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A mother's first thought

James Lenox.









A

MOTHER'S

FIRST THOUGHTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“FAITH'S TELESCOPE.”

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PREFACE.

AMONG all the wonderful qualities of earth's highest wonder, the Bible, its astonishing *adaptation* to all classes and all circumstances of its searchers is assuredly not the least. Who ever humbly looked into its sacred pages for a "word in season," and found it not? The wealthy and the indigent, the old and the young, the prosperous and the sorrowing, have each their varied treasure, each their "apple of gold in this *net-work* of silver,"—their word fitly spoken, of rebuke or of warning, of consolation or instruction, as they severally require them.

High and low, male and female, bond and free, find depicted on this great map of human duty, the minutest windings of their appointed course. And for special need, what special provision has been made!—For the sinking heart of the bereaved, how varied, how strong, how abundant the resources of Divine consolation; for the wearied and fainting, what promises of rest; for the persecuted and perplexed, what assurances of encouragement; for the sick in body, what upholding; for the sick in spirit, what healing? Verily, we may say in this, as in another sense, “Thy commandment is exceeding broad: therefore thy servant loveth it.”

The aim of the following pages has been to develope, of this gracious fulness in the oracles of God, some meditations more especially suitable to *Mothers*, both as such, and more particularly in their character of professing Christians. At a period when the heart is excited by new and pure emo-

tions; when gratitude to a merciful Preserver is usually experienced in a very high degree; when the world is necessarily much shut out, and the nearness of eternity, often borne in powerfully on the soul by the possibility, if not the certainty of peril;—it does not appear unreasonable to hope that the “still small voice” of heavenly truth, will be more readily listened to than at other times. And though it be but too certain that in many cases any salutary impressions thus made will prove evanescent or inefficient, yet if the Lord vouchsafe his blessing, in *some* at least, they may be deepened, enlarged, and brightened, into a lasting record of Eternal mercy. May that blessing be graciously bestowed!

But by those Mothers who are already awake to spiritual things, these meditations will perhaps be recognized as embodying some train of feeling and association, or illustrating some scriptural symbol drawn from the early nursery, which has often

occurred to their own minds. To them, therefore, as possessing the best clue to its meaning and intention, this little work is affectionately dedicated, and may He who alone *can*, render it, in some degree, conducive to their edification.

Edinburgh, October, 1832.

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MEDITATION I.

“In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me.”—*Psalm cxx. 1.*

THESE are words of much simplicity; the humblest capacity can readily perceive their meaning; yet what capacity is exalted enough to comprehend the vast mysteries which they involve? The communion of a praying soul, with a prayer-hearing God, who shall explain it? The condescension of Omnipotence towards the breathings of distress, from a being whose volition could not confer the breath of existence upon the meanest reptile, who shall fathom it? The never-slumbering watchfulness over millions, and the ever-ready compassion awake to the groan of penitence, even from the vilest of them, who shall express their marvellousness?—Yet all this, yea, more than this, is implied in the assertion, “In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me.”

Easy it is for those who have not *tried* this blessed resource in the depths of human

wretchedness, to say in their folly, How can Man converse with God? How can an insignificant, nay, a sinful creature, engage the attention, depend on the kindness, obtain the assistance of Him, who holds a universe in his hand, who is “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” How!—Because He is God,—glorious in holiness. He “ever worketh,” that the creation He has formed may be holy also; and the whole economy of Providence and Grace is but a succession of steps in this important process. Sublime in Majesty, He is no less sublime in Mercy—admirable in his Power—magnificent is the sphere of its operation—but quite as admirable, and to us infinitely more delightful is the benevolence of its exercise, and the minuteness of its diffusion. “I cried,” says the sinner, “and thou heardest me.” Has the objector reasoned himself into a belief that this is a fallacy? Let him “become a fool that he may be wise;” let him *try*, what to him appears so unlikely to succeed.—Oh, that his first petition might be for humility, and for profound submission to that revelation of unspeakable grace, which says to the sons of men, “Call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will answer thee!”—which unites duty with privilege,

and pledges Infinite Truth to reward the petitioner, who, venturing on the unimpeachable warrant of an express permission, flees for refuge, where "He that cometh shall in no wise be cast out." And when performance has actually been vouchsafed of this promise, so rich with unspeakable consolation, when we have cried and have been answered, when we know that God, through our never-failing Intercessor, has heard us, "because we have the petitions that we asked of Him," shall we ever again be backward to pour out our souls before Him, who has thus heard our voice out of his holy temple, and suffered our feeble cry to come before Him, even into his ears? Or shall we hesitate to devote to Him the homage of our most devoted love, who has not disdained to listen to us, to comfort and to relieve us, when He might justly have answered us only thus, "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"

PRAYER.

Oh, good and gracious God! Father of all mercies, Giver of all comfort, I adore and praise thee that thou permittest me to

approach thy throne of grace in every time of need. I desire especially to thank thee for [the recent instance of] thy preserving mercy towards me, a miserable sinner, and I earnestly pray that I may be led so to meditate on thy loving-kindness, manifested in all thy past dealings with me and mine, as henceforth to devote my heart and life to thy service, and to put my whole trust in thee, in every trial and trouble of this mortal state. Through thy dear Son Jesus Christ, who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared, and who ever lives to make intercession for us, hear my prayers, oh merciful Lord! and to thy name be glory for ever and ever—Amen.

PSALM CXVI.

I love the Lord, whose gracious ear,
 Hath heard my humble voice,
 Who saw my supplicating tear,
 And caused me to rejoice.

Long as I live, I'll call on thee,
 Thou Answerer of prayer ;
 Long as I live, my joy shall be,
 To cast on thee my care.

Anguish, with unrelenting fangs,
Deep hold upon me took ;
As of approaching death, the pangs
My suffering spirit shook.

Then cried I unto thee, oh Lord !
Deliverance I besought ;
Thy grace and righteousness adored,
And of thy mercies thought.

Who simply fix their trust on thee,
Thou amply dost protect ;
I was brought low—Thou helpedst me,
Nor didst my suit reject.

Return, return, my weary soul,
Be tranquil and repose,
For Mercy's hand can still control
The measure of thy woes.

Oh ! be it now thy only aim,
With grateful zeal to pay,
That tribute which His bounties claim,
Who chased thy griefs away.

MEDITATION II.

“I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”—*Malachi* iii. 6.

THE sun is still the same glorious orb of splendid lustre, though innumerable clouds have passed between us and his dazzling brightness, since first our eyes opened on his beauty. The moon is still the same faithful witness in heaven of her Creator's directing hand, as when the newly-breathing inmates of Paradise first gazed with admiration upon her nightly varying form, or hailed the return of her suspended beams in evening's silent hour. Five thousand years have rolled away, and the ordinances of heaven depart not from before the Lord, who in his wisdom decreed them all. Yet *they* shall change: as a garment shall they all wax old, and as a vesture shall they be folded up. Thou, oh Lord! only art ever, ever the same, and thy years shall not fail, neither shall thine Israel cease from being a nation before thee for ever.

Happy thought, if we too are of Israel! Have we “wept” for sin and “made sup-

plication" for grace like him? Through the Angel of the Covenant wrestling powerfully with our hearts in the hour of apprehension and peril, have we like Jacob, "had power with God," and "prevailed" with him for a blessing? Happy thought! "He changes not." He will establish, he will keep us from all evil. Faithful is he that calleth, who also will do according to his abundant mercy, and his ever-steadfast promises. He changes not, therefore are we not consumed. Oh! where, but for the immutability of this Rock, on which the believer has laid his eager, grateful hand, where would he have been ere now? Where would he still fall, had not that rock, once touched, a magnetic power, strong enough to retain his hold in spite of all the counteractions of his corrupt nature? Sometimes, alas! so feeble and vacillating is his will, so faint and careless his mind, that he scarcely knows whether he stands or not within reach of his security. But the Lord "changes not." He sees and he restores. New energy flows into the almost paralyzed spirit. A startling view of sin, a melting view of Jesus, is vouchsafed. The sliding one beholds! repeats! adores! "It is not consumed." Oh, grace unspeakable! how can we sufficiently admire it?

How can we earnestly, speedily enough accept the offer of it, each one for ourselves? Lord enable us so to do. Make us willing in this day of thy power.

PRAYER.

Oh Lord! God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, I rejoice in the assurance of thy everlasting faithfulness contained in thy Holy Word. I would rest upon them now and for ever. Work in me, oh Lord! to will and to do of thy good pleasure. My own heart is deceitful, and its corrupt bent is ever to fall back from thee, my true life, and strength and joy. Oh, aid me with thy continual grace. Watch over me for good, and make me watchful that I may never depart from thee, my God. Thy love to thy redeemed is wonderful, beyond all that I can imagine or express. Fill all my faculties with such a deep sense of this, that I may love thee more and more, till I see thee face to face, and rejoice in thee unceasingly for ever and ever, through Him who bought us with his own blood, and pleadeth continually that we may not be consumed,—even Jesus Christ, our ever blessed Lord and Saviour.—Amen.

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I never forget thee."
—*Isa.* xlix. 15.

Golden key of richest treasure,
Opening wide affection's store;
Oh the tender throb of pleasure,
At the mother's bosom core!

Oh, the deep pathetic feeling,
Joyful hope and pity mild,
Through each new pulsation stealing,
As she gazes on her child!

Can they forget? Ah, yes, fond Mother,
Ostrich bosoms *do* exist:
Sucking babes *may* find another
Kinder than the parent breast.

They may forget. Compassion's fountain
Human hearts may turn to gall;
Yet, "fear not thou, my holy mountain,
That thy God forgets *thy* call."

Oh, afflicted, tempest smitten,
Though the whelming billows roll,
On his hands thy name is written,
As "the travail of *his* soul."

Say not *thou*, in sinful blindness,
 That Jehovah loves thee not ;
 Called with everlasting kindness,
Thou shalt never be forgot !

MEDITATION III.

“ Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ?
 Not one.—*Job. xiv. 4.* ”

THERE are rivers which run under ground for a part of their course ; but in that hidden progress, are they not as truly fed from the original source, as when emerging into open day, they overflow the level plain, or rush impetuously towards their great depository ? There are diseases of which the patient knows not the existence within his frame ; but do they therefore the less certainly, because unsuspectedly, sap its vital force ? While the faculties of the human mind are as yet undeveloped, while its imaginations are as yet unexercised, many are inclined to suppose that it would be a work of little

or no inherent difficulty, to direct its powers, as they shall gradually increase, into the purest, the most beneficial, the most virtuous channels. The mind, *they* affirm, is as a smooth unmarked surface: indented by the minute processes of Habit,—sculptured into various forms by the skilful hand of Education, or stained by contact with unfavourable Example—all its peculiarities and all its vices may be traced to the circumstances in which the individual, from his earliest and most impressible age, has been placed. To a certain and limited extent, these assertions may be said to be founded in truth. Habit, Education, and Example, have, indisputably, a large and important influence informing the youthful character; and had man retained his original righteousness, these would have but tended to strengthen within him the principles of rectitude and piety. But had not the word of God expressly asserted, that, fallen from primeval uprightness, men have sought out and substituted for it, many inventions,—had it not illustrated the melancholy fact of our depravity, by reminding us how impossible it is to draw from a polluted fountain limpid and pure waters, or to “bring a clean thing out of an unclean one,”—personal observation

might, in a great degree, have led to such a conviction of our state. When the good and the evil are set before us, or before our youngest intelligent inmates,—let conscience and experience witness which of these it is, that, on the impulse of the moment, would invariably be chosen, and which rejected ;—which it is that it requires no struggle to select : Alas ! does not our real position, as to these things, resemble that of a heavily laden equipage, “a burden to the weary beasts,” who, with toilsome steps, and by slow degrees, drag it up the steep ascent, but liable, if only a moment’s pause occur in their exertions, to run back with fearfully multiplying rapidity, to the very foot of the precipice ? In such a case, where would be the most rational hope of safety ? Would it be most securely grounded on ignorance of danger, or on the perception of it in its fullest extent ?

Surely, then, an enlightened view of our tendency to evil, ought to excite more vigorous exertions for overcoming it, than would a supine denial of its existence ! and if there be a strong and friendly aid at hand who can give efficacy to our otherwise futile efforts, and enable us to climb in safety the hill of Zion, that must be an infatuation indeed,

which induces men to stand denying their need, till the opportunity of attaining help is gone forever. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool; but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered."

PRAYER.

Vouchsafe to me, oh gracious Lord! a just and accurate view of my condition in this world, as a sin-loving and sin-practising creature. Give me deep contrition for the many offences against thee, wherein a depraved will and selfish affections, have involved me, with humble and entire reliance on thy loving-kindness, which is able to extricate me from all the perils by which I am surrounded. Through the atoning love of thy blessed Son, and the promised aid of thy Holy Spirit, which for his sake I implore thee to give me, may I be renewed in heart and mind, and preserved unto thy heavenly kingdom. And for those immortal souls in any way especially committed to my guidance, grant me also, oh merciful Father! the same inestimable help. May we all be taught of thee, and by thee mercifully guided and defended, for the Redeemer's sake.—Amen.

“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”
Proverbs xxii. 15.

Addressed to a very young Infant.

Gentle and dove-like are thine eyes,
 Thy look is calm and meek,
 And innocence endearing sits
 Upon thy dimpled cheek.

And can it be, that flower so fair,
 Should seeds of poison hide ;
 And can it be, thy brow serene,
 Should flush with angry pride ?

I love thee much, my little one,
 And fain I would believe,
 Thy youthful spirit, angel pure,
 And pure for aye to live.

But, ah ! my babe, each day confirms,
 What heaven-taught sages say,
 That “foolishness is bound” in man,
 E’en from his earliest day.

Uncheck’d by grace divine, his sin
 Developes as he grows ;
 And hopeful infancy’s sweet bud,
 In disappointment blows.

While others therefore boast the mind,
 Of childhood, spotless white,
 And, all unaided, hope to guide
 Its energies aright ;

I, for I love thee, little one,
 Most earnestly will pray,
 A purer spirit than thine own,
 Thy helplessness to stay.

Incipient evils I'll deplore,
 Ere they themselves unfold,
 And seek a Father's pitying hand
 To drive them from their hold.

And so, my babe, in holy truth,
 Shall shine upon thy brow,
 Those virtues which but seem to deck
 Its placid sweetness now.

MEDITATION IV.

“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow,
 because her hour is come.”—*St. John* xvi. 21.

THE sure word of prophecy when setting
 forth, in sublime and awakening language,

the approaching judgments of the Lord upon sinful nations, has perhaps applied no metaphors more frequently—certainly none with more appropriateness and force,—than those which it has drawn from the sorrows of a woman “when her hour is come.” When the troubles thus denounced are on the heathen (as in Jeremiah xlix. 22, 24. and l. 43.) we may remark, that the symbol is chiefly directed to point out the inevitable certainty of their occurrence at the time appointed,—the suddenness of the visitation,—and the terrors with which it will be attended ; but when addressed to that Zion, whom her long-suffering Lord will not utterly cast off, though the crown of her glory be for a season laid in the dust, though her habitation be desolate, and the voice of joy unheard within its bounds, it is very remarkable how the illustrative figure is carried forth to the happy termination of a *deliverance*, as joyful as its introductory sufferings are terrible. “It is even the day of Jacob’s trouble,” but he shall be saved out of it. “Be in pain and labour to bring forth, oh daughters of Zion ! like a woman in travail, for now shalt thou go forth, even to Babylon ; *there* shalt thou be delivered ; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.”—Micah. iv. 10.

So, also, when in predicting the solemn period of searching and sifting retribution, which is reserved for the enemies of Christ, the same allusion is employed, first by the Saviour himself, and subsequently by his Apostle. The same encouraging promises are vouchsafed to the church of a terminating joy, which shall swallow up all memory of previous anguish: "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Of that awful "day of vengeance," when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, all previous and detached outpourings of indignation have been indeed but the types and precursors, and as a snare will it come on the often-warned, but obstinately careless inhabitants of the whole earth. But, oh blessed thought for the saints of Jesus! and through all the convulsions and tribulations among men by which "the time of the end" shall be ushered in, how supporting, how reviving to their trembling hearts, to know that "their Redeemer is mighty." He for whom they have waited, is the same who now cometh in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and with a triumphant salvation will he save them. They shall be hidden within an inviolable sanctuary, protected by an im-

pregnable fortress, yea, saith the Lord of Hosts, "they shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels." They are his special treasure, and He will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. After briefly enumerating the signs by which the watching disciple may be enabled to perceive the immediate approach of that day, to which he so frequently directs their attention, how impressively does the Lord, in one short precept, comprise the characteristics of such, by saying to his faithful servants, "When ye shall see these things begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh!" When others faint and tremble, the people of Christ are commanded to exult, and why? Because they are virtuous, and therefore safe? Because they are holy, and entitled to pre-eminence? No! but because their *redemption* draweth nigh. Those who rejoice in recovered freedom, must have groaned under the oppressions of captivity. Those who welcome the victory of the Redeemer over his enemies, must have inward evidence that they are numbered with his friends. Those who are looking for, and hasting unto the day of God, cannot be such as are lavishing their

affections and exertions on the evanescent delights of a world ripe for correction. Those who anticipate, with lively joy, the coming of Jesus, must be equally ready, should he previously call them, to be absent from the body and present with himself. While they are continued here, they must be living as strangers and pilgrims, in all holy conversation and godliness. If *thus* we be looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour, we shall verily and effectually be strengthened, (even though our lot *should* be cast among the troubles of the latter days,) to “endure unto the end;” assured that if we do, the unspeakable mercy which has kept, will finally bless us.—May all our trials here purify and “make us white” for that great consummation!

PRAYER.

Almighty God! the Shield and the Refuge of them that trust in thee, enable me so to confide in thy gracious protection, as to contemplate with joy, and not with dismay, the predicted coming of thy Son. May I, in the way thy Gospel has revealed, seek righteousness and meekness, so that I may

be hid in the day of thy fierce anger. Open, Lord, I beseech thee, the eyes of those who are careless and at ease in Zion, to behold, ere it be too late, the things which are for their everlasting good. Awaken them who yet slumber and sleep, that with replenished lamps they may be ready, when summoned to meet their Lord. If the combined voices of thy word, and thy Providence unite to say, "The bridegroom is coming, go ye forth to meet him," may our souls hear and obey the call; and may He ever meet us in mercy and peace, who is with thee, our prevailing Mediator and Advocate. For his sake hear and accept me, oh my God! and all for whom I desire to pray, and among the multitudes in the day of decision, place us at thy right hand, and pronounce us blessed.—Amen and Amen!

“When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.”—1st *Thess.* v. 3, 4.

That trying hour! how suddenly it came,
 Though long expected, unawares at last;
 So on a world at ease, Destruction's flame,
 And judgment's fearful, long impending
 blast,
 With startling shock shall burst,
 O'erwhelming the accurst:
 And “they shall not escape.”

Dark day of terrors! emblem faint of thee,
 Are woman's sorrows when her hour's
 arrived.

Shalt thou not Earth! as one in travail be,
 Press'd with increasing pangs? yet not
 deprived
 Of Hope—for from thy womb,
 In that dread day of doom,
 A gladdening birth shall spring.

The dead in Christ shall rise. The teeming
 dust
 Shall wake and sing. Thick as the drops
 of dew

Th' innumerable myriads of the just

O'er their *last* enemy, triumphant too,
 Caught up their Lord to meet,
 With shouts of joy shall greet
 Jesus—salvation's King!

Oh! for a heart prepared, to watch, to wait,
 With trembling joy that consummation
 sure;
 God's ways to love—the ways of sin to hate,
 And through all tribulations, to "endure."
 Such, in earth's direful woe,
 Shall "peace and safety" know,
 E'en in a world convulsed!

MEDITATION V.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst
 after righteousness, for they shall be filled."
St. Matthew v. 6.

AMONG the treasures of Divine Wisdom
 which are richly scattered through the re-
 vealed Scriptures, none surely should be
 more dear to the Christian's heart, none
 more constantly present to the Christian's
 memory, than the very words which fell

from the lips of Him, who even from his enemies extorted this confession, "Never man spake like this man!" That beautiful analysis of true blessedness with which the Lord commenced his instructions on the mountain, is of itself an inexhaustible fund of pious and profitable meditation; so that we can scarcely help supposing, that many of the assembled multitude unto whom it was delivered, must have called to mind the words of their ancient Lawgiver, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear," and welcomed their evident fulfilment by exclaiming, "Grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." Not only do the beatitudes here announced describe the assured happiness of the believer who possesses them, and the fitness of the promised blessings to his several wants,—they also afford a distinguished test of individual profession, marking deeply that line of separation from worldly maxims, feelings, and pursuits, by which the genuine character of the Redeemer's people is to be distinguished. The strong hold of corrupt nature is pride. "Ye shall be as Gods," formed no inconsiderable part of the first temptation; and it is in almost

every sin still committed, a component part of the guilt; but what says the Saviour? "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Nature loves present ease at the expense of future good; but what saith Grace? "Blessed are they that mourn." The carnal mind resents injuries, revolts against mysteries, rebels against afflictive dispensations; so do not they who are born of the Spirit: "Blessed are the meek." The people of this world covet the splendours and luxuries of life, saying, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" So do not the people of God. They hunger and thirst after righteousness, and "Blessed are they, for they shall be filled." Their meat and drink it shall be to do the will of God. Earnestly do they desire the sincere milk of the Word that they may grow thereby, and it shall not be denied them. Is not their Lord he that teacheth them to profit? Does not his Spirit turn into nourishment for *them*, that which to others is tasteless and unsatisfactory, mixing it with faith in their hearts, and so fulfilling the ardent prayer of the Redeemer for his Church, that through the Word of Truth it might be sanctified?

As there is no surer sign of animal life and health, than the desire of wholesome

sustenance ; so of the life of faith within the soul, is no token more unquestionable than an abiding delight in all God's testimonies ; a longing for them, not mingled with merely human ingredients, and so depreciated into the food of controversy,—not to be agitated in a vessel already soured by preconceived opinions, and so fermented into the aliment of intoxicating Pride, of infidel doubts ;—but pure, unmixed, and in all their sublime simplicity ; to grow thereby, and not to shine,—to improve the heart, not merely to gratify the taste,—to give vigour and activity to self-denying obedience, not merely to excite indolent admiration, or encourage speculative contemplations, from which no practical influences are to be digested.

It is most important to examine ourselves on this point, whether hungering and thirsting after righteousness be distinctly the motive of our Scriptural studies. They may otherwise be pursued with regularity and perseverance, yea, even with delight, without real spiritual advantage. The Word of God may be *admired* for its many intrinsic excellencies, even where it has not reached the conscience and affections. The faithfulness and antiquity of its national records,—the grandeur of its discoveries

concerning the origin of created things—the pathetic beauties of its interesting biographies—the loftiness of its poetry—the rich variety of its imagery—the convincing energy of its arguments—the comprehensive simplicity and unsullied purity of its moral lessons—have, in various ways, attractions for minds who never suffered it to say, I have a message from God unto *thee*. For any or for all these, its perfections, as well as from custom or decency, for professional distinction, or for victorious arguments, the Bible may be examined stately, and even closely, yet laid down without heartfelt advantage! And why? Because not handled as *food*. None but those who can say, “Thy commandments were found and I did eat them,” can grow in grace by their spiritual digestion. Personal application of the Divine statutes is the only arrow which can effectually reach, and prick, and rouse, the self-satisfied conscience. Personal application of the love of Jesus, the only elixir which can exalt and purify the soul unto the love and practice of holiness; they are both in the hand of the Spirit to dispense, for his office it is, both to convince of sin, and, taking of the things of Christ, so to shew them to the soul, that it may have

peace and joy in believing. The feast is spread! many behold and many praise it; but who are they that partake of the provided repast, not only with relish, but so as to go in the strength of that meat from day to day, from hour to hour, through evil report and good report, rejoicing? This is the privilege of those only who are taught of God. Such honour have all his saints, and his saints *only*. Are we called so to be? Let us look well, that we be not only called but chosen, and to that end pray earnestly to Him who is able to make all grace abound towards us, that he will open our eyes to see wonderful things out of his law.

