguised thoughts, we put ourselves into the power of those to whom we make these discoveries. This is oftener a proof of imbecility of mind than reality of attachment, and is seldom productive of any real advantage. At least, it should be reserved as the *last* pledge which full *security* intrusts to *tried regard*; I need not add, that it should be the most sacred. Apparent amiability has no pretence to require it; for it is due to principle, and not to manners. Those who attempt to begin a connexion by what they call the unrestrained intercourse of hearts, endeavour to erect an inverted pyramid, which must therefore inevitably fall.

Every moral precept, and every rule of good manners, is applicable to friendship; except that, as it sanctions greater freedom of behaviour, it also requires greater forbearance, than is necessary in general intercourse. I was once very rich in this treasure, and I could with pleasure dilate on this theme, which is interwoven with all the *happiest* scenes of my life; but as a more copious description of the advantages that I possessed from having intelligent, zealous, and pleasant friends in early life, could neither amuse nor instruct my readers, I will tear myself from a topic which may lead to refractory regrets, repugnant to the decrees of Him "who gives and takes away." Let me rather turn my eyes on the prospects which still open on me: and your agreeable image reminds me that you have allowed me to call myself

Your truly affectionate friend.

## LETTER XII.

*On Celibacy, Love, and Marriage.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

THE extensive prospect that lately lay before us begins to contract into a narrow compass. A few relative duties and engagements are all that we have to consider before we enter upon the closing scene.

Previous to our discussing the topic of love and marriage, it may be necessary to inquire which is the most eligible for women, the single or the married state. The answer appears extremely obvious: certainly, the condition which the Almighty created us to occupy must be most conducive to our general happiness; that is to say, defining happiness as it always should be interpreted, to signify the peace of conscience which results from well doing. The corrupted inclinations and luxurious habits of mankind have, however, introduced such disorder and mutability into the universe, that we may be allowed to produce the confessedly uninspired determination of an apostle, in opposition to the general law of nature, and to acknowledge that a greater share of care, perplexity, pain, and sorrow, belongs to the matron than to the spinster: our inquiries must, therefore, be extended further, or our conclusions will be contradictory. Do the general laws of the Creator point at universal or individual happiness? Are not troubles and afflictions medicinal in this probationary state, as the purifiers of error and the nourishers of *christian* graces? Should we, therefore, estimate the blessedness of our lives by the degree of self-enjoyment that has fallen to our lot; or by our usefulness to our fellow-creatures, and preparedness for a better existence? I hear my young friends exclaim, "Who could have courage to enter into the married state with such mournful views of futurity?" Alas! we can never form a right estimate of the *present*, or act upon proper motives, without extending our researches to what is *impending* and *unseen*.

It is a false and dangerous assertion, that single women must at best pass their lives in a dull mediocrity, removed indeed from lively griefs, but unacquainted with real enjoyment. Spinsters may be daughters, sisters, aunts, and friends, though they are not wives and mothers. Every one's experience can supply instances, wherein as much warmth of attachment and solicitude of attention have accompanied the fraternal, as ever hallowed the conjugal tie. How many helpless orphans have found maternal tenderness supplied by the attachment of an aunt! How many parents have perceived the joyless portion of extreme old age turned into the downy pillow of repose, by the assiduous watchfulness of an unconnected daughter! Friendship, too, may reign in the heart of the single woman with unrivalled influence; and the absolute power that she possesses over her time and property gives an extensive range to her patriotic and charitable exertions. Ladies who are thus circumstanced are the properest patronesses of public undertakings; they are the natural *protectors* of the friendless, and the proprietors of those funds to which genius and indigence have a *right* to apply. Destitute of nearer ties, and unfettered by primary obligations, the whole world of benevolence affords a sphere for their actions, and the whole circle of science offers to adorn their minds. It seems, indeed, difficult to pourtray a more enviable being, than a single woman, possessed of affluence, who has passed through the tempest of youthful passions with untainted character, unvitiated temper, and unfettered heart. Let us allow her an active mind, sound judgment, good principles, and bodily activity; and we must rank her with those orders of superior beings who, though they "neither marry nor are given in marriage," are ever employed in executing the will and studying the works of God. But such a view of human nature is no more applicable to the *daughters* than to the *sons* of Adam. As in the latter, liberty is too often used for a cloak of licentiousness; so in the former, it is apt to be considered as a patent for folly. I do not however discover, that those votaries of Bacchus or Venus who devote their fortune to gamesters, their time to sin, their bodies to disease, and their souls to Satan, have any right to ridicule the unconnected spinster for sacrificing to the graces of Bondstreet, dividing her time between Fiddle and Cassino, or even for swallowing the nostrums of Dr. Tattle, or being duped by the hypocrisy or fanaticism of a Cantwell. Uselessness is surely better than



vice ; egotism and credulity are not so culpable, nor so destructive, as blasphemy and licentiousness.

Since I am not only the *advocate* but also the *monitor* of single ladies, it is my duty to correct the errors which at best recrimination can only extenuate : I especially wish to correct their propensity to relate their early conquests. As the poor lovers whom they killed by their cruelty at eighteen, must be long ere this “dead and rotten ;” informing us that such a one expired under a frown, and that another fell into a mortal disease on their returning him an unopened letter, is but tantamount, in the scale of interesting conversation, to the list of apoplexies and consumptions in an old bill of mortality. If these *fair murderers* are agreeable and worthy, we can readily conceive that their singleness proceeded more from choice than compulsion ; if they are destitute of these recommendations, we shall not credit the narrative of their conquests, though the sheeted ghosts of fighting swains returned from the myrtle shades, and showed us their hearts transfixed with Cupid’s arrows.

One word more of a sisterhood which I fear is not likely soon to diminish. Increased habits of luxury must lessen the chance of estimable offers ; women, therefore, ought to accustom themselves to those pursuits and occupations which will render them less dependent on the other sex, or enliven those lonely hours of retirement which frequently fall to the lot of poorly portioned celibacy. It is not only necessary that they should be economical, but that they should have a general knowledge of business and money transactions, at least sufficient to escape *imposition*. To this should be added, activity of mind, that they may avoid the ennui inseparable from idleness, and the diseases incident to a sedentary life. Improving study of all kinds is here a most valuable acquisition ; and elegant accomplishments cannot be pursued with too much avidity, provided they do not injure the health. Great care should be taken to rebut the sarcasms of witlings and coquets ; I do not say by a life of decorum, for I suppose myself addressing women of virtue, but by a style of *manners* and *dress* suitable to their years. They should scorn all ridiculous affectation of youth, all “hoisting the flag of distress,” as a witty author provokingly terms the pink ribband when it waves over the wrinkled brow of faded beauty. The observation extends to manners and amusements, as well as dress ; and they should also be solicitous to bid farewell to the allowable levities of youth, with that easy good

Humour which shows that the resignation has not been painful. Let them but endeavour to be as useful to others as their limited means allow, and pursue every source of virtuous employment which their bounded sphere permits; and I can predict, that many a wife will have reason to envy the respectability and happiness of the old maid, and to regret that the silly ridicule attached to that name precipitated her into a ruinous and miserable connexion, which strength of mind would have enabled her to reject with the becoming pride of self-dependence.

But as we unquestionably were created to be the wedded mates of man, it is only in some circumstances, and to some dispositions, that I would recommend celibacy as a state of choice; though I am persuaded that a well disposed mind may always submit to it without considering it as a misfortune. Extreme delicacy of health seems one motive for declining to enter the conjugal state; for, though passionate Love may promise that his purple torch shall *ever* burn beside the couch of the lovely sufferer, Hymen generally tells a very different story, and, carrying his flambeau to an evening party, vacates his seat in the sick lady's chamber in favour of her nurse and apothecary. It would indeed be imposing too much upon a benevolent and upright heart, to confine it by engagements where we are unable to discharge our part of the contract; for infirmity is a clog, not a helpmate. Hereditary diseases are another obstacle; and in some cases I think they ought to be an insurmountable one, comprising an extension of duty to many generations. Great susceptibility of temper is an objection less universally acknowledged, and which unfortunately predisposes the heart to enter upon a trial for which it has incapacitated it. The precept, that in the married state women should never *expect* too much, nor feel too *keenly*, can never be too deeply impressed on the ardent mind of youth; and can they conform to this conclusion who cherish sensibility as a virtue, and, instead of studying the temper of others, suffer their own to acquire fastidiousness, under the pretence of delicacy and refinement of feeling?

A disposition that can yield to the desires of others, not only without *apparent* reluctance, but without *enduring* pain; health, cheerfulness, activity, frugality, attention to family concerns, and a relish for common domestic pleasures, are the qualities which a young lady should endeavour to obtain who determines to become a wife. In a majority of instan-

ces, these will put happiness in her own power; in all, they will lighten the load of misery. What a fashionable education can do toward the attainment of these requisites, has been already considered. The generality of English girls are educated, if not for a Turkish Harem, at least for the court of imperial France. Should they not be apprised, that the utility of the objects on which they are taught to lay a primary stress, is commonly annihilated the moment their end is achieved? When the wild elephant's neck is once fast in the noose, the pursuer has no further occasion for the fascinating influence of drums and bells. But constant attention, and command of temper, will still be necessary, or he will never bend to the yoke and draw kindly.

I believe young ladies are not *now* apt to fall violently in love at first sight. Except a few tinder-hearted nymphs, who inhabit the woodland glades, our sex is become too mercenary, and too dissipated, to feel an *irresistible* penchant, till they have obtained a side glance at the swain's rent-roll. Or, should the lying gossip Fame have cheated them in this particular, their extensive acquaintance furnishes them with a number of Adonises, who can assist them to break the fictitious chain which they mistook for gold; and thus, like patterns at the dress maker's, one beautiful figure effaces the impression that another had made. I shall not, therefore, here detain you with a long admonition against young ladies' falling in love. The thing is *just* possible among a set whom nobody knows, and therefore nobody cares for their absurdities. It is, indeed, upon *record*, that formerly love made terrible work with the female heart, from fourteen to seventeen; and as it is still supposed, that during this period the soft and pliant wax might receive not only a deep but a lasting impression, fashion has copied the edifices in which it immures female adolescence, from the strong fortresses where the royal race of Abyssinia are secluded from the world. On reconsidering all the masquerade habits which the gods of old assumed in their amours, I can only think of two disguises in which Cupid could now gain admittance to a girl of fashion: he must either fold his wings into the stuffed jacket of a dancing master, and twirl his bow and quiver into a kit; or dilate his tiny form into the magnitude of a drill serjeant; as these are the only *privileged* beings who are still allowed an opportunity of whispering a tender tale into the credulous ear of youth.

Moralists are as much inclined to prescribe rules for the *choice* of a husband, as of a friend. I am afraid that the very title they prefix to their admonitions is apt to mislead a young mind, which is thus led to expect a variety of offers, and a liberty of taking what it prefers. Perhaps a great beauty, or still more probably a great fortune, may have the power of selecting the best from many *cotemporary* offers; but lovers rarely appear in groupes, very seldom amount to plurality, and generally, like the fruit of the orange tree, appear in succession, or perhaps fall off before they ripen. A man of honour, and I may add of delicacy, does not choose to enter upon a field which another has occupied, or to solicit a heart which he may suspect is preengaged. Rejection then, rather than selection, constitutes female prerogative in this important point. It seldom happens that a woman has the good fortune to attract the attentions of the man she would prefer; and often, when from a false hope of that kind she has refused an eligible offer, circumstances arise which prevail upon her to accept what presents a far less favourable prospect of happiness. "The world is not before us, where to choose;" we are not, we cannot be, the carvers of our own fortunes, any further than respects that internal disposition which teaches us to view our affairs in the best light, and, since we cannot mend our lot, to mend our minds. Regret for what is lost, or restless desire of what is unattainable, does but foster murmuring discontent.

When a young woman contracts an attachment for a deserving object, who seems not to return her preference, her situation is most dangerous and pitiable. As the perverse (perhaps, in this instance, I should rather say independent) nature of man never appears more strongly, than in his determination to fly those who follow, and to follow those who fly; every enticement that a lovelorn lass holds out to catch the heart she wishes for, generally proves a *scarecrow* that terrifies the wayward animal; and as I do not want her to have art enough to cover her advances in the *attractive* disguise of disdain, she must avoid "the god of her idolatry," as the most likely prelude to self-conquest. If circumstances will not permit her to do this without exciting suspicion that secret partiality is the motive, she must yet rouse all her mental strength, and make an heroic effort for self-conquest; which will be her only alternative with a life of despair. Nature certainly intended that man should sue, and woman *coolly* yield. Few who have volunteered their affec-

tions ever became happy wives; we must never reckon on the stability of gratitude, when we put ourselves wholly in the power of the obliged party.

I have already stated, that it is needless to address polite readers on the absolute necessity of prudential considerations in marriage. But though the worship of Plutus seems to be the established religion of the age, there are a few dissenters still remaining, who fancy that pure love will supply a good every day dinner. This rash conclusion is, however, more the effect of ignorance, than of any real dereliction of principle; and proceeds from not knowing the *value* of money, and not from a Spartan *renunciation* of the comfort that it procures. For, if we examine the habits of these tender devotees, we shall find that their wants are too numerous even for competence; and that it is not penury, but affluence, which must supply what they call mere *necessary* expenses. Suppose some lace enveloped Lydia Languish, in the height of her paroxysm for poor Ensign Beverly, were compelled to assist the family caterer in the routine of purchasing daily provisions. Let her investigate the demands of the tax gatherer and coal merchant, and even cast her eye over the items of soap, candles, and chandlery. She will discover a great many inelegant articles to which she never affixed either value or importance, that have operated as a constant drain upon the needful, and have really been so essential to her comfort that she could scarcely exist without them. If she understand the rudiments of arithmetic, let her next employment be to subtract these essentials from the ensign's pay, and then let her estimate how much will remain to be the *food* of love.

But to leave such romantic extravagants to their certain cure, experience, permit me to assure every young woman who is inclined to underrate the consideration of competence, that she is very unlikely to feel herself happy in a station of life *below* that which she filled in her single state. An income inadequate to our real (not our imaginary) wants, is a calamity of sufficient weight to overthrow the fairest fabric of happiness, and to oppress the most amiable temper. When the pruning hand of necessary retrenchment cuts off comfort after comfort, when the wants of a rising family press upon parental tenderness, most wives have more to contend with than their *own* feelings. They may divert discontent, by cheerfully engaging in the more active share of family duty which prudence has taught them to practise;

but how shall the poor gentleman (if he be also a man of leisure) pass the hours which society and amusement agreeably occupied, when poverty confines him to the domestic fire side? Men bear this species of trial infinitely worse than women; and when a young lady marries a man whose fortune will but *just* cover *unavoidable* expenses, she should consider whether her fortitude be equal to the multiplied misery that she must endure from the reverberating pressure of the wants and woes of those who are nearest to her heart, and whose privations must pain her more than her own.

What are called very splendid alliances, are as little likely to produce comfort and content, as the imprudent connexions that we have just considered. In the preceding remarks, I did not mean to interdict a connexion which admits of the brightening prospects of successful industry, but was supposing a state in which industry could not act (and many who write gentlemen are in this painful and humiliating predicament.) So with respect to disparity of fortune, I do not mean to estimate it by mere weight of metal, when other considerations are equal. The well portioned heiress *ought* to enrich the dependent younger brother; and the wealthy heir *should* select for his consort the unportioned daughter of a respectable family. It is my wish to warn young women from aiming at conquests, on the score of their personal attractions, to which neither their birth, connexions, education, nor situation entitle them to aspire. If the erratic pursuers of happiness would candidly state their discoveries, we should probably accede to the proposition, that every one is happiest in the state of life to which they have been accustomed. It is certainly sufficient to discourage this species of fair adventurers, that not one in a hundred succeeds in her efforts; but the prospect becomes still more disheartening, if we also discover that few of these fortunate candidates are *happy*. A young woman of humble connexions and inferior accomplishments, who is engrafted into an honourable stock, will experience mortifications from the family to which she is allied, that can only be parried by effrontery or stupidity. She must continually feel the restraints and the difficulties of her situation; she will sink under the fatigues of fashionable dissipation, and will find her mind fretted by fastidious refinements, of which the happy simplicity of inartificial manners can form no conception. She will also be conscious of improprieties, and omissions, which nothing but an early initiation into high life

would have taught her to avoid; and even the glittering equipage, which so forcibly struck her youthful fancy, will seem but a painful conveyance, if it *pass* by the amusement that she could have *enjoyed*, and *set* her down at what she *desists*. In fine, she will discover that merit cannot successfully combat the minute scrutiny of envy, especially when its prying glances are sharpened by unexpected prosperity; and that luxurious enjoyments can sooner pall the taste, than mortifications can render the heart callous. I have not taken into this view, the more than probable accumulation of uneasiness which may wring the heart, at that period when the fond romantic lover changes into the cool reflecting husband. Richardson's Pamela is as absurd in its colourings of high life, as in its portrait of the reformation of a libertine.

Let not a young woman, then, seek for conjugal happiness in a station of life that is very dissimilar to her own; or in her own rank, without a competent provision to maintain those decencies of appearance which are its *proper* appendages. If she possess delicacy of character (I should here use stronger terms,) if she value her own temporal or eternal interests, or that of the unborn, by the sacred names of mother and christian let me conjure her to *shrink* from the advances of a *known* libertine; or, if she cannot avoid, let her steadily refuse his offers; they comprise such an accumulation of misery, as no pecuniary advantages can counterbalance. Let not youthful innocence sell itself to disease, impurity, and remorse; nor pledge her hand where, though she must obey, she can neither love nor honour. All gross moral errors are in the same strong sense *insuperable* objections; and surely women never would knowingly venture on such partners, but from an expectation of their being able to *reclaim* them. Alas! how much does youthful vanity here overrate female power! The stubborn clay of man is never pliant but in early life; the storms of contention, and the pressure of business, give it an impenetrability which, however suited to the rude buffets that it is designed to endure, prevent its being made malleable by the soft strokes of feminine influence. Whatever itself "wills to do, seems," in its own estimation, "wisest, virtuouslest, discreetest, best." If we attempt to remodel the lords of the creation, we must begin before they have discarded that *emblem* of subjection, a petticoat.

Infidelity is frequently coupled with licentious conduct; but sometimes it doffs its gross associates, and affects the dignity of moral virtue. The women who regards her eternal interests, and those of her future offspring, will tremble at submitting to the superintendance of a man whose dark and cheerless mind is unilluminated by visions of a better world. Even if she had *good* grounds to rely on the virtue, tenderness, and generosity of such a partner (which I greatly doubt;) even if she be previously assured that he will never seek to unsettle her faith, to restrain her devout exercises, or to interfere with the religious education of his children; even if she know that he always will pay an *outward* respect to faith and piety, and ostensibly comply with its forms; though assured that no word will ever escape him, which shall betray his secret contempt and incredulity (what impossibilities am I now admitting!) if her fears are lulled, can her affection sleep? can she be happy, while she views in her kind and faithful partner, her bosom friend, the father of her children, the source of all her earthly happiness, a *rebel* to his God, the *self-devoted* son of perdition, from whom, after death, she must hope to be eternally disjoined, and to whom she must wish annihilation as a blessing? The text, that “the believing wife sanctifies the unbelieving husband,” has no reference to the case that we are considering, but to the early situation of Christian converts, when baptism did not dissolve the bonds either of marriage or servitude, but the new members of the Christian church continued to discharge the obligations which they had contracted in their Gentile state, and this with additional earnestness, as a proof of their obedience to their heavenly Master. When we thus pervert scripture, to strengthen the temptations of avarice, ambition, sensual attachment, or from any other sinister motive, we imitate the conduct of the Prince of Darkness, who is never so dangerous to our souls as when he wields “the sword of the spirit, even the word of God.” Surely it is far better that “the rose should wither on the virgin thorn,” than that its tender leaves should be defiled, and excoriated, by being bound up with the filthy briars of vice or infidelity.

Next to these dreadful associates, let the candidate for the wreath of connubial happiness steadily reject the offerings of *insuperable* folly. There is a strangely erroneous jumble of ideas respecting a supposed combination of docility, good nature, and weakness of intellect, in the minds of some people, who are deplorably ignorant of life and manners. Folly is



always selfish and obstinate; and I take these to be the standard compositions of *ill nature*, not of *amiability*. Can narrowness of intellect be capable of those enlarged and disinterested views which produce good will to all mankind, which refine the tender attentions of love, and invigorate the indelible impressions of friendship? Can the fool forget his own dear self so far as to be truly benevolent; can he learn self-denial; can he be convinced of his own infirmities, and set about reforming them? If you answer in the affirmative, you prove him not to be a fool.

I would advise a young woman never to select a man whom she discovers to be very deficient in the article of judgment; not even if she have reason to form a high opinion of her own, and to believe that her future husband will always regard it with lover like preference; a contingency which is extremely *improbable*. The original design of marriage (mutual help and assistance) is defeated; and an inversion in the relative situation of the sexes is always attended by a degree of ridicule and absurdity, which an ingenuous and delicate mind must strongly feel. Women, in this instance, seem a little treacherous to their own cause. I will not pretend to state how it happens to be so; much less will I justify the proceeding; but most unquestionably that very respectable (though, I fear, not numerous) body of men, the Jerrys, lead a life something like that of a flying fish, who when they are hunted out of their own natural element are pecked at by every petty wren that skims the air. We certainly ought to take these martyrs to our renown under our *protection*, and, by bringing them forward on all occasions as the only *true heroes*, show the refractory monsters who rebel against us what they *ought* to be. Suppose I were to attempt their eulogium: the theme is certainly *new*, and capable of considerable ornament. History whispers that it might be embellished with a few great names; and private anecdotes would furnish me with some eminent *living* ornaments of the society. I may reserve this for one of my future labours, in which I shall endeavour to appreciate merit by the most rigid rule of right; and as the more perfect the slavery, the more heroic the captive must be deemed, I shall ascribe the first station to those *worthies* who, rejecting the filken chains of Hymen, contentedly endure the iron shackles of illicit love. But having just caught myself in the act of laughing at the idea of a laurelled son of Mars or Themis crouching at the painted shrine of a varnished Venus, who has just put on

her wig and rouge to twirl the lash of discipline over the uxorious fool who feeds her avarice with *unacknowledged* favours, I am too conscientious an advocate to undertake a cause which I find I should betray. Men of this cast are generally the prey of artful women, who, whether as wives or mistresses, contrive to manage the imbecility that they despise. Some men, indeed, are classed by their friends in this order, though they really belong to a much superior rank; I mean men of real worth, and sound minds, who endure female caprice from conscientious motives, and bear the cross rather than expose their families to the miseries of contention. I think our feelings cannot be more painfully roused, than when we see a man of merit thus circumstanced. A wife unjustly degraded below her proper station does not excite a tenth part of such strong sympathy and indignant interference. Is not this an argument in favour of the original institution of Providence, respecting the subservience of our sex? Though I stoutly deny that this injunction originated in our natural inferiority, I believe it to be so expedient to the welfare and happiness of both parties, that I never would advise you, my dear Miss M——, to marry a man with a *promising* degree of obsequiousness in his aspect, unless you perceive that he has good sense enough to cover the gossamer manacles which you may entwine around him with such an impervious coat of seeming *pertinacity*, that no one but yourself can tell that he actually wears them.

But since a young woman may have some objections to absolute slavery, even after she has lowered her mind to the just standard of wife like obedience, it may not be unuseful to repeat a hint which a favourite author (perhaps incautiously) gave the ladies in his "Triumphs of Temper;" I allude to the domestic *teryism* of that staunch *whig* Sir Gilbert. History and experience bear equal testimony to the just colouring of that character; for, from the antient Spartan, to that great volcano of patriotism Jack Wilkes, the greatest sticklers for public freedom have been the veriest domestic bashaws. I do not mean to create an alarm which must condemn the Whig Club to celibacy; I only remind those female archers who take aim at such "bold sons of air and fire," that in their precincts *freedom* is always considered to be of the masculine gender; and for my thus endeavouring to secure these gentlemen from all possibility of being brought under petticoat government (an event which is to them as horrible as the revival of the doctrine of passive obe-

dience,) I expect to be toasted at their next meeting, under the title of the "liberal minded opponent of domestic emancipation."

Women are generally accused of being partial to exterior advantages, especially to wit, pleasantry, and what is called *airiness* of conversation. In this case, we certainly hazard our respectability and our happiness. If a man of plain sense rarely attends to the advantages of address, and seldom takes the lead in conversation; neither does he, on the other hand, attach value to general admiration. With a husband of this description, we may not excite the envy of our unmarried friends; the fluency of our partner's conversation, the vivacity and brilliancy of his remarks, or the elegance of his deportment, may pass unnoticed; but our *fire sides* have a chance of being *comfortable*, because it is most likely he will *there* condescend, or even wish, to be entertained by *us*. And as the consciousness of being less formed to shine in society, is sure to create domestic habits; so those who are not spoiled by an excess of praise are always grateful to those who regard them with preference. The blandishments of the gay and graceful lover are still more evanescent than the beauty of his mistress; and not even the renovating cauldron of Medea could renew their pristine vigour. The more precious they were to our hearts, the more shall we feel the vacuum which their absence makes. Conjugal felicity cannot live upon public admiration; it is too meagre food. Male coquets are most frequently married men, who are never out of humour, (or, as they often call it, *nervous*;) but in that circumscribed circle from which they *cannot* be banished for being disagreeable. On such men, the charms of wit, information, and sprightliness in a wife, are lost, or perhaps they may induce him to hate her as a rival. His idea of a good companion implies a being who will admire his talents, and laugh at his bons mots, or one who will be the patient butt of his raillery, or a prowling jackall to collect him new anecdotes. The wife of a coxcomb (and surely the man who piques himself upon ostensible holiday agreeableness is a coxcomb) must content herself with being an *echo* to a Narcissus.

I shall say little to that portion of my sex with whom a handsome person, a well made coat, or any other eye trap which whim or fashion has fashioned, constitutes a dear adorable, preferable to every solid advantage and every in-

ternal excellence which papa and mamma may have discovered in some good quiz, who dances ill and employs a bad tailor. Such enchanted lasses are out of the precincts of reason; and I neither expect my pen to be possessed of the powers of a talisman, nor my voice to have the potency of the lyre of Orpheus. I must, therefore, leave them in the magical regions to which they have wandered.

I enter my solemn caveat against every thing that can be construed into an involuntary sacrifice; and if I will not allow rank, wit, or beauty, to lead their besotted captive to the altar, I positively prohibit wealth from binding its dejected victim in an indissoluble bond. When a young woman consents to sell herself to a rich Camacho,\* from whom (instead of a decided preference) she revolts with disgust, she certainly becomes a legal prostitute. This title is not, however, due to all who, in their matrimonial sketches, place love *semel* in the back ground. If esteem constitute the principal figure, and if no disguised predilection for another *lark* in the corner, I can conceive not only a good but a happy wife, in the shape of one who at first listened to a proposal of marriage through a hope of escaping from poverty and dependance, through the desire of raising a distressed family, or even through a wish of escaping from the inconveniences attached to a limited fortune. But a young woman who connects herself with a man much her senior, or one who labours under some remarkable personal disadvantages, should possess a superior share of discretion and gratitude, and should previously determine to be the *partner* of his calamities, not the *spender* of his fortune. The habits of the present age so much diminish the chance of finding, among the many girls who would sell themselves to riches, one who would faithfully discharge the duties of the nurse, the friend, and the companion of infirmity, that it darkens the prospects of all uxorious old bachelors, whose passion for a young wife has not vanquished their dislike of having their morning slumbers disturbed by the clamour of their own footmen returning with their lady from a fashionable party, or being crammed into some obscure corner, with other obsolete lumber, whenever their lovely bride chooses to be "at home to every body but themselves." As times now go, the dotard of threescore must think himself happy to be converted into *nobody*; a more marked distinction is so probable, that it seems

\* See Don Quixote.

to be his wisest way to betake himself to the quietus of his *arm chair* and flannel gown, instead of crowning his brow with Hymen's thorny roses.

Long deferred attachments, even when they are at last crowned with fruition, often produce little more than a happy honey moon. The reason is, that romantic ideas take strong possession of the mind, while hope and fear alternately act upon so susceptible a passion as love. It is most certain, that difficulties and impediments rarely fail to *deepen* the impression which they are expected to eradicate; and when we feel dissatisfied with our present lot, we always dress up the unseen future in most false and flattering colours. A young woman firmly attached to a man, to whom she sees little chance of being united, instead of investigating those defects which might reconcile her to the probable separation, generally adorns her idol in the robe of perfection. His steady fidelity to her covers every other fault; his fond solicitations, or high wrought pictures of the felicity they are prevented from enjoying, increases her enthusiasm; and she either believes that the sun would ever shine upon them could their vows be once plighted, or that they should then live in a world of their own, insensible to the intervention of *external* miseries.

“ Scarce one reflects that to the torch of love  
 “ Perhaps succeeds pale discord's sullen fire;  
 “ Few image woes which parents only prove,  
 “ When daughters sicken, or when sons expire.”

To the sure consequences of this extravagant expectation, let us add the effect which long deferred hope must have on the spirits and temper. Sometimes the prospect will be brightened with the view of a speedy conclusion; this will again disappear, and a final separation will seem inevitable. Jealousy will perhaps intervene; but whatever form the tormenting desire wears, disgust and indifference of the present will increase. No one more keenly feels the force of the scriptural aphorism, “that hope deferred maketh the heart sick,” than she who surrenders her own to the heavy profusion of protracted love:

“ Thus on her present hour rude passion preys,  
 “ Thus bright the prospect of her future days.”

Can we picture worse bride maids than broken spirits, irritable feelings, and sanguine expectations? or can we, viewing human nature as it really is, suppose it probable, that all external circumstances conjoining with the superlative excellence of the bridegroom, can prevent those wayward ladies from hurrying the bride into some extravagance, before "those shoes grow old" which carried her to the altar? Among many other reasons which render novels dangerous to young women, is this; that they always make a long attachment which is not dissolved by death terminate in a happy marriage, whose felicity is *proportionable* to the previous embarrassments. I suppose their authors consider, that as our most agreeable feelings result from contrast, the same must be true in great events, as in matters of taste or in indifferent occurrences. I would advise these writers to look into life, and see if years of misery increase or diminish our relish of sublunary happiness; if the human fabric is undermined or improved by such a sickness as excluded hope; whether a quick succession of every agonizing sensation corrodes or corrects the temper; whether melancholy is a good preparation for the active duties of social life; whether the jealous, capricious, eccentric, or dissipated lover *always* produces the candid, affectionate, steady, and regular husband; in fine, whether marriage really is that scene of repose and full felicity which romantic love supposes; or whether its cares, its difficulties, and its trials, are not at least equal to what the tender passion can excite in the virgin bosom.

