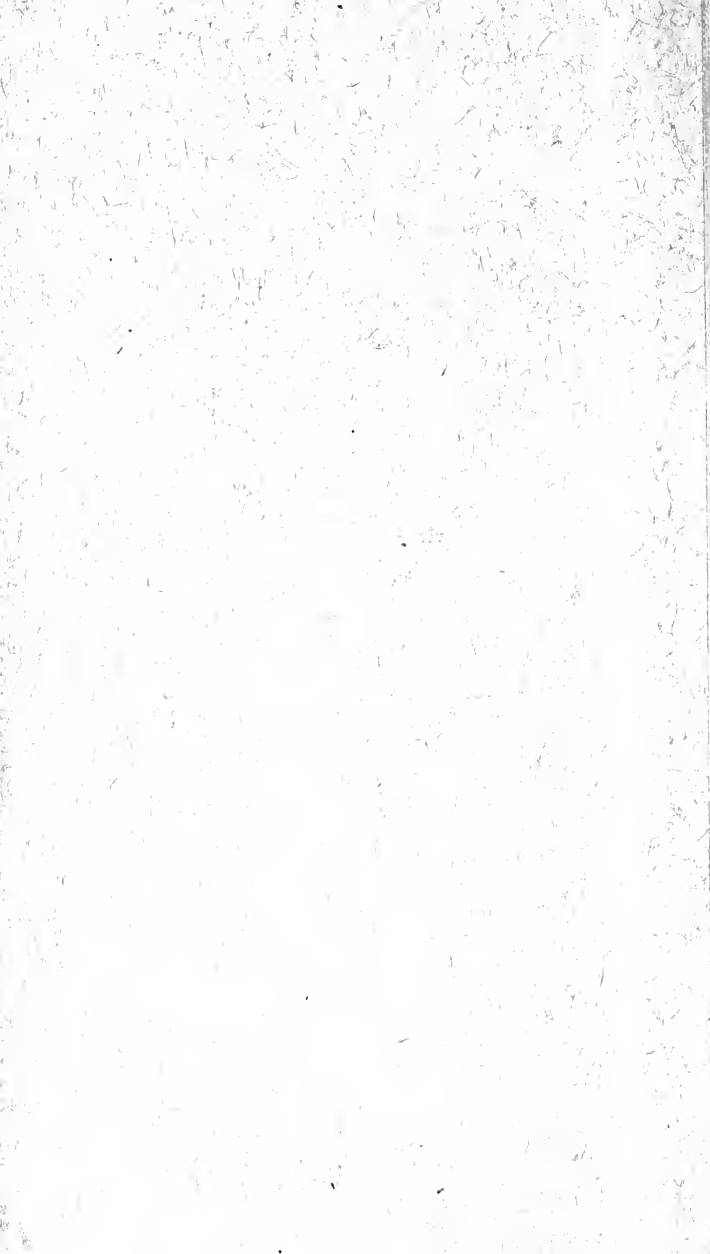


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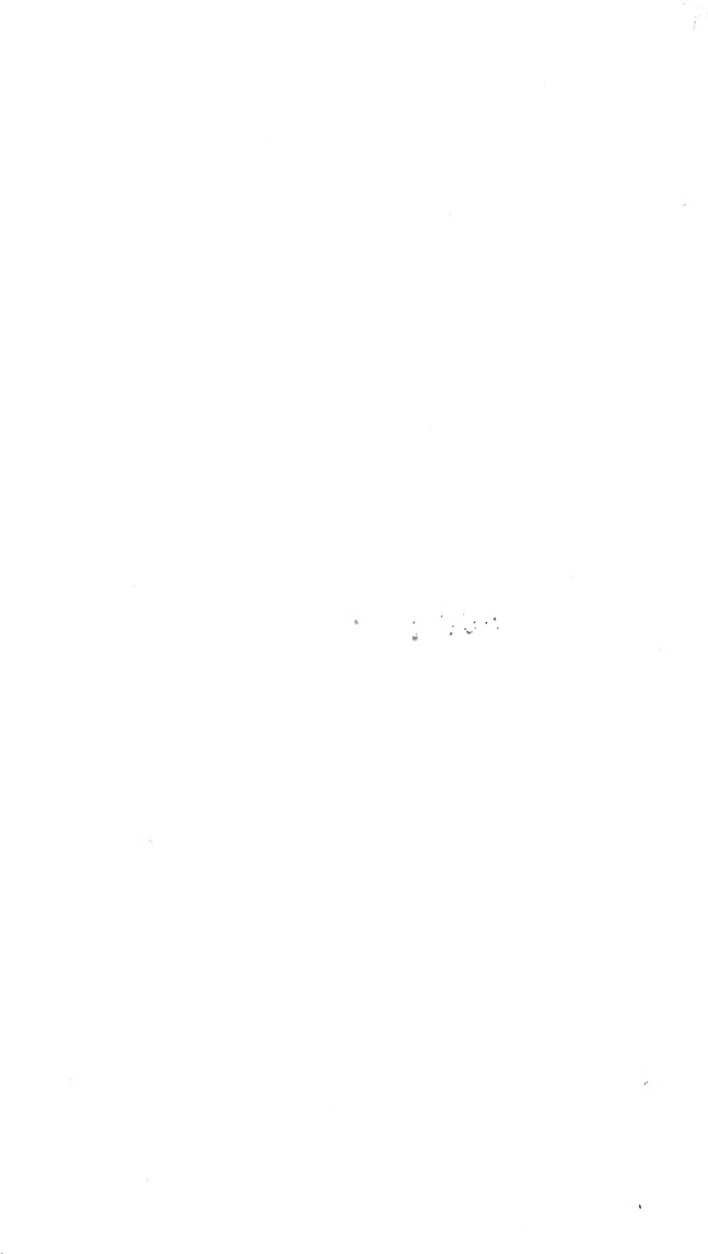
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THE
PORTRAITURE
OF A
CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

BY W. ROBERTS, ESQ.
LINCOLN'S INN.

Verum atque decens.

NEW-YORK:
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE strong expressions of approbation with which the “**Portraiture of a Christian Gentleman**” has been received both in England and in this country, have determined the subscribers, with the advice of some of their friends, to offer it to the American public. They do so, in the confidence that it will exert a strong influence in behalf of the great principles of practical religion, and afford instruction, in an interesting form, to many who might not so readily receive it from a different source.

In its original state, the work preserved a very close adherence to the peculiar circumstances of an *English* gentleman—more particularly in frequent references to the connexion of such an individual with the church establishment and civil polity of Great-Britain. Knowing the difficulty with which readers, especially careless readers, abstract remarks of general importance from such circumstantial allusions, and the hinderance to usefulness which they consequently present, the publishers have deemed it expedient to omit a few sentences.

and short passages of this description, and to curtail three entire sections, wholly relative to matters inapplicable to the citizen of the United States. They believe that this measure has deprived the work of little, if any, of its interest, and tends materially to increase its utility.

T. & J. SWORDS.

New-York, July, 1831.

TO
MRS. HANNAH MORE.

MY DEAR MADAM,

HAVING recently perused your important work on the Spirit of Prayer with some advantage, I hope, to my own principles and practice, it came into my head to consider, with more than ordinary attention, the actual state of the believing world, as to the conduct and method of this essential duty in Christian families. When one's thoughts are stirred into strong action on an interesting and favourite subject, they soon ripen into projects; and we often find a difficulty in restraining these projects within practicable limits. My first intentions were to write something for publication on the "practice of prayer," as a supplement to your valuable performance;

but those intentions soon expanded into various larger undertakings, till, at length, they settled down into a resolution to obtrude upon the public the sketch of a "Christian Gentleman," as he presents himself under the various aspects of duty and demeanour proper to the purest conception of that character. Whether I have or have not drawn and coloured the picture correctly, no one is more competent to judge than yourself. I have endeavoured to portray a man worthy of being introduced to the honour of your acquaintance, and have, therefore, kept as close as I could to your own views of spiritual and moral excellence.

So far as my humble purpose shall appear to have been usefully executed, I am sure it will have the advantage of your countenance and approbation, and I desire no success for it on any other grounds. If, by the favour of Almighty God, I shall be accepted as an instrument in his hands of conveying profitable counsel to some

of my countrymen, who contemplate the qualifications of a gentleman through the medium of perverted sentiment, and the prejudices which naturally and almost necessarily result from a prevalent system of false education—if I shall be successful in bringing over a few to better judgment, in a matter which so greatly concerns the well-being of society, I shall consider my slight performance as superabundantly rewarded.

I am, my dear Madam, with the highest sense of what I owe to you, as one of a community so benefited by your labours, and for long-continued personal kindness,

Your affectionate friend and servant,

W. R.

Clapham, Feb. 1829.

CONTENTS.

Section	Page
I.—Introduction	9
II.—Family Devotion.—Prayer	16
III.— Thanksgiving	29
IV.— Poetry and Music	33
V.— Preparation for Prayer	36
VI.—Unscriptural Religion	43
VII.—The Mechanic Philosophy	50
VIII.—Philanthropic Excesses	61
IX.—The Politics of the Christian Gentleman	65
X.—The Literature of the Christian Gentleman	73
XI.—Family Government of the Christian Gentleman	85
XII.—The exterior Intercourse of the Christian Gentleman	87
XIII.—Familiar Talk of the Christian Gentleman	91
XIV.—Worldly Dealings of the Christian Gentleman	99
XV.—Education of the Christian Gentleman	103
XVI.—The Scriptural Model of a Christian Gentleman	119
XVII.—The Sabbath of the Christian Gentleman	126
XVIII.—The same Subject, under the Christian Dispensation	135
XIX.—The National Consecration of the Sabbath	144
XX.—The Deportment of the Christian Gentleman in the Worship of God on the Lord's Day	148
XXI.—Postures appropriate to the several Parts of the Service	159
XXII.—The Duty of joining in the Psalmody	161
XXIII.—The Subject of the Christian Gentleman's Sabbath continued.—General Conclusion	166

THE
PORTRAITURE
OF A
CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

SECTION I.
INTRODUCTION.

THE physical state of the globe of our earth is not more diversified by climate, soil, and cultivation, than the aspect and temperature of religion is affected by the circumstances, habits, and prejudices of mankind. Truth is immutable, determinate, and single; error is fluctuating, variable, and multifold. Some truths are abstract, and stand in separation from man's infirmity; but others sustain the gross admixture of human passions, ignorances, and perversities; and of this latter class is religion, which, even in its Christian form, and founded on the oracles of God, has its perfect and unerring essence obscured in various degrees, and falsified in a thousand ways by its connexion with corrupt natures, and its passage through a medium of contagious defilement. To draw from this precious gift its real virtue and profit, the nearer

we get to its source the better. It is a most beneficial exercise to the faculties of man to pierce through the subtleties which his own presumptuous understanding and vain curiosity have interposed to the pure emanation of the word of Jehovah repositied in the sacred Scriptures. To escape out of the intricacies of human invention to the clear element in which truth resides, is the privilege of humble inquiry; and to promote and assist this inquiry, our religious literature abounds in valuable directories and expositions. With respect, also, to Christian practice generally, we are in no want of guides and counsellors. But how in these days of intellectual activity, when so much is busily wrong, partially right, and essentially good, and so many incongruous characters are crowded on the same stage, amidst so much stirring and strife of opinion, boldness of speculation, and contest for distinction, a pious individual is to comport himself in all his relations and transactions, so as to reconcile and unite in one vocation and system of behaviour the duties and habits proper to the Christian Gentleman, it is the object of this little manual to explain. It is not Christianity in ordinary life, but Christianity in a special relation and connexion, that will be the subject of its inquiry. Neglecting the plains

and valleys, it will confine its views to the garden border, where the lily on its graceful stalk exposes its petals to the sun, and to the hills, where the cedar throws around its lofty shade.

That the Christian loses nothing by being a gentleman, and that the gentleman gains greatly by being a Christian, may be gathered from the history of our own country. In various proportions, and in various degrees, the union has probably subsisted in the lives of many eminent persons who have flourished in remote periods; but time has cast into the shade the delicate traces of character in which this coalescence of the Christian with the gentleman is principally manifested. We catch eagerly at every anecdote which can bring us into familiarity with those distant characters, of whom every domestic record affects us with a sort of picturesque interest, and are delighted with any partial or petty occurrence in their biography which can help the fancy in its efforts to complete the model. But it is often the fate of researches into the characters of our ancient ancestry, to find that the nearer we approach the reality, the less we perceive of that union in which our fancies have indulged, of Christian graces with chivalrous breeding. As the light of the Reformation increased, the characters of

English story acquired greater distinctness, by exhibiting more of their domestic lineaments, and presenting themselves in scenes of greater moral interest and importance. The province of history at this period became graver and more careful to record the share of each personage in the changes produced in society. From the commencement of Elizabeth's reign, many considerable men came forward to view in vivacious relief; and it may do no harm to hold them out as objects of general praise and partial imitation: but with the Gospel before us, understood as it happily is by our church and all orthodox Christians, it would be impossible, apart from enthusiasm, to admit that the age of Elizabeth, or of her immediate successor, presents us with a model of a Christian gentleman, composed of the constituents which really belong to that character. Two men indeed there were of Elizabeth's court, Sir Philip Sidney and the Earl of Sussex, in whom Englishmen delight to trace the lineaments of this graceful conformity and happy combination. But in Sir Philip Sidney the ingredients were disproportionately mixed. The flavour of the gentleman predominated: he was a gentleman rather after the prescription of the world than after the Christian exemplar. Yet such was the beauty of his life,

and the heroism of his death, that, if the gentlemanly half of him was not sufficiently under the control of his other and better half, yet the grand total and sum of his perfections were such that the heart fondly declines to dwell upon the corrections and distinctions which the judgment suggests.

The Earl of Sussex was still nearer the fulfilment of the true requisites of the Christian gentleman. History records nothing of him that is not in agreement with that character: and such we might probably have pronounced him to have been had he stood nearer to our own times, so as to exhibit himself under a greater variety of aspects, and especially in one more natural and ordinary; but we see him only through the vaporous atmosphere of a court, and know him only in his great concerns. In all that we do see of him, the gentleman and Christian appear to have been combined; and upon the whole it may be said with some assurance, upon the strength both of what he did and what he did not in the midst of intrigue, detraction, adulation, and ambition, that English history has hardly proposed to imitation a better man.

Our frame of polity, which has been moulded with a singular suitableness to the nature, wants,

and passions of the beings to whose use it is devoted—the product not of convention or contrivance, but of causes beyond human forecast or control, and balanced like nature herself on a grand economy of compensations, interior springs of action, reciprocal checks, and silent securities—is indented with the marks and impressions of the virtuous and vigorous minds which in the various periods of its development have modified its character or accelerated its progress. After the reign of Elizabeth commenced what may be called the formative periods of our history; during which, by a succession of crises and struggles, our destiny has been matured. The order of things has been driven onwards by an irregular impulse and vacillating progression, actuated by vigorous intelligences and a manly aspiration towards moral and equitable freedom; nor can we wonder that a country proceeding in such a career of advancement, should have produced a succession of great and accomplished persons. But such times and circumstances were not the best for the production of that harmonious assemblage of qualities which must meet in the structure of the Christian gentleman. We shall borrow, therefore, but little illustration from examples; and the few that will be cited will

be taken from recent times. Historical examples are variously appreciated; and as it is the design of this little book to maintain a consistent and uniform tenor in its conception and exhibition of the character it delineates, it will be better to trust to the authority of Scripture and the suggestions of experience than to circumscribe the character within the bounds of any particular specimen.

We will forthwith, therefore, present the picture of the Christian gentleman as it has been traced in the thoughts of one who has frequently amused a pensive hour with this sober exercise of his fancy: sober, indeed, will the reader exclaim, when he finds it begin with a scene of family worship. But we see not where we can assume a more regular and rational commencement.

SECTION II.

PRAYER.

WE seem, at length, by God's peculiar blessing, to have arrived in this country at a period in its religious advancement, when family worship at the beginning and end of each day is quite of course among all professing Christians who have any right apprehension of what that name imports. Very few that entertain any serious prospects beyond the present world are now deterred by the silly dread of profane ridicule from instituting in their families the decent, daily recognition of man's dependence upon the Author of his being; and even among those with whom that feeling of dependence is never present with its becoming influence, the disposition to ridicule what is in itself so reasonable, and so manifestly belongs to the creed to which they nominally subscribe, grows gradually weaker as common sense advances with the progress of experience.

It is, however, too true that many masters and fathers, decorous in their lives, omit the practice of family prayer. Some seem to imagine that their decorous lives render unnecessary either

prayer or intercession. Some revolt at the humiliating posture and character of suppliants; some appear to be unconcerned at the inconsistencies they display before the Creator, so long as they stand before his criminal creatures acquitted of hypocrisy.

On the class of the self-satisfied, it is not within my purpose to employ many words. They have taken religion by the wrong handle, and have turned it upside down. They begin with pretension, instead of confession; with claim, instead of renunciation; with security, instead of alarm; and it is impossible, while the man continues thus estranged from himself, for any just notion to be felt by him of his relation to God. With such a person, it is necessary, as a preliminary to prayer, that the whole order of his religious ideas should be inverted, and a new basis of thought and reflection set up in his mind. Till the worshipper of God shall have attained to this right view of himself and of his doings, in comparison with the holy law of him whom he addresses, and of the fearful exigence of his perfect justice, he can have no proper subjects of prayer, which are all suggested by the abject state of the soul of man, apart from the hope of forgiveness through the Saviour.

With respect to that class whom a false shame

and an ill-directed fear deters from this essential duty, who may, doubtless, often be wrong, rather from the perversion of sentiment than from the corruption of principle, a hope may be cherished that in the progress of religious knowledge their understandings may come to adjust the case between man and his Maker with better discernment, and to settle their proportionate dues with more correctness of comparison. When sanity of sentiment is thus restored, and shame and glory settle upon their proper objects, order and arrangement will succeed to disturbance and confusion, and the lights and shadows will be distinctly and beautifully disposed throughout the moral picture.

Where prayer is a novel exercise, it may, perhaps, exhibit itself in a family with a certain degree of awkwardness. On our first essay to proceed in untried armour, our gait may be ungraceful and constrained; and a consciousness or apprehension of this will be apt to embarrass the beginner. This ineptitude may remain for some time after the false shame above alluded to has ceased to operate; but none can have passed the first month of initiation in this good work with his family, without experiencing an internal sense of security that invigorates his hopes and cheers his prospects; his house seems

more his castle; and an invisible guard encamps about his bed.

Prayer flourishes and grows in beauty like a flower in a state of domestic culture. It has a small beginning, but a bright consummation: it is cradled in the clod, but crowned in the sunbeam. To accomplish it well, we have often to begin it ill, that is, as we can, in the midst of retardments and avocations; if not holily, yet humbly; if not with the unction of divine grace, at least with a full feeling of human depravity: if not with assurance of success, at least with the conviction of need; finding the strongest motive to prayer in the weakness of our efforts to pray. Prayer thrives with repetition. All can try; all can ask; all can kneel; and most idle and dangerous it is to trust to anticipating grace, or to wait in expectation of gratuitous mercy, without putting forth such natural strength as we possess, in confessing inability and imploring succour. The holy will, the sanctified wish, the steady purpose, are of the free bounty of God to impart; but to do the act of prayer with humble endeavour; to do it with exemplary frequency; to avow a sinner's concern for his soul, and to supplicate forgiveness, are simple doings within the competency of miserable flesh; duties which humanity is a debtor to perform,

and from which beginnings we may mount on the promises of Scripture to that high and "holy hill," where our Maker will shed the dew of his blessings on all sincere suppliants.