PRAYER.

Quicken me, O Lord, after thy loving-kindness, so shall I keep the statutes of thy mouth. May I hunger for Christ the living bread. May I thirst for the water of life, which he only can bestow, and may that bread be given me, and those waters be made sure according to thy promises. O never-failing Fountain of Love and Hope, of Holiness and Peace! Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth thee not, be in me whenever I meditate

on the oracles of God, and impress them savingly on my heart to the end of my course on earth, making my profiting to appear unto all men, to the glory of my Heavenly Father. All I ask is through Jesus Christ, my only Saviour.—Amen.

“As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.”—1 *Peter* ii. 2.

Instinctively the infant craves
 That food which fits it best,
 And nature's nutriment receives
 Pure from the mother's breast.

See with what eagerness of joy
 It takes the proffered boon,
 What tempting bait shall wealth employ,
 To lure it thence too soon ?

No weariness—no love of change,
 Repress its fond delight ;
 Had it the universe to range,
 'Twould seek no dearer sight.

With powers thus ardently intent,
 Do Christian minds desire,
 That heaven provided nourishment,
 Their daily wants require.

On unadulterated food,
 Jehovah's word they live,
 Nor would they change that cherished good
 For all that earth can give.

Thy statutes, Lord, are good and pure,
 They make the simple wise :
 Thy testimonies, clear and sure,
 Illume our darkened eyes.

Oh be the sacred pleasure mine,
 Unceasingly to draw,
 Fresh from the fount of life divine,
 The sweetness of thy law.

MEDITATION VI.

“They changed the truth of God into a lie ; and worshipped and served the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.”—*Romans* i. 25.

FROM the beginning it was even so ! From the beginning, even until now, the dispositions here described have been the very essence of all sin. Disbelief of the Divine

testimony—self-indulgence, in opposition to the restraint of the Divine commands—deliberate preference of created perishing enjoyments, to the favour and fruition of the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Thus it was with Eve; she doubted the immutability of the Divine Word; she permitted a momentary gratification, opposed to her Maker's will, and the visionary prospect of an exalted happiness, independent of Him, to withdraw her heart from its only true rest, even when surrounded by the paradise of delights in which he had vouchsafed to place her. The serpent beguiled her by his subtlety, and she fell. Thus, too, it was with Adam—he was not deceived—he supposed not that any rich virtues dwelt in that forbidden fruit, whereby he should be wiser or happier after he had eaten; but the creature lay at his heart. “The woman whom thou gavest me, she tempted me and I did eat.” His love for Eve was greater than his love for his God! Without that last precious gift, he could not be happy, even in the light of his Maker's countenance, and the certainty of his approving smile. Though he knew that his help-meet had thrown off her allegiance to the Supreme Giver of all their blessings, he shrank not

from the pollution of her society, as shrink the unfallen from contact with the disobedient. He loved the world, and the things of the world, and the love of the Father faded within him, and he fell. See ye not, oh posterity! of that offending pair, see ye not your own portraits in this mirror? Yet how mercifully does the adorable Jehovah meet, even the guilty beings who had thus insulted him! He condemns man indeed to toil, but with the passions which now became predominant in his degraded nature to what excesses might not a life of total indolence have exposed the wretched culprit? He condemns woman to suffering and to subjection; but these also counteract the evils of that supine rest, to which a frame less fitted for robust exertion than her partner's, might often expose her. Rightly used, they are beneficial in changing that corrupt bias to which she yielded in the original transgression; they wean her spirit from its too fond attachment to this vain world, and humble it by the frequent recollection, that "Dust she is, and unto dust, must ere long return." But there is yet a more astonishing mercy to be remembered, when meditating on this momentous transaction: The resources of Omnipotent Love are infinite;

and greatly as they had rebelled, Jehovah forsook not the work of his own hands. He looked and there was none to help—none to uphold; therefore his own arm brought salvation. “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” The “Eternal Word was made flesh!”

It is not indeed wonderful, that when once conscious of disobedience, the soul should recoil from immediate contact with inflexible justice. The unsullied purity—the unspeakable dignity of his Omniscient Judge, cannot fail to fill the sinner with dismay; and often is he driven, by his futile anxiety to forget his terrors, to seek a hiding-place “among the trees of the garden,” to plunge deeper and deeper into *creature* worship—that fatal net which first entangled his faculties, and is ever dragging them to a wider distance from their right end and aim. But redeeming mercy makes her gentle summons heard. Can the guilty refuse to listen? “To you, oh sons of men! does she speak,” and will you refuse to hear the voice of the charmer, saying, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but should have everlasting life?” “Look unto Him and be saved all ye ends

of the earth?" A mediator, with claims irresistible to the confidence of both the alienated parties, stands between them. On the one side, (and that the side of the Lord God Almighty,) he is accepted, approved, delighted in. What is wanting, then to the reconciliation? Wonder ye Heavens, and be astonished, oh Earth! when it is replied,—the acceptance of man!

PRAYER.

Blessed be thy name, Oh Just and Holy God! that thou hast declared thyself the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus—that thine indignation burneth not against us continually, to destroy, but that in wrath thou rememberest mercy, ever saying unto the children of men, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Gracious Father! I would now arise and come unto thee, confessing that I have grievously transgressed thy righteous laws, and too slightly regarded thy tender forbearance towards me hitherto. I ever need, and fervently implore the renewing influences of thy Holy Spirit, to take of the things of Christ and make them unto me the seed of everlasting life and blessedness. I adore thy kindness in

rendering the temporal punishments of our guilty race beneficial to our fallen state. Oh! may I bear my portion of them patiently, cheerfully, and wisely, so as best to prepare me for that hour, when the last effect of the curse shall be triumphantly overcome by the power of the Saviour. When my body shall return to the dust, and my spirit unto Thee who gave it, oh! may I meet death in the joyful hope of rising from the grave, to dwell for ever in thy presence, through the merits of our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.—Amen.

“In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.”—*Genesis* iii. 16.

Not long may woman hide,
 In Eden's happy bowers;
 Her doom is “sorrows multiplied,”
 And not a path of flowers.

Hope's garland may be bright
 In girlhood's opening day,
 But matron troubles early blight
 Youth and her roses gay.

And shall she, therefore, grieve,
 Or wish to change her lot,
 If sin be strengthened to deceive,
 Where suffering enters not?

Where "changes" are unknown,
 Created gifts are dear ;
 But He who showers them from his throne,
 Where are His thanks and fear ?

The smooth unruffled nest,
 Might sleep *lethargic* woo,
 Welcome the storm that breaks such rest ;
 Welcome afflictions too.

Pain and subjection well
 Mind woman of their cause,
 And to her humbled spirit tell,
 Of Heaven's neglected laws.

Yes ; from her very curse,
 Distils a precious balm,
 As dews of godly sorrow nurse,
 The saint's eternal palm.

Scarce was that curse pronounced
 On disobedient Eve,
 Ere the consoling Judge announced,
 What Mary should achieve ;

That handmaid of the Lord,
 Her wondrous Seed hath borne ;
 Our God by Woman hath restored
 What woman's guilt had shorn ;

Then weep not nor repine,
 Ye daughters at your state,
 Behold for you the Scriptures shine
 With gems of heavenly weight.

“She shall be saved,” they say,
 “Through her severest woe,
 If on her sober, holy way,
 In faith and love she go.”

MEDITATION VII.

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.”—*John* iii. 7.

WHAT a contrast to the self-seeking harangues of many human teachers is to be perceived, in the calm yet dignified simplicity, with which the Lord Jesus delivered his instructions. Replete with heavenly wisdom, he yet sought not to display it. He desired not that his own praises should be sounded, but the glory of his Father promoted. He desired not that the voice of astonishment should be uplifted, to magnify

the perfection of his precepts, the "enticing words" of his oratory, or the originality of his system of doctrine. Marvel not!—Art thou a Master in Israel, and knowest not these things? What is written in the law! how readest thou?—Expressions like these, leading the hearers rather to wonder at their own culpable darkness, than to extol the illumination of their teacher, plainly shew that it was their edification, not their admiration, which Jesus desired,—not to be taken by force and made a King, environed with outward splendour, but to reign in their hearts, unto the glory of God, even the Father. Oh! how apparent is it that such was the spirit of that Divine Redeemer, who came not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent him in accomplishing the salvation of them that believe on his name. That such was also the spirit of his early disciples, very evidently appears from several passages of their writings. One short expression of the Apostle Paul may be quoted as an example; it beautifully expresses the temper which he had imbibed, not at the feet of Gamaliel, but of Jesus, "We seek not yours, but you." To win souls from destruction to duty,—to thwart evil,—to implant, revive,

and multiply good ; these were the spiritual meat and drink of Christ in his earthly humiliation. Christians ! should they not also be yours ? Instruments fitted by his Spirit for agency in his cause, should you seek other and meaner objects than his glory, in any ministrations to which you may be called ?

But let me now return to meditate on the Lord's assertion, "Ye must be born again," and his intimation that in announcing this, he was speaking of an already known and received truth, not putting forth a novel and mysterious revelation ; or, as it would seem, Nicodemus had imagined, a prediction of some supernatural interference with the course of human events. The previous and convincing miracles of Christ seem to have prepared the inquiring Pharisee to give a literal interpretation to the figure of a new birth, under which the Lord had represented the nature of conversion ; so that he appears to have expected a miraculous demonstration of Almighty Power connected with the words, "Ye must be born again." But if such were his error, he was not long permitted to entertain it. The nature of this absolutely requisite renovation was distinctly described as an earthly thing, attended

with no miraculous evidences, no shakings of the earth, nor thunderings of the heavens: No marvellings of men, nor manifestation of angels, were to be its consequences, but the still small voice which none heareth save the happy soul within which it whispers. Yet as surely, as undeniably, was it to be proved to exist by its influences on the heart and conduct, as the winds of heaven are proved to be in motion, by the echoing blasts or the yielding boughs, of the forests which they visit. And must *all* be thus renovated? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."—If any can plead exemption from such a natural condition, they and they alone may rightly deem that to *them* a new birth from above would be superfluous. If any be now living the life that they live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who gave himself for them, who died for them, who lives for them—they *are* created anew in Christ Jesus. They are the children of God by faith. May they walk obediently, not fashioning themselves according to the former lusts in their ignorance, but pressing ever towards the mark for the prize of their high calling. But, oh! for more vigour of faith, more singleness of heart, more unsophisticated

humility in crediting the assurances of our Father's gracious message, and embracing the condescending offers of his love. Oh! for grace to receive the truth in the love of it, with the undoubting simplicity of a little child, that questions not the kindness, the sufficiency, the constancy, of parental care; but lives from hour to hour upon its continued vigilance. Thus to trust in our God is everlasting strength. To them that receive Christ,—a free gift, a willing Saviour—power is given to become the sons of God. Believe on his name, and ye are born again. Believe strongly, and you shall have life abundantly. Waste not time in fallacious, useless, disquisitions as to the *manner* of that holy change, which must qualify you for a blissful inheritance. Make it not a mere subject of *marvelling* speculation, but once convinced of its necessity by the existence of even one *allowed* sin within your heart, make it rather a subject of prayer, till the invaluable blessing be obtained, till the Spirit be poured on you from on High, and witness with your spirits, that you are accepted in the beloved,—the children of God by adoption and grace. Lord increase our faith, and be Thou our all in all.

PRAYER.

Oh God! from whose inexhaustible fullness cometh down every good and every perfect gift, and who art ever inviting thy guilty and unworthy creatures to come unto thee, according to thy rich mercies revealed in the Gospel, for light, and life, and everlasting strength, incline me effectually, I pray thee, by thy Holy Spirit, to obey the repeated calls of thy word to repentance and faith. Thy word is the incorruptible seed of holiness. Make it fruitful, I beseech thee, in my renewed soul,—that seeing I may so see, and hearing I may so hear, as to be regenerated in heart and mind, henceforth abhorring and renouncing every sin, and perseveringly contending against every temptation; through thy gracious help and undeserved goodness in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.—Amen.

“Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—*Matthew* xviii 3.

“In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.”—*Isaiah* xxx. 15.

To a very young Infant.

Dear object of a parent's prayer!

How peaceably and sweetly
Thou'rt resting on thy mother's care,
And trusting her completely.

Thou thinkest not, with anxious fear,
Of future wants distressing;
Enough for thee, if she be near,
Who waits but their expressing.

Thou dreamest not, her love depends
On aught thy hand can give her;
Nor that thine infant power extends
Thy perils to deliver.

But tender thoughts of kindness past,
Reposing trust awaken;
And freely all thy cares are cast,
Where freely they are taken.

'Twere well, dear babe, of thee to learn
Such simple, strong believing,
And in a Saviour's love discern
Our warrant for receiving.

'Twere well to trust *his* gracious Word,
 Not weigh our own deserving;
 And calmly rest, whate'er occur'd,
 Upon his safe preserving.

As "little children" he invites
 Our full and free confiding,
 And in the filial heart delights
 Still in his love abiding.

Our happiness is just to leave
 Ourselves to his direction;
 The sole return that we can give,
 Our reverence and affection.

MEDITATION VIII.

"Oh Lord! how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all."—*Psalm* civ. 24.

INFINITE skill, commanding infinite resources might well be supposed capable of producing a world of wonders; and in such a world do we live. Researches, diligently

made through many successive centuries, have still discovered within its sphere, new fields of observation, unexplored by those that preceded them. Yet not one leaf of the book of science has ever been perused without displaying, in still brighter characters than before, this testimony of the Psalmist concerning the works of the Most High, that "in wisdom hath he made them all." That record standeth sure. Placed beneath the searching influences of microscopic investigation, (like a secretly written manuscript, whose important information might long remain invisible, did not fire, or some other efficient agency, bring it into view,) the utmost concentration of human talent, employed in examining the structure and arrangement of this world and its inhabitants, has but yielded forth new proofs of creative Omnipotence, Intelligence, and considerate Benevolence. The minutest touches of nature's great record, as well as that magnificent vault of heaven, where suns and planets, comets and satellites form the vast materials of her alphabet, testify unvaryingly the same great truth. From the obscurest cavern of earth, as from the immeasurable distances of space, echoes the same interrogation, "Canst thou by

earching find out God ; canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection ?”

The Divine Infinitude is indeed daily and hourly corroborated. Every beam of light that visits us, fitted as it is in every possible respect for the organs which are to receive and use it, witnesses this great truth. Every breath we inhale,—impossible as it would be for us to exist were the present just proportion of its constituent parts impaired,—gives it confirmation ; and yet, does not that sacred Word, which like the visible things of creation, is the more wonderful, the more minutely it is scrutinized, does it not assert that there are those who regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands ; and others, who make indeed an extorted acknowledgment of his existence, yet nullify it as to any moral effects, by saying, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil ? If there be therefore, alas ! fools who still say in their hearts, “ There is no God,”—who mock at sin, saying, “ He will never see it,”—melancholy as that fact is, let us remember it is nevertheless an attestation of Scripture, which so well defines the scoffers of the last days, as “ walking after their own lusts,” carelessly, contentedly, and as if the eye of an

unslumbering God were not always upon them.

Awful state of practical infidelity! yet how little aware of their condition are many who are nevertheless deeply sunk in its guilt! They would start and shrink from the imputation were they called Atheists; but *to what purpose* are they otherwise, if they can as fearlessly plunge into the iniquities which God abhors, as though the Lord were not a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed?

My soul, this is a profitable subject for self-searching humiliation. Thou believest that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, that by Him and for his pleasure were all things created, that the grand end and object of all being is to glorify Him, his Power, his Wisdom, his Justice, his Holiness, and his Love. Art thou in any way, and to the extent of thine ability, fulfilling this end? Art thou glorifying Him? admiring his works, wherever they are placed before thee and their consummate excellence developed? adoring his goodness in their adjustment to the comfort of intelligent creatures? especially art thou remembering that He who made all, who preserves all, must needs be present with all? That to

Him the secrets of all hearts are revealed, and that unreserved obedient devotedness from those who are endowed with faculties to bestow it, is his undoubted right? My soul, bind down thy wandering powers to reflect seriously on these questions, and thou wilt infallibly find cause to reply, "I have sinned, I have perverted my way. I have forgotten God my Maker. Deliver me, oh Lord! by the ransom thou hast found, lest I go down into the pit, for the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people which forget God."

Neither let any one say, I am no philosopher. I understand not the discoveries of science. I have no means of studying them. I am safe from the charge of neglecting to praise God for the wisdom of his works, on this plea of my ignorance. The most illiterate among us has in his own frame,— "fearfully and marvellously made," and "curiously wrought" as it is, enough to prove, beyond the shadow of rational doubt, that the hand that "made him is divine." To set in motion, and preserve in order, such complicated machinery as it exhibits, —to adapt its members, in the most admirable manner, for their several functions, and to place them all under the direction of the

indwelling soul,—required the exertion of such Intellect, such Foresight, such Scope of Design, that had we *only* this to contemplate, and did we contemplate it as steadily and frequently as we ought, we could not long withstand the conviction, that “Verily this is done by the finger of God;” nor withhold the adoring confession, Oh Lord! our Governor, “How excellent is thy name in all the earth!”

PRAYER.

Glorious and ever blessed God! I am astonished and awed by the infinity of thy Power, and the innumerable exertions of thy Wisdom, by which I am continually encompassed. By thy Spirit, Thou hast garnished the heavens, calling out their hosts by number! The vast ocean is measured as in the hollow of thine hand. The dust of the whole earth is comprehended in a measure; for thou distinctly perceivest and providest for its minutest living atom. There is no searching of thine understanding. Thou doest great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number. Yet, oh Lord! God of Power and Might, of Knowledge and Wisdom, thou art also the good Shep-

herd of thy believing servants, and the lambs of thy flock are dear to thee. They that wait on thee shall run in thy ways and not be weary, and thou upholdest them that seek no other helper. Without thy continual care, oh good Lord! where had we now been? Amidst the perils of feeble infancy, what else could have preserved our bodies? And amidst far worse, because spiritual dangers, what else can maintain us in the life of faith and holiness? Both for body and soul, do I now entrust myself, and all those that I love, to thy fatherly care, for all eternity, through thy manifested loving-kindness, in thy blessed Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ.—Amen.

“Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about.”--*Job* x. 8.

In every work of thine,
 Thou only Great and wise!
 The demonstrations of design
 Are laid before our eyes.

The heavens thy glory shew,
 The stars speak loud to man;
 “Behold us, as we circling glow,
 And own Creation’s plan.”

The earth with riches filled,
 The wide replenish'd sea,
 Proclaim no less—'twas Goodness will'd,
 And Might that made us be.

Yet infant of a day,
 Thy little frame would seem,
 With voice more powerful than they,
 To tell the glorious theme.

A thousand fibres twine,
 Throughout each feeble limb ;
 Muscles, and nerves, and veins, combine,
 All, all to speak of Him.

No eye that work could mark ;
 In secret wast thou made ;
 Yet, members fashion'd in the dark,
 In symmetry were laid !

Admiring awe and fear,
 Divide my powers of thought,
 So complex ! and such perils near !
 Yet safe through perils brought.

My soul, thou marv'lest much,
 How sceptic should deny,
 Strong evidence of sight and touch,
 Declaring, "God is nigh."

Oh ! marvel deeply more,
 Examining within,
 That thou, who scann'st it o'er and o'er,
 Should'st ever dare to sin !

MEDITATION IX.

“ Sin is the transgression of the law.”
1st John iii. 4.

THE Apostle does not even add the law of *God*; what that law really is,—the breadth of its requirements, and the force of its sanctions, might then have become the questions for discussions; but on these he is not at present arguing. His assertion is, in fact, true of *every* law, which is acknowledged by the transgressor of it to emanate from authority competent to direct his actions. The Gentiles were a law unto themselves, and were criminal in transgressing it. Wilfully departing from what their own conscience and philosophy (defective as these were) instructed them to observe, they were brought in guilty before Jehovah,

even had they never heard of his personal existence, nor witnessed those outward tokens of his "Eternal Power and Godhead," which left them without excuse when they refused to retain Him in their knowledge. Of those whom the Gospel has not yet reached, the same may be declared. Insufficient, and even false as are their notions of true good, and misplaced their dependence on their deluded lawgivers; yet, the deliberate act of preferring, to what is *supposed* good, that which is believed to be evil, while this is done for the gratification of *self*, and as rejecting lawful subordination, as fully proves the individuals so offending to be sinners after the similitude of Adam's transgression, as if the law to which they *profess* obedience were in itself perfect.

But if those shall be accounted liable for the stripes of a just condemnation, who have thus lifted up the hand of rebellion against natural conscience, or the commands of erring legislators, of how much sorer punishment think we, shall they be found worthy, who have trodden under foot the authority of the Son of God, and who, instead of valuing the privilege of being numbered among his visible church, count, as it were, the blood of that covenant, wherewith they have been

so set apart as a peculiar people, an unholy, or a worthless thing? What shall we think of those who have in their possession a perfect rule, and an unfailing standard of principle and conduct, who *profess* to submit to it, yet even when fully aware of its injunctions and prohibitions, fearlessly disregard and infringe them? Verily, if he that committeth sin by choosing what he only imagines to be evil, offendeth Him who enjoins purity in the inmost parts, rectitude in the will, and uprightness in the actions,—then must every mouth be stopped, and every individual pronounced guilty against God. Many will, however, confess thus much, who will by no means allow their minds to go forward to the consequences which hang upon the admission. Though convinced of the law, as transgressors, they yet put aside those awful denunciations, “The soul that sinneth it shall die,” “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,” &c.—as inapplicable to their own case—blessing themselves in their hearts they say, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace, and walk on in their vain imaginations, undisturbed by the fear of impending wrath,—satisfied

that "all will be well at last." Various are the self-soothing contrivances of man to free himself from all uneasiness on these momentous subjects. It might be easy to extend our meditations by reflecting on these several fallacies ; but unbelief of God's testimony is the agent which in every one of them blinds the deceived arguers ; and it matters comparatively little, whether she choose the material that hoodwinks them, from the embroidered stores of human reasoning, and venture to suppose the execution of Divine Justice inconsistent with the Infinity of Divine Mercy ; or snatching up the flimsy veil of the voluptuary, blinds their eyes to the nearness of eternity, while a vague whisper silences the strivings of conscience, saying, "There will be time enough yet for thoughts like these." Numerous and subtle as the devices of Satan may be, to produce in us an *unsafe security*, when the word of the Lord goeth forth, as a mighty warrior, conquering and to conquer, as the fire devoureth the crackling thorns, and as the flame consumes the stubble, they vanish before it. The sinner wonders at the callous ears which so long heard its convincing statements of his condition, without carrying to his conscience one feel-

ing of their truth, and like a swimmer I have lately read of, who, in his sleep, ventured into the ocean, wakes to a consciousness of peril, more or less awful perhaps, according to the depths whereto he may have ventured ; but in its mildest form sufficiently overwhelming to absorb every other thought, while he cries aloud, "What shall I do to be saved?" As the moon, bursting from the cloud that long obscured her, a beam of hope from the hitherto neglected Gospel, crosses his soul, and shews him the rock of safety. Is not Jesus the Saviour? Has he not suffered the just for the unjust? Has He not redeemed his people from the curse of the law? Is He not a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest? Lord save me, or I perish. Thus is Christ the end of the law to every one that believeth.