Let us ask, Does the security of our tenure prevent us from discovering the inconveniences and blemishes that are attached to the habitation which we hold on a lease for life? Will not the frown of a husband affect the sensibility which was rent into *shivers* by the negligence of a lover; or will his humours seem more tolerable when we are compelled to *study* and yield to them, instead of making them subservient to our own? Or, to avoid sketching a portrait which you single ladies will call the caricature of disappointed imprudence; will the dear good man never be ill, never be absent, or never be unhappy? Will his path of life be constantly smooth; will there be no obstacles to impede his course, no rivals to obstruct him, no misfortunes to depress him? Are children always healthy, amiable, and prosperous? If this be a just epitome of life, then may the lovelorn maid, when married to the idol of her fond heart, say in the language of scripture, "Soul, take thy ease; thou hast much goods

laid up in store for many years." If it be not, then let all who approach the nuptial altar resolve never to withdraw the hand which they there lay upon the plough. Let them remember, that they *then* enter upon a state of enlarged duty and extended trial; and that they ought to rise superior to the petty occupations, and trivial cares, which might more pardonably engross their early years. Perhaps, this stern decision may cause a great falling off among my fair disciples, who think more of their bridal paraphernalia than of the contract which it is intended to honour. I will endeavour to propitiate them by observing, that fastidiousness and susceptibility are greater enemies to conjugal happiness than vanity, and are harder to be eradicated.

Is it possible to love twice? is a common question. Certainly not, with all that enthusiasm of preference which attends a first attachment. But enthusiasm appears to be so doubtful a foundation whereon to raise the massy pile of lasting esteem, that I incline to think a second choice is more likely to be the result of judgment, and regulated by those just views which disappointment and experience mutually supply. Love, indeed, is painted *blind*, and so he generally is; but Hymen might be as properly exhibited looking through a microscope. A woman increases her chance of happiness by prevailing on these deities to change their appendages thus: applying the microscope to the lover's character, and binding the bandage as close as possible over the faults of her husband. If after investigating the merits and defects of the man who addresses her, as narrowly as her situation will admit, she feels convinced that the latter will not diminish her decided preference for the former, I give her leave to accompany what I call the bequest of her heart with her hand. You see I have permitted Love to creep in at last; but with his wings so *pruned*, and his costume so deranged, that I question if any, excepting yourself, will feel much respect for a Cupid who is permitted to *loiter* about him, and forbidden to *fly* into the regions of Utopia.

But let our sex be as circumspect as possible, man, while he acts the part of a lover, wears a mask which we cannot wholly penetrate. Perhaps it is uncandid to call this insincerity. When we wish to please, we almost unconsciously assume an agreeable aspect; nor do we at that moment resolve to indemnify ourselves, by future indulgence, for the restraints that we are then putting upon our bad propensities; perhaps we are hardly conscious that we are acting a

part foreign to our natural character. How then is a young woman to discover the feigning, which is so justly copied from nature as probably to deceive the actor? I would not advise her *needlessly* to try the temper of a favoured lover; the power of recrimination is so great in the other sex, that to do so, equals the folly of irritating a lion whose den we are going to enter. Let no unpleasant recollections of female tyranny interrupt the complacency of the bridegroom on attaining the object of his wishes. But I am again reverting to past manners. The new code of gallantry has deprived woman of the short empire which she once possessed, and compelled her to accommodate herself to the *humours* of him who pursues her with the provoking indifference of *assured* victory.

The nuptial band being knit (we will hope with happy auspices,) let us consider what will be the first solicitude of a wife; and unquestionably this must be, to discover her husband's real disposition. But her research must not be conducted with inquisitive penetration, nor with that strict scrutiny which may develop what might otherwise have been for ever unknown. It is too late to find out moral depravity; the attention of herself and her friends *ought* to have been directed to that important point before she had formed the indissoluble tie. It is to the certainly inferior requisites of taste and temper that a prudent wife should limit her inquiries; for to temper she must conform; and it is possible for her to acquire a taste somewhat similar to her partner's. As her duty and her interest alike require her to make home agreeable, she must, if she be not by nature the companion that he prefers, endeavour to make herself so: I do not say by *art*, for I detest the word, but by *imitation*. I do not here recommend a close conformity to all the habits and pursuits of our partners, much less a servile adoption of all their sentiments and opinions: the latter would destroy one of the chief ends of marriage, mutual improvement; and the former would be more apt to excite rivalry than unity; men being extremely jealous of preeminence in every study to which they bend their attention. I suppose this duty to consist in cheerfully acquiescing with those customs and employments which seem habitual or necessary; never opposing his wishes in things that are really immaterial; avoiding whatever is known to be disagreeable, either in our dress, our conversation, or our conduct; and above all, carefully attending to those oblique hints by which a



delicate mind chooses rather to explain its wishes, than to appeal to authority by an express injunction; always remembering that the indulgence of our own humour affords but a momentary gratification; but that to oblige another produces a lasting delight; and if such observance be shown to a generous person it will be sure to be rewarded.

I mention it rather as an admonitory warning, than as a directing precept to my sex, that men are ever most easily vanquished by the *meanest* antagonists. An artful woman is a despicable creature, who departs from the ingenuous simplicity which, next to modesty, is the ornament of her sex. Yet I scarcely ever knew a proficient in deception who did not govern all her male connexions, and moreover persuade them that she was a most amiable creature. Man is so enamoured of unresisting meekness, as to become the easy dupe of that *studied manner* which bespeaks its counterfeit. Give the lords of the creation but the appearance of supremacy, and they are contented to obey. Suffer them to run their own wild career unrestrained, and they will gratify your vanity, humour your caprices, and readily make you, as far as relates to your own actions, sovereign queen. Hence come the splendid establishments of many pretty triflers; hence the subservience of uxorious keepers, and the influence of courtizans. A conscientious wife ever wishes to restrain her husband from doing what would prove *injurious* to his health, fortune, or reputation, which are too valuable in her eyes to be bartered for any personal indulgence to herself. An artful woman places her own individual advantage in the first point of view; and her chief objection to a riotous debauch is, that its attendant fever may hurry the good man out of the world before he has time to appoint her residuary legatee. The pecuniary embarrassments of the family are of little consequence, provided her pin money and settlement are secured by a responsible trust. Her caro sposo's reputation may be irreparably injured; no matter, her own stands firm; she has never interfered in his affairs, and no one can charge her with having suffered her sense of his ill conduct to spoil her temper. Every body is right to take care of themselves; and what could a prudent woman who had a refractory husband do, but lay the reins upon his neck, and leave him to play his wild gambols? She mean while, like the *provident* steward, has been making friends of "the mammon of unrighteousness." She has never failed in the offices of civility and attention to her acquaintance; she has accommodat-

ed every creature that she knew, to the utmost of her power ; and they all can witness that she never suffered the pleasantry of her parties to be interrupted, though the gay votary of Bacchus, in the shape of her disregarded husband, reeled in at an unexpected hour. Nor did her placid features suffer any discomposure, if in her way to the opera she encountered the chariot of his paramour. What an amiable creature ! how often will she be preferred to her unhappy neighbour, who, shrinking under the pressure of a husband's shame, *immures* herself from the world, and weeps for the ills which she cannot cure ! Yet surely, as far as relates to intrinsic worth, even the virago is a more respectable character than the cold hearted dissembler, who makes carelessness and selfishness pass for self-command, and engrafts the insensible rapacity and negligence of a courtesan, on a character which demands the lively interest and active participation of generous friendship.

But do not, from my having incidentally named the blunt Xantippe with *comparative* honour, suppose I mean to insinuate, that a wayward husband may be *scolded* into propriety ; or think that melancholy and complaint will recommend home to a refractory debauchee, and detach him from scenes of riotous festivity or criminal enjoyment, because I condemn that heedless apathy which many mistake for good humour. Home must, if possible, be always rendered pleasant to its master ; and a wife must ever strive to be amiable in the eyes of her husband. The means of doing this must depend upon circumstances, and her knowledge of his particular humour. The widow Bellmour, in "The Way to Keep Him," offers lessons to her sex which young wives might study with advantage ; I mean in her first scenes with Mrs. Lovemore ; they must, however, be adopted with *discreet* selection ; for the variety of manner which she recommends seems more to resemble the flippant coquet panting for admiration, than that amiable desire of pleasing which actuates an affectionate wife, while striving to reclaim the heart of her husband. Women cannot be too strongly urged to renounce every species of artifice. Instead, therefore, of saying a bad temper must be *concealed*, let us endeavour to *subdue* it. The effort is nearly the same in either case ; it is only changing the pernicious principle of expediency, which teaches occasional restrictions, for that nobler motive of conscious rectitude which insures a perpetual victory.

But to return to the play we have just mentioned : I am not pleased with the eclaircissement ; I mean, as a moral lesson ; for we are not now examining its theatrical effect. Every prudent wife will, as she values her future peace, endeavour to save her faithless husband from the shame of *public* detection. The lordly nature of man so strongly revolts from the suspicion of inferiority, that a susceptible husband can never feel easy in the society of his wife, when he *knows* that she is acquainted with his vices, though he is well assured that her prudence, generosity, and affection, will prevent her from being a severe accuser. Mrs. Bellmour, therefore, in recommending that Lovemore should be probed to the quick before a large circle of witnesses, does not display that knowledge of mankind to which she pretends ; and, notwithstanding the author wishes to convince us to the contrary, we can scarcely avoid suspecting that she is a false friend to his wife. The simple recipe, of making home agreeable, is better calculated to reclaim the libertine, than the artifices which Mrs. Lovemore adopts ; and no woman of delicacy (I will add, of principle) will have recourse to the dangerous expedient of exciting jealousy in her husband : it may rouse him from the torpor of indifference, but it is at the expense of his confidence in her *virtue*. Even if her motive were merely to show him how nobly she can resist temptation, may she not fear he will remind her that *indiscretion* must have led her into danger ? Chastity (like its male concomitant, courage,) courts no unnecessary trial. A truly virtuous *wife* has little reason to fear the solicitations of illicit love. Some error must be seen in her manner, relaxed principles must peep through some disregarded loop-hole in her conduct, before the intentional seducer dares drop the mask of respectful friendship. Never, therefore, let an unhappy neglected wife try to reclaim her truant spouse, by showing him that the charms which he despises can make *other* conquests.

I have already deplored, that the manners of the age are unfavourable to conjugal fidelity ; not only on account of the comparatively slight reproach attached to what are too generally called the errors of the heart, but also to those habits of society which separate the wife and the husband, and those false rules of gallantry which direct him to bestow his attention on other ladies, and her to accept the assiduities of other gentlemen ; for, though these customs are not

in themselves positively criminal, they not only open a door to adultery, but also afford the security and concealment which it desires. It seems but a step from the preferred cicisbeo to the favourite lover; a male confidant and a gallant are almost synonymous. Slander too, by its premature degradation, sometimes *accelerates* the disgrace it feeds on. When an agreeable man becomes an intimate in a family, the mistress of which is young and beautiful, and the husband either engrossed by other pursuits, or negligent from indifference, every gossip in the neighbourhood snuffs the approaching crim. con.; and most unquestionably, the *reputation* of an intrigue has often produced one. Many a woman has intended nothing more than to spend the hours of solitude agreeably, or to dissipate vexatious thoughts while she chatted or danced with the captain in public, or admitted his private visits, though her invidious acquaintance have put the *oddest* constructions on such harmless liberties. But the captain is most probably less platonic than herself, and will soon convince her that she may as well *deserve* reproach as *endure* it.

Let us, therefore, obey the divine admonition, and “abstain even from the appearance of evil.” If we have drawn a blank in the lottery of life, let us remember that we must not again try our fortunes. Yet though we cannot be *happy*, or even *contented*, we may be *resigned*. Faith and patience may obtain a serene triumph, though joy and gratitude do not swell a pæan of rapture. This is “not our abiding city:” pass but a few years, and all the pains and regrets that we now feel will appear but like a dream: we have it indeed in our power to make them not only durable but eternal: only add guilt to disappointment, and the load becomes intolerable.

I acknowledge that a young and susceptible wife, who feels her confidence betrayed, her love rejected, and her anguish disregarded, by her sworn partner and dearest choice, is exposed to a most severe trial; especially if the cold, the capricious, the dissolute, or the tyrannical husband, be contrasted by the attentive, obsequious, and specious friend. The best heart may so far wander, as to wish that it had attached itself to this amiable being, who seems so fully sensible of her injured desert. Would to heaven that the much endangered fair one had, at this minute, the power to look into the bosom which she supposes to be the seat of every virtue! She would then discover that “all was false and

hollow." He is only acting a part which perhaps her recreant spouse may be playing in some other family; and as to marrying, if he had indeed met her before she had "been fast link'd and wedlock bound," and a friend had questioned him upon the subject, he would have confessed that matrimony was a trade he never intended to deal in, except in the way of partnership.

But may not the friendship of a man for a married woman be disinterested, and free from all base intentions? *Perhaps* it may; but if the parties are young, amiable, and in habits of peculiar intimacy, there is much cause to fear that such sinister views may intrude into original purity of purpose. If the friend be particularly solicitous to please, if he ever attempt to place the husband in an inferior point of view, either by discovering his foibles or showing his own superiority; let the lady fly from the voice of the charmer, as she would from a lurking adder. But if the gentleman's conduct admit of no suspicious constructions, let her doubt *herself*. If she perceive that this agreeable and disinterested companion has made a deep impression upon (I will not say her heart, but) her imagination; if she find that he possesses a great share of her thoughts; if his unexpected absence make her uneasy, or if she be piqued by his attentions to other women; let her be assured that this friendship is of too susceptible a nature to be cherished with safety, and that she owes the renunciation of it, if not to her *virtue*, at least to her peace of mind.

The general adoption of continental manners having driven our sex from the strong holds of decorum, no wonder that we have voluntarily abandoned the hillfort of jealousy. It was indeed an ill chosen and untenable post, serving rather to exhaust ourselves, than to subdue the enemy. No woman, who now pretends to the name of fashionable, could forbear smiling at my supposing that her feelings could be irritated by a discovery of her husband's infidelities: but though such nonchalance is thought to have a very genteel air, to me it appears more like want of principle, than superabundance of equanimity and prudence. Surely there is nothing absurd in a lady's being distressed at the certainty that her husband lives in the practice of one of those sins which will exclude him from the kingdom of God; and if his *overruling* will compel her to stand gossip to his spurious issue, is it not better to perform that office with intercessive tears, than smiles of amiability? The rage of jealousy is,

however, ill suited to a woman. We cannot cast off our offending partner "a prey to fortune;" and for our children's sake, if not for our own, we should prefer the *nominal* protection of our husband to positive alienation. It is most advisable, therefore, to restrain our curiosity, when we suspect that the gratification of it will produce distress. If the decencies of public manner are preserved, let us resolve never to attempt to discover what our husband carefully conceals; and let us spare him the disgrace of detection, which oftener conquers shame than sin. By studying to please him, and by conscientiously endeavouring to perform our own duty, we shall have daily opportunities of contrasting the loveliness of virtue with the deformity of vice; and unless he is indeed reprobate, and lost to grace, this opposition must make his evil courses uneasy to him. If we are compelled to see his misdeeds, let us notice them more as sincere christians, than as revengeful women; and show the sinner, that while we weep and pray for his crime, we can practise the law that we acknowledge, and *forgive* the injury.

In some cases, indeed, passive submission is impossible; I mean where the libertine glories in his iniquities, and boasts of what is his disgrace. Former ages would have supposed it was impossible that a man should expect his wife to visit or countenance his mistress; but the annals of the great world tell more than one example of such abominable depravity. Let the young lady who shudders at the possibility of such a proposal consider, that as it can only come from a hardened profligate, steeped to "the very lips in vice," the way to avoid it is, to resolve never to venture on the more than Herculean labour of reforming a rake; lest, after having given him such a proof of her want of true delicacy, he should think himself justified, at some future period, in requesting her to set him down at the door of a brothel.

Suspicion is often a *spontaneous* production in the minds of women who have more affection than judgment; and surely, if love ever designed to commit suicide, no baleful drug could be better adapted to his purpose. The sufferings of these self-tormentors, who are ever bewildering themselves in a maze of doubts, constructions, and discoveries, open an ample *field* for the comic muse; but I cannot think that Colman has done it justice in his character of Mrs. Oakley, in the "Jealous Wife." He seems to have designed to make her fond of her husband, and a gentlewoman; but in

the warm colouring that he bestows on her suspicions, he loses sight of his original sketch, and the *vixen* predominates to such a degree that we turn from her in disgust; and the denouement, though designed to be happy, proves mortifying.

We will now direct our attention to those trivial disputes, arising from petty causes, which frequently interrupt, and often destroy, conjugal comfort. As, in the case of our husband's gross faults, we must beware of permitting our *male* acquaintance to engross too much of our attention; so, in his lesser peccadillos, let us refrain from opening our hearts to a *female* confidant. Married unhappiness, from whatever cause it springs, should never be suffered to meet the eye of others; nor must we, for the sake of covering ourselves with the glory of patient suffering, expose our wedded partners to reproach; which the world will be good natured enough to remember, when we have entirely forgotten that it was founded on our own testimony. A zealous but indiscreet friend has often ruined the peace of a young couple, who had no other fault than lively passions, and would have gone on with quarrels and reconciliations for their whole lives, alternately supremely happy and intensely miserable, had not some worthy confidant convinced the lady that she *deserved* a far better fate.

Here let me earnestly entreat the young wife not only to confine her sorrows to her own bosom, or to intrust them to some very *dispassionate* and *wise* counsellor, but also to refrain from swelling mole-hills into mountains. Let not her regret at perceiving some human imperfections in the master of her heart sink so deep into her fancy as to convert a fallible man into a hardened reprobate. If the error be venial, let her pass it in silence; at least till she shall have sufficiently ascertained the ground on which she stands, to enter with safety on the difficult task of monitor. In all petty disputes, let her avoid the least shadow of exultation when she gains the victory: nor must she often expect concessions; which, when made, she should endeavour to soften, and receive them rather as a favour than a right. Recrimination must ever be avoided, and all references to former faults. The offences of another are no justification of our own; and what has been passed over and forgiven, must not be brought forward on a fresh provocation.

The best way of avoiding domestic contest is, for both parties to resolve never to attach importance to trifles: but

this would be requiring too much from our fallible nature ; the nerves of feeling are alike tremulous at the touch of pain and pleasure ; and as trifles are the source of most of our joys, they must also produce the majority of our sorrows. We will then advise (and the counsel is not only archiepiscopal, but proceeds from one of the first of British worthies,)\* that the gentleman and lady should never wear the fool's cap at the same moment. A philosopher might suppose that this precept is not impracticable ; for it seems possible, that of two human beings *one* may be in possession of *common sense* ; and yet whoever knows the world must confess, that only a very sanguine expectation can look for uniform compliance with this rule ; for, however galling the cap of folly evidently seems to the person who first puts it on, the affectionate partner cannot keep from *tugging at* it till he has stretched it wide enough to admit his own *noddle* also. Perhaps, therefore, matrimonial jars, like storms and tempests in the natural world, may be morally necessary, to prevent that absolute stagnation in the connubial atmosphere, which generates indifference, the apoplexy of love.

We must, therefore, (except among those very high bred people who can *sting* each other with smiling suavity and graceful politeness,) allow a little *wholesome* contention. We will now suppose the combat over ; the gentleman fullenly stalking along the library, and the lady in tears in her closet. It will now be acknowledged that both have time to reflect ; and I sincerely hope that their thoughts will not be so far engrossed by the cruel usage they have both endured, as not to recollect that a fool's cap is very uneasy wearing. Whoever makes the first effort to throw it off recovers the title to superior wisdom. Conciliatory measures are first expected from our sex ; and I pique myself upon this tacit acknowledgment of what I have always pleaded for, the intrinsic, though not ostentible, superiority of women. In some of the uneasy moments which precede the removal of the above named incumbrance (which is apt to stick as close as the tunic of Nessus,) the indignant lady may perhaps compare her situation with that of some other happy wife, and her *tyrant* with some attentive *indulgent* husband. If she herself be a woman of prudence, it may happen that one of her own acquaintance, immersed in similar dolours, may at this moment be drawing the same conclusions on her apparent fe-

\* Archbishop Cranmer.



licity. The proverb says, "There is an anatomy in every closet, and they are the wisest people who keep the door locked;" and, let us ask ourselves, when we are admitted to such an intimacy in a family as to peep through the key-hole, have we ever failed to *discover* this mournful vestige of frail humanity?

In respect to the attentions which a wife ought to show her husband, these should rather be guided by his humour than her own. While some men consider constant sollicitude as the proof of love, others are disgusted by what they call "fuss and faddle." Men of strong sense and stern tempers are generally averse to whatever wears the shape of importunate care; and their estimation of their wives rises in proportion to the strength of mind and self-command which they possess. A woman should be particularly cautious of giving such a husband reason to *despise* her; they are apt to under-rate our sex, and impressions are generally deep as well as lasting on such minds. Whoever, therefore, is bound to a mate of this description should always aim at the possession of his esteem; and if she gain this point, I would request her to conquer the natural susceptibility of her sex so far as not to be pained at the omission of those attentions on his part, which, though mostly considered as proofs of affection, are overlooked or disclaimed by people of this stamp, not through ill nature, but from a turn of mind that will not allow them to ascribe importance to trifles. Such men are most capable of *steady* uniform affection; and, if their general conduct give proof of this, a wife is not delicate, but fretful, who torments herself and her good man because he has not learned to lisp in the language of adulation, nor to move in the prescribed form of heedful tendernefs.

If in these circumstances it becomes our duty to bind the iron mail of fortitude on our bosom; so, in the case of our being wedded to a man of quick sensibility, refined imagination, or placid temper, it is equally incumbent on us not to wound his feelings by our levity, carelessness, or indifference; for in this light we must consider any habits which *endanger* his repose. A mind that is formed in this mould is not unapt to mistake fastidiousness for feeling, and only to suppose itself very delicate when it is provokingly capricious. I will however acknowledge, that this is not genuine but pseudo-sensibility. It is by this affected acuteness of perception, this nicety of distinction, that the domestic tyrant often excuses his extravagancies; that is to say, he makes all

around him miserable, because too many adjuncts enter into his idea of happiness. He cannot, like true sensibility, enjoy it in the rebound; nor, like benevolence, produce and cherish it in his own tranquil bosom. Heaven and earth must combine their influence to procure and rear the frail exotic; and when at last its flowers expand, and hope seems to touch the point of fruition, "a cursed east wind," or "an infernal shower," scatters its glowing petals, or wets its fragrant dust. Every one knows that a gentleman of *exquisite sensibility* cannot be comfortable in an east wind, or a wet day; and in such excruciating, though not uncommon circumstances, a poor wife is but in the situation of a Lapland witch, who is constantly anathematized by her customers whenever the weather proves unfavourable.

As submission and observance do but confirm the malady of these gentlemen, which, whatever mental or physical form it may affect, I take to be the right fore disease of self-sufficiency and self-love; I sincerely wish the small remainder of the ancient breed of "bonny Catherines," that *can still be found*, might be so disposed of, as to give them the opportunity of exerting their animating energies in the cure of these wayward Petruchios. The horrors of hypochondriacal conceit, fretful irritability, or moody melancholy, might be dissipated by the *necessity* of silencing a well played sonorous female alarm. For, as these *sufferers* are apt to forget that there are any other people in the world except themselves, or rather to suppose that the things they see moving around them, though apparently men and women, are really only blocks, automatons, and dumb waiters, such a peal as would *pierce* all but "the dull cold ear of death" may rouse them to recollect their social duties, and consequently make them *happy*. Observe, in this case, I tolerate scolding, not because (as some witlings maliciously assert) it is salubrious to the health of the lady, (for I am convinced it must always be inimical to the tender feelings and nice susceptibility of woman,) but as the only means of restoring the gentleman to convalescence; and a good wife, like our pious Eleanor, must not refuse to draw the poison from her husband's wounds, though the operation be both distasteful and dangerous.

If a woman be blessed with a consort whose true and noble tenderness is free from this vile adulteration of selfishness, let her show her value of her fair heritage by gratitude and content. Never let her impose upon real sensibility,

nor pain indubitable affection, by *capricious* trials. Does her husband anxiously endeavour to promote her happiness, surely it must be her chief delight to show him that she is happy. Is he kindly alarmed at her indispositions, and agonized by her distress; she will never, for the sake of gratifying her vanity by a useless display of her power, affect the languor of disease, or the mournful aspect of grief. In proportion as she perceives his apprehensions for her to be *tremulously* alive, she will endeavour to acquire that patient fortitude and strength of mind which is not masculine, but angelical. It is to be lamented, that these Phœnixes of husbands often fall into the hands of artful women, who estimate their worth, not according to its intrinsic value, but as it is a marketable commodity; and transform what was intended to present the liveliest portrait of human felicity, into the perverted homage which gentleness offers to caprice. Such ill sorted pairs make one listen to Dr. Watt's conjectures respecting the disastrous dispersion of souls, which happened as the appointed partners took their flight to these lower regions.

I will mention but one other peculiarity of temper, and that is the choleric, which, unless it be indulged to a very wild extreme, is supposed to be most easily managed. It is, unquestionably, infinitely preferable to quiet moodiness or melancholy peevishness. We can stoop to let the rushing whirlwind pass by us, knowing that it will soon spend itself, and that peace and sunshine will succeed this apparent dissolution of the elements; but who can stand the continual bitings "of Zembla's frost," or the enervating moisture of Darien's putrid swamps, without material injury? No one betrays his sex's high prerogative so much as the passionate man; even in his very storm he merely scatters the seed of rebellion; and his infant girl calculates what play things papa will give her to make it up with her when he becomes *good again*. Power cannot be secured by the discovery of an assailable point. If the bridle be held with a steady hand, obedience is uniform; but, as depression constantly succeeds over exertion, he who alternately curbs high, and rides with a loose rein, can never pretend to the praise of good horsemanship. Few men are in a greater state of subjection, not merely to their wives, but also to their *domestics*, than they who frequently break out into *extravagant* acts of phrensy.

After having reprobated with so much severity those fashionable habits which lead to conjugal infidelity, you will wonder to hear *me* say any thing against the opposite error, of too close domestication; but extremes are always reprehensible. Very few admonitions on this head will suffice; for what the Romans supposed of patricide is here realized; the fault is so rare, that prohibitions seem superfluous.

Every objection to individual seclusion from the world, as that it is likely to form the unsocial temper of misanthropy, and to introduce unpleasant habits and contracted notions, may be urged against an idea which sometimes adheres to a very affectionate couple beyond the honeymoon; namely, that each being to the other a world, the rest of their species are to them nonentities. A very well told tale, called "Variety," was published about thirty years ago on this subject. I forget its author, and know not whether it was much read; but the moral was worth regarding. A young, amiable, and much attached pair set out with the idea that they could not have too much of each other's society. In process of time, however, this exquisite feast of the flow of soul, being confined to only *two standing* dishes, loses its relish; and, after a yawning evening, the husband informs his wife that he suspects "*they live too much together.*" A cousin Jenny is now introduced, who enlivens them with London anecdotes; and the tender pair resolve, for a time, to quit the retirement which they have so passionately preferred, and esteemed the bower of bliss, and try if the great world will not make them a *little* happier. The journey is described in natural and humorous colours; they plunge not in vice, but in dissipation; they meet but rarely, and then with indifference. Mutually alarmed at this change (for their hearts are not vitiated,) they determine to keep one evening disengaged to examine the cause; and, after a little investigation, the husband decides that "*they live too much asunder.*"

The application is anticipated. Occasional intervals are necessary to make even pleasure please. A man should come to his own fire side as a weary bird does to his nest, not as the captive to his prison. The breaks into the domestic party must be regulated by external circumstances as well as by internal taste. If they are too frequent, simple delights and family duties will lose their attractions and their influence. If they are too rare, satiety will deprive us of our relish for what we should enjoy to the last moment of our

lives, and our notions will be as contracted as the circle in which we move.

The duty of a wife, as the regulator of domestic expence, has been anticipated by some former observations.\* I have nothing more to say on this head, than to prescribe peculiar caution in the article of personal expenditure. Great expence in dress can never be justified in a matron, unless she, by that, complies with the *wish* of her husband, or with the *particular* claims of his situation, rank, or fortune. It is the undoubted duty of every woman to pay especial attention to the station that her husband holds in life. No error is more frequent among vulgar women, than to appear ashamed of the employment from which they derive their opulence. Every attempt to deck it out in false importance, or to disguise its real nature, is an indication of a little mind, equally weak and unprincipled; for surely we are unjust to others when we force ourselves into a rank to which we have no proper pretensions. No employment can be discreditable which is pursued with honesty and industry; the shame attaches not to the *station*, but to the *individual*, who, by his attempts to escape from what he is, betrays a secret consciousness which degrades himself more than the pride of his superiors. The ingenious mechanic is as respectable in his own rank as the statesman or gentleman in theirs. But I am wandering to another subject. I will now confine myself to advising women to scorn all false pretences, and never to hope that high lived company will afford either advantage or pleasure to her, whose ticket of admission depends upon the assumption of borrowed honours. Should any personal or local advantages procure her such distinction, let her not tarnish it by sophisticating the amiable simplicity of nature. The stolen plume of an esquire will not shade vulgarity; and the petty dealer and chapman will betray his littleness, though buttoned up in the respectable garb of a merchant. In every rank of life, *propriety* of conduct, and *suitability* of manners, command, and also inspire, *respect*. The humour of the times makes these reflections peculiarly necessary to female vanity, which, with the folly to which vanity is ever subject, relinquishes real for artificial distinctions.