In the exhibition of domestic worship the Christian head of a family has a charge of great importance, and a task which calls for discretion. His primary object should be, as I reason from personal experience, to keep his own mind in an honest state, really occupied with that in which he professes to be engaged. In the style of our prayers, public and private, our language is usually suited to the urgency and solemnity of their objects; but often, while the lips are importunate, the heart is cold and unconscious; while the organs are busy, the thoughts are rambling over the fields of illusory hope and turbid anxiety. To keep the thoughts at home, and the sympathies alert; to sustain in the little circle assembled around him, an attention to the thing they are doing and the Majesty they are addressing, is the difficult task of the domestic officiator. Prayer should, on these considerations, have the precedence in the day's arrangements. The sacred duty should open freshly with the dawn, and drink in the dewy ray of the morning; it should meet the orient sun when he comes as a bridegroom out of his chamber,

to refresh all things (and why not man's heart?) with new life and motion. Every day opens a scene of cares which surcharge and secularize the soul; so that, if the daily duties or pleasures, or even the first meal is begun before prayer, God takes only a share with the idols of the world in the mixed service of the heart.

The great effort of the Christian master of a family should be, to bring his little congregation together with minds so far vacant from business and other disturbing influences, as to be the proper recipients of scriptural impressions, and sufficiently disencumbered for spiritual exercise.

To preface prayer with a chapter of the Bible, or a psalm, judiciously selected, is much to be recommended, as the mind is thereby settled into a frame suited to the office which is to follow, of addressing the Divine Majesty through the Saviour; which is, of course, a duty to be performed on the knees; but which, for its vital quality, must depend, in no small measure, upon the devout carriage of him who, as the priest of the family, impresses his own character upon the performance.

As to the time to be allotted to the service, reason and prudence demand that it should be restricted within the compass imposed by the necessary and daily avocations of the members

of the family, and prescribed, in part, perhaps, by the infirmities of our frail bodies, which render it difficult, even for the devout, to support, without lassitude, a state of tension and abstraction beyond a moderate time. The expense of mind is considerable in earnest prayer; and far better does it seem to give to our Maker an undivided homage for a short period, than to extend our orisons till the weariness of the flesh raises up a rival in the very weakness of our mortal nature.

While we are upon the exhibition of family prayer, we may be allowed to lay a stress upon minute particulars, as acquiring value from the supreme worth of the object, and conferring beauty and impressiveness upon a solemnity, the benefit of which depends so much upon the attitude of the soul in performing it, and the manner of its procedure. Family prayer should be preceded and succeeded by some moments of silence. It should have a character of distinction and separation; it should dissolve the continuity of earthly interests and engagements, and elevate the thoughts into a higher element. That confluence so apt to take place between the interests of the different worlds should be avoided as much as may be: let prayer then have its proper and exclusive course—its own

deep bed and gentle current, bearing on its bosom the commerce of mind with eternity, and carrying refreshment to those whose souls are "athirst for God."

The utterance of prayer is also a matter of great practical importance. It is not the less a rational, because it is a spiritual act: neither inflated nor familiar; neither rapid nor creeping; neither vapouring nor hallucinating; neither declamatory nor dull, it should indicate the predicament of a being in abject need before the throne of Omnipotent Goodness; of a being, however, who comes accredited by invitation, assured by promise, and having a privilege of access purchased for him by blood—the blood of incarnate Deity.

The prayers of our church service are in general admirably adapted to the wants of the soul and body; and there are few of them that may not by slight additions, omissions, and alterations, be rendered sufficiently pointed and appropriate to suit the temporary and accidental circumstances of every family. They have, besides, the advantage of being familiar to the hearers, and consequently of being easily followed and participated by those in attendance. But a prayer selected from a spiritual collection is sometimes more profitably impressive, not

only from its infrequency and freshness, but from a certain character of affinity which it holds with present feelings and things. They give a sort of spiritual poignancy to what might otherwise lose somewhat of its awakening influence by repetition; they open, as it were, fresh avenues of persuasion, captivate by a gentle surprise, and besiege the heart with a new and effectual artillery.

But among the unauthorized forms of family prayer, it will be prudent in the main to trust only to those which adhere to the phraseology of Scripture. Modern refinement is disposed to cast disreputation on the use of biblical terms and phrases, either in prayer or religious conversation; and it is possible, no doubt, too profusely to adopt and too familiarly to apply the language of Scripture; it is possible to merge intelligence in technicality, and to give to religious intercourse the mystery of a craft; but so long as we are clear of excess and abuse, consecrated expressions are safest. To the import of these phrases the most unlettered student of the Bible has attained, and it must be the earnest wish of the devout leader of the family worship to be understood and followed by the humblest and simplest of his domestic auditory.

With respect to the attendance on this great

family transaction, I doubt not that every good householder and amiable Christian must desire to make the circle as wide as convenience and opportunity will permit; for prayer is that transaction in which all have an equal concern. Nothing is so social, because nothing is of such common interest: it is the right of all, but it is the *privilege* of the poor. The servants, therefore, within the house should be expected, and the servants out of the house, whether their service be occasional or constant, should be invited to attend. It is not a complete congregation without them. When accompanied by them, we are united in a common bond of spiritual equality, courtesy, and charity, without the smallest disturbance of the principle of subordination by which society is organized and sustained.

Blessed equality! Not that contentious sort to which the murmurs of the envious, or the arts of the ambitious are directed; not the colourless confusion of natural disparities or politic distinctions, but an equality grounded on the feeling of our measureless distance from the centre of all true greatness; on the experience and recognition of our common nature and need of support; on our comparative nothingness and conscious depravity; on our partner-

ship in the promises of the Gospel; our joint inheritance of pardoning grace, our identity of interest in the death of the Redeemer, our equal dependence on the power of the Intercessor.

Blessed courtesy! Not that ambiguous and calculating sort which purchases homage by condescension, and barter smiles for applause, but such as a Christian gentleman acknowledges to be due to those who minister to his comforts, and are the essential parts of his family, whose situation consigns them to an atmosphere of dense ignorance, where intelligence is merged in prejudice, as light is lost in vapour, and the low details of animal existence leave little leisure from busy vacancy for profitable thinking.

Blessed charity! Not that promiscuous and indolent sort which blends the deserving and undeserving in its degrees of universal amnesty, or which perpetuates suffering by injudicious bounty, scattering rather than distributing; but that right and rational principle which considers spiritual comfort and Christian communion as the heritage and birth-right of man in every station; which delights in the fellowship of prayer, in the extension of Gospel privileges, in the increase of petitioners before the throne of mercy, and in peopling and crowding the great scene and area of grace, mercy, and thanks-

giving. COURTESY and CHARITY thus scripturally understood, resting on an EQUALITY thus spiritually acknowledged, harmonize all diversities of estate in the same act of self-abasement. The master, kneeling before his servant, is on the same floor with him as a sinner; the servant, kneeling with his master, is on the same eminence with him as a Christian.

There are those who laugh at all this, as there are those in lunatic hospitals who laugh at their own wretchedness; but the life of those prayerless buffoons so soon passes from madness to sadness, from farce to tragedy, that their ridicule is only an appeal to the compassion of the real Christian. Unawed by such weak enemies, and without inquiring who laughs or who approves, he prays, and still prays at the accustomed seasons with his family. Whatever may be the dispositions or doubts of his household or his visitors; though some may lounge, and some refuse to listen, he will summon all within his gates to the family altar as a matter of course. Whether they will hear or forbear, ridicule or respect, his practice varies not. Nothing interrupts him; through good and evil report his righteous resolution flows on continuously and tranquilly. Like the stream from the sanctuary in the vision of the prophet, it increases in depth

and abundance till it issues in the great and wide receptacle of living waters, leaving behind it whatever drift or defilement may have floated on its surface.

In a good man's house prayer is the product of every event of the family out of the ordinary course. A journey accomplished; a danger escaped; a birth, a death, a marriage; every infliction, every blessing, every providence, every visitation, every instance in the family history in which God has made known his power by ministering to man's helplessness, or the wayward heart has been recovered by his grace; all these vicissitudes are subjects of commemoration and prayer in the house of one who faithfully follows up his baptismal dedication in a consistent course of practical loyalty and devoted service. The posterns of such a house have the sprinkling of the sacrifice, which denotes its privileges, and preserves it from surrounding contagion. In such a house, the secret is found out of combining seriousness with cheerfulness, service with freedom, duty with delight. Happy home! where prayers are victorious over tears, and trust is too strong for despair; where God is a daily guest, and his angels a nightly guard.

SECTION III.

THANKSGIVING.

PRAYER, in its general sense, includes "thanksgiving." A feeling of thankfulness is always present to the mind of a genuine Christian. Thankfulness, as a commutative sentiment between man and man, is occasional, brief, and fugitive; but between man and his God it implies the state and character of the mind. So sweet and so happy is this frame, that to pray to be thankful is a most reasonable act of the Christian worshipper. To pray for a thanksgiving heart is to pray for a great distinction and precious privilege: for it is, indeed, "a joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful." It is to be in a constant jubilee in those deep retreats of the bosom where the soul sits in sequestered communion with God. This happy privilege must come, however, in its order; it must succeed to various precursory attainments. It is not of the genuine sort as it displays itself upon the surface of conversation, making a part of the expletives of religion. Some men have a pleasant way of adverting to providential mercies that may be serviceable in seasoning their remarks; while by the light and airy manner in which the

topic is touched, the imputation of over-righteousness is tastefully avoided. Spiritual thankfulness is a pervasive principle, refreshed from the fountains of feeling, and living in constant efflorescence and verdure. It joins the general song of nature; and like that, is perpetual; rejoicing with "the little hills," and with the "firmament declaring his handy-work."

It is pleasant to associate with persons thus uniformly thankful to God. There is peace, sweet peace in their borders: peace within, and peace all around. No one can witness it without wishing for it. How then is it to be attained? By imitation, by adoption, by assuming its language and tones? Certainly not by any such compendious methods. It is among the fruits of the Spirit, and belongs to the renewed and sanctified heart: it is to be arrived at by a process and by steps. To estimate the mercies of Jehovah, and to feel all our grounds of thankfulness, we must begin with duly "regarding the power of his wrath." Our lost estate, our utter helplessness, our natural destitution, the exigence of God's most holy law, the perfection and symmetry of his immutable justice, the worm that dieth never, and the fire that for ever burns, must all come in vision to the prostrate soul, before it can know how properly to appreciate

what has been done for its deliverance. When every particle of fancied desert is eradicated, and our forfeiture and danger stand fully revealed to view, then comes the greatness of the rescue with home appeal to our bosoms. All nature then teems with benefits. God's hand is every where seen: his munificence is every where felt. When the value of his gifts is thus measured by our indeseerts, the very breath that he has given returns in vital homage. Our demerits thus acknowledged and felt, supply a sort of grammar to the language of our petitions and thanksgivings. They afford the elements, without which we cannot express our gratitude suitably or our wants effectually.

It may seem strange to the ears of some to talk of the language of thanksgiving as of a language to be learned; but it is in truth a language which none speak correctly or fluently but those who have felt the deep conviction of their own sinful estate. It is observable that one who feels this conviction, and one who feels it not, express their thanks in very different dialects. There is even a way of giving thanks, by which the absence of gratitude may be plainly, I had almost said emphatically, indicated. Let the mode in which those whose gratitude is only skin deep say grace, as it is termed, before or

after meals, be attended to, and the pertinency of this observation may be understood by example. The lowest favour in the scale of beneficence which man receives at the hand of his fellow, is acknowledged by thanks more feelingly expressed than those which are given to God for the daily sustenance by which we are continued in existence, and of which he is the author and dispenser. The reluctant rising, the stifled utterance, the despatchful haste, the frigid levity, the heartless indifference, the alacrity in sinking back into the half-relinquished seat, the anxiety to avoid the suspicion of being in earnest, are all sure to characterize this ceremony when performed by the mere man of the world, ecclesiastic or laic. The bounties of the Great Giver are to him *δωρεα αδωρεα*, giftless gifts, and his returns are thankless thanks. Let the Christian gentleman well consider that Jehovah is insulted by unmeaning compliment; that his titles are not words of course; and that to mention him, much more to address him, without real homage, is constructively to blaspheme.

SECTION IV.

POETRY AND MUSIC.

THAT poetry and music may properly be adopted into family worship as the vehicles of praise and thanksgiving cannot be doubted, when the influence of these arts on the affections and sentiments is considered. The hymning voices of children, gathered about their parents on these solemn occasions, are beautiful appendages to prayer. Our sacred literature is opulent in devotional poetry; and the application of it to the expression of pious gratitude has the warrant of high and holy example. The Bible is replete with poetry and song. The plan of redemption, in all its depth, breadth, and altitude; the Man of Sorrows, the King of Glory, stricken, pierced, exalted; the Bridegroom of the Church; the Warrior of salvation; the Conqueror of the last enemy; appear in their genuine colours and characters in the poetry of inspiration.

Wherever genius and piety join their force to raise our imagination and affections above earthly things, the verse, though uninspired, has the models of inspiration to guide and consecrate its efforts. If holy things appear with less

grandeur through this secondary medium, it presents them to us under new and familiar aspects, and with a certain freshness and variety of adaptation. Its very inferiority touches us with a milder influence, and generates closer and more soothing sympathies of want, dependence, expectation, and trust. But sacred songs are sacred things, nor is every muse to be trusted on this hallowed ground.

Cowper and Watts, and Newton and Heber, and others of that class, may be trusted. They are the classics in this walk of literature: they became religious poets by first becoming religious men. Their productions are, therefore, without affectation; piety was their proper element; a holy tact, a vital heat, a conscious principle, a central feeling, gave the first impulse to their exertions, and a character of legitimacy to the results. But where writers essay to try their skill on this topic for the sake only of its poetical resources, leaving for a season their amatory themes, and all the trickery of their worn-out pathos, their specious but spurious performances should never find their way into the family of the religious parent, under whatever title they announce themselves, of hymns, or serious melodies, or sacred songs. From Eastern scenes of degrading pleasure, from ex-

aggerated descriptions of painted bliss, from fascinating lies and medicated debauchery, the poet cannot, at least he gracefully cannot, on the sudden, turn himself towards Sion. With the feverish dreams of carnal riot still cleaving to his fancy, he cannot join harmoniously with the holy and humble of heart, in hallelujahs to Him who "is exalted above the heavens, and whose glory is above the clouds."

With respect to music and poetry as aids to piety, the Christian mind will readily acknowledge and appreciate their influence; but consistency and proper feeling condemn the intermixture, which is sometimes permitted in decorous families, of profane with sacred melodies. By such a combination the heart is not merely neutralized, but mis-directed and perverted; religion is lowered, sense is exalted; a compromise takes place, in which passion exults in the mimicry of devotion. The stability of right sentiment is shaken by such quick transitions and contrary emotions; the affections neither settle upon earth nor rise towards heaven: but while the Creator and his creatures are thus mixed in equal homage, the realities of life are falsified, and the quality of spiritual things debased.

SECTION V.

PREPARATION FOR PRAYER.

AFTER all, it is impossible that the practice of devotion can be in a right train in any family, when it is not secured and regulated by sound instruction. "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing." The right apprehension of our predicament under the Gospel, is the ground of all real devotion and unctious prayer. That we are delinquents before God; that divine justice is perfect, and therefore incapable of falling short of its accomplishment; that it must have satisfaction; that to give scope to his mercy, without impairing his justice, was an achievement only within the compass of his own wisdom; that to reconcile these attributes in their application to man, it seemed good to the supreme Arbiter of all things to make the stupendous sacrifice recorded in the Gospel: these are the views of our humanity in its relation to God, which bring us to the knowledge of the only medium by which prayer can ascend to

the throne of mercy. Deep and penitent conviction of sin, faith and hope in the great sacrifice, and consequent love and obedience, make up the sum and substance of the Christian's state and profession: they are the stamina of vital prayer.

Prayer delights in a cordial intimacy with divine truth; it ventures beyond that ceremonial barrier, where so many rest in an unholy self-satisfaction. It is but half alive in the cold sojourn about the precincts of Christianity; it is only within its comfortable interior that it is in vigour and vivacity. From its evidences, its formalities, and its moralities, prayer, importunate prayer presses on to the inner circle of grace and mercy, of pardon and sanctification. What the man of prayer wants, is to come so near the seraphic centre as to catch the cheering glimpse of God's infinite plan of reconciliation, its mysterious operation, its mighty work of love, its singularity of contrivance, its specific holiness. These are the characteristics of divine truth, which the man of prayer must incorporate in his petitions, or he does not pray to Christianity's God. If he prays not through the great Propitiator and Intercessor, he prays to an unknown god, to the phantom of a vain imagination, or to the spectre of a terrified conscience. Never,

for a moment, can the Christian, with safety, depart in his devotional exercises from the great lines of Gospel divinity. The holy exigence of the divine law, the desolation of a criminal world, the prevailing virtue of a vicarious atonement, in opening a new access to God, these teach us how to pray; the riches of divine mercy, the renewing power of divine grace, the privileges of the divine communion, and the promises of the divine covenant, these teach us for what to pray; but these are not to the taste of an unspiritual nature: the intellect refuses the yoke of these disparaging thoughts, proud morality prefers a *claim* to what is freely proffered to conscious indeseert. Man, the relick of a ruined world; man, under sentence from the decree of infallible justice, claims to judge himself and others by his own variable and vicious standard. With the collar and decorations which belong to the fraternity of the good, so called upon earth, he challenges an equal distinction in heaven. He strengthens himself in a corporate resistance of opinion to the humbling decrees of Omnipotence. Our unhappy propensity to weigh our own actions without regard to the balance of the sanctuary, extends itself through every grade of social life; its rank luxuriance casts an unholy shade between man and his

Maker, deeper indeed and darker as moral character descends, but more or less hiding from some of the best and wisest, the pure irradiations of divine goodness.

The great end and aim of the pious father should be, to set up the standard of religion in his family, for each to measure thereby the worth of his own attainments. I say of the father, not only because the mother is rarely opposed to such a scheme, but because it is the peculiar work of the father to settle the principle of family government. All rule is at an end, where the individuals of a family are admitted to justify themselves by a comparison with others. From such a licence, nothing but confusion can result—a fatal and lying security. The treacherous privilege speaks peace, where there can be no peace, and reconciles man to his ruin: the very outcasts can build upon it a title to reward. It sets up a scale of value where no value is, and fabricates the forms and images of goodness out of the quarry of our corrupted nature.

Where men thus take into their own hands the adjustment of their claims to pardon or reward, prayer is inappropriate and out of place. The first business, therefore, of him who wishes to have a praying family around him, should

be to destroy this error at its root; and, if possible, by directing the views of his children and domestics to the perfection of the divine law, to convince them of their lost estate, and their incapacity of self-restoration.