But that is *not* belief which only *sees* him to be a Saviour. There are hearers of the law who behold as in a glass their natural face, yet go their way, and straight-way forget what manner of creatures they are. Oh! that we may not only *look* into that perfect law of liberty, whereby Christ Jesus is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption, but

continue therein, as doers of the works which it enjoins to his glory. Those whom God justifies, them He also glorifies; a wilful continuance in sin can never be glorious; what therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder; but that we may perfect holiness in the fear of God, let us be ever looking unto Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith; as our example, our atonement, our advocate, our shield on earth, and our exceeding great reward for ever, yea, even for ever.

PRAYER.

What shall I say unto thee, oh! thou observer of men? When I remember thy righteous law, and my innumerable backslidings? Behold I am vile! I abhor myself in dust and ashes! Heal me, oh Lord, and I shall be healed; turn me and I shall be turned. Surely in vain is salvation hoped for, except through thy rich mercy in Christ Jesus, for thou art a just God and hatest iniquity, and wilt by no means clear the guilty, therefore hast thou laid on Him, whom the rulers despised, whom man rejected, the iniquity of us all, that He might bear it far away into the wilderness, whence

it should never return to witness against the contrite and believing soul. May I be enabled by thee to lay my hand, in true faith, on the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world. Sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, may I obtain confidence and comfort in the hour of affliction, and serenity on the bed of death, and at length arrive in safety where I shall keep thy holy law perfectly, delightedly, and for ever.—Amen.

“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1st Corinthians xv. 56, 57.

Hadst thou, oh God ! in judgment turned,
 To view thy creatures' sin,
 Had thy just wrath in vengeance burned
 With nought to intervene ;

Where should we then have found a place,
 Our wretchedness to hide ?
 Or to escape thine awful face,
 What way of refuge tried ?

When to the couch of sickness led,
 What horrors had been there,
 While conscience strewed the restless bed
 With thorns of sharp despair !

But oh! for words of wonder vast,
 Of gratitude immense!
 God on his well-loved Son hath cast
 The weight of man's offence.

His well-loved Son, in pity free,
 Our Rescuer became,
 And fenced a tower where faith might flee
 From fear, and wrath, and shame.

Thither my guilty spirit fled,
 When rose the offended law,
 And wielded o'er my conscious head
 The weapons of its awe.

Thither I fled, for Jesus called
 And helped me to obey,
 And in that fortress, once installed,
 Who shall forbid my stay?

Approacheth now affliction's fire?
 It burns but to refine;
 Pain is no longer penal ire,
 But chastening love divine.

Sweet thought, and full of hallowing peace,
 Through sorrow, pain, and fear,
 Eternal love can never cease,
 Eternal love is here.

MEDITATION X.

“ Oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee, and that He would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is. Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.—*Job xi. 5, 6.*”

Good were the words of Zophar, the Naamathite, when he thus reminded his suffering, but repining friend, that the actings of an all-wise Providence are not to be meted with the measure of earth, nor compared with the expansive ocean, but extend their consequences into a boundless eternity.

Job had cried out in the bitterness of his soul, under almost unparalleled afflictions. “ Changes and war are against me.” He had bewailed, what he considered the renewed witnesses of the Lord’s indignation against him, so keenly, that he had been even betrayed into expressions of regret, because the gift of existence had been bestowed upon him, or not withdrawn immediately after his birth: “ Wherefore hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me !”

And if even that eminently pious man, who feared God and eschewed evil, and whose meekness of resignation has been enshrined by the Inspired Word as a pattern for succeeding ages,—was so overcome by bodily and mental anguish, as to forget for a while that the Most High doth not arbitrarily afflict, nor wantonly grieve the children of men, and to vent his sorrows in such unbecoming language, who are we that we should be able to stand, were similar trials to assail us; or how can we be sure that the weight of a far lighter burden might not be too heavy for our faith to counterpoise? “Lead us not into temptation” is wisely ordained to be our daily petition, and sweet is the corresponding promise, “God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted beyond that ye are able, but will also with the temptation make a way for you to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

The promises are, however, in our days *fulfilled*, not by miracle, but by extraordinary blessings upon ordinary means, especially by enlightening our minds to derive comfort from the sacred precepts of revelation, and the testimonies of God as suited to the peculiar necessities of our case. If, then, we be in heaviness through manifold tribula-

tions, if “without be fightings, and within be fears,” so that we are as it were “pressed out of measure,” “beyond strength,” may not the support and consolation we have earnestly besought, be conveyed to us in meditating on such a text as that now in view,—intimating to us, as it manifestly does, that there is in the secrets of the Eternal Mind, a “need be” for every specific tribulation of his saints, a “*double for that which is,*” however dreadful, however overwhelming may be its present endurance. We see but parts of the Lord’s ways: Justice and Mercy may sometimes be hid by the tears with which the exercise of *Power* dims our eyes; but, “is there iniquity with the most High?” “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” “Know rather that He exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.” Every stroke of his scourge is but the evidence of what he has forborne, for were He not slow to anger and of great mercy, why should that scourge have been so long withheld, or wherefore dost thou instinctively hope for its mitigation or removal? Were this world under any but a dispensation of compassion,—were it governed by the caprices of chance, or under the dominion of might unallied with

benevolence—would not its inhabitants (strung together as they are with nerves of exquisite sensibility,) be daily, hourly, agonizing under torturing disarrangements of their complex mechanism? would not sufferings, which are now of rare occurrence, be frequent and long continued, and without remedy, unless indeed it be imagined that some happy accident alone has stored the world with medicines and palliatives for human misery? And if occasionally, and for a season, and to a few individuals there arise complaints which baffle medical skill, and occasion intense agony to the sufferer, shall we therefore venture to assert that “God hath forgotten to be gracious?” Suppose the case our own, would it not be less, far less, than our manifold rebellions have warranted as an equitable visitation? Hath not God promised to make them endurable if he remove them not? Hath he not said, “My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness?”

And if we are wearied and faint in our minds, let us consider the Captain of our Salvation made perfect through suffering, Jesus whose soul was sorrowful even unto death; the Father, for our imputed sin, laid

on Him that deep distress; and among other fruits of this inestimable mercy, we are well warranted to include the assurance of our Saviour's sympathy under our most trying woes. Let us, then, draw refreshment from that well of consolation, and remember that if we suffer with him, we shall with him rejoice. We shall "shine forth as the morning," we shall forget our misery, and remember it as "waters that pass away." Let but our hearts be prepared, and our hands stretched forth towards him, while iniquity is put far from our hand, and wickedness dwells not in our tabernacle, and in the end, clad in his perfect righteousness, who for us became a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, we shall lift up our faces without spot. We may "be steadfast and not fear,"—"we may be secure," because in Him there is hope,—there is salvation,—there is everlasting felicity.

PRAYER.

Oh Lord! the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, enable me so to feel myself in and through Him, one of thy reconciled and beloved children, that under every

trying and painful dispensation of thy will, I may draw near to thee in the comfortable hope, that thou dealest with me in mercy, not in wrath,—with the tempered chastening of a tender parent, and not with the rigid hand of a recompensing Judge. May I receive all thy corrections with meekness, humbly endeavouring to profit by their endurance, and do thou, oh, Heavenly Father! so bless to me all the afflictions of this mortal state, that they may work out for me an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, when the days of my mourning shall be ended, and sin and sorrow eternally dismissed, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, my Saviour.—Amen.

“She remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.”—*John* xvi. 21.

Oh man of woman born !

Thy upward path, through many a conflict lies.

Thy early breath is drawn,

Where sin has fenced thee from a glorious prize ;

And many a wounding thorn

Must pierce thee ere thou grasp it in the skies ;

Oh man of woman born !

Without a friend to cheer thy way of woe,
 Art thou then left to mourn,
 With none thy bosom's bitterness to know?
 Nor how thy heart is torn
 With struggling through the hated things
 below;
 Oh man of woman born!

Were such indeed thy miserable case,
 Sad were thy natal morn.
 Oh how could anguish e'er to joy give place,
 Or mother cease to mourn,
 Because she held within her fond embrace,
 One to *Despondence* born?

But thou art *not* without a pitying friend,
 Nor helplessly forlorn!
 One is at hand, who "oil of joy" can send,
 To comfort all that mourn!
 He who himself did humbly condescend,
 To be of woman born.

Come then ye sorrowing sinners to his feet,
 Who sorrow's robe hath worn,
 He is exalted to Dominion's seat;
 He is salvation's horn;
 Ye grateful ransom'd ones! his name repeat,
 Jesus of woman born.

MEDITATION XI.

“Who hath despised the day of small things?”—*Zechariah* iv. 10.

IT is no proof of a superior mind to overlook or contemn what by casual observers is deemed unimportant. Had Sir Isaac Newton when the question occurred to him, “why should the apple infallibly fall *to the ground*, and not fly off into boundless space?” dismissed it from his mind as unworthy of consideration, those grand laws impressed on nature by her Maker, and whereby the heavenly bodies are kept in their several orbits, might have been yet unattained by human intellect. Had another philosopher disregarded, as too trivial for attention, the inquiry suggested by the force of the rising vapour, when it lifted the cover from the boiling liquid, whence would then have arisen our knowledge of the steam-engine, and all its important advantages?

To despise the day of small things, is indeed, in various ways, a common error; the commencement of many scientific improvements has been frequently discouraged by its prevalency; useful projects have been

retarded; works of art utterly prevented, by the habit in which men are so apt to indulge of pouring contempt on insignificant beginnings; and it is well, therefore, to be on our guard against it, even in temporal things. With such a feeling did the heathen around Nehemiah ridicule his first attempts to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem: "What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they offer sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall!" With such a feeling also did the Jews of Jerusalem in Zerubbabel's day regard his first endeavours to rebuild their temple, and despond, as they considered the magnitude of the work he had to accomplish. But while the Prophet remonstrates with them on this, and assures them of a joyful completion, which should make them ashamed of their early incredulity, may not his remonstrance give rise to a series of reflections in our minds as to the building of that spiritual edifice, of which the temple at Jerusalem was but a symbol? Our Lord has himself directed us to such an application, when, likening his visible church to a grain of mustard-seed, gradually increasing in importance till its

protecting branches should become well known as a safe and obvious shelter, he thus predicted that his evangelical dominion, though then restricted to a few humble followers, would at last overspread the earth as the waters cover the sea. No less has he in another simile, that of the leaven hidden in three measures of meal, taught us to avoid the tendency we are considering. It might seem small at first that leaven, and its effects despicable; but once hidden, the whole would be leavened; and the kingdom of God, in the believer's heart, may be compared to it. It enters into a mass, which would otherwise be relinquished to corruption. It preserves, it elevates, it renders it profitable. But does it this at once, or gradually? Christian! let your experience testify! Yet how cheering the assurance, that though the process of sanctification be slow, it is, it must be, complete. Mark the words, till the *whole* be leavened. Not one element of evil shall remain. Holiness shall endure for ever, without spot or possibility of stain. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, constitute that kingdom to which the comparison relates; and if,—while we deplore the slow progress they make within us, we have still the testimony

of their certain *existence*, then, stirring them up by prayer, and pleading the immutable promises for their full developement, let us not, in the mean time, despise our day of small things. The Lord is able to make all grace abound towards us, and to supply all our need, according to the riches of his mercy. In him let us trust, and the little one shall become a thousand, and the feeblest among us "as David."

But there is another and an opposite way of despising the day of small things, far more common and far more dangerous, than that already alluded to. The beginnings of sin are small, nay, sometimes they are almost imperceptible; yet how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Does Humility slumber at her post? is our state of dependence forgotten, and an aperture thus left for the destroyer? With stealthy step, how readily glides in the unsuspected desire—how unprofitably slips by the precious opportunity—how quickly escapes the culpable expression—Oh how shall they be rectified or retrieved? The tempter well knows that seeming trifles are his vantage-ground with those who have in them any fear of God, or love to Jesus. From daring and open sin they instinctively shrink. From habitual

and allowed evil they are mercifully kept by "the anointing that abideth;" but who will despise the day of small things when he looks into himself, and beholds how often the spirit of unwatchfulness in minute occurrences has led him into a way hedged about with the thorns of painful regret and contrition, and calling for salutary rebukes from Him, who will have us in this wilderness to be often humbled and proved, that we may know what is in our hearts; their proneness to depart from their only strength, and His mercy in not utterly forsaking us, notwithstanding all our follies and weakness. But let us remember that even the *thought* of foolishness is sin, and beware, yea, of its smallest inroads. As a fortress may be taken by the feeblest enemy, entering in disguise, and opening its gates, while the defenders sleep; it behoves us therefore to be watchful, even against the least formidable approaches of evil, and never to lay aside our armour of proof, till we reach the land where no enemy can assail us. In the meantime it may console us to reflect, that even our faint, often-remitted endeavours to promote the glory of our Redeemer, are not over-looked nor despised by Him. He will not quench the smoking flax, but kindle it

into a more vigorous flame. There is joy among the angels of God "over one sinner that repenteth," and so far from despising our day of small things, Jesus has himself said, a single cup of cold water, given in the true spirit of Christian love to him, and to our brethren, shall in no wise lose its reward.

PRAYER.

Oh Eternal and most Holy God! who knowest the end from the beginning, and dost discern the most secret thoughts and intents of our hearts, we are yet but in the infancy of our spiritual being; our highest thoughts of Thee are low and deficient,—our endeavours to approach thee weak and faltering,—our ignorance is great, and our frailty distressing. Have pity on us, oh our heavenly Father! Enlighten and uphold us. Keep us from sin, and put us on our guard against its most subtle approaches. As the eagle beareth her feeble ones on her wings, do thou, oh merciful Lord! have compassion on our infirmities, and lift up our minds to improving contemplations, that, growing in grace and in knowledge, we may be prepared, in thy good time, for

the glorious inheritance of the saints in light, through the merits and intercession of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ our Lord,
—Amen.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.”—1 *John* iii. 2.

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”—1 *Corinth.* xiii. 11.

Trace to its source yon broad majestic
stream,
Where navies float, and nations riches
teem.
What does it shew? a small and shallow
rill,
Moistening the marshes of a nameless hill.

Or mark yon stately oak! the forest's pride,
Deep-rooted, and with boughs extending
wide;
Where was it once? inertly folded up
In the small compass of an acorn cup.

Or lift thine eye, where yonder star minute,
 A faint uncertain ray appears to shoot ;
 Canst thou imagine it a sun, most bright,
 With worlds perhaps dependant on its
 light ?

All these are wonderful ; yet stranger far,
 Than oak, or stream, or faintly beaming
 star,
 The passive babe, upon the mother's knee,
 Viewed as a child of immortality.

Oh ! tis astonishing so frail a shell,
 Should hide Creation's mightiest miracle,
 A living soul ! Jehovah's gifted breath,
 Placed in a tent of weakness ! Life in
 death !

Lo ! in her secret chamber sleeps the mind,
 Until those cords mysterious shall be twined,
 By which her busy handmaids find access
 To break the slumbers of her deep recess.

Perfect each faculty, complete each sense,
 Yet all chained up in infant impotence.
 Bound, as it were, in mental swathing
 band,
 For Time to loosen with his gradual hand.

Believer! in such types, a picture see,
 Of what the spirits blest consider thee,
 Thou glorious creature of ethereal birth,
 Passing thy time of pupilage on earth;

They view thee as a jewel in the mine,
 All rough and lustreless; yet form'd to
 shine;
 Thy brightest graces, as a little spark,
 Just visible,—because the world is dark.

From thee to them the interval how great!
 A baby and a minister of state;
 And yet deny it, doubt it if we can,
 The babe as truly *lives* as does the man.

Already does thy full admiring love,
 Follow the rays that reach thee from above,
 And when thine eye can bear the full orb'd
 blaze,
 Thy King, in all his beauty, waits thy gaze.

Already dost thou nestle to that side,
 Where all thy wants are tenderly supplied.
 Oh! keep thee closely to that parent breast,
 For thou shalt find it an *eternal* rest.

MEDITATION XII.

“All of you be clothed with humility.”—1 *Peter* v. 5.

IN no respect does the Gospel present a more striking contrast to those maxims of moral guidance, which have their origin in motives unconnected with eternity, than in the discouragement which it uniformly gives to a system of actions founded on the love of fame. The heathen philosophers esteemed this a noble passion, and ever encouraged those feelings of rivalry, and those strivings of an ambition, falsely called heroic, which sprang from its indulgence. To live and to die undistinguished, was, according to them, to live and to die *ignobly*. They even went so far in their unhallowed pride, as to consider it better to be remembered for some bold and daring deed, which even their ethics justified not, than to lie down in an obscure unnoted grave. Eratostratus deemed it more honourable that posterity should name him

as the impious incendiary of the consecrated fane, than that it should be unknown to posterity that Eratostratus ever lived.

The desire of celebrity is now indeed frequently directed into other channels than those which flow through the ensanguined field of warfare, or live to future ages in the songs of the minstrel. Yet who will say that potently and influentially it acts not among worldly men of the present day? Assuredly it so acts. From the youthful aspirant for the college crown, to the candidate for exaltation, as the most eloquent and learned of the village operatives; from the statesman to the peasant, how often do we see ambition of this world's praise to be the sole, or most powerful incentive of effort? Were there no other or better state than the present life, all this might be of little consequence, it might even be laudable as producing some advantages to society, which the absence of higher motives would otherwise deliver over to much supineness. But are *they* wise to seek honour from men, who know the eager pursuit of it to be inconsistent with the attainment of that true honour which cometh from God only? Yet there is reason, I think, to fear that such is the case with many. There are even in the

religious world symptoms plainly betraying, that the strife among the disciples which of them should be the greatest, is not without parallel in the present day. But will it avail any in the day of judgment, to have been *called* an eminent Christian, if the luxuriance of those gifts which acquired for him the venerable title, had not its deep root in the recesses of his closet, neither was there continually consecrated to the glory and referred to the guidance of its great Bestower? Alas! we have all much cause to say on this subject, "Search me, oh God! and try my heart, and see whether there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," for when we least suspect ourselves of lacking humility, then may we be in most imminent peril of pride. The heart is very deceitful; even in its purest and most gracious actings, much base alloy, alas! is mingled. We speak of God, and for God perhaps; but do we always, in so doing, speak as of the ability which God giveth? Is there no lurking pride of victory, no craving for human applause, no deficiency of holy charity in things whereby our light shineth forth before men? If our actions be performed to be seen of them, or our words spoken to be admired of them, verily

we *have* our reward ; and if there be a strife among us which of us should be accounted greatest, let it utterly cease when we see our blessed, lowly Master, putting honour on a little child who seeks it not, and setting him *in the midst*, for observation and for pre-eminence, that he may practically exemplify how he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The entire subjugation of self,—the absorption of all other glorying into the glory of Jehovah,—seems to be the grand end of our discipline on earth ; and the more entirely our views and wishes are condensed into this, the closer will be our membership with our glorified Head, for He did not his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him. The true honour of the saints is conformity to their Divine Lord : and “ He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Whoso receiveth a little child, as a type of the humility with which he ought to be clothed, and thenceforth strives diligently towards the acquisition of the spirit so depicted and approved, receiveth Christ. The possession of a truly humble spirit is a genuine test of having embraced by faith a crucified and reviled Saviour. Nothing, in fact, can produce a habit of

mind so opposed to our natural bias, except such a transformation, by his Holy Spirit, as implies a reception of Him in all his offices. And as he who "receiveth the Son, receiveth also the Father that sent him," cheerful, ready, and implicit obedience to the whole promulgated law of God, is also necessarily included; so that to be truly *humble*, does in every possible way, indicate the vitally unfeigned Christian. Clothed with humility, as Jesus was, should his servants be in this world, and so arrayed they are, except when for a time they fall into some strange delusions. From the delusions of pride, may the good Lord preserve us, for verily a "haughty spirit goeth before a fall; but before honour is humility."

PRAYER.

Oh Lord! may that mind be in me which was so conspicuously in thy dear Son, when He emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. May my only strife henceforward be contending zealously for the faith once delivered to the saints; my only provoca-

tion, the provoking of others to mutual love and good works; and my only covetousness, the coveting earnestly of thy best gifts. Give me, I pray thee, that meek and quiet spirit, which is in thy sight of great price, and that wisdom which is full of mercy and good fruits. May my moderation be apparent in all things. May thy great name be glorified, and my soul sanctified, for the Redeemer's sake.—Amen.

“And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, verily I say unto you,—Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”—*St. Matthew*, xviii. 2, 4.

Far happier in the sheltered vale,
 Than if permitted to inhale
 The dangerous, though enlivening gale,
 Which men distinction name.
 Shall the disciples of the cross,
 Exchanged for which the world were loss,
 Barter their gold for earthly dross,
 And covet earthly fame?

Shall they among themselves aspire,
 Each one to be "a little higher"
 Who *all* were lifted from the mire
 Of guiltiness and sin ?
 And that by one who chose to trace,
 With shame and spitting on his face,
 The path of sorrow and disgrace,
 Their happiness to win !

Remember when unhallowed strife
 Arose among the heirs of life,
 How Jesus marked the mischief rife,
 And marked it to repel !
 Remember how he took a child,
 Too young to know ambition wild,
 And taught them, by that emblem mild,
 How his meek Church should dwell.

With such sweet type, in daily view,
 Lord! I would be instructed too,
 And at that fount my soul imbue,
 With antidotes to pride ;
 As in thy chosen glass I'll see,
 How heaven-born Christians should be
 free
 From all contentious rivalry,
 And "in their lot abide."

Oh lowly Saviour! thou didst deign
 Thy saints' affections to enchain,
 By entering on a life of pain,
 Thyself an Infant pure.
 Teach all thy faithful—unenticed
 By honours frail, though dearly priced,
 Humble and calm, like babes in Christ,
 For ever to endure.

MEDITATION XIII.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

Matthew vii. 11, 12.