Beside the duties that we personally owe to a husband, there are often some mediate obligations which arise from marriage. If his parents survive, they extend to us the

\* See Letter 2d.

claim of paternity, and we owe them the same expressions of respect and habits of observance as to our own immediate progenitors. The office of a stepmother is proverbially odious; and our observations on life favour the opinion, either that it is too great a trial for virtue, or that it is a situation in which merit cannot meet with due returns. There are, however, a few happy exceptions to this melancholy conclusion; and we may, on the whole, hope that a sincere disposition to act rightly, guided by a sound judgment, will in this, as in *all other* situations of life, enable us to acquit ourselves of this delicate task with conscientious impartiality. We may observe, that the charge is *voluntarily* undertaken; and they whose duty it is to perform it must remember, that after it is accepted they are no longer free to choose. The relative ties appendant to wifehood are as indissoluble as the connexion on which they depend; and if difficulty, inconvenience, or dislike, were admitted as reasons for our neglecting our positive duty, *every* obligation might easily be evaded. Did stepdames and their adopted charge mutually consider themselves as insuperably bound to each other, disagreement would be prevented from ripening into disgust, by the powerful restraint of self-interest. Married people seldom *hate* each other, till they have ruminated on the feasibility of *separation*.

Beside these very close connexions to which marriage frequently binds us, it generally introduces us to others that are more remote. Considering what human nature is, we should not sanguinely expect friends and admirers in the relations of our husband. If this happen to be the case, we should bless our good fortune; but it is too rare to justify complaint when we do not possess the good opinion of our new kindred. If they are not our enemies, we must be contented; and they seldom become so but through our own fault. The suggestions I have already given respecting the preservation of family politeness and good breeding, are still more indispensably requisite in these adopted ties; for here habit will not restore the affection which has been interrupted by a sudden quarrel; it will be lucky if natural forbearance ever permit the unnecessary wound to be skinned over by cool civility. If conjugal affection prompt the husband to forget the claims of blood, a conscientious wife must feel great self-reproach; but, if he espouse the cause of kindred, she is then indeed a wretch. As a preservative from these evils, let her guard against being too *early* or too *intimately*

familiar; a fault into which our sex is too apt to fall. I do not mean that we should keep at a distance from our husband's family; but that our intercourse with them should be regulated by a *strict* attention to those rules of good breeding and caution which we observe to strangers. The rule is reciprocal, and should be observed by both parties.

We have now reviewed the conjugal state, and will sum up the requisites for happiness. We will suppose a pair united by preference, blessed with easy fortunes and enlightened minds, free from the cravings of immoderate appetite, and uncouraged by the remembrance of past misdeeds; we must also add, endued not only with moral but with christian principles, which are the only sure foundation of rectitude of conduct and peace of mind. We will not require that nice accordance of temper, or of taste, which would form tallies, not companions; we will limit our requisites to general suitability and mutual forbearance. Expense shall be regulated rather by the moderate desires of temperance and sober propriety, than by the alternate reaction of *parade* and *necessity*. We will admit variety and festivity into the circle, as occasional guests; but we must insist, that cheerfulness and good humour shall be *constantly* present; at least, if we allow them to be occasionally indisposed, we must always have them *within call*. Let health join the party; at least, let not hopeless sickness or extreme agony intrude; and you have all the enjoyments that this world affords. Poetry has painted the charming portrait, and, I trust many hearts can testify, without exaggerated colouring: I allude to the well known lines of the bard of nature and moral purity, "But happy these, the happiest of their kind," &c.

And next to these, happy is she who can reconcile her mind to a less enviable lot, by remembering that we all enjoy infinitely more blessings than we deserve; and that afflictions are the merciful chastisements of the Almighty, to lead us to a region of ineffable happiness, of which the *fairest* human copy can be but a dark imperfect outline. Every wish respecting this world should be limited by a reference to, and acquiescence in, the will of Him who knows what is best for us; but, in the world which is to come, our desires may *largely* expatiate. Whatever your temporal lot may be, may it serve to conduct you to the native regions of harmony and love!

Prays your affectionate friend.

## LETTER XIII.

*On the Duty of Mothers.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

THE maternal character generally follows the conjugal; the subject of this letter, therefore, is predetermined. You will here, as in my former epistles, be more disposed to expect moral and practical than scientific and speculative observations. I am too conscious of the limited sphere to which my remarks are bounded, to presume that I shall be able to present you with a well digested system on education and family management. Indeed, systems on this subject are so apt to mislead, that my first advice to a sensible young woman would be, to disregard them, and to trust to no other rule than her affectionate tenderness, restrained and stimulated by religious principle.

Education is become a most fashionable study, and has attracted the attention of many voluminous writers. The dangers to which we are now exposed are, that we shall grow too theoretical; that we shall attribute too much to *education*, and too little to *grace*; that by incessant discipline we shall fashion automaton instead of characters; or that excessive care will defeat its object. When we see with what avidity mothers devour every hint on the subject of juvenile instruction, we seem required to felicitate the age on its moral improvement; for, unquestionably, I need not preface the desultory remarks contained in this letter by stimulating the maternal reader to fulfil this duty to her rising offspring. And yet, if we consider the turn that education has taken, we may find cause for alarm at this universal rage for disciplining the youthful hope of Britain. Surely it is better to let a garden run wild than to plant it with hemlock and nightshade; in the former instance, it will produce useful weeds, in the latter noxious poisons. I have formerly shown\* that infidelity and immorality have not been unsuc-

\* See Letters 5th and 10th.



cessful in their efforts to introduce their destructive tenets, under the specious pretext of improving the human race.

The greatest error that we can commit in education is, to limit its views to this world; and this must be the effect of every plan which discards the basis of our holy religion. No matter whether by a strict adherence to rule and system, and by diversified and well digested studies, you form an intelligent philosopher, a polished philanthropist, or a lovely attractive creature; the first business of every mother is to rear "a child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Deistical morals never can accelerate this end, and morals from which christianity is systematically excluded *must be deistical*. This extraordinary, this avowed and radical defect in "practical education," may perhaps proceed from the author's confounding christian *sects* with christianity itself; and as they meant not to recommend any particular religious society, to the preference of their readers, they deemed it advisable to withhold from their theory the only invincible barrier to vice, and excitement to virtue. Nay, so delicate were they on this head, that even the obligations which may be derived from *natural* religion are not alluded to, as one poor hope of an hereafter afforded, to teach the reader that he is less mortal than his fellow-worm. This mistake (if it really be a mistake to call all religious persuasions by a name denoting unnecessary division) may teach us the extreme danger of that well founding liberality which recommends indifference to particular forms; since it seems probable that we shall soon lose all regard for the *substance* of religion by pretending to keep ourselves *independent* of all parties.

The next error in education seems to be, the pains that are taken to make instruction wear such an agreeable habit, that children may be cheated or played into learning, rather than obliged to apply to it as a labour and a *duty*, as was formerly the custom. This method may form many intelligent infants, and some conversible men and women; it is to be doubted whether it ever will make a sound scholar; and we have seen it produce pert babies and coxcomical adults. But the greatest danger arises from the moral injury which the character may receive, by being thus early habituated to do only such things as are *perfectly* agreeable.

Combined with this error, are the objects to which this premature infusion of science is directed. We aim at first opening the understanding; surely our chief attention should

be paid to the temper and the heart. Of all infantine graces, affectionate simplicity and ingenuous playfulness are the most attractive; it is to be feared, that a very early course of philosophical experiment, and scientific scrutiny, must impress this pliant mass of docile imitation with a very different cast of character. However we may be amused with what is called a well cultivated child, if it has lost the diffidence and credulity (shall I not say the *endearing* folly?) of its age, we rather consider it with wonder than delight. The fruits of autumn cannot properly mingle with the snowdrops and violets of early spring; the painter who should combine them would become unnatural; time and place are what constitute beauty and agreeableness.

But if we only regret a want of diffidence in what is called a well educated child, or young person, we must have seen very little, or observed less. Diffidence has almost universally exchanged places with confidence. Unhappily, parents give too much proof that it is vanity, rather than affection, which induces them to bestow so much *culture* on their offspring; for they rarely rest satisfied with their attainments, unless they are shown and admired. Thus, a child who excels in any particular species of knowledge lives in a constant state of acquisition and exhibition, and treasures in its plastic memory the easily comprehended language of praise. Address always implies perfect self-possession, and at the mature periods of life the want of it is a manifest disadvantage. But a child should be considered as a feeble being, who runs to your bosom to be cherished; not as an accomplished gallant, who challenges your understanding by a display of his finished graces. The blush of simplicity and surprise, the naïveté of ignorance, even the tear of terror, or the struggle of occasional waywardness, impress the affections more forcibly, than the cold propriety of an artificial puppet, moved by the wires of discipline under the inspection of vanity.

In addressing my own sex, I must particularly attend to its errors. *Excessive* affection is one of the most common faults of mothers, and is generally apt to predominate among those amiable women who employ themselves wholly in their domestic duties. A confined sphere of observation naturally makes them believe, that the "dear little creatures" to whom they cheerfully devote their lives are as interesting to every body else. Now, as this species of idols, in populous countries, are even more numerous than the gods of the

heathens, it may be supposed that our friends have all got their hearths *preoccupied* by domestic Lares, whom our "dear little creatures" cannot dispossess. Whenever, therefore, we introduce our darlings into company, we should previously teach them their inferiority. We should assure them, that it is a condescension in their elders to notice them, and that it is rude (or, with your leave, I will use the old word naughty) either to interrupt conversation, or to *intrude* upon any who are so kind as to commend or amuse them, longer than they are desired so to do. The pleasure of a social party must be entirely spoiled if these rules are not adhered to; but a more important consideration arises from the effect which a contrary practice has upon the temper and disposition of the child. You lay the foundation of that overbearing character, which is no less opposite to female gentleness, than to manly greatness of soul; you introduce the germ of coxcomical impertinence and self-conceit; above all, you create the necessity of extraneous amusement, which is in a moral sense a fault and a misfortune. A child that is not much accustomed to be talked to, or played with, soon finds out a method of making itself happy. It is amazing, in an age which professes to pay so much attention to all kinds of early culture, that we should neglect the simple rule of suffering want to sharpen invention. This was the foundation of Rousseau's system, but he pushed it to excess. I quote an authority which is very dear to me, when I say that "more children are spoiled by *over* attention than by any other method." Many men express an apprehension of marrying an only daughter; being persuaded that the temper must be hurt, and the character rendered fantastical, by having been the sole object of paternal solicitude, which in this case often becomes idolatry. Children, whether many or few, who have been accustomed to be watched over with this species of anticipating, preventing, ever wakeful care, only spend their early days in acquiring expectations, which will unfit them for the part they have to act in their remaining years. Extreme caution respecting health, though deserving of censure, is far less injurious than that solicitude which *enervates* the mind. The tender mother who sends "her velvet capp'd, fur envelop'd" boy from the warm nursery, to encounter the cuffs and rebuffs, the heats and colds, of a great school, has but exposed him to the danger of a hectic or a broken bone, the usual consequences of early fra-

gility and inactivity ; from which robustness and alacrity are the only preservatives. But if his mind be also enfeebled by the *observance*, if not the *indulgence*, of his perverse wayward humours ; if importance be attached to all his motions ; if provident affection anticipate all his wants, and all his words and actions seem worthy of admiration and record ; how will this ill fated child, when arrived at maturity, feel himself in a world where every one is either self-engrossed or his competitor ? The victim of irritable sensibility, whom I described in my last letter, is generally thus formed by maternal supererogation to torment his future wife, and to create misery, needless contradiction, and slavish subservience for the unborn.

But wholly confining children to their nurseries is no cure for self-importance, because in that domain they generally reign sovereigns ; and from knowing that they occupy the attention, and command the services, of all around them, that *egotism* is fostered which it is most desirable to *subdue*. We shall learn how to act by our children, from attending to the purposes to which education should be applied. Its first aim is to make us good christians, its second to prepare us for performing our social duties. Let us then, as soon as possible, introduce those habits which are most useful, and those sentiments which are most just. Let every child be instructed in the full meaning of that popular hymn of Dr. Watts's, which begins with this admirable reflection :

Whene'er I take my walks abroad,  
How many poor I see !  
What shall I render to my God  
For all his gifts to me ?  
Not more than others I deserve,  
Yet God has given me more, &c.

I do not mean merely with respect to devotional or charitable impressions, but also to its own trivial consequence in the scale of animated nature. No idea is more fatal to the future improvement and happiness of a child, than undue self-consideration. Whoever has a strong propensity to this error in infancy, will require more management than any other disposition, because a mother must not only correct him but herself ; for she must carefully *hide* from him her own affection, and endeavour to watch over his safety, and improve his good qualities, with the unseen ministrations of a guardian angel. As extraordinary acuteness often accom-

panies this high sense of desert, it will be in vain to seek to subdue it by telling him that he is a little weak, helpless, unworthy object, and that it is the benevolence of his attendants and friends which induces them to relieve his wants: the urchin will soon discover that mamma *idolizes* him, that her eye follows all his actions with silent applause, that she devotes herself and sacrifices her comforts to his convenience, and that the imperative manner for which she chides him is *afterwards* spoken of as a token of the dawning of a distinguished character. School is the most effectual cure for this malady in boys; and though much has been said to recommend domestic education for men, it still seems doubtful whether its moral advantages are sufficiently evident to counterbalance its unavoidable defects, which arise from the want of the competition and collision that produces fortitude, enterprise, decision, and energy, and (to speak coarsely but strongly) *jostles* every person into his *proper* place. Children (if untainted by vice) are the best correctors of each others' faults; and we rarely see those who have been much secluded from play fellows, and brought up with their seniors, who do not contract (beside great self-opinionatedness) a quaintness of expression, and an *artificial* manner, which, after the period when every sort of prattle is pleasing, becomes disgusting, and impedes their progress in the world.

If a mother would endeavour to command her own feelings and to practise a sort of concealed attention to her young charge, her watchfulness will answer the most beneficial purposes. Her children may sport around her, while to them she seems engrossed by a friend, by her work, or her amusements; from which she appears only casually to withdraw her attention, to correct a fault, or adjust a difference. Such interference will eradicate their natural errors, without introducing artificial ones. If she can conduct them to the age of adolescence with healthy bodies, docile tempers, just notions, benevolent hearts, and firm minds, she has performed the essential parts of her duty. Whatever instructions may be superadded will then stand on a sure foundation. If she be judicious, she will not aim at reducing their characters to one *prescribed* standard; she will suffer nature to send forth its vigorous shoots, and will only aim at pruning its excessive redundance, cutting off its oblique branches, or eradicating its disease: in other words, principles should be introduced, and habits formed; but the original bent of character (if not vicious) should be suffered

to remain. Indeed, nature generally imprints it with too powerful a hand, for education to efface the impression ; and where we have so much to do which promises success, and requires diligence, we should avoid embarking in useless labours. Let her not be too anxious to form an infant Crichton ; she will act more wisely in proportioning the *stream* of information to the capacity of the *recipient*, than by drowning the judgment through the floodgates of memory. If she appeal to experience and general opinion, she will find that they do not report favourably of the permanent produce of premature blossoms. It is extremely difficult to gratify exalted expectation ; and nature seldom evinces her full powers, but when she has been permitted to let the sun of manhood, or even the rough winds of autumnal life, “ ripen the noble growth of thought.” I fear these observations will be unpopular, especially at this period, when fantastic taste, in its search for novelty, demands an *impossible combination* of contrary qualities ; and, by preferring what is wonderful to what is exhilarating, hurries genius into absurdity.

The female heart is apt to pant for distinction ; and we must not wonder that this passion acts with full force in a near connexion, which being removed one degree from ourselves diminishes the apprehension of error, and relieves us from the reproach of selfishness and vanity, even while we indulge *those* suggestions. Most mothers wish that their sons may possess talent, and their daughters beauty. Johnson has exposed this “ vanity of human wishes” in a most impressive manner, by describing the misery incident to their attainment. But how rarely is the desire *granted* ! how few of the human race are distinguished for mental or personal excellence ! Common characters form the mass of society. Tell me, Is the admired science of education, which mothers study with such avidity, calculated to correct the faults and improve the virtues of these ordinary, but useful, nay important beings ? Mocking birds are numerous in the forests of America ; and parrots and cockatoos almost nuisances in the West India islands ; but even poetical imagination speaks of the phoenix as “ one sole bird.” And thus it happens in the human species, genius is seldom seen, but coxcombs are a numerous race. The model of the Medicean Venus is rarely equalled by living symmetry ; but we meet many nymphs, whose looks tell us that they are self-appointed rivals of the Cyprian Queen. If to the probability of disappointment we add the severe discipline to which genius and

elégance must submit, ere they can hope to reach that standard of perfection which confers celebrity, and consider how often fear will deject hope, and defeat compel the disastrous competitor to retread the painful steps of instruction; surely mothers would act most wisely, by limiting their wishes to a sound mind seated in a sound body.

But among the misfortunes of juvenile life, that of being the beauty or the wit of our own family seems most lamentable, because it is least apprehended. Yet surely, to be the object of *partial* affection, and *secret* envy, is sufficient to rouse the apprehension of a susceptible mind; especially when we consider, that this evil assaults us at a time when our judgments afford us but little ballast, to keep us steady in this wild whirl of contrary passions. A great deal of natural good sense and agreeableness of person has thus been early perverted by vanity and affectation, and rendered odious. Let a mother endeavour to teach all her children, that the plain path of life is not only the most safe and easy, but also the most respectable. She need not fear that her admonitions will prevent real genius from exploring an untried road, through whose oblique paths it may be safely guided by its own unextinguishable lamp. A mind that feels its own powers cannot be restrained from its pursuits merely by being told that there is a difficulty in accomplishing them; but she may hinder folly from setting out under the guidance of that will-o'-the-wisp conceit, and thus preserve it from being immerged in the quagmire of ridicule. Some tempers want encouragement; but to the majority of the human race in civilized states, the curb is more necessary than the spur. This is right, and most unquestionably all the purposes of Providence are right and wise. General indolence would be more fatal than general enterprise. A country may revive after a storm; but inaction is political annihilation. The miseries of savages proceed from that *indolence* which keeps them *savage*. But I am wandering from my subject. In this busy age, busy either in procuring the means or indulging in the act of self-enjoyment, we are not often called upon to stimulate the rising generation by teaching them to set a high value on their own endowments.

Those theories of education must be fundamentally wrong, which flatter the foibles that parental vanity is too apt to foster. Our children (I speak of them as washed in the laver of regeneration) are "inheritors of the kingdom of heaven;" but *supremacy*, or even *superiority*, in this world can be

the lot of but few. Instead, therefore, of labouring after early intelligence, let us build every improvement on the sure foundation of humility of mind. Extensive knowledge has never stood firm when placed on any other superstructure. Instead of forcing that literary taste which cannot possess any real discrimination, let us eradicate that fastidiousness which conceals a reluctance to be pleased, under the air of extraordinary delicacy. It is delightful, to see a child enter with all its soul into simple and natural amusements congenial to its age. We may hope that an energetic and independent mind will remain, when time has corrected its early errors: to pursue its sports, therefore, with an avidity bordering upon extravagance, is pardonable. But find me a child who is soon weary of what it longed for, who dislikes rather than disputes with its companions, who wants you to contrive its pleasures, who sickens with ideal disgusts, and finds a thousand circumstances necessary before it relishes amusements, and I shall foresee in that child the capricious husband, the fretful wife, or the useless hypochondriac; though, perhaps, the partial parents solace themselves with air built calculations on the future products of its imagination, science, and refined taste.

Many systems of education are so impracticable, that it seems absurd to attack a fabric which its very plan proclaims can *never* be erected. This impossibility does not, however, at first strike the speculator who attempts to realise the plausible vision; and it is not till after much useless expense of time and labour, that the mother discovers that an adherence to the prescribed rules will deprive her of all society, and indeed preclude her from discharging any duties, but those of teaching and watching her little ones. We must observe, that the conjugal and social character is most intimately blended with the maternal, to which the filial and fraternal are also frequently added. The theoretical instructor, who requires a mother to be the *constant* companion of her children, will render her such a wife as will drive most husbands from their own fire sides, such a mistress as will suffer her household to run into disorder, and such a neighbour as every one will avoid. Beside, it generally happens, that a family, if at all numerous, requires different exertions of maternal care, corresponding to diversity of age, dissimilarity of pursuits and occupations, a more infirm state of health, or some peculiarity in their future destination. In this case, what is to be done, but to *sacrifice* what is least to



what is most important, to attend to the general outline rather than the particular filling up, and, after having regulated the heart and the temper, or, in better words, having sown the seeds of grace, to commend the event to God by humble prayer? A steady course of regular sober guidance has this advantage over elaborate tuition, that the mother who adheres to it is less apt to be disgusted by extreme exertion, and consequently has not that temptation to *abandon* her design; and if she aims at but little, perseverance will produce an ampler harvest than can result from the capricious labours of overstrained but unequal exertion.

A writer on the subject of education, who is deeply impressed with the depravity of the lower orders, recommends it as expedient, and even supposes it feasible, that the children of a family should be preserved from all communication with servants. She does not particularize by whom the servile offices which childhood and infancy require are to be performed; and she confesses, that there must be some architectural alterations in our dwellings, before our domestics and our offspring can be so barricaded from each other, that the latter shall never catch a contaminating glance of the former. Maugre the resentment of bricklayers and carpenters, which *I* may justly apprehend, and though I *suspect* myself to be much more aristocratical than the ingenious suggester of this extraordinary precaution, I enter my strongest protest against a measure, which would only tend to increase the animosity now unhappily subsisting between masters and servants; and confirm (I speak plainly) their mutual guiltiness. A book *systematically* excluded from the elaborate treatise that I allude to, would have taught the writers that, “the rich and the poor meet together, and that the Lord is “the Maker of them all.” A wicked servant cannot corrupt a child who is *early* endued with good principles, unless parental neglect puts it into the power of the dependant. Let a mother, by good humoured not wearisome tendernefs, and inviolable fidelity, make herself the confident, and, as much as her duties will permit, the *associate* of her children, and she need not fear that their minds will be vitiated, during the *short* intervals in which she intrusts them to the care of their attendants. She will find her children rather improved than corrupted by an occasional intercourse with *orderly* domestics, provided she strictly forbid tyranny and impertinence on the one part, and flattery and improper indulgence on the other; and the best method to have this com-

mand obeyed will be, to impose no whimsical restrictions, and to eradicate the first symptoms of domineering arrogance. Our minds can never acquire that capaciousness which our future commerce in life requires, by only mixing with *one* order in society, or imbibing *one* train of ideas. The narrative of a nursery maid's early life, a description of the wants which rendered her cottage hearth dreary, of the exertions which relieved those distresses, and the simple pleasures which diversified those labours, related in the impressive language of nature, would afford an excellent lesson to a wayward girl, who is dissatisfied and petulant without even discovering the object at which her craving desires point. But I am afraid that my imagination has transported me to *past times*, in supposing a menial, in a *gentle family*, possessed of frankness and good sense enough to enter into a conversation that would be fatal to all those inherent pretensions to elegance and independence, which our well dressed handmaids universally claim. The just inference which ought to be drawn from that lamentable corruption which has perverted the originally benevolent and useful institution of servitude, into a system of espionage and chicanery, is, that *mistresses* of families should again attend to their duty *as such*, not that they should endeavour, by the adoption of fanciful schemes, whose extravagant impracticability diminishes their danger, to *sever* what God has bound *together* by the strong tie of mutual wants. For let us recollect, that wealth and poverty, weakness and strength, authority and subservience, power and dependance, are not bestowed as blessings, nor inflicted as punishments, upon the individual, nor are they confined in their operation to the immediate self. They are distributed among mankind with a view to *general* benefit. The soul of the mistress is not more *intrinsically* valuable, than that of her handmaiden, in the eyes of God; her nature is not less corrupted, nor is her ultimate destination more exalted. Each has her appointed station in the great drama of life, and each is accountable for her conduct in discharging her relative functions. Shall we really improve the human race, by impressing the stamp of pride on the flexible heart of youth? Children, unless carefully restrained, soon conceive improper notions of the inferiority of those whom they see appointed to minister to their wants: but surely no restraint, no admonition, would be sufficient to preserve the feelings of humanity in their bosoms, for a race of beings from whom they perceive themselves hedged and separated by barriers invincible even to

that strong bond of mutual necessity, which unites frail and feeble humanity in serviceable intercourse, to the interruption of which (or rather to perverted communication, arising from every rank forgetting its due situation) the alarming increase of democratical manners must be ascribed.

Suffer your children therefore, in early life, to cultivate the benevolent affections, by acts of kindness and endearing attentions to your domestics, as well as to each other; and thus early habituate them to the discharge of one branch of the extensive duties which they owe to their neighbours. This essentially differs from close intimacy, which is seldom beneficial to either party; but should you be so singularly fortunate as to possess a servant of *tried* integrity, bring up your children in the habit of considering such a one as an hereditary friend, who is entitled to the protection and good will of all the branches of the family that they have faithfully served. Such treatment would induce servants to be faithful and regular, even on self-interested motives; and certainly it is a reward to which they are justly entitled, and should be *especially* required from those to whom their services in early life were particularly devoted. In old age, in sickness, or when they labour under the pressure of calamity, our active kindness is strictly due to those who ministered to our infantine wants, or who served the necessities of our more advanced life. Beside these great calls on duty, there are a thousand little engaging offices, which children should be encouraged to perform to those who are about their persons; not from the selfish motives of procuring improper indulgence, but from disinterested good will. Servants, however, like all other inferiors, are very dangerous confidants; those who have not sufficient intelligence, or who do not thoroughly understand all the relative duties of our station (which those who move in an inferior rank of life cannot do,) are not *capable* of giving us useful counsel, nor have they firmness and independence enough to reprove us when we do wrong. They must, therefore, be at best useless depositaries of our secrets; and as it is most probable that they would confirm our vices by flattery, or enter into our views from a regard to their own private advantage, their participation or connivance in our secrets is extremely dangerous. No consideration should induce a mother to intrust her children with a servant in whom she has discovered a propensity for intrigue; their acquiring awkward habits from an un-

country rustic attendant is comparatively of little consequence; vulgarity may be unlearned; but to teach the youthful mind hypocrisy will produce incalculable mischief.

It is a common fault in the theories of education, that one prescribed rule is laid down, without attending to differences of rank, fortune, temper, and scarcely sex. Some of our sciologists have indeed ridiculed all considerations of this last distinction, and have determined, that till the age of puberty boys and girls ought to have the same mode of instruction. Till society can be persuaded to *alter* all existing institutions, so as to render the offices and duties of men and women exactly similar, it will be wise in us to adhere to the old method, which was founded on reason and revelation, and has been sanctioned by experience. It seems advisable, that mothers should early endeavour to give to each sex the proper bias; for, surely, fribbles and viragos are equally contemptible and unnatural. Let activity, energy, courage, and enterprize, particularly mark the boys. A man who is deficient in these qualities can only be a negatively good citizen, and may, indeed, be said to *encumber* rather than *strengthen* the commonwealth. If we wish our girls to be happy, we must try to make them docile, contented, prudent, and domestic. Man must range abroad and forage for his family; woman "must look well to the ways of her household," and "bring up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The passive virtues, and the christian graces, are her natural dowry; and surely a disposition which is more peculiarly calculated to bring forth the tree of life, cannot be considered as more sterile than that *firmer* soil in which the tree of knowledge is most disposed to extend its knotted fibres.

I heard an eminent divine observe, "That men are taught  
 " to be domestic tyrants in early life, by the injudicious con-  
 " duct of parents; who accustom their boys to expect such  
 " obsequiousness from their sisters, as imprints their minds  
 " with inelible opinions of the natural intrinsic superiority  
 " of man." Do not regard what the girls say to you," is the common paternal precept; "Do as your brother bids  
 " you," is as frequently the injunction of the mother. I do not wish to have every family converted into a school of gallantry and chivalrous attention to women; but surely if ever the wise climax of seniority be inverted, it should be in favour of that sex to whom the habits of polished life invariably assign precedence. But the protection and respect,

which the weaker sex was intended to derive from these punctilios of decorum, will effectually be counteracted, if contempt be made one of the domestic lessons that are daily inculcated in the family. Surely, it would improve the boisterous schoolboy, if he were convinced that his manly dignity would be more unequivocally shown by promoting the happiness of his sisters, than by burying their dolls, and putting pattens on their cats. Let him be taught (and he cannot imbibe this notion too early) that nature has designed him to be the protector and friend of women; and let every attempt to tyrannize over or insult the females of his family be *reprobated*, as a mark of mean selfish cowardice; not, as is too generally the case, *recorded* as a proof of wit, spirit, and intelligence. If mothers would but consider themselves as they really are, the guardians of the future generation of wives, the germ of domestic tyranny might be crushed in its bud.

My views of life are too limited to attach much value to my private opinions when they require the confirmation of extensive observation. I speak more from reflecting on abstract principles, and from a dislike of arguing from the abuse of any thing against its use, than from experience, when I remark, that boys are more likely to make not merely shining but valuable men, by being early thrown into active life, and accustomed to the contrariety of character and concussion of interests which are found in schools. A lad educated at home begins the world with all the disadvantages incident to a *confined* view of the region that he is about to explore; and if he has had a very tender and very assiduous mother, there will be cause to apprehend, not only that fastidiousness or self-consequence of which we have already spoken, but that the timidity or effeminacy of his manners may cast a ridicule over his moral purity; which, when he comes to venture into mixed society, he will perhaps endeavour to obviate, not by the assumption of *hardihood*, but by the *affectation*, or even the *practice* of vice. With respect to our sons, let us, then, be contented with watching their morals and correcting their tempers; their male friends, who generally fix their destination in life, will model their minds and manners by a standard which, if not directly consonant to our ideas, observation and reflection will convince us, is more consonant to the part that they will be required to act.