This conviction places the soul between grace and despair. It turns it to the one only practicable method of reconciliation; darkness may intervene, but the shadows gradually retire, to make way for a scene in which every thing lies disposed in a new order; a moral constitution, in which the decrees of this lower judicature appear reversed. All that has so long intercepted the divine glory—the shrines and monuments of earthly homage and consecrated delusion are swept away, and in their place, the “holy mountain where God has made himself an everlasting name,” “the treasures of darkness,” and “a day for the ransomed,” all burst upon the view.

This right estimation of ourselves is at the bottom of all religious discipline and saving knowledge. We cannot love God until we know what he has done for us, and we cannot know what he has done for us until we know what we are, and what we have forfeited. It is thus that faith lays the foundation of love. When we see the Deity only in his power and

holiness, and clothed in majesty and honour, the terrors of his righteous anger overwhelm us, and fear casteth out love—the fear of the Judge and Castigator. But when we see the door of heaven opened, and the stupendous miracle of his mercy administering to his justice by a sacrifice as costly as even that justice could exact, and ponder that act of unutterable tenderness by which our ransom has been effected, love finds its argument in our nature, in so far at least as gratitude is a part of our nature. By this process, and to this extent, we may proceed somewhat in the work of spiritual improvement, and render ourselves, so to speak, more genial recipients of divine grace. But the love that casteth out fear, that re-acts upon our faith, and gives us peace in believing, is the proper conquest of prayer, and the gift only of the Holy Ghost.

But it is of main importance to know and to feel, that the faith which is evidenced by love is not a single act, or a principle that stays at a point; it retrogrades when it does not advance; it must be sustained as our worldly friendships are sustained, by keeping the benefits and kindnesses which first created it alive in the memory and the heart, by frequent recurrences of thought and meditation.

Man is never safe out of the bounds of express Scripture. There is a spurious religion which assumes these titles of love, and of which we should say to the Christian householder, Give it no hospitality, nor let it domicile with thee a day. It smiles and flatters to betray. Reject its fabulous and facile deity, nor trust his gratuitous pity and unpurchased pardon. It proposes to us a will-worship of sentiment, pathos, and emotion, without seal or authority, or statute or ordinance. It settles the balance of divine justice and mercy, by abridging each of its perfection. "But thou continuest holy, O thou Worship of Israel;" while thy creatures pretend to lower the requisitions of thy law to their own standard of goodness, and to contract to their own proportions the measureless dimensions of thy godhead.

SECTION VI.

UNSCRIPTURAL RELIGION.

THESE framers of their own religion will not receive Christianity as a system of positive enunciation—as the statute law of God. They must have a religion made in consultation with the moral dictates of right reason; or if given us by God only, still by God borrowing the suggestions of human counsel. I should say to the spirits of these inquiring times, Come manfully to this contest with Scripture: prove it false; but do not, in place of its positive declarations, affect to build upon it a structure “daubed with untempered mortar,” and which can have no foundation but the corrupt suggestions of a wandering fancy and a misguided will. What does the philosophy of these times give us in the place of the letter of scriptural religion? Observe it in the German school, unfolding itself in all its vagueness and vanity. Instead of the grace of God and his teaching Spirit, it proposes to us, in the words of one of their liveliest interpreters, the “*poesie de Pame*;” an internal life, which the privileged only live; an inner apartment in the bosom,

“sanctos recessus mentis,” where the spirits enjoy a constant feast, and dance to a music of their own.

The religion of revelation tells us that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; but the theology of this school talks to us of the religion of the heart—of this same heart so low in scriptural repute. In the place to which revelation points as the seat of corruption, philosophy has enshrined her oracles.

Admire as we will these soldiers of the parade, the plume, and the fluttering field-day, they belong not to the militant church, nor are to be classed among those violent ones that take heaven by storm. We cannot trust their pioneers for the route to that place where the Supreme sits intrenched in his holiness; where the flaming sword of his justice turns every way but one—the one only way of access. Let not the Christian householder join in the march of this philosophy. The Christianity which it proposes is a Christianity without Christ. It is an unsanctified system of maxims, seemingly of a very social aspect, but in truth nothing but the phantasy of inflated feeling; a creed of impressions, requiring its votaries to believe mysteries without meaning and without authority. Let him be aware of those German apostles,

and this ideal world of abstractions. Let him turn from the metaphysics, the ethics, and the poetry of these independent theologians, to follow the Saviour's footsteps into the press of mortal misery, through scenes of actual conflict and the realities of faith working by love. They may be challenged to show in our nature those deep-seated principles to which we are referred—that inborn purity, or that silent suffrage of the heart in unison with the voice of heaven. It is in the power of education to educe religion from our nature, just as much as it is in the power of philosophy to bring the sunbeams out of cucumbers.

The maxims of these metaphysical moralists are in nothing more defective than in that for which they take to themselves the greatest credit—systematic reasoning. They picture to themselves an interior nature in the constitution of things that prompts and determines the soul to what is virtuous and pure, while yet the vanity and misery of human life are the favourite themes of their declamation. According to them, it is to the perverse dispositions of artificial society, and the want of a right education, that the frequent interruptions, or rather the general disappointment of these natural tendencies towards moral perfection is to be attributed. According

to them, the work of man's perfectibility is in his own hands: he has the materials and means within himself of his own spiritual exaltation; whether it be destiny or divinity, or what else they say not; but a seminal something inherent in our nature, waiting only to be developed by human cultivation.

In some of the expositions of Pestalozzi's system of education, amidst much good, is found much of the quackery and cabalism of these German ethics. It is one of the vehicles for the nostrums of that empyrical shop, whose opiates make our heads swim with the dignity of human nature. In what recess of the mind the new philosophy has found the "*vie interieure*," the "*sens interieur*," and the comfortable truth "*que l'homme est bon par nature*," he only can tell who is able to follow these sage explorers of our moral constitution in their development of these "*primitive dispositions*." They have sunk their shafts too low for ordinary intellect to venture: they are to be distrusted as much as the other mining speculations of the day. Unable, even with the help of these gentlemen, to settle whether "*on fait le bien par instinct ou par besoin*," we turn to the humbling doctrines of the faith of our ancestors, and make the best of our way out of the circuit

of an enthusiastic morality, within which every sciolist may take his seat and deliver his lectures. Turning a deaf ear to this authoritative announcement of the dignity of our nature, this vocation to the proper use of our constitutional resources and native capacities, let us repair to that Gospel which, while it places before us our own pravity and perversity, gives us a "commandment which is exceeding broad," and offers "a lantern to our feet and a light to our paths."

It is to be lamented that Madame de Stael has afforded the aid of her powerful and prevailing talents towards exalting an unmeaning enthusiasm into the place of religion; an enthusiasm which, however pure in its elements, terminates by a natural proclivity of the heart in sentimental profligacy. The consequence of this enthusiasm has, of late years, much increased throughout the moral and intellectual world. Whence this principle, so specious and so false, may have derived its birth it would be tedious to inquire; but we may affirm that in Germany it has been most active and influencing. It has grown with the literature of that country, which has been remarkably adapted to give it operation and expansion;—that people had advanced far in their intellectual career, before they could be

said to possess a literature of their own. A strong determination of the intellect towards philosophy, and particularly the abstract and metaphysical, was always a distinguishing feature of their character. An infant literature is very impressible; and when poetry and polite learning began in Germany to be the objects of home cultivation, they were mixed with the refinements of a philosophy which had become mistress of the mind of this ardent people. A wilderness of anomalous thoughts and roving fancies caught and fixed in wonder the first glances of their infant poesy. And the most impassioned species of composition, the drama, soon reflected the taste of the nation in scenes of moral extravagance, mystical invention, undisciplined impulses, and all the intricacies and excesses of sentimental sensuality.

Thus Germany, if not the source, has been the great patron and promulgator of an order of ideas, loosened and at large from the control of testimony and authority, and only to be called an order or class, as meeting, under all their varieties, in the one common and fatal folly of looking within ourselves, and into the constitution of things, for the principles of our belief and practice. Sentiment, detached from its proper basis, has become a servile minister of the pas-

sions, giving a deceptive interest to the mischievous aberrations of the heart and the propensities of mere animal nature. Nothing better than this unhallowed product can come of an education, of which real scriptural religion does not constitute the prevailing ingredient ; no system of education can prosper which leaves out that which is the great and proper business of man. A principle of culture is proposed to us which has no reference to the end for which we were born : its maxims and dogmas are flux and evanescent, like the particles, whatever they are, which carry abroad the virus of disease. Down from the lofty, but unsound reveries of Madame de Stael, through all the deepening grades of German story, domestic or dramatic, to the pestilent pen of that unhappy lord, whose genius has thrown lasting reproach upon the literature of his country ; through every disguise and every modification, the lurking disease betrays itself, amidst paint and perfumes, by the invincible scent of its native quarry.

SECTION VII.

THE MECHANIC PHILOSOPHY.

So much for the religion of the heart, and the metaphysics of sentiment, of which the principal doctors are of the German school, from which our Christian householder should be warned to insulate his family. But it is the fate of religion to be placed in the midst of dangers. She is only safe in her own element—humility; out of this peaceful harbour she becomes the sport of winds. She is in danger on the side of abstraction; she is in danger on the side of induction. At the present time, and in our own country, she is in some danger from the progress of the physical sciences, and a strong determination towards inquiries, experimental and material. The ideal philosophy, it is true, is well exchanged for a more substantial and experimental course of inquiry; but scepticism may germinate upon either of these stocks. Contraries are seldom good correctives of each other; they are apt to coalesce in a common extravagance: they may be “reconciled in ruin.” We have reason to be afraid of a mechanical philosophy pushed to excess, as it now seems to be by some of our

leading men of the present time; and as it assuredly was by most of the leading men of the revolutionary times, which have hardly gone by in a neighbouring country. The French physiologists have exported to this country their fashions of thinking and disputing. An exclusive contemplation of physical causes, an over-reliance on experimental deduction, a depreciation of moral evidence, an abusive extension of Lord Bacon's principles, a study of nature that leaves out nature's God, appears to characterize too strongly the course of study to which the general mind is at present industriously directed and impelled. The "march of intellect" is a stunning phrase, that hardly permits the voice of pious foreboding to be heard. A study and instruction which terminate in extending our acquaintance with the capacities and properties of matter, and find their principal inducement and reward in the increase of corporeal gratification, or which, at least, are entirely terrestrial and temporary in their objects, do not only not lead to the consummation devoutly to be wished by every true patriot and lover of the soul, but afford a very dubious pledge and promise of real intellectual advancement among the mass of our population. If the value of mental attainments is to be estimated with reference to their proper

end and purpose, the knowledge of Scripture divinity, and of the duties which flow from that knowledge, are surely to be preferred to a proficiency in sciences, which only propose to lay nature more widely under contribution to sense and appetite. By which observations it is far from being intended to treat with disrespect inquiries into nature's operations, but to insist upon the danger of giving them an engrossing influence, to the exclusion of better things. Take two persons of ordinary average capacity from the humbler path of life; put the one under the exclusive process of instruction in physical philosophy, according to the improved modern method of accelerating knowledge among what are called the operative classes; and let the other be taught from the Bible to judge of himself, in his relations to God and his fellows; let him be taught duly to feel the worth of his soul, the extent of his accountability, his natural corruption, and the true spiritual grounds of his hope and trust; and let this be all he learns, or, at least, his great and engrossing study, and it will be soon manifested which of these two persons, by the enlargement of his understanding and the general invigoration of his reasoning powers, reflects the greater credit on the means taken to improve him—in a word, which turns out the

more sensible man, in the general and popular view of that character.

The subject is not an agreeable one. It is painful to stand in opposition to any scheme ostensibly formed for the promotion of general intelligence; but still, in delineating the characteristics of any of the great operations now in action for the improvement of our fellow-beings, it is difficult to avoid dwelling a little longer upon certain tendencies, which naturally arise out of arrangements as captivating in their sound as they are comprehensive in their consequences. As in the natural body, particular determinations, strong impulses, and a partial distribution of organic action, are the occasions of disease; so in the social system certain morbid phenomena indicate the presence of disturbing influences, and a disproportionate direction of its energies. Society seems to shake either with fever or fear, while the whole faculty are assembled about her in clamorous consultation, with their formidable apparatus of laxatives, alteratives, and restoratives, so as to render it altogether doubtful whether she is to die of disease or the curative process. Where matter is held up as the great object and end of inquiry, and sense and experiment arrogate an ascendancy so prevailing as to throw into disrepute all other tests of truth, or

guides to knowledge, sober men rationally take alarm. They cannot, perhaps, distinctly designate, or decisively demonstrate, the danger which they apprehend ; but they feel an inquietude in the contemplation of the new aspect of popular instruction, akin to that which the expression of certain countenances usually excites. Something, too, there is in particular physiognomies which alarm only by their similitude to those which have been observed to belong to certain authors of mischief and misery ; and these are often safer documents to go upon than inferences grounded on more legitimate reasoning.

From the general tone of conversation and style of expression on this subject, it does not appear as if the heart were the soil in which the seeds of these new products were to be sown, or that truth, as it has been revealed to us, were to have its ascendancy acknowledged in this catholic scheme of refinement. And yet, without this ascendancy fully acknowledged, it may be doubted whether all the teaching in the world will do any thing but stuff the minds of the labouring classes with the beggarly refuse of atheistical philosophy and revolutionary politics, warp them out of their proper places, propagate conceit and discontent, inflame the presumptuousness of pride, and arm the powers of male-

volence. There is a blessed condition annexed by divine promise to holy teaching, and to holy teaching only,—“all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

The expedients now in operation, or in preparation, may be variously viewed. To some they afford a subject of calculation, in what ratio the brain may be made productive, under a given stimulus; others are satisfied with a vague impression, that any impulse given to the human mind must necessarily propel it in a course of advancement: and that it is only to create a talking, reading, and disputing population, to secure the progress of the cause of truth. Some look with complacency upon a state of mental fermentation, as involving the elements of political change, the seeds of a new produce of ideas, and the generation of a new strength in the country; while others anticipate moral perplexity and mischief from this plebeian philosophy, deeming it safer that those who subsist by manual labour should take at least their spiritual learning from authorized instructors, than that they should be left to rove at large in a region overspread with contagious error.

Whatever ground there may be for any of

these apprehensions or expectations of positive evil or good, from the character and tendency of any of our new institutions, the Christian philanthropist can prognosticate success from no plan of public instruction which cannot claim God for its patron. To him it will seem to be a sound principle, that man must be dealt with, not merely as a religious being, but as belonging to a peculiar dispensation, from which must flow all his maxims of moral truth: that the purposes of universal education can never be accomplished without a specific and perpetual reference to the one, supreme, authentic model: that as the best learning for the rich, is that which best qualifies them to be guides to the poor; so for the poor, that which soonest carries them to the sources of comfort and contentment, duty and peace; which asks for few intermissions of labour, but makes its pauses refreshing and improving; in short, that the wisdom for the multitude is not the wisdom of the porch or the academy, but that which "uttereth her voice in the streets," and opens her school to every variety of condition, without interruption, without disturbance, without excess; that the only proper impelling power for giving motion and effect to all the new machinery of public instruction must be, if any good is to

come from it, the genuine purpose of educating the soul for another state, and widening the foundations of human hope.

The crude materials of an inapplicable knowledge lie in the mind only to ferment, perhaps to mount in noxious exhalation, or perhaps to vegetate in poisonous luxuriance.

That these consequences may not reward the spurious philanthropy of the times in which we live, is the earnest hope of the writer of these pages; but the only certain way of obviating such consequences, is to promote a direct instruction in scriptural and vital knowledge among those who are to live by the labour of their hands, in opposition to that unholy dogma which dictates a general and secular education as a preparative to the introduction of Christian doctrines. With the poorer classes, the Gospel is the end and means of instruction. Practical religion is the alpha and omega of their proper discipline; it is the most rapid way of generating an intellectual character among them: if it prompt to other inquiries and attainments, as it will often do, the great point is at the same time secured, of bringing those attainments into subserviency to a godly conscience: it keeps the heart whole, the affections chaste, and the practice steady; it may not excite genius, but it exercises wisdom;

and if it do not multiply the possibilities of eventual excellence, it secures the realities of actual good.

It is among God's plain appointments, that popular ignorance is not to be dispelled by a secular, or even a philosophical education. By throwing in certain ingredients, which general education may furnish, it may be made to boil and bubble, to fume and roar—but it will be ignorance still, in a more turbid and noxious state. None of that knowledge which lays the foundation of good neighbourhood, kind habits, political contentedness, and moral obedience, will be the result; while numbers will be added to the dupes of inflammatory falsehoods, and the victims of a debauching press. No good can come of any discipline for the common people, but that which may open their eyes to their awful predicament as accountable creatures.

But to come a little more to points. Has not the prevailing disposition towards physical inquiries produced an inordinate and contumacious spirit of research, under the pretext of an unlimited love of truth? Has it not, in some degree, perplexed the great landmarks by which the provinces of mathematical and moral evidence are authentically divided? Has it not tended to make man himself too unreservedly a subject of

experiment? Has it not led many to regard their species as an object of natural history, an aggregation of functions, and mind as the mere result of structure and organization?

These intimations are thrown out by way of general caution against the dangerous inroads of science on that sacred ground, into which modern philosophy is beginning to introduce the "dry bones of her diagrams, and the smoke of her furnaces."

Let the Christian householder be warned to trench around some of his indigenious convictions; and to let it be one among the number, that "man was formed out of the dust of the ground;" that his Maker "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," and that thus "he became a living soul."

If God is a thinking Being, what necessary dependence can intelligence have upon organized matter or animal substance?

There are other notions hovering about this focus of philosophical intensity, which are hardly of dignity enough to be dangerous. Folly ferments in the neighbourhood of mischief, as flies swarm in the atmosphere of infection. Little more, perhaps, is necessary to protect the mind from the fever of phrenology, than to keep its chambers clean and ventilated.

But if this will not do, it may be worth a greater exertion to keep this mockery of science out of the family. Young minds and low capacities are captivated by easy methods of acquiring distinction. To conjure is shorter than to calculate; to decide than to inquire. Life is brief and study wearisome; many feel the greater practicability of being overwise than wise, and that it is more easy to run before the judicious than to rank with them; to go where they dare not follow, than to submit to their guidance.

SECTION VIII.

PHILANTHROPIC EXCESSES.

IN tracing the proper path of the Christian gentleman, the subjects last alluded to have incidentally crossed our way. It requires a cautious tread to be safe in these times. Many misleading lights glimmer on the right hand and on the left, to betray us into swamps and quagmires. The atmosphere of religion itself is full of vapours and false fires. However strong and steady its proper light, many meteors gather round it and disturb its influence. In the midst of much activity, much moral ebullition, a singleness and integrity of purpose may be wanting. The mass and momentum of the public mind may be parcelled out till its force is frittered away. Societies, schemes, and institutions, committees and sub-committees, may teem and swarm upon the floor of the religious world; charities may jostle and cross each other; there may be the dust, and smoke, and din of philanthropy; school may rival school, and teachers canvass for scholars; there may be the bazaar and the ball; much female commotion and fair impertinence; the daughters of Zion, in all their bravery of attire,

sitting at their stands and stalls, and forgetting to blush in their pious work of traffic and exposure : but still the crowning end and proper design of all this stir and agitation may be lost sight of, or scarcely mentioned, or faintly avowed. Talk of the soul's concern and God's glory ; of making the Saviour known ; of sending through a world of sin the healing proclamation of the Gospel ; of giving to the poor the learning that belongs to them by the charter of their spiritual destination, and you may find that you have touched upon a theme to which all this loquacious activity has little distinct reference : a theme it is that comprises all that is valuable and sound in any religious or charitable undertaking ; but it leaves out the picturesque and captivating part, and administers nothing to a mere negotiating and intermeddling egotism.