THE connecting word *therefore* between these two verses is very remarkable. Let us consider the whole passage as it stands from the 7th verse. Those magnificent, unfettered promises, “Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you,” are first propounded; and then the infinite, but wise kindness, of our Heavenly Parent in their fulfilment, is illustrated and restricted, by

an appeal to those tender feelings, which yet remain unobliterated in our fallen nature. "What man is there among you, who, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" Assuredly no affectionate father would hesitate to refuse the hurtful gratification of a wish made in ignorance by his fondly loved child. But if we, warped and deadened as we are by the evil that is in us, have yet so much perception of what is right, and so much regard for what is kind, as to bestow cheerfully and assiduously, what our best judgments can select as *good* upon our children, much more will our Heavenly Father give "*good things*," truly, intrinsically, eternally excellent things, even (as another Evangelist expresses it) his Holy Spirit, unto them that ask him, "*Therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.*" *Because* you are thus assured by God himself of his willingness to bestow on you freely every needful blessing. *Because* you are thus invited to come to him as reconciled children and receive power to obey his commands; therefore I again give you forth this epitome of social duties, not as the ministration of con-

demnation, but that you may seek and obtain (by the pleading of your Father's liberal promises with himself in prayer) to have it written on your hearts as the law of love. As the true disciples of a lowly and loving Lord, you will moderate to a *due* standard your own expectations from others, and then, by the same standard, regulate your conduct towards them. The reference to the corrupt state of man, (ye being evil,) strengthens this application of the promise, as implying our need of Divine assistance in our dealings with our brethren, as well as amply providing the means of obtaining it; and if we do but consider how "exceedingly broad is the precept of doing to *all* men, not as they *act*, but as we should reasonably desire them to act towards us, we shall not be slow to acknowledge, that in order to "do justly," and to "love mercy," as this brief precept enjoins, we *must* also "walk humbly with our God," and implore of him ability to do to others, as we would they should do to us. When a certain lawyer "stood up and tempted Jesus," that he might be entrapped, if possible, to shew a partiality to one commandment over others, and so give occasion for captious objections and arguments, the Lord confuted

his base purpose by a comprehensive enforcement of those two great mainsprings of action, the love of God, and the love of man flowing from it, (which the lawyer had himself selected as the most important of all its precepts,) saying, "This do, and thou shalt live." By one of those inimitably minute strokes, with which the volume of inspiration abounds, and which unveil the deception of man, as by a *touch* from the great Heart-searcher, without the superfluous use of words, the struggle of pride with conviction of his own guilt, which this short sentence produced in the enquirer, is thus briefly narrated, "But he willing to justify himself, said, And who is my neighbour?" and we are constrained to confess how, when this spirit-searching standard, this rule of universal love, is pressed home on any one of us, the same desire of self-justification, and the same endeavour to lower the duty to the performer, instead of seeking help to elevate the performer to the duty, is frequently visible. Our Lord replied to the question by the beautiful parable of the charitable Samaritan. We shall do well to study it to enlarge our own ideas of the self-denial and kindness, the indifference to man's mistaken opinions, and resistance to

evil example, the victory over prejudice, the consecration of time, labour, and substance, and the provident attention to the permanent relief and benefit of others, which are therein set before us, as included in our fulfilling this great precept. All must perceive that so considered it is well calculated to make us conclude our internal scrutiny by deep-felt condemnation of our past defective performance, and so to lead us for pardon, and the power of better obedience, to the throne of unfailing grace. May this, then, be the lesson gained from the whole subject—abasement of our “evil” selves before God, and unfeigned entreaties, as from perishing offspring to a pitying Father, for the faith which can justify—the grace which can restore,—the love which can enable us to fulfil the law. May we so trust in Him, who waiteth to be gracious, as to believe that having given us his dear Son, he will with him freely give us all things; and may He send into our hearts the spirit of adoption, ever to cry unto him, abba, Father!

PRAYER.

Oh Lord God! Omnipotent Creator of Heaven and Earth, I am ashamed and con-

founded when I remember thy condescending goodness, compared with my own coldness, disobedience, and rebellion, towards Thee. Through the compassionate invitations of thy dear Son, who was manifested to take away our sins, thou hast given us free access to thee, our insulted Sovereign, as unto a propitiated Father, and hast called us to thy throne of grace, to ask and receive, to seek and find, according to our wants, and not according to our deservings. But, alas! wayward, perverse, and ungrateful, I have too little esteemed, too little profited, by privileges so unspeakable. Oh! may I henceforward approach thy mercy-seat in every time of need, and obtain there all thy covenanted blessings in Christ Jesus, our Saviour, even abundantly more than I can ask or think.—Amen.

“Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.”—*Psalms* ciii. 13.

Prostrated by destroying hands,
 In ages long gone by,
 Beneath Arabia's dreary sands
 Some noble fragments lie ;

And even on her arid soil,
 May here and there be seen,
 Sweet to the eye and foot of toil,
 A cheering spot of green.

Thus He who of our evil state
 Explored the depths profound,
 Tho' crush'd by sins' encumbering weight,
 Saw Eden's wrecks around.

He saw, and on one verdant spot,
 That blessed the sterile waste,
 A tree whose verdure fadeth not,
 His hand divinely placed.

With that Oäsis in his view,
 Parental love its name,
 Rich words of comfort Jesus drew,
 His wanderers to reclaim.

“ If ye, corrupt and full of ill,
 As parents yet perceive,
 What gifts your children's welfare still,
 Requires them to receive ;

“ Yea, if thy yearning heart would shrink,
 Heart-hardened though thou be,
 From leading on to danger's brink,
 Sons that depend on Thee ;

- “ Shall the great Parent not much more,
Confiding souls require ?
And to his asking children's store
Add life, and love, and light ?
- “ When supplicating heavenly bread,
Will He a stone confer ?
Or leave them to be basely fed
With husks that swine prefer ?
- “ Will He their filial tears despise,
Or slight the woes they speak ?
Or with a scorpion whip chastise,
When they forgiveness seek ?
- “ Ah! lay aside such fearful thoughts,
Though sinful, yet approach,
As rebel children homeward brought,
Nor dread one harsh reproach.
- “ Distrust your Father's love no more,
That love so vast and sure ;
Knock boldly at the mystic door,
Who enters is secure.”

MEDITATION XIV.

“But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children : to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.”—*Psalm ciii.* 17.

WHAT a remarkable *suitability* may be traced in the nature of the blessings here promised, and the characters addressed ! To those who contemplate, with awful reverence, the character of God as a Being of unbounded Majesty and Holiness, what can be so desirable as to be assured that these, his adorable attributes, co-exist with a *mercy* which is “from everlasting unto everlasting,” upon them that fear Him. While to such as *keep* “his covenant ;” to those who have embraced it as the anchor of their soul, sure and steadfast, who can say with David, “Thy testimonies have I taken as mine heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicings of my heart,” how satisfactory must be the conviction, that there is a *Righteousness* pledged to the inviolable fulfilment of those engagements, which the Lord of his goodness has vouchsafed to

make with them and with their children after them, which no power of earth or hell can avail to do away. "The fear of God," says Solomon, "is the beginning of wisdom;" and though we are told that "perfect love casteth out fear," yet this is that love which casteth out also the lawful *causes* of fear, by turning the heart with abhorrence from every thing offensive to Him it loves. Wherever love fails in doing *this*, it is so far *imperfect*. No truly Christian heart ever "cast out" the fear of *sin*, (that abominable thing which the Lord hateth,) though undoubtedly it is delivered from fear of approaching a merciful God to obtain peace and pardon through the blood of Jesus. Well does the word of truth assure us, that it is the fear of being utterly cast off for all that we have done, and not the holy affectionate fear of offending our best Friend, grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit, and bringing a scandal on our blessed religion, that is to be dismissed from our bosoms; for it says, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that *fear* him, in those that hope in his mercy," and let none divide what is thus expressly united by the highest authority. Fear, which excludes *Hope*, cannot certainly consist with *Love*;—such

were the fear of remorse, of Judas Iscariot, of the condemned spirits ; but neither can such a hope as excludes fear of sin, consist with humility, for it is written, "Be not high minded, *but fear*;" "Blessed is the man that feareth always." While therefore we remember this, let our hope in unspeakable mercy be nevertheless unlimited ; let us remember that it is "from everlasting ;" all has been foreseen, all is provided for, that the trembling supplicant can need or desire ; and it is "*to everlasting*" also. Effects more astonishing than imagination can picture, will flow from it through unbounded ages.

But has God given us assurance that his righteousness is "unto children's children, to them that keep his covenant, to those that remember his commandments to do them," and are we verily and unreservedly joined to Him in the blessed covenant, whereby he justifieth the ungodly ? Have we not only embraced it intellectually, consenting to its provisions, as good and wise, and sufficient, saying, "It is well ordered in all things and sure," but have we embraced it personally, saying, "This is all *my* salvation, all *my* desire ?" And are we indeed remembering his commandments to

do them, not merely abstaining from evil *deeds* and *words*, but watching over secret thoughts, feelings, and motives? Are we looking out for opportunities to follow the injunctions to activity and benevolence, which more peculiarly distinguish the *gospel*, as well as watchful to avoid the things forbidden, of which the ancient *law* makes mention? Have we respect unto the Lord's precepts, not partially but universally? then, why does faith droop; why does the heart grow sad as we look forward to our future path through life, or that of our beloved children, and almost despondingly envisage the temptations they must encounter, the evil examples they must witness in their progress through a world lying in wickedness? Assuredly these feelings are *natural*; but nature is fallible, and grace should be triumphant over her where they are at all incompatible. To doubt the fulfilment of promises recorded in the sacred word, in one of two ways, "cometh of evil;" either we must be conscious that we are not fearing, adhering, and obeying, according to the terms of the promise, or, we must consider the promise itself too vast and astonishing for our credence. Oh! for the faith of holy Paul, when he said, "The Lord

will deliver me from every evil work : The Lord will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom!" Oh! for the confidence of pious Hannah, when she said, "For this child I prayed. I have lent him to the Lord, and *he shall* be lent unto the Lord as long as he liveth!" Christian mother! who rememberest the commandments of the Lord to do them, and art therefore studying how thou shalt bring up thy child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, lift up thy hands which hang down; strengthen thy feeble knees. His righteousness extends to the completion of thy heart's desire; it is pledged to thee for it; it is as much engaged to thee for thine offspring as for thyself. Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of the "great multitude" of difficulties which unbelief would conjure up to alarm thee. "The battle is not your's, but God's." Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shalt thou prosper. "Lo! children, and the fruit of the womb, are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord;" it is the abuse of the Lord's gifts which alone can render them undesirable. Do therefore *thy* part faithfully, and the fidelity of the promise will be abundantly displayed. Thy children shall rise

up and call thee blessed, and in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, thou shalt have the unutterable joy of saying, "Behold, Lord, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me;" for "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him."

PRAYER.

Gracious God, I pray that my ways may be made so direct, that I may keep all thy statutes, as well as reverence all thy perfections. Give me immoveable confidence in all that thy gracious Word sets before me, as the covenanted inheritance of thy people, and let me hold it fast to the end of my earthly pilgrimage. Though I see not with my eyes any fruit of my labours and intercessions in those for whom Thou hast commanded me to pray, let me not be tempted to remit them, nor to cease from exercising the patience of faith, resting on thy faithfulness and truth. Oh! holy Lord God! who keepest covenant and mercy with them that fear thee, enrich my heart daily more and more, with that reverence which springs from grateful love, and keep me in the way of thy commandments in all

things, through Him in whom all thy gracious promises are yea and amen, even Jesus Christ our Saviour.—Amen.

“A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children.”—*Proverbs* xiii. 22.

Not as heir of wide domains,
 Fertile fields or watered plains ;
 Not as destined to possess
 Carmel’s richest fruitfulness ;
 Nor because my eye ambitious
 Pictures forth thy mortal day
 Pleased beneath a sky propitious,
 Graced with honours, crown’d with sway,
 Greet I thee, my infant dear,
 On thy welcome coming here ;

But because endowed to claim
 Birthright more than wealth or fame,
 Privileges dearly bought,
 Passing language, passing thought ;
 Gifted by the promise gracious,
 Of a God who cannot lie ;
 With an heritage more spacious
 Than in Time’s small span can lie ;
Therefore do I greet thee here,
 With hopeful smiles, my infant dear.

Ah! if thou shouldst live to know
 Human happiness and woe ;
 That to gain and this to shun,
 May'st thou ne'er through folly run !
 But, above all transient pleasure,
 Far above as sky from dust,
 Value still the glorious treasure
 Which their Saviour gives the just ;
 Else, alas! my infant dear,
 Sad should be thy greeting here.

Better *never* to have been
 Than to live, to die in sin.
 Better hear no sound at all,
 Than refuse the Gospel call !
 But the word of consolation
 Sets a brighter hope in view,
 And the voice of supplication,
 Still shall plead that word anew,
 Till I greet thee, child of bliss,
 In a holier world than this.

MEDITATION XV.

“For we know that the law is spiritual.”

Romans vii. 14.

THOUGH acknowledged in words, it is too often forgotten in practice, that the precepts of God's word extend even to the thoughts and intents of the heart, and claim dominion over the inner, as well as the outer man. Yet He, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, upon many occasions luminously enforced the great truth, that the essential venom of sin is as deadly when existing in the most secret foldings of the heartfelt desire and cherished imagination, as when it breaks forth into the plague spots of open transgression, seen and known of all men. And though we may not at present consider the spiritual nature of the law, in the details of its every branch, it may be very profitable to do so in *one* (and that a most important) requirement, and to remember the various ways in which we may be departing in heart and mind, from that commandment, “Thou shalt have none other gods but me,” even

when scarcely suspecting how far our wandering steps have deviated from the path so pointed out to them.

Let us reflect, then, when this injunction was delivered,—at Mount Sinai,—amidst a fearful conflict of the elements,—and to a people who had been enfranchised by the strong hand of miraculous power from ignominious servitude, by the infliction of awful judgments on their enslavers, when they dared to deny the sovereignty of Jehovah. Let us remember, that this display of supernatural might had been made, not only in wrath against Pharaoh, but to accomplish a promise given four hundred years before to an ancestor, *then* childless, that a great nation, descended from him, should thus, and at that time, be delivered. We shall then perceive unlimited command over the powers of nature, minute observation of human actions, jealousy of his own honour against the despisers of his mandates, prescience, gracious forbearance, and fulfilment of his promises to the minutest tittle,—to have been all attributes, so exemplified before the eyes of Israel, that when they heard this claim of their *Deliverer* to be exclusively *their* God, they would necessarily be aware that to worship any being, without ascribing.

to him the possession of these things, as well as the character of *the self-existent one*, by which he had announced himself, would be a flagrant breach of the command. Let us take care that our deep and undivided devotion be indeed given to *the* God of Israel, with these his attributes in view, that our worship be rendered to him who created the heavens, and rules in the kingdoms of men; who searches the heart and tries the reins; who taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and reserveth wrath for his enemies; who will not acquit the wicked, yet is slow to anger, waiteth to be gracious, and knoweth them that trust in Him, and not merely to an idol of our own imaginations. They who represent to themselves a God less indignant against the rebellious, less omniscient, less magnanimously compassionate than the Bible displays *the* God of Israel to be, certainly transgress this law, which confines us to have Him for our God, and Him alone.

But what is it to have him for our God? Is it not to live in Him, and for him? to do all that we do to his glory? to devote all the powers he has given us to his willing service? If God be the chief good, then to have him for our God is to regard him

as *our* chief good ; to place no other object, no other affection in competition with him, to surrender to him the guidance of our wills, and the care of our true happiness ; to fear him, as the avenger of iniquity, the just, the terrible, the all-seeing judge, at whose touch the mountains shake, and all the strong ones of the earth shall tremble,—yet, to love him, because He is merciful and gracious and long-suffering, and has not withheld from us his Son, his only Son. This it is to have the Lord for our God ; and to serve him *fully*, because no man can serve two masters, this is our duty. But said the Lord to Ezekiel, “ Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face : should I be inquired of at all by them ? ” And do we not at all resemble those so here depicted ? Could the hidden chambers of the heart be unveiled, what idol worship would too often appear among the nominal Israel of God ! Self-indulgence, like the cameleon, taking various hues, specious and voluptuous in some, dark and loathsome in others, usurps dominion over hearts pledged, yea, frequently sacramentally pledged, to deny *themselves*, and take up the cross. The god of *this*

world exhales around him the pernicious vapours of pride and false reasoning, and to these are made to yield the plainest laws of heaven. Covetousness grasps increase of wealth with more than pious eagerness, and well merits the epithet which an apostle has bestowed. Vanity, with smiling face, allures the simple to her control; but, oh! what sacrifices must be rendered at her idol shrine? too often truth, consistency, principle, natural affection, are offered up where she presides, while health, and eventually life itself, have not been too much to receive from her jaded worshippers. Oh! why, or wherein, are any of these abominations less abominable than weeping for Tammuz, or pouring out cakes of oblation unto the queen of Heaven?

But are *we* through grace delivered from the prevalence of such evils? and has the Lord numbered us among his own true people, to whom He is indeed a God, so that we can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of thee?" it is well! Great should be our measure of gratitude; but let us remember that He who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks, who keepeth his vineyard, and watereth it every

moment, passed not without rebuke, even the faithful, patient, laborious *Ephesus*, when He saw that she had left her *first* love. Jesus will allow no rival in the affections of his redeemed people towards himself; their members which are on the earth, the friend, the child, the husband, the parent, are *idolized* when they in any way interfere to wean them from Him. He that loveth, even those dear relatives, more than he loves his Saviour, "is not worthy" of him. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its *affections* and lusts; and though to love all men, and especially the household of faith, and more especially still they of our own household, be all commanded duties; and of the last it is said, such as neglect it have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels, yet our love for the Redeemer should be the moving spring of all these affections towards his creatures. Our desires of happiness *from* them should centre in the hope of enjoying together everlastingly the blessings of his favour; and our desires of felicity *for* them, should aspire to nothing but what accords with his will, and conduces to his honour.

PRAYER.

Worthy art thou, oh Lord! to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. I deplore before thee, oh Almighty God! my many departures from thy perfect law. Though I consent unto it, that it is good, and acknowledge thy just claims on my entire love and obedience, and though I desire to have no other God before thee, yet other lords have had dominion over me, but too much and too often. By thee only therefore, blessed Jesus! will I make mention of the name of the Lord God; through thee He is pacified towards me, notwithstanding all my rebellions. Strengthen the cords of love by which thou drawest me to thyself; and weaken all those attractions which would allure me from thee. Let neither the fear nor the praise of man prepare a net to entangle my soul, but may even life itself be less dear than the Saviour, who gave his own life to deliver us from this present evil world. Abiding in Him, without whom I can do nothing, may I endure unto the end in thy faith and fear, and to thy name be glory for ever and ever.—Amen.

“He that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.—*Matthew* x. 37.

Oh! for a self-appropriating faith,
 In ceaseless action, calling Jesus mine.
 “Abide in me,” the great Redeemer saith,
 Ye living branches of the living vine.

Thou inexhaustibly nutritious root,
 Diffuse thy vital presence through my
 heart.
 Flow forth blest Comforter, and love’s rich
 fruit,
 In all its fair maturity impart.

Shake off, as on thy blossoms they alight,
 Those soul-insinuating things terrene,
 Whose unsuspected, but destructive blight,
 Eats out the sweetness of a hope unseen.

Holy Redeemer! are they none of thine,
 Who son or daughter love in place of thee?
 Exalt and purify the love of mine,
 From every tincture of idolatry.

Not for themselves, nor for their creature
 worth,
 But as reflections of celestial light;
 As *fibres* of my Saviour; sent to earth
 To work his glory and rejoice his heart.

So would I love them ! and if cherished so,
 In thee and for thee, oh our glorious Head!
 My joys shall work me no insidious woe,
 Nor serpent lurk beneath my flowery bed.

MEDITATION XVI.

“ For verily he took not on him the nature of angels ; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Hebrews ii. 16—18.

THAT He who upholdeth all things by the word of his Power, who laid the foundation of the earth, and of whose hands the heavens are the works, should be made for a little while “ lower than the angels,” that He should “ take on,” the seed of Abraham, —tabernacling in the flesh of that holy thing, which, by the overshadowing of his omnipotent Spirit, was born of Mary, and so intimately uniting it to his Eternal God-head, as to be really bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, tempted in all points like

as we are, yet without sin,—that through the Eternal Spirit given to Him during his humiliation without measure, He should offer himself without spot to God, a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour, to take away the sin of the world, are indeed most astonishing facts. Vast beyond utterance are their consequences,—deep beyond imagination the everlasting counsels of Wisdom and Love which prepared, performed, and revealed them. Well may it be said into these “things the angels desire to look.” Angels *do* look and adore, yea, rejoice in the blessings thus brought upon the heirs of salvation ; but what shall we think of any who are invited to share this inheritance, nay, perhaps, nominally invested with the privileges of its reversionary possessors, yet who turn away, as from the tediousness of a twice told tale, when meditations are suggested on this seraph-enrapturing, this soul-interesting subject—this one only intimation of a way in which, being at enmity, they may be reconciled to God ; being rebels, may be welcomed again among the obedient.

If *all* the Inspired Scriptures be profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, surely *that*

which is as it were the sum and substance of all Scripture, must to all these ends be abundantly efficient. As to doctrine, we have already alluded to its *sublimity*, and of its adaptation to the nature of man, in every state, from the most savage to the most refined, testimonies of the strongest kind might be brought; it witnesses itself, in fact, even to our debased understandings (where no immediate enticement of engrossing sin at the moment interferes to blind them) as a doctrine well fitted to magnify the law, as most worthy of honour, and at the same time admirably calculated, by the exhibition of love ineffable, to win back the alienated creature to its only true rest and joy.

But not only for *doctrine* is it good for us to go even to Bethel and see that wonderful thing there brought to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us,—for reproof also should we go, and for correction. Has the Son of God made himself of no reputation for the sake of sinful men, and do we still prefer to him, the transient honours, the fading pleasures of this life—gaudy poppies that look fine to the childish eyes of ambition and folly, but distil over the senses a fatal dulness to the things of eternity? Oh let us stand reprov'd. Let us beseech

Him, who alone can, to set before us the ingratitude and guilt of thus slighting our Divine Benefactor, and that so forcibly, so affectingly, that we may neither hesitate nor delay to fall low before the footstool of his mercy, saying, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?"

And not less for instruction and improvement in righteousness, than for doctrine and reproof, does the incarnation of the Lord of Glory furnish large and various scope. No longer need the timid and the contrite despondingly exclaim, How shall I know that my tears are accepted, my sins blotted out? A voice from heaven has pronounced, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; and that Son has said, Him that cometh to *me* I will in no wise cast out. No longer need the heart of the desolate turn in vain through the universe for one sympathizing Comforter; Jesus groaned at the grave of Lazarus; Jesus was wounded by the perfidy of Judas, the cowardice of Peter, the desertion of every friend; Jesus was aspersed, betrayed, forsaken; who like Him can appreciate, who like Him can effectually relieve the bitterest bereavements, the most heart-rending woes of man?

Come ye persecuted and behold whether there be any sorrow like unto that sorrow wherewith the Lord afflicted Jesus of Nazareth in the day of his fierce anger. Ye who are in heaviness through manifold temptations come, for he was tempted in all points like as ye are. He hath compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way. He is a merciful High Priest, knowing and pitying the infirmities of those whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren; a *faithful* High Priest in things pertaining to God, seeing he hath offered for them a pure, perfect, unsullied offering, and of infinite value. Ye proud, learn of Him, for he was meek and lowly, accessible to all, benevolent to all, ever ready, without a reluctant word, to yield up those precious hours he most valued, the hours of solitary communion with God, when the poorest and meanest sought him, that they might be instructed by his words. Ye poor, learn of him, for he suffered the want of all things, that ye might practically perceive, how "Man does not live by bread alone," and while obliged therefore to *labour* for your needful, but perishing food, be far more fervently laborious for the instruction, and the feelings, and the holiness of the children of God.