But though our superintendence of our sons must probably remit after they have attained the age of adolescence, our daughters will require our increasing care. To them our attentions will be highly beneficial, from their cradled infancy till we sink into our graves. If public education seem most likely to form the active being that man ought to be, domestic instruction promises to introduce those habits which will prepare a woman for the retired part that she has to perform. A girl is, unquestionably, a more tender care than a boy; every error is more glaring, and comes more feelingly to our hearts and bosoms. A false step is here irretrievable. Man can triumph not only over slander, but in some instances over shame; but if the breath of calumny blow upon the tender foliage of female fame, it is blasted *for ever*. When care becomes so important, surely those who are most interested in the welfare of the precious charge should undertake the office of superintendence. Unless a mother be really unequal to the task of educating her daughters, or so engrossed by other *unavoidable* duties that she cannot command the leisure which is requisite, a boarding school seems a less eligible situation for the early years of female life than the paternal dwelling. I do not mean to cast an invidious or a general reflection on the public instructors of our sex, nor on the morality of their seminaries; I hope the majority of governesses are conscientiously solicitous to discharge their *important* trust, and that their schools are as correct as it is possible for large associations of young people to be. The fault is in the manners of the age,\* which attach undue preeminence to exterior graces and accomplishments; and of course these must be cultivated with most assiduity; for the credit and the emolument of the mistress induce her to stimulate youthful emulation, not only to *excel*, but to *exhibit* its acquirements, and to pique itself upon its superiority. It must also be remembered, that a boarding school does not present such determinate advantages to girls, as will counterbalance this essential fault of fomenting that vanity to which they are unhappily too prone. The connexions formed by schoolgirls rarely ripen into valuable friendships; they do not reap that permanent advantage from opposition, or from observing diversity of character, which is necessary to those who must elbow their way through

\* The defects in public education, whether for boys or girls, can only be radically cured by a change of manners in *private* families.

an opposing world. All the knowledge that is requisite for our sex may be acquired from books, and from domestic observation, assisted by the judicious remarks of an intelligent mother. But, in giving this opinion, I am aware that many cases may be pleaded, where the *impossibility* of properly conducting female education at home, creates a necessity for removing daughters from the maternal eye. This frequently arises from a difficulty of acquiring a competent share of those ornamental accomplishments, which cannot at this time be wholly disregarded without incurring the *depressing feeling of inferiority*. Of two evils it is our duty to choose the least. Let the mother, who is thus circumstanced, employ the intervals of school vacation in obviating the ill effects incident to that mode of tuition. Let her repress the ebullitions of vanity, maintain the superiority of virtue over external gracefulness, and above all endeavour, by every means which her knowledge of her daughter's temper suggests, to recover that confidential intercourse, and endearing friendship, which these estrangements are apt to interrupt, and which is really the most powerful objection against sending a girl from what is the natural sphere of her duties and delights, her own family.

A consideration of the painful disappointment which plain well meaning mothers often experience, when they receive back their girls, polished into impertinence, from some vulgarly expensive school for *young ladies*, makes one earnestly wish that seminaries for the education of *young women* could be opened with any chance of success. This leads me to a subject which, though it requires the deepest consideration, is unhappily little attended to; I mean, that education should be suited to the *rank* in life, the *fortunes*, and the *connexions* of our children. To be *really* more refined than those around us is a misfortune, and a fruitful source of unhappiness to a delicate reflecting mind. A good heart and a sound judgment will, however, sweeten these bitter waters, by wisely and kindly condescending to bend to the gross capacities which it cannot illuminate. But refinement is more frequently fictitious than real; and Miss despises her mamma, not because she is more *wife*, but from her being a much *greater* fool, whose state is indeed hopeless; for ignorance, simplicity, and humility may be improved; but affectation and conceit, founded upon half information, never can.

Should we not be inclined to laugh at a mother who should bind up her child's feet and blacken her teeth, be-

cause it was *possible* she might marry a Chinese mandarin? Or what should we think of cramming a girl with milk and oatmeal till she grew to an immoderate size, because the Bedouin Arabs estimate loveliness by the ton weight, and fill their harems with female porpoises? Yet if these nymphs were to be immediately shipped off for Canton, or sent to discover the centre of Africa, we should allow that these would be prudent provisions for their establishment. Do French, drawing, dancing, music, skill in dress, and all the pretty train of little graces and diminutive airs, which are so sedulously inculcated on the daughters of inferior tradesmen, yeomen, and mechanics, *promise* to be of more real advantage to them, than if they had spent their time in learning the customs and adopting the habits of *remote* nations? It is but just possible, that they may settle in a rank so much above their own as to prevent their accomplishments from being both inconvenient and ridiculous. A good education (in this perverted sense of the word) is now too common to give *distinction* to its possessor. I see so strongly the very serious consequences of this worse than foolish, this insane predilection for acquirements and manners which give to their possessors, if in humble life, a meretricious rather than an engaging appearance, that I fear I weary you by my *frequent* reprehension of this increasing rage for imitative gentility.

There is a high and exalted destination to which every christian mother should direct her offspring to aspire. Let us all, therefore, sedulously cultivate the graces of the heart; and in so doing let us not forget, that as they are the properest foundation for agreeable manners, so piety and virtue lose much of their merit when they reject the *exterior* adornment of amiable carriage. No station of life is precluded from the attainment of this criterion of true gentility. It varies, indeed, with the circumstances of the person with whom it is connected; but whether it take the shape of refined politeness, simple elegance, respectful attention, modest civility, or blunt but friendly sincerity, it ever appears like the offspring of benevolence, and consequently is ever pleasing.

An obliging accommodating disposition, when it is not natural, may be formed by prudent attention to the manners of a person in early life. A habit of saying and doing civil things is indeed afterwards taught by our intercourse with the world; but it is not merely *external* deportment, but the



*inward* principle of urbanity, that we should seek to introduce. Fraternal love is considerably strengthened by preserving the laws of civility and decorum; and it must be a singularly amiable disposition, and uncommon natural affection, which can resist the perpetual irritation of rude and morose deportment. A harsh expression to a brother or sister should never pass unproved; a spirit of contention should be discouraged; envy and jealousy should be repressed by every method which reproof or exhortation, punishment or reward, encouragement or disgrace, can alternately supply; and, most of all, by a strict observance of impartiality in the parent: for, if we suffer ourselves to be misled in our maternal superintendence by a spirit of favouritism, we take the surest means to ruin the temper and character of all our offspring, and to render our household the reverse of what called forth the rapturous exclamation of the Psalmist, "Behold how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity!" Let it ever be remembered by those who have the charge of a family of children, that they are forming a sort of petty *commonwealth*, which ought to preserve its reciprocal connexion and fœderal union, as its surest preservative against the animosity and opposition of the contentious neighbours among whom it is seated. Trifling disputes, petty contradictory habits of incivility, harsh expressions, and uncomplying humours, create those animosities in early life which frequently lead to that most deplorable of all disagreements, family dissension. For, as kindred has power to brace the knot of friendship to *indissoluble* straitness, so it also possesses materials to kindle the never dying flame of *irreconcilable* enmity, and to render the occasional intercourse, which often *must* subsist between the different branches of a family, a soul harrowing torment to a susceptible heart, instead of a support in all its sorrows.

It is, therefore, one of the first duties of a mother to endeavour, by exciting reciprocal affection in her family, to secure them mutual friends and assistants, even to that extended period of life when, according to the course of nature, she can no longer hope to minister to their wants and sorrows. To promote this happy end, she will (as I have just observed) be extremely careful to convince them of the *equality* of her own affection to them all; dealing out her dose of kindness, not as personal beauty, lively parts, or ingenious talents shall dictate, but candidly and fairly, according to those estimable qualities of the head and the heart which,

being powerfully seconded by voluntary exertion, are therefore praise worthy. But, in exercising this duty, affection must occasionally reject the guidance of tenderness, and call in the aid of authority. We cannot wonder that the advocates of anarchy should erase filial obedience from the catalogue of virtues, and even denominate it prejudice and narrowness of soul. But this country is not yet revolutionized; paganism is not established by law; and while we continue to *call* ourselves christians, we must insist upon the indelible obligation of the fifth commandment; which, with its corresponding obligations, has united the world in the bond of social union for nearly six thousand years.\* The perverseness of our nature appears so strongly in that period of life which is least under the guidance of reason, that every attempt to educate children on the principle of insinuation, collusion, or address, must be futile, and end in total disappointment. *Authority*, however, is not *austerity*; and while I reprobate the alarming tendency to domestic insubordination which is apparent in the prevailing system of instruction, I by no means wish for the unmodified resumption of the old theory, which imposed a continual restraint upon child and parent, and chilled the exhilarating glow of mutual endearment. These extremes in management are alike fatal to that delightful interchange of sentiments and wishes which should ever take place between parents and children. If I insist least upon the mischiefs arising from over severity, it is not because I suppose them to be less fatal, but from their appearing less *imminent*: general custom leans strongly to the opposite error. It sometimes happens, however, that the father of a family, either from partiality to the old school, or from the love of indulging his own humour, stretches authority into tyranny, and requires not the obedience, but the slavish subservience, of his children. Mistaking the opposite extreme of wrong for right, the mother in this case is often so hurt by the sacrifices which *submission* is obliged to make to *caprice*, that she endeavours to repair the injury by the most endearing tenderness and unlimited indulgence. Children thus educated are mostly spoiled; they learn to hate their father and to despise their mother; for, sad to say! such is the capriciousness of human nature, that we are always inclined to undervalue the tenderness which re-

\* The fifth commandment is here spoken of as a republication of the law of nature, of which many vestiges remain in the book of Genesis.

quires no sacrifices, and to fly from the preventing kindness which courts our acceptance. If the mother thinks that the paternal rein is held with too strict a hand, let her recollect that no good can accrue from an *avowed* disagreement among those who ought to be the ruling power in a family; nor can contrariety of treatment form stability of character in those whom she wishes to improve.

A mother whose displeasure is not *feared*, is never really *loved*. She becomes a nonentity, and nothing can be so detrimental to domestic good government as maternal insignificance. It implies the extinction of that intermediate power which should always subsist between the sovereign and the subject, and which, when properly exercised, harmonizes the whole system. Though indulgence generally springs from a better disposition than harshness, its consequences are more ruinous to the objects on whom it is exercised. The petted child is always the least promising of the family.

Being a decided enemy to artifice, I cannot admit deception and contrivance to be useful allies in education. I fear little good has been done by attempting to *cheat* children into learning, and I am sure that cunning is still less proper as an agent to form their *moral* character. I would entreat mothers never to lay traps for the integrity or veracity of their children; all temptations and contrivances of this kind are not only unfair but dangerous, and really tend to form knaves or liars. It is much better to prevent offences than to punish them; and we never can correct with effect, if we know that we ourselves have spread the snare which we foresaw youthful indiscretion and presumption could hardly avoid. Let us endeavour, from the earliest dawn of reason, to give our children good principles. Let us, by discriminating degrees of rewards and punishments, teach them early to *distinguish* between childish indiscretions and vices, between talents and virtues. This will often lead us to censure what strangers admire, and to pass over what casual observers think extremely wrong; but by so doing our children will only have the faults of their age, and will make up in simplicity and ingenuousness what they want in information and polish. When we have habituated them to a right way of thinking, let us appear to confide in the principles which we have established. I say *appear to confide*; for watchfulness must intermit slowly, and not resign its charge till experience has ascertained the prevalence of the good seed that we have so

carefully sown. Unhappily, art and duplicity may have grown spontaneously in the minds of our children, though our own mode of proceeding with them has been most generous and open. Nothing should be more severely punished in a child than deceit, or an attempt to appear better than it really is. I do not, by this, mean the mere habit of excusing their faults; this is the common foible of infantine timidity, and is rather *increased* than *eradicated* by severity. I speak of the assumption of good qualities, and pretences to merit, which they do not possess. A child should never be suffered to praise itself, even when it has really done well; but some mark of approbation should always be bestowed on those who have sufficient generosity to commend another and to conceal their own defects.

It is the duty of a mother to study the characters of her children; and in this instance a sound judgment is most eminently serviceable. Let her not determine upon a child's disposition by one or two instances; character is variable, and in the early years of life it often has no fixed or determinable feature. Hence arises the advantage of judicious culture, especially with respect to temper, which is frequently what the poet calls "softened wax." Many people have been rendered *irremediably* petulant, vindictive, or suspicious, by improper management in their childhood. Teasing what is called a bad, but what perhaps only means a very susceptible temper, is the surest means to sour the disposition, and to introduce malignity and misanthropy. The remedy should here be applied to the judgment, which we should endeavour to strengthen, instead of wounding the heart. By showing a fretful child the little value of the trifles by which it is agitated, you may give it firmness; but by suffering its playmates to do what they know will vex and distress it, you confirm it in its weakness; for peevishness does not exhaust but increase its own irritability by indulging it. I am now speaking of *natural*, not *artificial* susceptibility, and am supposing that you have not cockered your child into an impossibility of self-enjoyment. When peevishness really results from depressed spirits, it is better counteracted by affection than displeasure; especially when it is entirely devoid of envy, and accompanied with a sense of demerit. Capricious parents are apt to confound obstinacy with firmness, though they differ as far as virtue and vice can do; for, as is the case in most other qualities of the human mind, pertinacity is fortitude pushed to excess. When we perceive a

spirit of resistance to our commands, let us, before we rouse to the defence of our impleaded authority, do the intractable child the justice to reconsider the grounds of his dissent, and the reasonableness and propriety of our own injunction; and if we discover the error to have been in ourselves, let us beware of committing our supremacy and his obedience in future. Non-resistance was (as I before observed) the ruling error of past times; the present, among its other improvements, teaches us that reason is the *only* foundation of all authority. Admitting the truth of this position, surely we must wait till this quality is disclosed before we can apply to its decisions. If we press the unripe grape, we shall not obtain *wine*, but *vinegar*. If we attempt to govern children by arguing them into propriety, before their judgment can tell them what propriety is, we shall make them pert, voluble, and refractory. In this system, they are never to submit but upon conviction: how very seldom will they be convinced, when their natural reluctance to yield is seconded by the interests of some powerful inclination! Whoever has witnessed the triumphs of reason over prejudice must have observed, that continued attention was necessary on one side, and great closeness of application on the other. Let us now observe how children *argue*, or rather *contend*; how opposite their questions are to the point in dispute, and how soon they lose sight of the first object and start some other wayward desire; and we must acknowledge that reason has very little chance of gaining the victory, when such disputants are created *umpires*.

We will appeal to the understanding as soon as it ripens; but this cannot be the case in early childhood; and yet childhood must not be neglected; for, if we omit early culture, vices and prejudices will overrun the untilled soil. Authority then must be the medium of instruction; the parent must have a *right* to command, and the child must feel that it is its *duty* to submit. An infant under seven years of age questioning the expediency of parental precepts, would formerly have been considered as a monster. What would our Sydneys, our Bacons, our Miltons, or even our Lockes, (for that eminent antagonist of tyranny\* was so staunch an advocate for parental supremacy, as not to allow a child to have what it craved, or so much as asked for,) have said to the plan of improving infantine intelligence, by allowing it

\* See Locke on Education, page 117.

to cavil and dispute with its parents and instructors? Would they have considered our modern prodigies as auspicious omens or fearful portents?

As reason gathers strength, children should be taught to direct it against their own foibles, not to set it up as a judge to determine between their *desires* and our *injunctions*; much less should they be allowed to convert it into a censor upon our principles and mode of government. Early prohibition and correction should teach a child *what* are errors: when reason discovers *why* they are so, she confirms the dictates of experience.

A forward child should never be suffered to obtrude upon attention. Stimulants are here destructive; they should be reserved for the diffident. Confident children so generally engage the attention of strangers, and shy ones are so constantly neglected, that it must be very difficult for a mother to prevent the faults of each from being confirmed whenever they are brought into company. She may, however, preserve her own mind from being prejudiced in favour of what rarely proves a lasting advantage; and, by pointing out instances wherein casual observers have judged wrong, she may prevent one part of her charge from being too much elated, or the other too much depressed, by the accidental commendations or neglect of visitants.

Injudicious parents take the most likely means to prevent the improvement of those children in whom they discover extraordinary marks of genius and intelligence; for, instead of considering that the ampler the field the greater cultivation it requires, they are apt to suppose that nature has done all for them, and that we have nothing to do but *admire* the produce and put in the sickle. It is by slow degrees, by painful and progressive steps, that human ingenuity ever can hope to ascend the heights of science or knowledge. No one was ever able to fly to the summit of fame self-taught and self-supported; and the Icarus who attempts it will ever share the fate and the reproach of rash pretenders. Whenever a mother *really* discovers extraordinary talent in her family, let her recollect that a diamond must be highly wrought before it will diffuse lustre. Genius is often counterbalanced by numerous disadvantages. To render it a blessing to society, or to itself, it should be united to prudence, whom it generally disclaims, and, I must add, estranged from that very exquisite sensibility from which apparently it derives its energy. It must be taught to speak

in well modulated tones, or it cannot charm a fastidious age; it must borrow the clear lamp of learning, or an enlightened nation will disregard its discoveries; it must enforce the principles of truth and goodness, or it will become a blasting meteor instead of a guiding ray. Contrarieties must be united in its composition; the love of fame must be blended with native independence of mind; ardour of pursuit with diligence in execution; imagination must mix with judgment; impetuosity with self-command. Let the mother, who *clearly* discerns indisputable proofs of mental superiority in her child, seriously consider the high responsibility which such a trust imposes on her. The fatal miscarriages of genius are generally ascribable more to the bad qualities with which it was united, than to the opposition of envy and rivalry, or even to the withering mildew of neglect.

Extravagance and carelessness are frequently concomitants of superior parts. Blinded by parental vanity, injudicious mothers seldom require any other proof of their children's talents, than that they are disposed to say and do strange things, and have a total indifference for money. This latter disposition is scarcely considered as a fault in youth; yet certainly it never can be the parent of true generosity; for it is not benevolence, to give what we have not discovered to be valuable. Whatever may be children's rank in life, or prospect of fortune, it seems advisable that they should be early initiated into pecuniary knowledge; not to make them *penurious*, but liberal, charitable, and provident, to the extent which their future expectations will justify. "Do not squander what will relieve a fellow-creature. Do not spend *all* your allowance, lest you should be forced to act meanly or uncharitably, from the incapacity of answering an unexpected demand. Calculate the expense of what you really want, and furnish the necessary sum by abstaining from capricious desires. Remember, that you will never hereafter reproach yourself for not having indulged your appetites; but that it is a *sin* to omit doing the good actions which you ought to perform." Surely, these or similar precepts may be imprinted on young minds, without any danger of inculcating the horrid and unnatural vice of early avarice. Though the proportion of a child's pocket money ought to vary with its rank and situation, the allowance should never be profuse, because an over liberal supply is more likely to corrupt its morals than to stimulate its beneficence; and though the entire sum should be submitted to

its own management, independent of superintendance or control, an intimation should be given, that this its little property really is an *accountable* talent, which cannot be wholly appropriated to the purposes of self-enjoyment without great injustice to its fellow-creatures.

Will you indulge me, in this place, with a few *critical* remarks? Benevolence is a marked feature in the fashionable system of education; and a multiplicity of books are composed, whose professed aim is to awaken in the juvenile mind a predilection for the duties of liberality. I fear they tend but little to cultivate those principles on which its real value essentially depends: I allude to tales in the manner of Marмонтel which attach romantic sentiment and pompous notoriety to actions that ought to be considered as too *ordinary* and *indispensable* to deserve *record*. Casting my eyes over a newspaper, I will extract the following anecdote by way of illustration: "The emperor Napoleon, when at Brienne, heard that an old woman still lived who inhabited a small cottage in the middle of the wood, whither he had frequently repaired, while at the military school at Brienne, to drink milk. His majesty bent his way thither, and asked the old woman if she recollected Buonaparte. On hearing his name, the poor woman fell at the emperor's feet. He raised her up, and asked her if she had nothing to offer him. Milk and eggs, answered the old woman. The emperor took two eggs, gave the old woman assurances of his favour, and left her a purse of gold."

When our Saviour enjoined us not to let our left hand know what our right hand did, he did not annex *praise* to *liberality* as its beatitude; but he commanded us to cultivate benevolence with privacy, and to expect its fruits after the visible frame of nature shall be destroyed.\* These anecdotes predispose the mind to seek after a contrarious alliance between charity and fame. A child should never be so far misled, as to suppose that it is *magnanimous* to do what it would really be *infamous* to omit. No merit should be attached to the resignation of superfluities, especially when the giver has not imbibed any provident care for the future. In many ranks of life, charity is accompanied by an act of self-denial which greatly enhances its value. The hungry school boy who divides his breakfast with a beggar, and runs away to avoid being seen by his companions, possesses the

\* Compare St. Matth. chap. vi. verse 3. and chap. xxv. verse 35, &c.



right sort of internal feeling, and only wants the christian principle to be superadded to give it stability. But if you bestow very high commendations on this action, or to his knowledge give it publicity, you corrupt the ingenuousness of his nature; and the next time he performs it, vain glory will taint the modest simplicity of his deportment. Though candour forbids us to particularize, can any one, who knows the world, avoid fearing that many of the deeds which we extol as the offspring of *charity*, are in reality those *indulgences of vanity and ostentation* for which we ought to ask pardon of God? One precept of Scripture deeply engraven on the heart does more to cultivate this heavenly disposition, than all the volumes which sentimental philanthropy ever composed.

Feeling and sentiment are indeed too loose and indeterminate in their nature, to allow us to build upon them that massy pile of acceptable good works which is to endure through all eternity. A florid description of distress, dressed up in the pomp of oratory, may accelerate the design of public contributions; but it never can form the consistent character of habitual benevolence, which bestows its alms, not to relieve itself from the painful emotions of compassion, much less to purchase a sort of decent covering for its own sins, but because it is commanded "to do good and to be ready to distribute." It neither says to the Almighty, "Why didst thou ordain calamity?" nor does it blow the Pharisaical trumpet, and call upon its neighbours to witness its distribution of alms; but it *secretly* deals out that dole to the unfortunate, which, thus bestowed, will be replaced by everlasting treasures. In these *pretty* tales, by which bounty is tricked out in adventitious amiableness, so much of gauzy refinement and sentimental interest is hung around the object in distress, that the authoritative precept of "feeding the hungry and clothing the naked," because they are the servants of Christ, is overlooked in the exquisite delight of relieving indigent beauty, or rewarding faithful love. While our children are nurtured by this ornamented charity, this unstable offspring of a vain imagination, can we wonder that the grace which holy writ commands, should be lowered into a commutation for gross offences, or that we should often hear those sins, which we are expressly told will exclude us from the kingdom of God, palliated, if not justified, because the wealthy offender is very charitable? Charity, my dear young friend, in the true sense of the word, cannot subsist in

the heart which is at enmity with God ; for charity is obedience to the commands of the Most High, and faith on his promises of remuneration.

To return to the subject of early *œconomic* habits, so much scouted, and yet so highly necessary to the generality of mankind ; few of whom are born to spend a fortune, compared with those who must improve or acquire the means of subsistence. Though I profess to abstain, in this letter, from what is called *scientific* instruction, I must recommend one branch of knowledge, on which sensible men ever set a great value in women ; I mean, that every girl ought to possess a competent knowledge of arithmetic. It is also desirable that this knowledge should be practical as well as theoretical ; that she should understand the value of commodities, be able to calculate expenses, and to tell what a specific income will afford. These are excellent preparatives for a good housewife ; yet, if to be accompanied with expertness, and practised with alacrity, the rudiments must be acquired in childhood. It may be expedient to enlarge this sort of knowledge to a general acquaintance with the earnings of different trades and occupations ; such information will not only prove an admirable assistant to domestic management, but will be an intelligent guide to benevolence. These acquisitions have a *moral* as well as a *prudential* influence upon the character, and are beneficial in every rank of life.

It is observed by the great Johnson, in a letter to one of the Miss Thrales, that “ a thousand stories which the ignorant believe, die away when the computist takes them in his gripe.” The science of numbers may therefore be resorted to, not only as a guardian for prudence, but as a preservative from credulity ; and what is of still more consequence, as a protection from the idle and vulgar habit of telling *extraordinary stories as certain facts*, by which we subject our auditors either to the rudeness of contradiction, or to the pain of disingenuousness. Society is so generally improved in point of information, that lying fabulists now want the temptation to falsehood which the credulity of past times afforded : they cannot excite even momentary astonishment.

Neatness, regularity, and attention to the order and propriety of domestic concerns, so intimately belong to the female department, that she who is deficient in these qualities is universally allowed to have relinquished all the lesser decorums of her sex, if not to give proof of such a light and

relaxed mind as makes the virtues she really possesses seem rather fortuitous than intrinsic. Most ranks in society require that *industry* should be added to this list of minor morals; a relish for occupation becomes incumbent upon us all, not merely as it respects the advantage of others, but because, unless we *delight* in being employed, we must be *unhappy*. The habits on which these valuable endowments are built must be acquired in childhood or youth. They can never be superadded in mature age, without so much force and difficulty as make the practice distasteful; not, as it ought to be, in the highest degree gratifying and exhilarating to an energetic spirit, to whom the dawdling languor of flatteringly indolence is misery. It is with regret we observe, how much the modern method of education has degenerated from the practice of our ancestors in this instance; and as a propensity to throw away time is a marked feature of this age, it becomes highly incumbent on a mother to endeavour to *revive* the old notions in this respect. Let her steadily engage her children (her daughters especially,) before stubborn will and inveterate habit are armed against authority and exhortation, in a varied series of employments, which inclination should sometimes be allowed to *select*, but duty should more frequently *prescribe*; for in future life they will probably find it necessary to conform to this allotted order of occupations. By teaching them to be self-amused and contented with cheap common enjoyments and quiet pleasures, we shall not only render our girls more eligible as wives and as friends, but shall save them from the languor of ennui, fastidiousness, and all the long list of vapourish humours and maladies that fall to the lot of those who suppose discontent and refinement to be synonymous.

Firmness and steadiness are essential requisites in the character of a mother; yet our sex is reproached with a deficiency in these respects; and if the accusation be deserved, we have another reason to acknowledge the wisdom of divine Providence, in instituting the conjugal bond as a remedy for these, as well as for our other *imperfections*. Whenever a mother perceives herself sliding into irresolution and indecision, let her not consider it as a characteristic of an amiable yielding temper, but remember that her children will discover it to be imbecility, and thus gain an advantage over her, which more severe discipline cannot for some time obviate. Let her not suffer herself to be *teased* out of her

determinations, even when she is doubtful of their propriety; the alteration in her plans must appear to proceed from her own reconsideration, and not from submitting her sense of right to their importunities. Mutability of purpose is the ruin of children, especially when it operates so far as to alter the system of education, to change the school, or to deviate from the original trade or profession to which they have been devoted. Nothing of this kind should be done, but for reasons almost amounting to *positive* necessity. When our minds are wavering in these particulars, we should consider that what is human cannot be perfect, and that objections may be made to every mode of tuition, to every instructor, and to every occupation; and therefore it is generally wiser to persevere in the course that we have engaged in, and endeavour to counteract the evils with which it is connected, than by a total dereliction of plan to unsettle the ideas of our children, and engage them and ourselves in fresh difficulties; thus running the hazard of engendering inconsistent conduct and desultory habits.

You have found me to be a determined enemy to all those innovations, falsely called improvements, which either tend to confound the orders in society, or to rob children of that submissive simplicity which is their most endearing quality. Yet being far from wishing to recall those days, when coercion and terror were the *sole* instructors of youth, when docility consisted in *silent* acquiescence, and information, like the Roman lictors, bore no insignia but the rod; I readily admit, that a child should be assisted in the acquirement of clear ideas as soon as it can entertain them; and that just views of the world it inhabits should be presented to its observation, when its powers expand beyond the narrow range of *individual* feeling. This method of exercising the capacity of children is extremely different from cherishing a disputatious sceptical humour; for this knowledge will be conveyed in the form of *preceptive* instruction, not argumentative controversy. Such real cultivation is, in fact, the only cure to the vanity, affectation, and conceit which a premature exercise of the deliberative faculties generally engenders. To know our actual situation in the world, is the best preparative for properly discharging our duties; and nothing can so effectually preserve us from the delusions of error, as a just sober way of thinking. Humble birth and lowly fortunes are no bar to this kind of improvement; for we are all rational and accountable creatures. Nor can it be ob-

jected, that these instructions will *consume* the time which should in such dependent situations be devoted to useful occupations: a mother, who has learned to think rightly herself, can communicate those ideas to her children while they are actively pursuing their ordinary callings.\* The commonest incidents of life will furnish an intelligent parent with lessons of "moral prudence," which, if related in an agreeable and impressive style, will be "with delight received." "Every walk," as has been observed by an intelligent instructor of childhood, "may be converted into an easy lecture on the works of nature;" and when (as should ever be the case) the pupil's mind is led from sensible objects, and visible events, to the unseen Author and Conductor of all things, philosophical investigation becomes what it ought to be, the handmaid of religion. Many sciences are recommended to our sex, for their utility in enabling us to form clear and precise notions; and when leisure and ability will admit, the mother is usefully employed who instructs her family in every branch of useful or ornamental knowledge. But there are some things which it is *desirable* to do, others which it is *criminal* to leave undone.

It being the first business of education to prepare the mind for that warfare with our spiritual enemies which will never finally terminate on this side the grave, and in which the christian, though sometimes overpowered, must ever rise with renewed hope to overcome; let us, above all things, endeavour to equip the destined combatants "in the whole armour of God." Let us give them not only a thorough knowledge of their duty, but carefully exercise them in the *practice* of it; teaching them to act always upon christian *principles*, and to view every event through christian *optics*. This cannot be done, unless we make them intimately conversant with the truths of revelation; and surely no language can be so proper as that which the Spirit of God employed to instruct mankind, and of which we possess a sufficiently faithful translation† in our English Scriptures. Let

\* Examples of this kind of instruction in a humble station are given in the account of Dr. Franklin's early life; where we may also meet with excellent rules to correct fastidiousness in appetite and sensual indulgence.

† On the fidelity and other excellencies of our English Bible, see the bishop of Lincoln's Elements, vol. ii. He calls it "a most wonderful and incomparable work."

me strongly urge every mother to make her children adepts in both the Old and New Testaments. Merely reading them is not sufficient; they should be taught to reflect and converse upon sacred subjects, as the only way of clearly understanding what they peruse. By the use of Bibles with marginal references, she may accustom them to illustrate precepts by facts, and to connect facts with precepts; the type and its antetype may be shown together, the prophecy and its fulfilment, the promise and its accomplishment, the threatening and the chastisement. Let her show them the vast superiority of sacred over profane history, not merely on account of its indubitable verity, or from its being the *oldest* authentic record of past ages, but because every fact that it contains is expressly said to be "written for our instruction." The method by which God saw fit to make himself known to mankind was by historical narrative; this being the least subject to imposture or misrepresentation, carrying with it the strongest evidence, and therefore being best suited to convince every understanding, and to impress its authority upon every age, from that which witnessed the event to the last records of time.\* Let not the minds of children, therefore, be suffered to rest in the mere circumstances of the narrative they are perusing, beautiful and impressive as they often are; but, as soon as their unfolding faculties will permit, open to their minds the *great designs* of God's providence, which the incidental sufferings or exaltation of good and bad men alternately furthered. It was not for his personal virtue, much less from partial affection, that Jacob was chosen to be the father of the promised seed, and Esau prohibited from receiving the blessing. Josiah was not slain in punishment for his sins, nor Jeroboam exalted over the degenerate house of David in consideration of his superior merit. In the first instance, Jacob, though exposed by his own duplicity to much temporal calamity, was foreseen to possess a more active dependance on the promises of God, of which he became the *faithful*, though for many years *afflicted*† depositary. In the second case, a righteous and pious prince was removed from witnessing the miseries which just-

\* See an ingenious essay by the Rev. S. Cobbold on this subject, which gained the Norriltan prize in 1797.