To distinguish the specious and the sparkling from the solid and useful, is an exercise of discrimination of great importance to the Christian gentleman in his family. Home is, after all, his nearest concern, and should be the main concern of her on whom the dignity of home depends. A vagrant charity but ill compensates for a deserted hearth, a distracted economy, and a loose domestic government. The moral landscape is imperfect without a good foreground : it is that

which gives value to the distant scenery. Home is the nucleus of national morality. Popular meetings, and the bustle of management, are apt to usurp upon those duties which, if defectively performed, leave society in want of that primary nourishment which is not to be superseded by artificial substitutes. The mother should be the moon of her little world, and recruit her horn from the source of genuine illumination: her light, so borrowed and so dispensed, is soft, serene, and holy; and her influence flows out from a centre of interior loveliness, till it fills the circle with which she is surrounded. But while all are for educating all, specific culture may lie neglected; and the simple, tender task of maternal management is ill exchanged for the ambulatory and ambitious range of distant objects.

It is true, that sometimes the outer verge of that rampart which separates the provinces of moral duty has been trod by the gentler sex with a singularity of usefulness: but in general the Christian mother carries in her bosom the sense of an accumulating arrear, which increases with every step in the path that leads her from her home and its warm precincts. The Christian gentleman's family should be a concentrated family, always acting in combination, and with a steady union of purpose in the work of practical

piety; it then acts upon society with a collective force, which gives it an influence hard to be resisted. But if its integrality be broken into parts, however separately sound, yet not harmoniously composed, its movements are vacillating, and its effects feeble and fugitive. A Christian gentleman should be the Coryphæus of his household; to whose example all about him should respond in happy religious concord. This is the perfection of domestic felicity.

SECTION IX.

THE POLITICS OF THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

WE hear, occasionally, of a distinction between public and private character, grounded on no real difference. It may be, that some may use the term in a looser sense than others; but to affirm that Christian principle can be modified by circumstances, can be active in one situation and quiescent in another, is to forget the nobility of its origin. The Christian gentleman's character is independent of place or time. In every part of his course he maintains his parallelism. The security and comfort which the simplicity of his moral plan conveys to his bosom, are as remarkable as the dignity and grace which it lends to his example. There may be occasions produced by public life too strong and prevailing for the virtue that has approved itself within the circle of private intercourse; but then the entire man is depressed by every such instance to a lower grade in the scale of moral dignity; the sum of his value is reduced; and no solecism could be more dangerous to Christian ethics than to treat such failures as terminating in themselves, or as in-

volving character no farther than the sphere of action in which they have occurred.

In political life, it is among the baser characteristics of party feeling that it begins with vitiating the moral relish of what is great or laudable, just or true, in itself, as far, at least, as the vortex of servile associations and predilections extends, and ends with sapping the solid foundations of justice, and enervating the springs of virtuous utility. The school of party may form the public man, in the vulgar view of that character, who takes up the profession of politics, not as a field of duty or usefulness, but as the road to eminence, profit, or power; but the man of honour—and such in the highest sense of that phrase must any Christian gentleman be—can form no attachments but on the basis of legitimate esteem; nor can suffer the interests of a nation to be confounded with the fortunes of a particular body. Where the tongue is suborned to advocate what the conscience condemns, and the mind receives the first elements of politics in conjunction with the ambitious views of faction, the jurisdiction of private judgment is merged in a cowardly compromise; the franchise of intellectual freedom is bartered for a mean, shifting, and gaudy servitude. If there may be good in political confederacies,

their value must depend upon the necessity out of which they spring, and the spirit by which they are animated. Let the edifice of factious power exult in its proper supports, but let the Christian patriot stand alone, or, at least, let nothing associate him with party, but virtuous ends to be accomplished by social means. In party so influenced and so limited, there may be security against individual presumption and temerity. Where men are to act together for the common good, the foundation of their permanence must be laid in the acknowledgment of those verities of which none can deny the obligation. There is nothing which can hold men together long, but that which stands with their relation to God.

There may be public conjunctures which may justify systematic opposition; and there may be a prevalence of public virtue sufficient to control the fiercest contentions of party, and bend them into subservience to the great interests of the state; but these are rare and special predicaments. The ordinary tendency of party spirit is to confound the distinctions of virtue and vice, under names and designations determined by the ill-concocted friendships and hostilities of the hour; to warp the mind out of an honest position, and to degrade it to that last

condition of mischievous meanness, the hypocritical use of the idiom of patriotism, to cover a canting ambition and selfish assaults on power.

The Christian gentleman carries his high bearing and courageous consistency into every vocation and connexion. Bright honour attends his course, and preserves his very treadings unsoiled by the slough of party: he brings into great office or grave debate the high-mindedness which belongs to conscious elevation; while, in the intercourse of social life, that gentleness so mild and manly—that tenderness which so charms and warms, loses nothing of its character or colouring. Congruous habits are the results and tests of permanent principle; and what we should say is the great mark of the Christian gentleman, is a certain harmony of deportment, which shows him the same under all varieties of action and relation: he holds in abhorrence the hypocritical abuse of the language of virtue in the mouths of party men, by which Virtue herself becomes suspected, and ceases at length to be felt or understood: he considers a factious, indiscriminate opposition as a mean and dishonest confederacy; and while he admits the benefit of a wholesome parliamentary jealousy, he cannot treat his country as a secondary object; he cannot falsify measures, inflame discontent,

foster delusion, echo groundless complaints, propose the removal of inevitable burdens, promise remedies for imaginary wrongs, hold up magistracies to contempt; he cannot practise any arts of cajolment, to cheat the multitude; or borrow their physical strength, to endanger the edifice of public happiness and moral freedom; he cannot agree that falsehood or exaggeration in the mouth of an election orator lose their inherent baseness. Truth is with him of universal obligation, and will suffer no pause or suspension; and with him there is a sort of reverence due to surrounding ignorance, which calls upon the chastity of virtue for something more than its ordinary forbearance: he thinks with Phocion, that the shouts of the multitude imply that something wrong must have escaped his lips; and, with that noble heathen, he abhors tyranny, whether it be the tyranny of abused authority, the tyranny of usurpation, or the tyranny of tumultuous force: his love of his country is the love of its mind, at least as much as of its conquests or its exterior glory: he therefore views his own example in all the extension of its consequences; his politics are among the guards of his private conduct; and his private worth is the surety and pledge of his public honour.

The lives, and principles, and speeches of political men, more perhaps than any other examples, display the influence of genuine Christianity in forming and finishing what is great and excellent in character. The statesman or senator cannot be truly great in separation from Christian piety.

In the progress of our national polity, a reciprocity of action has moulded our institutions. Led on by an invisible hand and an occult dispensation, through a course of crises and emergencies above man's contrivance, and beyond his forethought, the constitution of England has progressively awakened and unfolded the faculties of her sons; and in return, the character of our ancestors has stamped upon every great occurrence which has operated in the formation of our liberties, its vivacious impression. It was Christianity in an imperfect form, which raised the tone of our early habits and character above the average mind of contemporary periods. A serious courage, a manly heart, a consecrated allegiance, were the distinguishing qualities of those patriots, whose worth, under severe assays, came out from the furnace pure and resplendent. A chivalrous attachment to the prince; generous and religious, and therefore consistent with the largest love of legitimate freedom; a high spirited

sentiment of duty, grounded on a certain sanctity of principle, as deeply carved as the quarterings on the field of his escutcheon, were wont in our early days to be the characteristics of the nobleman and gentleman of England.

This character, indeed, was not strictly Christian, but it displayed the power of Christian principles, which, even by their secondary operation, modified ferocity into courage, licentiousness into freedom, sense into sensibility, appetite into love. Cradled in the forest, the British character grew, under the rough discipline of stormy conjunctures, to a singular hardihood of moral texture, and Christianity completed its stature, and filled out its proportions. This was the source of the magnanimous self-devotion which displayed itself so often in war and in council; and not seldom in the dungeon and on the scaffold. It was seen in that peculiar gravity and composure which distinguished the dying moments of some of our great progenitors, whose decorous deaths have sealed our chartered rights, and purchased the inheritance of our liberties.

Travelling through the land with the scales of justice in her hands, Christianity, imperfect as it was, familiarized to the people the maxims of equity and equality, and maintained in the

public mind an elasticity against the pressure of unjust rule, ready to profit by every opportunity of expansion. Her action was constant, while that of oppression was irregular and vacillating; and such was the virtue of the constitution under her ascendancy, that as intelligence proceeded, and enlarged its boundary, the polity of England kept on a par with this progression. Struggles and conflicting tendencies were natural and unavoidable; superstition and tyranny fought for their lives, and in military language, sold their lives dear. They had their victims on the scaffold and at the stake; innocence and loyalty were immolated, but the perfume of the sacrifice diffused a fragrance through the land; and the stream of those pure libations quickened every seed of patriotism, with which the soil of England had been early sown, into vigorous vegetation and life.

SECTION X.

THE LITERATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

THE Christian gentleman is by supposition a man of letters. Liberal learning is a constituent of his character. Indolence and sensuality are twin sisters. If our baser nature assumes the command, the understanding puts on its livery; and it accords with all practical observation, that knowledge and superstition are in an inverse proportion. It is because truth challenges inquiry, that Christianity is the religion of research, the assertor of intellectual freedom, and the partner of philosophy in its highest acquisitions.

It says to the inquirer after truth, examine my pretensions; investigate my muniments and my documents; trace my course from my first commencement; apply to me every fair test of moral evidence; try me by the soundest canons of critical learning; ask what history records of that paradoxical power, by which passions, prejudices, and propensities have been overruled, and nature bent into subserviency to an invisible vocation, and a glory beyond the grave; and tell me whether you do not find me to possess

incentives to stimulate the finest capacities of man's intelligence and genius.

These are the invitations and challenges of Christianity ; and it is among its properties and peculiarities that it equally addresses itself to all degrees of intelligence : it descends into the vales of ignorance, and crowns the summits of knowledge ; it ministers to man wherever it finds him, in his elevations and in his depressions ; it is milk to the suckling, and meat to the wise ; it is confirmation to the strong, and a staff to the feeble : where learning is not, it supplies the vacancy ; where it is, it secures its advantages : by the divine efficacy of its perfect principles, it carries society forward, consolidates the powers of the intellect, and makes its accumulations at once permanent and productive.

Thus the Christian gentleman graduates fast in the best school of learning. The more he knows of his Saviour and the Bible, the more correct and chastised is his general knowledge ; the more the exercise of his faculties is secured from disturbance, and the more amenable he becomes to the discipline of truth and the delights of genuine taste.

Learned society and literary habits are often the friends of presumptuous error, and act a plausible but treacherous part in their influence

on principles. But the Christian gentleman is in no danger from these distracting tendencies; his security lies no less in the subordination of his faculties than in his right estimate of things without. Where the values of objects are computed in their relation to eternity, and the interests of the soul stand in their due priority, there is neither contradiction nor vacillation in the movements within, and the powers of the intellect are sustained in an equable progression. There is a silliness characteristic of the wisest in their generation where the religious mind is wanting; an interest in trifles, a mean standard of worth, and a littleness of pursuit. Sound religion, by engaging the whole mind on the side of truth, adjusts these discordances; there is in it a rectifying influence, that puts all the capacities on a right poise and position for effective operations.

There is in evangelical religion an expansive principle, that seems to spread out the soul and enlarge its border. Learning in the service of religion is essentially liberal. What charter is so complete as that which opens to the capacities a celestial range—a range commensurate with man in the most extended relations of his being? Unsanctified science loses itself in a labyrinth of second causes, fritters down knowledge into

vain disputations, and involves itself in the folds of circular reasoning; but the learning of the devout Christian always looks to an end and a consummation. He sees God expressed in all his works; and where mystery stops his progress, he turns to the great magazine of original power; the solitary source to which all mysteries are traceable, wherein the solution of all problems resides, and all conflicting realities are at peace.

It is further the privilege of the Christian mind, that all its learning issues in self-knowledge; in that knowledge which lights the way to the inmost area of the bosom, where the spirit of truth carries on its controversy with our inherent unfaithfulness, and the victory of prayer is achieved. As the Christian advances in this intellectual progress, he grows in inward and outward grace, and his deportment attests the alliance of interior peace with exterior composure: all is harmony, proportion, and order; the composition of the man is complete, according to the measure of his capacities.

Life is replete with examples of the dilating influence of religion on the powers of the understanding. The experience of every observing man attests this interesting truth. The pious mind perceives in it the traces of a holy

dispensation ; and that in this, as in every other providential appointment, “Wisdom is justified of all her children.” It is in fact the only effectual ripener of the understanding : other stimulants may produce precocity or exuberance ; but that which bestows the mellow softening of mature grace, which unfolds the principle of vital growth, which makes progress proficiency, acquisition gain, and knowledge wisdom, is religion—sound, saving, authentic religion, the religion of Christianity, as it stands evangelically recorded.

Is an instance required of the simultaneous course which religion holds with the progress and development of intelligence ? look at the career of that sage and sober servant of Christ, the late Reverend Thomas Scott ; think of him struggling with the prejudices and depravities of nature and education ; an heroic assertor of the purest liberty of research, with no auxiliary but truth, marching from conquest to conquest, and pushing forwards, by honest effort, the bounds of his acquisitions, till the whole field was won. What but the “force of truth” could have led him from the sheep-fold, where “he was following his father’s ewes,” to the sources of divine intelligence ? and what but the learning he there found could have led him,

on in a course so remote from all his habits—habits arrived at their full strength—to those profound attainments which have given him a place among the luminaries of his age and nation? We see in him a specimen of biblical culture, and of the force of sacred truth in drawing out the best part of man into its amplest and fairest proportions: a product of pure religious growth, a creature of Christianity, made for its glory; a solitary, protesting, honest man, taking his stand on God's word, and proclaiming his convictions with fearless integrity. No founder of an ancient school, no institutor of a modern sect, no reformer, no discoverer, has at any time put forth more independent thinking, or assumed a freer range of inquiry; but in the exercise of his privileges, his first resort was to that teaching which had a just right to his first attention, and it rewarded him by an improvement that might seem miraculous to those who have not been observant of the league subsisting between reason and religion.

If from this venerable sage of the Gospel, whose life has illustrated the force of religion in abbreviating study, and rescuing the understanding from the perversions of habitual error, we turn to the early maturity of Henry Kirke White, we see on the other hand the power of

religion in endowing the tenderness of youth with the vigour of ripe age, and anticipating the teaching of experience. It may be admitted that his natural capacity made him a quick recipient of the truth; but his great felicity was his bent towards religious exercises and objects; and the early introduction of religious knowledge into his mind repaid him by such an infusion of intellectual vigour, that at an age when others scarcely begin to learn, he was invested by his attainments with the privileges of a teacher. And so it will ever be, that whenever pure evangelical religion finds an entrance into the mind, however dark or uninstructed that mind may previously have been, an expansion of its general powers is the speedy consequence; the judgment is preternaturally ripened, a better taste and feeling respecting all social duties and moral proprieties are rapidly developed, and the faculties and perceptions, whether called forth on men, or books, or things, receive from an unseen source an increment of vital strength, that soon appears in all their operations. It is an invigoration of the capacity, not unlike the refreshment which nature feels from the silent and invisible drops which in the still summer night moisten and impregnate her

teeming surface, enabling her to greet the dawn with a countless increase of vegetable births.

It were easy enough to find contrasts to the above specimens in the history of our country's literature; proofs of the injury done to the best intellects by the neglect of religious culture; instances of the abortive births of genius under the deteriorating influence of profane and profligate sentiments. Turn to that great orator and wit of his day. The few years which have elapsed since his departure have sufficed for the recovery of a cool consideration of his intellectual powers, and of the real value and merit of his performances. Observe how short his genius came of fulfilling its proper ends and answering its great capabilities, and compute how much was lost to the energies and qualities of that extraordinary mind from the absence of sound religious principles, with their correcting, elevating, and systematizing influence. Nature had furnished him with all the elements of greatness, and fitted him to be the ornament and blessing of these eventful times; but the absence of every thing restraining and regulating in the first formation of his habits, left him at large, the creature of accidental impressions—the pupil of his own passions, and vanities, and

wants. Some wild flowers grew upon this moral wilderness, which threw around them a faint evanescent glory, and seem in some degree to decorate his grave; but they only served while he lived to cover the path of his errors, and to promote the fascinations of a ruinous example. For want of the harmonizing effects of a religious ground, his moral eloquence was unnatural, imposing, inflated, and false; full of tawdry antitheses and tricking artifice, mimicking principles to which his heart was a stranger, and glittering in the pageantry of borrowed feelings. His most celebrated attempts at moral elevation exhibit only the intimations of meanings which played about his fancy, without touching his bosom; and amidst the misdirected resources of his genius, his fine intellect prematurely fell into decay, leaving only the monuments of a grand capacity in ruins. Had he possessed those right and persevering dispositions which are the results of religious principles, instead of a few mischievous efforts to make virtue ridiculous and vice attractive, his genius would have multiplied our means of extending the boundaries of real knowledge, and our securities against hollow and presumptuous systems of empirical instruction. As it was, Mr. Sheridan could never attain in his lifetime to dignity,

opulence, or trust, or raise to himself a monument among his country's benefactors. The sincere portion of his existence was miserably vain and sensual; and never, perhaps, did the entire man sink so altogether, and at once, into the shade and frost of penury and neglect.

Is another instance required? Look at that void and dreary space, so recently filled by the greatest genius of these latter times: see the print of his unholy tread, where every noxious plant still grows in rank luxuriance. Of what was he not capable, if religion had guided his efforts and inspired his song? Who can estimate the amount of damage done by him to mind and its treasures? the waste committed upon the fairest domains of imagination by his abuse of his great capacities? In him the clearest moral perceptions, the control of all that belongs to the bright ideal world of poetic invention and combination, a magnificent store of language, pathos, and sentiment, were all dissipated, intercepted, degraded, and spoiled by a heartless principle of impiety and an atheistical buffoonery of manner. That the infidel puts a cheat upon his own understanding and starves his genius by refusing the bread of life, is no where better exemplified than in the poems of the writer here alluded to. Whatever idol claims

the honour of the sacrifice, a more costly homage was never offered at any shrine of prostitute worship. That intelligence which stood upon a level with the most glittering elevations of human character, surrendered itself to the trammels of a vicious vulgarity.