Come to Jesus! thou selfish sensualist, and be ashamed. He had not where to lay his head, yet he went about doing good. Thou farest sumptuously every day! and art thou doing good even when opportunities are *presented* to thee? Come to Jesus ye fainting souls, who shudder and shrink as ye are to enter the valley of the shadow of death; He is the staff upon whom you may safely lean in its gloomiest passes. From his own dying lips it was extorted, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" yet He closed not his eyes on this visible world till he had said in the full repose of love, "Father! into thy hands I commend my spirit!" and whatever be your present distress and fears, He can enable *you* to say so too.

But the time would fail, even to *name* the many, many advantages combining all, and tallying with, the *grand* purpose of making reconciliation for the sins of the people, which are derived to Christians and to the world from the Saviour "taking part of that flesh and blood," of which "the children" of men "are also partakers." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

PRAYER.

Well may we sing unto thee a new and still renewing song of praise, Almighty Lord God, for thou hast done wonderful things. Thine own right hand, thy mighty arm, have gotten thee the victory. Holy is thy great name, and marvellous are thy ways, oh King of saints! in that Thou hast sent us a Saviour every way suitable to our wants, in every possible respect replete with excellencies. Good will to man has been published from thy throne. Oh dispose my heart to welcome the precious tidings with the joy of submissive gratitude. May my spirit go up with unfailing delight to contemplate the sanctuary of thy holy mercy towards the children of thine adoption, even Him whose generation is from everlasting, yet who "came forth" in feeble infancy from Bethlehem-Ephrata. This is the tent which thou hast pitched among men. May I abide therein for ever, safely hidden from the malice of the accuser; protected and upheld through the duties and troubles of life, and sustained in the hour of death; so, oh my God! in the ages to come

shall I exalt the riches of thy mercy among the multitudes of thy redeemed, for ever and ever.—Amen.

“Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.”—*Luke* ii. 15.

In the hour of blest devotion,
 Oft the hallowed theme we find,
 Echoing to each pure emotion
 That has whispered through the mind.

Thy prompt gale association,
 Thus from cradle scene anew,
 Wafts the soul in contemplation,
 Where the Virgin's babe we view.

Wondrous thought! that Lord dependant,
 On a nurturing creature's care!
 At whose single word attendant,
 World's of creatures would repair!

Yes, Ephrata! in thy stable
 Is the palace of a King,
 Vain the stores of truth or fable
 Pedigree like His to bring.

In his weakness, lies before us,
 Hope of Prophets! Lord of Heaven!
 He whose advent woke the chorus,
 "Unto us a Son is given."

On that Holy Infant looking,
 Son of Mary, Son of God!
 Scorn and want resign'dly brooking,
 While archangels wait His nod.

Shall not every cloud of error
 Melt in Love's refulgent blaze?
 Shall not sin, and doubt, and terror,
 Die within me as I gaze?

MEDITATION XVII.

"Commune with your own heart upon your bed,
 and be still."—*Psalm* iv. 4.

IN forming their estimate as to what it may be worth while to relinquish or to endure at the present moment, for the sake of prospective benefit, men are not in general so blinded as greatly to mistake their path of

wisdom. There are few who would absolutely refuse to submit to a painful operation, where death without it would appear inevitable. There are few who would not sacrifice a trifling sum of money, where even a reasonable possibility occurred of thereby securing the reversion of a vast inheritance. To obtain the honourable celebrity of enterprising courage, how many are always eager to volunteer for services where they must struggle through the most painful privations, and be exposed to the most imminent perils. But if the question be, what will you willingly submit to, what will you cheerfully resign, that you may improve the condition of your soul, and that for eternity, how quickly falls below zero the index that must give reply, namely the practice of thousands.

But if we be Christians indeed, we have not so learned Christ as to put out of remembrance that impressive question of our Lord, "What is a man advantaged if he shall gain the whole world, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The *whole* world, were it possible to attain it,—every imaginable gratification that man can enjoy in and from the world, without reference to the will of his Maker, ought to be,

and to the truly pious soul is, but dust in the balance, compared to advancement in those graces which evidence their possessor to be gradually becoming fit, under the potent hand of an internal agent, for a world whose joys and whose glories neither change nor depart. If the day of adversity be a day peculiarly fitted for consideration, it is therefore not wonderful that it should be spoken of honourably by those who look beyond this transitory scene in forming a judgment as to their true interests, or that to those who are much engaged in the active relations of life, a season of comparative abstraction from its cares and duties, should be regarded as peculiarly precious. Divested of every encumbering solicitude, how delightful is it on such occasions to sit down, as at the feet of Jesus, hearing his precious words addressed to ourselves; or to commune with our own hearts upon the couch of languid convalescence, when all around is calm repose, and the sweet experience of the Psalmist, that his gracious Shepherd led him beside the "still" waters, is fully realized to our feelings. Is not this preferable to the festive relaxations which the worldly minded claim as but due refreshments on their course of zealous and active

attention to the business of life? True it is, that even among multiplied secular engagements, the heart that sincerely loves the Saviour has within itself a "little sanctuary," wherein to retreat from the strife of tongues and collision of earthly interests troubling it from without; a fresh spring, as it were, beneath the ocean's tide, retaining its purity and ministering refreshment, though the restless billows ebb and flow above it. But notwithstanding this, there is undoubtedly a deteriorating tendency in many of the trials we experience in life, and the corruption of our hearts too readily coincides with it, in permitting the *details* of duty to assume undue, or at least unseasonable predominance in our thoughts. From day to day perhaps, we go on, recollecting indeed the sins, and reviewing the employments of the few preceding hours, but very seldom taking a comprehensive view of our whole spiritual progress, unless when preparing for some special ordinance, or when called into the more immediate chambers of reflection by sickness, or other providential appointments of our lot. But in these special retirements, it seems, as if, other voices being for a while unheard, we can more easily distinguish *one*

which searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, saying unto us, as to Elijah in the solitudes of Carmel, "What dost thou here?" We have leisure and opportunity to go farther and deeper into *ourselves*, and when these are blest by the Divine Spirit, teaching us to profit, how frequently is the result comprehended in this text, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Uninviting therefore as the valley of Baca may be, its deep pools often furnish much needed aid on the way to Zion. Is it recorded in vain, that the Lord withdrew himself into the wilderness to pray; nay, that in the oratory of the desert he spent whole nights of watchfulness and love? Oh let us remember that *our* special seasons of recollection and retirement, must like *his* be prayerful if we desire them to be profitable; and taking advantage of there being a more extended time at our command than in our ordinary course, let us therein embrace a wider scope of retrospection, and gain a more thorough insight into the state of our hearts, our affections, and our consciences. Those who stand on high and isolated ground take into their view a larger surface, and are less influenced by the mists that overspread

it, than their brethren who are walking below and mingling with its many travellers. Let us not lose the advantage thus figuratively represented, but (adapting the Prophet's words to such a situation) "Let us stand upon our watch tower, and set ourselves upon the tower of observation watching to see what the Lord will say to us, and what we shall answer when we are reprov'd." We may then hope to return with invigorated powers to the routine of our appointed occupations, offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and calling upon the name of the Lord, who in the multitude of the thoughts that we had in our hearts, by his comforts refreshed our souls.

PRAYER.

Oh most holy Comforter! who didst descend like a dove on our Lord Jesus Christ, and lead him forth into the secluded wilderness, there to commune with the Father concerning the salvation of his chosen, breathe upon me, his unworthy disciple, the spirit of grace and supplication, that I may delight unfeignedly in every enlarged opportunity of seeking my God, and pouring out my heart before him. Quicken me, oh

Lord! for my soul cleaveth unto the dust.
 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant,
 and teach me thy statutes. Cause me to
 rejoice in every event that conduces to bring
 me nearer to thee, and to nurture my mind
 in humility and the love of holiness. Make
 my seasons of devotion profitable, both to
 myself and others, stirring me up to much
 and manifold intercession for my friends, for
 thy Church, and for all men ; and may that
 peace which passeth all understanding keep
 my heart and mind, for ever and ever,
 through Christ Jesus the Lord.—Amen.



“ He went out and departed into a solitary place
 and prayed.”—*St. Mark* i. 35.

When, rapidly rolling, the wheels of our life
 Move on undisturbed by affliction or strife,
 Oh! how soon might they kindle the flame
 of despair,
 Unless rectified still by the unction of
 prayer.

How desirable then is the stone on our
 way,
 Intercepting a little their uniform play.

If the pause of retirement but lead us to
think,
It may hurry us back from a precipice
brink!

The wilderness witnessed our pattern and
guide,
When in pious communion He sought to
abide,
Preparing for conflicts, with labours opprest,
Meditation *apart* was his strength and his
rest.

Bless the Lord then my spirit,—ah! bless
him indeed,
For the hours of refreshment which sickness
hath freed;
But adore him with trembling,—with
trembling rejoice,
Lest his mercies abused wake his chasten-
ing voice.

MEDITATION XVIII.

“ And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.—And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”—*St. Mark* x. 13, 14, 16.

THE more closely we observe and analyze the smallest incidents recorded of our blessed Saviour's life and actions, the more fully will it appear to us that one great purpose of the Lord of glory, when he condescended to dwell on earth, conversing familiarly, and on terms of condescending equality with the sons of men, was to display in the way most intelligible to the human understanding, and most impressive on the human heart, the true character of the Almighty Creator and Governor of all things towards his intelligent creatures.

In express words Jesus intimated this object of his mission when he said, “ No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father he hath declared Him,” and oh! how beau-

tifully is this object developed and fulfilled on the occasion which forms the brief narrative before us. He took infants in his arms and blessed them. If Christ be "God manifest in the flesh," here then is a visible palpable declaration, that "God is Love." His sacred word asserts it, his providential arrangements confirm it, but his beloved Son *proves* it, sets it actually before the eyes of men, and leaves them not the shadow of an excuse for doubting it. What could these helpless infants offer to the Messiah, that they should thus have the unspeakable privilege of His affectionate embrace? Nothing, absolutely nothing, not even their poor powerless gratitude. Thus not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy, doth the Most High save us—freely appointing and accepting for us a way of access in which He will receive and bless us. Thus does He act towards all who evince their entire confidence in his Infinite tenderness, and come to Him craving unmerited favours. None may rebuke them for their unprofitableness. His blessing is given while they are yet unable of themselves to help themselves: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly."

Neither will He upbraid them because of the root of bitterness which is in them: Jesus takes the babes into his arms, not to hold them up as beacons to a trembling universe of the irretrievable misery produced by disobedience, but to *bless* them, to obliterate that worst ingredient of their misery, alienation from himself, by saying, "Suffer them to come unto me—Forbid them not!" Oh does not this expressive delineation of the boundless goodness, the attractive kindness of the Majesty of Heaven, melt our hearts, overcome our enmity? Unholy, self-convicted sinners! well might ye fear to draw nigh, as in the intimate communion of children, had ye not hope, that in the Lord there is plenteous redemption. Behold! the Son takes in his own holy arms, the offspring of sinful parents and says, "of such is the kingdom of heaven!" that He may exemplify and picture to you the expansive compassion of the Eternal Jehovah. Will ye not, then, exclaim, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardonest the transgressions of the remnant of thine heritage, that castest our sins into the depths of the sea?" Will ye not henceforth cry unto him "My Father, Thou art the guide of my life?" Desire you not to approach the habitation

of his holiness, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his essence, saying, Lord Jesus, I am thine. My soul is as a weaned child before thee, no way, no resource of sustenance and happiness is open to it but thy goodness. Take me into the arms of thy love, and give unto thy servant the blessing of peace, write my unworthy name in thy book of life by virtue of that blessing, and make me joint heir with thyself of the glory which is prepared for the saints in light.

But there are other ways in which this lovely picture of Christ's condescending goodness may be contemplated with advantage. Revelation's luminous hand clears up many obscurities in the Book of Nature, and this gracious declaration of the Redeemer concerning the admissibility of infants to privileges they cannot appreciate, is most valuable as a sure testimony of his disposition towards them, when removed at a period incapable of individual sin, from this present life. That infants should suffer and die, would be very inexplicable on the principles of mere natural religion. The Scriptures alone give us any insight into the cause, "death having passed upon all men, in consequence of their universal connection

with one who incurred it as the known penalty of his own act ; but the words of the Lord, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," do more than this, they show us that these sufferings are but temporary—a point in immeasurable space,—that such death is but an entrance into life. Where no deed of personal disobedience has re-forfeited the once retrieved inheritance, they direct us to consider the obedience of the second Adam as having availed to blot out on behalf of his posterity, the darkly recorded guilt of their "First Father." The sap of the whole human tree is indeed envenomed, but when broken off in its earliest spring, the evil has not so circulated into the newly germinated twig, as to show even the buddings of the natural fruit. Often then doth an unseen and beneficent hand, (after divesting it of all its latent poison, by a sure and efficacious, though silent process,) take it away and engraft it into a rich and fertile vine to bloom and bear fruit in never-fading glory. Instead, therefore, of melancholy regrets and murmuring cavils at the mortality incident to those who have never personally sinned, the Christian sees ground for admiration of the great mercy of God, who has reaped to himself a rich harvest from the

fields of destruction, by suffering the little children, whom Jesus hath redeemed, to come unto Him, in all ages, and from all nations, tongues, and kindreds. Of his unspeakable goodness has he thus perfected to Himself praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, that he might still the enemy and avenger, who prompted their Parent's crime, and might rescue, untold millions, from that horrible gulf of hopeless perdition into which they would have fallen had they lived to *know*, but not savingly to repent of sin, silencing every objection of the foul accuser, by that irresistible sentence, "Who shall condemn! It is Christ that died."

Finally, when we have meditated on this transaction as an expressive type of the simplicity and humility, in which we should expect, obtain, and use, gospel blessings, we may also observe the example here given for the purpose of directing our conduct towards those who, being yet somewhat dark, confused or insufficient in the knowledge of divine things, are aptly termed *babes*, as compared to others whose minds, by reason of use, are more competent to receive it. Discourage not such in *coming*, ye who have better opportunities of knowing the truth as it is in Jesus. If they be willing

and obedient, know ye not that they shall eat of the fruit of the land, and though they may not yet be capable of digesting the "strong meat," may they not be patiently fed with the sincere milk of the word? Forbid them not, but encourage them rather to follow on perseveringly till they know the way of the Lord more perfectly, till the now dawning gleam increase to the perfect day: Encourage them to come, in humble consciousness of their own helplessness and ignorance, to Jesus; for "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

And oh! if the Lord, with such amiable tenderness, received and rewarded the pious parents who besought tokens of his love on their little ones, can we too early, in the fulness of faith and hope, dedicate to Him our own fondly cherished babes? If we are ourselves of his own peculiar people, his word has already said of *them*, "Now are they holy." May it be our persevering prayer and faithful endeavour, that they should so escape the pollutions of the world, through the effectual sanctification of the Spirit, as to give them an early application of these words, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is He that is in you, than He that is

in the world. Little children abide in Him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at his coming.”

PRAYER.

God of all grace ! by whose tender mercy towards a seed of evil doers, the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to shew us the glories of the divine nature in the face of Jesus Christ, dispose and incline my heart continually and closely to study the sacred words and works of thy beloved Son, in whom Thou art well pleased. Remove from my mind every carnal and prejudiced feeling, that beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, I may be changed into some reflection of the same glorious image, and go on my way rejoicing. Purify me even as Christ was pure. Help me to imitate his affectionate patience towards the young and ignorant, and the sincere love with which he invoked on them the blessing from on high. Heavenly Father, adorable Saviour, pour out thy benediction upon me, and on all whom I bear on my heart before thee at this time. Give them a name and a place among thy children in the king-

dom of thy glory, for thy great mercy's sake.—Amen.

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones : for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”—*St. Matthew* xviii. 10.

Repell'd, and yet retained, a wondrous sight
On the rough blade impends the glittering
dew,

Trembling and shining, like a beam of light,
Condensed into a drop of rainbow hue.

Thus like the creatures of a purer sphere
Unmingled yet with all the black alloy
Of sublunary things, refracting clear
Some beauteous rays of pure primeval joy,

Jesus beheld you, ye, whose angels high,
Unintermitted see his Father's face ;
Jesus beheld you, and with pitying eye,
And tender speech conferred his kind
embrace.

Ye could not “*come*,” yet Mercy called it so,
When others brought you where the
Christ received.

Ye could not plead, when bid from him to go,
Yet who so pleaded for, ye babes ag-
grieved!

Safe in his sheltering arms, his word of love
 From age to age assures us, He will bear
 The tender nestlings of his turtle dove,
 By faith presented to his holy care.

And shall they not be *brought*? Shall any
 say
 Fall back, ye little ones, your time's not
 yet;
 Or, whom the Saviour *blesses* chide away,
 Till worthiness for blessings they may
 get?

MEDITATION XIX.

"What is your life? It is even a vapour, that
 appeareth for little time, and then vanisheth away."
James iv. 14.

A VAPOUR! quickly exhaled! soon dissipated! Oh man! is this all thy brief existence? Are all thy schemes, thy highly sounding designs, thy pompous titles, thy intricate investigations, dependant on that frail uncertain evaporating thing, which thus appeareth for a little time, and then vanish-

eth away? It is even so. Well may it be said "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" His manifold solitudes for the future, how vain are they! That future, perhaps, beholds him cold, inanimate, insensible to joy or woe. How vain his presumptuous boastings of the morrow! He knows not what a day may bring forth.

There is no one subject more continually brought under our observation than this: the crowded street, whose habitations *endure*, reminds us as forcibly, where now are the builders thereof! as the tomb of the dead, or the chamber of the dying; but though in *theory* no absurdity can be more glaring than to forget that which is so present to our daily experience, yet where is the person who duly remembers it?

We see our contemporaries, our acquaintances, our relatives, successively and rapidly disappearing. They depart quickly, and the place thereof knoweth them no more; as a dream, as a shadow, as a concluded tale, they are past away. No security have we, that we shall not follow them ere another's sun has risen in its splendour; yet where are they who lay this to heart, who live as in the midst of death, using their

lamp actively, efficiently, cheerfully, while it does burn, but looking from day to day, from hour to hour, for the sudden blast to which it is constantly exposed, and from which no art of man can cover or protect it. But there is a lamp whose flame expires not, whose bright glow is no transient meteor, but the radiance of an eternal, immutable, inexhaustible, luminary; and do we not ardently desire its never-dying presence? There is a life hidden with Christ in God, and can we prefer any earthly trifle to the possession of it? There is a promise, "He that heareth my word, and believeth in Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die," and can we rest till we embrace it as given to ourselves? "Because I live," says the Saviour, "ye shall live also." *That*, then is not *life*, which has no connection, no union with Him, the only true source of vitality. To be *in* Him, by whom and for whom are all things, as his devoted, loving, beloved members: this is to be alive unto God. To deny *Him*, to walk no more with him, to remain wilfully ignorant of him, of his offices, of his love: *this* is blindness, numbness, misery.

Oh my soul! thy days on earth are num-

bered ; as the thread of the weaver's shuttle, they may be suddenly broken off when apparently most smooth in their career. But Jesus came that thou mightest have *life*, a name and a place among happy immortals, rejoicing together in the riches of his grace. He came that thou mightest have it abundantly. Why then content thyself with such languid progress, such sickly and interrupted evidences of thy acceptance in the Beloved? Thou art not straitened in Him, for he is all fulness, but thou hast not because thou askest not. He says, Drink, yea, drink abundantly of my grace ; but thy thirst is slaked with lower blessings ; and where are thy ardent longings that one should give thee of the well of Bethlehem? Oh awake, thou arm of the Lord ! and revive my drooping energies ; put activity into my obedience, in the use of every talent committed to me ; and as it was said to the creatures when endued with animal life, " increase," " multiply," and " replenish the earth," may I know that I have true spiritual life, by a fervent wish and sincere endeavours to diffuse it through the whole sphere of my influence. According to the Lord's own tender expostulation, " He hath no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn from his

evil ways and live," and how can we be his faithful ones if we strive not to forward that which he has thus declared to be his pleasure? Oh may He renew the face of the earth, and may the spiritually dead hear his voice, cast aside the vanities of time, and delight themselves in Him; for in "Him shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory."

PRAYER.

Oh ever living! ever adorable Jehovah! shall we who inhabit houses of clay, who are frail and feeble and short-lived creatures, venture into thy glorious and awful presence? Yea, Lord, for thou hast commanded us to come, and thou hast even reproved us by the voice of thy Son, saying, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life," therefore, now trusting in the multitude of thy mercies, do I approach thy mercy-seat, oh Lord! beseeching Thee to give me the seeing eye, and the understanding heart, of a new creature in Christ Jesus, and to enlighten me continually with the blessed doctrines of thy word. Enable me to crucify and render harmless, all worldly affections and desires within me.

Keep me in remembrance, that not only for my mortal body, but for my immortal spirit, in Thee I live and move, and have my being; and endue me with an assured hope that when this earthly house of my tabernacle is dissolved, I have a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, prepared for me through the prevailing merits of our ever gracious High Priest and meritorious sacrifice, Jesus Christ.—Amen.

“O that Ishmael might live before thee.”

Genesis xvii. 18.

Could Parents hold a magic glass,
Wherein should meet their eyes,
Those troubled scenes through which shall
pass,
The offspring whom they prize,

How oft the views depicted there,
Of sorrow and of strife,
Would wake for early death the prayer,
That now beseeches life!

And though before the eye of sense,
No lights prophetic gleam,
How vain to draw permission thence,
For Hope's delightful dream.

Experience and the word of Truth,
 Full soon such visions break,
 And bid the rosy lips of youth,
 The cup of sorrows take.

Then why for dying life like this,
 With strong petitions plead,
 And for your darling's better bliss,
 So slightly take heed ?

Hark how the pious Patriarch speaks !
 Suppose you that his cry
 Refers but to the days and weeks
 Ere his beloved die ?

Suppose you that the bounded span
 Of Ishmael's dwelling here,
 The breathings of the faithful man
 Comprised within its sphere ?

Ah! take with him a loftier flight,
 That only *living* call,
 Which breathes to God! and in his might
 Bursts off corruption's thrall.

Oh Life eternal! Life begun!
 E'en in a house of clay,
 Obedient as the constant sun
 In Heaven's appointed way:

Life ! still miraculously fed
 By God the Spirit's care,
 With rich reception of "*The Bread*"
 Jehovah did prepare.

Thou art existence ! and to thee
 Should point the parent's love,
 That intercedes with energy
 For blessings from above.

MEDITATION XX.

"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."—1st *Corinthians* i. 19.

THE desires of the self-seeking mind, in various ways, concur to usurp and occupy that pre-eminence which is due to the Creator alone. But in no respect has man been seduced more readily and fatally from the supreme allegiance which he owes to the Lord his God, than by an inordinate, un-sanctified, seeking after *knowledge*. Wherever knowledge is sought merely for its own sake ; wherever the elevation of human intellect, as an independent intelligence, and not the expansion of the faculties for adora-

tion of the Beneficent Being who bestowed them, is the chief object of mental cultivation, the pursuit must assuredly be deemed, in its nature, unhallowed, and in its effects, pernicious.