† "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," said Jacob to Pharaoh, Gen. xlvii. verse 9.

ly fell on a sinful impenitent people;\* and in the third the Almighty acted according to the usual laws of his providential government, by raising up the wicked to correct those wanderers whom he wished to regather into his fold. All these, and other instances, as the bishop of Lincoln observes, from the sad proof of human corruption, show the necessity of a Redeemer.

Nothing is so apt to embarrass young minds, and to unsettle their faith and trust in God, as the apparently unequal dispensations of Providence, in often giving success to vice, and allotting afflictions to virtue. Temporal prosperity is now almost universally held out as the reward of desert, in those fictitious histories on which youth are too much made to depend for moral instruction; can we then wonder that dispassionate observers should lament that success is universally considered as the criterion of merit? A thorough acquaintance with the book of God will teach children to estimate human actions and human affairs by *juster* principles, and induce them to consider every instance of unequal distribution for which they cannot account, as an irrefragable confirmation of the certainty of a future state. Temporal prosperity was promised to the Jews collectively, provided they adhered to the law of the Lord; yet even during the period of their being governed by a supernatural theocracy, Gideon, Jephtha, and Samuel, experienced hard returns of unkindness from the people whom they had protected, and closed a life of virtuous activity with an old age of sorrow. Rebellious Israel was *forgiven* many offences; but Moses, their distinguished conductor, the mediator of the first covenant, after faithfully discharging his arduous but glorious task during forty years, was for one offence *prohibited* from entering into the promised rest which he so ardently wished to partake; and, after being only permitted to gaze on the *earthly*, was removed to enjoy the splendour of a *heavenly* Canaan. In later times, the conscientious Naboth was cut off by the hypocritical cruelty of Jezebel; and Elijah, who was predestined to ascend the skies in a fiery vehicle without passing through the valley of the shadow of death, spent his days in hunger and thirst, in perils and dangers, continually pursued by an implacable revengeful tyrant, till even his in-

\* "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country." Jeremiah, chap. xxiii. verse 10.

trepid spirit, though supported by the supernatural aid of prophetic inspiration, uttered those bitter complaints against life which can only be excused by excruciating misery. With these powerful examples before our eyes, who shall say that the *gratification* of our wishes is a  *blessing*, or temporal misfortunes a *curse*?

I must not multiply these reflections. The sacred volume presents innumerable instances, from which the judicious mother will derive the most salutary lessons, to correct the erroneous conclusions, and to temper the sanguine hopes, of impassioned youth. But the power of religion is still more efficacious in *forming* the *character*, than in *illuminating* the *understanding*. If children early discover strong passions and ardent desires, be assured that religion will prove the only restraint which can be relied upon to prevent criminal indulgences; or, should they fall, it will enable them to rise again. There is little danger that those will long remain in the thralldom of sin, who have enjoyed the glorious privileges of being the enlightened servant of God, and can compare the difference between the two masters. The sullen and the envious may, under the influence of christian principles, disencumber their dark and clouded minds from the gloom of misanthropy and discontent; and patience and complacence may, under the exhilarating light of the divine Spirit, spring up in those hearts which, if left to canker under the baleful influence of crafty policy and crooked expedience, “would have brought forth murders, adulteries, treasons, and every evil work.” A religious education would afford ballast to levity, and confine to innocent cheerfulness those exuberant spirits which might otherwise *mislead* their possessor to the extremes of thoughtless dissipation; and, not to multiply instances, as religion presents the only just view of this probationary state, beholding the world as it is reflected by this just mirror will save young people from all those bitter pangs of disappointed expectation, which are so apt to nip the opening joys of youth.

Let mothers then begin early to bring their children to Christ.\* Let them “add line to line, precept to precept,

\* I shall make no apology for transcribing the following passage from Hey's Lectures, vol. iv. page 305, sincerely wishing that genius and piety may realize the portrait here so affectingly imagined. He is speaking of the Gospel in the office of baptism.

“Christ blessed the children affectionately, holding them in his arms: his benediction, surely, must be some spiritual good. My reason dares



dispensing here a little and there a little," as occasion shall suggest, from the first dawn of reason till their young charge, ripe in faith, renew their baptismal vows of obedience at the altar of God. With what transport must a parent kneel at the head of her pious offspring at the eucharistical feast, while looking upwards she beholds in meditation her Saviour and her God, and addresses him with "Lo, I come; and of the children whom thou hast given me I have lost none!"

*Fear*, however, can *enjoy*, and *none* perhaps ought to *expect*, such a full consummation of their labours. In education, as in every sublunary undertaking, troubles and disappointments will intervene. Sometimes the sterile soil desires all culture, and is either totally barren, or produces only pernicious unsightly weeds. This case, indeed, rarely happens when much pains have been taken, never, I should hope, unless natural capacity is extremely defective, and in that instance we may rely on the righteousness of God, who does not expect to reap where he has not sown. Thorns and briars, indeed, frequently sprout up with the good seed, and either for a time smother it, or prevent its luxuriant growth. Yet in this case also we must not sorrow as those without hope; for, if the word of God has been grafted in the soul, even in the eleventh hour, the barren tree may bring forth fruit unto life. In the event of those wasteful storms of misfortune from which none of the race of Adam can hope to be exempt, let us solace ourselves with the consolation, that we have *provided* our young ones with a safe retreat from the *tempesk*. And should the irremediable sithe

"scarcely make an argument from this interesting scene; but when I contemplate it, I always wish myself a painter, that I might give a lasting representation of it. What an attitude might not that of Jesus be! what a countenance! looking down, with a mild and gracious benevolence, on the infant in his arms! expressing a deep knowledge of what was in man! other children of different ages and characters, grouped in various employments; the officious disciples with ill grounded apprehensions, and needless importunities, endeavouring to disperse them; the mother of the child in our Saviour's arms, near him, expressing as one principal figure, in her face and gesture, suspense and hope, not without some degree of fear; joy, refined and meliorated with paternal affection and piety; other parents; some mildly triumphing in the benediction already received, others gently pressing forward to attain it. Who that performs the ceremony of baptism does not feel the efficacy of this scene? The infant in one's arms excites a sentiment of tenderness; and the ceremony becomes, to the imagination, an imitation of the benevolence of him who appointed it."

of Death prematurely cut down the just blooming flower, surely we must "rejoice with exceeding great joy," in the confidence that it will be replanted, and flourish for ever, beside the river of life which flows through the holy city the new Jerusalem, which needeth not the faint lustre of the sun, but is enlightened by the glory of her God.

One consolation will attend the truly conscientious mother in the most disastrous circumstances: I refer to the heartfelt satisfaction that she has done her duty, for which she may humbly hope to receive her everlasting reward: I mean, if her conduct has been *uniform*; if her life and behaviour have been *consistent* with her precepts; and if she has been as careful to prevent her children from *seeing* in her what was *evil*, as she has been diligent to instruct and confirm them in what is *good*. To these requisites I must also add, if, in full confidence of the insufficiency of all human means, she has not rested in her own care, or in the skill and assiduity of the instructors whom she has employed, but with daily and hourly *intenseness* of devotion, has supplicated Almighty God to bestow his heavenly benediction on her labours of love, and to crown them with success. If she has neglected this finishing duty, she must be pronounced unfit for the task that she undertook. She might teach religion as a system; but, not feeling its influence on her own heart, she could not communicate it as a living principle to others.

To those who have enjoyed the advantage of an enlightened and christian education, I need not expatiate on its blessed tendency. Others who, amid many superfluous or immaterial acquisitions, remain destitute of that one thing peculiarly needful, "that pearl" of inestimable price, I would, in the Gospel language, conjure and entreat "to part with all they possess," sooner than not acquire it. Devote the morning of your lives to serious and valuable purposes. There is a marked analogy between the periods of our existence, and the hours of the natural day. How vigorous and refreshed do we feel when we first awake! how languid and exhausted do the fatigues incident to our occupations leave us at the close of a vexatious day! Exertion then seems impracticable; all that we require is relaxation or repose. We commonly rise from our beds calm and tranquil in our tempers, with our minds as well as our bodies braced for exertion. At night, we usually find that our cares and disappointments, teasing incidents and unexpected competitions, have ruffled if not annihilated this serene delight, which, ere

we can compose ourselves to sleep, we labour to restore, by recalling the agreeable visions of the morning. The dull and heavy evening of old age will affect us in a similar manner. Happy those who can relieve its tediousness by the recollection of a well spent youth, and can feed, during this barren season, on the nutritious fruits which memory *providently* stored. But those only can be said to enjoy even the dregs of life, who can look back on the smiling record of years of piety and virtue; for they are well assured that the "Creator, whom they *remembered* in their youth," will never *desert* them in their hoary hairs, when all other consolations forsake them. That you, my dear young friend, who were so eminently happy in your early instructions, may enjoy this enviable privilege at the close of your days, is both the wish and belief of

Your truly affectionate, &c.

## LETTER XIV.

*On our Duty to Servants and Inferiors.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

THE last relative situation of importance which we hold, is that of mistress of a family: with your permission, I will combine with it our general duty to our inferiors; since the observations upon one subject will in most cases apply to the other.

My rank in life having enabled me to see the lower orders, stripped of those disguises which cunning prompts them to assume in their intercourse with those who are too remote to judge of their real character, I am aware that my opinion of their present manners and sentiments will be thought too unfavourable, by those who, taking only a distant glance of the humbler classes of society, consider them merely as victims of oppression, or objects of benevolence; while those who have had an opportunity for close investigation will join me in lamenting, that a great and an alarming revolution has taken place in the ideas and character of the commonalty. This is most apparent among the manufacturing classes; but the peasantry have not escaped the contagion, especially those who reside in the neighbourhood of flourishing towns; and it is to this cause that the degeneracy of servants (which is an ample subject of complaint in all companies) must be *primarily* attributed. Did this evil only threaten the destruction of our domestic comfort, we should have great cause for alarm; but if the “lying spirit” which has gone abroad among the poor of this realm continue to make proselytes as rapidly as it has done of late years, our national subjugation cannot be very remote.

Do not suppose I mean to insinuate that there subsists a general spirit of disaffection to the present government. Considering the extraordinary pains that have been taken to excite the passions of the mob in this respect, the populace may be said to have resisted temptation *nobly*; and, except among some sectaries whose principles are professedly repub-

lican, people are generally content to be governed as their ancestors have been. But the temper that justly excites apprehension is, their increasing dislike of their *immediate* superiors, which breaks out in all the modes of envy, incivility, and rapacity. You will smile at my ranking *rapacity* among the crimes of a poor person; but suffer me to explain. Notwithstanding that great increase of wages which the scarcity five years ago rendered both just and necessary, suffered little or no reduction in the interval of cheapness (I mean during the amazing reduction in the price of corn, the great article of sustenance among the poor,) scarcely any thought themselves *bound* (as they formerly supposed themselves) to lay up a provision for sickness and calamity. Their earnings were dissipated in a style of living and dress unbecoming their station, and on the least pressure of distress they *demand'd*, not *solicited*, parochial relief; but as that relief was only given in such proportions as their wants rendered necessary, not as their luxuries required, their envy of those whom they beheld possessed of enjoyments which they had learned to value increased; and an inquiry, why one person ought to be richer than another, became general; not considering that, by so doing, they cavilled against Providence; and without reflecting that industry and œconomy are the sure, though slow, means to procure decent competence.

Factionous demagogues have taken advantage of this sourness of disposition, which luxury and thoughtlessness introduced among the lower orders, who are now made perfectly acquainted with all the vices and follies which unhappily, in this dissipated age, disgrace the higher walks of life. You will frequently hear village politicians exclaiming against the manifest injustice of people being *permitted* to possess wealth who lead infamous lives. Does not this proceed from a want of those just *views* of life, and *clear* notions of duty, which were recommended in the preceding letter as incumbent upon all ranks and conditions of mankind? When did (or rather when can) an order of things subsist, in which wealth or power shall be *exclusively* assigned to virtue and goodness? The trials of virtue cannot be its recompense. God did not intend earthly distinction to be the reward of his faithful servants. The responsible talents of riches and authority ever have been promiscuously intrusted to just and unjust stewards. In the hands of the former, they are a blessing to themselves and to all around them; with the latter, they

become a curse and a punishment. But all who occupy the less accountable stations in life should ever look from the *agent* to the *employer*; and, whether our superiors are benefactors or oppressors, should remember that they possess but a delegated power, and in all cases be devoutly disposed to say with the pious Patriarch, "The lot falleth into the lap, but the disposal of it is in the Lord."

The poor of this kingdom were once distinguished by the moral propriety of their opinions, and their affectionate attachment to their superiors. If you had *then* asked a plain countryman, what right a notoriously wicked man had to live in the best house in the village, with some astonishment at the inquiry he would have answered, that "He was the eldest son of the old 'squire." Apply to a modern rustic, who has been *enlightened* by a refracted ray stolen from Paine's modified wild fire, on the same occasion, and with a significant shake of his head he will answer, "Sad times, master! "things want mending; something must be wrong, or *rogues* "would not flourish while poor men are forced to work." Or, as I have known to be the case in an instance where a person of fortune united notorious profligacy with careless liberality, the reply has been to one who condemned the guilt and effrontery of *public* licentiousness, "This is a land "of liberty; and every one has a right to do what they like; "the 'squire maintains my family, and that is all I care "about."

This leads me to what I would next observe, that the poor entertain very false notions of wealth; not only as to the rules by which it ought to be distributed, but of the manner in which it should be applied. Generally speaking, the ideas of indigence are extravagant; and thus it happens, that profusion is sure to have advocates among the lower orders, whose notions of merit are mostly confined to two qualities, *bounty* and *affability*. How fortunate would it be for themselves, if honesty and prudence shared in these eulogiums! It is this error, imbibed in their paternal cottages, and fostered by their subsequent commerce with their own profession, that renders servants so generally wasteful, and inclined to support the appearance of the person they serve at the expense of his *credit*. Having very few ideas of distinction and consequence, but what are derived from show and expense, and believing their own dignity to be essentially combined with their master's, it becomes their constant aim to make him live, not as he can afford, but as other

people do ; and if they unhappily discover that he has a propensity to reserve some part of his income for future contingencies, they most generously resolve to protect him from the crime of being shabby, by every secret method of waiving or purloining his property that their ingenuity can devise ; quieting their consciences with the salvo, that, as he can afford it, he ought to be *made* to do so. Such monitors and administrators of the property of others seem unlearned in the plain rules of common honesty, though possibly they are well versed in sentimental refinements. We cannot, therefore, wonder that they should be inclined to palliate every vice but *avarice*, which indeed never meets with any *quarter*. Should this humour, of estimating crimes only as they affect ourselves, gain ground, I fear we shall degenerate into those dreadful extremes of heathen enormity, which St. Paul so forcibly describes in his epistle to the Romans ; when after enumerating a black catalogue of heinous and unnatural offences, he tells his christian converts that they not only once did those things, but *also took pleasure in others for practising* them. The great change which christianity produced in the world was never more manifest, than in the alteration of public opinion, which, though it often utters a hasty decision founded on *incomplete* evidence, used to give (and I trust, in spite of the perverters of the human mind, will still give) its suffrage in favour of virtue and goodness.

But enough of declamation : let us try if we can ascertain the causes of the change which we deplore, and thence endeavour to discover the cure. A great deal of mischief must be attributed to the dissemination of the idea of universal liberty, by which half informed people always understand licentiousness. Much injury has been done to the lower orders by unsettled opinions on religious subjects. Vanity and conceit are the usual causes of dissent from established doctrines ; and we rarely see a convert to new opinions in these matters, who does not, in his air and manner, discover unequivocal proofs of self-inaportance. Indeed, among the lower orders, few seem now disposed to take their "noiseless way along the cool sequestered vale of life," and to live honest, quiet, and respectable. The tenet that "we live in a land of liberty" (which, when misunderstood, is the foundation of all our religious and civil contests) is much oftener referred to, than the divinely enforced duties appending to the fifth commandment ; though *all* men, especially those who are placed in a *humble station*, may in them trace one of

the most comprehensive outlines of their christian course. The effect of preaching chiefly upon doctrinal, mysterious, and (strictly speaking) metaphysical subjects, is most strongly seen in the followers of this description of teachers, who are ever talking of *rights* and *privileges*; never of *obligations*. Here again the want of clear ideas and just notions is most obvious; for amid the torrent of language, which every gifted haranguer can pour forth on the most abstruse and recondite subjects, they rarely let fall a sentence that can be understood by those who are not versed in this cabalistic jargon.

It has been said, that the depravity of the lower orders is owing to the great separation in the conditions of society which refinement has introduced. Unquestionably, luxury has greatly tended to alienate the minds of inferiors from their betters, by the almost insuperable bars which it has placed between their free communication. When the feudal chief presided at the banquet among his vassals, and the farmer dined at the head of his labourers, the manners of the more intelligent were copied by the less informed; and the respectful awe inseparable from the presence of the master operated as a curb to improper expressions, and gradually infused decorum of conduct. It is to be feared, that in the present state of society such customs could not be safely resumed; but we may regret that they ever were laid aside. The intrepid reformer who should attempt to revive them would probably only experience insult and ridicule, or familiarity would break down the few fences that are yet left round fortune and dignity. To confine my observations to my own sex: the tenant's daughters would visit the mansion house, and the young cottager would go to the farmer's abode, only with a view of learning fashions, and of conducting their next party or junket in a more genteel style. Can we wonder at this, knowing that the view of the entertainers would rather be to *amaze* their guests, than to render them happy or to improve their moral character?\*. But to avoid visionary schemes: whenever modest simplicity of character insures us from the evils incident to familiarity, affability and condescension are the most likely means to conciliate and attach the lower orders. These are favours which they peculiarly feel, and are perhaps more grateful for than for the positive exertions of benevolence. A kind remem-

\* Letter iv.



brance of their wants, an affectionate concern for their welfare, a desire to promote their real interests, are attentions which forcibly attract the unsophisticated mind. Even in our domestic management, affability is strictly compatible with authority. Command need not speak in the voice of *terror*, nor accompany its injunction with *menaces*.

But perhaps the most influential cause of this change of manners and sentiments among the poor is the increasing luxury of the middle orders, who bind the extremes of society together, and consequently whose manners are the most important to the commonwealth. It is from our very immediate superiors that we all derive our ideas of what is just and desirable; their station, therefore, is the point on which our ambition rests; for it rarely happens that our imagination takes so bold a flight, as to build its eyry on the lofty summit from which we are separated by *many* intermediate ranks. While we suffer from the vices of our inferiors, therefore, let us ask, Does no blame attach to ourselves? Have we not been so fond of distinction, so engrossed by pleasure, so entranced by views of advantage, as to forget our own responsibility to those who looked up to us? Can we then blame them for following the pattern that we set them, and becoming in their turns as aspiring, luxuriant, and indolent as is in their power? Example is a duty which we owe to all the world; and there is no person, however humble his rank or limited his powers, but may thus benefit society; and if we pervert what should be for the improvement of those, a part of whose duty it is to imitate us, "into an occasion for their falling," let us be assured, that a portion of their offences will be referred to us in the day when the Maker of both rich and poor shall claim an account of all our actions.\* The larger our sphere of acting, the greater is our responsibility; but all are accountable in some degree. The moral virtue of prudence should rise in our esteem, from the recollection, that a *small* deviation, from it on our *own* part may lead others to *extravagance*, or even to *disbonesty*.

The middle orders may also be charged with another offence against their inferiors, beside that of setting them a bad example: I mean, neglecting proper watchfulness and admonition. This is most lamentably visible in the conduct of masters and mistresses toward their domestics, and is not

\* Letter iii.

confined to persons in genteel life, but extends to those who ape gentility. The luxurious refinements in living that are generally adopted render adroitness in servants so essential, that the nobler distinction of moral worth is comparatively overlooked. As in most families the expense of being genteel operates as a severe check upon the inclination of shining, it is a general law, that show shall be procured at the *least possible cost*; and thus the number of our domestics being limited to bare necessity, we swelling frogs, who ape the magnificent oxen, are forced to transfer the vocations of several domestics to one. Thus it becomes necessary that a good servant should add dispatch to handiness; and provided they can but perform their work, few mistresses inquire further about their conduct, than as their vices affect the interests or safety of their employers. A servant who is thus wearisomely occupied has little leisure for moral or religious considerations. I do not mean that intervals of leisure are positively necessary for a devout ejaculation or serious reflection; but these presuppose a foundation of religious knowledge and pious habits. Considering the present state of education among the poor, and the general manners of families, we shall be too sanguine if we expect that the majority of servants will be disposed to keep alive this religion of the *heart*, especially if we also recollect, that the multiplicity of minute attentions and successive occupations which we require of them, must perplex and harass their thoughts, and, if no intervals of rest are allowed, must even prevent the well disposed from “pouring that oil into their lamps” which is necessary to keep them burning. What then will be the conduct of servants? They know that their chance of advancement depends on their ability to execute the services required of them; and duplicity and cunning, which are vices common to all illiterate people, will lead them to suppose that *concealing* their sinful practices is quite sufficient; for, alas! it is a general opinion with them, that *detection* constitutes guilt: a melancholy proof how little the omnipresence of God is understood, or at least influences the behaviour of many nominal christians! Surely these evils might be diminished by a more conscientious attention to the moral conduct of our dependents, and by expressing more displeasure at vice, than at those venial faults which only affect the propriety of our domestic arrangements. But the cure of this disorder must be sought in more powerful correctives.

The increasing profanation of the sabbatical rest is one great cause of the degeneracy, not only of servants but of all the inferior conditions of society. It was not from the desire of hearing his creatures praise him, that the Almighty issued his command for a septenary remembrance of creation and redemption. He showed, by that institution, his benevolent regard to our temporal and eternal welfare. By hal- lowing the Lord's day, we do not only learn those "songs of Sion in a strange land," which we may hope to sing for ever in the kingdom of our Father; but we diminish the evils incident to our *pilgrimage*, by acquiring those habits which will render it pleasant and prosperous. Whoever has seen the blessed effects of the Sabbath in an orderly country village, will readily acquiesce in the acknowledgment that it is the great civilizer of the lower orders. Suspension of toil, innocent recreation, decent apparel, comfortable food, domestic enjoyment, and social worship, all present themselves to our view in the family of an industrious religious labourer; nor can we contemplate the cleanliness and modest propriety of their appearance, as they walk to "the house of the Lord their God," without a rapturous sensation of benevolent exultation. Let us now glance at the scenes which Sunday presents in the vicinity of flourishing manufactures, where promiscuous associations and enormous gains beget the disgusting habits of low debauchery. Labour indeed is suspended; but sin, like the Egyptian task-masters, demands her double tale of service. The filthy squalid rags worn all the week are laid aside, not to assume a neat simplicity of clean apparel, but to flaunt in a ridiculous medley of ill sorted finery. The work shop is deserted, but the church is unfrequented; the ale-houses are however well peopled; and though the wheel and the loom are silent, drunken blasphemy and unrestrained indelicacy offend our ears with noises equally obstreperous. If we turn our eyes to the younger part of the mechanic's family, we shall see in their pursuits and conduct the future victims of prostitution and debauchery. Are not these scenes too general; has not depravity of manners uniformly kept pace with multiplied assemblage and superabundant provision? Manufacturing towns are the usual depositories of disaffection, tumult, profligacy, and misery. Surely then it is to be feared, that these inevitable evils, which are so intimately annexed to our commercial superiority, must very sensibly diminish its value in

a national point of view. It is much to be lamented, that the comparative independence which is annexed to artificers and artisans removes them from the controlling superintendance of their immediate superior; who (if possible) ought to be *armed with power* to prevent or punish those excesses which the streets of a great town generally present on Sunday evenings; for, even when the statute laws of the realm are not grossly violated, the moral feelings of christians are severely pained.

We have already lamented the bad consequences which the dissipation too common among great fashionists in the middle orders must have on their immediate dependents. As no people are so apt to utter dolorous complaints against the general depravity of servants, it seems desirable that they should take into their serious consideration the political expediency of restoring Sunday to its original destination. If they have no christian concern for the immortal interests of their fellow-creatures; if they really do not dread appearing, unprepared with an answer, at that awful audit when the souls of their household (by them wilfully abandoned to perdition) will be required at their hands; still let them take those menials, whose good behaviour is so necessary to their own self-indulgence, where they will be *taught* to become *good servants*. This will be acting prudently, though not piously; but to do this will require some sacrifices. They can neither go out nor have visitors on Sundays; the full courses must be abridged; the toilet service must be shortened; the breakfast hour must be expedited; nay more, they must *accompany* their families to church themselves, and not only give them an opportunity of serving God, but actually see that they are present in his temple. One of the sad effects of itinerance in public worship is, that it *separates* the family, who ought to appear in their proper places in the *same* congregation; thus removing those whose conduct requires inspection, from those whose duty it is to inspect. Unless you take them where you pay your own vows, your footman may probably frequent the tippling house, instead of the conventicle; and your housemaid patrol the streets in search of a gallant, while you suppose her in pursuit of a ghastly comforter.

By some previous arrangements, and a few personal sacrifices, mistresses may generally contrive to give *every* member of their family an opportunity of attending public worship at least *once* in every sabbath; but they must not suppose

that they shall then have discharged all their duty: family prayer and social instruction are a very important, though much neglected, branch of duty, from which much real advantage may be expected. Did nothing better ensue than restraining irregularity and intemperance, by seeing the whole family early assembled on a Sunday evening in a state of sobriety and decorum, the benefit would be great; but we must not mete by these short measures, when we speak of a religious household seriously employed in supplicating the blessing of Almighty God. We may certainly ascribe the comparative regularity which families formerly exhibited, to the uniform practice of family prayer; for, though such households *might* be mere seminaries of hypocrites, they who disregard or ridicule such services *must* be profligates. That this valuable custom is not now attended with similar decency of deportment in the few places where it is still preserved, must be ascribed to the general tendency of the times to ridicule all unusual strictness and sobriety, as unnecessary and puritanical; and to the unavoidable connection of servants who are thus disciplined, with those who are neglected and depraved; which seems likely to impede the former in their growth in grace; for "evil communication is much more likely to corrupt good manners," than vice is to derive advantage from the beneficial influence of virtue. If this custom were again universal, we should soon perceive its excellence. By doing all in our power to render it so, we at least discharge ourselves of blame; and in this, as in every other instance, when we do not reap the full harvest of our labours, we shall exonerate ourselves from the blame of sinful negligence.

A selection of books proper for servants' reading has lately been strongly recommended by very respectable authorities; and, no doubt, if they were discreetly chosen, and seconded by other measures, they would be eminently useful. Much good has certainly been done by the distribution of cheap well principled tracts among the lower orders; but with the same, or perhaps still greater avidity, has the evil spirit of insubordination and dissension seized upon their improved capacities to scatter his baneful principles; so that, in proportion as information has been multiplied, the circulation of pernicious doctrines has increased. I presume not to question the general utility of Sunday schools; they seem founded on two incontrovertibly just positions; that every soul in a christian country should be taught its duty to God,

and be trained in an habitual reverence of the sabbath day; but, unquestionably, there is a point at which the cultivation of the lower orders ought to stop. Writing and accounts appear superfluous instructions in the *humblest* walks of life; and, when imparted, have the general effect of making them ambitious, and disgusted with the servile offices which they are required to perform. It seems, therefore, a misapplication of benevolence, to communicate what will make the possessor unhappy; for hard toil and humble diligence are indispensably needful to the community; and we oftener want the hand of a *labourer* than of a *scribe*: nor should any ideas of refinement, or views of aggrandisement, be supplied, but when an evident superiority of genius, or weakness of frame, warrants a departure from established rules. People in the higher walks of life are apt to think that their own domestics are in a more eligible situation than their rustic equals; and in their benevolent endeavours to improve the general condition of the villages in which they reside, they consider it to be an unimpeachable exercise of charity when they fit the youth of both sexes for genteel service. If they attended to the gradation of ranks (which ought to be observed in the humbler as well as in the more elevated classes,) they would learn to *limit* these views, and would take especial care that conceit and profligacy do not thwart their generous design of making their protégés happy and respectable. The unsophisticated ploughman and milkmaid are infinitely more valuable, as rational beings and members of the commonwealth, than the coxcomical valet and pert abigail.

The degree of instruction which we bestow on our poor neighbours or servants should be fitted, as much as it can, to their relative stations. There can be no danger of our falling into any error, by labouring to make them plain and sincere christians; I now speak in a political sense: when I add, and members of the church of England, I mean not to deny piety and virtue, much less salvation, to other "congregations of christian men:" but believing that the tenets of the establishment are *supereminently* calculated to combat the *errors of the times*, and being firmly convinced that there is safety and comfort in her spacious fold, I recommend it as an asylum to all who have not leisure to study the niceties and subtleties of disputation, and who yet must ever be subject to be tempest-torn "by adverse winds of doctrine," while they continue to assert their own liberty of election in

a point where they do not possess capacity for decision, or leisure for investigation.

With respect to servants' libraries, those who form them will do well to observe, that the books which compose them should possess two requisites, or they will remain unread. They should be *appropriate*, and also *entertaining*. It is often said, that gentlemen's servants are the most dissolute set of beings in the kingdom: if this be true, it is a grievous reproach on the morals, as well as on the negligence, of their immediate rulers. The infectious nature of dissipation, and the tendency of all contagion to grow more inveterate the more it is diffused, convinces us that, while the master and mistress spend their time in idle extravagance, the servants will give up their hours of lounging attendance to vice; and that vice in the superior will be downright depravity when reflected by vulgar imitation. To hope that a few moral treatises laid in their way will correct the evil propensities which are perpetually excited by example, and encouraged by opportunity, is absurd. Books, it is to be feared, never can *diffuse* correctness into a licentious family; they may *preserve* an orderly one, and prevent its members from going out in their hours of leisure to seek for less salutary recreation.