Good sense and good taste sicken at the repetition of apologies for sin in the disguise of sentiment—sensuality without relief wearies even the sensual. It may be reasonably doubted whether moral pollution, by whatever power of song it may be celebrated, can confer immortality, or even rescue poetry from the putrefying neglect by which the muse is revenged upon those who abuse her gifts. The perversion of natural feeling, the perpetual stench of the sty of Epicurus; infidel banter for ever withering the fairest forms of virtue and holiness; beauty and bravery, in the constant uniform of lust and cruelty, are surfeiting things, even to the lowdest ear, when novelty has ceased to recommend them. In a few more years, men, women, and children will grow tired of a mannerist in versifying, who, in contempt of his own capabilities, has been pleased to luxuriate in a slovenly laxity of composition, and a reprobate rhyming facility, adopted as a suitable vehicle for jests upon the marriage tie, and the profane treatment of truths

unutterably solemn; for exhibiting lust as a harmless recreation, and the world as a wilderness intended only for the wide and predatory range of the passions.

SECTION XI.

FAMILY GOVERNMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN
GENTLEMAN.

THE Christian gentleman is in his best estate and properest attitude as a family man: his dealing with his children, with his domestics, and with his tradespeople, manifests the operation of that central principle which radiates in every direction. But the sure sign and note of Christianity is a humbled heart; not the mere disposition of humility, which may be allied to meanness and servility, but that product of Christian grace which comports with true dignity of character. The order of society, and every relation comprehended under it, discipline and degrees, homage and honour, control and respect, all the correlative duties of life, are in perfect correspondence with spiritual humility; they belong to the same harmonious system. Christian temper must not be confounded with temperament. It is known from that which belongs to fibre and contexture, by its moral sway and the constancy of its action. By humility the Christian is made involuntarily great: his moderation is power: his

gentleness is force: his empire is that of complacency, consistency, and love.

To treat humility as the source of authority, may have the air of paradox; but it is a fact remarkably evidenced in the government of a Christian family. If the Christian father must ground his jurisdiction on the Gospel, and decide parlour controversies by an appeal to that standard, his personal veneration for it must be first attested by a profound and practical submission to its ordinances. The humility of the parent, when exhibited as a Christian grace, is a constraining pattern, the tendency of which is to keep up a perpetual recognition of the engagements of our religious profession, to establish a family compact of reciprocal forbearance, and to purify the whole atmosphere of home by the fire of the altar; his talk, his walk, all his communication will combine to enunciate his Christian character. Before his children he will move with a special awe of the consequences of each word and act. It will be his great care

Ut sanctam filius omni
Aspiciat sine labe domum, vitioque carentem

SECTION XII.

THE EXTERIOR INTERCOURSE OF THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

THERE is a distinct society among men which we designate by the name of “the Religious World;” and to this community the Christian gentleman does necessarily belong. But within this line of circumscription there are many classes and grades of Christians, more or less imbued with the proper evangelical spirit. To impute insincerity to any within this circle would be inconsistent with candour or Christian charity. It may be allowable, however, to remark, that there is in some men a tendency to shut up religion within their own arbitrary enclosure; to surround it with technicalities and interdicts which do not belong to it; to make it speak a language of peculiar and private dictation, and to hold in virtual excommunication a very large portion of sound and serious Christians. None without the shibboleth can enter the sacred barriers; and with it, men of little understanding and narrow sentiment are easily admitted. To be spiritually separated from the world is the sacrifice required by Christianity from its true pro-

fessors; but it is from the world that lieth in wickedness, from the god of this world that blindeth the mind, from the rulers of the darkness of this world, from the lust of the eye and the pride of life, that we are to be separated; not from those who in manners and opinions differ by some shades from ourselves, or who, though equally anxious for the soul's safety and for the extension of Gospel truths, are less often than themselves at religious meetings, having families, perhaps, to provide for or instruct, or being, perhaps, less conversant with a certain phraseology by which these exceptional persons measure the progress of Christian attainments.

The Christian gentleman would, probably, be soonest found on the outside of this exclusive and mystic circle; his charities and affections delight in a clear horizon and extensive ken; in the substances of things rather than their circumstances; in the genuine expression of feeling and the rectitude of the heart, rather than in the trammels of an unvaried phraseology and an exclusive medium of religious communication: he loves wisdom, and virtue, and goodness, and beneficence, wherever he finds them, and all "the impresses of God on the spirits of brave men;" he sees also that the Father of Heaven sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust; and,

imitating the pattern of this great Mercy, he embraces all men within the scope of his charity, and carries his Christian regards to all that aim at pleasing God by obedience to the Son of his love and the Word of his power. This is that friendship which has been christened charity by the Gospel, and this is that charity which is friendship to all the world. It is a friendship and charity which separate those who possess them from all commerce with impiety, but give the widest influence to Christian counsel and holy practice. In the religion of the Christian gentleman there is something frank, natural, and simple,—shall we say manly? not so, certainly, in the sense of that word as it comes from the mouth of a worldly person, but as it indicates the cordial and resolute adoption and profession of the truth, abstracted from party feelings, corporate distinction, or silent self-adulation. Neither is it meant, by animadverting on the language in which the religion of a peculiar class is apt to express itself, to narrow the free and frequent exercise of pious conversation, or to reduce the space it occupies in religious companies. If this is a life of preparation for another which is to last for ever; if our Almighty Father has reconciled us to himself by a way of stupendous grace and mercy; if he has scat-

tered his beneficence over the whole face of his creation, it is but a consequence of natural gratitude to pass much of our time in talking of his power, his glory, and his goodness; but there is nothing in all this to justify a principle of sequestration or exclusion, or to warrant the pretensions of a privileged order.

The Christian gentleman, though of no religious corps, has generally the fate of being assigned over by each class to some other. However fervent in spirit, his professions range within the limits of a strict moderation: his views are singly directed to the glory of God and the good of man; he carries his religion, or rather the spirit of his religion, into all his intercourse and converse with society; but he carries no banner or motto before him, his creed is written in his practice, and blazoned in his victories over pride, passion, and temper.

SECTION XIII.

FAMILIAR TALK OF THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

THE table-talk of the Christian gentleman is that part of his conduct in which he particularly declares himself. It is in the competency only of considerable minds to season social intercourse with wit, or to enrich it with the tributary products of ready wisdom: but there is a complacent turn of thought and morality characteristic of the well-educated and well-furnished Christian, which, with little advantage from experience, conciliates and fixes attention. It can hardly happen, but by a very cross combination of circumstances, that a father can fail of being the centre of attraction to his family, where religion joins its voice to that of nature to enforce his claims. To guide domestic conversation, and to give to it its proper tone; to make it profitable and irreproachable, the multiplier of thoughts, the medium of a spiritual commerce, a mutual provocation to virtuous resolves and manly purposes, is the province which the Christian father must fill in his family, or he does not reach the level of his station.

There are other besides his children to whom the domestic and familiar talk of a Christian belongs. His servants have a property in it: they have a claim upon it in virtue of their ignorance. An awful accountability waits upon the accents of a parent in the midst of children and domestics, whenever he approaches what belongs to their peace, touches the consecrated lines which distinguish truth from error, right from wrong, reason from prejudice, or affects in whatever degree the principles by which we live to God, to ourselves, and to society.

There is a garniture with which Christian morality decorates common discourse, for which no other gifts or graces can be adequately substituted. A natural dignity, a composure of manner, a quiet eye, a complacent regard, are among the exterior advantages which it confers: they denote its specific presence, its peaceful domicile in the bosom. When the passions and principles are not under its control, the countenance betrays an inward riot. Something unrectified, tumultuous, alarmed, suspicious, or fierce—something that carries the mark of Cain, that tells of inborn corruption, that discovers the alienated mind—gathers about the brow of a godless person, speaks in his gestures, and breaks through the disguise of artificial breeding.

Thus it is that a real Christian heart is fundamental to that graceful composition of the social man, emphatically called the gentleman. The religious gentleman is such in his countenance; he carries in his forehead his credentials from above, and the seal of his designation and calling. He comes with a sort of diplomacy into the world, bearing the badge and collar of his great Master, whose willing agents are not only in his holy service, but in his holier similitude.

In a peculiar sense, the Christian gentleman must be absent from the world: not, indeed, from the intercourse of business with the world; such an abstraction may not be consistent with his duties and engagements; neither does it comport with his general character and necessary relations to withhold himself from the commerce of good offices and cheerful hospitality: but he must separate himself by a decided line from the loose practices and careless demeanour of worldly men. He who sets God always before him, cannot "sit among the ungodly," without a depression of spirit. The communication with the godless he cannot altogether avoid: he cannot avoid the contact, but he may avoid the intermixture. As he has his delights, with which they cannot intermeddle, so does the nature of their pleasures exclude his participation. There

is, however, a neutral ground on which they may stand together; common interests, by which they may be temporarily associated; reciprocities, which hold them in occasional correspondence; but the Christian gentleman looks below him on the crowd of pleasure's votaries. While "he meditates in the fields, at eventide," or converses with God in his chamber, or sits in his watch-tower, to "muse upon his works," he sees through dust and smoke the plain beneath him, the "dwellings of Mesech," and the "tents of Kedar," or perhaps the turrets of the distant city,

"Where the noise
Of riot ascends above her loftiest towers,
And injury and outrage."

The Christian gentleman is not required to declare war against what he must disapprove; his object must be simple separation, and that will be effected for him, without trouble on his part. He has only to declare for God, and the sentence of outlawry will follow: his imputed leprosy will send him from the camp to his own world of pure and rational delights.

After all, however, let Christian piety be fairly judged, as to its real effects on social happiness. Has it no merry moods? The way to do it justice will be to bring under a fair comparison

with each other its renunciations and its acquisitions. This is to settle on an accurate footing its secular account with man. In adjusting this balance, it is too true that the Bible must be delivered over to the unevangelized mind, or the worldly professor of Christianity, as a field of witty allusion, sportive contrast, and ludicrous comparison: that which was written by inspiration, and intended for instruction, for reproof, and for exhortation, he forces into the service of folly and impiety. His humour is emancipated; against the interdicts of Heaven, he avails himself of the toleration of man and the sufferance of human laws; he roves at large a lawless buccanneer, making booty of all that comes in his way: but his wit loses by its prodigality as much as it gains by its hardihood; frequency and facility cheapen its merchandize; its sallies are remembered in heaven, and echoed in hell: he is playing with thunder, and kissing the mouth of a cannon. All this the profane humorist is aware of; it checks his efforts, and damps his self-complacence; he inwardly feels that of every such experiment the success is precarious, the penalty sure. He is conscious that the odds of this desperate game are cruelly against him: and when men laugh against their own convictions, there is always in their merri-

ment something of a contradictory emotion, that trembles on the lip, and transpires in the manner: the heart that is true to the devil is false to itself.

But the pious, too, have their own province of humour. It may be of a sober sort; but it has an extensive range; and were it not restrained by the proximity of the peril, the partnership of a fallen nature, and the checks of conscious infirmity, the vanities and vagaries of boasting unbelief would be the fairest objects of ridicule to the well-instructed Christian. As it is, his mature and meditative mind finds appropriate amusement in the exposure of the shifts and sophistries of the disputers of this world. He sees them, in the midst of their false security, "set in slippery places:" he deploras the danger; he derides the folly. Cowper, Newton, Horne, and, in a more sarcastic vein, the Dean of St. Patrick, have shown that infidelity and impiety might give perpetual employment to wit, if charity were not in the way. The sorrows to which humanity is heir, will not allow them to make ridicule and banter the staple of conversation; but the pious mind most correctly feels, and can best expose the elaborate impertinencies and follies of artificial life. It is in the table-talk of the right-minded Christian that a pure and delicate humour is oftenest found; that humour

which is the seasoner and corrector of familiar discourse, the source at once of discipline and delight, the medium in which virtue and vivacity unite and co-operate.

Those who attempt the definition of a gentleman, are apt to lay stress on a certain dignified ease in his composure and address. Ease is not assurance; if it were, the Christian would have no advantage in this respect. The ease which belongs to a quieted temper and a trusting heart is his—permanently his. The awe and awkwardness which arise from false grounds of appreciation, he must necessarily feel in a less degree than others; first, because he feels in a stronger degree than others the humiliating truth of our common debasement; and secondly, because the value of adventitious elevation has with him no more than the respect which rationally belongs to it: human pretensions are in his mind compared with a standard, which greatly lessens their substantial disparity. The man whose thoughts are most in heaven, walks the earth with the greatest composure: the service of mammon is a service of toil and trepidation; the service of God is a “service of perfect freedom;” and the character of the service will appear in the manners. It is in the Christian mind that a generous ease finds the best soil for

its spontaneous growth. He is shame-faced only before those by whose nearer resemblance to the evangelical pattern he feels himself discredited. A strong faith weakens the hold of human opinion; it gives an air of conscious liberty to the countenance. The Christian sojourns among men, as the citizen of another state, franchised from their jurisdiction by the high privilege of his acceptance with God, in all matters which can affect his soul's estate, or the real dignity of his nature; and thus he moves with a serene confidence among those from whose judgment he has an instantaneous appeal, and from whose wrongs he can fly to an invisible sanctuary.

SECTION XIV.

WORLDLY DEALINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN
GENTLEMAN.

WHAT pure religion forms, it finishes; the totality of its principle is marked in the smallest lineaments of the Christian gentleman. Like the blood which dispenses the living energy through the whole corporeal frame, Christian morality runs through the whole contexture of conduct, giving to every part a similar basis and consistence. In the veritable Christian we see an entire scheme of behaviour, agreeing with itself under all diversities of circumstances: all his dealings and negotiations are under the guarantee of this pervasive and coercing principle; in his traffic with men he remembers his compact with Heaven, and the federal vow that is upon him.

The mere gentleman, perhaps, in the best worldly conception of the character, rejects the soil and slough of a bargain. If it be true that the little arts of deceptive dexterity are thrown off from the generous mind by a simple effort of its nature, it is equally true that in the same nature where this generosity prevails, are found

the dangerous excesses and spurious qualities which belong to that sentiment of honour which is bred out of the habits of society; but where the feelings and associations of the gentleman are regulated and confirmed by the permanent influence of Christian motives and sanctions, the moral of life is simplified and assimilated in all its possible predicaments, and the whole of the social man is brought under one rule of decisive application—the rule of righteous reciprocity, which the glorious Gospel has pronounced.

One might expect that the gentleman, as such, independently of the Christian obligation, would be secured by his worldly honour, if he hold that principle in its extended sense, from every thing that has the odour or colour of fraud; yet the gentleman, so called, is often little scrupulous of evading the payment of a tax, or of dealing in prohibited or uncustomed goods, to the injury of the revenue and the fair trader, however disgraceful to his port and breeding such a practice should be deemed, taking his standard no higher than his chivalrous origin and the legend and device of his escutcheon. But the Christian gentleman lives under a law which is explicit and decisive on the subject; which requires him to render unto all their dues; tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom. If a Christian.

professor commit or countenance an act so pregnant with meanness, falsehood, and violence, he brings the stigma of hypocrisy upon himself, and a scandal upon the service of his Master.

Among men, the proper test of the presence and influence of religion is its visible occupation of the conscience. If it be real, it runs through the character in its whole length and breadth. Then it is that the entire conduct is restricted within those lines of circumscription, of which the clear written declaration of the divine will has furnished the directory rule. Speculative religion, or that which plays about the heart, or that which glows in the fancy, or that which enshrines itself in human eloquence, leaves a large area about the centre of busy life free from its intermeddling; but the religion of the conscience is every where intrusive, crossing our common paths, meeting us at every turn, and dispersing over all the concerns of active existence luminous indications of the divine will. It is an oracle which requires no formal consultation, no journeys to its shrines; it is ever in ministerial attendance, coming at every call, at hand in every exigence, anticipating the casuistry of the passions, those false prophets within us, and showing, in fiery traces, all the interceptive lines by which God has restricted the path of his

faithful servants. The true Christian is known as much in the little as in the great things of life: he sees the transgression in the principle. "The fear of the Lord is clean," and therefore every unclean practice, whether in his contracts, his engagements, his money transactions, his common intercourse, his manners, or his conversation, is under the control of an incessant monitor. It is true, we are contemplating a rare specimen; but the Gospel of Jesus has settled the standard, and placed it above human interference. It is in a graceful symmetry, or an union of the parts into one consistent and refulgent whole, that the perfection of the Christian gentleman resides. As there may be a greatness known to the sculptor, which owes something to the neglect of proportion; so what to man's perceptions is heroic, is often the result of a colossal grandeur: but the character of gentleman rejoices in the combination and consent of its parts; and when the character of Christian accedes to it, its dimensions are enlarged, while its proportions are maintained; and this is the state of man to which the epithet of *great* does in truth belong, though the multitude allow nothing to be great but that by which society is convulsed, or a domineering spirit is let loose upon the world,

SECTION XV.

EDUCATION OF THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

There is a strange want of adaptation in our scholastic institutions to the production of a character at all answering to the Christian model: none of our methods lead up to it. To keep the proper destiny of man in the view of a child; to present life as a whole to his contemplation, and as a gift bestowed for a certain end; to inculcate a principle of steady direction; to fill the soul with a consciousness of the claims upon it, and of its essential relations and affinities; to set in their right order the first impelling powers; to institute a determinate progression; to place before each his personal vocation, and to open in clear perspective the lines of specific duty comprehended in the great practical plan of God's moral government, are things unthought of in our schools of highest reputation for the formation of gentlemen. If Christianity be true, and if it do really involve all that is most worthy of attainment, the education of the country is rotten at the core. It has no prospective or final connexion with the Christian scheme of commutative forbearance and love, nor is any one

of the constituents of St. Paul's definition of charity included in its scope or contemplation. In many of our great schools it is even forgotten that life is a functional gift; that we breathe to think, and think to act in a prescribed course of duty and charity; that it is our great business to know and practise the will of Him who made us, and to start in the career of life as candidates for his forgiveness; that each of us has a post to maintain, a station to fill, a part to act, a fearful responsibility to encounter. Warped by these errors of discipline from the true line of dignity and modesty, a juvenile throng is successively mixing at random with our bearded population, bringing with them fresh importations of anti-christian habits, the natural product of a fighting, fagging, flogging system, alternating between slavery and tyranny; where, if a knowledge of the world is gained by anticipation, precocity in vice maintains at least a parallel progress. They come forth to the world Christians in name, but Heathens in prejudice, furnished with an estimate of life and its blessings, alike inconsistent with their proper relation to man, and their baptismal covenant with God.