“To be *as gods*,” in the acquisition of extended wisdom about the nature of all things “good and evil,” is a snare, which has indeed been long in use, but has not even yet, by any means, lost its power over the hearts of foolish, ambitious creatures. The gentile world, professing themselves to be wise, became fools.” Their philosophers, (with few exceptions,) when too refined to entertain the grosser superstitions of the multitude, deified their own understandings; and, alas! there is even yet a generation who are wise in their own eyes, and instructed, not that they may praise, but too often that they may insult, the Giver of all true wisdom. It is the besetting sin of our age to bestow far more attention on the mere accumulation of facts within the memory, than on their right application to the conscience. Many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased; but where are they who study for personal improvement in principles and practice, and make all their studies more or less directly conduce to the

glory of God and benefit of society,—extending that benefit beyond the contracted sphere of visible things?

Revelation itself is brought before the tribunal of human opinion,—not to ascertain its sense, not to examine its authenticity,—but try its consistency with preconceived notions of the fitting and the good; to explain away the miracles by which it was attested—to neutralize its doctrines—to soften down its holy requisitions—to put aside, as the result of *obsolete* and *uninspired* traditions, the belief of those sacred mysteries to which the holy penmen refer. Vain man! will ye thus assume the authority of Wisdom, and exalt yourselves to teach your teachers? Wo! wo unto you! for ye put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; ye put darkness for light, and light for darkness.

Oh! let me be on my guard against the most specious and subtle risings of this vain-glorious and dangerous spirit; this most hateful of that serpent tribe, the corruptions of man. Every exhibition of talent for the sake of display, has in it a tincture of this spirit; every ingenious sophism by which we think to blunt the keen edge of Scripture, when coming too near our own

consciences, is but a modification of it; every indulged sentiment of delight in the misdirected exertions of genius, flourishing from a godless soil, shews the latent seeds of it to be in our own hearts; and, if scrutinized closely, alas! where is the Christian who is totally free from its baneful influence? Is there no self-gratification when our prayers have been fluent, and our hearts (according to our own conceits) enlarged? Is there no conscious complacency, because we have devised ingeniously, or executed acceptably, rather than a pure, deep, unalloyed delight, that our Redeemer is honoured, and his spiritual kingdom advanced? Verily we may smite on our breasts saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," when we detect this spirit mingling with our very devotions, and so debasing even the fine gold of the sanctuary, that we may almost universally take up the Apostle's lamenting declaration and say, "*all*," (in some degree or other,) "seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's!"

But if it be thus even in the Church, in the world this ungodly influence is truly dreadful. It envelopes the spiritually insensible within such redoubled coatings of resistance, and they adhere so tenaciously

to their very substance, that sharp and sore is often the process of tearing them aside, when Almighty Mercy gives the word, and the proud worshipper of intellectual wealth, is made to enter the rock, and to hide himself in the dust for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, and to acknowledge that the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but to them that are saved, Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

Oh it is a goodly sight, when every thought is subdued into the subjection of willing obedience unto the revelations of the Most High. When they are received, not as the writings of fallible men, but as the testimonies of Truth, from which not one jot, not one tittle, shall in any wise depart until the whole be fulfilled, and which are able to make us *wise* unto salvation. A blessed sight it is when the haughtiness of man is laid low, and all his lofty imaginings terminated in this conviction, that to fear God, and to keep his commandments, and to be at peace with Him through a propitiating Mediator, is the concentration of all genuine felicity, and that to depart from evil, that is understanding.

PRAYER.

Great is thy long-suffering patience, Almighty, but gracious God! that the insolent pride of rebellious worms has not provoked thee long since to consume us in vindication of thy Sovereign Majesty; yea, to destroy us utterly. Pride was not made for man. Behold we are vile, what can we offer to thee? Hath not thy hand given us all that we possess? We must crave from thyself the only acceptable sacrifice, the broken and the contrite heart, which Thou dost not despise. Lord, look on me, thy sinful suppliant, and bestow on me this blessed gift. Lead me in unfeigned humility to the foot of the cross, and induce me to embrace the invitations of Him, who suffered there, the just for the unjust. With Jesus my Lord in view, may I neither trust to my own heart, nor lean to my own understanding, but in all my ways acknowledge thee, and obtain thy unerring direction, and unto Thee, who art the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only Wise God, be honour, and glory, and praise for ever.—Amen.

“To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”
—*Isaiah* lxvi. 2.

“Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.”—*St. Mark* x. 15.

Where is this world's disputer? where the
wise,
In subtlest themes of philosophic thought?
Can all their science, falsely named, suffice,
To gain that kingdom which the Saviour
bought.

Ah no! Salvation has no lofty door,
Through which, erect, in self-exalting
pride,
And crown'd with pompous gems of human
lore,
Man can in triumph march, his God
defied;

But when to infant simpleness and trust,
Bends the proud soul, embracing Jesus
given,
What systems can philosophy adjust,
To give that soul so pure a taste of heaven?

Say'st thou, "Presumption, only would advance,
 With less than Virtue's fulness to prefer,
 Dare I assume the vast inheritance,
 Till years of holiness the right confer?"

Ages of holiness no right could give,
 Nor freeness of that blessing supersede;
 As rationally might you fear to live
 Till you had purchased all the breath you
 need!

'Tis sweet Humility that enters in,
 Invited freely, and receiving blest,
 But haughty perseverance unto sin,
 Usurps her name, and spurns the Sa-
 viour's rest.

True, thou art helpless as the new-born
 child,
 And quite as destitute! the more thy need,
 On God in Christ, thy Father reconciled,
 Simply to rest, and on his fulness feed.

Meek, babe-like souls, encouragement to
 you,
 This gospel strain in silvery sweetness
 tells,
 Who lowliest stoop among the chosen few,
 In them most potently the Saviour dwells.

MEDITATION XXI.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,—how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”—*St. Matthew xxiii. 37.*

It were difficult to say whether in this pathetic lamentation, the condescending tenderness of the remonstrance, or the frigid obduracy of those to whom it was addressed, be most conspicuous. Certainly there is in both what may well excite our wonder, even if we limit our thoughts to that nation whose city was especially apostrophized. It is a sort of epitome of their whole history. Provocations in return for unexampled wonders of kindness—patient forbearance insulted by continual rebellions—enmity holding out against entreating love—a perverse, stiff-necked nation—a long-suffering wonder-working God!

But the Shepherd of Israel had other sheep not of that peculiar fold. Them also must He bring that they might be blessed with faithful Abraham. Not the

sons of Jacob only, but all the sons and daughters of Adam does He continually invite to look unto Him that they may be saved; and alas! to how large a proportion might He appropriate the language he applied to Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered you together unto me, and ye would not." And how simple, yet beautiful, is the similitude by which he illustrates his love: instinctive affection prompts the hen to gather her chickens under her wings; her anxious voice warns them of impending peril, or summons them to needful provision; with self-denying care she waits long for the reward of knowing them as her cherished brood, and when they come forth from their imprisonment, how industriously does she procure for them all that their wants demand. She shelters them from every inconvenience; she protects them from every hostility as far as her ability permits. "*She gathers them under her wings!*"

How readily does the Christian discern, in all these tender demonstrations of affectionate interest, an apt resemblance to the work of the Redeemer towards his beloved and ransomed people. Long and patiently does He "wait" for them; kindly does He

cherish in them, their yet unfledged graces, and prepare them for what is to form the scope and enjoyment of their existence, the promotion of glory to God by their holy and willing services; how safe are they when confidentially trusting in their Lord's revealed mercies. When they are entering upon any dangerous path, or when the Tempter, like an impending bird of prey, is hovering about them, watching to devour, how providential are the warnings they receive from God's word, from his ministers, from the events around them, to flee to their hiding-place of invulnerable safety; how abundant are the supplies, how sweet and nourishing the stores of gospel food and refreshment laid up for them; how precious the consoling conviction, that personal superintendance, vigilant tenderness, are in unceasing exercise towards *all* of them indiscriminately; that there is ample room beneath the outstretched compassion of the Almighty Summoner, for every one who hears and obeys the call of mercy, and treasures of grace, inexhaustible by the largest demands. Verily under their Saviour's wings they *have* a refuge, and there do they rest till every tyranny, every calamity be overpast. But alas! Jesus said of

the Jews, *ye would not*. He said it and wept! What will He say of *us*? Oh it is an important inquiry, If God be so condescending as to plead with man for his own eternal peace, who are they that believe the report and are melted by the pleading. If the Lord deign to say, "I, even I, am He that comforteth you," who are they that are aroused by such compassionate words to disdain the vanity of frivolous pleasures, and to value lightly every created comfort in comparison of that promised friendship. Who are they that reflect so profitably on the brittle texture of earthly blessings, as to use only without abusing them, who enjoy them indeed by the way, as the pilgrim inhales the cooling breeze that enlivens his path, but are too intent on the grand object of their course, to be induced by these pleasant occasional reliefs to lie down supinely, slumbering beneath their seducing influence, and so retard their progress heavenwards?

That the Lord Jesus exemplified in *action* the character of the invisible Godhead, is a truth which we have already dwelt upon in meditation, and it is strikingly displayed in the passage before us.

How could imagination devise a more

full correspondence than this narration presents with those passages of the Old Testament that delineate a yearning, pleading Jehovah. Hear him saying of an ungrateful, disobedient, apostate people, "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together: I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger." "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Hear Him saying, "In all their afflictions I was afflicted," then turn to his Incarnate Son; behold his tears mingling with his rebukes, his soul melting in pity for the desolations which he foresees coming on the beloved city, and say, is he not indeed the manifestation in the flesh of the just God, the Saviour? And if this be conceded, there is yet an observation to be made: Let none forget that there is yet one attribute of the Godhead, Judgment on the obstinately impenitent, which Jesus of Nazareth must set forth before men, in the flesh that he assumed as the mirror of Deity. He hath yet to exemplify openly in human action, that awful definition of the Prophet Nahum, "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth.

The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." But how merciful is He in his indignation to be *still* warning and exhorting with us, notwithstanding our long indifference; still admonishing the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous their thoughts, and to "come under his wings and be safe under his feathers." Oh let us kiss the Son, lest he be angry; lest when his wrath be kindled we perish in our sins. Is He already our tried corner-stone of safety, then cordially do we add the last clause of that warning verse, "Blessed are they that trust in Him." What exceeding consolation is contained in the strong assurance of faith, that the Eternal God is our refuge, the Lord Jehovah our everlasting strength. In pain, or in privation, how precious to rest on *Him*, as on a mother's tender breast rests her feeble babe, wearied with suffering. When dark threatenings of trouble and perplexity are gathering around, their portentous appearance may distress, but it cannot dismay. The prayer of the Christian, more potent than the boldly wielded rod of the electrician, draws out from those black clouds every alarming quality, and directs the salutary flame to

kindle a new sacrifice of thanksgiving on the altar of the heart.

If they be indeed the sufferings of *Christ* that we in any shape endure; if they be cheerfully borne for his sake, with the same great objects in view, of which he never lost sight, and if they be met in the same spirit of meek acquiescence, of uncomplaining, patient, gentleness, so also by *Christ* shall our consolations abound. Our broken, because self-hewed, cisterns may be drained and polluted, but the fountain of living waters never fails. The Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the God of all mercies, is the God, not of temporary, nor of partial, but of all comfort. Oh let me pour out my heart before him at all times, and I shall find him a very present help in every time of trouble.

PRAYER.

Oh God! I bewail the sinful coldness with which the advances of thy tender pity towards us, miserable sinners, are continually met; especially I bewail my own guilt and hardness of heart which have made me criminally indifferent to the things of my everlasting peace. Preserve me, oh gracious

Father, from that judicially inflicted blindness, under approaching judgments, which is an awful forerunner of wrath in those whom thou hast long wooed in mercy to come under thy wings, and they would not. Preserve me from disregarding the compassionate strivings of thy Holy Spirit within me. Let me never quench nor grieve Him, but receiving him as the only Comforter, may all the consoling truths of religion act forcibly upon my heart, and enable me even to rejoice in tribulations as thy appointed messengers for my good, as proofs of thy love, and instruments of thy wisdom. May grace and peace refresh me, and all the people of thy pasture, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.—Amen.

“As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.”—*Isaiah* lxvi. 13.

When pangs it cannot utter, wring
 The tender infant's frame,
 And deeply, keenly, shoots the sting
 Of ancestral blame,

What anodyne avails so well,
 What sympathy so sweet,
 As that which draws its secret spell
 From hearts with love replete ?

And when advancing childhood knows
 A less corporeal pang,
 And youth's maturer, deeper woes,
 Thick o'er her prospects hang,

Shall anguish find compassion bland,
 Or grief, a friend sincere,
 If not in her, whose loving hand,
 Dried its primeval tear ?

Oh then of Love what treasures deep,
 Reveals the sacred Word,
 When, pointing out to them that weep,
 Their mercy beaming Lord.

Thus, thus the truthful witness saith,
 (Hear ye the witness true,)
 "As one-his mother comforteth,
 So will I comfort you!"

What but a churl's ingratitude,
 Remote from God would mourn,
 Wooed by such sweet similitude,
 Entreated to return !

Earth's best refreshments, frail and brief,
 If leaned upon too much,
 But aggravate the mourner's grief,
 When wrested from its touch.

But He who piteth his own,
 With more than mother's heart,
 Gives peace from an ETERNAL throne,
 Peace never to depart!

MEDITATION XXII.

“ Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them. Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bonds of the wild ass?”

Job xxxix. 3, 4.

THE material creation is as an open book of instruction, wherein every being formed with reasoning powers, may, by the attentive use of them, attain to some perception of the Wisdom and Glory of its Author. Those clearer and more enlarged testimonies, delivered by the instrumentality of holy men of old, and handed down from age

to age in their genuine writings, refer us often to that universal volume, not only freely employing the visible things around us as symbols and tokens of abstract truths, but pointing out much *direct* information as to the ways and dealings of the Lord, to be derived from closely examining the arrangement of his Providence throughout the inferior and inanimate divisions of nature. But as in the early period when Job lived, it was lamented, "None saith, where is God my Maker! that giveth songs in the night, that maketh us to know more than the beasts of the earth, and to be wiser than the fowls of heaven?" so in our own days, there are many who discern not the work of the Lord, neither regard the operations of his hands, even when science has unfolded to them the well-adapted economy established towards every class of living beings, and is still developing new wonders in every compartment of nature's richly-gemmed casket. It might appear strange that beings, naturally inquisitive, should pay little attention to innumerable curious and interesting facts offered to their observation. Yet however unlikely, it is but too practically visible, that a total want of *consideration*, when viewing the beautiful and inge-

nious works by which the eye of man is surrounded, is a leading feature in the character of many, who yet call themselves rational and grateful creatures. Inquiries are indeed made, and investigations diligently prosecuted from vain-glorious, or self-indulgent, or sordid motives. Profitable rewards, a distinguished reputation, the gratification of a refined taste, or of an eager curiosity, have all sufficient influence to prompt men's accurate investigation into the various modifications of animal existence, and the provisions made for its advantage; but comparatively few look into these things, that by beholding the minute, the never-failing sufficiency of his regulations, they may bless and magnify the Divine Regulator. The verse now chosen for meditation, relates to one of those wise providential arrangements, which perhaps I have less attended to than I ought to have done; but that it is *worthy* of attention cannot be doubted, when we remark *who* it is that alludes to it as claiming remark. The commencing verse of this chapter hinted at that singular fact, that the time of year when undomesticated animals produce their young, is always that most suitable for their due nourishment; had the most trifling de-

tails of this kind been left without attention in the due ordering of a stupendous universe, what confusion must have arisen ; but even "The wild goats bring forth at an *appointed* time," that the herbage scattered among the rocks may be prepared for them at the fitting season. The tiny insect, whose food is the verdant leaf, lies dormant till that leaf expands ; the bird hatches not its nestlings till the winter is past, till the rains are over and gone, and the flowers appear in the earth ; the hinds calve when their young ones may grow up with corn. Another circumstance is then noted, that their young ones (that is the hinds, wild goats, &c.) are in good liking ; they go forth and return to them no more. The description is concise, but it refers to a circumstance on which extended observations might be made, namely, the remarkable peculiarity, that *man*, who, considered merely as to his animal nature, is assuredly the noblest and most perfect of earth's children, should be inferior to the meanest of them, as to early capacity, for providing himself with the necessaries of life. Considering him as a creature endowed with mental powers and an immortal soul, this apparent deficiency is subservient to his best

interests—it cements the parental and filial affections by lengthening the term of dependant feebleness, on the one side, and of assiduous tenderness on the other; and it affords time and opportunity for that judicious and vigilant culture, which it is the purpose of his Creator man should receive, and which when duly pursued in the spirit of obedience, faith, and prayer, he has promised to bless; so that though his infancy be weak and unpromising, his latter end may be peace, and his resurrection glory. Were the newly-weaned child corporeally strong enough to “go forth,” (like the offspring of other creatures at a similar period,) and return to his parents’ roof no more; were he instinctively able like them to seek and procure his own food, how limited must have been the progress of our race in every intellectual and religious improvement. Voluntary submission to the restraints of education, and voluntary endeavours to impose them by continuing the tuition of the mind, after the body had attained its full vigour, would scarcely have been yielded or attempted, and it is easy to perceive the consequences to society, to religion, and every other advantage now blessing the generation of men, which would

have ensued. While we perceive, therefore, how by this little-noticed peculiarity of our infantine weakness, the goodness of God has produced most important and widely ramified effects on our eternal well-being, let us be led to improve the present consideration of it, *1st*, By laying up as an axiom for our guidance in every seeming anomaly in creation, that whether we can discern them or not, the reasons of it are founded in perfect foresight and consummate sagacity, and that the deeper the researches of Christian philosophy into the works and ways of Heaven, the more will they reveal of Heavenly wisdom and benevolence. *2dly*, If to afford facility for instructing the youthful mind, be the motive of God in making the offspring of man more helpless than that of any other race, let us not thwart his gracious purpose by *wasting* that precious seed-time for eternity. For creatures destined only for this life, the consumption of many years in education would be disproportioned to their whole duration, and accordingly the force of the instincts they require is exceedingly increased; but a being formed for *immortality* may well consider the brief period of his earthly span at its fullest extension, thoroughly well bestowed

on the great object of obtaining that holiness, without which he can never see God, and which therefore to remain unclothed with, were to insure unspeakable misery to himself for ever. While therefore it behoves *parents* to use diligently their talent of influence over the impressible affections of their little ones, we may *all* find it beneficial to remember, that our heavenly Father is by the various changes that happen in our temporal state, carrying us through a process of instruction and refinement, which however mysterious or unnecessary it may *now* seem, will assuredly develope itself to our *ripened* faculties in all its deep discretion. The words which the Lord spake to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," may in an enlarged sense be applicable to every believer. Let us only yield ourselves entirely and submissively to the means appointed for training us to the maturity of faith, and we shall at last have cause to rejoice that the discipline of our spirits for a higher world was longer and more painful than our own hearts might have chosen. Guided by the Lord's counsel here, we shall hereafter see Him, not through a glass darkly, but face to face, and know even as we are known.

My soul, this is the felicity of his chosen. Rest not satisfied till thou hast a good hope that thy name is written among them.

PRAYER.

Thou, oh Lord ! art our Father, our Redeemer ; from everlasting is thy name. May thy paternal protection and teaching be never forfeited by the backwardness and obstinacy of my behaviour towards thee. Thou hast made every thing beautiful in its time ; all thy works redound to thine honour. My soul praiseth thee, oh God ! that thou hast of thy free goodness, created me with powers capable of receiving some knowledge of thy wisdom and goodness, although thy thoughts surpass my highest thoughts, as the heavens are high above the earth. But thou hast encouraged me to anticipate a time of increased capacity, of purified and enlarged faculties. May it be my delight to prepare for the arrival of that blissful period ; and by docility, under all the methods by which thy grace would mould my character for a happy eternity, may I be proved to be indeed one of thy ransomed people, for Jesus Christ's sake.—
Amen.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Proverbs xxii. 6.

Search all the tribes of living things
That roam the woods or dive the main,
Float through the air on burnished wings,
Or scale the rock, or crop the plain.

Where shall investigating skill
Dependence so enduring trace,
Weakness to act, and strength to will,
As mark our planets ruling race?

Man only, views returning Spring,
With frequent blossoms deck the trees,
While he himself a helpless thing
Is dandled on a parent's knees.

Man only (sovereign though he be,
By Heaven's deputed rule below)
Successive summer's fruits may see,
Ere his own life her summer know.

And why does Providence prolong
The hours of feebleness and care?
Why is not man at once as strong
As all inferior creatures are?

Is there no cause? when thus is gained
 Time for tuition and control?
 Is there no cause, if thus be trained
 For heavenly bliss, the human soul?

Where instinct guides, sufficeth well
 Protection and provision kind,
 And short, though potent, is the spell
 Which *only* for such ends doth bind.

But Reason's children, nobler made,
 A culture more laborious need,
 And claim a Parent's fostering aid,
 For higher purpose, richer meed.

Train up thy child as he should go,
 Yea train him in "the" glorious "Way,"
The only path from sin and woe,
 The only path to endless day.

If thou thyself that pathway tread
 Thou knowest well its narrow gate,
 And there by yearning nature led,
 Dost for thine offspring pleading wait.

"And if they enter, shall their feet
 To devious paths decline again?"
 Take to thine heart the promise sweet,
 And hush to rest thy doubtings vain.

“Train up a child where he should go,”
 He may fall down, may swerve, may
 start,
 But this saith He, who best can know,
 “Thence will he not when old depart.”

MEDITATION XXIII.

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you.”—*Galatians* iv. 19.

WHAT fervent love must that have been which chose for its expression this energetic metaphor. What a picture does it set before us of Christian intercession in its aim, and in its fervency. But not only for admiration and applause, is it here recorded: as a guide for our own meditation and self-examination, it is calculated to be very useful; as such would I now employ it. Do I not profess to be a servant of the same Lord, to whose glory Paul devoted himself? Do I not profess to derive vitality from the same Spirit of holiness, which kindled his heart into a glow of sympathizing philanthropy, and made him become all things to all

men," that by any means he might win some; which made him willing to spend and be spent in the service of Christ; which made him zealous in never-ceasing prayers and exertions to spread through the whole earth the blessed gospel of salvation, and to persuade those who nominally accepted it, to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. But if this be so, if I am indeed purchased by the same redeeming blood, and looking for the same glorious immortality, and sealed by the same Spirit, which thus worked mightily in Saul of Tarsus, and transformed him by the renewing of his mind, do my feelings at all correspond in their object or their intensity with those which influenced him to use the language before me?

The Apostle calls the Galatians, to whom he writes, "my little children, of whom I travail in birth again." Thus intimating that they were already, to all appearance, Christians, and that his former supplications and labours on their behalf had been heard and blessed; but does he therefore consider his work done, and his continued pleadings superfluous? or should we deem it enough when we see our children, our friends, or our relatives, embracing the cause of piety,

and avowing themselves to be on the Lord's side? Should we thenceforth relax in the fervour of our petitions for them, resting satisfied that they are *safe*, and further intercession unnecessary? So did not Paul: Like him, let us rather redouble than remit them. Let us be instant in seeking for them the perfecting of that good work which we hope to be already commenced. Let us further that work by every counsel, every aid, in our power. Let us not faint, nor be weary of interceding, that their whole mind may be brought into such conformity to Christ, that he may truly be said to be "formed" in them.