Books that are written for the instruction of the lower orders, are often penned in a style which their readers cannot understand; or else, under the idea of being made plain, they become dull and unimpressive. Clear ideas, natural turns of reflection, and forcible yet plain expressions, are the fundamentals on which popular addresses should be built. No one can reason with effect with an illiterate person, unless he experimentally knows how such persons do reason: hence an intimate acquaintance with the opinions and manners of humble life, becomes necessary to all who would reform its errors. When we can only say of these attempts that they are well meant, we actually deprive them of all pretensions to utility. A person of education is oftener induced to read *well intentioned* stupidity than one in low life. The popularity of enthusiastic preachers is acquired by their *animation*. Bishop Wilson's "Plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper" may be considered as a model for religious tracts that are addressed to the uninformed. It is concise and yet full, perspicuous yet animating. There is nothing in it that is superfluous, no unnecessary affectation of learning, no rapturous flights of devotion, nothing to

weary attention, to excite doubt, or to engender extravagance. Many excellent works of this truly apostolical prelate deserve similar praise. Mr. Nelson's "Companion for the Feasts and Fasts of the Church of England" combines the narratives that are most interesting to christians, with the doctrines of our religion and the distinguishing excellencies of our venerable establishment. Archbishop Secker's "Lectures on the Catechism" is a very superior work; but perhaps it may be objected to its use on this occasion, that it supposes a greater degree of previous information than servants usually possess, and should rather be ranked among the elementary treatises that are adapted to a *superior* walk of life. The like observations will apply to Bishop Porteus's "Principal Evidences of the Truth and divine Origin of the Christian Religion," and Bishop Percy's "Key to the New Testament." It is perhaps impertinent in me to observe, that these works will be eminently useful wherever the understanding has been sufficiently enlightened to comprehend the arguments and historical notices which they contain. The labours of Mrs. Trimmer to inform and correct the lower classes cannot, without ingratitude, be passed over. Every friend to the religion of our country, and to social order, must confess the value of her services. Even in those works which are ostensibly less important, the same excellent principles are inculcated; and her fictitious histories have the merit of being at once instructive and interesting. I know not my dear Miss M——, whether you have met with a little tale by an anonymous author, entitled Lucy Franklin. It attacks that rage for finery which is so *unhappily* prevalent among young women in low life (and which mistresses of families *may* and *ought* to discourage;) showing them, that it is the most likely means to plunge them into all the miseries of disgrace and ruin; for, that extravagance which leaves them unprovided in the hour of distress, and those exorbitant desires of distinction which their humble means cannot gratify, are the very avenues through which vice and profligacy are sure to enter. Young women, who by these means solicit the notice or put themselves into the power of man, can hardly be said to be seduced; they are in fact their own betrayers, and spread the snare by which they are undone. I particularise the above tale for its *manner* as well as its *moral*. I have seen it forcibly interest the rank to which it is addressed, and therefore conclude that



the author knew her readers and understood her subject; no very common or easy qualifications.

It has been suggested, that a proper selection of well authenticated facts from newspapers, accompanied with short and significant comments, might form a very valuable sort of servants' hall common place book: it is the kind of reading which generally pleases them, being short and pithy: and real history possesses many advantages over fictitious, especially among that class of people who seldom bestow much attention on a narrative, till assured of its *authenticity*. But in all our selections of this kind we should remember, that those who attempt to corrupt the commonalty are aided by powerful abilities, and inculcate tenets peculiarly palatable to fallen humanity in an alluring fascinating style. We cannot therefore hope to have *unpleasant* truths regarded, unless we are very careful to *dress* them in an *agreeable* form. A weak defence of a good cause is rather injurious than beneficial, and is more apt to pervert the auditors, and incline them to be adversaries, than to win over neutrals (much less enemies) to the cause of truth.

Respecting the proper government of our families, it unquestionably lies in the happy medium between the extremes of rigour and lenity, wearying watchfulness and careless neglect. It is certainly our duty to endeavour to promote the present comfort and ultimate advantage of all who minister to our wants and necessities. This should be done regularly and consistently, not capriciously and partially, with a discriminating sense of superior desert, but without injustice to the rightful claims of any. Yet when we bestow peculiar favour in consequence of long or valuable service, or any other extraordinary merit, we must take care that it be of such a kind as will not unfit them for their station in life. We must never permit *idleness*, unless we mean to make them independent; nor should we allow them such indulgencies in their appetites or desires, as we know their limited means will not warrant in future. On no account should we permit them to despise or insult those to whom they are intrinsically inferior, on account of the adventitious elevation which they derive from their connexion with us. Kindness does not show itself in flattering their *foibles*, or in fostering their *vanity*; but in a steady desire to promote their *real* happiness. We should allow occasional relaxation, not only for the management of their temporal and spiritual concerns, but also for the purposes of innocent amusement; though in

this latter particular it will doubtless be advisable to preserve some sort of superintendance over their pleasures; for servants have often a most diabolical pride in deceiving their superiors; and those hours are most likely to be ill employed which are removed from all restraining control.

*Watchfulness*, therefore, becomes an essential part of a mistress's duty: how it can be practised by those "whose feet never abide in their own house," is difficult to conceive. We require too much from that nature which self-examination must tell us is weak, frail, and corrupt, when we expect that those who have no permanent interest in our concerns will *supply* the care and good management which we *totally* omit. A negligent master and mistress are considered as lawful prey by their domestics; and those who are proverbially easy and know nothing, are at once cheated and despised for a disposition which (however it may engage the affection and esteem of generous and enlightened characters) seldom fails to excite the rapacity of the ignorant, who are wise only in cunning. It is this which makes a previous acquaintance with domestic affairs so necessary a part of a young woman's education; and it is to the neglect of this, that the knavery of servants may often be imputed; for they rarely attempt fraud and deceit, but when they think they may practise it with *impunity*. To speak impartially, may we not also ascribe capricious, petulant, and suspicious mistresses to the same source? By setting out with unbounded confidence in those who serve us, we certainly open the door for gross imposition; and as detection is sure to follow dishonesty sooner or later, the natural transition in our own minds will conduct us from *cheated credulity* to *unjust suspicion*; and if we are too little acquainted with household management to know when we meet with fidelity and industry, everlasting jealousy and contention are the consequence, till, by a most uncomfortable and culpable perversion of our judgment, we include all servants in one iniquitous class of cheats and deceivers. The almost inevitable consequence of this injurious conclusion is, that all with whom we are concerned will prove to be so.

I am far from wishing a mistress of a family to be *wholly* engrossed with superintending the conduct of her household; much less would I have her establish a system of espionage, and create herself inquisitor general; for these measures would only render her hated and unhappy. It is sufficient if she uniformly display vigilance and intelligence. No fault,

which she is *known* to have observed, should be suffered to pass without a reprimand, proportioned (let me be permitted to observe) to the *moral turpitude* of the action, not to the *casual inconvenience* which arises from it. All wilful neglects, and even insolence of behaviour, come under this description, because attention and civility are *positive* parts of a servant's duty as *prescribed* by the law of God:\* but awkwardness, forgetfulness, and error, should be treated with forgiving lenity. I am sorry to have observed, that among the vices of the lower orders falsehood and envy seem so predominant as to be almost incurable. They are however such black offences, that a conscientious mistress will never remit her endeavours to expel them from her own household. By way of curing the first, she should easily pardon faults that are frankly confessed; nor should she too strictly persevere in inquiries which she has reason to believe will create a strong temptation to duplicity. By these methods, and by uniformly expressing her detestation of falsehood and evasion, she may break a *young* servant of telling *lies of excuse*, which many of the lower orders affirm to be no sin. Another species of falsehood appears in mysterious secrecy, and frivolous deception. Every mistress must have observed, at times, in her family, a sort of petty duplicity, and insignificant breaches of trust; the real guilt of which consists not in the actions themselves, but in the pains that are taken to conceal them. I fear, in the present state of servitude, we must either be content to pass over such provocations, or perform our family offices ourselves. Such conduct is, however, certainly blameable; and whenever a mistress is *constrained* to observe it, she should express her hearty disapprobation of every thing which is contrary to openness and candour. But I would advise those who are teased by these unpleasant, shuffling, mysterious proceedings, when they know them to be allied with valuable qualities (as is sometimes the case,) occasionally to appear not to observe them. Severity in trifles is sometimes a *cause*, and always an *excuse*, for this dubious behaviour. If, however, a mistress discover a constant tendency to disguise on all occasions, she must conclude that the integrity of that servant cannot be unim-

\* "Servants, be subject to your own masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. Not answering again. Not slothful in business; not with eye service."

peachable, nor to be depended upon in things of consequence. The only cure for malversation is religious principle; which, if firmly implanted in the mind, would prevent all that eye service of which we so justly complain.\*

I fear envy is such a mortal canker, that, when once it has deeply penetrated the heart, a total cure is impossible. It, however, frequently results from narrowness of thinking, and may be greatly counteracted by giving servants more enlarged views of the state of society, and their own positive duties and comforts: to do so, will not be teaching them refinement, but sense; and from the monarch on his throne, to the humble cottager, *sound sense* and *just opinions* are inestimable treasures. A steady rejection of a system of favouritism, and strict impartiality in domestic management, will at least relieve ourselves from the reproach of having tended to excite this malignant spirit.

Some well meaning people adopt an idea, that it is necessary to try the honesty and veracity of their servants by concerted proofs. You will, of course, expect me to reprobate a mode of conduct which is, in fact, usurping the post of the prince of darkness, and becoming at once the *seducer* and "the *accuser* of our brethren." Many people never would have fallen into sin, but through the unlucky prevalence of a temptation which appeared to unite gratification and security. Before we lay a trap for a servant, let us reflect that there is a greater chance of our exciting a new desire, than that we shall stimulate an inveterate habit; and even in the case of old offenders, it is possible that they may have resolved against the crime, and were endeavouring to gain a victory over a sinful course, when we basely betrayed them, and thus crushed "the limed soul that struggled to get free." Let us consider too, that every time an offence is committed, remorse and compunction are *diminished*. The young beginner sins with fear and trembling; his tortured conscience so much afflicts him, that after the moment of commission he resolves to offend no more. Supposing him again overcome by temptation, his concern decreases, till, if he persevere in an evil course, he finally vanquishes grief as well as shame. Thus, by even allowing a hardened villain to re-

\* "It is impossible to secure the duty of inferiors," says bishop Taylor, "but by conscience and good will; unless provision could be made against their secret arts and concealments, which, as no providence can foresee, no diligence can cure."

*peat* his crimes, we lessen the probability of his repentance, and become accessary to his final destruction. To *prevent* iniquity, not to *detect* and punish it, will be the study of a humane mistress.

Of course, all who are solicitous for the orderly government of their households, refuse to admit a servant without previously inquiring into their character. Hence it becomes the duty of every one to speak honestly and candidly of the domestics whom they discharge. A religious adherence to truth, in this particular, would greatly tend to improve the *morals* of servants; and it is to be hoped, that the interference of the legislature, and the imposition of severe penalties, will enforce punctuality from those whom honour could not bind to *veracity*. It is false tenderness to disguise the faults of those whom you have found to be incorrigibly profligate; since by so doing, under the weak pretence of not robbing a poor servant of her bread, you may chance to introduce depravity into a well principled household, some of whom they may probably contaminate. Certainly there are degrees of guilt; and when favourable circumstances appear in extenuation of a fault, let not resentment induce us to paint it in its blackest colours. We should in this case be so candid to inquirers, as to discover what was done amiss, that they may be guarded against bad consequences, supposing they venture upon the trial.

Faultless characters are not to be found, even in those situations most favourable to virtue; much less must we hope for them in the rank of life which is *most* exposed to temptation, and furnished with but *weak* antidotes, either from education, habit, example, or general opinion. It is, therefore, more than possible, that those who believe themselves to possess a super-excellent dependent are the dupes of chicanery and duplicity. There are some qualities which are more especially to be valued, and others with which we may dispense. It is also possible, indeed I hope it often happens, that a servant is *reformed* by admonition, good example, and discreet management. We must allow much for the errors of ignorance. That mild indulgence for female frailty, which it is so fashionable to claim from our sex, with respect to what are called gentle errors, though culpable and dangerous when exercised to those whom fortune secured from solicitation, and rank hedged round from pollution, is not only *merciful* but *just*, when excited by the backslidings of the untaught child of indigence. It is in a humble station,

in which loss of character exposes women to all the infamy and misery of venal prostitution, that we should extend our arm to rescue a *fallen sister*, and once more restore her to the *competence of industry*. Whenever youth, or extreme simplicity, or gross ignorance, or bad example, or strong temptation, or great neglect, can be pleaded in excuse of a *first* offence, pardon should be prompt. I do not say it should precede contrition in all instances; in some, perhaps, our first act of kindness must be to awaken remorse. We should, however, take care so to proportion our pity, that it can never be construed into an encouragement to sin. This caution is extremely necessary in these times, when it is lamentable to observe what slight ideas are formed of the value of chastity among women in low life. Bastardy is scarcely reckoned a disgrace, and criminality before marriage is too common even to excite surprise. When we add, to this lax idea of our first distinction, the universal passion for dress and expense which has seized those who have no honest dependence but on frugality and industry, we must discover a most alarming prospect of degradation and extreme infamy. Yet where shall our censure point? Surely, at those who by their luxury and *untempted* profligacy set an example of evil; at those from whom, as more inducements to virtue and better guards of discretion were given to them, more correctness of morals will be required.

I am firmly persuaded, that a *general determination* of mistresses to discountenance all *improper* and *unsuitable* apparel, all needless expense, and ridiculous imitation of fashionable modes, would effect a speedy reformation in the appearance not only of female servants, but of all the humble ranks of life. But here unhappily, as in every other instance, our own vanity betrays us into the inconvenience which we afterwards find such cause to regret. Some silly gentlewoman, adopting the supercilious humour of Addison's Brunetta,\* determines that her handmaid shall rival, in smartness, that competitor whom she herself cannot eclipse in taste or beauty. An attempt of this kind cannot be made without causing a general tumult in the neighbourhood; for all the Mollies and Betties immediately recollect some degrading anecdote of the poor decorated jackdaw, or some reason why they have an equal right to wear peacocks' feathers. No mistress (I mean, no *vain* mistress, which qualified negative

\* Spectator, No. 80.

almost amounts to a positive) likes to see her damsels look shabbier than those of other people; and the metamorphosis of gowns and bonnets becomes as general and instantaneous, as that which Ovid records of the stones flung by Deucalion; for, under the forming hand of a dressmaker and milliner, beauty and grace grow out of as shapeless masses, and the world seems peopled with another order of beings. The laws of Fashion are, however, the exact reverse of those of the Medes and Persians: and her humble worshippers must find their time consumed, and their ingenuity and money wasted, by those liberal sacrifices to this deity which their slender means can ill afford. Thus *holiday* gentility begets *every day* untidiness, and occasional regard to appearance becomes another name for flatternliness. Young women used to consider servitude as the bank on which they drew for their little marriage portion; and even in choosing their clothes the cautious *girl* looked forward to the future wants of the *Goody*, and evinced her provident regard to usefulness, by her preference of stout everlasting and substantial camelot. I suspect that no draper's shop could now furnish these, or even similar articles; and, unquestionably, they would never meet with purchasers among our advocates for light floating drapery, who begin life with a resolution to spend as fast as they earn. Hence arise wretchedness and poverty in the married state; hence total dependence and helplessness in the case of sickness or any other misfortune; and hence are the haunts of prostitution thickly peopled with the miserable victims of vanity and extravagance; most of whom, from their *rapidly increasing* numbers, can have no resource but to eat the wages of shame, till premature death terminates unspeakable misery.

Are these consequences deplorable? Is this portrait true? Then let the compassionate matron, who weeps over this devastation of female innocence, this defalcation of female utility and respectability, earnestly consider what she is doing, when she first *rouses the spirit of vanity* in the bosom of an artless rustic, by requiring from her young servants any further attention to dress than cleanliness and neatness, or encouraging a regard to appearance beyond abhorrence of rags and filth. Even when some provision for future contingencies has been made, the dress of servants should always continue plain, uniform, and suited to their station; I mean in convenience of shape, as well as propriety of materials. Feathers rattling among our pots and saucians, trains

sweeping our dripping-pans, and muslin dresses scrubbing our rooms, can only excite ludicrous ideas in the beholders; while the poor decorated block patiently endures the inconvenience, in the hope that every one will admire her elegance. But I have not yet mentioned that acme of absurdity (to give it no stronger name) to which *caricatured* refinement has *hurried* the age. Indelicacy treads upon the heels of impropriety. Diana, in her diamond crescent, cannot disrobe faster than the wood-nymphs who attend her; and, as Fielding observes of his Sophia, “when the lady uncovers her arms, which have all the properties of wax but that of melting, her maid Mrs. Honour exhibits her resemblance of bull-beef with equal sang-froid and to the same extent.” I have an aversion to the Venus de Medicis, even when it is carved in alabaster; and I hope that the numerous brick-bat models which we meet with in sculleries will persuade the indignant goddesses to resume her veil: till she sets the example, there is no hope of reformation. In vain shall we preach economy and propriety, if we show those who look up to us for examples the *method* of being extravagant and ridiculous.

Thus, as in all other authoritative situations, example closes the circle of prescribed duties, and its influence on subordinate stations is almost invincible. You rarely see the master and mistress of a family distinguished for propriety and goodness, without observing that the servants exhibit the aspect of decency and order. When the heads of the house are dissipated, riot and profligacy reign in the kitchen; the extravagance of the lady is reflected by her myrmydons. Is she absurdly emulous of her superiors; does she launch into expenses merely because she cannot bear to be outdone; you will generally find that every female in the house is a tawdry beggar, and intimately acquainted with the *internal* regulations of a pawnbroker’s shop. On the other hand, is the mistress contented in her station, economic, industrious, domestic, and prudent, the servants will not be gadders and gossips; their appearance will be plain; their manners regular; they will find amusement in their occupations, and the song of cheerfulness will carol to the wheel of diligence.

Nor is the benefit of a good example confined within the walls of our own dwelling. To you, my dear young friend, who are by birth appointed to that most enviable of all situations a country gentlewoman, I can with peculiar applicability point out the beneficial consequences of prudence, gen-



tleness, decent respect to your own rank, kind attention to the wants and comforts of others, and regard to religious duties, as reflected in the appearance of a village which looks up to you as its standard of right. Happy would it be for this kingdom, if *influence* were always as happily exerted in favour of *moral* improvement!

The virtue of charity has been so often commended in the course of our correspondence, that I shall only briefly mention it in this letter. Benevolence is certainly a prime part of our duty to our inferiors. Happily it is not overlooked in this kingdom. In our laudable endeavours for bettering the condition of the poor, let us, however, bear in mind two considerations, which ever ought to guide the liberal hand of *unsparing* beneficence: I mean that we should never excite the insatiable appetite of *improper refinement*, and beware of encouraging that *perpetual dependence* on our aid which weakens the moral stimulus from which industry and provident care for the future are derived. It is in these particulars that the poor of this kingdom are placed in a *worse* situation than their ancestors. Parochial relief, though it is their only bulwark against absolute want that has yet been discovered, seldom fails to injure the character of those who frequently claim it. Hence the incalculable superiority of every plan which proposes to preserve the poor from distress, over those which barely tend to prevent them from sinking under its galling pressure.

As far, therefore, as the influence of any lady can extend, let her be the patroness of industry and frugality, the rewarder of merit, and the enemy of immorality. Let her acquaint herself with the *real* wants of the family which she means to serve, before she takes them out of their own hands, and teaches them to depend upon her assistance. To this end, she should (as has been before observed) know what they have it in their power to earn, what sum is necessary for their *subsistence*, what for *comfort*, what for *indulgence*. The thrifty earth does not produce her delicacies in sufficient redundancy to allow all her offspring to partake of them; but when the relish has not been acquired, this privation is not painful. The increasing opulence of every *ascending* rank proportionably increases care, responsibility, and indulgence. It is our duty to remember this, both in respect to those above and those beneath us. If we encourage indolence, or foster unreasonable appetites, our benevolence makes us bad citizens. Age, infirmity, sickness, unprotected infancy, wid-

owhood, and imbecility, have a right to pecuniary aid ; and what we give to extravagance, idleness, or dissolute morals, is in fact taken from these just claimants.

To discharge our duty well in the relative stations of life, ample fortunes or superior information are not necessary. The widow's mite was accepted and *recorded* ; to "a cup of cold water," given on christian motives, is promised a reward. Out of her little barrel of meal and scanty cruse, the Zidonian widow maintained the exiled prophet of God. They who confine their notions of benevolence to the *overflowings* of wealth, forget that christian charity is founded on *self-denial*.

These remarks, my dear Miss M——, are not necessary to you ; but the times require them. The equalizing spirit of the age, and the abundant largesses which wealth unsparingly bestows, induce the poor to set little value upon the assistances which *limited frugality* can *prudently* afford. The ingratitude and extravagance of the lower orders are therefore frequently urged, by those who have not much to bestow, as a reason for reserving that little to their own use. The rapacity of self-indulgence must, however, be checked ; the positive command of our Master must not be forgotten, nor his own example of tender pity to the ungrateful overlooked. If we should really be so unfortunately situated as to know no object who deserves or requires our aid, let us then remember that we can further the beneficial purposes of public charity. We are ourselves naked and hungry, unless we are adorned and fed by the riches of God's mercy. We are commanded "to do good, and to be ready to communicate to those who are in need." We are also enjoined to keep our own bodies in subjection ; and we shall never avoid indulging ourselves in sinful propensities, unless we are accustomed to the wholesome discipline of moderating or denying our innocent desires. If we permit ourselves to plead experienced ingratitude, as a reason for abstaining from the duty of benevolence, we shall become in every sense of the word uncharitable, selfish, implacable, uncandid, and petulant, full of envy, swollen with pride, haughty, and vain glorious, without kindly affections to our brother man, and unthankful to God. How detestable is such a character, and how intimately has our blessed Master united *duty* with *respectability and true enjoyment* !

I remain, my dear Miss M——,

Ever faithfully yours, &c.

## LETTER XV.

*On the Duties of declining Life and old Age.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

WE have considered the sphere of general utility in which Providence designed that our sex should move. We have investigated the oblique paths in which the frailty of our nature, and the strong inducements of external temptations, have frequently made us wander; and we have also considered our general and relative duties as christians, as rational creatures, as the wives and mothers of the human race, and as the regulators of domestic comfort and family order. We seem now to have conducted the female character to that stage of life which requires and deserves tranquillity and repose. Yet even hither the obligations of duty and usefulness accompany us; nor indeed do they quit us on this side the grave, unless we are destined to hang suspended over its brink, stretched on the couch of *bedridden inanity*. Let no one, therefore, suppose that because the decline of life is generally less crowded with busy occupations, we may devote it without hesitation to selfish enjoyment.

- “ For better purposes to favour’d man  
 “ Is length of days, tremendous blessing, given;  
 \* To regulate our life’s disorder’d plan,  
 “ And purify the blemish’d soul for heaven.  
 \* How blest who thus, by added years improv’d,  
 “ With cautious steps their lengthen’d journey tread,  
 “ And, from the task of sultry life remov’d,  
 “ Convert with wisdom in its ev’ning shade !”

*Mrs. Carter’s Poems.*

A few reflections on the reciprocal obligations of youth and age, and on the occupations of declining life, shall conclude a correspondence in which I flatter myself the pleasure and improvement have been mutual. By analysing the faults of others, I have furnished myself with better armour against

my own errors; and the subject that I am about to discuss leads me to think, that the counsels of experience may occasionally have relieved *you* from the incertitude of youthful timidity.

The primary duties of declining life are certainly due to our own family, and those remnants of friendship and early connexion which death, or the vicissitudes of fortune, still permit us to retain; for this is not the period to extend our acquaintance and enlarge our circle, when we feel ourselves daily less capable of slowly pacing a *circumscribed* round. Our first preparation for decent retreat is, to let the strictness of maternal authority gradually subside into affectionate friendship. When the judgment of a young person has so far ripened as to become adequate to the common purposes of life, the mother will do well to change command into counsel, and positive prohibition into reason and argument. The period between adolescence and maturity seems to be the age in which we should attempt to govern by influence, and to direct the understanding rather by insinuation than decisive control. As years advance, the cord of restraint should continue to be slackened; and in proportion to this relaxation, the ties of affection and esteem should, if possible, be strengthened, till attachment and habit have formed the *invincible cement* of maternal and filial friendship. This surely never can be promoted by inverting the natural order so long sanctioned by experience. A contending infant must certainly make a pert child, a froward girl, and an insolent daughter. The complaints which parents in declining life frequently make, of the neglect and unkindness of their children, are mostly ascribable to their own bad management; they indulged and humoured them when they *ought to have had them in subjection*; and then expected to govern them when habit had engendered stubbornness, and custom *acknowledged and justified* their claim to self-government.

The mother who has preserved the affections of her children, and brought them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," has made the richest provision for her declining years; and she may then with propriety begin to relieve her own shoulders from the burthen of worldly care. Our sex is charged with finding it very difficult to *grow old* when they *ought*; and the beauty of a daughter is said to be never thoroughly admired by a mother who piqued herself upon her early loveliness. There is some truth in this charge; but the picture of a faded toast covering her gray locks with

false hair, brightening her dim eyes with a large portion of rouge, exposing her shrivelled person, imitating in her girlish titters and jaunty step the vivacity of youth, and looking around to see if she has withdrawn admiration from those fair blossoms of unassisted nature which bloom beautiful at her side, is so irresistibly ludicrous, that I should hope the general inclination to laugh at such gross folly makes people often accuse maternal vanity, when the *sprightly* matron only intended to pave the way for her *daughter's* conquests.

This view of the world has made me often lament the indispensable necessity of chaperons for spinsters who have passed the age of juvenile indiscretion; supposing that it must be miserable, for ladies in the autumn of their days to be compelled to pass, not merely their midnight, but their morning hours also, in the fatiguing scenes of public amusement and private dissipation, as often as any *unmarried* friend solicited them to forego those comforts of rest and repose which must be so much more congenial to declining strength and impaired health. Above all, I have lamented the absolute necessity of their adopting the chilling costume, without which, I suppose, it is *impossible* for them to be admitted within the precincts of fashion. Contemplating the mournful list of diseases, dire catarrhs, asthmas, rheumatics, palsies, &c. to which decaying fabrics are more exposed, and *feeling* the comforts of fleecy hosiery and warm wrappings, I have had the presumption to suppose that a general *insurrection* of middle aged ladies, in defence of the privileges suited to their years, might procure them a charter to authorise their wearing sleeves, petticoats, and handkerchiefs. As for *old* women, it will not be necessary to put in any saving clauses on their account; for in genteel life the order is *extinct*. With this very humble effort to serve the idol they worship, self (which on that account will, I trust, be kindly received,) I make my farewell curtsy to "the fashionable world;" among whose virtues I gratefully acknowledge the gay good humour, and polite nonchalance, with which it endures censure, defies reproach, and even enjoys a satire on its own vices that promises to kill time; thus leaving to myself, and the industrious tribe to whom I belong, the *ever new* delight of pointing out its vices and absurdities. I will address the remainder of this letter to a less *incorrigible* order of beings.

To the gradual abdication of maternal authority, a progressive relinquishment of superfluous ornaments of dress and

pleasurable pursuits should be added. I do not mean that this dereliction should proceed to total negligence or entire seclusion; but that, in the former case, we should forbear to set "an odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds on the icy brow of Hymen," because every tittering girl will discover that it is done "in mockery;" and in the latter instance, that we should sit so loose to active enjoyment, as most willingly to relinquish a place at a party of pleasure, to gratify the longings of sanguine youth; nay, that we should bring our minds to such a state, as to receive more satisfaction from the recapitulation of such scenes, when described by a daughter or a niece, than the being an eye witness could have communicated. This is not supposing or recommending an untimely or entire renunciation of the world. While we continue to have the charge of young daughters, we must, most unquestionably, for their sakes, mix in its more festive scenes as often as prudence and propriety enjoin that they should enjoy those amusements, which it is necessary our presence should sanction. The absurd laws of fashionable life require matrons to initiate single ladies in *continual* dissipation; there seems also to be an *opposite error* in the middle classes permitting their grown girls to go *every where*, without the least restriction from the presence of a mother or steady relation, who would not only prevent the impertinent advances of forward pretenders, but also check those ebullitions of volatile spirits which are apt to hurry the possessor into extravagance, if not into vice. The evils that arise from neglected infancy are comparatively trivial, to the consequences which must ensue from suffering youth to run its headlong course unadmonished and unobserved. A significant glance from a maternal eye may prevent a thousand improprieties; nip a dangerous intimacy in its bud; correct a vivacity which, though resulting from innocence, is often ascribed to improper levity; and extricate a heedless inexperienced girl from embarrassments, with which it would be impossible for her to contend self-supported.

But, though our appearance in *public scenes* of amusement should rather depend upon the wishes and necessities of others than on our own, as long as our health and faculties will permit us to add to the pleasures of social intercourse, I would advise my sex not to give themselves up to *total seclusion*. If they can bring good humour and cheerfulness into company, they may be assured that their presence will be a valuable addition to its delights. There are very few young peo-

ple who would not love the society of their seniors, provided they were treated with kindness, and condescending attention to the propensities and errors incident to their age. The trite rule, that old people should remember they were young, and the young should consider that if they live they will be old, is quite sufficient to establish the commerce of different ages on an agreeable footing. Let us picture to ourselves the wisdom of declining years removing the doubts and confirming the judgment of youthful inexperience; and receiving, in return, those exhilarating supplies of vivacity and amusement which its exhausted spirits often require. Does not this idea present to the mind one of the most amiable and valuable portraits of social life, exercised in the beneficent offices of relieving the mutual wants of humanity? Let us take sound sense and good temper for the characteristics on one side, and let modesty and sprightliness predominate on the other; affection, and a desire to serve and to please, must be mutual; and surely a friendship that is founded on an equality of years can hardly furnish so many essential requisites for happy and improving intercourse.