The amusements of our gentlemen are the mirror in which the state of education in the country is reflected. Some of them may be of

a virtuous, some of an innocent character, and some of no character at all, but by far the greater part of them are steeped in the depravity of our nature, and of a crimson colour. The persecution of inferior animals, a ruthless entertainment furnished by their forced exertions, brawling festivities, and impure spectacles, still form the prevailing portion of man's delights in this largely educated country. In mass and quantity no nation upon earth can boast such provisions for the moral and literary education both of the rich and poor: our established religion is the religion of the Gospel; and our great seminaries of learning are in theoretical union with its principles; but the country contains few instances of schools wherein the precepts and injunctions of our religion are explicitly, consistently, and systematically recognised and acted upon. Can it be affirmed of any of our public schools, that any system exists in them for placing virtue, reason, and religion, above force, and tyranny, and passion? Fine things may be said of them at anniversary dinners, or where there may be an interest or pride in complimenting the scenes of our boyish achievements and unworn sensibilities; but it is nevertheless lamentably true, that, except some stated exterior observances of religion, vestiges

of their primitive designation, (with what languor performed!) no plan is in practical operation, in any of our national seminaries, for adjusting the behaviour of the youths to their vocation as Christians, or even teaching them to live together conformably to the standard of the best Heathen morality. The whole plan and character of these establishments are opposed to any such views. Their machinery may be good for the promotion of classic literature, but to the formation of habits, the inculcation of principles, and the government of the heart and conduct after the model of that system which in our creeds and sacred offices is held forth as the only sure and saving system, there is not in our British seminaries any adequate, or indeed any considerable dedication of time or assiduity. So far from it, that it is among the excellences usually attributed to public schools, that the boys are left, in their commerce with each other, to the guidance of their own wills and feelings, out of the conflicts and agitations of which is expected to arise a commonwealth of worthies, full of equity in their principles, honour in their sentiments, and kindness in their intercourse. But what is the simple truth? what is the real state of boys committed to their own moral legislation? Is it a society of mutual justice and equal law; or

is it one in which gentleness is despised, innocence derided, and authority assailed?

In the system derived from M. Pestalozzi, as it has been exhibited at Stanz, at Hofwyl, and at Yverdon, there are faults and defects leading to some practical, perhaps dangerous errors; but it proceeds, upon the whole, in a virtuous spirit; and has, at least, exhibited a polity in which bone and muscle have no prerogative—a polity in which a law of liberty and the maxims of a wise beneficence are realized to the conceptions and sensibilities of the young bosom, as the preparations for the part which, by their Christian profession, they stand engaged to act in the scenes which await their maturity.

Inquire into the social or moral condition of any of our public or chartered schools, and observe which prevails, the Christian or the Heathen character; that of which the Founder of our faith is the author and the pattern, or that of which the foundation was laid in sin and sensuality. Then go to their anniversaries, and observe in what parents and teachers place their pride and importance; dull declamations ill recited, the cant of Heathen moralists, addressed to ears for the most part incapable of understanding them; or exhibitions of Latin plays, in which boys are prepared for the great stage of

life by personating miserly old men, profligate sons, imperious courtesans, and lying valets. From these scenes retire to the peaceful vale, where Pestalozzi walks with his youthful retinue; see them, in their affectionate relation to their master and to each other, living under the yoke of equal fellowship, in the practice of mutual kindness, and cultivating their talents of mind and body from a principle of duty to themselves and others, without strife, or envy, or clamour. See there the reason cultivated, the affections directed, and the spirits softened; see there the benefits of an unremitting superintendence, constant occupation, gentle treatment, firm distributive justice; see there the sacred links by which virtue is married to happiness. These comparisons may lead us to comprehend and feel the value of a real substantial process, where every thing fosters and enforces the sentiment of duty and the glowing charities of the heart, and to understand with a bosom-intelligence how far such a system rises above a grand officious scene of endowed and chartered education.

Surely that is the wise system of instruction which superinduces a better nature, rather than that which leaves nature to itself; that which holds the appetites in willing subjection, rather

than that which leaves them to their own accidental counterpoise ; that by which children are affiliated to their preceptor, rather than that which consigns them to their own crude and barbarous legislation. But in our great public schools the master stands aloof from all sympathy with the scholar ; and that which is properly an affair of the soul and a labour of love, is made the business of official detail and frigid authority.

It is true that the enterprise of M. Pestalozzi may have something of too complexional a cast, too much of dependence upon the extraordinary qualities of the instructor. It may be better calculated for the valleys of Switzerland than for the vortex of British society ; but the moral interests and obligations of man are every where the same, and sometimes opportunities and seasons may be forced into existence by the plastic vigour of invincible perseverance. Manly enterprise will sometimes create its own means of success ; and the world is always better for every provocation to good thoughts and designs, by which its intelligence may be shaken and its aims exalted. Institutions not very dissimilar to these Swiss establishments have found a place amongst us, and their increase may be hoped for in proportion as they unfold their advantages.

The good sense and feeling of a large part of our countrymen gives us ground for expecting that by a more paternal and religious culture of our youth, in imitation of the general genius of M. Pestalozzi's establishments, debarrassed of some of its details, and in a more vital connexion with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, something may be effectually done towards laying the foundation of a happier society among men.

The great point to be contended for is this—that projects for the education of the lower orders can never be successful unless they are combined with an improvement of our institutions for the education of the higher. The community must all move on together. A greater anomaly can scarcely be imagined, than an improved education for the poor, while the education of the upper classes is suffered to continue stationary at the point at which it now stands, in respect of religious culture. There is a natural order in the providential arrangements of society to which human institutions cannot oppose themselves without a jar that must throw every thing out of its place; and this order requires that teachers—and such are virtually all those who support or conduct institutions for popular education—should be well taught themselves. It is so natural for the poorer part of the people to look

up to the wealthier for examples, that, could this state of things, by a strong countervailing influence, be inverted, society must reel under such a disturbance of its balance, and a convulsive change in its relations and dispositions would become inevitable. But a proper education of the rich must lead to a just education of the poor; such a beginning would not only be the pledge of sincerity, but an integral part of the plan: in a word, it may with safety be affirmed, that all systems for the instruction of the poor are mere delusions, unless an education in the same spirit, however different in the subject and the form, be given to the children of all conditions. We should either cease to call Christianity our established religion, or our chartered schools and general institutions should be essentially Christian.

If the education which our church supposes her members to receive, and to the successive stages of which she has adapted her formularies, were really in harmony with our professions and sacred institutions, we might expect a race of Christian gentlemen, who would be the educators of their country by their very position in it. Then would the dissemination of religious truths, for which the superior orders of society are combining and subscribing, be the result of a

veracious adoption of them, and a sincere persuasion of their intrinsic value. Then would spiritual reform assume a simultaneous start and progression, and the great purposes of pious edification be illustrated in the lives of its promoters. Then would wise teaching be placed under the best security—under a covenant, to which the Holy Ghost would be a party, to dispense among the poor one only sort of instruction—that authentic unambiguous instruction which lays the foundation of moral conduct in Christian belief, and deduces all the duties, obligations, charities, and claims of social and domestic intercourse, from the will of God, scripturally revealed. Under this honest, simple, palpable teaching, spreading before the multitude their proper ethics and their proper literature, we should soon discern the beginnings of a progressive enlargement of popular feeling, the increase of industrious and independent habits, and a melting away of that stubborn mass of ignorance of which our speculative writers so philanthropically complain, and which, in the view of our political regenerators, is to be dispersed only by their grand catholicon—cheap and plebeian philosophy, with a liberal and neutral religion.

It is to this new race of Christian gentlemen,

the creatures of this better education, that we are to look for that successful moral culture by which the character of the people may be essentially raised. No mechanical arrangement will bring this about : it must be the work of living agency. It is in things, not in words, that the essence of teaching resides ; in those vital specimens of practice and example, which write their lessons on the heart, in characters of efficient holiness. Eminent example must beckon the people to come forth, from a region of perpetual shade, to the bright borders of that luminous disk, where man may walk by the light of heaven, and breathe with conscious delight a kindling atmosphere of newly recognised duties, relations, and privileges.

From such a race of gentlemen, the product of a Christian education, we may hope to see the present gloom of juvenile delinquency brighten into promise ; and upon the extended floor of Christian worship, vouchsafed of late to the spiritual exigence of the poor, a holier observance of the Sabbath spring up, the great and sure criterion of national improvement. It is then that we may expect to see religion vitally impressed, rather than technically taught, and displaying its proper transforming influence, by exchanging that sour, unblessed state of society,

wherein the spirits of the poor press incessantly against coercion, and order leans upon a militant support, for the harmony of reciprocal protection and obedience—the poisons of the press, and the prurience of licentious curiosity, for that appropriate learning and compendious wisdom which inculcate duty, peace, and order, and unfold to the humblest student the great art and mystery of holy living and happy dying. But only then can these things be, when the statutes of an all-wise God shall control the teaching of moral self-righteousness, and the lords of that secular darkness shall cast their crowns at the foot of the cross.

We are arrived at a period of high expectation and pretension, if not of moral commotion. Art is triumphing over nature, and reason is shaking off the yoke of authority; former things are fast dropping into discredit, and the aspect of the times is perplexed with indications of change. But what throws “ominous conjecture” over all these movements, is a certain character of conceit which accompanies them. England seems to grow less English; the very countenances of men are becoming strange; the streets of the capital teem and swarm with novelties and exotic affections. Precocious attainments, the forced products of our new system of mental

culture, have inverted the order of families, and laid the honours of reverend age at the feet of talkative and prejudging inexperience: authority, usage, prescription, and precedent, have no longer the prejudices of men in their favour.

Before the preponderancy of good or evil in this new order of things can be determined, we must wait for the final balance of the results. It may be a mighty development, it may be a magnificent cheat. One thing we may maintain with confidence—the great value of sober example in eminent station, at a moment so pregnant with consequences, in a time when example is every thing, because opinion is every thing; when the moral principle which pervades the public, and determines the tendency and quality of opinion, as to laws, and measures, and men, is the source of all substantial security—the vital spring of government itself; and, according to the character it assumes, the aliment of disorder or the pledge of perpetuity and peace. The whole system rests upon this fulcrum.

It is the natural effect of the numerous institutions now on foot throughout the land, to make us a reasoning, intermeddling people; and it is awful to think of the consequences, if all this movement in the moral state of society is treated as bringing with it no new motives to

vigilance and preparation. The fortune of the state is involved in the character of its rulers; neither monarchy nor magistracy can stand without it: there is no repose upon the couch of preferment, no dignity in the staff of office, no terror in the sword of justice, no sanctity in the crosier, no majesty in the diadem, unless opinion, rightly constituted opinion, administer to them its unseen and gratuitous support.

Every day, and all day long, a mighty moral inquest upon all that is distinguished and great in rule and station, is sitting on the floor of the nation. By the rapid publicity given to every movement of exalted persons, and by those arts of discovery to which no privacy is inaccessible, all public men are brought before the forum of the multitude, and virtually put upon their country. There is, therefore, no stability in the system of our polity, but what consists in the sterling worth of our men of station and fortune. We may almost count the years of our probable duration by the number of our Christian gentlemen; and, furthermore, it is the Christian portion of the Christian gentleman's character which gives it all its strength and potency; it is this which contracts the distance between the high and low, by bringing elevated station within the reach of all the sympathies

which belong to our common nature; it shows us to ourselves, as in a faithful mirror, associated under a similar allotment of misery and mortality; and in the midst of our artificial distinctions makes us feel and recognise that affiliating cord which draws us together under a common dispensation of sin and sorrow, hope and forgiveness, grace and correction.

The ascendancy of the Christian principle in the bosom of the British gentleman, is just now the single principle on which the solid frame of our polity reposes. Let our universities look to this, if they love their own existence, and “would fain see good days.” Their own towers will tumble upon them, unless they so order their institutions as to supply the demand which the times make upon them for loyal gentlemen and Christian legislators. Above all, let them consider that they are the great seminaries of the church—of a church surrounded by enemies, and on all sides vigorously assailed. Let the Christian gentleman come forth a son of this church; an inheritor and transmitter of its blessings and its graces—a son of the true church, that is, of the busy church, the ministering church of Christ; of her who in spirit recognises only her real and effective agents—her bold expostulators with the high—her faithful teachers

of the low ; her firm promulgators of evangelical truth, full of the awful immensity of the obligation which, as trustees of deathless souls, they have incurred both towards God and towards man : of that church which, rightly understood, is the depository of the faith once delivered to the saints, warranted by inspiration, illustrated by wisdom, and attested by blood ; which stands, in stature, stability, and beauty, pre-eminent in Christendom, purest among the congregations of the devout on earth, most in the spiritual likeness of the temple not made with hands, and most fit to resound with the hallelujahs of the faithful.

SECTION XVI.

THE SCRIPTURAL MODEL OF A CHRISTIAN
GENTLEMAN.

It is a mistake to suppose that the qualities of the Christian and the gentleman are in parallelism with each other, and that each draws its existence and perfection from a distinct source,—that the one taking its origin from the world and its school of manners, and the other derived from its proper author, work together as co-efficients in fashioning the character of the Christian gentleman. The case is far otherwise. The whole composition is fundamentally Christian; the result of that formative grace which renovates the heart, and which, as a refiner's fire or as fuller's soap, purges the thoughts and temper from the dross and scum of their gross adhesions.

If we turn our attention to the mere exterior manners, to the modes and habitudes of familiar life, and to those accidents of time and place which are as diversified as the relations of man to man, and which assume all the varieties of physical and moral predicament, it may be that upon them religion has no specific or necessary

influence; but if we regard the basis of politeness, urbanity of temper, suavity of disposition, and charity of heart, we acknowledge the true gentleman to be the proper product of Christian discipline, and that Scriptural holiness is the mirror before which his character must be dressed, to come forth to the world in the dignity of its appropriate adornment.

In looking to this origin of the Christian gentleman, we see how necessary, to the right constitution of his character, is the purity of the source from which it springs;—the dew of its birth is of the womb of the morning, fresh and sparkling with spiritual graces. The dignity of his descent declares itself in his aspect; and his bearing shows him to be of the family of Christ; the tokens of his brotherhood are joy and peace, and all that lights up the believer's countenance: he moves a king and a priest by divine right and celestial ordination: the fashions of the world are at his feet, as mists at the base of Lebanon; they come and go, gather and disappear, while the Christian's heart standeth fast and believeth in the Lord: every movement expresses the beauty of holiness, and gives form and body to virtue: his exterior tells of inward order: he speaks before he utters his voice, and every tone and gesture borrows a grace from a deep and

never-failing interior supply: the charm of his deportment depends upon a principle coeval with our being and co-extensive with our nature.

While Christianity existed only in promise, Abraham felt its influence, and in his reception of the heavenly visitors anticipated the Gospel in the elegance of its morality. With the same gracefulness he negotiated for the cave of Machpelah with the children of Heth. Boaz with equal delicacy threw his protection around the helpless Ruth. But in Paul the perfection of Christian refinement was developed. Christ had indeed come, and given us a new commandment; and the same was illustrated by the apostle in the purest spirit of its practical import.

Paul, before his conversion, was a man of blood and a persecutor; after his conversion his mind was the tabernacle of holy love and heavenly joy; he became a Christian gentleman, formed entirely out of Christian materials; he retained all his characteristic perseverance, but he dropped all his characteristic violence. Had his walk been in the path of domestic endearment, he would have strewed that path with flowers; had he lived in the married state, his breast would have beaten with its tenderest anxieties; had he been a parent, his children would have felt the blessings of his nurture;

had he mixed in familiar life, he would have largely shared and dispensed the privileged pleasures of affectionate intercourse. These possibilities of earthly felicity expanded with his Christian perfections; but his lofty vocation to glory held all his capabilities and endowments in sacred captivity; bound to the chariot of all-conquering grace, they served to decorate the triumphant career of his duty, as the trophies and spoils of a crucified world and a subjugated nature. In this subordinate condition, how they wrought in his bosom; how they softened his intercourse with his converts; how they tempered his sanguine character; how they disposed him to patience under persecution; to contentment with his condition; to consideration for the infirmities of the flesh; to compliance with things indifferent; to a modest appreciation of himself; to delicacy towards others; to charity of judgment, modesty of opinion, respect for authority, and numberless other graces of sentiment and conduct, is seen in the only book which was worthy to register the acts and correspondence of this surprising person. In that faithful repository, contemplate his gentleness to his Corinthian converts; his godly sorrow for their transgressions; his joy in their penitence: observe his touching farewell to his Ephesian

friends: hear him addressing his converts of Philippi, as his dearly beloved and longed for, and exhorting them to stand fast in the Lord; and beseeching the Christians in Rome by the mercies of God, and by the meekness and gentleness of Christ: attend to his comforting and gracious manner towards the Thessalonians and the converts at Rome: consider his tender intercession for Onesimus: remark his injunctions to obey authorities: see, throughout his correspondence, his love of order, his peaceful industry, and his loyal submission to constituted authority: and see also the practice of his own lessons in his conduct towards Ananias, and before Agrippa, and before the Roman magistracy: forget not his holy courage and magnanimity in the face of danger—and then say, O say, in whom have the properties of a gentleman been more fully displayed? where have “bright thoughts, clear deeds, constancy, fidelity, and generous honesty, the gems of noble minds,” more illustriously shone forth? in whose mind has the beauty of regulated affections more amiably manifested itself? in whose manners has dignity been so combined with humility, greatness with condescension, learning with simplicity?

Never were circumstances accumulated around

the mind of a man so calculated of themselves to beget enthusiasm, and to disturb the balance of the understanding; and yet never has there lived the man in whom sobriety was more conspicuous. Never has there lived a man whose natural temperament was so easy to be excited, or whose warmth of feeling subjected him to more violent emotions; but what man has been more distinguished for moderation? Shining with graces and gifts, he saw in himself little else than the infirmities of nature and the need of pardon. In others, it was his joy and his consolation to discern the beginnings of that holiness of which his modest spirit prevented him from seeing the accomplishment in himself: his distrust of his own sufficiency was in the same degree with his trust in the mercy of God; and by bringing his own title in continual comparison with the merits of the Saviour, he drew from his conscious weakness perpetual supplies of strength; from the renunciation of his own deserts a foretaste of his great reward; from present crosses an earnest of triumphant bliss; and from bonds, imprisonment, and the loss of all things, the expectation of an eternal weight of glory. So chastened, so exercised, so endowed, so in harmony with man, so in communion with God, the character of St. Paul has realized the

conception of that bright exemplar which has been rather desiderated than described in the foregoing pages. In him, the union of Christian soundness with essential politeness has completed the lineaments and furnished the model of that humble and heaven-taught grace of deportment, which awes while it delights, purifies while it pleases, and is at once in favour with God and man.

SECTION XVII.

THE SABBATH OF THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

HITHERTO the view taken of the Christian gentleman has related only to his conduct on ordinary days, or the days in which his own work is in progress: there is yet a day not touched upon, in which his own works are to be suspended, in order that the work of grace, or God's peculiar work, may be going forward in his heart. Happy day for the body and soul of man! The world's birthday; sign of an everlasting covenant between God and his faithful worshippers; day of Jehovah and his creation: and more honourable still our Christian Sabbath—the birthday of the spiritual world; earnest of perpetual rest; day of the Lord, and the redemption completed. But, happy and honourable as is this hallowed day, man has not been wanting in endeavours to dash the cup of blessedness from his lips. He has been solicitous and ingenious to discover grounds for disputing the import and obligation of one of the plainest passages in the Bible, and to furnish himself with a pretext for renouncing a gift of God so full of grace and mercy, that none, save

the gift of himself in his mysterious work of redemption, may be compared with it. Man has been studious to dissever a ligament designed to hold him in communion with heaven, and to let in the torrents of a polluted world upon that little spot where our Shepherd calls us to lie down in green pastures, and repose beside the still waters.