We are more easily awakened to anxiety for the conversion of those we love, than upheld in a steady course of solicitous efforts for their progress and improvement after it. Yet such efforts are surely implied in the Apostle's parental address, and that they should *increase*, not diminish, in vigour as the blessing to be attained approaches nearer to our possession. It is often difficult for hearts prone to unbelief as ours are, to hope on even against hope, to view things *always* through the cheering medium of the promises, and so, to pursue perseveringly our way of exertion, though nothing but dis-

couragement appear to follow our endeavours. We know that this is our duty, but it is one against which the "Anakim" of the land muster in stoutest opposition; but what an earnest of good things to come, is the first tear of unfeigned humiliation, the very first tottering step that decidedly turns towards the cross. When we remember *who* it is that worketh in the regenerate, both to will and to do, what encouragement ought we to derive in helping *them* forward with our prayers, who have apparently the the work of grace proceeding upon them. This is to be honoured indeed; to be fellow-workers with the Lord our Saviour, who not only *engrafts* the branches into Himself, the true vine, but so deals with them as to increase their fertility. And surely the Apostle felt this encouraging incitement, or he would not have said so confidently, "*Until* Christ be formed in you." Had the result of his petitions and exhortations been doubtful, he would have said, *in hopes*, or to the end that this may be; but *until! until!* There is no dubiousness here. It is just the prosecution of appointed means for an *assured* end, and evinces the same principle, which on a memorable occasion prompted the writer, though supernaturally convinced of

final safety from shipwreck, to urge the means of preservation as indispensable.

Another thing to be noticed in this verse is the implied fact, that the formation of the Christian character is a secret internal work; that it needs another agent than him who is to evidence its operation by the tenor of his conduct; that the assistance of this all-sufficient Agent is to be implored and received by addressing the throne of grace, and that the standard of perfection, the full measure of stature to which the Christian must be always aspiring, is nothing less, than as his Saviour was, so to be himself in this world. Vain and fallacious is every criterion as to a really *saving* union with Christ, which embraces not unreserved submission to the continual influence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the soul, as in a temple, and producing likeness to Him, with whom it claims membership, fellowship and everlasting heritage. Tried by this criterion, if we are deficient, our own prayers must not indeed be wanting to attain a state of more security; but we may *also* well ask the prayers of the Lord's devoted people, and most especially should we entreat those who are set over us in the ministry, that they would earnestly plead

with the Lord,—in the expressive language of the Prophet,—that they would give him no rest, till Christ be formed in us, till He make us with his chosen Jerusalem, a name and a praise in the earth. Nor can we cultivate too carefully that spirit of holy charity which feels deeply for the spiritual state of others, which “hopeth all things,” and rejoiceth in the truth, where even a dawning of its triumphant day can be discerned, and which labours strenuously, though silently and unostentatiously, by supplications unceasing, to obtain increase of the church, and to contribute to its edification.

Could we but *duly* regard the value of that which is to endure *for ever*,—could we weigh souls after the shekel of the sanctuary; could we estimate as *He* estimated them, who agonized in prayer for their eternal salvation, till “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground” with the vehemence of that inward conflict,—oh! how should we be ashamed of our apathy in suffering sin upon our brethren, in omitting *any* thing which may save *them* from perishing for whom Christ died, in being indifferent to the growth in grace of those for whom

Paul, were he now living, would be fervent in prayer night and day!

The answer of assent to all this is on our lips, may it sound deep into our consciences, and animate our affections into such zeal, as through Divine grace may prove indefatigable for promoting the enlargement, the purity and the peace, of our spiritual Zion. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

PRAYER.

Oh ever glorious King of Zion! unite me to thyself in the bonds of thy everlasting covenant, and to thy people in the bonds of love and holy communion. Give me occasion to thank thee for the triumphs of thy grace, in making known by me the excellency of thy knowledge in every place. But especially draw forth my heart in much sincerity of desire for those who are nearest and dearest to me after the flesh, and for those with whom I am connected in the intimacy of Christian fellowship. Give me an abiding interest in their prayers, and an ever widening solicitude for thy glory in the con-

version of sinners. Oh Lord! send forth labourers into thine harvest, strengthened by thine own hand in the great and honourable task of preparing souls for thy everlasting kingdom, and may they never remit their exertions, while there remains the least glimmering of hope, that Christ may yet be formed in them, and become in them the hope of glory. Lift up the light of thy countenance, oh gracious Lord! upon me, and upon all who truly seek thee. Accept us mercifully through the meritorious sacrifice of the cross, and to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and praise for ever and ever.—Amen.

“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:”—*Isaiah* liii. 11.

“Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.”—*Hebrews* xii. 2.

The bark has struck upon the reef,
 The surge is mountain high,
 Who ventures forth to their relief?
 Shall he not surely die?

Oh should they gain the rescuing strand,
 That life-boat and her crew,
 And one by one in safety land,
 And their Deliverer too,

Who would not read within that heart,
 So nobly self-denied,
 Engraven on its liveliest part,
 "Now am I satisfied!"

The fruit of peril *must* be dear,
 This well the *Mother* knows,
 When falls the calm delightful tear
 That terminates her throes.

But how may human emblem suit,
 Or human tongue repeat,
 The Saviour's anguish! or its fruit
 Ineffably complete?

Full in his knowledge was the weight
 Impending over man,
 Yea, all the horrors of a state
 Of everlasting ban.

Full in his knowledge was the weight,
 Of blessing for the pure,
 And all the glories of a state,
 Whose joys for ever dure.

And love was stronger than the grave,
 And deeper than our loss ;
 It buffeted Temptation's wave,
 It triumphed o'er the cross ;—

It drained the darkest, bitterest draught,
 That Wrath for sin could pour,
 Defeated all the Serpent's craft,
 And opened Heaven's door ;—

It toiled, it suffered, it obeyed,
 And who the joy shall mete,
 When "it is finish'd," Jesus said,
 And saw his work complete!

This was the travail of thy soul,
 Oh Son of God Most High !
 Thy ransom'd church, while ages roll,
 Was all within thine eye.

Yes for this joy thou didst despise
 All suffering and all shame :
 Oh give us grace, and make us wise,
 For *thee* to do the same.

MEDITATION XXIV.

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

St. Matthew xxv. 40.

IT cannot be too often dwelt upon, that the motive and not the manner of our performances designates them as *really* good or bad in the sight of God. Worldly men, like Herod, do “many things,” which, towards society, have much in them that is good, pleasing, and advantageous,—much that passes current as kind, disinterested, valuable; but do we examine for the deeply engraved stamp of the genuine gold, the royal mark which distinguishes the pure metal from the dross and from the counterfeit, where it is to be found, and what is it? It is good to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked, says one, and am I not a member of a benevolent society which does both, which gives bread to the hungry, and raiment to the destitute? It is good to minister to the aged and to the sick, says another, and do I not subscribe to this hospital, or to that infirmary, which provides efficiently for

these purposes? It is good to instruct the ignorant and evangelize the world, says a third, and towards distributing Bibles or supporting missionaries, I am ever ready liberally to contribute.

One comprehensive answer includes every variety of such cases. When you aid those whom Jesus condescends to call his brethren, do you do so, *because* they are such?

If full of affection to your great Redeemer, you look round and say, what shall I render in proof of my gratitude; and your memory recalls his words, "If ye love me, keep my commandments,"—"a new commandment give I unto you, that ye *love* one another," and so having nothing else to confer, you go forth, even with the cup of cold water, to refresh his meanest member, you shall in no wise lose the blessing and the reward,—that blessing and that reward which will assuredly be most dear to you, of hearing from his own lips the acknowledgment, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." But if God be not at all in our contemplation when we do actions beneficial to man, from man alone must we look for their recompence. Let the thanks of the receiver, or

the praise of the beholder, crown with satisfaction the merely compassionate or the merely liberal ; but let the Christian seek his Father, which seeth in secret, and say, accept, oh Lord, the feeble endeavours of a willing mind, receive this labour of love as a token of obedience and gratitude, and help me to perform it as unto thyself.

But we are sometimes apt to forget, that if the love of Christ constrains us for his sake to view with tender pity every distressed fellow creature, however slight may be our acquaintance or connection with them, as *all* bearing that form, wherein the Son of God thought it not below his dignity to inhabit ; it is no less the love of Christ, not any inferior excitement, which must prompt and consecrate our services towards those with whom the ties of kindred and of friendship bring us closely into contact.

Are we called to the momentous task of educating for eternity a being dear to us as the breath of our own life, and the light of heaven ? That being is yet dearer to the Lord, who bought it, not with silver or gold, but by his own unblemished oblation of himself. Nurture it then as you would a child of God. Give it up to him as not yours only but his ; receive it back as the

Hebrew mother did her rescued Moses, to *nurse it* in his ways. Like Peter obey your Lord's injunction to feed his lambs, and like Peter obtain confidence to regard both it and yourself as partakers of the glory that shall be revealed.

It is delightful to fulfil relative duties in Christ, and for Christ, instead of finding them snares and hindrances, (as it too often the case,) by setting out upon them with unfixed principles, or deficient views of duty. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," is a command which well explains how piety does not withdraw us from needful occupations and refreshments, but sets us rather to watch over their nature, degree, and peculiar influence on our own dispositions. If they neither infringe the law of love to God and man, by their natural tendency, -their abuse, or their excess, they may be presented to Him as part of our cheerful obedience, and they will be accepted, and through Christ sanctified.

And if it should be thus with our very meals and recreations, how much more with our almsgiving, our exhortations, our teachings. When we give, or when we speak, could we always but keep in view, that it

is a fellow-member of that body to which unmerited mercy alone has united *us*, whom we relieve, or whom we advise, or over whose tender infancy we carefully watch, would not a richer unction of affectionate sympathy pervade our free-will offerings, and a holier dedication mark our daily employments? May it be thus with us henceforth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

PRAYER.

Be not far from me, oh Lord my God, in any thing that I do. In all that I plan, and in all that I undertake; when I rise up and when I lie down; when I go forth and when I return; when I speak and when I hear; when I read thy Word, or when I sing thy praise, enable me still to choose the good, and refuse the evil. Let me ever bear in mind, that though living in the world as a scene of duty and trial, I must not be conformed to its spirit, nor blind to its vices. Oh Lord, help me to be ever proving what is thy good and acceptable and perfect will, and with firm reliance on the immutable truth of thy promises, may I follow the way of thy commandments,

looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. For his sake, Eternal Father, hear and pardon my imperfect prayers.—Amen.

“A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”—*Proverbs* xxix. 15.

“Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.—*Isaiah* xliv. 1—5.

A mother! oh the sacred trust
 Confided in that tender name,
 To rear and sway, with guidance just,
 The dedicated of the Lord!

To stamp the ductile mind of youth
 With lessons time shall ne'er efface,
 With reverence for Eternal Truth,
 With longings for refining grace;

To watch, to warn, to check, to teach,
 To point the path and cheer the way,
 Enforcing by affection's speech,
 What wisdom else might vainly say ;

Who is sufficient for the task ?
 Who trembles not the task is theirs,
 Which doth imperatively ask,
 Such anxious unremitting cares ?

Who is sufficient ! not indeed
 The frail, unaided, fleshly arm ;
 But Faith hath stores for every need,
 And cordials for each new alarm.

“ Fear not Jesurun,” saith the Lord,
 “ My chosen servants, fear not you,
 My Spirit on your seed is poured,
 My blessing on your offspring too.”

They shall spring up among the grass,
 The church's ever verdant field,
 Where crystal flowing waters pass,
 Where healing herbs their fragrance yield.

As willows by the water course,
 Their pliant boughs luxuriant bend,
 So drawn by Love's constraining force,
 Their hearts shall seek the sinner's friend.

“I am the Lord’s, those hearts shall say,
 Emmanuel’s, by recorded vow ;
 Like Jacob, to their God they’ll pray.
 Like Israel to Jehovah bow.”

What gracious words, what prospects fair !
 Is He not mighty to fulfil ?
 Plead them, my soul, in faithful prayer,
 He *can* perform them, and He *will*.

MEDITATION XXV.

“Lord, in trouble have they visited thee ; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.”—*Isaiah* xxvi. 16.

THERE are few men living to whom these words might not with truth be applied : so natural is it to a dependant, powerless being to look out of himself for help in the hour of extreme distress. Like the mariners whom Jonah accompanied, when men are afraid, each one cries unto his God. “In their distress they did seek him early ;” but, alas ! this is all too often in the spirit of selfishness unmixed. Love to themselves,

and the dread of continued suffering, alone influence them, and not the feeling of rendering honour to Him whose sovereignty they yet virtually acknowledge, and whose succour they implore; and because they have thus “no root,” is it wonderful that their piety should be evanescent as the terrors which awaken it.

But is not the dread of approaching punishment, or the apprehension of immediate death, in any case salutary? Are they that exhort henceforth to dismiss from their quiver the terrors of the Lord as inefficacious for producing true conversion? Are they that tremble, because the great and dreadful God, holding in his hand the issues of life and death, is dealing with them in apparent wrath, who are deeply bowed down in awe before the displays of his retributive justice towards the despisers of his forbearance and long-suffering,—are they to be told that fears thus excited are vain, and lead only to delusion,—that to be dismayed under affliction by the reproaches of conscience, or to shrink from the vengeance which our sins have incurred, is “to be in bondage,”—that repentance so produced is in *all* cases unsound and unacceptable, and will prove merely transitory?

The Scriptures are remote from such conclusions ; they inform us, that when the Lord's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants thereof will learn righteousness ; they command us to serve God with reverence and godly fear, for " our God is a consuming fire ;" and they continually intimate that he heareth the groaning of the miserable, and is very gracious, even to the most wretched, when they cry to him in their destitution and despair, seeking comfort only from his mercy and goodness towards them. They ever intimate to us, that the most awful of all human conditions is that which is denoted by insensibility under God's uplifted scourge ; by " refusing to receive correction,"—" Why should ye be smitten any more ? Ye will revolt more and more." Never was surely a more awful denunciation ! The prediction of any calamity, however sweeping on the nation, however agonizing on the individual, which the Prophet could have put forth, would have been light compared to it !

What is it, then, which makes a difference between the mere cry of terror, and the out-breathings of a spirit humiliated by anguish into sentiments of profound godly sorrow, and poured forth in earnest peti-

tions for relief and protection from an omnipotent Jehovah? Great is the difference, essential the distinction in every way, in their object, their nature, their effects. Much might be said on all of these; but at present it may be as well to confine ourselves to the last mentioned. It is a safe and easy, as it is also an authorized test, "By their fruits ye shall know them," let *repentance* be tried by it, and it will readily appear which are real and which spurious of its apparent symptoms. That fear must be insufficient which is unaccompanied by love; and where love is not, there is not the fulfilling of God's law. Should we observe an unwonted frown on the countenance of an earthly benefactor, and be sensible of an alteration in the exercises of his benignity, our first inquiry would be, what can possibly have induced so kind a friend to act on this occasion with seeming severity? How have I offended him? and if we could trace the cause to some negligence or ingratitude of our own, would not the only probable course towards reconciliation be an altered behaviour on our part?

Thus the alarms arising under danger from a sense of guilt, if produced in us by God's saving grace, will neither subside nor

terminate in mere confessions and deprecations. They trouble not the smooth waters of life without also healing him whose diseased frame is exposed to their influence, and bringing him forth "a new creature," devoted in heart and mind to his heavenly Physician; whereas the sorrows of the world worketh death,—every fresh trial, unimproved in the right way, hardening the heart, and lessening its ability to turn unto Him that smiteth. Oh of what importance is it, then, to see that afflictions be indeed of abiding benefit, and to bear forth with us into the business and the allurements of life, those prospects which, under the pressure of sickness or of peril, caused us to cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The recollection of danger escaped can never avail us, unless the renewal of danger be guarded against. Not only while in suffering or in fear, but at all times, in all places, "Lord save us or we perish," must be our heartfelt prayer. Oh may He enable us, by our spiritual thank-offerings and dutiful conduct through life, to pay him acceptably those vows which we may have made in the time of trouble.

PRAYER.

Oh Almighty Lord God, thou hast not dealt with me after my sins, neither rewarded me after my iniquities: Thou hast stayed thy rough wind in the day of thy east wind, in thy wrath remembering mercy: Thou hast debated with me in measure, and hast kept back my soul from the pit, and my life from perishing, when thou didst see fit to exercise me with pain upon my bed, and the multitude of my bones with strong pain. Oh continue forth thy loving-kindness and thy truth unto thy servant, and establish me so firmly on the Rock of Salvation, that I may never be removed. Through the provided ransom, may my soul, not only be delivered from the curse of thy just anger, but renovated, day by day, and preserved in holiness to the glory of thy grace in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Mediator.—Amen.



“And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?”

St. Luke xvii. 17,

A time of deep distress
 Impels us, Lord, to thee:
 We feel our utter feebleness,
 And to thy greatness flee:

But freedom from alarm,
 A brightly shining sky,
 Life's current flowing clear and calm,
 A thousand comforts nigh,

These form a state of peace,
 And well we might suppose,
 Such gifts would heav'nward love increase,
 Far more than torturing woes.

Yet, ah ye sons of men !
 Cold and ungrateful race,
 Nine lepers thankless out of ten
 Best parallels your case.

Deceitful as the brook
 Dried by the summer's sun,
 'Twere often vain in health to look,
 For what Affliction won.

The vows in trouble breathed,
 Engraved on brass may seem,
 Yet prove, when trouble's sword is sheathed,
 Writ on the faithless stream !

Oh ! thou preserving God,
 Whose mercy led me through
 The strokes of thy paternal rod,
 For sin so justly due,

Still more thy grace I need
 To guard my treacherous heart,
 From pain and sickness when I'm freed,
 Than while beneath their smart.

A thousand, thousand snares,
 As ease and health return,
 Alluring joys, absorbing cares,
 My spirit can discern.

Lord Jesus! let thy prayer
 In my behalf prevail,
 Where'er I am, be Thou but there,
 And faith shall never fail.

MEDITATION XXVI.

“What mean ye by these stones.”—*Joshua* iv. 6.

IN all nations the custom has prevailed of preserving to future generations, by monuments and observances, a lively impression of their forefathers' historical annals, and in the early times of the world, even individual contracts were concluded by the joint erec-

tion of a "pillar of witness," which should serve to remind each party of the solemn ratification of their mutual promises made, as it were, in its presence. The Israelites were a nation so nurtured in marvels from their first existence as a distinct people, that they seem, (like many in our own day who behold, with careless eyes, the daily miracles of creation and providence,) to have forgotten that there was any thing remarkable in the dealings of God with them, and to have become callous to their special mercies. Though their bread was rained from heaven, and water flowed from the rock to refresh their fainting bodies, those miraculous supplies were received with the same indifference, which too often characterizes the professed followers of Jesus, before whom the nourishing truths of the Gospel are spread, till they become scarcely conscious of the inestimable privilege thus enjoyed.

But the merciful and gracious God inflicted not on Israel the extermination their provocations merited. He permitted Moses, as a type of the one Mediator, Jesus, to plead successfully for their continued national existence; by new wonders and new benefits He "wrought with them for his name's

sake," exemplifying to all creatures that long-suffering patience of his, by which alone his church reaches Canaan in safety under the guidance of their spiritual Joshua, and prepared them after their long wandering in the wilderness, for a triumphant entrance into the land he had promised them for an inheritance.

To shew that notwithstanding past forfeitures of his favour, He was still to them a God of blessing and of grace, and as if by renewing in their memories the transactions of the Red Sea, to give proof of his being still pledged to put them in possession of that Canaan for which they quitted Egypt, he divided the waters of Jordan, and made them to pass through the midst of it, and while the miracle was yet in progress, provided a memorial of it for their successive descendants, by erecting in the centre of the river, where the feet of the priests had stood, and on the banks, so miraculously reached, massive stones taken from its then uncovered bed.

When a mighty deliverance of Israel from the oppressing Philistines took place some centuries after, "Samuel took a stone,"* and giving it an appropriate title, Ebenezer,

or the stone of help, set before the observation of all future inquirers, as to its remarkable position, the important truth that the battle is the Lord's, that He ruleth in the generations of men, that he hath not said in vain unto his faithful ones, "Seek ye my face," but that instead of continually fearing for the fury of the oppressor, they should contend manfully in His strength, and still acknowledge, as they retrace past conflicts and victories, "Hitherto has the Lord helped me."

National perpetuations of signal events are in our days devoted chiefly to very subordinate ends. As in many other respects, the glory of man is in this matter a more prevailing summons to us, than the glory of God. If England once had a Queen, who shewed commendable piety in acknowledging the hand of the Omnipotent, by commanding a medal to be struck after the discomfiture of the Spanish Armada, bearing that sublime inscription, "Thou didst blow with thy winds and they were scattered," the present day of practical infidelity would too probably laugh to scorn any similar acknowledgment of the superintending Deity. But in the solitude of that happy Bethel, where the Christian has found himself as at the gate of heaven, where he has studied

the sweet mystery of Divine love, till his heart melted in entire subjection to that God, of whose least mercies he felt his unworthiness,—where he has meditated in faith on the wisdom and mercy of the incarnation, till he saw how it “opened heaven,” and formed a ladder of communication between its holy courts and the polluted dwelling-place of man; there are yet I trust many who are setting up a pillar of remembrance, which in future hours of depression and disquietude, will remind them how they have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and revive their trust in his everlasting mercy. “When deep calleth unto deep,” and escape seems so difficult that nature says, “despair,” some *association* is made to recall the “months that are past,” when the “secret of God” was “upon our tabernacle,” and “his candle” shined upon our heads,—we remember our God concerning such and such particular seasons as the Psalmist did concerning the land of Hermon, and the hill of Mizar, and at length are generally enabled to say with him, “Why art thou cast down, oh my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? I will yet trust in Him, who is the help of my countenance and my God.”

It is obvious that the same principle may be carried through all the varieties of life. Anniversaries of our several changes, joyful or sorrowful, will suggest trains of improving thought. A season of new and exciting emotions, if duly employed, will be fruitful in thoughts which will recur to the mind very powerfully and beneficially in after life. Let us neglect none of these helps on our way to the celestial city. Let us treasure them up for those that shall be young when we are old, so that when asked by them, "What mean ye by these reminiscences," a reply which shall tend at once to their improvement, and the glory of our great Preserver, may be given, and we may relate to them, on such and such occasions, "the Lord did wonderously,"—we sought him and he was found of us, "Go ye and do likewise."

PRAYER.

Oh Lord engrave upon my memory and affections, an imperishable record of thy manifold and unceasing merciestowards me, through the several periods of my life. May I frequently retrace in my mind the way by which thou hast led me hitherto, to

adore thy goodness and faithfulness, and to bewail my own ingratitude. May every past fall serve as a beacon to my future steps, and instruct me in the humbling knowledge of my own defects. Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. Thou forsakest not them that fear thee. I put my trust in thee, therefore, oh God, to open for me a safe pathway into the land of thy heavenly promises, that with all thy redeemed I may praise thy name for ever.—Amen.