To increase the effect of its admonitions, age should always place its superiority in a true light; it being an adventitious and relative, not an inherent distinction. If, while we obliquely lecture the extravagancies of youth, we glance occasionally at our "own salad days," when we also "were green in judgment," we shall greatly abate the *offensiveness* of prescription. The narrative of our mischances, proceeding either from the want or the neglect of *instruction*, will persuade our hearers of the integrity of our intentions in bestowing it upon them; and they will be contented not to be wise before their time, provided we yield them the empire which youth and beauty may claim with propriety, and do not require them to listen to us as to beings who are exempt from error. The sombre colours in which we must occasionally depicture life, in order that we may check the extreme avidity of youthful pursuit, and the ardour of sanguine expectation, will appear more natural, if we direct their recollection to the images that occupied their minds in their childish days, and the little relish they now have for the enjoyments which then seemed impossible to glut their craving desires. But we must not enlarge too far on the melancholy side of human life; we should also tell our young auditors, that as every age and season has its appropriate views and duties, it would be improper for those who are begin-

ning the task of life to estimate it by the same standard as we do, whose labours are nearly finished. And, lest they should suspect our views of existence to be copied from the darkening mirror of spleen and envy, at finding ourselves superannuated in the records of pleasure, let us prove our disinterestedness in the disposal of her favours, not by a *formal disavowal*, but by our unaffected *indifference* to what we have voluntarily surrendered, and by our sincere desire to enable the rising generation to enjoy the *fruits* of their season, in such a degree as temperance and prudence will allow.

I have spoken of vivacity as the distinguishing feature of youth; but it by no means follows, that age ought to adopt the sober uniform of tristful melancholy. If it prefer the attire of gravity, let that decorous garb resemble the robe of "the starr'd Ethiop queen," and be studded over with lucid spangles. I grant, the sportive train of Euphrosyne, who "trip on the light fantastic toe," would be rather inconvenient partners to those who limp through the vale of years; but, *if possible*, let cheerfulness conduct us to life's latest stage. There is something delightfully exhilarating in the sportive good humour of an agreeable old woman. I have even seen assumed coquetry appear infinitely engaging, when it was adopted to correct and instruct a granddaughter. You observe, I speak of an *affected*, not a real flirtation; and I premise that the actor had a *moral* purpose. When cheerfulness struggles with disease and hopeless infirmity, she presents us not merely an amiable but a sublime object; for how, my dear miss M——, can we better estimate the power of religion, than when we perceive that it enables the soul to emerge from the ruins of its earthly tabernacle, not only without terror, but with a serene complacency almost amounting to exultation?

I believe mental energy and bodily activity are the best medical recipes that have been discovered to retard the progress of physical decay. When the wish of repose increases upon us, we should exercise our judgment, to distinguish whether it is the *positive* call of nature, or the cravings of self-indulgence; and as we value the enjoyment of our remaining days, we must comply with the former, and combat the latter. Let us apply to the employments that most interest us as long as possible, and decline the assistance of others as long as we are able to perform little offices for ourselves. To "live all the days of our lives," in a *rational*, not a *Bacchanalian* sense, is most desirable; for our mortal ex-



istence is a burden, and not a blessing, when the spring of the mind, as well as the sinews of the body, is broken down, and feeble dependence is constrained to lean on extraneous support. In such a state we may and must continue, if it be the will of God, till he separates impatient age from its load of drossy alloy, and purifies it into ethereal mind. But surely it must be a sensible aggravation to the miseries of those who thus drink the bitter dregs of life, to have their scanty share of recollection filled with the consciousness that indolence and self-indulgence have *prematurely* brought on those years in which they feel there is no pleasure.

Another preventive to growing old before our time is, to avoid incurring those habits which will drive us to our own bed chambers, and what is still worse, confine us to the society of interested dependence. I have mentioned cheerfulness and good humour as the credentials which will ever procure admittance into good company. To preserve our title to these, we must watch against those notions and habits which are apt to predominate when disappointment and lassitude have prepared the wearied mind for misanthropy, or at least rendered it indifferent to surrounding objects. It is certainly extremely desirable, that we should not be too much attached to what we must soon relinquish: Yet, on the other hand, if we cut the knots which bind us to the world faster than nature unties them, we *excoriate* instead of *liberating* our hearts; and there is more probability of their becoming cankered o'er with spleen, than that they will be so purified as to render them a willing and acceptable offering to God. If we seclude ourselves from society further than our religious duties, our infirmities, or the decorums due to our age, justify, we shall not think more *wisely* than our neighbours, but more *austerely*. We shall look on errors as crimes, and turn dissimilarity of opinion into error. If our intercourse is chiefly limited to those who dare not contradict us, we shall infallibly become dogmatical and opinionated; and our tenacity, instead of giving sanction to the purity of our principles and the rectitude of our conduct, will render even our wisdom and virtue forbidding and disgusting. They who would reform the world (and who so proper for the undertaking "as the hoary head, when it is found in the paths of righteousness?") should remember the apostolical rule of becoming "all things to all men, that by any means they might gain some." The uncomplaining aspect of sterile stern reproof is ill adapted to the office of per-

suasion. If we require youth to sacrifice its inclinations and passions to our admonitions, we must take especial care that its attentions shall not be *diverted* from its own improvement, by the irresistible inducement of an *obvious retort*, which our own petulance or positiveness has deserved, and rendered but too applicable.

But notwithstanding all these heroical endeavours to delay as long as we can the period of our playing nobody in the drama of life, the time commonly at length arrives when our excursions cannot extend far beyond our own fire-sides, and our limited observations must be contented with the confined amusements which the domestic circle affords us. Happy they who at this, or indeed any other period of declining life,\* possess the luxurious enjoyment of long established well proved friendship! Age is always said to be garrulous; and how can this propensity be so delightfully gratified, as in the society of one with whom we can discuss those scenes of early life which are viewed with tenfold interest, and glow with more vivid colours, when descried through the *softening* perspective of time? When memory begins to fail, it resembles the telescope; near objects and late events are but dimly discerned, and make a faint impression; while expatiating on those which are remote, it magnifies them into distinctness and splendour. Hence the conversation of aged people generally consists in tales of past times; and if they are faithful chroniclers, an intelligent auditor will always listen to them with delight: but the pleasure of the relater is exquisitely increased, when a venerable cotemporary is at hand to confirm the narrative, or to elucidate it with additional circumstances.

But though an *occasional* companion of our own age, especially such a one with whom we can renew the endearments of ancient friendship, is highly gratifying; if the pressure of infirmities be very *severe*, it rarely happens that the comfort of old people is really increased by *residing* together, unless they have done so from an earlier period of life. In the last stages of our existence, habit becomes extremely tenacious; acquiescence is painful; anguish and wearisomeness can ill spare those attentions which humanity to the infirmities, and observance of the wants, of our companions require; and it is justly observed, "that two groaning people make a miserable concert." Hence we may discover the value of that

\* See Letter 21.

benevolence which unites the different ages as well as ranks in society; and surely there cannot be a greater proof of real goodness of heart in those who are blessed with a full enjoyment of their faculties, than when they devote their leisure intervals to divert the gloom that must ever intrude on the doleful sameness of decrepitude. This was a distinguishing characteristic of a gentleman whom you have often heard me applaud and lament. With talents which obtained distinction in the most learned societies, with such natural and acquired elegance as favoured his admittance into the most polished company, his *christianized* spirit often led him to prefer those *untrodden* paths, where he could expect to meet with no other entertainment than the grateful welcome of infirmity, and the gratulations of his own approving conscience. For these and all his other good deeds, we may trust, he is now enjoying the foretaste of his future eternal recompense, in the society of prophets and martyrs, and of the spirits of wise “and just men made perfect, amid the church of the first born.” Happy will it be, if the fair memorial that he has left behind him of virtues and talents shall excite the emulation of such as now shrink with fantastical horror from those duties in which his exalted mind found the most exquisite satisfaction.\* But to return.

When protracted life has attained the period of which we are now treating, a relinquishment of worldly concerns becomes necessary. To do this, requires great strength of mind and command of temper; for what is so difficult as to part with long cherished habits of praise-worthy exertion, and, after we have been accustomed to lead and direct others, to be obliged to submit to be led and directed, perhaps in a method which is *distasteful* to ourselves? The Saviour of the world points out this circumstance to the great apostle of the circumcision;† and though in that instance it prophetically referred to the trial of martyrdom, it may be considered as analogous to the common decrepitude of age: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands,

\* A faint sketch of this gentleman's character may be met with in *The Guardian of Education*, vol. iii. p. 242. It is also the subject of a monody, entitled *Lycid*, in the 3d vol. of this author's *Poetry*.

† John *xxi.* verse 18.

“and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.” These considerations should forcibly strike all who have the care of infirm people, whose narrow bound of enjoyments should be *sacredly* regarded, and the *few* pleasures that they can yet taste *most charily preserved*. The time will probably arrive when their own feelings will tell them that what they thought care was negligence; and if this reflection do not arise from an acute sense of the bitterness of privation, when the grave has closed on those to whom we can no longer minister, an affectionate heart will always feel that the services *which cannot be repeated* were limited and cold.

As in active minds the desire of occupation always survives the power of performance, the burden of time becomes to such insupportable, and their first and last complaint always is, that they are now good for nothing. To remove this weighty pressure by contriving little amusements, becomes the joint duty of all who have charge of this state of second childhood; but such compassionate anticipating kindness does not exonerate the sufferers from the exercise of self-control, which is as much their duty now, as it was in the early and happy period of youthful activity. “They serve who can only stand and wait,”\* as much as they who fly to discharge the behests of divine Providence. When we can no longer *act*, we can yet *obey*; when we can no longer do good to our fellow-creatures, we *can set them an example of resignation*. Yet how often does it happen, that imbecility clings still closer to the world in proportion as sublunary engagements tear themselves from its grasp! Hence spring two dark and heavy offences, which generally gain ground “as we tend toward earth;” an attachment to that “golden snare” for which we have now so little use, and an anxiety to superintend the pecuniary concerns of our descendants even after we are consigned to the grave, and this for as many generations as the law will *permit us* to extend our precautionary limitations. The passion for entailing and fettering their successors by whimsical and arbitrary restraints, is the last gratification of restless avarice, and generally seizes upon advanced life. Except for the purpose of *securing* property in the *right line*, these restrictions are unjust, and often a fruitful source of domestic unhappiness. Unless there be cause to suspect, either from the vices or prejudices

\* This sublime idea is taken from Milton's 20th sonnet.

of the next heir, that the family inheritance will be *improperly* alienated, every generation should possess its natural right of managing its effects according to its own discretion. In treating of the errors which are incident to old age, it seemed requisite that I should not omit what is a very common one; though women so seldom possess the power of exercising their caprice in this way, that these admonitions in an address to my own sex appear almost supererogatory. Those who have property to bestow, should take care to perform that important duty at a time when their judgment is too sound to be influenced by other motives than justice and discretion, and before the habits of brooding reflection, constantly occupied in its own concerns, have taught them to attach importance to trifles, and made them the *slaves* of pique and prejudice, and the *dupes* of artful blandishment.

Often, at this period of life, those who have been most tenacious of governing others, and conducting their affairs by the sole consideration of their sovereign will and pleasure, become the prey of some cunning dependant; who, having banished the relations and respectable connexions of their infatuated victims by crafty subservience, exercise a most uncontrollable tyranny over what they consider, in every purport of the word, *their* property; while the unhappy captives (for in that light aged persons so situated must be considered,) warped in their judgments by false representations, and precluded from an intercourse with those who would direct them right, often conceive a strong attachment for the authors of this most unjust treatment. It is extremely natural to feel grateful to those who personally minister to our infirmities, and perform for us those offices which are most necessary to our comfort; but our sense of these benefits should not obliterate the impressions of early affection, or silence the sacred voice of justice in behalf of our relations and friends, who are perhaps prevented from thus constantly attending to our wants, by nearer, and therefore primary claims. Stipendiary services demand a reward in proportion to the fatigue that they occasion, or the fidelity, adroitness, and alacrity with which they are performed; but the ties of blood and early affection are sacred, and cannot be *cancelled* even by the *unworthiness* of the immediate representative, unless he has no *issue* to rescind the deserved forfeiture. Were we to put ourselves in the place of those who claim to inherit our property, we should feel the justice of these remarks; though, unquestionably, we are allowed some license

as to the *proportions* in which we make our distribution, where the wants and the deserts of our legatees may be fairly considered; and if our kindred be remote, we may also, without abrogating the laws of God,\* exercise the privilege of *selection*. If our obligations to our domestics are principally confined to their humouring our waywardness and flattering our foibles, it is more our business to *reform* ourselves than to *reward* them. But, unhappily, I am now preaching to ears almost as cold and dull as that of death. Enfeebled intellect and increasing obstinacy have, in this state of humiliated mortality, barred the mind against the admission of reason, especially if it approach in the shape of a monitor. But since (like what was supposed to be the case of the provident ant) we ought to secure those stores in autumn which must support us in winter, let us, among our preparations for growing old with propriety, lay up a double stock of caution against whims, peculiarities, and prejudices; and prepare an antidote for the morbid anodyne of flattery, by preserving a relish for wholesome reproof, and subduing that obstinate self-attachment which alone can render the expressed juice of the noxious creeper palatable.

It being expedient to prevent as long as possible the mind from constantly brooding over its own *narrow* concerns, or on the *mouldering* particles of its decaying associate, a relish for literature should be carefully cherished. Science and taste belong to that rank of quiet companions, who are not terrified by the appearance of an arm chair, a wrapping shawl, and solitude. Reading, as long as prudent regard to the organs of vision will permit, is a most gratifying employment to an elderly person who preserves the power of clear discrimination. But this can never be enjoyed in our declining years, unless the taste for it has been early acquired. Hence arises the advantage of extending our youthful studies as far as our abilities and leisure will permit; for though, in the busy scenes incident to the middle of our existence, there may be but few opportunities for indulging this appetite, it will revive at the season of retired privacy, and form one of the most delightful interruptions to the sameness of solitude.

\* For the Jewish law of inheritance, see Numbers xxvii. verse 6; which law is exemplified in the xxxvith chap. Though the judicial laws of Moses do not bind christians, the civil institutions of this nation have recognised the justice of this distribution.

It has been often observed, that improvement can never take place at a late period in life; and the age of forty-five was (as you well know) determined to be the *remotest* period of amelioration. Many instances might however be given, of great mental attainments after that age; and I think moral and religious cultivation never goes on more rapidly, than when we *drive* our ploughs *down hill*. But to continue the allusion in another point of view; though as long as the sun of intellect continues to shine, the harvest of thought will increase in ripeness and value; those who neglected to sow the seeds of reflection till the end of summer, must never expect to reap their mature produce. Just as the green blade shoots forth, the *sithe of death*, or the *frost of oblivious infirmity*, will cut down the hopes of the indolent husbandman who slumbered during the proper season of toil.

Permit me in this place to indulge in a few reflections, which, though not adapted to general use, force themselves upon my mind with irresistible urgency: I fear, however, that they favour strongly of egotism. Beside the termination of our mortal existence, to which all look forward, the close of a literary career presents many serious considerations to those who have experienced its delights and its pains. These principally proceed from those acute sensibilities which, while they invigorate fancy and quicken observation, *particularly* expose the possessor to feel "the rubs and flouts," "the proud man's contumely," and all the scorns which "merit" must ever experience, not only from "the unworthy" but from competitors in the race of fame, from misconceived opinions, from severe censure, and from that capriciousness of popular opinion which frequently withholds its praise where labour and ingenuity alike claimed attention; and bestows that celebrity and emolument on a well turned *jeu d'esprit*, an appropriate tale, or a local satire, which the writer of a profound thesis vainly contemplated, and soothed his painful labours with the hope of enjoying.

Yet, notwithstanding that none but a writer can *guess* a writer's pains, the visits of fancy, or the scintillations of investigation, are so delightful, that their absence must leave a void in the mind when they cease to illuminate it, which is more dreary than what is created by the cessations of ordinary occupations. It will, however, be advisable for the possessors of these treasures, to look forward to the gradual relinquishment of delights so justly dear; and as nothing is more unlikely than that we should be able to appreciate our

own decay, it seems advisable, at that period of life when judgment usually becomes defective, to accustom ourselves to an increased reliance on the opinions of others, whom we should encourage to frankness and candour by a ready acknowledgment of infirmity. The productions of even valuable authors in old age seldom fail to diminish their reputation, and often only present a mournful picture of *stubborn infirmity* scorning to yield to the inevitable lot of humanity. It is more melancholy to see respectable talent burying itself alive beneath the ponderosity of its own loquaciousness, than when injudicious friendship, by its frivolous and bustling industry, contrives, like Falstaff, to murder some defunct Hotspur of the Parnassian field *with his own sword*. The timely destruction of all manuscripts which unclouded judgment determines to be unworthy of publication, would prevent this posthumous homicide; and the friendly counsels of some *faithful* Lucius may snatch back the hand of Cato before it signs the deed of self-slaughter.

Authors, after they have withdrawn from the field of literary enterprise, may still be most usefully employed. The examination of former labours, if not in a critical or philological, at least in a moral point of view, will become not only an amusement, but a solemn preparation for another world. In this respect, the children of literature seem more responsible than the rest of mankind: death can scarcely be said to put the seal to their actions; for, if they possess celebrity, their good or bad works continue to operate in the world long after the authors have ceased to prepare the poison, or to compound the antidote. To reexamine what they have penned, to analyse the consequences of all their tenets, at least to see that the general result cannot encourage vice, weaken the principles, vitiate the fancy, or warp the judgment of posterity, is an office which reflection teaches us is right, and religion therefore *requires* us to perform. If they discover any thing erroneous, they should diligently use the yet remaining light that their wasting taper affords to repair what is amiss. Perhaps the acknowledgment of error is the only reparation that they can make; and if they cannot excise from their works the passages which they now feel to be objectionable, they may at least take some public method to refute them. "To err is human;" to confess error, though not "divine," is the nearest approach that conscious fallibility can make to perfection.



Something, possibly, may also be required by society individually considered. In the heat of controversy, they may have spoken injuriously of their opponents, or they may have dressed opposite opinions in false colours. Satire may have hurried them into calumny, or prepossession may have shed a delusive brilliancy around a worthless object. In these particulars, whatever is wrong should be remedied by frank confession, as well as all other notions which experience, or increased information, shall convince them were erroneous.

Supposing the rare case, that reason should still reign in unclouded majesty, while nature wastes by gentle, imperceptible, and easy decay; and that our affections were not agonized by those losses which often embitter protracted life, or those cares for immediate provision which must be severely felt by *increasing* wants struggling with *limited* means; we can hardly picture a more happy state than such a serene, quiet, and, let me add, independent old age. The enjoyments of youth have always a degree of feverish passion annexed to them, which produces too much trepidation for lasting delight. The pleasures of mature age are interrupted by fears and cares; in either state, exquisite sensations of pain and pleasure tread closely upon each other, and the soul is alternately lifted high, and low ingulphed, like a vessel in a storm. But when the passions are subdued by time; when desire is weakened by long experience of the unsubstantial nature of earthly enjoyments; when the certainty of the shortness of our stay on earth *abates* our anxiety for the duration of what we still possess; when in our retrospect of our past days we discover no fearful record of unrepented misdeeds; when we still retain that best part of us, the intellectual faculty, in full perfection, strengthened by the well digested treasures of our early days, and capable of the improvement which leisure and inclination still promise to afford; when, to the progressive satisfactions of increased perception, the duties of charity and the visions of faith are superadded, surely this is to lead the life of angels even while on earth.

May we not acquire a faint image of its exquisite serenity, by comparing it to the cool *refreshing calm* of a beautiful summer's evening, when the *exhausting* heat of the day has subsided? Let us suppose ourselves stationed in a pleasant garden, refreshed with odiferous breezes, soothed by the murmurs of a distant rivulet, or the soft tones of a flute mel-

lowed by intervening waters. Here, while the labour which we lately underwent renders the repose that we now enjoy more balsamic; while our refreshing faculties awaken with new energy to contemplation or imagination; while every pulse "makes healthful music," and every sense conveys delight to the soul; does not our satisfaction increase from the reflection that our toil is finished, and the hour of lawful repose arrived? Such, I conceive, must be the feelings of healthful, intelligent, contented, and pious old age. The hope of living thus happily and wisely for *ourselves*, when dissolved ties no more enjoin us to live to *others*, solaces the fatigue attendant on anxious and incessant employment.

Is there, however, a period in human life when we *really* are released from the obligation of being useful to our fellow-creatures? Surely none. Let us therefore rather look forward to *relaxation*, than to *absolute* rest.

The pleasures of very advanced life must chiefly spring from recollection; and if the faculties are not much impaired, a retrospect of our past lives will afford us a salutary and agreeable amusement. We must not, however, place full confidence in the conclusions which we shall then form of the real value of life. If youth is apt to be too precipitate in its decisions, and too sanguine in its views, slow and faturine age is not more uniformly just in its conclusions.

Seen through the vista of expected years,  
 Life cheats our hopes with glories not its own;  
 Each glittering vane a golden tower appears,  
 And every rock a temple or a throne;  
 While the dim sight of melancholy time  
 Involves the prospect in unnatural gloom,  
 And the fond idols of our days of prime  
 Change to a toy, a shipwreck, or a tomb.

Here then, as in early life, we shall need a guide to correct the false views which prejudice is apt to impose upon us; and where shall we apply, but to that never failing friend to whose counsels, it is to be hoped, our youth has been deeply indebted; I mean to *religion*; and chiefly to the sacred volume in which she speaks in her own genuine and authoritative language? As this is the most proper of all books for those who have wandered far into the vale of years, it is earnestly to be hoped that we shall not fail to apply to what must be our chief source of consolation. The necessity of

acquiring a relish for such studies at an early period is obvious, by considering that whoever neglects to learn the laws by which they must be judged, till their opportunities of obeying them are past, can have no pretensions to the reward of a *faithful servant*, whatever hope they may cherish to obtain forgiveness as a *bankrupt debtor*; for their obedience must have been accidental, and therefore unmeritorious. Nor can their minds be enlarged to the comprehension of scripture doctrines, so as to receive *solid* consolations from them, if they never entered upon the study till their dull and blunted faculties were no longer capable of attending to worldly concerns, though habit had long familiarized their ordinary routine.

The study of the holy scriptures will correct the false views which melancholy and misanthropy are too apt to exhibit to those who quarrel with a world which they have really loved too well, and whose dissatisfaction is rather occasioned by grudging their sons the relics of the feast, or by the loss of their own appetite, than from any real conviction of the unsuitableness of the entertainment which they have been forced to quit. The only just estimate of our existence is, that it is a scene of probation and trial, in which much is to be *suffered* and *performed* under the guidance of hope and patience, and much to be *enjoyed* under the tuition of moderation and gratitude. Man, the chief actor in this motley drama, is neither a dæmon nor an angel; for the attributes of either character, exclusively bestowed, would have made him unfit for the task which has been assigned him; and thus we should unwisely bring the righteousness of God into question. Man is a being endowed with *free will*, or else he could not be *responsible*; he has great frailties, or in what would the merit of that virtue which cannot fall consist? He requires correction, or how can we reconcile the afflictions that he suffers with the attributes of a just God? He has powerful encouragements and assistances to enable him to vanquish the temptations to which he is exposed, as well from the assaults of his spiritual enemy, as from his own evil inclinations. Subduing his erroneous propensities, and cultivating his nobler properties, constitute his best employment in this state of warfare and exercise; but as all his efforts must fall infinitely short of his Creator's holiness, the merciful expedient of a Redeemer has been provided, in whose merits and mediation he may *securely*, but not *supinely*, trust.

Being compounded of seemingly discordant materials, matter and spirit, corruptibility and incorruptibility, sensuality and intellect, the body, which his better self inhabits, also requires his attention: hence spring all the obligations of justice, temperance, benevolence, and industry; and thus every chasm of existence becomes filled with appropriate duties; by neglecting which, he delivers himself into the power of his enemies; for idleness is the mother of sin, and sin the parent of death. Hence spring the duties of every period of life, and hence the trials to which all are exposed.

But our estimate of life can never be just, unless we enlarge our views to eternal existence, of which religion (or, I should rather say, christianity) affords us the only *substantial* and *definite* prospect. A future state of rewards and punishments smooths all the inequalities of this life, and affords to faltering virtue the only encouragement that can enable her to endure to the end. Among the conclusions respecting futurity which revelation permits us to indulge, it seems apparent that the blessed will never more experience fear or hope. Fear, we all know, is torture; but we are so indebted to hope for our sublunary pleasures, that we seem unwilling to part with so exhilarating a companion. Hope may be considered as one of the strongest *internal* evidences of our immortality; for when did human enjoyment ever realize the visions sketched by her fairy pencil? When have we found the good that we long toiled to possess, afford us such delight as we expected? Hope reminds us, therefore, of our immortal origin, by continually directing our views to the *future*, because, like Noah's dove, she can find no *sure footing* in this world, unwashed by the waves of affliction. But she will properly leave us at the entrance of the world to which she conducts us, because there the *present* affords such entire delight, that the mind is filled with the idea of immediate good, and wants nothing to confirm its bliss, but the certainty of its endless duration; which, resting on the sure promise of omnipotence, is liable to no incertitude.

When we are assured that at some distant period we must remove to a remote region, from whence we shall never return, and with which we are totally unacquainted, prudence teaches us to make all the inquiries that we can respecting its laws, and produce, and inhabitants, that we may endeavour to prepare ourselves for the habits and accommodations which we shall there meet with. But when we stand at the *very bourn* of this country, our interest in these discoveries

increases tenfold, and our diligence to prepare ourselves for our new habitation seems likely to engross all our thoughts. But since, in the case of exchanging the visible for the unseen world, we must wait "till we are summoned to pass the separating waters;" and since we are also assured, that to perform our duty here is our passport to the mansions of bliss; we must not, even in the last stage of life, so look on things eternal as to forget things temporal. This error is too rare to need much dissuasive admonition. Our offences are chiefly on the other side; and life even appears more attractive to most people when they know that they hold it by the slightest tenure.

To counteract this weakness, and to subdue the selfishness which is so natural to age, let the lively feelings of benevolence be carefully cherished. "I would attach myself to a tree or a plant," are, I think, the words of an amiable writer, "rather than exist without some object to excite the tender affections." Probably it is from an idea of this kind, that elderly people often keep some fondled pet, whom they cherish with ridiculous endearments. We must pardon such habits in those who live alone, and have no near object of attachment on whom they may more properly lavish their caresses; but when our immediate descendants or collateral branches can supply us with prattling infancy or sprightly youth, to exercise our tender feelings, we seem both unjust and unwise if we prefer irrational society. The advantages which age can afford to youth have been already remarked; they are not wholly limited to the period of *exertion*; as long as we can show an example of patience and piety, we are useful to the rising generation; and the consciousness of being so, must impart a serene gratification.

In proportion as the wants of our nature increase, our sensibility to our fellow-sufferers should enlarge. If aches and pains prevent us from sleeping even upon down, if we shiver with cold under the warm envelope of furs and fleeces, what must they do whose equal infirmities are exposed to musty straw and tattered wretchedness? If nourishing food and balsamic cordials can hardly keep "the wheel turning round at the cistern," how must the *faint heart falter* which lacks the stimulant of necessary sustenance! Is it not strange, that unfeeling avarice should so often mark the extreme of life, while the faithful remembrancers of compassion speak in every agonized feeling and languid sensation?

Combined with liberality to the pecuniary distresses of others, is the exercise of candour, forbearance, and gentleness; virtues extremely necessary, but most hard to practise, in declining life. Considering what many people then endure, asperity and petulance seem pardonable frailties; and in that light they should ever be considered by those whose duty it is to attend upon infirmity. But the sufferers themselves will ever act wisely by striving against those indulgencies of humour, which, like all other indulgencies, *increase* the evil which they seem to relieve. Infirmity cannot be benefited by spleen, envy, or moroseness; on the contrary, whatever robs us of the sympathy and affection of our fellow creatures increases our misery. But the only *perfect* defence against the temptations which so forcibly beset us in declining life, is resignation to the will of God. He who gives, has a manifest right to resume; and shall we not meekly bend to his dispensations, when we know that he has promised to restore our temporal losses tenfold in a better world!

Thus the bitter ingredients which render the dregs of life unpalatable continue to be medicinal. The loss of friends, the deprivation of faculties, the abridgment of enjoyments, all become useful preparatives, and *lighten* us for our journey. How dreadful is death to those who are in the prime of health and strength, and are cut off at the *commencement* of what promised to be a prosperous and happy life! But when the king of terrors seizes on a victim whom affliction has disrobed and prepared for his dart, his approach is not only *welcomed* by the sufferer, but all who witness the blow pronounce it to be merciful. To contemplate the advantages which they have derived from past trials, seems to be one of the most suitable employments of old age. How often will they have reason to exult at the *disappointments* which crossed their youthful desires, and to bless the *privations* which rent their agonized hearts! The beneficial purposes of misfortune cannot be immediately perceived. A child, when he is corrected, feels the punishment, but not the advantage of those improvements which punishment impels him to acquire. So, while we sink under the pressure of sorrow, our down-cast eyes are never raised so high as to discern that good will spring out of evil, even if we are so far improved in piety as to confess that our griefs proceed from an all wise God and merciful Father. But when we look at our trials through the distance of intervening years,

we can generally discern some good purpose which they immediately answered: and if this be the case with our *finite* powers of discrimination; if, while we “see through a glass darkly,” we can all of us say “it is good for us to be afflicted;” what conclusions must we form of the inestimable advantages of such discipline, when our glorified faculties are *enlarged* in a state of endless enjoyment! Surely our notions of life, as they respect the vicissitudes of fortune, will then so far change, that we shall denominate evil good and good evil.

But beside these trials, which must necessarily fall to the lot of declining age, it often happens, that some great and overwhelming affliction, some dreadful deprivation or change of circumstances, assaults us at this feeble period; and to evils of this kind the female sex is more peculiarly exposed. These are, however, felt more severely in the autumn of our days, than in the last years of life. The tree is most likely to be overfet when it is loaded with its verdant honours; for the tempest which would have howled through its *bare and naked* branches without meeting with resistance, will overwhelm opposition. The want of a sympathetic feeling, which is so universally ascribed to age as one of its errors, is in fact a characteristic of bodily decay, and a merciful preparative for its departure hence. In those rare instances, in which the afflictions of advanced life encounter very acute feelings, they who have witnessed the tears and bitter wailings of hopeless infirmity must ever regret that insensibility has not dropped the veil.