“On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and rested the seventh day from all his work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which he had made.” Thus the Sabbath was instituted at the close of the creation, and enjoined upon all the families and posterities of the earth in words as plain as language affords. It was blessed, and appointed to be kept holy, or set apart (as the Hebrew may be read;) and is it possible for an unprejudiced understanding to doubt of the perpetuity of the obligation? How can a boon be blessed but by being made a lasting source of good to follow upon the distinction bestowed? and how can it be sanctified or set apart but by a continued observance and separation? and when was an observance to end which equally appertained and appertains to man in every generation? Is it a natural

inference, that a solemnity ordained by God to lead his creatures to consider the excellency of his works, and his goodness towards them, was intended to be less durable than the relation between the creature and his Creator? If the Sabbath was made for man, as Christ himself has declared, for whom, or for what period was it not made?

When we find such a man as Dr. Paley, in his anxiety to avoid the plain and palpable meaning of the second and third verses of the second chapter of Genesis, maintaining that, as the passage does not say that Jehovah *then* blessed and sanctified the seventh day, but only that he blessed and sanctified it because he rested from all his work, the Hebrew historian alluded by anticipation to the Jewish Sabbath, we can no longer wonder at any triumph of subtlety over sense, or of vanity over judgment.

But the Pentateuch is silent on the subject of the sabbatical observance by the patriarchs; "wherefore," says Dr. Paley, "it is to be inferred that no such observance existed; and we are led to the presumption that, previous to the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, the Sabbath was not an appointed solemnity." He admits that the institution was in existence before the promulgation of the tables; being expressly

mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, in relation to the manna, which was not found on the seventh day : but then he says the mention of the Sabbath in that place does not imply the revival of an ancient institution. Strange argument! Was it of course to advert, by *express* mention, to the ancient institution? and does not the manner in which the mention of the Sabbath is there introduced, almost conclusively show that the institution was recognised as previously existing? or would not the words of Moses, instead of being simply "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath of the Lord," have been such as to import a new command, accompanied by reasons for the appointment of the solemnity?

In the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses of the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, we also read that the Lord said unto Moses, "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath." From which expressions Dr. Paley infers, that the Sabbath was first instituted in the wilderness; and it seems unaccountable to him, that if it had been instituted immediately at the close of the creation, and had been observed from that time to the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, it should not have been

mentioned or alluded to during the whole biblical account of that period. But could Dr. Paley doubt that circumcision, the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, was in perpetual observance during the patriarchal period? and yet where is there any express mention thereof, from the settlement of the Israelites in the Promised Land to the coming of the Lord Christ? Nor is the Sabbath itself once mentioned in the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, and first of Kings, though its existence as an institution, in full observance, during the period comprised in that portion of sacred story, will, it is presumed, be undisputed.

These few arguments are here noticed, as affording a specimen of the manner in which, by some unaccountable obliquity of the will, even great and estimable persons have been led to bring obvious passages into controversy and doubt, which, in their natural sense, are the vehicles of blessings and privileges, and gracious testimonies of divine favour.

The Sabbath was blessed and set apart, when man, the object of it, was formed; and the ancient decree was repeated and confirmed, when the voice of Jehovah established the polity of his people Israel. The command, coeval with the world's origin, and for the abridgment of

which no reason can be assigned, was emphatically enjoined upon that peculiar people, for whose use, and for separating whom to himself, the Lord was pleased to construct an exclusive system of government. It was the great primeval purpose of the institution that God should be specially remembered, and his goodness towards his creatures recorded by the dedication to him and his worship of one day in seven. It was meant to be a treasury of sacred recollections, receiving fresh accessions as the gracious dispensations of divine benevolence advanced in the sequel of his providence, the first in order being the wonders of creation. The people of Israel being distinguished by special acts of favour, had subjects of grateful reminiscence peculiar to themselves: they were commanded, therefore, to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; for such, according to Dr. Kenicot, is the proper translation: they were to make it commemorative of their deliverance from Egyptian tyranny, by revolving in their minds on that day the goodness of their God, "who had redeemed them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage." (Deut. v. 15.) Our motives to gratitude, still accumulating with time, have at length attained the measure of their fulness in the mystery of

our redemption by the Son of God in the flesh : and as by this sacrifice an eternal Sabbath has been prepared for the people of God, the day which has been made illustrious by that achievement has been, with the sanction of him who is Lord of the Sabbath, put in the place of the Jewish Sabbath, whereby the primitive and substantial obligation to keep one day in seven especially holy was confirmed, and its moral perpetuity established.

The argument for the observance of the Sabbath is happily not a long one; and most happy is it for the human race, that God has proclaimed his will, in this respect, in terms not to be mistaken. He has sanctified it, or, in other words, commanded it to be kept holy by the eldest of all his mundane institutions; but man, by a gratuitous construction, has sought to bring down the ordinance from that lofty position from which it overlooks the world, to the date and level of the Hebrew economy, and to circumscribe it within the scope and limit of a defunct dispensation. This he does by a construction depending upon the assumption that the book of Genesis was not composed until after the promulgation of the law; for if Moses used the words, "and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it," by a prolepsis, the law

enjoining the observance on the Israelites must have been given them before those words were written; a point no where established or countenanced, and therefore, wholly a gratuitous assumption. And why assumed? On the ground only that the inference drawn from the silence of the Pentateuch respecting the fact of the sabbatical observance in the patriarchal ages must otherwise be abandoned; but the inference is unsound, and therefore the proleptical construction has neither necessity to excuse it, nor fact to support it.

But let the original sanction of the Sabbath be taken away, in compliment to this reasoning, infirm as it is, and let it date no higher than the tables of the law. It there stands in the midst of a code, entirely distinguished from the perishable ritual of the people to whom it was propounded; a code grounded deep in nature and necessity; a code of moral universality, proceeding immediately from the mouth of Jehovah, amidst an awful scene of magnificence and terror, and recognised as subsisting in perpetual obligation by Christ himself; and by an apostle, who quotes the commandment next in order, as the first commandment with promise; thus adverting to their arrangement in the decalogue; and by another apostle, who declares,

“ that whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all ; for he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill.”

Is the decalogue then, which has been so carefully kept by itself through the whole period of the Jewish history, to be regarded as a part of the ceremonial law ? Is a system of ordinances, having all the characters of immutability, and twice written by the finger of Almighty God on tables of stone, to be regarded as in the same predicament with a temporary compilation of institutes, intended only to preserve God's people from idolatrous communication and intermixture, and to shadow forth the mysteries of future grace and glory ? and if not, was the totality and integrity of that great record, consecrated, by its position within the ark, in the holy of holies, to be mutilated and defaced by the obliteration of one of its commandments ? Who shall profane that sacred enclosure, but the enemy of God and man ?

SECTION XVIII.

THE SAME SUBJECT, UNDER THE CHRISTIAN
DISPENSATION.

ONE day in seven, as a day of sacred rest, and as a day of commemoration, was given to the first man and his posterities; was given to the children of Israel; and was given in promise to the Gentile world, to celebrate therein the successive wonders of Jehovah's love, the creation of a glorious world, and the restoration of its fallen inhabitants, with all the intermediate preparatives and disclosures of Divine Mercy. Christ's resurrection and return to glory completed the stupendous work of grace, and opened the prospect of an eternal Sabbath, wrought by a work of love ineffable; whereby it was revealed, that "there remaineth a rest for the people of God, into which he that is entered hath ceased from his works, as God did from his." Thus the Christian Sabbath hath not abrogated the Sabbath of the Jews, but taken it into itself, as a law of immutable obligation; not indeed by an express recorded appointment, but by the sanction of our Lord's own blessed example, by apostolical practice, and by a continued

stream of observance, which has flowed through all ages of the church to the present time.

Christ came not "to destroy, but to fulfil," and hath declared, that "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 17—19.) And if the Sabbath be considered as a type of the heavenly rest of the people of God, as long as the anti-type is deferred, or in progress to its accomplishment, the type must necessarily continue. The Sabbath has been circumstantially changed—changed as to the day, and changed as to some of those rigid observances which belonged to the Jewish ritual; but adopted and confirmed in substance, as the day indicative of that consummate rest which Christ has purchased for his redeemed, and to which he led the way by his own triumph over tribulation and death. It was in Christ Jesus that every commandment of the decalogue was first spiritualized, and then fulfilled; and, therefore, all wait upon him and his righteous dominion: they belong to his kingdom of grace, to which they look for their perfection and judicial satisfaction. In his person all holiness

has been completed, and to him, therefore, the Sabbath of the Lord is most appropriately consecrated and devoted. It was on the Sunday that the disciples first assembled after our Lord's crucifixion, when Christ appeared in the midst of them; and again, on the first day of the succeeding week, "came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."* On this day the Holy Ghost descended with his commission from the risen Redeemer. On this day, "being the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread, and Paul preached unto them, and continued his speech until midnight." (Acts xx. 7.) St. John was in the spirit on the "Lord's day," (Rev. i. 10.) and this day was familiar to the primitive followers of the Lord Jesus, as his day; a day for social prayer, for the celebration of the holy communion, and for assembling

* The Jews, in computing time from one day to another, reckoned the days inclusively; therefore, eight days from the first day of the week, would be again the first day of the week following; and "after eight days," according to the common phraseology of the Old and New Testament, is to be taken in the same sense as *in* eight days, or on the eighth day. Thus, "after three days, I will rise again," Matthew xxvii. 63. And, "after three days they found him in the temple," Luke ii. 46. "Come again unto me after three days," 2 Chron. x. 5; "and the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king bade," *ib.* 12. In all which instances the phrase imports, "on the third day," including the day from which the reckoning dates,

together in religious conference; a day altogether holy unto the Lord.

The title then of this first day of the week is established, on the virtual authority of Christ and his apostles. It is furthermore confirmed by the constant usage of Christians from the earliest times. The voice of antiquity has declared for it; the trumpet of time has proclaimed it; it has been the subject of positive enactment, and the offering of solemn dedication. It is the day of the Lord by right of acquisition; and admitting it only to be set apart by the Church and human ordinance, is it for man to resume the gift, and cancel the surrender? If the first converts of the Gospel, with whom the faith and practice of the Church were in their purest exercise, observed the first day of the week as a day separated and hallowed, and if, in all succeeding times, this day has been recognised as the resurrection-day of the Lord Christ, what want we more to fix the duty of keeping it holy upon our reason, our gratitude, and our conscience? All Christian antiquity rings with the sacred sound of the Lord's day. The celebrated letter of Pliny to Trajan remarks the assembling of the Christian converts on a stated day, to sing hymns to Christ as God. Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Ter-

tullian, Origen, St. Cyprian, Eusebius, Athanasius, Epiphanius, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustin, have recorded the dedication of the Sunday among Christians to the Great Captain of our Salvation, who, on that day, conquered death and the grave. It is the Lord's day by right of prescription and long possession; for if these are the foundations of the titles of men, in respect of their enjoyments and privileges, shall we dispute with Christ the dominion of a day, which, from the oldest period of recorded usage, has had his name and seal upon it? Let it be that we have given it to him, and that his right rests only on the vow of a human offering; it is an offering, and not to be recalled, but by profanation and sacrilege.

But it has been consecrated by Christ and his Church as our Christian Sabbath; a season of seclusion from secular cares, employments, and pleasures. It has been substituted in the place of the Jewish Sabbath, and cannot be less holy in all substantial solemnities. With less of ritual rigour, it has more of vital sanctity. If it was expected of the Jew, that he should "call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; that he should honour it, not doing his own ways, nor finding his own pleasure, nor

speaking his own words ;” is not the claim of the Christian Sabbath to the Christian’s devotion, if possible, more urgent and imperative ? or is its holy integrity of service and employment less pledged and bespoken ? The whole day is the Lord’s ; and he who approaches it and honours it as such, shall be more than “ fed with the heritage of Jacob ;” he shall inherit the promises of the spiritual Israel.

The Lord’s day is not only sanctified but blessed : it is abounding with benefits to man. To have one day in seven set apart and sequestered from the travail and tumult of the week, allotted for a closer communion with God and the record of his revealed will, is a privilege which every pious soul knows how to value ; and is it not obvious, if we regard the bulk of mankind, that without a returning season of religious service and the stated recurrence of sacred administrations, multitudes would be wholly destitute of religious habits and impressions ? As no habit can be formed, so neither can the religious habit be formed, without stated periods of renewal. What may be done on any day, if it is to be done with effort, will soon be done on no day, at least by the larger portion of mankind.

Such is eminently the case with respect to

national habits. Such is their flux and migratory character, that they require to be fixed and embodied in our permanent institutions, or they speedily vanish. But even the stated services can effect but little towards perpetuating a religious habit, if the tone of mind, instead of being sustained throughout the day, is to be subjected to the counterworking influence of secular employments, whether of business or recreation. If the day be divided between religious duties, and the thoughts, and cares, and pleasures of the world, it is evident to the least penetrating, that the Lord's day will soon become a merely nominal title. In essence and effect the total day will soon belong to our unrenewed nature, and pass under the dominion of a devouring depravity. When an inroad is made upon the Sabbath, no barrier line can stop the progress of desecration. One practice of disrespect gives birth to another, encroachment follows encroachment, till the queen of days is stripped of her diadem, and mingled with the crowd and riot of the week.

Still there are those who think, or affect to think, that neither the Lord of heaven and earth, nor the Saviour of the world, has any thing more to do with the Sunday than to receive the homage of a periodical service. According to them,

the scriptural injunction, to keep holy the Sabbath day, is to be taken with reference to that part only which is allotted to be spent in church. The rest of the day belongs, as they think, to man's dominion, whether for gain or gaiety, business or pastime, pomp or dissipation. They see neither profit in pious discourse, nor beauty in family instruction. In the interval between the morning and evening solemnities, when the public orisons have ceased, the voice from the sanctuary invites them in vain to continue in holy exercise; the silent summons is disregarded, that calls them to converse with God; no whisper in the stillness of the Sabbath evening refreshes their souls with intimations of mercy from above; no duty of self-inquiry shuts the door of their minds upon a carnal world, till the day is closed in peace. God has a stint allowed him for appointed service; the residue of the day is challenged by his creatures as their own, to use or abuse.

Many and various are the causes, proximate and remote, which involve the destinies of states and empires. Many operate unobserved, by a train of silent consequences; some by decided, some by ambiguous influence; some by slow results, some by rapid development, some through the passions, some through the under-

standing, some by physical, some by moral agency ; but in the history of every nation, some ascendant cause usually takes the lead, and works with a preponderating influence, controlling the issues of events in a course of aggrandizement or depression. In the great career of this nation, the consecration of the Sabbath has been the basis of our peculiar glory. Here only, and principally within the pale of our national church, the day of the Lord has been proclaimed a day of thorough sanctity, in its entire length. Throughout the continent of Europe, and chiefly where the Roman superstition has relaxed the hold of vital faith, the Sunday has been divided between God and man;—a brief ceremonial part being given to Jehovah ; the total remainder—alas! how much the larger portion!—being covered by the claims of this present world and its importunate interests.

SECTION XIX.

THE NATIONAL CONSECRATION OF THE SABBATH.

OF all our privileges, the distinction of this sacred day is the most important in a political view. It involves not merely our character, but our existence, as a great nation. On this day the soul is recruited from the fountain of spiritual life; all things appear to disclose their beginnings, and remount to the First Great Cause; the poor are lifted out of the mire, to be set among princes; the Lord reigneth in special majesty, and, to the multitude of the Isles, it is a day of gladness; righteousness looketh down from heaven, and on this blessed day Jehovah speaketh peace unto his people, and to his saints. Great day of gifts and graces! in which the wanderer is invited back to his paternal home; and the child of disobedience is reminded of his debt of love; his roving heart is silently reclaimed, and with gentle force arrested and constrained; his hopes and fears are directed to their proper centre; wrath and emulation, and the strife of tongues, are commanded to be still; with the returns of sacred service

fresh impulses of gratitude are imparted; new channels of thought are opened; men come before each other with improved appearance, and an increase of mutual respect; the noise of rustic labour and the din of the anvil are suspended; the shops and marts pour forth a comparatively peaceful population; cleanliness brightens the countenance, and the sweat is wiped from the brow; such, in short, is the value of this day to man, that his great spiritual enemy has no shorter way of compassing his ends against his soul and body, than by persuading him to give ear to those unsanctified arguments, which would diminish ought of the sacred rest, and solemn dedication of the Sabbath of the Lord.

This day is the nursling of the Church of England; she hides it in her bosom, and hushes it to repose. She will give it into the hands, neither of the Jew, the Papist, nor the Puritan, still less will she cast it upon the world, to be baptized and nurtured in its temporizing principles and lax observances. The ordinance of the Sabbath is with her as fixed as the firmament. She enjoins on this day the "mirth of the tabret to cease," and the roll of idle vehicles, and all commotion, whether of business or pleasure, to be suspended, that wearied nature may have lei-

sure to listen to its great Author. While she throws aside all burdensome rites, she tells us in her Homilies, that " whatsoever is found in this commandment (to keep the Sabbath day holy,) appertaining to the law of nature, as a thing most godly, most just, and needful to God's glory, ought to be retained and kept of all good Christian people. Therefore, by this commandment, we ought to have a time, as one day in the week, wherein we ought to rest, yea, from our lawful and needful works;" and again, " God's obedient children should use the Sunday holily, and rest from their^s common and daily business, and also give themselves wholly to heavenly exercises of God's true religion and service."

Thus our excellent Church dictates to her congregations the lessons of conservative wisdom. After the public offices of religion are ended, she makes each private house a sanctuary, placing the children and servants around their natural instructors in devout communion; or suggests to the exercised Christian the subjects of devout meditation. We trust, that though the tides of business and amusement sometimes threaten her with destruction, her sanctuary, with its awful precinct, will stand till the Bridegroom comes; and that her faithful worshippers will,

in the mean time, continue to keep their morning and evening watch, and to claim with unceasing earnestness the privileges of the Sabbath, as the earliest spiritual gift to man, and the great primeval pledge of his affiliation and obedience.

SECTION XX.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD ON THE LORD'S DAY.

IF what has been said be true of the Lord's day, great must be its claims upon the Christian gentleman. It must needs be the day which he delights to honour. It is a day so precious to him, that he rises early to enjoy it; he is desirous of losing no part of it; his intercourse with God may have been often interrupted, during the week past, by care, or business, or anxiety; limited to morning and evening prayer, and occasional aspirations. But on the Sunday his Christianity is concentrated. *Ἦτε γὰρ ἀνεσις τὸν νοῦν ἀπαγεὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀσχολημάτων τὸνδε οὕτως νοῦν τρέπει πρὸς τὸν Θεῖον.* The chambers of his mind are swept and garnished, to give reception to visitors from above—heavenly thoughts and blessed communications! Sunday is the Christian gentleman's court-day; the day of the levy of the King of kings; he meets it with his freshest looks, and greets it with the homage of a holy courtesy: not only do worldly occu-

pations cease with him, but worldly cares also ; he feels like a prisoner coming forth from his confinement into the pure untainted atmosphere, with the whole earth for his floor, and the sky for his canopy. It is to him a day of deliverance, release, and privilege, in which his feet are " set in a large room," and his spirit " refreshed in the multitude of peace." His demeanour, therefore, on this day, more than on others, is chastised and subdued. If, on other days, God has had much of his thoughts, on this day they are wholly God's. The time before church on the Sunday morning is, in a Christian gentleman's family, where things are ordered as they should be, a time of tranquil and cheerful preparation for the holy business of the day ; tranquil, because the thoughts repose upon God ; cheerful, because the heart responds to the invitations of the Gospel ; and yet it is a time of godly fear, for the sinner is about to enter into the sanctuary of the Lord, to confess upon his knees, and with prostration of soul, his entire unworthiness.