“Set thee up way-marks.”—*Jeremiah xxxi. 21.*

In thy solitary place
 Of communings divine,
 Christian! did thy Saviour's face,
 Upon thy spirit shine?
 Mark the spot.—Forget it not,
 Set thee up a way-mark there.

Though calamity drew nigh,
 Hath God in pity spared,
 Very gracious at thy cry,
 Through his Lamb prepared?
 Note the place, of special grace,
 Set thee up a way-mark there.

When as overwhelming flood
 The enemy came in,
 Did the standard, bathed in blood,
 For thee the battle win?
 Of that field, preserve the shield,
 Set thee up a way-mark there.

Did thy course perplexing seem,
 Thy mental organs blind,
 Till suddenly, a sacred beam
 Refreshed thy doubting mind?
 Fold the leaf, that soothed thy grief,
 Set thee up a way-mark there.

Hath thy sympathizing heart
 Bewailed another's fall,
 And seen exemplified in part
 The sin which cleaves to all?
 Deeply think, "How near that brink!"
 Set thee up a way-mark there.

When returning seasons wake
 Remembrance of the past,
 And bid thee for the future take
 The warning light they cast,
 Hear the speech, which sounds from each,
 Set thee up a way-mark there.

But especially doth God
By sickness with thee plead,
To "hear" his own appointed rod,
And give his precepts heed?
Let thy couch, amendment vouch,
Set thee up a way-mark there

Thus the pilgrim fathers went
Tow'rds city not in view,
Erecting for each new event,
Jehovah's tribute new:
Hark! they raise, their song of praise,
See they set their way-mark there.

So Christian! when thy master sends,
That thou thy crown receive,
What blest memorial for thy friends
Thy calm farewell may leave!
Yield thy breath, rejoice in death!
Christ has set his way-mark there.

MEDITATION XXVII.

“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name,”—*Psalm c. 4.*

WHEN we enter the courts of the Lord to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and the honour due unto his name, in the genuine spirit of humble, obedient gratitude, how surely do we find it a joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful; and what new discoveries of heavenly mercy are graciously made to those waiting spirits who studiously endeavour to fulfil all outward righteousness, that they may magnify the Lord's goodness to them, and who, because they rejoice in God their Saviour, say ever in sincerity, “Behold the servant of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.”

The mother of Jesus was thus piously anxious to perform all things according to the law of Moses, and when the Most High had graciously fulfilled what his Holy Spirit spake to her by the mouth of her cousin Elizabeth, and had given her a performance of those things which the commissioned angel predicted, she entered therefore the

temple of her God with the offering suited to her humble circumstances, and a heart no doubt deeply impressed with the miraculous sublimity of her infant's birth and destiny, and prepared to render homage to Him, who yet lay cradled on her maternal bosom, as one to whom the Lord God had promised the throne of his father David.

Obscure, though a daughter of kings,—poor, though highly favoured by the author of all real wealth,—an unknown stranger, though aware that “all generations should call her blessed,” little could Mary have expected that the fulfilment of her vows would be attended with such remarkable strengthening of her faith and hope, as was afforded by the welcome of holy Simeon, and the superadded testimony of Phanael's pious widow. Well may it be said, Joseph and his mother marvelled at the things which were spoken concerning him; for though previous events must have entitled them to expect great things from his matured years, yet it is probable that they, like others of their people at that period, regarded the kingdom promised to the Messiah, as national, temporal, and immediate, and had insufficient notions of the universal benefits mankind were to derive from the

wonderful, yet lowly child before them. When, therefore, the inspired Simeon embraced his Lord, as the salvation prepared before the face of all people, "The light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel,"—when he yet spoke plainly of his ill reception on earth, "as a sign that should be spoken against," and predicted the sword that should pierce through his mother's soul while beholding his sufferings, it is easy to conceive what new and almost overpowering views of extended consequences, in time and eternity, would expand before the mind of the humble and believing Mary. Much and deeply pondering them in her heart, what profound awe and enlarged gratitude would be the results,—many a rapturous meditation on the glory that should be revealed,—and many a prayer for fortitude to endure the foretold temporary agony of spirit, would take their rise in that visit to the sanctuary, which had for its primary object a conformity to external and typical ordinances.

And have believers of our own time no inference nor instruction to draw from all this history?

Professor of Christianity, few and simple are the outward signs and ceremonies which

are binding upon thee, see that the Saviour be near thy heart when attending them, and they will not be profitless. The servants of the Lord may not indeed pour forth for thine edification any prophetic hints concerning thy future path through life; neither may the Lord communicate by them any new truths concerning his beloved Son, as He did by those venerable saints at Jerusalem; but if they speak to thee of Jesus, as the delight of their hearts and the desire of their eyes, as the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely; if they descant on his perfections, and declare to thee his offices; if they prick thee to the heart while pointing out Him whom thy sins and the sins of thy brethren have nailed to the accursed tree, yet shew thee that there is salvation in no other, and that through him life and immortality are brought to light, rest assured that they give thee information far more precious than the gold of Ophir,—even that wisdom which, received and acted upon, may enable thee at the last to “depart in peace,” according to the word of thy Lord. Oh think not that it is enough to hear, to know, to worship. Mary “kept” the things told her in the temple, and “pondered them in her heart.”

In the secrecy of the closet must be digested the energetic declarations of the public assembly, if we wish them to prove effectual comforters under the endurance of persecution, or the anguish of tortured affection. She who was greeted by an angel as "highly favoured," no doubt endured much when Herod drove her from her humble home, and greatly more when Pilate gave to the cross its unblemished victim; but faith had treasured up the words which were spoken of Him by the holy prophets, and patience had her perfect work. What but the thought that all these things were *appointed* for bringing many sons to glory, the assured hope that Jesus should rise from the dead triumphant and immortal, supported her, (like Abraham looking to receive back his Isaac,) as she stood by the cross, that appalling scene for a mother? What but the view of the same cross, and the blessed certainty of that resurrection, can support *us* in the hour of death, or even under the bereavements of this varying world?

PRAYER.

Oh Lord, bestow upon me the willing mind and the grateful heart, which alone

can render outward sacrifices acceptable in thy sight. Accept, I pray thee, my services, not according to their intrinsic value, but as offered in dutiful love, and through that availing Intercessor, whose gracious undertaking for man was so variously shadowed forth to thine ancient people. May thy Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ and shew them unto me, and make me greatly delight to ponder them to my soul's good; and when the days of my sojourning here, oh Lord, are accomplished, may my purification from sin be declared by presentation before thee in thy everlasting temple, faultless, and with exceeding joy, through the merits of thy dear and only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour.—Amen.

“And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.”

St. Luke ii. 22.

Pictures and shadows filled the law
 From Sinai's mountain taught,
 Moses “far off” the substance saw,
 And by that pattern wrought.

All shewed the dread desert of sin,
 And sin's polluting taint,
 The means that should remission win,
 The culprit and the saint ;

Each new extension of the stain,
 That clings to Adam's race,
 Demanded thus a victim slain :
 Propitiating grace ;

But victim, altar, offering priest,
 Were emblems all of One,
 At once the Giver and the Feast,
 The everlasting Son !

Ah lowly Mary, wherefore bring,
 Those purifying doves,
 When in thine arms, for offering,
 Was Him the Father loves ?

No spot nor blemish had the child,
 Thy bosom fondly pressed,
 Then why, (as if that birth defiled,)
 This expiative test ?

Thus it became Him ! he was given
 To do the Father's will ;
 Each type, each ordinance, of heav'n
 His coming must fulfil.

The antitype through every rite
 Must show his richer worth ;
 The lamb, the dove, must be in sight,
 With him they shadowed forth.

Whom Mary brought, whom Simeon
 Whom Anna joyed to see, [blessed,
 In him to trust, in Him to rest,
 Is purity for me.

And if my feet again may stand
 Where saints in praise unite,
 A grateful heart, though empty hand,
 Vouchsafe me in thy sight.

MEDITATION XXVIII.

“ In thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.”—*1st Chronicles xxix. 12.*

To depreciate the importance of common cares and domestic duties is no part of Bible instructions, and that surely is a very mistaken view of its tendency, which would

inculcate, as the highest attainment of piety, a separation from these, or such an entire absorption of the soul in continued contemplations of a sacred nature, as to withdraw it from giving due and earnest attention to their performance. The Scriptures invariably deal with men as social beings; in fact, they greatly suspend on their behaviour as such, the external evidence of their subjection to the gospel of truth. Thus, women "professing godliness," are no where enjoined to discard from the catalogue of their avocations the humbler employments of their sex or station; on the contrary, the due discharge of these is ever ascribed to them as an honour,* while the opposite neglect is marked with more than one Apostolic censure.† However, therefore, the monotonous uniformity of feminine occupations may render it irksome to minds richly stored with heavenly wisdom, to pursue them steadily for their own sake, yet they become invested with powerful attractions when it is perceived that they are capable of devout consecration to the Master whose we are, and whom we serve. The "wise-hearted" women who contributed their industry to

* Prov. xxxi. 27.

† 1 Tim. i. 10.

the embellishment of the typical sanctuary, may be easily conceived to have wrought without one murmur at their own insignificance in the councils of the elders or the gatherings of the tribes, and when spinning the curtains of goats' hair in obedience to the Lord's directions for the right ordering of the tabernacle, to have been as efficiently grounded in the faith, as when with Miriam for their leader they went forth with timbrels and with dances, openly rejoicing in the delivering potency of the Lord who had triumphed gloriously.

And if subordinate offices in the Christian church be assigned to us, shall we therefore complain or be weary? When indeed we view things steadily in this gospel light, all the distinctions and varieties of our present state greatly diminish in relative importance. We see that to let our light shine before men so as to glorify our Father in heaven must be our undeviating object, but whether that light be elevated on the smoothly hewn summit of a pyramid, or surmount an erection of the roughest, coarsest kind, is of little consequence. An eminent Christian has recorded his opinion, that could we imagine two holy angels sent down to earth for a season, and placed the one on a throne, the

other as a *scavenger*, the scale of happiness or of alacrity in discharging duty would not be turned in favour of the former. Both would be so engrossed by the desire to glorify God and do his will, that the condition or the employment, wherein each was to pursue that vast end, would be estimated as nothing. It is in the Lord's hand to make us great in this sublime manner; not by exalting our station or withdrawing us from its duties, but by making our hearts so entirely his own as to obliterate all feelings of bitterness under the mortifications to which we may be exposed, and to render us careful for nothing except to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

But do we recoil from so awful a consideration as those now suggested? Do we say each one within ourselves, if life be thus a continual votive offering, and its commonest occurrences are to be rendered holy by the spirit in which they are encountered, it is indeed, I perceive, relieved of its apparent frivolity: it is manifested as an infinitely valuable possession; but at the same time what a burden does this throw upon my conscience; what deep culpability attaches to the misuse of its precious fragments, and how largely have I misused them.

Not to feel thus, would argue a strange and fatal dulness of heart in any child of man, and well may we bewail ourselves in this respect, saying, "My leanness, my leanness, wo unto me!" Yet though to discover such cause for mourning be sad, we may be assured it is safe. To be heavy laden with infirmity is common to all; to feel and lament that they are so, and so lamenting and feeling to cast their burden on the Lord is the distinction of those who are accepted in his love.

It is in the hand of the Lord to make us great, and he giveth strength to all. There is no class of petitioners too lowly to engage his kind attention, and his promise is, that "as our days are, so shall our strength be." The more conscientiously we become alive to the extended demands upon our entire energy, and the insufficiency of our past dedication of time and talent to the Lord, the more shall we prize such merciful declarations of his readiness to supply all our need. Were He extreme to mark what is done amiss, who should stand in his sight! but He who *lived* as well as died for us, had the power to present a pure offering and unadulterated incense. "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and forget not all his

benefits," that his glorious strength is pledged to support his people's weakness. Vain is the help of man, but if the Lord give quietness, who then shall make trouble? Only forget not that it is strength to act, not liberty to be idle, that the Lord promises. It is peace in seeking fellowship with Him, the zealous worker, not quiescent, inactive reliance on his finished work. It is pardon under deficiencies resisted, not indulgence in a contented indolence of spirit. Go daily, my soul, to the Fountain of Salvation, and renew within view of Calvary, that zeal which has its birth from humility and gratitude. If such be already our blessed experience, none need make us afraid. Happy are the people that are in such a case. Yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.

PRAYER.

Oh God! who workest all things according to the counsel of thy own will, even when employing the agency of man to accomplish thy wise designs, teach me to rest so fully on thy goodness and truth, as never to repine at any peculiarities in thine appointments on my behalf. The lot is

fallen unto me in a fair ground, yea, I have a goodly heritage; if whatever other and lesser advantages may seem withheld, I can truly say, Thou art my portion and my Almighty Friend. Oh Lord! I entreat thee to accept, as offered on the golden altar of thy Son's atonement, and perfumed with the incense of his continual priesthood, the dedication to thyself of all I have and I all am. Sanctify, by thine indwelling Spirit, the fountain of my thoughts, words, and actions, so that their current be henceforth pure, deviating less and less from that safe and happy course enjoined in thy holy Word. Look upon the face of thine Anointed, and for his sake, love me freely, blotting out my many sins, pardoning all my deficiencies, and filling me with the fruits of righteousness. Now to thy glorious name, Eternal Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be praise, honour, and reverence, for ages everlasting.—Amen.

“Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”
1st Corinthians x. 31.

Oh! how it dignifies this scene,
 Of still recurring petty things,
 Exalts our life, and o'er the mean
 The broidered robe of beauty flings.

Oh! how it reconciles the soul
 To tedious, homely, humbling, tasks,
 When as our days appointed roll,
 Their due improvement conscience asks.

'Tis this which forms the jewell'd chain
 By which immortals measure time,
 Not by its seconds, but the gain
 Of fitness for celestial clime.

To look on life as Glory's porch,
 And as the toilsome steps we mount,
 Lifting aloft Faith's brightening torch,
 Our cares minute as lessons count;—

'Tis this which makes the meanest shine
 In heavenly estimation great,
 The coarsest duties can refine,
 And sooth the most ungenial state.

Nor only this: but, if ordained
 By presience wise, this world's career,
 What high results may be enchained
 Upon each small domestic sphere.

Could Levi's daughter e'er have thought,
 As patiently her fingers plied,
 To weave that ark, which dearly fraught,
 She placed upon the river's side.

Could she have thought its slender frame
 Involved the fate of nations vast,
 Or that its helpless inmate's name
 Should soon eclipse all heroes past !

Yet Faith and strong Affection fed
 The hope that nerved her trembling hand ;
 How should her " saved one " else have led
 His people from their bondage land ?

And shall the Christian mother shrink
 From tasks comparatively light,
 Or mean, or unimportant think,
 With such example in her sight ?

No ! rather let her act her part
 With cheerful, conscientious care,
 Support, oh Lord ! her fainting heart,
 Give strength and wisdom at her prayer.

Nor let her view with tearful eyes,
 Her path of duty winding *down*,
 Lest detailed cares and worldly ties,
 Her nobler contemplations drown.

Sufficient is the clue of grace,
 To clear the most entangling road,
 To aid her hesitating pace,
 To lighten her detaining load.

“As is thy day, thy strength shall be,”
 Thy fears but make thee closer hold,
 “What e’er thou dost, do all to me,”
 This turns the meanest thing to gold.

MEDITATION XXIX.

“And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died,) that she called his name Ben-oni, [the son of my sorrow,] but his father called him Benjamin,” [the son of my right hand.]

Genesis xxxv. 18.

THE vanity of human wishes, and the ignorance of those who impatiently murmur when the gratification of them is withheld, were never perhaps more forcibly illustrated than in the history of Rachel. The moment when her long cherished hope received its accomplishment, was the same which deprived her of all enjoyment from its completion: “Give me children, or I die!”

A second son is granted ; his mother lives to embrace him ; but it is as the son of her sorrow, not of her joy, “ Her soul is in departing ! ” Better surely were the sickness of a hope deferred, than the fulness of desire vouchsafed, and frustrated thus in its very fulfilment.

And is it not still thus with short-sighted man ? Walketh he not still in a vain shadow, disquieting himself to little profit ? Alas ! how large a portion of human existence is spent like that of Jacob’s beloved wife, in painful longings for supposed good ; in virtually exclaiming,—Give me this, give me that, or I die ! And when the darling aim, the long-sought object of many years’ endeavours, is at last within grasp, we seize it, and the stroke of the torpedo is in its touch ! The attractive brightness which occupied our thoughts, which roused our exertions, was but the glittering hue of the envenomed serpent, or it existed only in our own deceived imagination ; it is gone, and for ever. The hour of possession is the hour of illumination, and the “ son of our sorrow ” is the truest title we can give to the fruition of all our earthly toils.

There is something exquisitely pathetic and affecting, as well as instructive in the last words of Rachel ; considered as the fond

yearnings of maternal affection over an infant seen but for a moment, they need no comment, they do indeed speak to the mother's heart. "Let him be called *Benoni*." As if she had said, With agony and with death have I borne him. Son of my sorrow, let these be recorded in thy *name*. Let me depart in the sweet hope that thou wilt love my memory, that the endearing appellation which I now give thee, shall hereafter awaken in thy soul affections towards her whom thou hast never seen; affections which I may not live to enjoy, but the very thought of which is consolation; or, to paraphrase her feelings in the beautiful language of a modern poet,

"And now when summoned from the world
and thee,
I lay my head beneath the willow tree,
Wilt thou, sweet mourner, at my stone
appear,
And soothe my parted spirit lingering near?
Oh wilt thou come at evening hour to shed
The tears of memory o'er my narrow bed.
With aching temples on thy hand reclined,
Muse on the last farewell I leave behind;
Breathe a deep sigh, to winds that murmur
low,
And think on all my love, and all my woe?"

But the warmest affections of earth cannot detain when the voice of the Unseen has spoken. "Her soul was departing, and she died." And does the thought arise, soon, soon, shall the like consummation be written of those who now meditate on her latter end? I too must one day be gathered to my fathers! I too perhaps may be summoned to leave behind me this cherished one, so feeble, yet so dear, which now lies beside me unconscious of my love, uninterested in my fears? Shalt its infant lips never lisp in my delighted ear the name of mother, shall its infant heart never respond to my unutterable tenderness? Oh might I but live to see its youthful mind expand, to watch the slender tendrils, as they successively unfold, and myself to entwine them around the pillars of Jehovah's temple, around all that is holiest, purest, best; what cause should I not have for thankfulness! how calmly should my spirit part from this earth, were my memorial thus erected, where alone it is valuable, in the inmost soul of those I love most tenderly. But to die,—to die like Rachel, and to leave the beloved of my soul on this cold world, orphaned, at least in part; helpless,

untaught, forsaken! oh grief immeasurable, how can I bear the thought!

This is the language of nature, but is it nature in subjection to the faith; or nature rebellious, unbelieving, graceless? Is the Lord's arm shortened that He needs our aid to fulfil our prayers and his own purposes? or is his ear become heavy that He will not hear the redeemed of his Son, committing to his tenderness, the children from whom He may see fit to withdraw them? Even to the chastised Edomites He condescended to say, "Leave thy fatherless children, and I will preserve them alive." And shall less be done for those who are washed, and justified, and sanctified, by the atonement and the Spirit of his Son! Forbid the thought, every feeling within us that is Christian.

But even when convinced that the Divine protection is all-sufficient, even when acquiescing resignedly in whatever God wills, may not a tear of fondness rise unbidden to the eye? As she contemplates a separation, possibly an early one, from the objects of her love, may not the Christian mother weep even when she smiles as she anticipates how to be with Christ is far better? That she may, that she must, none can deny, and who shall venture to condemn? Yet though

such tears may for a while dim the eyes of the saints to the glories beyond the grave, they are among those which shall be wiped from them, so soon as they enter the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. When Rachel passed the boundaries of sense, she might possibly be made aware that the son of her sorrow would be the son of his father's right hand, the Benjamin of his old age, the apple of his eye, watched over as one, whose loss would bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave,—that he would be the partial object of a Joseph's love, a Judah's self-devoting generosity; but whether these facts were made known to *her* or not, such they were, and in the great day of recognition, many such will be disclosed, many an anxiously departing parent will behold how the seeming bereavement may be made the means of multiplied blessings,—how compassion and solicitous tenderness may be excited with redoubled force in surviving relatives, where one more near than all, was prematurely removed,—and in innumerable ways how all may be made to work for good where the original aspect of events was most discouraging. Many a child like Jabez,* named in sorrow, and quitted, like

* 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10.

Benjamin, with regret, may like them be distinguished in blessing, and kept from evil that it should not grieve them; through the large requests of faith, and the gracious answers of the God of Israel, they may be enlarged in their coast of usefulness, and rendered more honourable than their brethren. "Why then art thou cast down, oh my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" "Be still, and know that the Lord is God;" anticipate not with dismay, events which He can afford thee ample power to endure; and to endure with a composure which now, perhaps, thou canst scarcely conceive. Trust in Him at all times; commit thy way unto him, and He will give thee the desire of thine heart.

PRAYER.

Oh Lord, our righteousness! the place of defence of them that fear thee is as the munition of rocks, why should any thing prevail to depress or make us afraid, when we know that thou seest from everlasting to everlasting; that not a sparrow falls to the ground without thy special permission, and that very precious in thy sight is the death of thy saints. Oh give me a cheerful de-

pendence on thy mercies and promises, and while I use the means thou hast commanded towards appointed ends, let me ever trust, not in them, but in thee, remembering that thou art all-sufficient, and that the agency of man would be totally superfluous hadst thou not ordained, for an exercise of his obedience, that he should execute thy righteous purposes. Do unto thy servant as seemeth good in thy sight, and when my soul shall depart from my body, may an abundant entrance be given it, where every trace of earthly sorrow shall be effaced, in the kingdom and glory of thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.—Amen.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”

Psalm xxiii. 4.

Visions of a mournful future,
Wherefore thus unbidden throng,
Boding tones of bitter sorrow,
Mingling with my grateful song.

Overhanging rocks and mountains,
Shade the valley of the tomb;
But a brighter sun than nature's,
Shall it not disperse the gloom?

Is there not a gracious Shepherd,
 Burdened souls to meet and claim,
 Is there not a hand Almighty,
 Pledged to bear them through the flame ?

Wherefore then his love dishonour,
 Faithless sink, or doubting sigh,
 When imagining the moment,
 That shall tell thee, "thou must die ?"

On thy Father's tried compassion
 Rest thee, stay thee,—thou art safe,
 Though the tempest rage around thee,
 Though the torrent roar and chafe.

Not by human rule or measure
 Spreads the everlasting plan,
 Shall an insect grasp the Andes,
 Shall a worm the ocean span ?

What to Rachel seemed denial,
 But prolong'd probation kind,
 Had her hope been earlier granted,
 Earlier had her Joseph pined !

Though she left a "son of sorrow,"
 Son of strength he soon arose ;
 Loved of God,* and dwelling by him,
 Covered from relentless foes ;

* Deut. xxxii. 12.

So *thy* child, dejected mother,
If by faith on Jesus cast,
(None may pluck Him from the Saviour,)
Thou shalt see with Him at last.

Whether life or death be written,
Shrink not, tremble, nor complain,
Let the cross be all thy portion,
“Life is Christ, and Death is gain?”

FINIS.