At whatever period of life we endure the extreme pressure of calamity, we shall do well to consider why we are severely afflicted. Sorrow cannot visit man but by divine permission, and for two purposes; to *prove* or to *correct* him; and both these ends are defeated, if we question instead of submitting to the blow. Repining murmurs are, in fact, rebellion against God, who may be thereby provoked either to cast us off as irreclaimable, or to humble us by still more acute chastisements. Even grief, when it becomes so immoderate as to injure our health or our temper, or absorbs our thoughts so as to disqualify us for the duties we owe to our friends and the world, is unquestionably a frailty, if not a sin. This consideration is very proper to women, who are too apt to attach *merit* to extreme *susceptibility*. To submit with cheerful resignation to the burden which Providence lays on us, and to improve it to our everlasting benefit, is

christian virtue. We must compassionate the faded form of grief, or the wild aspect of despair; but it is fortitude, “the nymph of the rock,” and “patience with her meek arms folded on her throbbing breast,” whom we *esteem* and *venerate*.

As death is the last enemy of man, so to subdue the dread of it is the *closing labour* of a pious christian; and, doubtless, it is to expedite this glorious achievement that the last scene of life is generally marked with privations and sorrows. Our friends expire before us, to teach us how to die; our powers of enjoyment decrease, to convince us that we have little to relinquish; our sphere of usefulness becomes contracted, to show us that our task in life is nearly finished. “The time was,” says the amiable Howel, writing to an old friend, “that you and I had all the fair continent of Europe before us to range in; we have since been confined to an island; and now, Lincoln holds you and London me. We must expect the day that sickness will confine us to our chambers, then to our beds, and so to our graves, the dark and silent grave, which will put a period to our pilgrimage in this world. And observable it is, what method nature doth use to contract our liberty by degrees. But though this small bag full of bones be so confined, yet the noblest part of us may then be said to be set at liberty, when, having shaken off this slough of flesh, she mounts up to her true country, the country of eternity, where one moment of joy is more than if we enjoyed all the pleasures of this world a million of years here among the elements. But till our threads are spun up, let us continue to enjoy ourselves as well as we can.” These reflections are *true wisdom*.

“You and I,” he continues, “have luckily met abroad under many meridians; when our course is run here, I trust that we shall meet in a region that is above the wheel of time, and it may be in the concave of some star, if those glorious lamps are habitable.” This pleasing hope, so dear to those who humbly trust that they have many a loved connexion among the blessed inhabitants of the unseen world, renders the memory of the friends we have lost not only “pleasingly mournful,” but *delightful* and *improving*. It is sanctioned by the opinion of many of our first divines, and is implied, though not fully asserted, in scripture. Where the veil has not been drawn aside, it is presumptuous to attempt to pierce into the secret counsels of God. But a hum-



ble expectation of this kind is not without effect, if it teach us to choose our friends from religious motives, and console us when we are so unfortunate as to have the bonds of virtuous attachment prematurely dissolved. Another happy use of this hope will be, to reconcile us to the irremediable stroke of death, in the expectation of its rejoining us to those whom we best loved.

To wait the approach of that event which shall for ever conceal from our eyes all that we have been *accustomed* to behold, and deliver us over to an untried and endless existence, with mingled sensibility and composure, is the enviable lot of *few*; and if even the strong and enlightened mind of Johnson faltered in this trial, what is the weakness and comparative ignorance of woman to expect, but *extreme dismay*? We beheld in the above instance, that firm faith, and habitual piety, were unable to protect the christian sage from being dejected by the apprehension of those tremendous evils, which haunt the shadow of that dark valley through which he expected soon to pass, faint and alone. To those who shudder with similar anticipations, it must be a consolation to know, that it was owing to the keen sensibility and devout humility of this admirable moralist, acting too forcibly upon a diseased and nervous frame, that he underrated his own fortitude, and feared the withdrawing of the *especial* grace of God. He *contemplated* his inevitable trial with doubt and terror; he *endured* it with magnanimity and hope. He who exclaimed, "O, my friend! the approach of death is very dreadful; I am afraid to think on that which I know I cannot avoid; It is vain to look round and round for that help which none can afford," found in his last hours the *full power* of the religion which he professed, and afforded another example to prove the propriety of the celebrated prayer of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

To those, however, who have had the misery to witness the desponding or excruciating exit of some dear connexion, whose life gave better expectations, a few consolatory suggestions may be useful; especially since enthusiasm and sectarism are so apt to dress the death beds of their converts and promulgators with as unnatural and fantastical ornaments as Rousseau bestowed on his *foppish* Eloise. The manner of dying very much depends on the nature of the mortal disease, which often entirely overpowers the intellectual faculties by absorbing them in acute pain, distorting them by

phrenzy, or benumbing them by torpor and stupidity. Rapturous exclamations of joy, and clear premonitions of felicity, cannot be congenial except to the *high wrought sensibility* of martyrs and confessors; for though a pious rational christian may, when death is at some distance, hail or even invite it as a blessed release, he must, when actually struggling in its grasp, feel an indescribable awe at the consciousness of immediately approaching the presence of his God. Even if the severity of bodily anguish do not compel him to cry aloud for help and deliverance, fervent and frequent ejaculations for mercy, and ardent professions of faith and hope in the great Mediator, are surely the most suitable expressions for sinful, repentant, dying man. To see our fellow-creatures thus expire, is to behold them die the death of the righteous. When they talk of *ravishing foretastes* of joy, golden crowns, and triumphant palms, may we not too generally lament that they quit this world in a state little suited to those who are to be examined as to what they have "done in the body, whether it is good or evil," and who must render a faithful account of their thoughts, words and actions? Bishop Taylor calls a persuasion of single predestination (or, as I believe it is now more generally called, assurance of salvation) on a death bed, "one of the designs of the tempter to interpose "between the end of the journey and the reception of the "crown."

We have now dropped the curtain on feeble age and conducted it, if not in presumptuous certainty, yet in humble expectation, to the "narrow house" which its ruined frame will never quit till "the earth and all things therein pass away." You well know on what promises we found our hopes that it may then "burst a seraph from the tomb," possessing faculties of which the fullest enjoyment of youthful alacrity, manly vigour, and sagacious experience, can give us but a *faint conception*. In a similarity to the glorified body of our Redeemer, and in the enjoyment of the beatific vision, every thing that is elevated, glorious, and desirable are combined.

The review of what age requires must impress youth with two considerations; a *tender felicitude* to minister to the infirmities of those who bend under its pressure, and a *provident* forecast to lay up the necessary stores for our own wants in that dreary season. These, it is obvious, will be of two kinds, mental and bodily; the former may be diminished by acquiring a relish for those pleasures and studies which we

can enjoy alone, and which will be then sufficiently delightful to occupy our attention, when vanity and interest offer no inducements to their pursuit. But the grand intellectual cordial of old age is the remembrance of a *well spent life*: if our years of prime have been devoted to the service of God and our fellow-creatures, if we have laid up a provision of good works, steady principles and just ideas, "the days" *never can arrive* "in which we shall have no pleasure."

The bodily wants of infirmity and imbecility are a claim upon the prudence, the œconomy, and the diligence of the active portion of our existence. The means that are foolishly squandered in one part of our lives, are generally wanted at another. As comforts are more necessary than luxuries, and as it is better to *enjoy* than to *outshine*; so it is infinitely more desirable that the evening of life should be serene, than that its morning should be brilliant. The disappointments and privations that assault us in the prime of our days, may be vanquished by industry or encountered by fortitude; but age sits shivering on its frozen perch, like a bird in winter, too weak to seek materials to build itself a nest, and yet unable to endure the storm. Whatever anxiety, exertion, or privation, I may endure while I have strength to sustain the burden, grant me *kind Providence, a comfortable retreat at the last*; where I may abide, sheltered and serene, and trim my ruffled plumes at leisure, before I launch on the ocean of eternity.

And now, my dear young friend, my task is ended, and my conscience seems discharged of a debt which it has long felt, and bade me often ponder on the means of paying. *I have written to you*, whether in such a manner as your blessed mother requested I would, I sometimes doubt; but this I know, I have in all my precepts kept her in my eye, and endeavoured to enforce those sentiments, and recommend those habits, which my intimate knowledge of her character tells me she would have approved. I may, therefore, solace myself with the thought that I have *endeavoured* to fulfil her injunction.

At the commencement of these letters, I felt discouraged at the extensiveness of the plan, for the due execution of which my numerous domestic duties left me little leisure. Whoever justly appreciates public favour must be strongly solicitous to preserve it, and of course anxious to ward off

whatever threatens its diminution. In this point I continue vulnerable, even to *timid susceptibility*. The difficulty of writing upon subjects which we have before discussed, increases with every successive composition. A desire to guard against repetition, on the one hand, obliges us to a wearisome pursuit of novelty; and the dread of contradicting what we have before advanced, imposes a painful restraint upon invention. If, while we avoid these faults, we can also steer clear of affectation and dulness, we must esteem ourselves singularly fortunate. Writing from the dictates of my heart, and from *fixed* principles, made it less probable that I should unsay my former testimony; but the danger of disgusting my readers by endless repetition proportionably increased.

Popular applause is proverbially capricious; it is often distributed by mere chance, and frequently it is rather a casual bounty, extorted by the situation of the writer, or the subject of the work, than the just tribute which discernment pays to desert: in either of the above cases it cannot be *uniform* or *permanent*. To this consideration must be added, the certainty of meeting with that increased degree of opposition which success is sure to create. The first efforts of a young author are generally most favourably received by the public; not only from a generous desire of encouraging merit, but from the forbearance of those who are seldom inclined "to cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war" on ignoble game, and who consequently indemnify themselves for this moderation by their more vigorous pursuit of what appears like established reputation. This temper is particularly visible, when the envy incident to authorship is stimulated by theological (I will not say by religious) differences. It is *impossible* for the liveliest imagination to *predict* what a doughty polemic will report of a work which labours to pull down the strong holds of heresy and schism. In different circles, and in different reviews, this book will probably be styled formal and fanatical, inculcating mere worldly wisdom, and enforcing unnecessary niceties, while its author is successively termed a latitudenarian and a bigot. I could mention other general reasons which might have induced me to lie by on the shelf for the remainder of my days, beside several private causes of a depressing nature, that are connected with my peculiar situation. One of these is the loss of nearly all the friends of my early life, who encouraged or assisted my literary pursuits; and my seclusion from such society as is

most apt to invigorate the intellectual faculties, which ever receive their best stimulus from the collision of active and ingenuous minds employed in similar pursuits.

Perseverance gradually lessened the difficulties which at first seemed so formidable. I found my mind gather strength in proportion as I detached it from *useless* contemplations and *vain* regrets; and the apprehension of forfeiting the estimation in which my former attempts have been kindly held (at first so formidable,) was gradually weakened, under the flattering suggestion that my present attempt might be allowed to stand by their side, and rank with them in the warfare which the friends of decorum (I hope not unsuccessfully) maintain with "every evil word and work." To promote the eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures, is a stimulus, compared to which, all the allurements that fame and ambition ever presented are lighter in the balance than vanity itself.

I had no intention to speak of the political aspect of the times; such discussions, further than as they are connected with religion and virtue, are ill adapted to my sex or my abilities. On its *moral* features I have dwelt diffusely; and general opinion will bear me out when I say that they are truly alarming. A very respectable authority has determined, that the danger to be apprehended from what are styled French and German principles rapidly diminishes. The bolder dogmas of those impious schools were, I believe, always too absurd and profligate for the sound sense and decorous habits of Englishmen: but it is impossible to touch pitch without being defiled; and the general rage for that pestilential literature, though it has not changed us into a nation of deists, anarchists, and reprobates, has made us indifferents and sensualists; while the cant phrases of liberty and energy, though they have not roused us to ruin the fairest fabric of government that ever human wisdom contrived, have introduced a spirit of insubordination and envy of our immediate superiors, which is visible in the delight that all ranks feel to *outrivine* and *traduce* those who are above themselves. Our commercial opulence greatly increases these faults; a restless pursuit of wealth leaves little leisure for religious attainments: hence we may trace, on one side, the alarming progress of fanaticism, which boldly and exclusively claims to itself the honours due to rational, steady, humble piety; and on the other, we see the dreadful neglect of public worship, and all that blind and timid dependance on

second causes, which bespeak a people "who know not God." To these we must add that laxity of public opinion, with respect to moral turpitude, which is so alarmingly visible in the mass of local publications and general conversation. I will instance in probity and chastity, the cardinal virtues of the two sexes. To counterbalance this mass of evil in our national character, we may plead that we still retain our ancient distinctions of courage and liberality, which certainly *never were* more conspicuous than under the present severe trial.

The accusations that have been brought against our sex for contributing to, or I should rather say accelerating, the downfall of our moral fame, are of a very serious nature. It is said that we have *deserted* the station in which our Creator placed us, and that, from the help-mates, we are become the incumbrances of man. We are charged with ingrafting the worst part of the Asiatic on the British character, and with being now as *voluptuous*, but not as *submissive*, as the degraded inhabitants of the eastern harems. The word wife is considered by men as indicative of a *vehicle* for extravagant expenditure; and woman is supposed to mean a *venal bauble*, whom few can afford to purchase. It would be easy for us to recriminate on the bad habits of the other sex; but this would produce no good effect. I fear we have too much reason to own the foibles and faults on which this severe charge is founded; and though I think the question of our superiority in comparative worth is fairly tenable, enough of blame still adheres to us to render the task of immediate reformation indispensable.

I have stated, that happiness is combined with duty; but then I spoke of happiness in a religious point of view, not as including external prosperity, or exemption from trial. I have said little of expedience; for though, in a political sense, we must connect piety and virtue to those external circumstances with which they can well incorporate, fitness and propriety are not the legitimate foundations on which we should seek to erect the massy pile of perfect holiness; for that purpose, we must select materials that are the growth of another world. I have paid little attention to external appearance, or polite accomplishments; not because I think them unimportant, *much less* from a desire that genuine virtue should unwisely decline all *adventitious* adornings; but because the present times show no disposition to underrate these advantages. For a similar reason, I have not bestow-

ed much labour in recommending *fashionable* virtues ; I have only endeavoured to place them on their proper basis, christianity.

I have particularly pointed my hostility at that false candour, and puling liberality, which meets with so much suspicious admiration among the teachers of the new school ; who, under the pretext of introducing more exalted purity, prepare our minds for every vice, by divesting us of our natural abhorrence of what is *sinful*. That rage for distinction and parade which infatuates the most respectable and important part of the community, and all its ridiculous appendages, of vanity, frivolity and affectation, have called forth my severe reprehension. In fine, I have endeavoured to the *utmost* of my abilities, not only to *enforce* the domestic duties, but to *enlarge* the foundation on which they stand ; and to this purpose I have employed a considerable portion of this work in elucidating the elements of christian knowledge, and recommending them to universal attention. My guide in this particular has been our *maternal church*, whom I have laboured to defend from the censures of her avowed enemies, and the charge of defection, now so strongly and unjustly urged against her by dubious brethren. My motive so to do has proceeded from my firm belief of her general excellence, and my conviction, founded on experience, that, next to indifference on religious points, indiscreet zeal is most fatal to individual virtue and peace of mind. Lamenting to see well meaning people place that merit in dissent and singularity, which (except in very peculiar cases) is due to conformity and humility, I have endeavoured to rescue the Church of England from the reproaches that have been thrown upon her ; and in this the labours of her best defenders have been my *revered guides*. My motive for incorporating so much of their arguments with my own connecting remarks, will, I hope, be candidly excused by their zeal for the glory of God ; since it proceeded from my very sincere desire to see much important knowledge universally diffused among my own sex, who are generally fearful of reading extensive works in divinity, that are professedly controversial ; and being by this diffidence kept ignorant of what can really be urged in support of the church into which they are baptized, they fall a ready prey to those preachers of dissension, who, in their zeal to make proselytes, neither respect the fundamental laws of our constitution, the privacy of domestic retirement, nor the peace of families.

To originality of design I make no pretensions. I am only *one of many thousand labourers* who have for ages cultivated a fruitful field; and I disclaim every attempt to practise experimental husbandry. The scene of our toil is spacious; briars and weeds rapidly spring up; and the enemy to the Lord of the soil, not content with surreptitiously sowing tares, endeavours to introduce new modes of culture, which, under the pretence of improvements, will convert the garden of God into a sterile and naked wilderness, where the seed of immortality can never take root. Hence the necessity of additional labourers, some of whom must act as watchmen while others carry home the harvest. "Blessed are they whom the Lord, when he cometh," shall find vigilant and faithful, speaking the words of truth with *singleness* of heart, and preferring the unchangeable approbation of God to the evanescent praise of men.

I have been so anxious to avoid omitting any reflections that seemed connected with my design, that I fear I ought to offer many apologies to the public for reintroducing some subjects under another head, which I had previously discussed. Whatever indulgence I may hope from the candour of my readers, or from the partiality of my friends, I anticipate many jests from the adversaries of my design (I am not conscious of having any *personal* enemies;) and the not unapt comparisons of the jog-trot of the pack-horse, and the tedious monotony of his bells, may deter many people from looking at my book, before they protest that they are disgusted with its *sameness*. The truth is this: the leading ideas which occupied my mind were so superlatively important, that I felt it to be my duty to bring them frequently upon the foreground, and to prove their consequence by showing their various bearings and relations. Generally speaking, they are either considerations which the present age is inclined to overlook, or else erroneous principles sanctioned by custom, or established by sophistry. In either case, my dissuasive warnings seemed to require all the enforcement which they could receive. Even verbal repetition has been sometimes studiously adopted, from a conviction that persuasion is more important than novelty, and from the hope that by this means memory might become an ally to virtue and piety.

I plead guilty to the charge of wishing to keep my fair countrywomen entirely British. I think that epithet infinitely more desirable than philosopher or cosmopolite. These



latter terms can only be applied to a few in an honourable sense; and, if universally aspired to, must occasion the sacrifice of that part of our characters which is most valuable. Those who are merely pretenders to these distinctions are worse than worthless, they are *detestable*; but she who sets out with a humble yet firm resolution of “doing her duty” in that state of life to which it shall please God to call “her,” cannot fail of being respectable, however mean her station, however calamitous her lot. And infinitely more blessed will her condition be than my own, if I confine my sense of christianity to the easy labour of *teaching others*, without recollecting that I also am required to fight the same good fight of faith; for it is not the *orator* who encourages the combatants to buckle on their arms, but the *victor* who subdues his spiritual enemies, that will receive the crown.

My motives for addressing these admonitions to one who so little requires to be taught her duty, have been stated. I have most happily experienced the effects which I predicted. By keeping you principally in my eye, I have felt my thoughts flow in a natural and easy train; and I flatter myself that you have been interested by topics remote from those in which your immediate utility was concerned. The judges to whom I am going to appeal will determine how I have executed the extensive design that I formed. Should this work be destined to celebrity, I shall be much gratified by the public attestation that will then be given to the sincere affection of,

My dear Miss M——,

Your faithful and hereditary friend.

THE END.



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Doctrines are more valuable for being old. The errors of perfectionists. Advantages of a liturgical service, and an independent ministry. Danger of wresting the scripture by unskilful interpretation of difficult texts: Instances of this fault: May be avoided by an intimate acquaintance with holy writ, which will prevent our faith from being shaken by light or ridiculous allusions to scripture narratives: It would soften religious animosities. Present state of religion in England. Vices of believers do not impugn the verity of the faith that they profess, or afford an excuse for deists. Prevalence of suicide. Too confident dependence on the mercy of God. Neglect of the sacrament. Great eagerness of inquiry. Suitability of the church to the national character: Review of her offices; The burial service; The marriage ceremony; The catechism; Confirmation; Churching of women; Visitation of the sick;

Ordination services; Communion; Offices for the 5th of November, January 30th, May 29th, and the King's accession. Temperate loyalty of the Church of England. Choice of the religious society to which we will belong. Christian liberality, as opposed to philopofistical.

## LETTER IX.

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## ON THE VIRTUES MORE ESPECIALLY FEMINE.

Change of opinion on the subject of chastity. Just portrait of a seduction, exhibited in Shenstone's *Jessy*, contrasted with the characters of *Ade-laide*, *Elvira*, and *Mary Thornbury*. Kindness to penitents differs from indulgence to audacious offenders. Pique at being deserted is not repentance. Freedom of manners. Danger from young women thinking lightly of female frailty. Benevolence must be supported by economy and self-denial: Extends to more duties than the act of giving: Contrast with showy liberality. The great should be their own almoners. Indiscriminate relief blamable. Parable of the good Samaritan. Candour is very popular: its restraints chiefly exercised in forbearance, gentleness, and acquiescence; may be urged too far. Command of temper necessary to women: Should be founded on principle. A soft manner often mistaken for real sweetness. Cheerfulness is not levity; is a preservative of health. Industry useful to the temper. Prudence in selecting amusements. Sensibility prejudicial to the temper, when it is suffered to be extreme; must be restrained when real. False feeling ridiculed. Imbecility not gentleness. Danger of aiming at praise for one particular virtue. Piety the crowning grace. Devotion should be chastened by judgment; an impassioned style condemned. Rational piety our best support.

## LETTER X.

page 307

## ON FEMALE EMPLOYMENTS AND STUDIES.

Needle-work. Religious should precede scientific information. Abstract knowledge not well suited to women. History and ethical essays recommended. Biography; faults in modern biographers; indiscriminate publication of private letters of deceased public characters condemned. Geography, voyages and travels. Fictitious reading apt to inspire false views of life. The best kind of novels useful introductions to the world. Modern poetry. Tragedy and Comedy of late date not intended for the closet. Brief review of the drama. Works of humour defended; have materially benefited virtue and taste. General information on political subjects necessary to women, who should cherish patriotic feelings. Excellence of the British constitution. National evils ascribable to God as punishments for national sins. She serves her country who reforms her own conduct, and guides her household well. Considerations on the lawfulness of war. Causes of our late contests. Maternal objections to a military life, must now yield to circumstances. Christian obedience is not slavish submission. Knowledge of the elementary principles of government is a preservative from party distinctions. Reading should not be confined to what is new or local. Extracts, beauties, &c. condemned. Criticism useful to improved taste. Necessity of guarding against party misrepresentations. A choice selection is preferable to multifarious reading.

## LETTER XI.

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## ON CONVERSATION, SOCIETY, AND FRIENDSHIP.

The desire of pleasing, is natural; the wish to shine, dangerous. Advantages of a literary taste in age, in conversation: to excel in this requires

a variety of talents. Fashionable conversation, its insincerity, frivolity; is accused of licentiousness. Requisites in conversation, regard to truth, attention to all present, duty of listening to the speaker; fidelity in engagements. Civility is no impeachment of sincerity. Self-importance inadmissible. Affectation condemned. Egotism a species of ostentation: May be managed with humour. Preconcerted wit is generally unsuccessful. Loquaciousness censured. Petty contradictions condemned. Opinions should never be rudely attacked. Bitter irony and uncandid constructions blamed. Polite attention to the affairs of others. Consolation and advice are difficult duties. Slander. Gossiping. Flattery. An accommodating character described. The essentials of good breeding are contained in the New Testament. Happiness of a family whose manners and conduct are formed on christian rules. Capability of women for friendship. The closer bond of marriage often dissolves, or rather suspends, the ties of early affection. Value of a friend in old age. Great prudence requisite in the friendship of married women. Friendships oftener the effect of chance than selection. Early friendships. A mother is the best friend of her daughters: Bad effects of having an unworthy injudicious friend. Flattery inconsistent with friendship. If our choice has been culpably precipitate, we must renounce it. Inestimable value of a faithful friend. Friendship admits of plurality.

## LETTER XII.

page 373

## ON CELIBACY, LOVE, AND MARRIAGE.

Utility is the true estimate of a happy life. Single women have many resources: Can best enjoy and cultivate friendship. Their eligible situation, if enlightened and amiable. Remarks on their usual foibles: Habits which they ought to acquire. Reasons for declining marriage: dispositions best suited to that state. Young women now are generally more mercenary than susceptible. Women should rather be said to reject than choose lovers. Competence necessary in marriage. Unequal alliances seldom are happy. Immorality is an insuperable objection; so is irreligion, and also weakness of intellect. Libertines are rarely reclaimed, or fools governed. Female ascendancy ridiculed. Great sticklers for freedom are generally domestic bathos. Women are apt to prefer wit to plain sense. A sacrifice to wealth deprecated. Long deferred attachments seldom produce happy matches. Young women are apt to underrate the trials of a married life. They should carefully investigate their lovers' conduct. The earliest duty of a wife is, to conform to her husband's habits. Art is most detestable, though often successful with men. Indifference to a husband's conduct condemned. Home must always be made agreeable. Danger of exciting a husband's jealousy. Dangerous situation of a young neglected wife, who is followed by an agreeable man. Jealousy in a wife is irritating and powerless. A female confidant is often pernicious. Young wives must beware of swelling trifles into miseries. Matrimonial quarrels. Attention to a husband should depend upon his temper and wishes; instanced in men of stern tempers, in the fastidious, in the susceptible, and in the choleric. Domestication may be too extreme. Economy in dress. Regard to a husband's circumstances and profession. Relative duties to his children or connexions. Happiness of a well suited couple.

## LETTER XIII.

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## ON THE DUTY OF MOTHERS.

Education a fashionable study. Its foundation should be in religion. Instruction is now made to depend upon agreeableness, instead of obedi-

ence, and more directed to open the understanding than correct the heart. It tends to make children confident. Over attention and extreme watchfulness have serious bad consequences on children. School is the best remedy for self-importance in boys. Premature intelligence is generally deceptive. Vanity of mothers. Common sense should be most cultivated. Most systems of education require more attention than is practicable. Scheme of keeping children apart from servants would make the former supercilious. Servants improper confidants for children. Each sex should early receive its proper bias. Boys should be prevented from tyrannizing over their sisters. Domestic education seems best adapted to girls. Education should be appropriated to the rank of life. Amiable deportment suits every station; is the cement of family harmony. Mothers should be impartial; should preserve their own authority. Artifices in education are inadmissible. Teasing injurious to a fretful temper. The system of reasoning with a young child is absurd. When their reason ripens, it should be directed to correct their own faults. Confidence should be suppressed, diffidence encouraged. Genius requires extraordinary culture and discipline. Parental partiality apt to mistake in this particular. Sentimental liberality different from christian benevolence. Value of arithmetical knowledge. Industry, neatness, and regularity commended. Irresolution highly injurious to children. Clear and just notions useful in every station. Religious knowledge. Use of the Bible: It will correct erroneous notions respecting worldly prosperity; will improve and regulate the disposition. The consciousness of having instilled religious principles, is the best consolation of unhappy parents. The comforts of age must be procured in youth.

## LETTER XIV.

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## ON OUR DUTY TO SERVANTS AND INFERIORS.

Change in the principles and manners of the lower orders evident by their dislike of their immediate superiors. Improper notions of wealth. General tendency to extravagance. Much of this evil owing to bad instruction; much to the separation between the ranks in society; most of all to the luxurious habits of the middle orders, their neglect of watchfulness, preference of ability to moral worth, and sabbath breaking. Dreadful consequences of this in manufacturing towns. Sunday, when well spent, a great check on the profligacy of domestics. Family instruction and worship. Proper books for servants. Instruction of the lower classes should not proceed too far. Great skill is necessary in composing books adapted to illiterate people. Domestic management should avoid the extremes of rigour and lenity. Carelessness and suspicion condemned. Falseness and envy are the principal vices of the lower orders. Laying traps for veracity and integrity is highly blamable. Conscientiousness in giving a character. Compassion to the frailty of ignorance. Principle is relaxed in the lower orders in respect to female chastity. Mistresses should restrain extravagance in dress. Example is the most useful means of instructing servants and inferiors. In the exercise of benevolence, care should be taken not to render the poor luxurious or totally dependent. The ingratitude of the poor no excuse for omitting our duty to them.

## LETTER XV.

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## ON THE DUTIES OF DECLINING LIFE AND OLD AGE.

Mothers should relax their authority, as their children advance in years. Women are charged with finding it difficult to grow old with proprie-



ty. Dissipation of autumnal ladies. Gradual resignation of ornaments and diversions. Attention to daughters. Should not renounce society. Advantages resulting from a mixture of different ages with mutual good will. Cheerfulness commendable in declining life. Activity and energy recommended on prudential motives. Obstinacy and ill humour censured on the same grounds. Premature seclusion is unwise. Value of an old friend when we are compelled to be sedentary. Great merit of those who sacrifice their amusements to divert the aged and infirm. Worldly concerns should be finally adjusted, and the care of them relinquished. Capricious testamentary bequests condemned. Old age often falls into mercenary hands. As long as possible, cherish a relish for literature. Avoid brooding on your own miseries. Termination of a literary career. Authors should leave off composition in time, review the moral tendency of their works, and correct mistakes. Happiness of an independent rational old age. Recollection its chief employment. Religion its best comfort. Just estimate of life. Prospect of futurity. Preparation for departing hence. Cherish the feelings of benevolence, practise candour and patience. Affliction a good preparative for death. Its extremes either in privation or suffering considered. Victory over the fear of death. Considerations on the closing scene. What youth owes to age in compassionate offices and provident care. Satisfaction at finishing a work that was undertaken on conscientious motives. The moral aspect of the times is portentous. General retrospect of the work. Conclusion.

*The Guardian of Education, a valuable periodical work, published in England, speaks of the Letters of Mrs. West to a Young Lady, in the following terms of commendation.*

“THE allusion in the title page, to a popular and justly esteemed work of the author’s,\* is sufficient to recommend this volume to public attention; for, the writer who could give such excellent advice to youth of the other sex, may reasonably be expected to be well qualified to instruct her own; nor will this expectation be disappointed in the present instance. Mrs. West has taken a very extensive range, including every female duty, and has enforced the practice of each by the most powerful motives; she has also painted, in the strongest colours, the vices and the follies of the age, as depreciating the character of her cotemporaries in the different ranks of society, and exemplified their effects on individual happiness, and the welfare of the nation; in short, this amiable author has left no point untouched, that could tend to excite in the minds of the females of the higher and middle ranks, a laudable ambition to fill their respective stations with dignity and propriety; to check the progress of impiety, vice, and folly; and to promote the knowledge and practice of religion and virtue upon the best principles.”

[*Guardian of Education for March, 1806.*

\* *Letters to a Young Man.*