With such sentiments and impressions, he feels it a sacred duty to be in church some time before the beginning of the service, to recall those " dispersed and ungathered" thoughts, which have been roving abroad upon their tem-

poral errands through the regions of sin, within the doors and vestibule of the sanctuary. The proper prelude to prayer is silence; and of all practices out of place and season, that of talking in church is the most egregious. This propriety the heathen worshipper was sensible of. When Telemachus observed to his father that some god was within, the wise Ulysses imposed on the youth a reverential silence.

Σιγα, και κατα σου νοον ισχανε, μηδ' ερεσινε.

Οδ. τ. 42.

And surely when the Lord is in his holy temple, all within should keep silence until the appointed time of prayer and praise. But in our Christian churches that appointed time is just the time when silence begins. The voice of the primitive church, which was wont to break forth into responses that shook its pillars, has sunk into feeble whispers, or inarticulate sounds, or unconcerned and fashionable silence. This ought not to be the case with the Christian gentleman: he has a part in the service assigned him in the rubric, and dare not stand out in sacrilegious silence against the demand so solemnly made upon him: he judges it also to be a mutilation of the service, and a spoiling of its sense and significance, to withhold his audible

responses.* Take, for example, that most holy and ineffably beautiful hymn, called the *Te Deum*, the materials of which are divine, and only the structure human, and mark how the materials are marred and the structure decomposed by the omission of the responses; or in other words, see how the catenation of the context is broken, and its links scattered, if those passages which should come from the mouth of the congregation are suppressed; unless it can be considered as enough to preserve this essential continuity that the clerk, after his manner, responds to the minister. This beautiful composition, as an act of praise, a confession of faith, and a supplication for mercy, belongs to the people at least as much as to the minister; and yet in many churches nothing of it is audibly uttered but what the necessity of official engage-

* Besides the grateful variety which is given to the devotion of our church by this interchange between the minister and his congregation, the part which the people have to sustain keeps their attention profitably engaged. To do their duty, they must watch and observe their minister, in order to be ready with their part of the duty. They must be upon the alert, and in a state of mind incompatible with weariness or inattention. "Our pious ancestors," says Dean Comber, "may make our devotion blush, when we see them all the time of prayer in procinctu, with their knees bended, their hands uplifted, and their eyes fixed on their minister. If ever this devotion is to be restored in the church, it must be by the people zealously and conscientiously joining in these pious ejaculations allotted to them."

ment compels. Thus says the hymn, "The holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee;" but the congregation does not appear to acquiesce in the declaration, nor are the subjects of this acknowledgment, except in so far as the clergyman and clerk are concerned, distinctly and intelligibly proclaimed.

How touchingly does the minister exclaim, "When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." And shall the prayer which follows by inference from that beautiful declaration be kept within the lips, or indistinctly muttered? "We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood."

Observe also the structure and composition of the psalms. Have not many of them been considered by great authority to be dramatic odes, consisting of dialogues between persons sustaining certain characters? Are they not often alternations of song between the psalmist and the chorus, or Levitical band? or sometimes between Jehovah himself and Christ in his incarnate state, both before and after his resurrection, as a priest, a king, and a conqueror? And if so, will the sense be supplied; or will the composition be intelligible, or the beauty, or

sublimity, or devotion apparent, when the part which is to be said by the people is not said *out*, if said at all, the lips, perhaps, giving sign of something which they dare not or care not to pronounce?

The ninety-fifth psalm, that beautiful introductory part of the service, thus begins: "Oh come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation:" to which the people respond, or should respond, "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and show ourselves glad in him with psalms." Can this second verse be suitably pronounced in a whisper? Is its sense only personal to the individual, or is it the language of general accord and holy acclamation?

Consider the texture of the twenty-fourth psalm. Does the priest inquire, "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? or who shall rise up in his holy place?" And shall not the people answer *aloud*, "Even he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; and that hath not lift up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour?" Can a devout congregation be dumb, when it is their province to announce the King of Glory with his angelic attendants? And yet all this is usually so; and will continue to be so until Christian gentlemen will collec-

tively resolve to rouse by their example our Christian congregations from this torpid indifference to an animated execution of their part in the worship of our church. Without these audible responses on the part of the congregation, the spirit and order of our liturgy are lost. Without them, the sequence and affinity of related passages are severed and suppressed. "O Lord, open thou our lips." (Resp.) "And (then) our mouth shall show forth thy praise." "O Lord, make speed to save us." (Resp.) "O Lord, make haste to help us." "Praise ye the Lord."* (Resp.) "The Lord's name be praised." "O God, make clean our hearts within us." (Resp.) "And take not thy Holy Spirit from us." Again, when the minister

* The sense of the Hebrew *Hallelujah* was so sacred in the original, that the church anciently adhered to the Hebrew term; and still it stands in many of our Christian hymns. It was in daily use in the temple service, and designated the Great Hymn, sung after the Passover, composed of the six psalms, from the 113th to the 118th inclusively. Early in every morning was the Hallelujah sung in the primitive church of Christ; and from Easter to Whitsunday the Christian assemblies of old resounded with the same note of praise. It is a song of victory, and was sung by the saints of the Apocalypse in celebration of their triumph. (Rev. xix. 1, 3, 4, 6.) "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluiah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." And can an English congregation of Christians, assembled for the worship of God, when their minister calls to them, "Praise ye the Lord," refuse to echo back the strain, "The Lord's name be praised?"

having, in the words of St. Paul, (2 Thess. iii. 16.) invoked a blessing on his hearers, saying, "The Lord be with you:" the answer to which, in the words of the liturgy, (from the 2 Tim. iv. 22.) is, "And with thy spirit:" can it be doubted that it is an imperative duty on the people to speak out audibly and distinctly what the church has thus put into their mouths?

The confession with which the service on the people's part begins, is the great motive to prayer—the foundation-stone of the edifice of a sinner's hope. It is of little importance that we should tell God that we are sinners: he knows we are sinners, and we must feel ourselves to be such, or we shall pray in vain; but it is expedient in social prayer that our supplications to Heaven should stand upon the general corruption of our nature, and the fellowship of sin and contrition; and if a general acknowledgment is to be made, accompanied by a general humiliation, it is not easy to perceive how this can be done but by a community of heart and voice, and an open avowal and publication by each before others of his own sinful estate and abject want of forgiveness. But if confession of a common corruption should be thus ostensible and public, profession of a common faith should be no less declared and avowed. The harmony

and sympathy of worship require it to be so; and there is something always interesting and instructive in the spectacle of a Christian gentleman, with erect and decided aspect, testifying aloud the great articles of his belief, and the grounded convictions of a trusting heart.

As our liturgy is so framed as to call imperiously upon the people to give audible utterance to their part in the service, so does it call upon the minister to give time for the congregation to finish what the rubric has appointed to be answered or repeated by them before he proceeds with the service. It is scarcely consistent with the decorum of good manners, much less with the dignity and efficacy of our forms of worship, so to tread upon the heels of those who are endeavouring to respond according to the rubric, as to force them to sacrifice a moiety of what they had to say, or hurry to the conclusion. There is an impatience in this proceeding, which does not surprise us in a clergyman who treats his function as a task to be dryly and technically performed; but it is a perfect solecism in the practice of a spiritual minister; it is a blemish in the beauty of holiness; a fraud upon the liturgy; a robbery of God, who has a right to every part of the service, whether it appertains to the minister or to the congregation: and if

the contumacious silence of a congregation is dangerous on their part, it is still more dangerous in the minister of God's word to throw any difficulty in the way of their return to their duty.

It is sometimes in defence of this sullen taciturnity affirmed, that to recite aloud any part of the service is an interruption to the devotion of others. Fastidious, unfounded objection! fallaciously set up in opposition to the spirit and intention of all social worship. No true Christian is ever disturbed by surrounding devotion; he loves to breathe the atmosphere of piety; nothing is more delightful to him than the sympathy of sacred sounds; the companionship of godly affections; the collective strength of prayer; the chorus of praise; the echoes of inward joy; the music of disburdened bosoms; the songs of secret deliverance; to feel himself part of a circumference of love gathered round a common centre; and to be placed where the magazines of private sorrow, comfort, joy, and hope, are all emptied into the common stock of the blessed company of all faithful people. Though not for ostentation, yet for profit and edification, Christians should let their light shine before others. Within the camp of Christ's soldiers there may be allowed to be some stir;

some notes of preparation ; some noise of arms. The public worship of God was never meant to be cold, or mute, or sad, or dull ; it should imitate rather the angels of the Apocalypse, falling before the throne on their faces, saying, (and surely with united voices and loud acclaim,) “ Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever.”

SECTION XXI.

POSTURES APPROPRIATE TO THE SEVERAL
PARTS OF THE SERVICE.

THE postures prescribed by the rubric, the Christian gentleman will be scrupulous to maintain. He does not say, with the psalmist, "Oh come, let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker; let us fall down low on our knees before his footstool," without honestly intending to give to God the homage of his obedience. And yet how many act as if by "Let us pray," were meant only, as far as regards themselves, "Let us all sit at our ease." Like sacks of meal in a row, each drops into his place, with a look of indifference to the business that should engage all the interest of his mind, and most actively stir his affections. No Christian gentleman, unless infirmity compel him, can maintain a sitting posture during the praying part of the church service. Can sinful man at such a moment sit unconcerned, or sit at all, in the courts of his palace, to whom sin is so hateful that he spared not to make his Son a sacrifice to his offended holiness for the sake of his guilty

creatures? Did Job abhor himself in dust and ashes in the presence of Him whom he had but little offended? Did Christ pray to his Father, with agony and bloody sweat? Do the angels fall down, and hide their faces before God, and tremble at his presence? And shall the son of pollution and the heir of vengeance sit at ease, and look carelessly about him, when the Church of his crucified Saviour is calling upon him to present himself as a suppliant sinner? Is it safe to sit in secular composure, neither hot nor cold, while God is expecting prayer, and proffering grace? Is it a time to sit in complacent security, while a double death and a single way of escape are before us? Can we be so insensible to the soul's jeopardy, and all the frightful possibilities of a dark futurity; can we be so untouched by the long-suffering of our compassionate Father, who still holds open the door to repentance, as to sit unmoved amidst all these challenges, vocations, and alarms, disdaining the attitude of subjection, and the homage of a humbled spirit?

SECTION XXII.

THE DUTY OF JOINING IN THE PSALMODY.

THE general conduct of a Christian gentleman in respect to the church service is inexpressibly important in the way of edification. His early attendance ; his composed demeanour ; his respectful observance of order and propriety ; his devotional postures ; his reverential fear ; his religious abstraction ; his solemn and distinct responses ; his athletic prayers of faith ; his pious breathings of confession ; and the various indescribable indications which attest the sincerity of his worship, and give to his whole exterior the attraction of godliness—how gracefully do these lead and animate the feelings and deportment of all around him !

It may be, the Christian gentleman has not the faculty of singing ; if so, it is his wisdom to forbear. If he cannot be an auxiliary, he had better withhold his interference ; but if he is competent to join in this awakening and beautiful part of the church service, he dares not refuse his contribution ; the whole sanctuary rings with invitations to sacred song ; it is the exercise of

adoring angels, and the delight of saints; it has the warrant of divine authority; it has been consecrated by the example of the Redeemer; it is one of the greatest glories of evangelical worship. How much better is it than with the cloud of incense, or the smoke of sacrifice, to visit Heaven with the voice of melody, and send forth hallelujahs to the throne of Omnipotence! It has been the proper employment of the societies of the blessed through all time—of the general assembly and church of the first-born. Songs of triumph celebrated the creation completed: songs of deliverance recorded the rescue of the chosen seed; hymns accompanied the work of salvation, and conveyed to Heaven the holy joy of the first Christians; throughout the records of inspiration, throughout the annals of the church, throughout the scene of the material world, innumerable calls of mercy, grace, and pardon, lay the voice and organs of man under contribution to his dying, redeeming, reconciling, life-giving God, the builder of the universe, the conqueror of death, the king of saints.

The Bible is full of poetry and the materials of music. Infidels have stolen largely from that treasury of song. And shall the service of the Christian church be tame and tuneless under so much holy provocation? or shall it leave the

singing to persons no otherwise qualified than by their alacrity to sing, or to vulgar combinations of rustic professors? The minstrelsy of the temple was David's supreme delight, who has bequeathed to that church, which the Holy Ghost presented to him in prospect, an exhaustless store of melodious worship. The psalms are full of encouragement to sing the praises of Jehovah, and they supply the sublimest subjects on which the faculty of singing can be employed. They were adapted by David to the music of the temple; and in a variety of versions they offer themselves to the pious Christian as the best medium through which his love can be declared of his dear Redeemer, so beautifully therein announced and prefigured in his sufferings and his glory. What is there of hope, peace, or consolation, which is not conveyed by these songs of Sion to the necessitous soul of man? Below the shining surface of their poetical beauties they hide the treasures of spiritual wisdom: beyond the scope of their tangible boundary they transport us to the border of the invisible world; by the instructive events of Jewish history they alarm the wicked, revive the penitent, console the afflicted, and confirm the faithful. They magnify the Lord in his doings, and lay open the spiritual history of the

world, presenting a path of discovery continually opening before us, refulgent with the footsteps of the Messiah, and resounding with the promises of the Gospel. It is there that, in allusions to the natural Israel, we see adumbrated the fortunes of the spiritual Israel—the Christian Church; it is there the kingdom of grace, the glory of the saints, the passage of Jehovah through the wonders of his creation, travelling in the greatness of his strength, the victories of faith, the accomplishment of the promises, the doom of sinners, and the consummation of all things, are set forth with the utmost majesty of diction, vivacity of truth, and beauty and variety of allusion and comparison. It is there that, in the private life of holy David, we see personified the holier Son of David, the Lord of all things, both in heaven and earth: it is there that, in the form of allegory, we trace a continued series of prophecy: in Egypt, in the wilderness, in the fortunes of the chosen people, in the fruitful Canaan, we see in figure the bondage of sin, the Christian warfare, the happiness of the redeemed. In the ritual sacrifices, the services of the law, and the offices of the priesthood, are shadowed forth the great sacrifice for all men, the spiritual temple, and “the High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.” In the pictures of

David's sufferings, we see the Man of Sorrows; in Solomon's magnificence, the more than mortal majesty of the King of Glory. It is there that we see depicted the Great Captain of our salvation, girding his sword upon his thigh, and surrounded with the trophies of his victorious grace; or anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, the bridegroom of his church, that comes forth to meet him, in her odoriferous vesture of gold and embroidery.

Who, when these Psalms are chanted, sung, or said, can sit or stand unconcerned, with vagrant thoughts or vacant gaze? Not the Christian gentleman; if he ever sings, he sings upon this occasion. What singer can refuse the tribute of his voice to subjects so enchanting? Only he or she whose voice has been dedicated to mischievous or unmeaning sing-song, or made the vehicle of senseless sound and vapid sentiment.

SECTION XXIII.

THE SUBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN'S SABBATH CONTINUED.—GENERAL CONCLUSION.

THE Christian gentleman does nothing for display—nothing with affectation; and yet he carries to all things a sort of sacred tact, and an unconscious propriety of behaviour. His walk into church, and his walk out of it, are like his walk in life, decorous, simple, and sedate.

Full of the honesty of real meaning, his carriage comports with his situation and object; he neither courts nor shuns observation; he has a direct and professed purpose in going to church, and to that he addresses himself, without regard to the eye or comment of man; it is his commerce with eternity—his earnest negotiation with his God; his heart is in it; there is nothing foreign to it in his look or manner; neither gesticulations, nor salutations, nor whisperings, nor greetings, divide his attention; nothing disturbs the polarity of his mind. On leaving the house of prayer, he walks quietly and uncovered, till he ceases to tread on holy ground. While others are impatient to resume

their worldly topics, his thoughts still linger within the sanctuary ; while others are employed in remarks on the preacher or his sermon, he tacitly examines and criticises himself ; while others are satisfied, he still thirsts ; while others fall back within the world's enclosures, he continues his pilgrimage onwards, with the land of rest before him ; while the loose devotion of others drops from them at the church porch, his habitual religion takes faster hold upon him, with every renewed exposure ; its analogies follow him into life and society ; his soul, which has dressed itself before the mirror of the Gospel, still wears its white investiture, attracting the homage of gentle spirits, and forbidding the touch of unhallowed communication.

The heart of the Christian gentleman is in a tender state when he comes new from the house of God ; a tenderness which becomes soreness, when he contemplates the state of things around him. Scarcely has he come into the open air, when the sound of wheels, and silly talk, and insane laughter, assails his ears ; scarcely is he out of the hearing of God's awful dealings with his creatures, the records of his might, the mysteries of his grace, and the visitations of his wrath ; hardly has the organ ceased, or the church-yard been crossed, when a world bursts

upon him, wherein an open indifference to all these things prevails; wherein the Sabbath is employed, as if the Lord's brief term in it had run out, and the inheritance, with a full right of disposition, had reverted to man, to devote it as interest or humour may suggest—to traffic, toil, or diversion; to the office, the counter, or the festive board; to gossiping visits; to the gathering and propagation of news; or to the fluttering tumult of parks and promenades.

From such unlovely scenes the Christian gentleman is glad to escape into the bosom of his family; happy if the domestic scene present a contrast to what he has witnessed abroad. And it generally must so do; for the wise example and admonitions of a parent have our better nature on their side; and, what is better still, the earnest of that new nature which is the great conqueror of the will and the reclamer of our wild humanity.

The ways of God are unsearchable. A Christian is not always allowed to see the consummation of his pious wishes in respect of his children's dispositions and principles; such a case, however, is an anomaly in life, and a mystery in the divine administration. A stubborn heart is sometimes made more stubborn by caresses, and is in a manner congealed in the

temperature of a father's embrace, or a mother's bosom; but it is the ordinary course of Providence to bless the endeavours of a Christian in his parental rule. When such is the constitution of a family, the Christian father has a tranquillity about his hearth which cheers him in the midst of a misjudging world. It is his delight on the evening of the Lord's day, to draw the curtain between the scene of home and the great theatre of Sabbath profanation; to read and meditate upon the Scriptures of truth; to vindicate within the circle of his children and dependents Jehovah's claim to the total Sunday; to make it a day of deep interior delight; and to give it a refuge from the storm without, in the retirement of his peaceful domicile.

So much for the "Portraiture of a Christian Gentleman," who has not in these pages been designated as a member of any particular church or community of Christians. It would be unjust and presumptuous to say, that the exemplar is not to be found in any congregation of sincere worshippers of the triune Jehovah; but it may, without offence, be said, that he is not in his worst attitude, on the floor of our national Church; that church, so mild and charitable,

so conformed to the earliest and purest standard; resting on Holy Scripture and apostolical foundations, simple in its worship, pure in its creed, modest in its pretensions, pastoral in its care; with a liturgy full of life and beauty, a discipline of sound ordinances, and a doctrine of peace and salvation; within whose scriptural pale the Christian gentleman may freely exercise his high and honourable commission.

THE END.







